



Welcome

We recently celebrated our 10th General Assembly and noted our increasingly crucial work in the context of a disappearing European political project.

The refugee crisis has demonstrated that European principles of democratic equality and social rights continue to be in grave danger. The old struggle of stateless peoples has become one of the most promising examples for the much-needed democratic revitalization of the continent and Europe's answer to the current economic-institutional crisis.

The recent successes of pro-independence Corsican parties, as well as social and political movements in Scotland and Catalonia, indicate that the defence of one's identity goes together with affirmations of sovereignty as a prerequisite for the development of welfare policies and social equality.

The struggle of stateless peoples is a promising answer to Europe's economic-institutional crisis.

The basis for these popular processes can be extended to other European stateless nations, not only in defending cultural and linguistic diversity, but as a question of representation in the EU.

It is not a coincidence that only in the past 20 years, 34 new states have been admitted to the United Nations as members. The peoples of the world strive for self-government and have confidence in their own efforts. The defence of collective rights does not only demonstrate the desire of the people to participate in politics and adopt community interests, it is also a new alternative path out of this crisis, affirming and exercising democracy in opposition to authoritarian tendencies of the economic-financial elites.

Xabier Macias,
President Centre Maurits Coppieters



Josu Juaristi Abaunz

Right to Decide Best Democratic Tool for Conflict Resolution

The two pertinent questions shaping the debate on the future of the Basque Country are legality and legitimacy.

Firstly, in the case of the Basque Country, 'legality' is what demarcates the Spanish State to the south and French State to the north, challenging and debilitating our rights as a nation. One could also argue that the decision of the Basque Autonomous Community's Parliament to position itself behind the right to self-determination and the right to decide falls under the term 'legality'. Yet, this decisive outcome has had no practical bearing on the Spanish State.

Secondly, our 'legitimacy' is our identity as a nation, and even more importantly than a shared historical heritage, our legitimacy derives from the will of the people. The question of how many Basques favour independence remains unresolved as we have never held a referendum in any part of our country, which could ascertain these figures.

When we bring these debates to European negotiations, we see that the majority of the unionist political forces are accustomed to say: "why do you support erecting new borders in a European Union, which has none?" We all know that this is not exactly true. The European Union clearly does have internal borders, which delineate the territories of its Member States. In the case of the Spanish government, the Popular Party ('Partido Popular'), as well as the

Spanish Socialist Workers Party ('Partido Socialista Obrero Español') generally characterize the demands of Catalans, Basques and Galicians as meaningless and impracticable, ridiculing our claims to statehood with the notion of an unworkable European Union consisting of 50 or 60 Member States.

What we need to explore further is, whether the European Union has the capacity to create a democratic protocol, which could effectively, flexibly and pragmatically deal with the procedures and consequences of self-determination claims; to give new responses to new questions. For now, European treaties are strikingly silent on the matter.

Our legitimacy derives from the will of the people.

As always, the key is civil society. In the case of the Basque country, this means building popular support, not only for the idea of a Basque nation, but the idea of a Basque State. We always say, every nation and every people, has its own dynamics, specific challenges and unique advantages. In order to meaningfully contribute to initiatives, which exert pressure from below at the level of the citizen, we have been helping to develop a campaign called "It is in our hands" ('Gure Esku Dago').

Josu Juaristi Abaunz,
Member of European Parliament
EH BILDU

The existence of a State is a matter of fact, not criteria - “Just get on with it and act as one!”



Ana Stanič

OPINION - During 10th General Assembly of the Centre Maurits Coppieters, Ana Stanič was the keynote speaker at the Coppieters Dinner-Debate, where she addressed secession and state succession from an international law perspective; shared her observations about lessons learned from newly independent states, such as her home state

of Slovenia; and provided recommendations about how to prepare for independence negotiations.

The existence of a State is a question of fact not a question of law, which means that the idea of State recognition is quite separate to the idea of State existence. Therefore, whether a State exists or not is a question of fact and it is not dependent upon recognition.

While recognition of a State and membership at the United Nations or other international organizations is important, it is not a fundamental requirement for a people to be regarded as a State. We have many examples in international law

It is very important to understand there is nothing in the international law that defines the criteria for the creation or formation of a state.

of States that have not yet been recognized as such, yet function as one, such as Nagorno-Karabakh and Palestine.

It is very important to understand there is nothing in the international law that defines the criteria for the creation or formation of a state. Moreover, there is nothing in the international law that prohibits unilateral declaration

of sovereignty and this is clearly stated in the International Court of Justice Kosovo Advisory Opinion.

International law does not deal with the creation of a State, since its primary objective is to deal with relations between States. This is why the International Court of Justice was very clear that the principle of territorial sovereignty - or territorial integrity - is a principle that is relevant with respect to relations between States, and in itself, does not prohibit the right to self-determination or the right of a people to declare independence.

*Ana Stanič
Founder of E&A Law Limited
Expert in international
and EU law*

ADEO: moving Occitania forward!



Gael Tabarly and Gustave Alirol

With the goal of becoming more open towards Europe and in recognition that exchange between regions and linguistic minorities facing similar challenges is essential to sustaining diversity, ADEO officially requested to join Centre Maurits Coppieters, and was formally admitted during its 10th General Assembly in Ajaccio in April 2016.

ADEO was founded in 1977 as an Occitan association set up to publish the “*Volem viure al país*” newspaper, which takes its name from a slogan used by Larzac farmers in their struggle against the French state, which was seizing their lands for the development of a large military camp.

The expression “*Volem viure al país*” continues to represent Occitan readiness for autonomy and freedom, which remains alive still today. Since then, ADEO has popularized numerous Occitan political ideas around several contemporary issues, targeting in particular, the Occitan political sphere, media, enterprises and the general public.

ADEO aims to operate as a laboratory for ideas, a think tank for inspired policy recommendations.

In 2014, thanks to the Gael Tabarly's perseverance, the General Assembly of ADEO decided to expand the organization. ADEO no longer wished to limit its activities to editing a newspaper, but would strive to become a space for reflection.

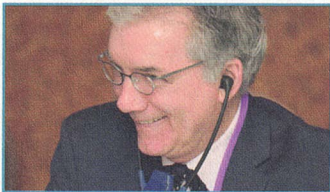
From that point onwards, ADEO has aimed to operate as a laboratory for ideas; a think tank that intends to produce and diffuse inspired solutions and public policy recommendations

incorporating Occitan considerations.

ADEO is involved in the creation of a special event called “*La Dintrada*”, a space for gatherings and debates about timely issues concerning Occitania and Europe, which took place for the first time in September 2015. The next edition of this event will take place in Leucate on 24-25 September 2016. This diversification of activities also resulted in the launch of a collection of books and the creation of a website.

*Gustave Alirol,
Honorary Member of the
European Free Alliance Bureau,
International Affairs Coordinator
for Partit Occitan*

IRAI: a new research institute on self-determination, a new laboratory of ideas on independence



Daniel Turp

During the 10th General Assembly of the Centre Maurits Coppieters, I had the pleasure to announce the creation of a research institute on peoples' self-determination and national independence (IRAI – 'Institut de recherche sur l'autodétermination des peuples et les indépendances nationales').

Now, I have the privilege to lead this new organization that principally aims to produce

research on economic, environmental, social and cultural issues related to Quebec's independence in both comparative and international perspectives.

IRAI will liaise with actors from social, economic, cultural and political sphere to build a new research network.

IRAI will function independently from political parties and it will not accept any directions or guidance from its members or officials. The Administration Council will take all relevant decisions about the Institute, overseeing the impartiality of its staff and researches. The Institute will liaise with a wide range of actors from social, economic, cultural and

political spheres to build a new research network.

Ms Geneviève Baril, who had been associated with the New World Institute since its establishment in 2005, was appointed Director General of the Institute. Mr Pierre Karl Pé-ladeau, who had been involved in the creation of an institute associated with the Québécois Party, was selected to elaborate IRAI's strategic plan.

I kindly invite you to check out the interactive web site of IRAI for further information:
www.irai.quebec.

*Daniel Turp
Ph.D. Professor, Constitutional & International Law, University of Montreal in Montreal (Quebec),
Scientific Counselor of
Center Maurits Coppieters*

US Congress debated US policy on national self-determination movements

On 15th of March, the US Congress' Foreign Affairs House Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia and Emerging Threats discussed the US policy on the recognition of self-determination movements and acknowledged the need to tackle the debate, not postpone it.

Dana Rohrabacher, Chairman of the Subcommittee, opened the debate stating,

"Over time, it is natural for populations of people to move and change, just as the characteristics of governments change. We should, and must, expect this. Yet, US foreign policy thinking too often acts as if the borders of a nation-state are set in stone. As circumstances change, the US must be open to the possibility that peacefully changing borders makes sense and promotes stability."

Jason Sorens, author of several books on self-determination claimed, "A legal path to independence can promote peace by constraining secessionists and central governments to pursue their aims through electoral and legislative means." On the question of whether the

US should recognise newly independent states, he believes, "The US government might wish to consider not only the interests of the host state, but also the effect of secession on regional stability. On average, replacing a state-to-nation relationship with a state-to-state relationship reduces violence."

Professor Paul Williams referred to the specific case of Scotland and Catalonia and its relationship with the EU. He argued that, "Without a coherent and cohesive approach to these movements, the EU has placed itself in an impossible and precarious position. Furthermore, in many European states, non-recognition would be perceived as anti-democratic.



Tweet!

Ana Miranda
[@anamirandapaz](#)
April 24, 2016

In Idomeni. A hellscape. And this is how they share dignity and affection in this inhuman place. Like this Syrian grandmother.



Nicola Sturgeon
[@NicolaSturgeon](#)
May 12, 2016

Looking forward to the immense privilege of being sworn in today as the Member of [@ScotParl](#) for Glasgow Southside.

Centre Coppieters
[@IdeasForEurope](#)
May 9, 2016

#EuropeDay Social equality, cultural diversity, human rights, self-determination and peace for #AnotherEurope



Josep-M. Terricabras
[@jmterricabras](#)
March 2, 2016

[@EP_President](#) should take measures to avoid intolerable fascist behavior of MEPs & assistants of Golden Dawn.

PARADIPLOMACY: an essential political tool of representation?

INTERVIEW - Sandrina Antunes is an assistant professor at the Department of Political Science and International Relations at the Universidade do Minho in Portugal, and the author of numerous publications on paradiplomacy and self-determination. On April 19th, Antunes spoke at the Coppieters conference entitled “Stateless Nations and Europe: New Challenges, New Opportunities”, which was held at the University of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia.

Sub-central governments, cities and towns are using paradiplomacy to seek influence beyond their borders. Why have national and regional movements and parties in Europe come to understand para-diplomacy as an essential political tool? And Europe an essential priority for their political agendas?

I would argue that using the term “para-diplomacy” as a “catch-all” concept that could be applied to all national/regional movements is rather incorrect. Para-diplomatic activities in Europe were linked to regional and national movements and political parties in the late 90’s because Europe was commonly perceived as a political opportunity structure that could guarantee access to political power. Even though Europe was commonly perceived as a new political platform, the nature and purposes of these activities have always been case-specific.

It is true that the notion of para-diplomacy was commonly intertwined with the notion of “national by-passing” and could be broadly defined as the ability of regional governments to represent their own

interests - either economic, political, cultural or all - at the international level. Nevertheless, it is a concept that I believe has been “stretched” too far. While para-diplomacy has had a huge impact on territorial politics in the late 90’s, it has always remained a “blurred” concept, which requires further systematization along clear theoretical lines.

What role do regional offices play for para-diplomatic activity of sub-state governments in Europe? Have views on this changed over time?

“Regional offices” in Europe is another concept that should be tackled with caution. According to Michael Tatham, we can identify two distinctive categories: “first league” public regional offices established by regional governments in the mid 80’s and “second league” regional offices led by private stakeholders from the early 90’s onwards.

Europe was commonly perceived as a polity made of multiple layers of government – European, national and regional – where regional actors could act autonomously,

apart from state diplomacy, in order to represent their own interests. Indeed, their main target and *raison d’être* was to act in parallel or in opposition to national state positions in order to guarantee accurate representation. The very nature of these activities explains why their relationship with the centre was mainly conflictual and why the first category of regional offices was banned by central governments in the mid 80’s and early 90’s.

Europe 2020 is the EU’s sustainable and inclusive economic growth strategy with key objectives in areas of employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate/energy for the coming decade. Has Europe 2020 influenced para-diplomatic activity and the role of regional offices? Can it be seen to contribute to a positive shift in Europe where regions are part of the solution?

As we approached the European 2020 agenda, major changes were about to occur because this new policy process established a new context of functional interdependence in order to comply with targets. To put it differently, in clear contrast with the 90’s, Europe has become a poly-centred system of governance where “first league” regional offices are now conceived as a “tool of government”, defining policy options to be implemented simultaneously on the European and regional level. Since the European 2020 strategy requires regional intervention, the argument for more self-government is economic, not political, although we could identify a positive political spill-over.



Sandrina Antunes

We could argue that the very nature of para-diplomacy has changed, as national bypassing is now performed through “governance” and in “cooperation” with the centre, within a polycentric European system of governance. We could conclude that this new vision of Europe could be subsumed into a neo-functional vision of Europe.

Would you consider public diplomacy, para-diplomacy and proto-diplomacy as part of a continuum or tools to be used simultaneously for leveraging opportunities for representation?

I would say that they are not part of a continuum, but they could be complementary in some ways. Whereas both concepts of para-diplomacy and proto-diplomacy refer to the international engagement of regional governments, the former suggests that these activities are conducted in parallel to national state diplomacy and the latter in opposition to national state diplomacy. Broadly speaking, public diplomacy is a more modern phenomenon and refers to the international activity of a region with the intent to promote their identity and economic/social activity. The main purpose is not to influence policy decisions or national state actors, but to affect international public opinion and achieve international informal recognition.

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