

Exploring Resilience Patterns amongst National Minorities: From the Historical Representative Assemblies (1812-1877) to the Basque Parliament (1980)

Agirreazkuenaga, Joseba

UPV/EHU. Social Sciences and Communication Fac. Contemporary History Dept. Sarriena, s/n. 48940 Leioa
joseba.agirreazkuenaga@ehu.es

BIBLID [ISBN: 978-84-8419-207-7 (2010); 73-90]

Europa nazio-estatuaren baitan garatu dira erregioetako parlamentuak kasu batzuetan nazionalaren izendapena ere hartzen dute. Maila desberdinetako parlamentuen garapena da gobernaeraren etorkizuneko erronka. Erresilientziaren eta epe luzearen ikuspegiari oinarriturik, azken 200 urteotan Euskal Herriko Batzar nagusien azterketa egiten da. Batzar nagusiak aldaketa sakonak jasan eta une batez deseginak izan arren, egokitzapenak ere bideratu ziren eta azken batean berriz indarrean ezarri ziren eta horrez gainera Eusko Legebiltzarra eta Nafarroako Foru Parlamentuak ere sortu ziren.

Giltza-Hitzak: Batzar nagusiak. Eusko Legebiltzarra. Erresilientzia. Maila askotariko gobernaera.

Los estados-nación de Europa, también han desarrollado parlamentos regionales que en algunos casos se manifiestan en tanto que nacionales. La coexistencia de parlamentos de distinto nivel es uno de los retos de la gobernanza. Desde el pensamiento resiliente y en una perspectiva de larga duración se analizan las Asambleas representativas del País Vasco. Durante los últimos 200 años dichas Asambleas han desarrollado una capacidad de adaptación al cambio en medio de las turbulencias y sucesivas aboliciones, hasta su recuperación y la constitución del Parlamento vasco y el Parlamento foral de Navarra en 1980.

Palabras Clave: Asambleas representativas. Parlamento vasco. Resiliencia. Gobernanza multinivel.

Les états-nations d'Europe ont également développé des parlements régionaux qui, dans certains cas, s'expriment autant que les nationaux. La coexistence de parlements de niveau différent est l'un des défis de la gouvernance. De la pensée de résilience et dans une perspective sur le long terme, on y analyse les Assemblées représentatives du Pays Basque. Durant ces 2 derniers siècles, ces mêmes Assemblées ont développé une capacité d'adaptation au changement au milieu des turbulences et des abolitions successives, jusqu'à leur récupération et la constitution du Parlement basque et du Parlement autonome de Navarre en 1980.

Mots-Clés: Assemblées représentatives. Parlement basque. Résilience. Gouvernance à multi-niveaux.

INTRODUCTION

In the cycle of liberal revolutions from 1789 onwards there were different transitions in the European kingdoms, in the systems of values and in the organisation of everyday social life. A new concept and new institutions articulated the political communities: “nation” and the “national assembly”. In place of *royal*, the army and the public institutions were to have the denomination *national* from then onwards, especially in the continent.

One of the questions relating to the continuity of the Representative Assemblies of the Basque Country is how political and cultural communities with representative institutions during the “Ancien” Regime, respond to systemic breakdown or convulsion in the context of the building of the new nation-state.

In the process of construction of the new nation-state some political leaders conceived a single national parliament, and a single public administration directed from a centre of power: one nation, a single parliament.

The forms of Union of the European monarchies brought the formation of a Europe of composite monarchies (Elliot, 1992). In the United Kingdom after the “Glorious Revolution of 1688”, the parliament became the centre of political power. According to J. H. Elliot this was a new historical phenomenon, “a composite *parliamentary* monarchy.” (Elliott, 2009). In Spain between 1707 and 1716 the new Bourbon dynasty drastically altered the legal constitutional system, abolishing the institutions and laws of the Crown of Aragon (Aragon, Valencia, Catalunya) and “horizontal Spain” was replaced by “vertical Spain” (García R., 2002) except in the Basque Country: the institutional system of the Kingdom of Navarre remain in force until 1841 and the representative assemblies of Biscay, Alava and Gipuzkoa until 1877.

During the 19th century, the national Parliament try to transform the inhabitants into national citizens, with a single law, a single language, a single cultural symbolic cultural view and a single religion. The nation-state model was exported from Europe to the rest of the world spreading towards America and others continents (Woolf, 1991). It was established as a norm of organisation in the world by the League of Nations (Geneve, 1920) and more effectively by the United Nations (1945). Two hundred years later it is the key question for many peoples, the model of the nation-state model (Douglas & White, 2009).

The nation is not a territory, or a fixed concept but mainly a symbolic organisation for a human group. The parliament is its material and institutional stage. All nations face problems in consolidating the loyalty of the population to the new legitimacy of the national construction. Nations are dynamic and open flows, and their symbolic recognition and loyalty change in a daily plebiscite, in the words of E. Renan. Individual or collective identity is not something given that one “has” or one “loses”, but a swampy and shifting terrain of permanent confrontation. Identity works as a fluid element in a state of permanent reconstruction and invention.

The creation of the new European Parliament is opening a new political era. Other national-regional parliaments coexisted within the historical nation-states. The coexistence of multi-level parliaments is a challenge.

To explore the *longue durée* of the Representative Assemblies we will employ resilience thinking. "Resilience is the capacity to deal with change and continue to develop" (B. Walker & D. Salt, 2006). In the case of the Basque Representative Assemblies there has been a capacity over the last 200 years to deal with change and, after their abolition in 1877, to build new Representative Assemblies and new Parliaments: the Basque Parliament and the Foral Parliament of Navarre (1980). In the XIX century many authors in Europe, following an evolutionist social view (Engels), said that the old peoples and national minorities would disappear (Garate, 1979). But there have been different experiences in Europe. The level of resilience in each case is different. In this paper I will emphasise the reference of the Representative Assemblies, which are an element and pattern for understanding the index of social and political resilience in dealing with the political and cultural continuity of the national minorities.

In summary, parliaments are constituted today as centres of debate and management: the management of resources (the budgetary debate) and the management of identities (a transversal debate that affects the cultural and educational system, the health system, religious issues). But in real politics, during recent decades, the sovereignty of Parliament has been transformed into the effective sovereignty of the executive.

1. THE REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLIES OF THE BASQUE COUNTRY AND THE NEW NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS OF FRANCE AND SPAIN

In the Basque Country, as in other areas of the Pyrenees from the XVI century onwards, an anti-feudal political culture developed. The foundation and development of the representative assemblies of the Basque regions occurred from the XVI century onwards (Peronet, 1998). The assemblies were the meeting point of the clans for speaking, to make use of the "parole". The politics of war became a politics of negotiation. These assemblies promoted a system of representative government, a habit of public governance and their own financial system.

With the appearance of the national parliaments and the project of the political nation, a problem of compatibility arose between the Basque Representative Assemblies (*Juntas Generales*) and their executive governments (the Deputations) and the new French and Spanish National Parliaments. There have been two experiences with different results concerning the role of the Basque Representative Assemblies in relation to the new National parliaments:

1.1. France

In the 18th century, the French monarchy expanded the royal administration, which accounted for the almost permanent conflict between French civil servants

and the representatives elected by the territorial assemblies, particularly in the peripheral Pyrenees area. The Representative Assemblies of the Basque Country were the subject of debate in the National Assembly. In short, the Representative Assemblies of the Basque area were abolished. The *Département* of Basses Pyrénées unites the Basque Country and Bearn, but the choice of Pau as capital gave Bearn greater influence in the administration of its affairs (Goyhenetche, M.).

In France, the National Assembly was formed as the representative depository of public power and in the report of the committee of “Public Health” to the National Assembly Barère declared:

Nous avons observe (...) que l’idiome appelé bas-breton, l’idiome basque, les langues allemande et italienne ont perpetué le règne du fanatisme de la superstition, assuré la domination des prêtres, des nobles et des praticiens (...) et peuvent favoriser les ennemis de la France.

Frequently, people who spoke other languages apart from the French language became “enemies” of France and the use of languages began to become politicised. Besides, opposition to “national” was to be “feudal”.

Le federalisme et la superstition parlent bas-breton, l’émigration et la haine de la République parlent allemand; la contre-révolution parle l’italien, et le fanatisme parle basque.

But at the same time the individual rights of persons and their equality were proclaimed, although slaves and women were not included. Human rights are a referential element of our political modernity. Democracy and identity were “the two issues driving modern-day politics and the question was how they could be reconciled” (J. Straw, 2007).¹

1.2. Spain

The resistance, continuity and change of the Representative Assemblies turned out to be different in Spain. As Humboldt observed in 1801, the influence of the social networks of the Basque elite in the political and institutional structures of Spain were more important than in France (Humboldt, W.).

The Spains (*Españas*) were organised as a transoceanic empire-monarchy. The constitution of 1812 was designed for inhabitants of Europe, America and the Philippines: “Spaniards of both hemispheres”.

We will now analyse the powers, the relationship and evolution of the Basque Representative Assemblies and their continuity in relation to the Spanish

1. J. Straw “Democracy and identity: building a global Union” *Blueprint. The newsletter of the University of Oxford*. Vol. 7, nº 6. 1 February 2007. p. 3.

National Parliament. In 19th century constitutional Spain there were no other Representative Assemblies.

We can distinguish between five periods that correspond to the victory of the liberal revolution.

1. 1812-1876: The Spanish system of dual trust or Crown-Parliament balance. The end of the arbitrary powers of the monarch. The Basque Assemblies were adapted to Spanish liberal constitutionalism. The Basque Assemblies tried to become *parliaments* in the accommodation process.

2. From 1877 to 1931: The Basque Representative Assemblies were abolished in 1877. From the legal viewpoint it was the end of the “*Legal Foral Constitution*”(self-rule statute) of the Basque Provinces and the end of the accommodation process. The single National Parliament was organised for the single Spanish State according to the Spanish Constitution of 1876.

3. 1931-1936. The Constitution of the II Republic. The Spanish National Parliament was formed. But a regional Parliament was also formed in Catalonia. (1932). The Basque government was formed in 1936 but the Basque Parliament was not constituted because of the Civil War.

4. 1937-1978. The Totalitarian-Corporatist State in Spain was opposed to the liberal parliament and against the self-government of the nations of Spain: Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia.

5. In 1978 a democratic constitution recognised the “nationalities” and regions but not the “nations” of the Spanish nation-state. In 1979 and 1980 the *Juntas Generales* or historical Assemblies of the Basque Provinces were re-established and in 1980 the Basque Parliament and the “*Foral* Parliament of Navarre” were founded.

2. THE TENSION BETWEEN THE NATIONAL PARLIAMENT AND THE REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLIES OF THE BASQUES (1812-1877)

The Spanish Congress became the new representation of the “Spanish nation”. This nation in 1812 grouped together citizens from the Iberian Peninsula, America and the Philippines. Three models of parliament and governance succeeded each other during the 19th century:

1. Monarchy governed by an Assembly: Influenced by the system of the French Convention of 1791. Opposing this constitutional view were the royalists who favoured the Monarchy: this Monarchy should be an organic aggregate of estates and regions, with the sovereignty of the King.

2. Parliamentary monarchy: 1837-1868. Shared sovereignty between the crown and the parliament. But the Crown legislates by decree separately from the Parliament and the Crown plays an increasing role facing the Parliament. There is a system of dual trust or balance during the reign of queen Isabel II de Bourbon.

3. Model of a democratic-liberal Parliament with male universal suffrage: power resides in the Parliament: Amadeus of Savoy, 1869-1873. In 1873 the first Republic of Spain was founded, with a federal organisation.

4. The constitution of 1876 returned once again to the system of dual sovereignty and trust: the king and the Parliament (1876-1931). But the crown was more subjected to the will of Parliament.

2.1. Evolution of the Basque Assemblies in the Context of the Spanish Parliament

During the first liberal constitutional power, (1813-1814) the Assemblies had to disappear because as in France there was one nation, one Parliament for Spaniards in America and the Philippine islands. But in 1839, at the end of the Carlist civil war, during the period of dual trust, the Basque Representative Assemblies began to undergo a new evolution within the liberal system. A tendency can be observed in the assemblies towards their becoming the equivalent of a parliament. The aim of the liberals who governed the Basque provinces was to create assemblies that were comparable to the National Parliament, under the sovereignty of the Spanish Crown. It was the political theory of the "Pact between the Basque Assemblies and the Crown." As a result, the Basque representatives in the Spanish National Parliament wanted to be nominated from the territorial assembly (C. Loizaga).

In fact, during the 1839-1876 period, the Deputations controlled the elections in the Basque districts of the MPs to the Spanish National Parliament. The candidates were nominated from the political group in the Deputations favourable to the "Foral Constitution." The Deputations directed the political strategy of the Basque MPs in the Spanish National Parliament and they were in Madrid as a "Basque Delegation". A. I. Altuna (1854) and other liberal *fueristas* understood that the Basque elected parliamentarians should act as a Basque delegation, aside from the divisions of party and opinion found in the Spanish Parliament. Hence what he identified as the "Basque cause" should not be identified with any of the Spanish parties,² an idea that was also developed by the parliamentarian from Álava, Ortiz de Zarate.³

2. "Los que aspiran a que la causa Vascongada no aparezca unida a la de ninguno de los partidos en que por desgracia está subdividida la nación no hostilizan al poder constituido, sea cual fuere" ALTUNA A. I., Refutación al discurso del Sr. D. Francisco Manuel Egaña procurador de la unión de Arguisano en las Juntas Generales de Hernani. San Sebastián, 1855.

3. "Los Fueros, buenos usos y costumbres de las provincias Bascongadas sufren todos los días y sufrirán constantemente en lo sucesivo repetidos ataques de parte del gobierno supremo, cualesquiera que sea el color político de los hombres que ocupan el poder. ...Conviene que las Conferencias de las tres Diputaciones sean más frecuentes y periódicas en cada uno o dos meses(...) Salvar las instituciones forales. Esta debe ser la bandera de todos los bascongados, sin distinción de partidos políticos". (1855) ORTIZ DE ZARATE, R. Escritos de Don Ramón Ortiz de Zarate. Bilbao, 1900.

During the period 1808-1876, for 672 seats were elected MPs 291 individual.

On the other hand, the Deputations organised a permanent office with delegates (*"Diputados en Corte"*) in Madrid.⁴

2.2. The Internal Evolution of the Basque Representative Assemblies

The representatives to the Basque Assemblies were elected or appointed by the municipalities. This type of representation generated internal debates. In Biscay, for instance, from 1864 onwards, there were reform efforts aimed at applying the proportional system of representation in the Assembly to mitigate the discrimination suffered by Bilbao and the more densely populated urban centres.

The progressive liberals had, since 1837, been opposed to this discrimination, and by 1860 the influence of the press and public opinion in Bilbao was increasing. The system of representation in the Representative Assemblies and the government of the Deputations appeared anachronistic. In 1870, after the failure of the Carlist uprising, the Spanish Home Minister ordered that the rules of representation of the Representative Assemblies be reformed, introducing the principle of proportionality, to reduce the presence of rural populations. The Commission elected by the Assembly decided that the number of representatives of all towns should depend on the size of their population and importance. Five urban centres demanded that the reform take effect immediately, giving rise to the reform project of 1872.

The 1872 project recognized that the Biscay Assembly "at least until now, has been more of an administrative body than a true parliament, and all the Town Councils in the land have used it as a sort of court of appeal".⁵ The liberal elite decided to define the Representative Assembly as an "administrative representative body" rather than a true parliament to avoid conflict with the Spanish government.

In Spain the Constitution only accepted one single National Parliament. The traditional Assemblies were in origin "corporative" bodies and a Parliament composed of members representing different political tendencies was a modern cre-

4. During the debate in the Senate in 1864, when P. Egaña expressed the concept "Basque nationality", the industrial leader F. de las Rivas, member of the Senate and delegate of the Biscay Deputation declared: "*Otra equivocación de S.S. es la de que los Comisionados en Corte de las Provincias Vascongadas estaban asalariados. Yo, que igualmente he merecido de aquella Diputación ser elegido como su Comisionado en Corte y que lo soy actualmente, ...jamás se ha cruzado un solo real entre aquella Diputación y el que tiene la honra de dirigirla palabra al Senado, y en el mismo caso se encuentran mis dignos compañeros de Diputación por Vizcaya. (...) Lo que he dicho tiene por objeto deshacer la equivocación del Sr Sanchez Silva, en nombre de mis compañeros de Diputación de Vizcaya.*" (D.S.C. Senado. 1864, p. 730).

5. Bizkaiko Foru Artxiboa. (Bilbao). Regimen Foral, R. 19 leg. 15.

ation. But in fact the Representative Assemblies of Biscay, Gipuzkoa and Alava were being transformed during the 19th century into bodies similar to liberal parliaments. There were two political tendencies: Carlist and Liberal. Proportional representation was introduced. The reform eliminated the privileges of the classes of land owners (that had become the sole wielders of political power), and provided for the direct election of the members of the executive. (The tradition had been to draw lots).

The reform, however, did not have major consequences due particularly to the outbreak of a new civil war. The Carlists controlled the Basque Country militarily, except for the urban capitals, and the new Carlist state took over the government of the Basque Country until its defeat in 1876.

3. ABOLITION OF THE BASQUE REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLIES IN 1877 AND THE EMERGENCE OF BASQUE NATIONALISM FROM “FORAL” POLITICAL CULTURE

A. Cánovas del Castillo, president of the Spanish Government, presented the project for the constitutional modification of the Legal *Foral* Law, or Constitution, of the Basque provinces in accordance with article 2 of the Law of October 25th, 1839. This Law accepted the adaptation of the Basque *Foral* Legal Law in constitutional terms.

The new Law was approved by the Spanish Parliament on 21st of July 1876 but the MPs from the Basque country voted against it: they argued that rather than a modification it defined the abolition of the legal constitutional system of the Basque provinces, the legal source of self government and the Representative Assemblies. The Government was in fact empowered to use the most convenient strategy to ensure that the new Statutory Law was applied (art. 5).

In September 1876 the representative bodies of the Assemblies of Biscay,⁶ Alava and Gipuzkoa met to analyse the new situation and agreed to oppose the new Law and any attempts to apply it.

So two tendencies arose: the radicals (“intransigents”), opposed to any collaboration with the Central Government in the application of the new Law and the “moderates”, in favour of negotiating the Law’s eventual application. However, majority opinion in the Assemblies and amongst the members of the Basque administration opposed its application. In consequence the Government prohibited common institutional meetings amongst the three executive powers of the Basque Provinces, as well the meetings of the Assemblies. Meanwhile, military control continued in the Basque area together with the suspension of constitutional rights (1877).

6. ACTAS de las Juntas Generales de Vizcaya. Bilbao 1876.

But while the Assemblies of Gipuzkoa and Alava analysed the manner of adapting Spanish Parliamentary Law (21.7.1876) during 1877, the Assembly of Biscay rejected any type of collaboration. In response, the commander-in-chief of the Army in the North, following orders from the president of the Government, A. Canovas del Castillo, dissolved the Biscay Assembly.⁷ Later, the Assemblies of both Alava and Gipuzkoa were also abolished, thus making way for the new provincial Deputations appointed by the president of the Central Government.

In 1877, the newspaper *La Paz* (with a conservative liberal tendency, favourable to the Basque Legal Foral Statute, published in Madrid because in the Basque Country it was forbidden to set out opinions about the Foral system in the press), considered that the Assemblies were the parliament of the Basques. This was in order to defend the idea that the *Basque Assemblies* and the National Parliament were representative assemblies of the same rank. As a result it faced legal proceedings. The liberal politicians of Madrid would not accept more than a single National Parliament.

Finally, according to the new Spanish law (21.7.1876), the Government decided to establish new provincial *administrative* councils, as in the rest of Spain.

So continuity of the Assemblies was ruled out. It was not until a century later, in 1979, that the Assemblies were reinstated, this time under the party system, as a “parliamentary” representation.

The case of Navarre was different because modification and constitutional adaptation had taken place in 1841 by Law (the Kingdom of Navarre became a Spanish Province with autonomy in tax and public finance), and the continuity of its application was respected by reintroducing the rates governing tax contributions.

In Biscay, Gipuzkoa and Alava, the new political and institutional situation was interpreted as the end of continuity and a break with the past. But the social and political solidity of the Foral administration forced the state to compromise with the elite of the new Provincial Councils, or Provincial Deputations as they called. In 1878, taxation remained in the hands of the Provincial Council. So a new economic, administrative and tax autonomy, or “Economic Agreement”, came into being, although it was established by a simple decree by the Government for a transitional period of 8 years (Alonso, 1993).

The abolition of the Assemblies meant something more than the disappearance of a representative institution. They were the symbol of Basque political power.

The military defeat of the Carlists and the political defeat of the Basque liberals in the Spanish Parliament, together with the disappearance of the Basque

7. Extraordinary issue of the gazette of the Province of Vizcaya, 26-IV-1877.

Assemblies and power, all left their mark on the political consciousness and the subsequent political experience of the Basques.

In 1844, P. Egaña, (an MP from the Basque Country and a Spanish government minister) was already talking of the loss of “Basque nationality” as a result of the abolition of the Foral Constitution and the Assemblies in 1841. He defined the nationhood of the Basques in political and institutional terms. This view is something of a contrast to later 19th-century formulations, essentially based on ethnic considerations.

Other political reflections were made in 1877: Tellitu, a former member of the executive power in Biscay and liberal representative of the intransigent tendency, claimed the right for Biscay to become an independent state “after the manner of a small Switzerland”.⁸

The imaginary of Basque political liberalism with respect to the Spanish nation generated an ambivalent discourse. In the crisis of 1877, a foundational event occurred that marked a break with the Spanish national imaginary: one sector became a pillar of Spanish monarchism, joining the Spanish parties. Another sector carried on the doctrine established in 1856, (the Basque political constitution) by the “Partido fuerista” or “Foral party”, alien to the division of the Spanish parties.

Liberalism, which was the majority political force in Bilbao from 1836-37 onwards, defended the conservation of the Foral regime in the sphere of private and public law in the framework of the Liberal Constitution in Spain. The newspapers *El Bilbaino* (1837) and *El Vascongado* (1840-1841), published by the printer from Piedmont Nicolas Dalmazo, who became N. Delmas in Bilbao, were the public expression of the new ideology. In 1846 his son J. E. Delmas undertook his first project in graphic and journalistic communication under the business tutelage of his father Nicolas.⁹ In 1852 he founded a new newspaper: *El Boletín de Comercio*, but on April 1st 1856 the Spanish Government suspended its publication because of its criticisms of the Central Government. However, J. E. Delmas immediately undertook the publication of *Irurac Bat* (June 26th 1856). In the editorial of issue number 1, written in Spanish and the Basque language, he declared: “The newspaper that is born today will not be systematically partisan to any political banner that waves in the Peninsula. Irurac Bat belongs to its own party, the party that lives incarnated in the land that is covered by its name, the most clearly Basque party, the *Fuerista Party*”. In 1859 it was published on a daily basis, with the subtitle of *Political newspaper*. It printed news stories that were sent by telegraph from the Havas agency in Paris. This Bilbao newspaper contributed to the diffusion and consolidation of a political *fuerismo* with a liberal inspiration, independent of the options that followed the party organisations in

8. Bizkaiko Foru Artxiboa. (Bilbao), Régimen Foral, 16.

9. *Viaje pintoresco por las Provincias Vascongadas. Obra destinada a dar a conocer su historia y sus principales vistas, monumentos y antigüedades etc. en láminas litografiadas copiadas al daguerrotipo y del natural por J.E.D. y acompañadas de texto.*

the capital of Spain. The new party and political conception launched by Delmas aspired to represent the interests of the “Vascongada Country”. “Vascongada politics”, or “*vascongadismo*”, was a new political conception, the theory of which had already been set out in the newspaper *Boletín de Comercio* by Ramón Ortiz de Zarate from Álava. The editorial of the first issue of *Irurac Bat* is a text with a programmatic character, representative of the political elite that governed the Basque Foral institutions. A renewal of the political and discursive categories can be glimpsed that evoke the start of a new period in Basque politics. From then onwards the “*Fuerista* party” was the defender of the institutions of self-rule and the Representative Assemblies. However, its leadership began to decline in 1880 when the Representative Assemblies had been abolished. The most representative political parties, the Carlist-Traditionalist party and the Dynastic Liberal party, integrated into the party system of Spain, proclaimed themselves to be the defenders of *Fuerismo*. As a result, the *Fuerista* party became a minority force at the end of the XIX century.

From 1898 onwards this sector formed the social and political basis of the Basque Nationalist Party founded by Sabino Arana in 1895.

In the last third of the 19th century, the advent of the industrial revolution was accompanied by the appearance of two new movements: Basque nationalism and socialism. But the genesis and subsequent shaping of this nationalism cannot be seen exclusively as an effect of industrialisation. The most popular formulation of Basque nationalism called for the “complete restoration” of the Basque political power including the Assemblies.

At least after 1878 management of the tax resources was in the hands of the new Provincial Councils but they wanted juridical security. The new political elite of the Basque Country was affiliated to the Spanish liberal or conservative parties. They were monarchists and in favour of Spanish nationalism with a rhetorical discourse about the economic and administrative independence of the three provinces.

The three Provincial Councils (Deputations) reached an agreement, according to the minutes of the conference, in favour of “*the economic and administrative independence of the three provinces*” (January 24th 1898).¹⁰

Following the Cuban insurrection (1895), the question of autonomy and self-rule once again emerged in Spanish political debate. But the Spanish government decreed a status of autonomy when the insurrectionists were already looking towards independence. After 1898, the idea of political autonomy became

10. “The three Deputations of Vizcaya, Guipúzcoa and Alava meeting in conference in Bilbao, as a consequence of the alarm that is spreading in the Country, due to the acts carried out by the Civil Governor of Vizcaya, with evident infringement on the faculties recognised to the Basque Deputations in the economic and administrative order, have agreed unanimously to present Your Excellency with a collective exposition claiming against the affronts that are inflicted in the Basque Country, invading the sphere of action of its Deputations, creating in this way a situation full of difficulties and dangers.” AGIRREAZKUENAGA, J. (Ed) 1995.

identified with a state prior to independence for Spanish conservative sectors. And as a result they were opposed to administrative decentralisation and the demands for autonomy in Catalonia and the Basque Country.

The discourse of Foral reintegration, or devolution of historical rights, continued in force in the Basque political debate. However, it was not raised in the Spanish parliament. The elected parliamentarians contented themselves with consolidating fiscal autonomy, that is, the system derived from the "Administrative-Economic Agreement". But autonomy, the devolution of Foral power, was called for in the institutional statements of the Deputations. From 1905 onwards, the concept of autonomy became a banner, or symbol, with the founding in Gipuzkoa of the Autonomist Foral League, formed by Catholic-confessional, secular liberal and republican parties. Nonetheless, in the negotiation of the "Administrative-Economic Agreement" of 1906, once it had been agreed that the "Administrative-Economic Agreement" should be in force for a period of twenty-five years, the question of Foral reintegration and autonomous power was postponed *sine die*.

The creation and first stage of development of the Catalan Mancomunitat in 1914 was decisive in encouraging the autonomist discourse. In Catalonia the discourse in favour of autonomy began to be formulated in terms of sovereignty. In 1916, the deputy F. Cambó made an autonomist speech to develop Catalan sovereignty in the field of its autonomous powers. While the Basque nationalist parliamentarians based their political discourse on the principles of Foral reintegration and the devolution of historical rights.

Basque nationalism, which had been represented in the Spanish parliament since 1918, defended autonomism from Catholic confessional postulates and demanded the right to recover the power that had been usurped in 1877. The Basque nationalist delegation (Luis Elizalde, Isaac López de Mendizabal) which participated in Lausanne in the Conférence des Nationalités in 1916, offered the following response:

What the Basques of the Peninsula ask for is Foral Reintegration without any restriction at all. This means a return to the situation prior to the Law of the Madrid Parliament that deprived the Basque regions of the Peninsula (Navarre, Biscay, Álava and Guipúzcoa) of the right to meet in Representative Assemblies (Juntas Generales and Cortes) that had an unrestricted legislative power in their respective regions.¹¹

But within the European perspective, and due in particular to the influence of Catalan autonomism (movement in favour of self-rule), Basque political autonomism achieved a new formulation about the future self-rule of the Basque Country, in 1917: Basque nationalism, based on traditionalism (E. Aranzadi, T. Epalza, R.Sota) found ground for common consensus with the autonomism of the Catholics (the "integrist" party) and of the liberals led by J. Orueta.

11. "Respuesta de la delegacion baska a la encuesta sobre las nacionalidades. Párrafo 1º (Reivindicación de la nacionalidad) ANTXUSTEGI (2007).

Autonomism in Catalonia appealed to the will of the citizens and to the principle of their nationality to argue for the legitimacy of the demand for autonomy, while the Basque nationalist parliamentarians, perhaps conscious of their minority role in Basque society, posed the question within the wide spectrum of political Catholicism and traditionalism, of which they claimed to be the representatives. In that context they called for autonomy in terms of the devolution of usurped rights, since theoretical "Foral reintegration" was a claim of principle supported by the political majority in the Basque Country.

However, its concrete formulation in terms of autonomy, gave rise to divergences in Basque politics. Basque nationalism began to organise the common program for the autonomous territory. However, the leaders of the Monarchic League, which brought together dynastic liberals, conservatives and Mauristas, described the projects for political autonomy as

(...) an exotic branch of a secular regionalism, thought up by Mr. Cambó, while, Basque regionalism sets out from the depths of the Catholic soul of our country (...) Our dispute is completely different from that of Catalonia and although Nationalism might wish it, we will not become donkeys following in line, nor will we, at least not Guipúzcoa and Álava, climb onto the back of the cart of the Catalan Mancomunitat.¹²

For these monarchists, the preferable and only option had to be restricted to defence of the "Administrative-Economic Agreements", appealing to "Foral reintegration" without any precision in juridical and political terms.

4. FIRST PROJECTS TO ORGANISE A BASQUE GOVERNMENT AND PARLIAMENT, 1918

The political conjuncture of 1917-1918 was a changing one in Europe and also in Bilbao, the industrial and financial centre of the Basque Country. New political concepts emerged in the public debate: Basque government, Basque congress-senate, self-determination and autonomy statute. Political self-government sought to manage education, culture, languages (Spanish and Basque), that is to say the symbols of the Basque community.

Basque nationalism, heir to one branch of the liberal Foral Party of the 1880s, articulated a policy to reclaim the political power that had been lost in 1877 in order to manage Basque modern society. It aspired to recover the power of the Assemblies. Basque nationalism had success on the city council of Bilbao and in Biscay in the 1917 and 1918 elections. It promoted a movement in favour of the devolution of the Basque Assemblies and at least, an autonomy statute.

The presidents of the Provincial Councils of Alava, Biscay and Gipuzkoa, with the vice-president (effectively the president) of Navarre and the elected mem-

12. La prensa regional y la expedición del Sr. Epalza a Cataluña. *El Pueblo Vasco*. (Newspaper) (1.1.1919).

bers of the Provincial Councils formulated a new political project in 1917: On the one hand, it called for “Devolution of the Old (*Foral*) Law”, but as they did not expect this to be recognised by the Spanish Government, they demanded autonomy, precisely specifying the powers that would correspond to the Spanish state: “Foreign Relations, War and Navy, Customs, Post and Telegraphs, Weights and Measures, Currency and Public Debt”.

The Provincial Councils would concern themselves with

(...) the faculty of resolving on their own the affairs referring to promotion of instruction at all levels, the practice of charity, works and hydraulic services, agriculture, industry and trade, and others that it is not necessary to specify, which do not at all go against the sovereignty of the state.

Full exclusivity would be applied in the respective spheres of power. This message was ratified by the municipal councils meeting in an assembly, but had no effect on the Central Government.

On 1918 (October 25th) the Basque nationalist Deputies¹³ in the Spanish Parliament sent a message to the president of the USA, Thomas Woodrow Wilson. Previously (on January 8th), he had defended a 14 point program in the American Congress for the reconstruction of the new Europe and had appealed to the doctrine of the self determination of the peoples. On the one hand, the text of the message specified the interpretation of the law of 25/10/1839 made by the group of Basque parliamentarians and, on the other, they expressed their adherence to the doctrine of the self determination of the peoples as one of the principles for establishing permanent peace in Europe:

On completion of the 79 anniversary of the annulment by the Spanish government of the independence of the Basque people, the signatories, Deputies and Senators in the Spanish Parliament, in the name of all Basques who, conscious of their nationality, desire and work to see the latter freely develop itself, greet the President of the United States of America, who on laying the foundations of future world peace, has based them on the right of every nationality, big or little, to live as it wishes, foundations that, accepted by all of the belligerent states, we hope to soon see applied for the better fulfilment of what justice and collective and individual freedom demand.

The journal *Hermes* also echoed the principles defended by the president of the USA W. Wilson, as well as the project for the “League of Nations”, and its editor Jesús de Sarria and R. Belausteguigoitia defended the constitution of a Basque government. According to J. Sarria

In the Old Law, interpreted according to the sentiments and needs of 1918, is to be found all of the content of the Constitution that the Basque people need... The Basque people asks for integral national autonomy, freedom to govern itself internally

13. José Horn y Areilza, Arturo Campión, Pedro Chalbaud (senators for Biscay) Ramón de la Sota, Domingo Epalza, Antonio Arroyo, Anacleto Ortueta, Ignacio Rotaetxe (deputies for Biscay) José Eizagirre (deputy for Gipuzkoa), Manuel Aranzadi (deputy for Navarre).

according to its broad social and juridical spirit. That means that Basque nationality and democracy are in reality together... (Hermes, No. 28, 1918).

Autonomy (self-rule) projects were drawn up envisioning a Basque parliament and a Basque government (1918). There were news aims.

But in 1919 the Central Government and the Spanish Parliament rejected the autonomy statute project for Catalunya and for the Basque Country. On the other hand, on January 7th 1919, in Bilbao, liberals and conservatives in favour of Spanish nationalism, founded the Monarchist Action League in order to “*confront the separatist movement*” and its pro-autonomy strategy. G. Balparda and other leaders appealed also to historical *Foralismo* to oppose the pro-autonomy position, which they considered to be the threshold to a pro-independence position. The independence of Cuba was still fresh in the memory. Between 1920 and 1979, the political discourse of this group governed the Basque Country during two dictatorships, except during the period of II Republic (1931-1937). They represented the conservatives that supported the army in organising a military and totalitarian system (Primo de Rivera and Franco).

5. THE NEW REPUBLICAN CONSTITUTION AND THE SPANISH PARLIAMENT, ACCEPTANCE OF THE FIRST REGIONAL PARLIAMENT IN CATALONIA (1932)

In the Basque Country the Parliament could not be constituted because of the civil war. The autonomy statute was approved and a Basque Government was formed in 1936. J. A. Aguirre was the first Basque president; he was a member of the Basque Nationalist Party, a Catholic confessional party. The other members of the Basque Government were republican, socialist and communist. In fact, the provisional Parliament and the autonomous Government formed a fragment of a state, with shared signs and symbols.

But during the dictatorship of Franco(1937-1978) Biscay and Gipuzkoa even lost their self-rule power in tax questions, (Alonso, 2001) which did not happen with Alava and Navarre, the two conservative regions with an agricultural economy. The new Spanish State imposed Centralism and Uniformity under Military tutelage and repression from 1937 to 1978.

6. DEMOCRATIC RECOVERY: CONSTITUTION OF 1978, SPANISH PARLIAMENT, REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLIES, BASQUE PARLIAMENT

The provincial Assemblies as a continuity of the historical Assemblies were re-established in 1979 with direct elections. These are not provincial parliaments but administrative assemblies with significant powers for managing tax resources.

The Basque Parliament, founded in 1980 with exclusive legislative functions in certain areas, articulates powers and authority with the Spanish National Parliament, the Provincial Assemblies and the European Parliament.

When the Basque Parliament was constituted different concepts on its institutional organisation were expressed (Figuerola, 2004). The conservatives wanted to reinforce the traditional Assemblies to avoid, or reduce, the Basque national dimension that the formation of the Parliament and the Basque Government represented. A very significant tendency of the Basque nationalists, appealing to the Foral tradition, wanted the Assemblies to have more power in such a way that the Basque Parliament would be a second chamber, a senate. On the other hand, the left wanted to strengthen the Basque Parliament. Representation in the Basque Parliament is not proportional. The three provinces have the same number of parliamentarians. As a result the population of the most densely populated province, Biscay, has a reduction in its representation of 1 to 3 in comparison with Alava. At present, it is the space of representation and political management of the Basque community. It is the axis of Basque politics. The Parliament has been organised administratively in the image of the Congress of Deputies of Spain in Madrid.

A question of permanent interest in the present day is the concurrence of powers: the Basque Parliament and the judicial power. Two independent powers. The organisation of judicial power has been kept centralised, and appointments depend on the Spanish National Parliament. At present, it is attempting to exercise political leadership, against the legislative power and the executive in the Basque Country. (Mancisidor, 2008) (The Supreme Court of Spain would like to change the rules of the internal organisation of the Basque Parliament. There is a conflict because the Court decided to put the President of the Basque Parliament on trial).

For a comparative view, in the U.K. there is not a codified constitution and there is an absence of a constitutional court to protect it. The Parliament is the centre, but in the last decade the dominance of the executive over Parliament has been notorious. In the U.K. the Parliament also works as a constitutional court. This is a big issue in the balance power and for the future of the representative Parliaments.

CONCLUSION

I have emphasised the relationship between the National Parliament and the Basque Representative Assemblies over the last 200 years. At the beginning of this period the National Parliament in the nation-state did not permit other territorial Representative Assemblies inside the Nation. But if social reality persistently favours other models of political self recognition, in the end another nation-state has to emerge. This experience is a representation of Basque political resilience. The Assemblies reflect the public power of the Basques. And the foundation of the Basque Parliament in 1980 represented the recognition by the Spanish State of the Basque political power, 100 years after the abolition of the Assemblies. Inside the Basque Country there is also a balance between the new Basque Parliament and the Assemblies, today called "historical territories". In fact there is a federal organisation.

Europe, as a supranational State, recognised (in the Maastrich Treaty of 1992) the subsidiary principle in order to organise the political unification of Europe with national-state members. But national-state members deny the subsidiary principle at the national level for their own sub-national-state political communities.

The political discourse of national minorities in Europe, the right to self-government and self-determination, became a reference in Basque politics from 1918 onwards, to make a demand in favour of the recognition of the Basque Representative Assemblies.

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