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# Para-diplomatic theory and Welsh external relations

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Sub-national politics is playing an ever more significant role in the way international policy is developed (Aldecoa and Keating 1999). Throughout this report, the question as to whether Wales has come of age to forward its own international development will be addressed. Using research into the para-diplomatic thesis, this research report will use research by academics including; Michael Keating (2000), Noe Cornago (1999, 2010), Elin Royles and Richard Wyn Jones (2011), Stelios Stavridis and Pace (2009). The research discussed will address the ever growing importance of regionalization, sub-national diplomacy, and the role of multilateral international organisations in international politics. Using three main themes of evaluation, this report will outline; the way para-diplomacy can be used to explain the international movements of Wales, the systemic differences found between the executive and legislative branches within the National Assembly for Wales (NAW), and, the role of organisations, like that of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, in forwarding international relations.

Increased participation on the international stage by regionalised assemblies has become evident in recent decades (Duchacek et al., 1988; Hocking 1997; Keating 2000). The para-diplomatic analysis conducted in this report will be outlining the theory of paradiplomacy and the effects sub-national legislatures have on developing international networks. Theories of para-diplomacy can be used as a working hypothesis into the many governmental approaches into external relations – including why governments create foreign policy and what they take from the economic, social, and political benefits from international cooperation. With the growth of global interconnectivity and the importance of the globalisation, the ever growing interconnectivity brought forward by the internet and the liberalization of subnational states, has challenged the traditional workings of the nation-states (Magone, 2006; Camilleri and Falk 1992). When applying the para-diplomatic thesis to Wales, Royles and Wyn-Jones explain the way the European Union has provided the positive example of how para-diplomacy/sub-state diplomacy has been developed and identified; “Europe provides a framework and a favourable setting for para-diplomatic activity in which a regional dimension has long been recognised and nurtured” (2010: 2). However it is not just a question of “nationalism” (2010: 3) spreading through the countries in the United Kingdom. As Keating evaluates “Much of it has been a response to policy problems and the search for pragmatic solutions to territorial or cultural questions” (2001: 263). Indeed when applying para-diplomatic theory to Wales it is key to understand the diplomatic framework. Though foreign policy lies outside the competencies of the NAW and the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), much like regions such as Catalonia and Flanders., the European Union has opened many networks for sub-nations to forward their own international agendas.

An interesting feature in this subject area is the difference of policy between the National Assembly for Wales (parliamentarians and legislature) with that of the Welsh Assembly Government (Ministers and Executive). To achieve an answer to the question of any ‘difference’ I will be using research conducted by Elin Royles and Richard Wyn Jones explaining the presence and development of ‘Wales in the World’ (Royles and Wyn Jones, 2010). To give a timeline to the develop of Welsh foreign policy, the Welsh affairs committee in 2000 published their first report “Wales in the World: The role of the UK Government in promoting Wales abroad”.<sup>[1]</sup> Comparing this House of Commons report in 2000 with the ‘Working Party Report on the CPA 2010’ this report will be able to analyze the movement from 2000 to present day in the forwarding of Welsh policy abroad.<sup>[2]</sup> Along side the development of Welsh influence abroad, the use of the CPA in creating valuable international connections plays a huge role in the explaining the role of Parliamentarians in legislatures around the globe at having a voice on international levels.

# **Para-diplomatic theory and Welsh external relations**

Written by Andrew Bolan

## **Para-diplomatic theory and European Regions**

Theories of para-diplomacy help measure the workings of regional governments and their approaches to external relations. With analysis into how regional assemblies conduct themselves on international stages, this section will undertake to explain why regional governments follow specific policies. The ever globalised world has increased the importance of regional development, including regional trading and transnational regimes, this in turn has blurred the roles played by national and subnational governments (Keating 1999; 2000; Royles and Wyn Jones 2010; Magone 2006).

The para-diplomatic thesis is an academic analysis of the way subnational governments act on national and international stages (Aldecoa and Keating 1999; Noe Cornago 1999; Mingus 2003). Globalisation has impacted on many political dimensions. The rise of subnational governments is a key political dimension that has changed the way international politics has been conducted in recent history. It has been this mass regionalisation of diplomacy that has led to the opening of more than 200 regional embassies in Brussels, engaging in policy development within the European Commission (Keating, 2000). The NAW and WAG both have offices in Brussels, raising an interesting question on the Welsh model of para-diplomacy; is there a clear motivational and political difference on the international stage, between the Executive and Legislature in Wales?<sup>[3]</sup> If this is indeed the case, the para-diplomatic thesis can explain, how the restructuring of regional politics has led to a separation of understanding into how international networking can benefit regional Governments (Jones 2011; Keating 1999; Cornago 2010; Mingus 2003).

## **Regionalization changing foreign policy?**

The regionalization of national politics has led to an interesting situation at the international political level. Keating outlines this fundamental shift; "Functionally, the most important effects are in economic and cultural matters. In the face of global change, the importance of territory as an ingredient in economic restructuring is now widely recognized" (1999: 2). Clearly regionalization is not a reactionary policy, but a well founded solution to the ever globalizing world. Stavridis and Pace make it clear 'the para-diplomacy involving sub-state regions is becoming more and more visible' (2009:13).

Expanding numbers of embassies in Brussels, are an arguably clear signal of the para-diplomatic thesis, and the importance and significance of subnational governments. The European Union has provided subnational regions, like that of Catalonia (Spain), Flanders (Belgium), and Wales (UK), with a "multilateral forum" (Jones 2011) in which domestic and international policy can be debated. Sub-state networking is another crucial outcome of the regionalization of many European states. Organisations, such as REGLEG whereby subnational states come together to benefit from each other's experiences and policy similarities. REGLEG has helped to solidify many regional assemblies on the international stage. A clear example is that of Catalonia: found in the North East of Spain, has battled for recognition in both identity and language (Price et al. 1997).

Keating explains how the multilateral make up of the EU has help develop recognition for states like that of Catalonia; "Alliances among cultural regions have been forged to lobby state and transnational institutions, for example in the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages" (1999: 5). This regional support and drive for lesser languages has directly benefited Wales. In 2008, the use of the Welsh language, was accepted by the EU as a permitted to be used by Welsh ministers in Brussels through pressures and support by other regional sub-states (Jones 2011; Royles and Wyn Jones 2010).

## **The National Assembly on the International Stage**

The growth of interconnectivity between nations and traditional notions of Wales leaving international issues to Westminster has become very much obsolete. The acceptance of the growth of international actors both state oriented and non-governmental on global affairs is key to the importance of smaller nation states to exercise their right to create international trade and business (Dittgen, 1999; Cerny, 2000). Having accepted the need for international connection the importance of a voice on any international stage is crucial. The CPA provides an

# **Para-diplomatic theory and Welsh external relations**

Written by Andrew Bolan

example of how an international organisation can supply a voice for the Parliamentarians in sub-state legislatures.

Using research gathered by David Crikemans theorizing the constitutional reform of Belgium we can see evidence of how nation states can allow sub-national governments and assemblies the ability to develop foreign policy where they see fit (2006). Crikemans' case study was Flanders and how from 1993-2005 the northern territory developed in his words 'international competencies' (2006:2) which then could be used and developed on a federal level if the national Belgian government needed too. Flanders' para-diplomatic development came from the move to protect its own identity found in its language and culture (Dutch). A lot of correlation can therefore be understood between Wales and Flanders, both having acted in their legislatures to protect their own identity and forward the social and political policies to help their regions develop. Analyzing the case study of Flanders, in parallel to that of Wales on the international stage, the Belgian model has outlined that if the region has the 'competency' to deal with 'day-to-day domestic policy' then it has the fundamental base to forward an international agenda (Crikeman, 2006:5).<sup>[4]</sup>

## **International benefit**

The importance of international connections to any nation are vital in forwarding international trade, growing business and increasing global communications. The growth of these international ideas and economic opportunity can also be directly linked with the theory of para-diplomacy, which begins to explain the growth of regionalized diplomatic states trying to achieve freedom from interdependence (Rokkan and Urwin, 1983; Cornago 2010; Druckman 2002). Through research into Wales abroad, Wales "does not generally enjoy as high a profile overseas as the other countries of the UK".<sup>[5]</sup> This can have a significant impact on economic as well as cultural growth. Quasi-autonomous agencies such as the 'International Business Wales' (IBW) have been created to channel business investment into Wales, but have done little to achieve significant inward or external investment (Royles & Wyn-Jones, 2010). Para-diplomatic theory suggest that, there is a significant correlation between economic motivations and sub-state international connectivity (Storper 1995; Keating 1999; Smith 2004). These motivations can be explained by sub-state legislatures increasing their policy fields as to encapsulate as much international identification and therefore investment opportunities in their regions. This therefore explains in a clear way, the importance that sub-state legislatures in playing a crucial role in the forwarding of international cooperation, be it; economic, cultural, or political.

## **WAG / NAW and the Para-diplomacy of Wales**

This section of the report will be used to investigate and evaluate the way in which Wales conducts itself abroad, be it represented by the Welsh Assembly Government or the National Assembly for Wales. As it has been outlined in previous sections, para-diplomacy is the ever growing importance of sub-state governments in international politics, as a result of the diminishing role of sole state actors. Wales is firmly situated in a position of global engagement. Royles and Wyn Jones lay the platform to address the effects of Wales internationally and the development of para-diplomacy in Wales; "The Welsh Assembly Government has made a significant effort to enhance its international presence" (2010: 6).

## **The Welsh Sub-State Model**

Noe Cornago makes clear the significant aspects of para-diplomacy, "its pioneering impetus to the institutional recognition of the political importance of regional governments and its support for the development of interregional cooperation" (Cornago in Aldecoa and Keating, 1999: 46). The evidence, of para-diplomacy theory to build international confidence in regions which have had previously poor economic and political growth, can be found in central and eastern Europe post 1989. As international connectivity, cooperation and business helped integrate nations at the end of the Cold War into the growing European economic system (Schumann, 1994; Dalton, 1994; Castro in Aldecoa and Keating, 1999). It is therefore logical for the WAG and NAW to seek further international connection to forward through para-diplomatic opportunities in areas such as business, tourism and external relations. As Keating explains "there are three broad sets of reasons for regions to engage in this kind of para-diplomatic activity: political; cultural and economic" (Keating, 2000:1). This quotation helps to evaluate the overall para-diplomatic theory when applied to Wales. With the ever increasing mobility of wealth and economic capital,

# **Para-diplomatic theory and Welsh external relations**

Written by Andrew Bolan

nations like Wales, have an opportunity to expand in areas of economic and political significance (Keating 1999; 2000; Royles and Wyn Jones 2010).

A clear example of a sub-state regional pushing of development and identity is that of Flanders (Belgium). As previously eluded to the regional assembly in Flanders has pushed certain aspects of development, within the EU, such as the; “Europe of Cultures” (Keating 1999: 7) whereby regions with their own language are given a special status. This can be directly linked to the development of the Welsh language. Significant development of the Welsh language across Wales, has instilled a national identity separate from the rest of the UK. Indeed, Wales in this linguistic sense, is a closer para-diplomatic state to, areas like Flanders and Catalonia, than other devolved parts of the UK.

## **An individual state abroad**

In the case for, Wales on the international stage, the legislature has been helped by the Welsh Branch of the CPA. The UK’s influence over foreign policy for the NAW can be very much linked with research by Flavia Zenon on the growth of a European Parliamentary foreign policy (Zenon, 2005). The influence the European Parliament has on its member states is in direct contrast to that of Wales and UK. As a goal that could be achieved by the NAW, is the adoption of a “constructive rather than a competitive approach” (Zenon, 2005: 15) to economic, cultural, and political policy abroad. Evidence to show the forwarding of Wales abroad can be found with the split offices found in the EP; The Welsh Assembly Government and The National Assembly for Wales.<sup>[6]</sup> Royles and Wyn Jones explain how the WAG has been working on international development through both the EU but also with programmes like that of; Wales for Africa. “Wales for Africa focuses on those countries in Sub Saharan Africa with existing links with Wales and aims to make a distinctive contribution to the delivery of the UN Millennium Development Goals” (2010: 9). A distinctly para-diplomatic case for the importance of regionalization forging international networks separate from that of sovereign nations. With the continued debate by the NAW, WAG and Westminster over international issues, narrow national interests can be put aside, to produce a commonplace foreign objective to further Welsh international development without infringing on the sovereign rights of the UK internationally (White, 2004; Dittgen 1999).

## **Is there a difference in approaches by the WAG and NAW?**

It has previously been discussed how significant the development of Wales has been as a para-diplomatic model. However, there are several distinctions, between the executive and legislative branches of the National Assembly for Wales, on the development of Wales internationally. Main differences are situated through the economic development, cultural exchange and perceived benefit of international connections for Wales.

Carwyn Jones explains a clear position of the WAG at putting Wales’s economic growth as central to the Wales abroad project; “Wales receives substantial European funding for economic development in our poorest areas. This is not a subsidy and nor is it a magic wand; public money for economic development is a stimulus to growth, not a subsidy for outmoded and unsustainable activity” (2011: 15). Economic investment in China, India and the United States is also helping Wales develop an international footing, whereby reliance on the UK in economic affairs decreases. At the heart of para-diplomatic development is control of economic aspects, of the sub-state, thus allowing this report to come to the conclusion that these economic moves by the WAG are forwarding the image and world position of Wales. As Royles and Wyn Jones evaluate; “it was an argument that it would facilitate the development of a powerful international presence and a more coherent and consistent Wales brand” (2010: 7). It is clear, in a competitive global world, being able to draw in investment is a key part of para-diplomatic prosperity (Storper 1995; Keating 1999; Amin and Thrift 1994; Stavridis and Pace 2009).

Though economic development is accepted as key to the success of Wales, the NAW takes a different stance on Wales abroad. Through the organisation, like that of the CPA, international connectivity and cultural exchange features at the heart of promoting Wales on the global stage. In the Commonwealth Day Debate 2008 the ability and power of the commonwealth was outlined. “Its continued push for democracy across the globe has led to the development of good governance and an understanding of the importance of national connections” (Ryder, 2008).<sup>[7]</sup>

# **Para-diplomatic theory and Welsh external relations**

Written by Andrew Bolan

Wales' footing on the international stage externally and internally can be judged by the reaction at the Cardiff Conference conducted by the UK Branch of CPA. Representatives from many Commonwealth regions focused on the relationship between Wales and the UK and the growth of diplomacy in the region since 1999 (the creation of the National Assembly for Wales). The importance of the UK in terms of Welsh diplomacy both domestically and internationally is key, due to the fact the UK provides the internationally diplomatic centre for all of UK nations. In doing so this illustrates the role the NAW needs to play in spreading the importance of Wales in international forums, like that of the EU and CPA. However, the growing role by the WAG in countries such as; India, China and the United States, underlined the way Welsh international policy was accepted as continuing to forward the economic aspirations of Wales.

## **The Role of the membership of the CPA**

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) is a charity based organisation that from its founding in 1911 has hitherto promoted and harboured good governance and the development of nations. The CPA consists of 17,000 parliamentarians, 185 Parliaments and Legislatures globally. The National Assembly for Wales advocated in 2008 just how important the Commonwealth is for Wales "it is an association of 53 independent states, consulting and cooperating in the common interest of their people and in the promotion of international understanding and world peace" (Ryder, 2008).<sup>[8]</sup>

## **The National Assembly for Wales: A driver for the spread of good governance**

The CPA is only a starting platform for Wales to open itself to more international interconnectivity, which as the evidence would suggest in the Flanders case study mentioned early in the report can only forward the economic, social and political development of Wales. The maturity of the National Assembly in domestic policy will play as a base to push more development into their geopolitical interests. A key policy developed by the CPA in recent years has been the 'three-D's; democracy, development and diversity' (McKinnon, 2007). Chair of the Welsh Branch of the CPA, J.Ryder AM, illustrates in the 2010 working party issue paper the importance of the CPA at spreading para-diplomatic connections "new and higher standards of governance are being developed by parliaments – the Association encourages Parliaments and Legislatures to raise their standards of transparency and accountability" (Ryder, 2010:1). Parliamentary reinforcement is a key pillar in both the make up of the National Assembly but also the CPA. The CPA plays a foundation for the strengthening of public and parliamentary institutions.

The CPA Cardiff conference November 2010 gives evidence to the importance of the CPA at acting as a building block for the spread of good governance, with host Assembly members; Mohammad Asghar (Con, South Wales East), Kirsty Williams (Lib Dem, Brecon and Radnorshire), John Griffiths (Lab, Newport East), Jocelyn Davis (Plaid Cymru, South Wales East), and Chair Janet Ryder (Plaid Cymru, North Wales). Common themes presented at the conference were the commitment of the National Assembly to International engagement, continued support of the spread of democracy and an internationalized National Assembly.<sup>[9]</sup>

## **Wales and the BIMR Branches**

The Welsh branch of the CPA is located within the British Isles and Mediterranean Region, a collection of Commonwealth states. The BIMR focuses on the forwarding of social and political policy at its annual conferences. Also, the BIMR sends a representative to the CPA conference where policy of the CPA is discussed and debated. Janet Ryder's working party paper 2010 gives an indication as to the effects on Wales, that the CPA conference can provide; "The continuation of the CPA's current status as a charity registered under laws of the jurisdiction in which its headquarters is based [the UK] was deemed by some countries to be untenable" (Ryder 2010: 1). The changing of the status would have significant effects on the way Wales could participate. If the change is carried through, the CPA would be transformed into a diplomatic forum in which the UK government would spear head the delegation. This would leave Wales and many other nations with in the BIMR without an international voice and a forum to discuss good democratic governance (Beetham 2006).

The work by the CPA plays a notable role in whereby Wales can present itself on the international stage, discussing

# **Para-diplomatic theory and Welsh external relations**

Written by Andrew Bolan

issues that it would not be able to discuss under the umbrella of the UK. Losing this forum of international discussion would damage the good para-diplomatic connections it has created.

## **A last word**

Para-diplomatic theory provides a compelling thesis in describing the National Assembly for Wales on the international stage. The development of the Assembly since devolution in forwarding Welsh culture, language, and economic prosperity can be seen as a significant example of sub-state growth.

This report began the discussion, as to the development of a Welsh foreign policy, by outlining the theory of para-diplomacy. By endeavouring to create a picture of Wales, forwarding its agenda in the world, para-diplomacy can be used to explain the workings of sub-state legislatures on the international stage. Research into para-diplomatic theory creates a solid explanation, in the development of sub-states and the importance they play in developing international policy. Be it through international trade, good governance, or multilateral organisations.

Also discussed in this report was the executive and legislative branches of The National Assembly for Wales on the issue of foreign policy. Having analyzed the approaches each branch has taken on the international scene, be it through transnational organisations like the CPA or through the European Parliament, it is clear there are fundamental differences and similarities. What is evidential is the complete acceptance by both branches of the Assembly, to continue Wales' international success.

The final aspect covered by this report was a discussion into the role of international organisations, like that of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association to forward para-diplomatic voices on a world stage. They play a helping hand to develop forums for sub-state legislatures to develop international connections. The CPA, since its creation in 1911, has put the spread of democracy and good parliamentary practice at the heart of its mission. It is the conclusion of this essay that The National Assembly for Wales and the CPA can work together to forward democratic practice on a sub-national level. Forwarding the representation of the Welsh people in large international forums and presenting a developing legislature to the world, ready to meet the global challenges that come with an ever internationalizing sub-state.

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Written by Andrew Bolan

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<sup>[2]</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, 2010 Working Party Issue Paper, J.Ryder AM Regional representative for the BIMR on the Working Party.

<sup>[3]</sup> <http://ukeu.fco.gov.uk/en/about-us/our-partners>

<sup>[4]</sup> See Crikeman; It was the two principles 1) Right to make treaties with third parties and 2) Right to send their own representatives that drove much of the domestic regionalization of international policy in Belgium between 1993-2005.

<sup>[5]</sup> Welsh Affairs Committee, Report (2000-2001) p. 7

<sup>[6]</sup> UK representation to the EU (2011). Source; <http://ukeu.fco.gov.uk/en/about-us/our-partners>

<sup>[7]</sup> See; Welsh Assembly Commonwealth Day Debate, (2008) <http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=78741&ds=3/2008#rhif5>

<sup>[8]</sup> See; Welsh Assembly Commonwealth Day Debate, (2008) <http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-chamber/bus-chamber-third-assembly-rop.htm?act=dis&id=78741&ds=3/2008#rhif5>

<sup>[9]</sup> UK Branch – Good Governance Conference, Nov. 2010 Cardiff.



# **Para-diplomatic theory and Welsh external relations**

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