(Re) constructing Europe after 1945:
the Council of Europe and the new political and
normative architecture

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Abstract

Since its foundation, the Council of Europe has played a leading role both in the post-World War II, and after the Berlin Wall fall, striving for the adoption of high standards of protection of fundamental freedoms and human rights. Although the constitutive Treaty of the Council of Europe was signed in London in 1949, its headquarters were set halfway between Paris and Prague, recognising the importance of linking "two former Europes" economical and socially devastated by the two world wars.

After more than 50 years, it's important to recall the origins and the evolving role of the Council of Europe, as well as discuss the future prospects of one of the most important but also probably one of the less recognized, and frequently misunderstood, European political Organisations of the post 1945.

Keywords: Council of Europe, European Union, Human Rights, Democracy, Normative power

Introduction

It was still during the Second World War (1939-1945) that Europe's post conflict reconstruction seemed crucial for the international community in order to avoid a further war escalation in European soil. In early 1943, in a radio broadcast, Winston

Churchill suggested the creation of a Council of Europe[1]. Later on, in a speech at the University of Zurich on 19 September 1946, he referred to the importance of a 'kind of a United States of Europe'[2].

In fact, in parallel with the efforts that led to the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (1950), the political and normative project for Europe laid down in the oldest and largest intergovernmental organisation aimed to promote democracy, rule of law and human rights. Indeed, the Council of Europe (CoE) precedes the European Communities established only in 1957 when the Treaties of Rome were signed.

However, despite the autonomy and distinctive character of the two European organizations, the Council of Europe has played a leading role both in the post-World War II, and after the Berlin Wall fall, striving for the adoption of high standards of protection of fundamental freedoms and human rights. Although the constitutive Treaty of the Council of Europe was signed in London in 1949, its headquarters were set halfway between Paris and Prague. In fact, Strasbourg[3], well known for its crossroads position within Europe, soon became a symbol of the post-world wars reconstruction.

This publication will then be an attempt to contribute for a broader discussion on the European project after 1945, namely the role of the Council of Europe immediately after the 1939-1945 world war, exploring today's features and future prospects. We will conclude with one last thought on the present and future of the Council of Europe, recalling its pioneering role in the European political and normative architecture post 1945 and highlighting its relevance after more than 50 years of its foundation.

The beginnings

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[1]   Please   listen   to   the   audio   extract   in   the   following   website   <URL: http://www.coe.int/t/dgal/dit/ilcd/Archives/selection/Churchill/Default_en.asp> (last accessed on 25/11/ 2015).

[2] Please see <URL: http://www.coe.int/t/dgal/dit/ilcd/Archives/selection/Churchill/ZurichSpeech_en.asp> for the integral speech (last accessed on 25/11/2015)

[3] Besides the Council of Europe, also other Institutions are placed in Strasbourg: the European Parliament; the European Ombudsman; the Schengen Information System; the Information Center on European Institutions; the Euro-Info Center that supports; MEDIA Antenna; the European Documentation Centers; the Eurocorps; the Central Commission for Navigation on the Rhine; the European Science Foundation; the European Cultural Channel ARTE; the Assembly of European Regions; the Institute of High European Studies; the Organisations for Cross-Frontier Cooperation; the Infobest Kehl-Strasbourg; the Euro-Info-Consumers; the Euro-Institute, and the Eurorepertoire.

More than 50 years ago, on May 7, 1948, in Hague, one thousand congressmen sketched what was meant to be the first political cooperation organization of the post second World War. Robert Schuman, as the host country representative, was welcoming in the following year the first session of the Committee of Ministers, chaired by Paul-Henri Spaak. At the time, there were three schools of thought among those who favoured European integration: the "unionists" (including Churchill, and to some extent de Gaulle) who wanted countries to cooperate as much as possible while remaining sovereign states; the "federalists" who thought European countries had been so ineffective and shown such a propensity to violence that the best solution was to form a federation; and the "functionalists", who could also be considered federalist, who believed that any economic and social integration would inevitably lead to political union by the "spill-over effect". (Liberti, 2012:2) Those three integration trends managed to converge and, on May 5, 1949, in the Palace of Saint James, in London, Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom agreed to 'achieve a greater unity between its members for the purpose of safeguarding and realising the ideals and principles which are their common heritage and facilitating their economic and social progress'[4].

That's how the Treaty establishing the Council of Europe, the oldest and largest intergovernmental organization of political and legal cooperation devoted to the respect of democracy and rule of law and the promotion and protection of fundamental human rights become formal. The ten founding states welcomed, in 1949, Greece, Turkey and Iceland and in 1950 the Federal Republic of Germany also joined. From a club of 10 countries in 1949, the Council of Europe enlarged to 23 in May 1989 and to 40 in the early 90.

Prior to the eastern enlargement, the case of Portugal is rather interesting. A CoE's Member State since 22 September 1976, it was after the April Revolution and propelled by the need to be recognized by the international community after 40 years of the Salazar regime that Portugal expressed its willingness to join this organization. This immediately led to a visit of a committee of the Board to evaluate and monitor the democratic route then initiated and maintained by a vast movement of decolonization.

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[4]   Article 1 of the Statute of the Council of Europe. Please see <URL: http://www.coe.int/pt/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/001> (last accessed on 01/12/2015)

In August 1976, Portugal formally fulfilled the necessary internal conditions for accession and on 22 September of the same year, the instrument of accession was delivered as the 19th member state of the Council of Europe. Portugal is often recognised as one of the most compliant countries in the ratification and implementation of conventions and agreements on legal cooperation[5].

With the end of the Cold War, the CoE was compelled to address the changes in the geopolitical landscape of the European continent. Before the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, the reunification of Germany, the breakup of the Soviet Union or the resurgence of extremist nationalist tensions in Yugoslavia and Albania, the international community raised awareness on the need to put the security issues in the agenda while broadening and deepening integration in European soil. In fact, the fall of the Iron curtain represented a game changer for new applications and, therefore, the confirmation of the pan-European vocation of the Council of Europe to welcome a large set of new European countries.

Since 2005, with Monaco's admission, the Council of Europe comprises 47 Member States, including the 28 European Union member states, 21 countries geographically located in the Central and Eastern Europe and 6 Observer States (United States of America, Canada, Holy See, Japan, Mexico and Israel). Israel only assists the work of the Parliamentary Assembly. Moreover, it is possible to invite States that have expressed their willingness to become part of the organization but whose membership is still in process[6].

In this regard it is worth highlight the cases of Hungary, Poland, USSR and Yugoslavia in the late 80s and Belarus, the only European country that does not belong to the Council of Europe. Its special status was suspended on January 13, 1997, given the report of various human rights violations against the Polish minority in the country, as well as obstacles to freedom of the press and access to internet, freedom of association, freedom of religion for churches other than the Belarusian Orthodox Church, along with other rights and political freedoms such as free and fair elections and the separation of powers. Belarus is indeed the only country in Europe where the death penalty is still applied, worsened by a penal system where prisoners are allegedly

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[5] In fact, in 2013, Portugal was the first EU country to ratify the Istanbul convention on violence against women.
[6] Please find in <URL: http://www.coe.int/en/web/about-us/our-member-states> the full list of member states, date of signature and entry into force of the treaty. (last accessed on 06/12/2015)

tortured in order to extract confessions and without any possibility to appeal. The first edition of the Council of Europe Vaclav Havel award, in 2013, was in fact given to the Belarusian activist Ales Bialiatski, president of the Human Rights Center Viasna[7] as an encouragement of the country's reform.

Besides the Vaclav Havel award, the Council of Europe recognises, since 1995, two different personalities, one from the north and centre of Europe and the other from the southern Mediterranean and Africa. The North South award may be given to a man and a woman, an individual citizen or organizations, which have shown throughout the year an outstanding contribution in cultural, institutional and political fields in four key areas: protection of human rights; defence of pluralist democracy and the promotion of public awareness about issues such as global solidarity and interdependence, as well as strengthening North-South partnership[8]. This award is an initiative of the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity, more commonly known as the North-South Centre, established in Lisbon, since May 1990. This centre has the purpose of promoting dialogue between North and South, fostering solidarity and raising awareness of global interdependence.

The Centre's political role is twofold: first, represent "the voice of the South" within the Council of Europe; and promote and disseminate the values of democracy and human rights that are central to the Council of Europe's mission in neighbouring regions. The Centre strives to promote gender empowerment, youth participation and democratic consolidation through intercultural dialogue in cooperation with civil society, local authorities, governments and parliaments.

Procedures and decision-making

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[7] The Václav Havel Human Rights Prize aims to honours outstanding civil society action in defence of human rights and is delivered in a special ceremony at the Palais de l'Europe in Strasbourg on the opening day of the autumn plenary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. In 2014 has been awarded to Azerbaijani human rights defender Anar Mammadli, founder and chairperson of an influential and experienced organization in Azerbaijan dedicated to observing elections. In 2015, the award was given to Ludmilla Alexeeva, a veteran human rights defender in Russia. Any individual or non-governmental institution active in the defence of human rights can be nominated for the Prize as long as the application is addressed to the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly and be signed by at least five sponsors, other than the nominee. For more info, please see <URL: http://website-pace.net/fr/web/apce/vaclav-havel-human-rights-prize (last accessed on 28/11/2015)

[8] Three Portuguese - Mário Soares (2001), António de Almeida Santos (2003) and Jorge Sampaio (2009) – won the north south award and received a sculpture which is a joint venture creativity of an artist of the northern hemisphere, John Murillo, and a southern hemisphere artist Livio de Morais. It also works with two types of traditional Portuguese stone (Estremoz and Negrais) and African wood (Tola).

Thorbjørn Jagland, former Norwegian Prime Minister, is the current Secretary General with the overall responsibility for the strategic management of the organization. He was elected for a five years term by the Parliamentary Assembly in September 2009 and again in June 2014, becoming the first Secretary-General of the Council of Europe ever to be re-elected. The 13th Secretary General of the Council of Europe was President of the Norwegian Parliament (2005-2009), Prime Minister (1996-1997), Minister for Foreign Affairs (2000-2001) and leader of the Norwegian Labour Party (1992-2002). Since January 1999 he is also the Chairman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, which awards the Nobel Peace Prize every year on 10 December.

There are other Institutions of the Council of Europe worth to note. First of all, the Committee of Ministers, responsible for monitoring the implementation of specific or general obligations arising from the European Court's judgments of Human Rights (ECHR) by the Member States, that comprises Ministers of Foreign Affairs of all 47 member states who are represented by their Permanent Representatives and Ambassadors. Whatever their size, each Member State has one vote. Committees of Ministers' presidencies are held in alphabetical order for six months according to the English alphabet.

Another Institution is the Parliamentary Assembly (PACE). Although its powers are limited to investigate, recommend and advice, its "good offices" function is significant in promoting the Organization's mission. In addition to the responsibility for the election of the Secretary General, PACE appoints members as rapporteurs with the mandate to prepare parliamentary reports on specific subjects such as the prevention of torture. The assembly meets in the Palace of Europe and comprises 642 representatives of the national parliaments (321 effective and the same number of substitutes). The number of representatives and votes is determined by the size of each country. National parliamentary delegations to the Assembly must express the political spectrum of their national parliament, comprising the government and opposition parties. PACE elects its President for a year period, with the possibility of being re-elected once.

In turn, the Commissioner for Human Rights, created in 1999, is elected by the Parliamentary Assembly for a non-renewable term of six years. Since April 2012, this position has been held by Nils Muižnieks[9] from Latvia.

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9 Please visit the official webpage <URL: http://www.coe.int/pt/web/commissioner> for further information (last accessed on 04/12/2015)

In addition, INGOs have a participatory status in the INGOs Conference of the Council of Europe as decided by a Resolution adopted by the Committee of Ministers on November 19, 2003.

Not only non-governmental organisations but also local and regional authorities are grouped into an institution entitled Congress of the Council of Europe or Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe. Founded in 1994, it is a pan-European political assembly that comprises political representatives from local and regional authorities in all member states which are grouped by national delegations and political groups: EPP-DC (the Christian Democrats European People's Party), SOC (Socialists), GILD (Independent and Liberal Democrat Group) and NI (members not belonging to any political group of the Council). This conference represents more than 200,000 local and regional authorities and aims to promote local and regional democracy and self-governance.

Also a note referring to the European Court of Human Rights. Institutionalized in 1959 and based in Strasbourg, the EHCR become a permanent body on November 1, 1998 also allowing individuals to ask the Court's intervention. Unlike the European Union Court of Justice, the ECHR is not a European Union body but part of the jurisdiction of the Council of Europe whose decisions are legally compulsory for the 47 members of the Organization. Any State or any individual who claims to be victim of a violation of the Convention can apply directly to the Strasbourg Court alleging violations by a given State of one of the rights guaranteed by the Convention. The European Court of Human Rights, framed by the European Convention on Human Rights of 1950, comprises one judge from each member state elected for a renewable term of six years by the Parliamentary Assembly and is headed by the President of the Court. Since November 2015, the President of the Court is Guido Raimondi, from Italy. In addition to the ECHR judgments, the Council of Europe also makes use of two legal instruments of great importance: recommendations (major political and legal guidelines addressed to the Member States) and conventions (binding for States who ratify them).

The Council of Europe and the European Union: two sides of the same protection standards

The Council of Europe historically precedes the European Communities created in 1957 by the Treaties of Rome. However, despite the autonomy and distinctive role of the two European organizations, one of the most important milestones of their complementarity is the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, in December 1, 2009. The normative dimension can be seen through two aspects. On the one hand, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, that becomes legally binding for all EU Member States (except Poland and the United Kingdom); on the other hand, the accession of the EU to the Convention of the Council of Europe, allowing the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg to control the compliance of the community acts in accordance with the European Court of Human Rights, thus allowing individuals and enterprises to ask for a review of the EU institutions' decisions (paragraph 2 of art. 59). In fact, the Charter was adopted as a recommendation and reference text by the European Council in Nice in December 2000 and is coherent with the 66 rights embedded in the European Convention on Human Rights. In December 2009, with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the Charter earned binding legal effect. It's important to recall that the Charter of Fundamental Rights contains a preamble and 54 Articles, grouped in seven chapters[10].

Chapter I is focused on Dignity, namely human dignity, the right to life, the right to the integrity of the person, prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, prohibition of slavery and forced labour.

Chapter II refers to Freedoms, as the right to liberty and security, respect for private and family life, protection of personal data, the right to marry and found a family, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of expression and information, freedom of assembly and association, freedom of the arts and sciences, the right to education, freedom to choose an occupation and the right to engage in work, freedom to conduct a business, the right to property, and the right to asylum, protection in the event of removal, expulsion or extradition.

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[10] Please see the all text in <URL: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/charter/index_en.htm> (last assessed on 10/12/2015)

Equality comes in Chapter III, in specific equality before the law, non-discrimination, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity, equality between men and women, the rights of the child, the rights of the elderly, and integration of persons with disabilities.

Chapter IV is dedicated to the Solidarity. We can find in this chapter the workers' right to information and consultation within the undertaking, the right of collective bargaining and action, the right of access to placement services, protection in the event of unjustified dismissal, fair and just working conditions, prohibition of child labour and protection of young people at work, family and professional life, social security and social assistance, health care, access to services of general economic interest, environmental protection, and consumer protection.

Citizens' rights, such as the right to vote and stand as a candidate at elections to the European Parliament and at municipal elections, the right to good administration, the right of access to documents, European Ombudsman, the right to petition, freedom of movement and residence, diplomatic and consular protection, are part of Chapter V.

Chapter VI refers to Justice, namely the right to an effective remedy and a fair trial, presumption of innocence and the right of defence, principles of legality and proportionality of criminal offences and penalties, the right not to be tried or punished twice in criminal proceedings for the same criminal offence. Finally, Chapter VII specifies the General Provisions.

Moreover, we should highlight how the 54 articles are coherent with the European Convention on Human Rights drafted in 1950 and entered into force on 3 September 1953[11].

As we can see, both documents recognise important dimensions of fundamental rights and are both pioneering for their time: the European Convention in the early 50's and the European Charter in the new millennium both envisage the four generations of Human Rights (Xavier, 2014:80).

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[11] The Convention comprises 18 main articles devoted to: Article 1 – Obligation to respect Human Rights; Article 2 – Right to life; Article 3 – Prohibition of torture; Article 4 – Prohibition of slavery and forced labour; Article 5 – Right to liberty and security; Article 6 – Right to a fair trial; Article 7 – No punishment without law; Article 8 – Right to respect for private and family life; Article 9 – Freedom of thought, conscience and religion; Article 10 – Freedom of expression; Article 11 – Freedom of assembly and association; Article 12 – Right to marry; Article 13 – Right to an effective remedy; Article 14 – Prohibition of discrimination; Article 15 – Derogation in time of emergency; Article 16 – Restrictions on political activity of aliens; Article 17 – Prohibition of abuse of rights; and Article 18 - Limitation on use of restrictions on rights. Please see <URL: http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf> (last accessed on 10/11/2015).

On the other hand, with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty (December 1, 2009) and of Protocol 14 to the ECHR[12] (June 1, 2010), the EU accession to the European Convention on Human Rights and on the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg has become legally binding for all EU member states. In fact, the Lisbon Treaty not only provides the EU's accession to the Convention, but also assures the EU compliance of ECHR decisions regarding individuals and companies' complaints.

The EU accession to the ECHR was indeed one of the highest priorities of the Council of Europe and its importance is twofold: enhances the Strasbourg and the Luxembourg Courts jurisdiction in the citizen's protection against the action of the EU; and fosters the EU credibility in third countries recalling in its bilateral relations the respect for ECHR. In brief, the EU is integrated into the fundamental rights protection system of the CoE, is bound to respect the ECHR and is placed under the external control of the European Court of Human Rights.

CoE as a normative power? Criticisms and prospects

When the academic literature needs to define normative power the first reference is due to Manners (2001; 2002; 2009) listing peace, democracy, the rule of law, good governance and respect for human rights as key concepts. Moreover, most of the literature referring to a normative power leads us to the European Union, endorsed by an ontological quality for it - that the EU can be thought as an actor who sets the standards in the international system and that the EU acts to extend their system to international standards and regulations of such quality that the EU must act to extend its standards for international system (2001, 2002).

In fact, Manners believes that the normative power of the EU is perceived by reach (provided by the EU), information (declarative and strategic communications by the member states), the process (institutionalization of the relations of the EU), transfer (the exchange of benefits between the EU and third countries), the evidence (the physical presence of the EU in third countries and organizations) and the cultural filter (dissemination of culture and learning policy in third countries and organizations). (2001: 13).

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[12] The Protocol 14 of the ECHR allows both states and international organizations to become signatories of the Convention, was opened the way for the European Union to become Contracting Party 48 of the Convention.

Additionally, Manners define as the key concepts peace, democracy, the rule of law, the good governance and respect for human rights, which reminds us of the Plato's universal democracy of Athens.

In fact, for Manners, the normative basis of the EU already exists both in the political acquis (2001: 11, 12) and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Morel and Cameron also give special importance to the EU acquis and perceive it as the "power of law"(2009), bearing in mind that «a state that becomes a member of the EU must incorporate into their own national legislation about 80,000 European laws, which gradually change their own constitution, sometimes deeply, and the balance of forces in society» (2009:81).

Therefore, (...)the notion of a normative power Europe is in the discussion of a key idea, the power over opinion, the ideological power or the symbolic power and the desire to go beyond the debate on the projection of the actor as a state by understanding the EU's international identity. (...) The European Union does not represent a intergovernmental civil power, with the use of economic instruments and international diplomacy, or supranational military force with armed force and international intervention, but characterizes a regulatory power common principles and a willingness to balance the concepts of "state" or "international". (Manners, 2001: 7)

Manners analysis is focused in the European project but, notwithstanding the complementarity between the EU and the CoE, what can we argue on the ability of the latter to be an 'important force for positive change' (HIRSCHMAN, 1963: 4)? If we look closely to the official website we immediately perceive CoE's role divided in three main pillars: promotion, protection and ensurance.

The first pillar concerns the protection of Human Rights through the European Court of Human Rights; Execution of judgements of the European Court of Human Rights; Effectiveness of the Human Rights Convention (ECHR) system at national and European level; Developing human rights law and policy; HELP - European Programme for Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals; ECHR national implementation; Torture – European Committee for the Prevention of Torture CPT; Human Rights Trust Fund; International Advisory Panel on Ukraine; and Safety of journalists Platform.

The second pillar refers to the promotion of Human Rights – through the Commissioner for Human Rights; Gender equality; Violence against women and

domestic violence; Trafficking in Human Beings – GRETA; Integration of people with disabilities; Racism and intolerance – ECRI; Roma rights; Migrants' rights; National minorities; Regional and minority languages; Children's rights – Building a Europe for and with children; Children's rights – Child abuse; Children's rights – Child-friendly justice; and Combating discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity – LGBT.

At last, ensuring social rights, through the European Social Charter; European Code of Social Security; Public health; Bioethics; European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines & HealthCare – EDQM / European Pharmacopoeia appears as the third pillar.

However, some tend to question the CoE's role as a political project strongly driven by the support (and acceleration) of the democratic transitions of most of the member states that joined the club after the berlin wall fall. One of the examples that have been most noticed is Azerbaijan, whose criticisms balance between the 'caviar diplomacy' of the Caucasus Republic[13] and the continuous reports of human rights violations and lack of political freedom[14].

Also interesting is the case of the 1999-2000 Chechnya conflict, as one of the immediate decisions was to suspend Russia over Chechnya rights[15] as a consequence of alleged failure to comply with the Human Rights Convention. Moreover, the 2003 and 2004 Council of Europe Resolutions on 'The human rights situation in the Chechen Republic' were called into question. In June 2005, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe presented a resolution which showed that had been very little progress in relation to bring to justice those responsible for human rights violations calling on the Russian authorities to take effective action. On March 13, 2007 a new report insisted in the failure to improve the situation despite detailed recommendations following the torture committee's visits to Chechnya last year.

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[13] Please see <URL: http://www.economist.com/blogs/charlemagne/2013/03/azerbaijan> (last accessed on 04/05/2015)
[14] Please see <URL: http://www.theguardian.com/law/afua-hirsch-law-blog/2010/jun/29/council-of-europe-azerbaijan-violations> (last accessed on 04/05/2015)
[15] Please see <URL: http://reliefweb.int/report/russian-federation/russia-suspended-council-europe-over-chechnya-rights> (last accessed on 04/12/2015)

More recently, in early 2014 [16] the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted a resolution arguing that the illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation have no legal effect and are not recognised by the Council of Europe.

All these case studies tend to question what role should the Council of Europe play in the 21st century, keeping its humanist core[17] but adjusting to new values as there is a real need for reform to address social inequalities and the crisis in political representation. In particular, the growing gap between 'elites' and the rest of the population (felt more and more in EU countries) requires building a new role for citizens and a new relationship between voters and those they elect[18]. (Liberti, 2012:1)

In fact, Human Rights, Democracy and the rule of law are the three pillars of the CoE, although the first pillar seems to be the one with more action in the recent years as the cases of Chechnya, Azerbaijan or Ukraine illustrate. However, with the need to both protect refugees and migrants and address the root causes of DAESH's expansion a long way must be done within CoE's member states in terms of democratic sustainability and valuing of human life.

Concluding remarks

In the early 40's of the 20th century, the Council of Europe was conceived as a benchmark for human rights, rule of law and democracy as the mobilizing strength in Europe. In 2015, this International Organization is still committed with protecting, promoting and ensuring the fundamental rights that the European architecture has been enhancing since the end of the Second World War.

In fact, the current challenges related with (the absence of) freedom and human rights are more complex and unpredictable and the International Organisations that act as security providers can no longer address today's threats on their own. In fact, the EU

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[16] Please see <URL: http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/News/News-View-EN.asp?newsid=4975&cat=8> (last accessed on 04/11/2015)

[17] One of the recente cases relates with Slams Discrimination in Czech Republic and Slovakia. Please see <URL: http://europe.newsweek.com/council-europe-slams-discrimination-czech-republic-slovakia-334858> (last accessed on 4/12/2015)

[18] Every year, the Strasbourg World Forum for Democracy gathers leaders, opinion-makers, civil society activists, representatives of business, academia, media and professional groups to debate key challenges for democracies worldwide. Therefore, the democratic governance seems to keep up the agenda of the Council of Europe member states as part of its normative calling.

and the CoE share not only values and principles but also the same neighbourhood, and both the east and the southern Mediterranean must be in the frontline of member states political will. In this regard, prospects to improve the institutional cooperation between the Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament, bringing together members of all national parliaments, shall be welcomed.

To conclude, when we recall the political and normative architecture of the late 40's of the 20th century, it's important to recognize the importance of the Council of Europe in one of the most challenging tasks: (re)constructing Europe through the paths of normative pillars and assure, throughout two centuries, that Human Rights and fundamental freedoms are entitled to all the people.

If we take one moment to take a look around our word we will surely be able to find at least 820 million reasons, one for each citizen of the 47 member states, to renew and recognize the founding mandate of the most ancient international cooperation Organisation. However, it is also crucial to acknowledge how the Council of Europe showed several times a lack of political and moral capability to challenge other members' failures which undermines the credibility of the entire organisation. Therefore, when we look to the current strategic environment it is legitimate to explore and discuss the role of this organisation within the spectrum of other European international organisation towards international security.

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