



## К вопросу о политической системе Андорры

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**Аннотация.** Политическая система Андорры, характеризующаяся парламентской моделью совместного управления княжествами и особой исторической траекторией, представляет собой уникальный пример европейского государственного устройства. Несмотря на свою уникальную институциональную структуру, андоррская модель мало освещена в политологической литературе. Данная статья направлена на устранение этого пробела путем проведения всестороннего анализа политической системы Андорры с акцентом на ее институциональные структуры, историческую эволюцию и современную динамику управления. С использованием историко-институционального подхода в исследовании рассматривается трансформация политической системы Андорры от ее средневековых образцов до принятия Конституции в 1993 году, которая официально закрепила ее статус суверенной парламентской демократии. В исследовании рассматривается роль ключевых институтов, включая Генеральный совет, избирательную систему и развитие политических партий. Параллельно рассматривается влияние внешних факторов, в частности, развитие отношений Андорры с Европейским союзом. С этой целью в документе используется подход сравнительной политологии, сравнивающий структуру управления Андорры с другими европейскими микросоударствами, такими как Монако, Сан-Марино, Лихтенштейн и Люксембург. Этот методологический подход позволяет оценить институциональную адаптируемость Андорры, ее демократическую консолидацию и международное положение. Анализ правовой, политической и территориальной организации Андорры в данном исследовании способствует пониманию управления малыми государствами и динамики суверенитета в современной Европе. Результаты исследования подчеркивают институциональную устойчивость Андорры и ее способность сочетать историческую преемственность с современными политическими преобразованиями, предлагая ценную информацию ученым в области сравнительной политологии, конституционного права и европейской интеграции.

**Ключевые слова:** Андорра, политическая система, парламентаризм, политические партии

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## The Andorran Political System Revisited

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**Abstract.** Characterized by its Parliamentary Co-principality model and a distinctive historical trajectory, the Andorran political system presents a unique case within European governance. Despite its singular institutional framework, the Andorran model has received limited attention in political science literature. This paper seeks to address this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of Andorra's political system, focusing on its institutional structures, historical evolution, and contemporary governance dynamics. Employing a historical-institutional approach, the study examines the transformation of Andorra's political system from its medieval paratages to the adoption of its Constitution in 1993, which formalized its status as a sovereign parliamentary democracy. The research delves into the role of key institutions, including the General Council, the electoral

system, and the development of political parties. Simultaneously, it also examines the influence of external factors, particularly Andorra's evolving relationship with the European Union. To this end, the paper integrates a comparative politics framework, contrasting Andorra's governance structure with other European microstates such as Monaco, San Marino, Liechtenstein, and Luxembourg. This methodological approach allows for an assessment of Andorra's institutional adaptability, democratic consolidation, and international positioning. By analyzing Andorra's legal, political, and territorial organization, this study contributes to the understanding of small-state governance and the dynamics of sovereignty in contemporary Europe. The findings highlight Andorra's institutional resilience and its capacity to balance historical continuity with modern political transformations, offering valuable insights for scholars of comparative politics, constitutional law, and European integration.

**Keywords:** Andorra, political system, parliamentarism, political parties

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## INTRODUCTION

Nested in the Pyrenees Mountain range, the borders of Andorra are among the oldest in Europe. Despite its ancient origins, the Andorran political system has traditionally been misunderstood by academia and overlooked by many. This may result from the rather discreet role that Andorra has played in global politics, or it could also be a consequence of the country's limited land area. Nonetheless, the lack of attention towards Andorra does not correspond with its academic value. As a matter of fact, the political system of Andorra stands out as one of the most unique in the world.

This paper delves into the fundamentals of the Andorran political system. Our purpose is to fill a gap in literature concerning the politics of one of Europe's most representative microstates. We contend that such an endeavor will yield valuable insights for scholars and practitioners in the fields of political science and international relations. While existing studies have examined various elements of the Andorran political system per separate, a comprehensive analysis remains as a pending task. For this reason, this paper includes a brief comparative analysis between the Andorran political system and other European microstates' key features.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This paper endeavors the analysis of the Andorran political system. We employ a mixed research methodology, combining both historical and political science perspectives. This approach is grounded in the understanding that the modern foundations of Andorra's political system cannot be fully grasped without considering the country's gradual

evolution, which traces back to the 13th century. As a matter of fact, the case of microstates should be regarded as a defining feature within the European continent. While relevant examples of microstates exist globally, European microstates benefit from a historical heritage that often surpasses that of many larger nation-states. For instance, the Republic of San Marino claims to be one of the oldest republics in the world. The Principality of Liechtenstein emerged in the context of the Holy Roman Empire, and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and the Principality of Monaco originated in the medieval age. That is to say, a primary goal of this article consists in setting the Andorran political system within a broader historical perspective that is essential to effectively comprehend its contemporary structure and functioning.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The origins of Andorra date back many centuries before the adoption of its Constitution in 1993. Around the year 790 AC, the territories of Urgell, Cerdanya and Girona were incorporated into the dominion of the Francs. Then, in 843, King Charles the Bold donated some of its properties to the Count Sunifred I d'Urgell-Cerdanya. That donation was transcendental for the topic of our discussion, as it was the first time that the toponym of 'Andorra' appeared in an official document [Vergès, 2021]. In 1276, the Count of Foix stood up against the church of Urgell, with the premise of a revolt of the nobles against the monarchy. In the following years, the region of the Urgellet witnessed important military campaigns that resulted in the truce of 1278, the so-called first 'pareatge'. Following the restoration of peace,

the King of Aragon, Peter the Great, met with the Bishop of Urgell and the Count of Foix to reach a new compromise, the second 'pareatge' from 1288. According to Gascón, that agreement would represent a turning point as it defined the basis for the Count of Foix and the Bishop of Urgell's 'shared and undivided' dominion over Andorra, setting the fundamental judicial basis for a 'differentiated political entity' [Gascón, 2022, p. 15].

### CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS

In the second half of the 20th century, Andorra's political elites agreed upon the need to adopt a Constitution. As a matter of fact, the adoption of a Constitution became a fundamental prerequisite to accommodate the country's fragile sovereignty to the new global order that emerged after World War II. With this purpose, the General Council – the Andorran parliament – informed in 1975 the Coprinces that Andorrans wished to modernize their institutions. Accordingly, the parliament presented an *institutional reform memoir*<sup>1</sup> in 1978 and a *model of internal reform*<sup>2</sup> in 1981, the so-called 'reformeta' (little reform). These reforms separated the executive from the legislative branch, creating the first executive organ of Andorra as well as the post of the 'head of the executive'[Minoves, 2022]. Then, following the 1989 general elections, a new parliamentary majority opened the constitutional process and a special commission, the so-called 'tripartite'<sup>3</sup>, was tasked with the responsibility of crafting the first proposal for a Constitution.

The tripartite commission put forward a Constitutional draft in December 1992, the parliament adopted the text in February 1993 and the Andorran people validated the Constitution by referendum the 14 March of the very same year. According to Garcia and Lluelles, the Constitution enabled Andorra 'to be recognized as a sovereign and independent state' [Garcia Lluelles, Lluelles Larrosa, 2022, p. 14] and guaranteed a set of fundamental rights that, while they had been historically recognized by the Andorran society, these rights did not benefit from the legal certainty that only a written constitution could offer. Below, we explore the constitutional foundations that – taken together – conform the basis of the Andorran political system.

<sup>1</sup>Memòria de reforma institucional. Consell General del Principat d'Andorra. Març 1978.

<sup>2</sup>Model de reforma interna. Decret del 15 de gener del 1981.

<sup>3</sup>The name results from the negotiations between Andorra, France and the Episcopal palace.

### 1. The Parliamentary Co-principality

Andorra's form of state originated in the aforementioned 'pareatges'<sup>4</sup>. A form of medieval treaty in which the Bishop of Urgell and the Count of Foix accepted an arbitration based on the notion of 'shared' and 'undivided' sovereignty. In this regard, the feudal system of a 'shared and undivided dominion' over Andorra experienced a process of gradual institutionalization through centuries, until its formal rationalization in 1993, when the Constitution was adopted.

Article 1.4 of the Andorran Constitution defines the political regime of Andorra as a *Parliamentarian Co-principality* and establishes the Coprinces as the symbol and guarantee of the prevalence and continuity of Andorra (Article 44). This article is fundamental for understanding the *raison d'être* of the Co-principality. As a matter of fact, institutional singularity, through the notion of 'shared and undivided dominion', represents the pillar upon which the Andorran sovereignty has consolidated in a 'world of rising nations' and 'dynamic borders'. For this reason, the Andorran political elites from the Constitutional phase were convinced of the necessity to maintain that *medieval duality* over the country, though they adequate it to the basis of a modern sovereign state<sup>5</sup>. The Co-principality, however, should be regarded as a *sui generis* form of state, only present in Andorra, and beyond their symbolism, Article 45 of the Constitution attributes the Coprinces with the following functions:

- a) Convene general elections and popular referendum;
- b) appoint the Head of Government; c) sign the decree in which the General Council is dissolved;
- d) sanction and promulgate laws, among others.

Based on the analysis of Bartumeu, it must be noted that either the French or the Episcopal Co-prince of Andorra have avoided the signature of a law from the Andorran parliament in just 24 occasions. 12 times the former and 12 the latter [Bartumeu, 2023]. However, Article 45 of the Andorran Constitution foresees the possibility to enact a law without the signature of one Co-prince.

<sup>4</sup>Based on article 43.2 the institution of the Coprinces arises from the aforementioned 'pareatges' and their functions derive from the constitutional text, even though they are based on the historical evolution of Andorra.

<sup>5</sup>Most of the fundaments that embody the idea of 'Andorran sovereignty' were compiled by Antoni Fiter i Rossell in its *Manual Digest de les valls neutres d'Andorra* (1748). That is a compilation of laws, customs and usages that governed Andorra since the XVIII century. It includes a wide range of judicial principles covering areas such as criminal law, property and political governance.

## 2. The General Council

Following the signature of the second 'pareatge', Andreu d'Alas, acting on behalf of the people of Andorra, petitioned the Bishop of Urgell for the establishment of an assembly. This body's primary objectives would be to ensure the enforcement of land-related contracts and facilitate dialogue with neighboring territories [Minoves, 2022]. Per Gascón, that gathering from 1289 triggered an assembly dynamic that consolidated progressively, amplified its competences and that it would evolve into the future 'Consell de la Terra' (Council of the Land) [Gascón, 2022]. Despite this process of gradual consolidation, it was not until the second half of the XX century that the modern basis and functions of the Andorran parliament were established. Namely, the legislative initiative, the adoption of the general budget and the political control of the Government, amongst others<sup>1</sup>. Below, we detail the General Council's structure.

### 2.1. Governing bureau: The 'sindicatura' and the board of presidents

The General Council is composed of 28 members elected through a combination of a nationwide constituency (with 14 seats in play) and 7 local constituencies (each one with 2 seats in play). Then, the Andorran parliament is led by the 'sindicatura', an organ equivalent to the parliament's governing bureau that is composed by the general 'síndic'<sup>2</sup>, the general 'sub-síndic' and two secretaries. The parliamentary activity is organized by the board of presidents, the place where the presidents of each parliamentary group reunite periodically. Amongst all the decisions taken by the board of presidents, we must highlight those relating to a) setting the legislative calendar and; b) forwarding each legislative proposal to the correspondent legislative committee.

### 2.2. Legislative Committees

The Andorran Parliament's activity develops around 9 legislative committees. That is the legislative committee on:

1. Justice, home and institutional affairs;
2. Foreign Affairs;
3. Economy;
4. Finances and Budget;

5. Territorial Policies, Urban Planning and Environment;

6. Health;

7. Social affairs and gender equality;

8. Education, research, culture, youth and sports and;

9. Pensions system reform. To put it simply, the main function of these committees consists of examining each legislative proposal and negotiating the amendments presented by each political group.

### 2.3. Legislative initiative

There are 4 main sources of legislative initiative in Andorra. First, the General Council's. In this regard, Article 102 of the Parliament's rules of procedure establishes that a proposition of the law can be presented by a single parliamentary group or by three parliamentarians. Second, the Government is also entitled to the prerogative of laws' proposition. Three, a group of three local governments, the so-called 'Comuns', jointly. Four, 1/10 parts of the national census. That is what is commonly referred to as the *citizen's legislative initiative*.

## 3. The Government

Before the adoption of the Constitution in 1993, the General Council was the sole institution of political power in Andorra. As Minoves noted, there was no modern executive to handle the complex decisions of a modern economy; there was no separation of powers [Minoves, 2022]. On top of that, the Coprinces held significant decision-making authority, with some powers equivalent to the ones of a government<sup>3</sup>. In the context of late XX century, when modern European democracies were gradually consolidating<sup>4</sup>, Andorra's need for an institutional reform could no longer be postponed. Consequently, in 1981, the role of the Head of Government separated from the legislative branch and, accordingly, the first-ever Executive Council was created<sup>5</sup>. More recently, in 1993, the Andorran Constitution defined the Government's main functions. These functions include: a) executing the laws adopted by the General Council; b) managing the public administration; c) directing national and international politics and; d) exercising regulatory powers through the adoption of governmental

<sup>3</sup>The Coprinces exerted its executive powers through the 'veguers'. A political post inherited from the medieval age and equivalent to the sort of representatives of the Coprinces' sovereignty over Andorra.

<sup>4</sup>In particular, the democratization of Spain and the downfall of the Spanish dictatorship exerted reinforced pressure over Andorra's political reform.

<sup>5</sup>Decret 15-01-1981.

<sup>1</sup>Article 50 of the Andorran Constitution.

<sup>2</sup>That is the equivalent to the President of Parliament.

regulations, among many other functions. Below, we explore the foundations of the Andorran Government.

## 3.1. Formation of Government

Based on the principles of a parliamentary system, the Andorran Government is appointed by the Parliament, eight days after the new legislature is constituted. During the initial voting session, a qualified majority is required. If this majority is not achieved, a second voting session will be convened, and the candidate with the highest number of votes will be elected as the new Head of Government of Andorra. In this regard, the newly appointed Head of Government is then responsible for nominating the remaining ministers, with a limit of 12 ministers maximum<sup>1</sup>. Also, Article 78 of the Constitution establishes that a Head of Government cannot be elected for more than two consecutive terms and the Constitution also outlines the following circumstances under which the Government's mandate may end: a) End of legislature term; b) Resignation; c) Decease; d) Incapacity after a prosperous censure motion or a vote of confidence. In this regard, convening a censure motion or a vote of confidence remains one of the most effective instruments of parliamentary control over the Government. On the one hand, a motion of censure can be called by  $\frac{1}{5}$  of the General Council's parliamentarians. To prosper, the motion needs to obtain a vote from an absolute majority of parliamentarians. On the other hand, the Head of Government can convene a vote of confidence. Similarly to the motion of censure, if the Head of Government does not obtain a simple majority of votes, his / her resignation will be required.

## 4. Electoral law<sup>2</sup>

The Parliament of Andorra, known as the 'Consell General' (General Council), is composed of 28 parliamentarians<sup>3</sup>. Specifically, each local parish – the so-called 'parròquia' – elects 2 parliamentarians through a parish-based first-past-the-post system, making a total of 14 parliamentarians. The remaining 14 members of parliament are elected using a proportional system on a national constituency [Minoves, 2022]. Below, we outline the fundamentals of Andorran electoral law.

<sup>1</sup>Llei del Govern 10.1.2001.

<sup>2</sup>Article 51.4 of the Constitution establishes that a qualified law regulates the electoral system of Andorra. In this regard, the Consell General adopted in 1993 the law that regulates the electoral system and the referendum of Andorra.

<sup>3</sup>Article 52 of the Andorran Constitution foresees a minimum of 28 and a maximum of 42 parliamentarians.

## 4.1. Constituencies

Andorran elections are organized into eight constituencies<sup>4</sup>. Seven of these constituencies correspond to each local parish, where citizens elect 2 parliamentarians each. The eighth constituency encompasses the entire nation, with 14 parliamentarians elected on a nationwide basis. Thus, Andorra's electoral system features a significant *duality*: 14 parliamentarians are elected from local constituencies, and the other 14 from the national constituency. As a matter of fact, this duality within the Andorran electoral system should be regarded as a historical heritage of a country that developed over centuries across six traditional territories. Namely, Canillo, Encamp, Ordino, La Massana, Andorra la Vella and Sant Julià de Lòria. These historical parishes have shaped Andorra's unique approach to governance.

## 4.2. Electoral formula

In Andorran elections, that duality between the *nation* and the *local* dimension has historically played a prominent role. Fundamentally, because of two differentiated electoral formulas. On the one hand, the national constituency elects 14 parliamentarians through the employment of a proportional formula that distributes seats based on the number of votes received by each candidacy<sup>5</sup>. On the other hand, each local constituency elects 2 parliamentarians through the employment of a majoritarian formula, the 'first-past-the-post' system.

## 4.3. Right to suffrage

In Andorra, suffrage is universal, free, equal, direct and secret, the five fundamental principles of suffrage in modern democracies [Torrens, 2006]. The right to vote belongs to all nationals of Andorra above 18 years old, and it must be noted that the Andorran electorate has experienced a process of expansion since the adoption of the Constitution in 1993. While 9.675 citizens were called to vote in

<sup>4</sup>Llei 44/2022, del 12 de desembre, de text consolidat qualificada del règim electoral i del referèndum.

<sup>5</sup>The electoral formula to distribute 14 parliamentarians from the nationwide constituency refers to the 'largest remainder method'. Basically, each candidacy receives as many seats as it results from the division of its number of votes by the electoral quotient. In this regard, the electoral quotient is determined by dividing the total valid votes by 14. In the case where, after applying this formula, the 14 seats have not been allocated to the different candidacies, the remaining seats will be distributed to the candidacies that already have a minimum of 1 parliamentarian allocated, based on the 'largest remainder' method. That is, candidacies with the largest decimal number, will receive additional seats until the 14 seats are completely distributed.



1993, 29.958 had the right to vote in 2023. That is a 209 % increase.

### 5. Party system

Since its Constitutional inception, Andorra's party system has been marked by a set of *allées et venues*<sup>1</sup> and temporary local coalitions<sup>2</sup>. This results from the fact that there has been little or no institutionalization of Andorran political parties since the constitution of 1993. As Minoves put it, before the adoption of the Andorran constitution, the electoral system was purely parish-based and did not favor national political groupings. In this regard, the emergence of a party system in Andorra must be understood in the context of the existing parties of notables that were already present, mostly at the parish level [Minoves, 2022]. Then, the Constitutional phase triggered a process of gradual definition of the modern Andorran party system.

#### 5.1. Evolution of Andorran main political parties

As it is frequent in other small states, Andorra has not been an *oasis* for political parties. That is to say, since its inception, the political system of Andorra has favored the formation of local and temporary political groups, rather than stable national political parties. Figure number 1 illustrates the evolution of Andorran national political parties with parliamentary representation since 1993.

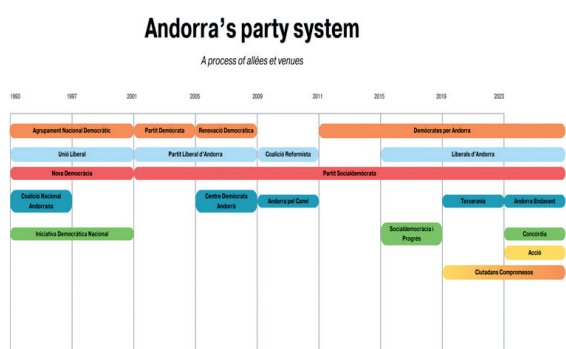


Figure 1. Evolution of Andorra's political parties (1993–2023)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The concept of 'allées et venues' refers to the fact that, while competing under different 'labels', the main political families of Andorra have remained stable and, to some extent, united.

<sup>2</sup>The formation of local coalitions results from the Andorran electoral system, which gives supplementary representation to local constituencies. That is the 'parroquial' or local constituency.

<sup>3</sup>The colors used in the graphic do not necessarily indicate any relationship or similarity between the aforementioned political parties.

The fragmentation of Andorra's party system results from its uniqueness. As Minoves put it, despite a long history of democratic politics and elections, political parties in the sense of those operating in the rest of the continent only appeared after the approval of the constitution of 1993' [Minoves, 2022]. Compared to the rest of the European democracies, that is a quite recent date that could explain why the Andorran party system has been so fragmented ever since its conception. As a matter of fact, when Andorran political parties were born, the time of 'mass parties' and 'catch-all parties' had almost passed [Minoves, 2022]. However, in the case of Andorra, it is not only that political parties are weakly institutionalized and formalized<sup>4</sup>, but also that General elections still tend to be developed around a group of leaders / notables, with traditional political parties playing a rather minor role.

#### 5.2. Electoral analysis

A brief analysis of the elections of Andorra gives us the following conclusions. Firstly, the formation of governmental majorities heavily relies on local support. That is, a fundamental prerequisite for governing Andorra is to gain support from at least 4 of the 7 contested local constituencies. Basically, the majoritarian electoral system in these local constituencies distorts election outcomes and inflates governmental majorities, far more than a single national proportional constituency would. Secondly, Andorra's party system has been dominated by a ruling center-right coalition, though the label of that coalition has evolved. Initially, this center-right coalition grouped around the Liberal Party, which embraced the traditional principles and values of other European mainstream liberals. Then, after a short period of reconfiguration that resulted in the social-democrats in office (2009–2011), the center-right spectrum grouped once again under a different label: Demòcrates per Andorra (Democrats). After successfully winning the last four general elections, the perspective is that the Andorran center-right coalition will undergo a new process of transformation in the upcoming years. Thirdly, turnout in Andorran general elections is arguably high, in comparison to the rest of Europe. Based on the analysis of Minoves, high participation rates can be regarded as a recurrent feature of small states. Before the Constitution, participation in General elections was over 80 percent, a similar participation rate that continued in the elections from 1993,

<sup>4</sup>Until the adoption of a more specific law in 2014 – that is, Llei 19/2014 – political parties in Andorra were regulated by the rules to 'associations'.

1997, 2001 and 2005 [Minoves, 2022]. The decline, however, began in 2009 probably as a consequence of the economic crisis. Turnout was 75.3 percent in 2009, 74.1 percent in 2011, 65.6 percent in 2015, a gradual recovery in 2019 with 68.33 percent of participation, and then it declined again in 2023 reaching 66.95 percent. Analyzing the volatility of the Andorran party system, Serra concluded that the average Andorran electoral volatility was similar to the one from Peru and Guatemala, and closer to that of Eastern European countries.

### 5.3. Party system classification

Based on electoral results since 1993, the Andorran party system can be defined as one of a 'predominant party' [Minoves, 2022]. In Sartori's terminology, a predominant-party system is marked by a major party that is consistently supported by a winning majority [Sartori, 2005]. So, in the case of Andorra, the Liberals predominated the period from 1997 to 2009. Then, after the brief social-democrats period (2009–2011), the Democrats<sup>1</sup> replaced the liberal predominance from 2011 to 2023, needing to form a Coalition Government in just one occasion (2019).

## 6. Foreign affairs and relations with Europe

After the publication of the *Manual Digest*<sup>2</sup>, the notion of *neutrality* became the central axis of Andorra's foreign policy [Codina, Conesa, 2022]. As a matter of fact, temptations of annexation were strong, and Andorra was considered to be either a part of France or Spain's territory for many centuries. The Coprincipality institution, however, became an invisible shield for Andorra. Specifically, the ambiguities that surrounded the notion of 'shared and undivided' dominion over Andorra effectively deterred any geopolitical ambitions towards the valleys. For this reason, Andorra's foreign policy has traditionally been discrete, with the primary objective of maintaining a stable relationship with the Coprinces. The adoption of the Constitution, however, marked a pivotal moment for Andorra's foreign policy. While the policy of neutrality was maintained, it became imperative to promote the adoption of international treaties and reinforce cooperation with neighboring regions. In this regard, formalizing membership in the international community became Andorra's most

urgent priority after the Constitution<sup>3</sup>. Among the numerous advantages of this approach, it is essential to highlight that it consolidated the country's status as a sovereign nation, countering the traditional perception of Andorra as a *personal, exclusive, and undivided* sovereignty shared by the two Coprinces<sup>4</sup>.

The Constitution was a *necessary* condition, yet not *sufficient* to guarantee the future of Andorra. During the eighties and nineties decades, Andorra certainly had to address many challenges in a short period of time, the most urgent being the need to define a relationship with the European Economic Community (EEC). That obligation resulted from the accession of Spain to the EEC in 1986 [Garcia Lluelles, Lluelles Larrosa, 2022]. Indeed, the accession treaty established that, within two years, a new commercial regime between the Community and Andorra must be regulated. These negotiations concluded in 1990, the moment when Andorra and the EEC signed the agreement in Luxembourg<sup>5</sup>. The agreement with the EEC was transcendental for Andorra<sup>6</sup>. On the one hand, it was the first time that Andorra signed directly an international agreement on the quality (not ratified yet) of a sovereign state [Bartolomé Areny, 2024]. Before that responsibility belonged to either the French or the Spanish representative, they would do so on behalf of Andorra [Becat i Tajaut, 2017]. On the other hand, the agreement was critical because, from that moment on, Andorra gained a direct way of communication with Brussels. Eventually, these embryonic relations were subject to reform and subsequent updates.

The 2008 financial crisis led to a global comprehensive revision of financial regulations. Consequently, Andorra could no longer sustain its economy through the use of bank secrecy. Under considerable pressure from the Élysée, with President Sarkozy's potential resignation as Coprince, Andorra and the EU adopted the Monetary Agreement in 2011. This agreement reaffirmed Andorra's commitment to fiscal transparency and financial standardization, and it would be eventually solidified with the adoption of the 2016 agreement between Andorra and the EU on the automatic exchange of information for financial accounts and income. At present, Andorra and the EU have concluded the negotiations relating to the

<sup>1</sup>A new center-right coalition that grouped all spectrum, arising from the former Liberals.

<sup>2</sup>That is a compilation of laws, customs and usages that governed Andorra since the XVIII century. It includes a wide range of judicial principles covering areas such as criminal law, property and political governance.

<sup>3</sup>Andorra's entrance into the global stage was a process formalized after the country's accession to the United Nations and the Council of Europe.

<sup>4</sup>Decret 15-01-81.

<sup>5</sup>The agreement entered into force one year after its signature.

<sup>6</sup>While the agreement established a common customs union for industrial products, a third-country regime was maintained for agricultural products. The agreement also defined a system of travelers' allowances that became fundamental for the attraction of tourism in Andorra.

participation of Andorra within the European Single Market. The association agreement, however, will be submitted to a popular referendum convened – in theory – during the first semester of 2025.

### CONCLUSIONS

The structure of a Co-principality is fundamental to understanding Andorra's remarkable ability to preserve its territorial integrity throughout history. In this regard, the political evolution of Andorra has been characterized by a strategy of continuous *accommodation* and *adaptation* to the evolving European landscape. To this end, during the 1970s and 1980s Andorra experienced a process of deep institutional reform, closely guided by the *Élysée* and the 'Mitra' (Bishopric). This process culminated in the adoption of a Constitution in 1993, which not only reaffirmed Andorra's status as a sovereign state but also formalized its political system. While the Constitution introduced numerous innovations and clarifications, it is crucial to recognize that the emerging system was not a revolutionary construct. Instead, it served as confirmation of all the pre-existing political, economic, and social dynamics that have shaped the nation for many centuries.

This paper provided a comprehensive overview of Andorra's political system's most silent features. First, the Parliamentary Co-principality form of state renders Andorra one of the most singular political systems in the world. The notion of a 'shared and undivided' dominion over Andorra, the foundation of contemporary Co-principality, has historically shielded the country from foreign annexation attempts. This duality, however, necessitated a process of clarification in the late XX century, amidst significant political transformations across Europe. Among the various ambiguities addressed by the Constitution, adapting the old duality over Andorra into the modern form of a Parliamentary Co-principality became the pillar of the country's political reform.

Second, the General Council, Andorra's Parliament, has undergone a gradual process of institutionalization over centuries. While its origins can be traced back to the XIII century, when the first assemblies of Andorrans convened, it was only with the adoption of a Constitution that the balance of power between the Parliament and the Government was explicitly defined. Again, Andorran elections are marked by an important duality. On the one hand, half of the parliamentary seats are filled through a nationwide constituency that employs a proportional system, the largest remainder method. On the other hand, the remaining half of the Parliament is composed of representatives elected

from local constituencies, where a majoritarian first-past-the-system system is employed. While this system distorts popular representation, at the same time, it unequivocally enhances the country's governmentality.

Thirdly, the Andorran party system has witnessed significant evolution since the adoption of the Constitution. Notably, the Andorran party system is characterized by the dominance of a center-right party and a propensity towards local and temporary coalitions, a phenomenon this paper has referred to as a process of 'allées et venues' (comings and goings). The tendency to form and dissolve electoral coalitions has enhanced the system's capacity to adapt to the evolving political landscape.

Finally, Andorra's enduring success throughout the centuries can be attributed to the meticulous process of adaptation to its ever-changing European environment. At present, the nation's primary focus on adaptation and transformation refers to the definition of a long-term relationship with its key partner, the European Union. The upcoming 2025 referendum on the Association Agreement with the European Union will test once again Andorra's historical pragmatism.

### *Similarities and differences between the European microstates*

Based on our analysis, we highlight the following similarities and differences between Andorra and other European microstates .

In the first place, when it comes to the form of state, Andorra's Coprincipality emerges as a unique political entity. In contrast, Monaco, Liechtenstein and Luxembourg operate as constitutional monarchies, though their forms of monarchy differ. On the one hand, Monaco and Liechtenstein represent a Principality where the Prince exerts the role of head of state. On the other hand, in Luxembourg the role of head of state belongs to a Grand Duchy. Then, the case of San Marino represents the only European microstates that develops under the form of a Republic, with a singular system of two elected *Capitani Reggenti*. In Andorra, the Constitution does not attribute substantive executive powers to the Co-princes. In practice, however, the need to protect the Coprincipality's fragile equilibrium has decisively influenced the country's orientation in several occasions.

In the second place, Andorra's form of Government, which is based on a Prime Minister elected by the parliament, slightly differs from other European microstates. For instance, the executive power of San Marino is located within a *Congresso di Stato*



that is led by a Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. In Monaco, the executive branch is centralized in the figure of the Prince, who also exercises limited legislative powers with the Parliament. A similar system features the case of Liechtenstein, where the Prince holds significant executive authority, *ceteris paribus*. Then, operating as a constitutional monarchy, the Duke of Luxembourg exerts a similar role to one of the Presidency of a Republic. For instance, in general elections, after official results have been announced, the Grand Duke invites the winner of the election to form a government based on the principles of a parliamentary system.

In the third place, the electoral systems of European microstates reflect the unique interplay between historical evolution and contemporary governance needs. In Andorra, the electoral system is marked by the aforementioned duality between the local parishes and the modern nation that contrasts with other European microstates. While smaller states tend to favor a single nationwide constituency, Andorra employs a system with seven out of eight constituencies with a territorial basis. Although there are some noteworthy similarities with the cases of Luxembourg and Liechtenstein, where the territorial structure of the country also plays a role in general elections, the Andorra's electoral system represents the most territorially decentralized among European

microstates. Such a distinctive approach underscores the historical heritage of Andorra and the consequent need to balance traditional local governance with contemporary national representation.

Lastly, the European microstates' differentiated electoral systems has resulted in varied party systems. In San Marino, elections have experienced a gradual fragmentation of the historical dominant three-party system. Similarly, in Liechtenstein two major parties have dominated general elections for decades. In contrast, Luxembourg politics can be regarded as a combination between a predominant center-right coalition and a stable multipartyism. Meanwhile, Andorra and Monaco share a consensus-based party system in which a center-right coalition has consistently led the elections. These patterns reveal two prominent features of European microstate politics. On the hand, the predominance of traditional political parties manifests strong ties between the political system and local elites. On the other hand, European microstates also display a tendency towards bipartisan and centripetal competition that is coupled with growing electoral volatility. This trend can largely be attributed to the weak institutionalization of political parties in these states. Indeed, it is noteworthy to recall that the smallness of European microstates paves the way for personalistic politics, where local and national leaders exert a strong influence on electoral outcomes.

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