



Special Event



“Revolutions of National Independence and the Birth of the Nation-State during the 18th and 19th Centuries”

Organized by: The Athens Institute (www.atiner.gr) under the auspices of the Athenian Academic Periodical (<https://www.atiner.gr/aap>).

Address: Chalkokondili 9 (5th Floor), Kaningos Square.

Date: Monday, March 30, 2026

Time: 18:30-20:30

Program

Welcome & Opening Speech: Gregory T. Papanikos President, Athens Institute & Professor (Adjunct), University of Tennessee, Knoxville, USA.

Moderator: Lampros Ap. Pyrgiotis, Editor-in-Chief, Athenian Academic Periodical.

Main Speakers

1. **Obrillant Damus**, Professor, State University of Haiti, Haiti & Visiting Professor, University of Sherbrooke, Canada. **Title:** *Towards an Analysis of Haiti's Contribution to Greek Independence in Terms of Regenerative and Restorative Pedagogy, as well as Global Citizenship Education.* ([summary](#))
2. **Pedro Ricardo Fonseca**, Professor, Guarda Polytechnic University & Researcher, University of Coimbra, Portugal. **Title:** *From Reconquista to Revolution: The Long Path of Portugal's Nation-State.* ([summary](#))
3. **Raquel de Caria Patrício**, Associate Professor, University of Lisbon, Portugal. **Title:** *The Transfer of the Portuguese Court to Brazil, Independence, and the Construction of the Brazilian Nation-State.* ([summary](#))
4. **Stefano Maggi**, Professor and Chairman, University of Siena, Italy. **Title:** *Italian National Unification and the Railways (1848–1861).* ([summary](#))
5. **Gregory T. Papanikos** President, Athens Institute & Professor (Adjunct), University of Tennessee, Knoxville, USA. **Title:** *The Long Run Trend in Sovereign State Proliferation: Evidence from 1820 to 2020.* ([summary](#) – [full paper](#))

Audience Comments and Questions

This event is free of charge, but pre-registration is required. If you are interested in participating, please fill out the form [here](#)

Summaries

Obrillant Damus: Haiti proclaimed its independence on January 1, 1804, after 13 years of bloody struggle against Napoleon Bonaparte's army (1791-1804). This glorious victory over the most powerful army in the world made Haiti the first independent black republic in a world then dominated by colonial and slave-owning powers. These powers did not hesitate to isolate the new state diplomatically and economically in order to prevent it from becoming a model for the plantation-based societies of the Caribbean and the Americas, whose economies were based on the enslavement of Africans. Despite the persecution and threats it faced from France, the colonial power at the time, Haiti decided to make the struggle for freedom and emancipation of peoples a regional and global issue. This is the main reason why it contributed to the liberation of several Latin American countries (Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru), as well as to the independence of a distant country like Greece, by responding to requests for help from revolutionaries in these different countries. Thus, Haiti participated not only in the regeneration of these countries, but also in the repair of their present, their past, and their future.

By providing assistance to these countries, and particularly to Greece, which is of interest to us here, Haiti transformed the rights of the dominant into the rights of all people, regardless of where they live or the color of their skin. If Haiti weighs heavily in the balance of universal history, it is because it is, rightly, the country that universalized human rights and citizenship. What did Haiti's aid to Greece consist of, and how can it be interpreted in terms of regenerative and restorative pedagogy and global citizenship education?

Keywords: Haiti, liberation, independence, Greece, Latin America, restorative and reparative pedagogy, global citizenship education.

Stefano Maggi: The process of Italian unification experienced its decisive phase between 1848 and 1861. It all began with the First War of Independence (1848), sparked by uprisings in Milan and Venice. Despite the initial enthusiasm, King Charles Albert's attempt to defeat Austria failed; however, it left behind the legacy of the "Statuto Albertino" and the realization that the Kingdom of Sardinia would serve as the heart of the national movement. In the 1850s, the key figure became the "Count of Cavour", Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Sardinia. Through a sophisticated diplomatic strategy, Cavour secured the support of Napoleon III's France. This alliance led to the Second War of Independence in 1859, through which Lombardy was conquered. Subsequently, the central duchies were annexed via plebiscites. The final piece of the puzzle was the heroic "Expedition of the Thousand" (1860) led by Giuseppe Garibaldi, who liberated Southern Italy in a rapid advance. The process culminated on March 17, 1861, when the first national Parliament in Turin proclaimed the birth of the Kingdom of Italy, with Victor Emmanuel II as its first king. Fundamental territories were still missing, such as Veneto (annexed in 1866) and Rome (which became the capital only in 1871). During the Second War of Independence in 1859, the Piedmontese railways transported soldiers, supplies, and equipment. The Franco-Piedmontese army used the railway to concentrate troops, to move French soldiers and materiel from the right bank of the Po to Vercelli, to transport various supplies and siege equipment to the French troops, and to transport the wounded. Paintings show everyone on horseback, but the train was used: for example, Garibaldi entered Naples triumphantly by train. Beyond that, unification took place during a period of railway growth, which played a significant dual role, in military events and the political process. It immediately became clear that, in the process of building the new unified State, the two primary tools for ensuring cohesion were the army and the railways —the latter of which were still largely to be built across much of the peninsula. Once Italy was made, it was necessary to "make the Italians" and post-unification governments spent the majority of public works funding to connect the various territories to one another through the tracks.

Keywords: Italy 1861, The wars of Independence, The Risorgimento, Unification of Italy 1861, Railways and the War.

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Raquel de Caria Patrício: Brazil's independence was the historical process of political separation between the Viceroyalty of Brazil and the Kingdom of Portugal and the Algarves, which took place between 1821 and 1825, in the context of the political transformations in the Euro-Atlantic world caused by the liberal revolutions and the Napoleonic wars, and following the transfer of the Portuguese Court to Rio de Janeiro in 1808, with British assistance. Independence was achieved on 7 September 1822, when the son of the Prince Regent of Portugal, Dom João VI, Dom Pedro, proclaimed the “Cry of Ipiranga” and was acclaimed on 12 October of the same year as Dom Pedro I, the first emperor of Brazil. This triggered a war against Portugal, which recognised independence in 1825 with the signing of the Treaty of Rio de Janeiro. Regardless of the high level of interest surrounding both the diplomatic intricacies preceding the Napoleonic invasions of Portugal and the invasions themselves and their consequences for the Kingdom of Portugal and the Algarves, this paper focuses on the consequences that this journey of the Portuguese Crown had for colonial Brazil, based on two premises. On the one hand, the originality of this event: the transfer of a state to preserve a regime and a dynasty. On the other hand, the consequence of this transfer: Brazil's independence, with the subsequent creation of the national state of Brazil.

Pedro Ricardo Fonseca: Portugal's independence from León in 1143 was followed by gradual territorial consolidation through the Reconquista, completed in the mid-thirteenth century with the definitive conquest of the Algarve. Largely because of the ongoing territorial wars with the Moors and the neighbouring Christian kingdoms of Castile and León, the medieval monarchy developed comparatively strong central institutions, including royal law codes and a representative Cortes, which fostered administrative cohesion (José Mattoso, 1993). It was the beginning of a centralizing political tradition that has persisted, with few variations, to the present day. The maritime expansion of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was a crown-driven endeavour, linking state authority to overseas commerce and royal patronage, transforming Portugal into a global imperial power that demanded strengthened bureaucratic governance (João Marinho dos Santos, 2010). The Iberian Union (1580–1640) temporarily subordinated Portugal to the Spanish Habsburgs, provoking a nationalist sentiment that fuelled the resistance and ultimately the Restoration of 1640 under the Braganza dynasty (Oliveira Marques, 2019). The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries witnessed renewed centralisation, particularly under Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, Marquis of Pombal, whose enlightened absolutist reforms enhanced fiscal, educational, and administrative control, laying some of the foundations of the modern state (Oliveira Marques, 2019). Nevertheless, Portugal remained a dynastic and corporate monarchy, grounded in traditional estates and colonial wealth (Vitor Neto, 2001). The Napoleonic invasions (1807–1811) proved decisive. A strong nationalist sentiment emerged first in response to the French incursions and later intensified due to British dominance, especially since the royal family and the court had fled to Brazil in the wake of the first invasion. Liberal ideas circulating across the Atlantic world inspired military officers and bourgeois elites to demand constitutional reform. The Liberal Revolution of 1820 convened the Cortes and produced the Constitution of 1822, which asserted national sovereignty, the separation of powers, and representative government. Although political instability followed, with several coups and a fierce Civil War between absolutists and liberals (1828–1834), the liberal victory secured the establishment of a constitutional monarchy (Vitor Neto, 2001). The consolidation of the nation-state was facilitated by Portugal's linguistic, cultural, and religious uniformity, alongside the absence of significant ethnic divisions (Fernando Catroga, 1985). Furthermore, Portuguese Romanticism, spearheaded by Alexandre Herculano and Almeida Garrett, was instrumental in shaping the concept of Portuguese identity by exalting the unique features of the nation's cultural heritage. By the mid-nineteenth century, Portugal had transitioned from a patrimonial absolutist kingdom to a constitutional nation-state grounded in codified law, parliamentary institutions, and the principle of national sovereignty, marking the culmination of a centuries-long process of state formation (Vitor Neto, 2001). However, at the level of the organization of

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power, there was a clear continuity between absolutist administrative centralization and the administrative model of the constitutional monarchy.

Gregory T. Papanikos: This paper examines the long-run drivers of sovereign state formation using decadal global data from 1820 to 2020. Over this period the number of sovereign states rose from 36 to 195, with a pronounced acceleration during the decolonization era. I develop a parsimonious framework in which human development—captured by per-capita income, education, and human rights—reduces the costs of statehood while increasing the demand for self-determination. Using a stationary principal-component index of development (PCI) and decadal observations, I show that once development is accounted for the secular time trend in state counts becomes statistically indistinguishable from zero, while a robust post-1960 acceleration remains, consistent with the catalytic role of decolonization and shifting international norms. The findings highlight the joint importance of structural development and episodic political shocks in shaping the expansion of the international state system.

Keywords: Sovereign state formation; development; decolonization; human capital; human rights; political economy; modernization; international system