

**DISCUSSION PAPERS IN DIPLOMACY**

***Political Issues of Paradiplomacy:  
Lessons from the Developed World***

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## **ABSTRACT**

Regional governments can be international actors. This phenomenon of regional governments developing international relations, often called 'paradiplomacy,' has been most visible in Western industrialized liberal-democracies. In thinking about paradiplomacy in developing and post-communist countries, considering the experience of regions such as Quebec, Catalonia, the Basque Country, Flanders and Wallonia could be instructive for understanding the logic of this activity, highlighting key choices that need to be made, and pointing out potential challenges stemming from the development by sub-state units of international relations. This paper begins by distinguishing between three layers of paradiplomacy and makes the argument that paradiplomacy can be a multifunctional vehicle for the promotion of interests and identity. It then discusses the various choices that have to be made when developing a paradiplomacy, including designing new structures and selecting partners. Next, the paper addresses the issue of intergovernmental relations in the context of paradiplomacy and, more specifically, the attitude of the central state when the sub-state unit developing paradiplomacy has nationalist aspirations. Finally, the last section offers a brief discussion of the implications of paradiplomacy for democracy, deliberation and representation.

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## **POLITICAL ISSUES OF PARADIPLMACY: LESSONS FROM THE DEVELOPED WORLD**

*André Lecours*

### ***Introduction***

The decentralization of political power or administrative responsibilities is a process that is studied mostly for its impact on political institutions and public policy. In this context, sub-state governments (regional or local) are treated as emerging or established actors in domestic politics. This is hardly surprising since regional governments are most noticeable for their design and/or implementation of public policy within the boundaries of their decentralized territory, and for their interaction with the central state. Sometimes forgotten is the fact that regional governments also operate within the broader international context, that they can be international actors. This phenomenon of regional governments developing international relations, often called 'paradiplomacy,' has been most visible in Western industrialized liberal-democracies. Quebec, Catalonia, the Basque Country, Flanders and Wallonia, as well as several German Lander and some French regions have all devoted considerable efforts at developing an international action.<sup>1</sup>

In thinking about paradiplomacy in developing and post-communist countries, the experience of some of the aforementioned cases could be instructive for understanding the logic of this activity, highlighting key choices that need to be made, and pointing out potential challenges stemming from the development by sub-state units of international relations. Regions in many developing countries are already involved in some form of paradiplomacy. Several of Argentina's provinces have engaged in transborder relations with sub-state governments in Chile, Paraguay, Bolivia and Brazil to manage the movements of people and goods.<sup>2</sup> This is done through Committees of

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1) (See Ivo Duchacek, Daniel Latouche and Garth Stevenson (eds), *Perforated Sovereignities and International Relations: Trans-Sovereign Contacts of Subnational Governments* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1999); Hans J. Michelmann and Panayotis Soldatos (eds), *Federalism and International Relations: The Role of Subnational Units* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990). There were some studies on federalism and international relations published in the 1970s. See, in French, Paul Painchaud, 'Fédéralisme et politique étrangère,' *Études internationales*, 5 (1974), 25-44.

2) Eduardo Iglesias *et al.*, *La provincias argentines en el escenario internacional* (Bueno Aires: PNUD, 2008).

Integrations that are coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In India, state governments have negotiated directly with international financial organizations such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the United Nations Development Program, although these negotiations require the blessing of the federal government.<sup>3</sup> In Malaysia, the state of Penang has actively been promoting itself as a center for information and communication technology in South-East Asia.<sup>4</sup>

This paper is divided into four main sections. The first section distinguishes between three layers of paradiplomacy and makes the argument that paradiplomacy can be a multifunctional vehicle for the promotion of interests and identity. The second section discusses the various choices that have to be made when developing a paradiplomacy, including designing new structures and selecting partners. The third section addresses the issue of intergovernmental relations in the context of paradiplomacy and, more specifically, the attitude of the central state when the sub-state unit developing paradiplomacy has nationalist aspirations. The last section offers a brief discussion of the implications of paradiplomacy for democracy, deliberation and representation.

### ***Layers of Paradiplomacy***

Paradiplomacy as it is conducted by sub-state governments in developed societies can have many different focuses. Not all regional governments have approached international relations in a similar way. At the broadest level, we can distinguish between three layers of paradiplomacy. The first layer corresponds to economic issues. In this context, sub-state governments aim at developing an international presence for the purpose of attracting foreign investment, luring international companies to the region, and targeting new markets for exports. This layer does not have an explicit political dimension, nor is it concerned with cultural issues. It is primarily a function of global economic competition. The prototypical example here is the American states whose international activity consists essentially of the pursuit of economic interests. Australian states, whose international presence is even weaker than

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3) Amitabh Mattoo and Happyman Jacob, 'Republic of India,' in Hans Michelmann (ed), *Foreign Relations in Federal Countries* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press and Forum of Federations, 2009), 177.

4) Francis Kok Wah Loh, 'Federation of Malaysia,' in Hans Michelmann (ed), *Foreign Relations in Federal Countries* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press and Forum of Federations, 2009), 199.

their U.S. counterparts, also fit in this category.<sup>5</sup> So do Canadian provinces other than Quebec, namely Ontario and Alberta, that have had some international experiences.

The second layer of paradiplomacy involves cooperation (cultural, educational, technical, technological and others). Here, paradiplomacy is more extensive and more multidimensional insofar as it is not simply focused in economic gain. Some German *Länder* fall into this category, most notably Baden-Württemberg, which has been a leader in the creation of the 'Four Motors of Europe' and the Assembly of European Regions. Baden-Württemberg has also spearheaded many transborder initiatives and has been involved in North-South cooperation and development assistance.<sup>6</sup> At least, one French region, Rhône-Alpes, also features this layer in its paradiplomacy.<sup>7</sup> In addition to membership in the 'Four Motors of Europe' and several transborder associations (for example with the Swiss cantons of Genève, Vaud and Valais), Rhône-Alpes has developed a series of bilateral relations with sub-state entities in various African (such as Mali, Senegal, Tunisia), Asian (such as Vietnam) and Central European countries (such as Poland). These relations, conceptualized as 'decentralized cooperation,' take the form of development assistance, cultural and educational exchanges, as well as scientific and technical cooperation. The Quebec government has similar partnerships with such countries as Rwanda, Togo, Senegal, Somalia, Lebanon, Vietnam and Cambodia.

The third layer of paradiplomacy involves political considerations. Paradiplomacies with this layer tend to feature prominently the international expression of an identity distinct from the one projected by the central state as is the case for Quebec, Flanders, Catalonia and the Basque Country.<sup>8</sup> They tend to be very ambitious which is not always manifested in the scope of their networks (some are fairly specifically targeted) but in the logic driving the international ventures. Here, sub-state governments seek to develop a set of international relations that will affirm the cultural distinctiveness, political autonomy and the national character of the community they represent. Of

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5) John Ravenhill, 'Federal-States Relations in Australian External Affairs,' in Francisco Aldecoa and Michael Keating (eds), *Paradiplomacy in Action. The Foreign Relations of Subnational Governments* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 134-152.

6) Martin Nagelschmidt, 'Les relations internationales des Länder allemand et l'évolution du système fédéral dans l'Union européenne: le cas du Bade-Wurtemberg,' *Études internationales*, 30 (1999), 679-699.

7) See Région Rhône-Alpes, *Rhône-Alpes, actions internationales*, 2000.

8) Stéphane Paquin simply refers to this type of paradiplomacy as 'identity paradiplomacy.' See *Paradiplomatie identitaire en Catalogne* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2003).

course, political considerations need not necessarily involve identity. Sub-state governments may have other *political* objectives than gaining recognition as a distinct community or a nation. They may, for example, seek to influence the behaviour of a neighbouring region.

These layers are cumulative. Indeed, virtually all paradiplomacies in advanced industrialized countries feature an economic component. From there, many regional governments add a cooperation element while a selected few get more political. The main lesson here is that paradiplomacy can be a multifunctional vehicle. Regions may decide to go abroad to support economic development, but they can also add layers, that is, incorporate other concerns, related to interests and/or identity. For developing societies, it makes sense to approach paradiplomacy in a comprehensive way and to attach many different objectives to it. Let us consider, for example, cooperation. Sub-state governments of developed countries typically devote part of their paradiplomacy to forging relationships of cooperation. This is partly motivated by their desire to develop their international personality, although a sincere willingness to support development abroad is most likely also part of the reason for 'going abroad' in that way. In any case, cooperation agreements can produce a multifaceted and beneficial relationship for the region of the developing country. In addition to the direct communication of expertise (setting up schools, training a police force, structuring a civil service, etc...), the assistance relationship can involve a cultural dimension in the form, for example, of educational/school exchanges. All of this can have a positive effect on development as does the economic opportunities that can emerge from networking with governments of advanced industrialized economies. Moreover, from a fairly targeted cooperation connection, a more comprehensive *political* relationship can develop, which favours the strengthening of local or regional institutions.

### ***Partnerships of Paradiplomacy***

The development of such multifaceted paradiplomacy involves certain choices with respect to partners and bureaucratic structures. For regions in developing countries and countries undergoing a political and economic transition, it makes sense to develop connections with sub-state governments in advanced industrialized societies because they can package different types of opportunities. Such connections can profit the population of the developing region in several ways. First of all, sub-state governments in the West are typically in a position to provide technical expertise in various fields. Second, they can create exchange opportunities in various areas, including

higher education. Third, these governments typically look for market and investment opportunities, which under the right conditions can be beneficial to the developing region. Fourth, through the development of cultural programs, segments of the population of the developing region can be exposed to a different, politically important culture. Finally, political relationships with democratic sub-state governments can promote, either directly through conditional aid or implicitly through sheer dialogue, liberal rights and values.

Finding sub-state government partners in advanced industrialized societies should not be very difficult for a developing region since the opportunity to help out through cooperation assistance is a central argument used by regional officials in developed country to justify the existence of paradiplomacy. Interestingly, the choice of partners often follows cultural and linguistic connections. Quebec's cooperation efforts, for example, are focused on French-speaking regions. In the same vein, Catalonia and the Basque Country prioritize Latin America while Flanders targets former Dutch colonies such as Indonesia and Surinam.

In addition to seeking paradiplomatic connections with sub-state governments in advanced industrialized countries, regions in developing countries can also benefit from transborder relations. At the broadest level, such relations can help manage common problems relating, for example, to the environment or population displacement. Paradiplomacy can also serve to diffuse ethnic tensions and irredentism. Basque paradiplomacy, for example, puts great emphasis on cooperation with the Basque Country in France since Basque nationalists conceptualise Euskadi as a nation cutting across the international border between Spain and France. From a political perspective, this is largely a principled position since the formal 'unification' of all Basque territories is not a realistic option. Basque paradiplomacy, however, does not treat the Basques of France simply as another European partner or as a community 'abroad.' Indeed, there is even some reticence in using the concept of transborder cooperation. The framework for these activities is an agreement signed in 1990 between the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country and the Aquitaine Region (the Foral Community of Navarra joined the agreement in 1992). The agreement involves an exchange of information in various policy areas: social, economic, communication; and research. It also sets out the objective of promoting the Basque culture and language. The most significant aspect of this Cooperation agreement is the creation of a Common Fund for the financing of Basque projects. As a result of the paradiplomacy of the Basque government, the Basque language academy (*Euskaltzaindia*) has been officially recognized by the French state,



which provides it with funding.

The Basque case gives an idea of how paradiplomacy can help manage situations of cultural diversity cutting across international borders that are prevalent in Africa (for example, between Congo and its neighbours or in the Horn of the continent) and parts of Asia (such as the Tamil population in Sri Lanka and the South of India) and which generate ethnic tensions and irredentist aspirations (such as the current civil war in Congo and the idea of a Greater Somalia that would include Somalis living in Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti). Transborder connections between people who consider that they belong to the same ethnic group, or national community, can lessen the appetite for secession and 'national unification' because they make questions of belonging less of a zero-sum game. Indeed, for a minority ethnic group isolated from political and perhaps even economic power in a state and looking towards its kin across the border, the possibility of forging meaningful political, economic and cultural links may be enough to discourage secessionist and irredentist politics. In other words, rather than seeking to isolate a population from their kin across an international border, states may wish to consider offering the possibility of meaningful connections through some form of paradiplomacy as a way to reduce tensions and centrifugal forces.

### ***Political coordination and the 'slippery slope'***

Paradiplomacy is an activity that typically falls in a legal and constitutional grey zone because constitutions almost always give exclusive powers over foreign affairs to the state. In addition, state officials are likely to view with some suspicion regions (and municipalities) developing relationships with governments abroad. Part of this suspicion simply comes from the belief that everything international should be handled by the state as opposed to sub-state governments. A more pragmatic concern is that paradiplomacy will undermine the international coherence of the country or, in other words, that the country will no longer speak with one voice on the international stage. Most cases of paradiplomacy in Western countries encounter this type of issue. The claims of the Quebec government for a formalization of its role in foreign affairs, for example, had many observers raise the issue of coherence.<sup>9</sup>

To minimize potential issues of incoherence in foreign policy, Western states where at least one region developed a significant paradiplomacy have

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9) Former Canadian diplomat Allan Gotlieb, 'Only one voice for Canada,' *The Globe and Mail*, October 5 2005

crafted channels and mechanisms of intergovernmental consultation and coordination. In Canada, where provinces play a formal role in the implementation of international treaties, consultation surrounding the definition of Canadian positions on matters of provincial jurisdiction takes place within sectoral intergovernmental forums. Typically, discussions of international issues occur in yearly meetings of federal and provincial ministers. In some instances, mechanisms of coordination for the purpose, for example, of treaty implementation are supported by a formal intergovernmental agreement. In the area of labour, the US-Canada agreement that accompanied CUSTA opened the way for *ad hoc* intergovernmental meetings when international treaties (paralleling other free-trade agreements) were negotiated by Canada in this area. In 2005, however, this practice was formalized through ‘a new Canadian intergovernmental agreement, a framework that establishes a federal-provincial-territorial mechanism for the implementation and operation of international labour cooperation agreement.’<sup>10</sup> In the field of environment, the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME), which typically meets once a year, is the forum for discussing international environmental issues or events. For example, in a June 2005 meeting, the ministers committed to work together to prepare for the United Nations Climate Change conference held in Montreal later that year.<sup>11</sup> Intergovernmental relations around the international dimensions of agriculture, such as improving foreign market access for Canadian agricultural products, are not stipulated in a distinct agreement but rather written into a larger intergovernmental framework, the Agriculture Policy Framework.

In Belgium, where the competencies of regional governments in international relations are a matter of constitutional law, arrangements are more formalized. For Belgium to take an international position (including treaty-signing) in an area of jurisdiction that is domestically the Region’s or the Community’s, the relevant regional governments need to provide its endorsement. This is an interlocking system that gives a veto to all the actors involved in an international process or issue as a result of constitutionally-specified powers. The system works fairly well, insofar as Belgium is virtually never forced to abstain as a result of a veto exercised by a Region or Community government. The consensual traditions of Belgian politics, and the familiarity of the country’s political class with all kinds of complex arrangements to ensure the

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10) See the January 28 2005 news release at <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/cs/comm/hrsd/news/2005/050128a.shtml>. Accessed January 24 2006.

11) See the following news release: <http://www.ccme.ca/about/communiqués/index.html?item=148>

peaceful coexistence of the two main language communities (French- and Dutch-speaking) has facilitated the transition towards the decentralized administration of international relations prompted by the 1993 constitutional change.

What lessons can regions in developing countries draw from these cases when it comes to the political relationship with the state in the context of paradiplomatic efforts. First of all, it is important to appreciate that sub-state governments in developing countries operate in a substantially different political environment than their counterparts in developed countries. At the broadest level, these governments might barely exist, lack formal power and/or legitimacy since the unitary state, rather than federalism and decentralization, is the norm in Africa, Asia and the Middle East.<sup>12</sup> In this context, coherence of foreign policy, as a demonstration of state power and national unity, is likely to be of paramount importance for state officials. In addition, when liberal-democracy is fragile, even inexistent, the relationship between these state officials and regional leaders can be perilous for the latter, especially if there are salient ethnic and/or religious cleavages.

Therefore, as tricky as paradiplomacy can be in developed countries, it faces more fundamental obstacles in developing countries. A key issue surrounding any sub-state entity 'going abroad', lies in the relationship between regional and state officials. The development of a sustainable paradiplomacy requires the establishment of adequate channels of consultation and coordination between regional and state officials. Obviously, this necessitates some level of acceptance on the part of state officials towards paradiplomacy. Assuming that there is such basic acceptance, the intensity of the consultation and coordination will depend first and foremost on the nature and extent of paradiplomacy. If the foreign action of a sub-state unit is modest, that is if it is primarily about cooperation, a fairly informal process of information-sharing may very well be enough to place state officials at ease. If paradiplomacy is more ambitious insofar as it deals with issues (economic, cultural, environmental, etc...) that has implications for national policy and/or politics, a more elaborate set up could be useful. In such a case, the relationship between the region and the state in relation to paradiplomacy needs to go beyond information-sharing to include genuine consultation and, even, coordination. Here, there are at least two options when it comes to arranging for specific channels and mechanisms.

In drawing from the Canadian experience, a first option is to set up communication channels between regional and state officials of specific

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12) There are some federations in Asia (India, Pakistan, Malaysia) and Africa (Nigeria, Ethiopia, the Comoros), and one in the Middle East (the United Arab Emirates), but this represents a very small proportion of the states in these regions.

bureaucratic unit. In this context, if a sub-state authority wants to develop a program of cultural exchange with a region abroad, it would contact the relevant department/ministry to inform its officials and political head of the project and discuss its appropriateness, including the choice of partner. If these discussions result in an agreement that this particular paradiplomacy initiative is acceptable to state officials, the sectoral channel can be used for subsequent information-sharing about the program, and even coordination insofar as the state might factor it in when running its own cultural policy. This sectoral approach may also be further developed through, for example, occasional meetings between state and regional officials working in issue areas where paradiplomacy takes place. The creation of more formal sectoral forums that can, for example, combine regular discussion meetings of the international (and sometimes domestic) aspects of a policy area would represent further institutionalization of the consultation process.

Another possibility for linking regional and state officials is to establish a specific (intergovernmental) body to deal with international relations issues, that is, a forum where paradiplomatic initiatives can be presented and aligned with national foreign policy if necessary, independently of their specific subject matter. This type of arrangement centralizes the coordination of international relations. It involves, therefore, the full acceptance by the state of the legitimacy of paradiplomacy and a strong commitment on the part of the sub-state unit to fit this activity within the broader state foreign policy or, at least, make sure that there is no fundamental divergence. This type of approach is rare because states are typically reluctant to embrace the international relations of sub-state units and to formalize inter-governmental mechanisms around them. In this regard, Belgium is clearly an exception. In fact, the Belgian model of constitutionally-specified powers in international relations for Regions and Communities and the intergovernmental arrangement that has all the institutional actors assuming a veto would be difficult to successfully export since it is rooted in the country's consociational traditions.

Intergovernmental relations around paradiplomacy are typically more conflictual in multinational, or even multiethnic countries, where the development of international relations by a sub-state unit reflects the expression of cultural and sometimes political distinctiveness. In this context, states face a dilemma when responding to paradiplomacy. On the one hand, there is potential upside for reacting positively to claims for greater involvement in foreign affairs because it can weaken various arguments for independence: for example the idea that the state represents badly the interests of a particular group abroad or the notion that system is overly centralized and poses overdue constraints on this group. On the other hand, adopting such an attitude could be viewed as 'giving

up' a fundamental expression of statehood (i.e. foreign policy/international relations). From this perspective, accommodating paradiplomacy threatens national unity to the point of possibly sending the restive group on a 'slippery slope' towards independence.

Western multinational states have adopted different positions towards the paradiplomacy of regions where there are strong nationalist movements. Belgium has gone very far with its constitutional decentralization of international relations. In that country, we are arguably beyond paradiplomacy since the international activities of Regions and Communities are in no way at the margin; rather, they are full components of Belgium's foreign policy. The underlying assumption behind this radical view of how international relations should be structured in the Belgian federation was that the survival of the Belgian state *required* the decentralization of international relations and corresponding intergovernmental arrangements. This, of course, is the result of (at least) two distinct driving forces: the Flemish Movement's aspiration for cultural autonomy (which led to the creation of communities) and the Walloon Movement's aspiration for socio-economic autonomy (which led to the creation of Regions).

Canada has largely accepted Quebec paradiplomacy insofar as it does not challenge or oppose most of the province's international relations efforts, which are considerable. Quebec has signed several hundred international agreements since 1964 with partners, both states and regional governments, from every continent.<sup>13</sup> These agreements cover virtually all the fields in which the Quebec government is involved domestically: agriculture, economic development, culture, social services, transportation, and so on. The province has international representation in over 25 countries: it boasts seven 'general delegations' (Brussels, London, Paris, Mexico, Munich, New York, Tokyo), four 'delegations' (Boston, Buenos Aires, Chicago, Atlanta and Los Angeles) as well as more than a dozen smaller units including immigration and tourism offices.<sup>14</sup> In the summer of 2006, Quebec announced it was opening offices in India and Brazil, bolstering its presence in Japan and China and upgrading its Washington D.C. tourist office to a more political role.<sup>15</sup> All in all, Quebec posts more than 250 people abroad. The Canadian government has even worked to

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13) Ministère des relations internationales, Répertoire des ententes internationales du Québec, 1964-2000, 2000.

14) See the MRI's website [http://www.mri.gouv.qc.ca/fr/action\\_internationale/representations\\_etranger/representations\\_etranger.asp.a](http://www.mri.gouv.qc.ca/fr/action_internationale/representations_etranger/representations_etranger.asp.a). Accessed February 1 2006.

15) Rhéal Séguin, 'Quebec seeks to raise its profile abroad,' *The Globe & Mail*, May 25 2006.

make the international organization *La Francophonie*<sup>16</sup> accept sub-state governments as full members so that Quebec (and New Brunswick could participate). In 2005, Prime Minister Stephen Harper made good on an election promise<sup>17</sup> by specifying a role for Quebec with respect to UNESCO activities, placing the agreement explicitly within the perspective of an ‘open’ and ‘asymmetrical’ federalism. To a large extent, therefore, Canadian governments have judged that providing Quebec with some freedom to conduct international affairs is the best option when it comes to secure Quebecers’ commitment to Canada. Differently put, the idea of constantly challenging Quebec’s paradiplomacy suggests a level of conflict that would be considered detrimental to national unity. This being said, the Canadian government rejects the idea, promoted by the Quebec government, that the province’s constitutionally-specified powers, *à la* Belgium, extend to the international area.<sup>18</sup> It is also careful to circumscribe formal relationships that the Quebec government may have with heads of governments or heads of state. This is especially the case when the Parti québécois (PQ) is in power because the federal government is then suspicious that the secessionist party will seek international support for an eventual declaration of independence, particularly when it comes to Quebec’s relationship with France.

The Spanish central government has been more reluctant to accept Catalan and, particularly, Basque paradiplomacy. The Basque government has argued for a limited understanding of the concept of international relations that reduces it to formal diplomatic representation, war and peace issues and the signing of treaties: it views most everything else as domestic activities that have, in a globalized world, an international extension. On the contrary, the central state has defended a much more comprehensive understanding of international relations as well as a rigid distinction between international and domestic politics. From there, it has argued for its exclusive jurisdiction in the former and situated Autonomous Communities strictly within the latter. This conflict surfaced clearly in the mid-1980s when the Basque Office for European Affairs was created and then sought to open a Basque delegation in Brussels. In response, the Spanish state contested in the courts the constitutionality of the Basque government having representatives abroad. As a consequence of a lengthy judicial process, the Basque government conducted European affairs for nearly ten years through a publicly-funded non-profit organization, INTERBASK. Finally, in 1994 Basque

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16) The formal name is, since 1998, *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie* (OIF).

17) Norma Greenaway, ‘Harper proposes voice for Quebec,’ *The Gazette*, December 20 2005, A1 and A12.

18) This is the so-called Gérin-Lajoie doctrine.

paradiplomacy emerged from this grey zone when the Constitutional Court confirmed the right of the Basque government to be officially represented in Brussels (ruling 165). Despite this legal clarification, Basque paradiplomacy remains fairly conflictual in terms of the relationship between the Basque government and the central state because it is seen by many Spanish politicians as challenging the unity of the country. Of course, the tensions over paradiplomacy can not be separated from the larger confrontational climate. In fact, the broader tensions and attitudes of mistrust on both sides (much more severe than, for example in Canada) are informing the state's suspicion of Basque external action.

### ***Democracy, Deliberation and Representation***

What does paradiplomacy mean for democratic representation and deliberation? An argument can be made that paradiplomacy strengthens democracy because it brings some elements of foreign affairs closer to the people. In any country, especially those large and diverse, public policy is the aggregate of many different interests, values and identities. This is the case for domestic as well as for foreign policy. Consequently, the traditional democratic argument in favour of decentralization (i.e. that decentralization brings decision-making closer to the population and is therefore a positive process for democracy) should also apply to foreign policy. The discourse surrounding the most advanced paradiplomacies (Quebec, Catalonia, the Basque Country, Flanders) develops, at least implicitly, a democratic argument. In the case of Quebec, for example, a central justification for paradiplomacy is that the specific identity of Quebecers, and also sometimes their interests, can not be adequately represented internationally by the Canadian government. In this context, the international action of the Quebec government is said to embody the collective will of the Quebec people and to serve as an instrument for furthering its interests and expressing its identity.

In these Western cases, a potential pitfall presented by paradiplomacy when it comes to concerns about democracy is the possibility of a disconnection between foreign policy and democratic deliberation and representation. Indeed, in the minds of most citizens is the idea that international relations are the exclusive prerogative of the central state. As such, foreign policy is debated in (state) national institutions and discussions in the larger public about foreign affairs issues occurs within this national context, particularly during election campaigns. The decentralization of elements of foreign policy, therefore, needs to be accompanied by a decentralization of deliberative and representational spaces. This has not

happened, at least in an explicit manner, in most cases of paradiplomacy, even the most advanced. For example, most Quebecers are aware that their provincial government is conducting international relations. One could argue that they are implicitly endorsing this decision by not challenging the allocation of resources towards these activities, but there are few opportunities to debate specific policy choices in a wider context. Provincial elections for example, always focus almost solely on domestic as opposed to international issues.<sup>19</sup>

For developing regions where democracy is young, fragile and/or in a transition stage, paradiplomacy offers both promise and pitfalls. On the one hand, paradiplomacy presents an opportunity to bring the 'international' to the 'regional/local'; it can demystify aspects of international processes and stimulate public discussion around international issues. The cooperation aspects of most paradiplomacies can also stimulate a grassroots involvement that is conducive to democracy. On the other hand, decentralizing elements of decision-making may introduce unwanted instability in a country where democracy is not yet consolidated. Timing is a crucial variable when assessing how the development of paradiplomacy by a sub-state unit in a developing country impacts democracy.

### ***Conclusion***

The cases of paradiplomacy in advanced industrialized states point to at least three things that could be considered by regions in developing countries as they establish their own international action. First, paradiplomacy can serve many different purposes, including economic development, cultural diffusion, technological advancement and political affirmation. In this context, developing capacity for acting abroad may serve various interests in the long term. From the perspective of development, regions in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America have much to gain from connections with sub-state governments such as Quebec, Catalonia, Flanders and the Basque Country that can provide various types of expertise (as demonstrated by the many cooperation agreements linking the former to the latter). These connections can also strengthen institutional capacity as well as a regional political class.

Second, the development of a paradiplomacy necessarily involves domestic adjustments. Within the region, paradiplomacy involves establishing

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19) The same is true for federal elections in Canada.



structures to give directions to international action and administer programs. At the state-wide level, paradiplomacy means creating some channels (or exploiting existing ones in new ways) with the central government to exchange information and coordinate action. States will not necessarily welcome paradiplomacy, especially if it comes from groups that express a distinct identity or have nationalist aspirations because it plays into conceptions of national unity (for example, in a country like India). In this context, paradiplomacy may prove conflictual and intergovernmental relations become especially important.

Third, paradiplomacy presents both potential opportunities and pitfalls for democratic development, an issue particularly crucial for many regions in developing countries. On the plus side, connections with liberal-democratic governments can serve to diffuse these values and the enactment of cooperation projects can promote civic involvement and mobilization and the local level. On the downside, the decentralization of aspects of international action may hinder public consideration and deliberation of international relations since this is typically done within the (state) national context. Sub-state units escape easy categorization as international actors since they are neither sovereign states nor non-state actors in the fashion of social movements or non-governmental organizations.<sup>20</sup> However, their conceptualization as agents not only in domestic politics but also in the international arena appears increasingly necessary. Indeed, the globalization of paradiplomacy beyond the Western world is a process which, if it keeps gaining in strength, will require to fundamentally re-think agency in the international context.

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20) James Rosenau, 'Patterned Chaos in Global Life: Structure and Process in the Two Worlds of World Politics,' *International Political Science Review*, 9 (1988), 327-364.

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  - 2 Melissen (2005), p. 24.
  - 3 H. Butterfield, 'Diplomacy New and Historical', in H. Butterfield and M. Wight, *Diplomatic Investigations*, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1966) pp. 150-2.
  - 4 Butterfield (1966), p. 27.
  - 5 Dominic Kelly, 'Rice, Oil and the Atom: A Study of the Role of Key Material Resources in the Security and Development of Japan', *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 40, No 2 (2005), pp. 278-327.
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