

“Paradiplomazia”: La diplomazia degli enti sub-statali e le sue motivazioni

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Abstract

Since the 1980s, academics and scholars of international relations theory in some countries began to take interest in a new phenomenon that takes the widely accepted denomination of "paradiplomacy." According to the Greek etymology, the term is to be applied to all those activities that stand "next to diplomacy" or "beyond diplomacy" and that ultimately involve those entities placed "beyond the state," and therefore within its borders. Paradiplomacy really is the deployment of diplomatic activities of any sort led by non-State regional entities on an international level. Theorists, notably the Canadian André Lecours and the British Michael Keating, all agree that it is not yet possible to give an encompassing theory of “paradiplomacy” as this is a peculiar instrument that largely takes its definition on the interests of the single regions employing it.

In the case of culturally distinct regions enclosed in sovereign States (e.g. Quebec, Catalonia, and Flanders), the all-out effort to put a system of international relations into practice is largely conducted by the aim of projecting their own identity issues on the international level to give them recognition. Some of them, like Quebec, fight on the side of culture, language and tradition against a supposed central government that they deem incapable of adequately reflecting the Francophone spirit of Canada both internationally and amongst the community of the French-speaking States (that gather every two years in the summits of the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie*) and ultimately desire to transform into sovereign States. That is the case of what could be defined as “protodiplomacy”: the effort, led by a regional government, to employ a

well-structured system of international relations in the quest for full sovereignty. Others, like Flanders, are given *ius tractati* by the Constitution of their State and are almost autonomous in the conclusion of treaties with other States and regions.

Being Quebec the most prominent and all-embracing case, the first chapter of my thesis is dedicated to the straining effort that Quebec is making in order to have its cause echoed in the international community. The chapter begins with a reconstruction of the history of Francophone North America under the British crown and the failed effort to suppress the typical French spirit of Quebec in favor of English, the British Empire's only official language. The chapter focuses on the particularly close ties that still bring together Quebec and France, former motherland and closest ally in the quest for sovereignty, and the controversial parallel participation of Quebec, New Brunswick and Canada, each occupying a single seat in the *Francophonie* summits. The chapter also focuses on the two referenda on Quebec sovereignty, held in 1980 and 1995 respectively, and the acute strengthening of France-Quebec relations in the period of time between them and gives a brief account of what is the present perspective of the Quebec society toward the possibility of a third referendum and sovereignty in general.

However, although identity and culture issues are certainly extremely powerful motives for a region to engage in paradiplomatic activities, this is not always the case. In fact, the earliest examples of paradiplomacy in history involve the effort conducted by regional governments, such as that of Catalonia in the 1980s, in order to incentive foreign investment in their own territory. Moreover, the conclusion of partnership agreements in the fields of education, research and know-how has been extremely profitable for regions of less-developed countries such as the state of São Paulo in Brazil. These partnership agreements, negotiated between São Paulo and regions of developed countries, have allowed an extensive improvement in the adoption of modern

health and environmental standards and technologies that have eased the task of environmental protection and benefitted the quality of life of the citizens but also had an effect on the mobility of university students and researchers between São Paulo and the Western World. The State and the city of São Paulo are outstanding economic and academic centers in the Latin American context: the city hosts the greatest number of foreign consulates in the world, after New York City, and the São Paulo State University is continuously one of the most international institutions in the whole continent.

As the phenomenon is analyzed, it is clear that the capacity of engaging in international relations is no longer an exclusive prerogative of sovereign States and that regions will surpass it if they have considerable motives. The international community is, by definition, a continuously transforming system and it will remain so. A lot of ancient certainties have been battled by inverting trends and changing customary laws, and the international law has thus progressed, unceasingly adapting the new world orders. Could it be, then, argued that, provided a consistent employment of paradiplomatic instruments, regions can be recognized some form of embryonic international personality?