



Norteamérica. Revista Académica del  
CISAN-UNAM

ISSN: 1870-3550

namerica@unam.mx

Centro de Investigaciones sobre América  
del Norte  
México

Zepeda, Roberto

Paradiplomacy in North America: Canadian Provinces' Relations with Their U.S. and  
Mexican Counterparts

Norteamérica. Revista Académica del CISAN-UNAM, vol. 12, núm. 2, julio, 2017, pp. 1-23

Centro de Investigaciones sobre América del Norte

Distrito Federal, México

Available in: <http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=193753567004>

- How to cite
- Complete issue
- More information about this article
- Journal's homepage in [redalyc.org](http://redalyc.org)

redalyc.org

Scientific Information System

Network of Scientific Journals from Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain and Portugal

Non-profit academic project, developed under the open access initiative

# Paradiplomacy in North America: Canadian Provinces' Relations with Their U.S. and Mexican Counterparts

## Paradiplomacia en Norteamérica: las relaciones de las provincias canadienses con sus contrapartes mexicanas y estadounidenses

ROBERTO ZEPEDA\*

### ABSTRACT

Subnational governments have become increasingly relevant actors in North America. This article examines international relations between subnational governments and dynamics of governance in the region; specifically, the relations of Canadian provinces with their counterparts in the United States and Mexico. It suggests that factors such as economic globalization, federalism, and decentralization have triggered increased paradiplomatic activities by subnational units. It also shows that international relations between Canadian provinces and subnational units in the United States are more significant than those with Mexico and involve mainly issues of sustainable economic development, the environment, natural resources, security, culture, education, science, and technology. These regional subnational dynamics have been crucial to finding solutions to common global and regional problems through subnational avenues and to advancing new forms of multilateral cooperation.

**Key words:** North America, paradiplomacy, governance, subnational governments

### RESUMEN

Los gobiernos subnacionales se han convertido en actores cada vez más relevantes en Norteamérica. Este artículo examina las relaciones internacionales entre los gobiernos subnacionales y las dinámicas de gobernanza en la región; específicamente, las relaciones de las provincias canadienses con sus contrapartes en Estados Unidos y México. Se sugiere que el aumento en las actividades de paradiplomacia realizadas por las unidades subnacionales ha sido estimulado por factores como la globalización económica, el federalismo y la descentralización. Además, se demuestra que las relaciones internacionales entre las provincias canadienses y las unidades subnacionales en Estados Unidos son más significativas, y están vinculadas principalmente con temas como el desarrollo económico, el medio ambiente, los recursos naturales, el desarrollo sustentable, la seguridad, la cultura, así como la educación, la ciencia y la tecnología. Estas dinámicas subnacionales regionales han sido cruciales para encontrar soluciones a problemas en común mediante vías subnacionales y avanzar en nuevas formas de cooperación multilateral.

**Palabras clave:** Norteamérica, paradiplomacia, gobernanza, gobiernos subnacionales.

\* Researcher at the Center for Research on North America (CISAN), UNAM; [rzepeda@unam.mx](mailto:rzepeda@unam.mx).

## INTRODUCTION

Subnational states have emerged as some of the most relevant actors of the twenty-first century in both the national and international arenas. Economic globalization and political democratization have generated unprecedented challenges, the solutions to which in many cases go beyond the national state's capacities. This has created new spaces of power and decision-making leading to global governance. In this context, sovereign states have been unable to solve major global problems, which are now finding avenues of solution at the supranational, regional, and sub-national levels.

Two major trends in international relations have emerged over the last two decades. The first, outward, has promoted integration among countries, creating regional and supranational blocs. Economic globalization has taken place through free-trade agreements and financial flows, as well as other forms of political cooperation among countries, which, in turn, form regions. The second trend, inward, has generated increased decentralization of federal governments, providing greater authority to non-central governments. Increasingly autonomous subnational governments participate more both within the national and international spheres, as demonstrated by their policy-making ability, mainly as a result of decentralization processes in countries with federal systems. These two trends are clear in North America. Subnational governments have become increasingly relevant owing to a series of developments, such as federalism, decentralization, and economic globalization, resulting in free-trade regions and the fragmentation of the central state's power. Against this background, subnational governments have created transnational political cooperation power-centers, generating spaces of governance in the region.

Several scholars have examined Canadian provinces' international relations using diverse approaches; for instance, exploring their international activities and foreign trade (Kukucha, 2008), their role in implementing international treaties (Paquin, 2010), and the specific motivations underlying Quebec's international relations (Balthazar, 1999). In the case of the United States, subnational governments' international role has been examined considering the importance of their international activities (Hocking, 1993; Fry, 2004; McMillan, 2012). Mexican states have also increased their international relations since the 1990s and these have been studied by several scholars (Schiavon, 2004; 2014; Velázquez, Fry, and Stéphane, eds., 2014). However, no one has proposed a regional, comparative perspective, considering the international relations among the subnational units of Canada, the United States, and Mexico.

This article deals with the following questions: What factors account for the emergence and development of international relations between Canadian provinces and their counterparts in the United States and Mexico? What kinds of cooperation have

evolved in relations between Canadian provinces and subnational governments in the U.S. and Mexico? How relevant are these relations in regional governance?

I will examine here the international relations between subnational states in North America, specifically relations between the Canadian provinces and subnational states of the United States and Mexico, as well as the role those relations play in the region's commercial, political, and social governance dynamics. These regional subnational dynamics have been crucial to finding new solutions to common global and regional problems through subnational avenues and to advancing new forms of multilateral cooperation in key areas.

The hypothesis outlined here assumes that Canadian provinces' international activities have increased within North America mainly as a result of the economic and commercial integration propelled by the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement (CUSFTA), signed in 1988, and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which came into force on January 1, 1994. Similarly, it considers that federalism and decentralization have facilitated the development of subnational governments' international relations. Owing to these developments, Canadian provinces, as well as subnational states in the United States and Mexico, have gained greater autonomy to formulate their policies and conduct international activities.

The article is divided into two main sections. The first examines the conditions under which subnational governments have acquired international relevance in North America in order to identify their characteristics, dynamics, and the most important actors in regional governance. This section examines the increasing deterioration of the central state's power and the expansion of new centers of power or authority. The second section focuses on the definition and characteristics of paradiplomacy in North America; then, it assesses several cases of trans-border relations between subnational governments in the NAFTA region and, subsequently, the expansion of Canadian provinces' paradiplomacy. Finally, it explores the international relations between Canadian provinces and Mexican states, which cover diverse areas of cooperation.

## THE EMERGENCE OF PARADIPLOMACY IN NORTH AMERICA

A group of factors can help explain the increasing role of subnational governments in the international sphere. First, federalism and decentralization have played an important role because in some federal countries with levels of decentralization, subnational governments have extensive constitutional capacities for designing and implementing policies, enabling them to be involved in international activities. Second,

one consequence of economic globalization has been a fragmentation of the state, leading to a new form of governance. In this context, subnational governments have gained more leverage and power, becoming some of the most important actors in the international system. Considering these developments, we can more accurately assess the international activities of subnational units, also known as paradiplomacy.

According to Kuznetsov (2014), paradiplomacy refers to the participation or involvement of the constituent units (regions) of national states in international affairs; for example, the provinces in Canada, the U.S. states, autonomous communities in Spain, the Länder in Germany, and the oblasts and constituent republics in Russia. Regional governments conduct various international affairs: "They open trade and cultural missions abroad, sign treaties and agreements with foreign state and non-state actors; they participate in international networks of regional cooperation, and they sometimes even challenge the official foreign policy of their central governments through their statements or actions" (Kuznetsov, 2014: 3).

## FEDERALISM AND DECENTRALIZATION

It is relevant to examine the characteristics of federalism, since in several countries with federal systems, subnational governments have an extensive capacity to formulate policies in various areas, including international activities. The three NAFTA countries have federal systems; however, each has different levels of decentralization. Fry underlines that "Canada has the most decentralized system, with the 10 provincial governments exercising more policy-making latitude than either the 50 U.S. state governments or the 32 Mexican state governments" (2004: 4). Indeed, Canada can be regarded as one of the most decentralized countries in the world (Hague and Harrop, 2004: 232). In contrast, in the case of Mexico a centralist trend has dominated political life. The emergence and development of federalism differs in each country. For example, United States and Canada emerged as countries with states and provinces, respectively, which enjoyed certain autonomy with respect to the central government; whereas, in the case of Mexico, federalism was created by a centralist government.<sup>1</sup> Canada's federalism is multicultural, multinational, and bilingual (Burgess, 2006: 120); the federal government recognizes Canada's diversity, which explains the provinces' high level of decentralization and autonomy.

Decentralized governance, according to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), when carefully planned, effectively implemented, and adequately managed, can lead to a notable improvement in the well-being of citizens at the local

<sup>1</sup> For more about the characteristics of federalism in Mexico, see Curzio (2000).

level, and its cumulative effect can strengthen human development. However, decentralized governance is neither a panacea nor a quick fix (UNDP, 2004: 2). This international organization also states that the key to decentralized governance favorable to human development is to assure that the demands and voices of the poor, especially women, contribute to its design, execution, and monitoring. In the same way, Fry (2011) argues that subnational governments are more receptive to their citizens' needs and more adapted to their problems and that transferring responsibilities to lower levels of government can therefore contribute to more effective and efficient policy-making.

In Canada, provinces manage the central government's health, education, and welfare systems; they also set labor policies, among others. In 2011, around 47 percent of Canada's public expenditures were made on the provincial level, the highest percentage at this level among countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), while local governments managed 20 percent and the federal government, 28 percent (OECD, 2015). These capacities of the provinces allow them to design the implementation of international treaties that affect the areas under their jurisdiction (Paquin, 2010). In the same way, the high levels of public spending controlled by the provinces enable them to conduct international activities.

In the United States, subnational states also have significant leverage in certain areas of policy-making. Indeed, the country's historic evolution demonstrates that federalism has solved the problems of order, uncertainty, and economic decline; it also shows that it is functional to have a strong central federal government and at the same time allow the subnational states to preserve their autonomy (Márquez-Padilla, 2014: 131-133). John Kincaid sustains that subnational states of the U.S. have "limited international competence derived from their 1) constitutional authority to engage the international arena in limited ways as states but not as nation-states; 2) political freedom to pursue state-local interests internationally; and 3) governmental capacity to act independently in the international arena" (1999: 111). This author underlines that these competencies increased over the last decades of the twentieth century as subnational states have sought to promote exports and attract foreign investment.

In the case of Mexico, according to a 2013 OECD report, by 2009 both state and municipal governments in this country controlled about 38 percent of total public spending, while the federal government concentrated just over 60 percent. In fact, the proportion of public expenditure controlled by subnational governments has increased in recent decades. For example, in 1990, subnational states and municipalities altogether accounted for 10 percent of public spending in Mexico: this percentage had reached almost 40 percent by 2009. According to this study, increased subnational

government spending coincided with higher federal transfers for specific purposes (contributions). Decentralization in Mexico has been especially outstanding in social spending, particularly in education, health, and poverty alleviation (OECD, 2013).

However, political decentralization processes do not necessarily lead to more efficient policies and governance—especially in those countries that have not become consolidated democracies, where authoritarian practices persist, especially at the subnational level. For example, in the case of Mexico, the decentralization of police forces started in the early 1990s, but it has not generated more security in some subnational states where violence has proliferated. Similarly, the educational system has not improved with its decentralization, begun in the late 1980s, especially at the primary and secondary levels.

## GLOBALIZATION, GOVERNANCE, AND FRAGMENTATION OF THE STATE

According to Pierre (2013), the impact of globalization has been stronger on subnational economies and institutions, coinciding with significant domestic institutional change. During the 1980s and 1990s, economic policies prioritized neoliberal goals such as deregulation and reduction of the public sector. This left cities and regions less protected from international economic and political pressures. The combined effect of neoliberal policies and the reduction of subsidies from central to subnational governments forced many cities and regions to explore other sources of income and economic development, including international networks. Thus, globalization has generated processes such as subnational internationalization and the emergence of regional or transnational governance agreements.

Subnational governments have emerged as relevant international actors during the era of globalization. They have increasingly gained leverage in decision-making about the international agenda, participating in various transnational organizations with their counterparts abroad, leading to global and regional governance.

Governance is a process or a set of processes comprised mainly of markets, hierarchies, and networks, and is represented by a blurry distinction between the state and society—private organizations and institutions work jointly with public institutions—and the participation of a number of levels and layers (local, provincial, national, regional, and global); the processes through which international affairs are coordinated are increasingly identified as “global governance” (Heywood, 2010: 25). Governance has been defined as “the sum of regulations brought about by actors, processes as well as structures and justified with reference to a public problem” (Zürn, Wälti, and Enderlein, 2010: 6). Similarly, “governance encompasses the actors and processes

that make up a collective course of action, including the political negotiations, coalition building, lobbying, persuasion, and threats that accompany the policymaking and implementation process" (Zürn, Wälti, and Enderlein, 2010: 6). Multi-level governance involves a group of actors with important input to the policy-making process; one of them is subnational governments. In this context, the subnational levels are "polycentric" governance arrangements or "functional overlapping and competing jurisdictions" that play an important role within a multi-level context (Zürn, Wälti, and Enderlein, 2010: 7).

Some authors have observed that national governments are increasingly constrained by a system of multilevel governance—local, national, regional, and global—which can barely be controlled, or at least, monitored. For example, Rosenau argues that global problems are addressed through a bifurcated system, in which there are two universes of world politics: the first is "an interstate system of states and their national governments that has long dominated the course of events"; the second is "a multicentric system of diverse types of other collectivities that has lately emerged as a rival source of authority with actors that sometimes cooperate with, often compete with, and endlessly interact with the state-centric system" (Rosenau, 2003: 225).

According to Scholte, governance comprises "suprastate (regional and transworld) regimes that operate with some autonomy from the state." Furthermore, "many substate (municipal and provincial) governments today engage directly with spheres beyond their state" (2005: 186). In other words, governance in a globalized world has become distinctly multi-layered and intertwined. Regulation occurs at—and through interconnections among—municipal, provincial, national, regional, and global sites. In this context, no level prevails over the others, as was the case in the past with central state supremacy over the substate spheres. Accordingly, society in the contemporary globalized world is regulated in a "polycentric way," in which "governance tends to be diffuse, emanating from multiple locales at once, with points and lines of authority that are not always clear" (Scholte, 2005: 186).

The nation-state has deteriorated or fragmented worldwide in a decentralizing trend that gives more leverage to subnational governments to operate in both the national and international arenas. The sources of authority in the multi-centric world, identified by Rosenau, include the subnational governments, among many other actors, which become centers of power and authority in different ways. Thus, increasing activity of subnational actors in the international sphere has taken place mainly because of the restructuring of the nation-state within a context of economic globalization and political democratization.

As described below, North America is regarded as a polycentric region because governance is generated by several levels of government but also by diverse centers



of power (local, subnational, national, and supranational), as well as by a variety of actors. As mentioned above, NAFTA gathered Mexico, the United States, and Canada into a common free-trade area in 1994.

Economic integration has advanced during the NAFTA period. It is pertinent to underline that Canada's largest trade partner is the United States. Around three-quarters of Canadian exports go to the U.S., and two-thirds of Canadian imports come from there. Ontario is the Canadian province most dependent on the U.S. market, as approximately 90 percent of its exports go there. It is followed by Alberta, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Quebec, all with more than 80 percent of their exports going to the United States (Lecours, 2009). Alberta has been a prominent province in Canada-U.S. trade, since it is linked to priority issues on the U.S. agenda such as energy and oil.

Around 80 percent of Mexico's exports go to the United States, while approximately 50 percent of its imports come from there. Furthermore, "40 cents out of every dollar of goods exported by Mexico to the United States is Made in the USA. For Canadian exports to the United States, 25 percent of goods' added value originated in the United States" (Goujon, 2017). Since NAFTA was enacted, Mexico's exports to the U.S. and Canada have grown more than five-fold from US\$53 billion to US\$319 billion in 2015 (Wharton, 2016). In contrast, trade between Mexico and Canada is less significant.

At the same time, every NAFTA member has democratic and political systems as well as federal governments and, to a greater or lesser extent, a certain degree of autonomy for subnational governments. This autonomy enables them to perform various activities and establish relations with their counterparts throughout the region.

In this political and economic context, subnational governments have emerged as one of the more relevant actors in regional governance, manifested in diverse forms of transnational cooperation. The following sections examine the role of subnational governments in North America as international actors.

## PARADIPLMACY IN NORTH AMERICA

As mentioned above, subnational governments' power and leverage have increased amidst the decentralization and the fragmentation of the state, which has created new forms of regional governance. It is precisely in these conditions that subnational governments have increased their international activities or paradiplomacy.

Ivo Duchacek (1990), one of the first scholars to use the term, identifies three different forms of paradiplomacy: transborder regional paradiplomacy, transregional (or macroregional) paradiplomacy, and global paradiplomacy. Firstly, "transborder

regional paradiplomacy refers to transborder contacts –institutional, formal, and, above all, informal–, which are predominantly conditioned by geographic proximity and the resulting similarity in the nature of common problems and their possible solutions.” Secondly, “transregional paradiplomacy refers to the connections and negotiations between non-central governments that are not neighbors (in contrast to transborder regional paradiplomacy) but whose national governments are.” Finally, “global paradiplomacy consists of political-functional contacts with distant nations that bring non-central governments into contact not only with trade, industrial, or cultural centers on other continents but also with the various branches or agencies of foreign national governments” (Duchacek, 1990: 18-27).<sup>2</sup>

With regard to Canada, Vengroff and Rich contend that increased paradiplomacy is the result of diverse key factors, such as “increasing globalization, international (including continental) trade agreements, the on-going impact of federalism, nationalism, decentralization, existing (but somewhat ambiguous) constitutional provisions, and the expansion of international activity into spheres heretofore reserved for sub-national units” (2006: 106-107). Paradiplomacy has created important avenues of solution for the most serious and difficult global problems of the early twenty-first century, which traditional diplomatic activities, conducted by national governments, have been unsuccessful at resolving. This is the case in North America, where the relationships between these countries’ subnational governments have in some cases become institutionalized, creating forums and conferences that become permanent transnational spaces for cooperation. The following sections analyze various instances of transnational cooperation between bordering states of the region and examine the global issues that paradiplomatic avenues are focusing on in the region.

## TRANS-BORDER RELATIONS BETWEEN SUBNATIONAL GOVERNMENTS IN THE NAFTA REGION

In a political context characterized by decentralized federal systems, NAFTA has contributed to strengthening political and institutional links among Canada’s 10 provinces, Mexico’s 32 states, and the United States’ 50 states. Several cross-border bodies have been created to facilitate greater regional cooperation between subnational governments.

<sup>2</sup> Duchacek also refers to protodiplomacy “to describe those initiatives and activities of a non-central government abroad that graft a more or less separatist message on to its economic, social, and cultural links with foreign nations.” In this context, “the regional/ provincial parent authority uses its trade/cultural missions abroad to prepare the international ground for a future secession and recognition of a new sovereign unit” (Duchacek, 1990: 27), as is the case of Quebec in Canada.

Several border states in North America facing common challenges have constituted forums and permanent working groups; for example, four south-western U.S. states (California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas) and the six northern Mexican states (Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Tamaulipas, and Nuevo León) have met periodically to create and sign cooperation agreements on such diverse topics as economic development, commercial ports, education, and health and security, among others. These meetings are known as the Border Governors' Conference. The first conference convened in Cd. Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico, in 1980 and began the formal process of opening lines of communication among the 10 U.S. and Mexican border states. The conference is held each year, alternating locations between the United States and Mexico (Arizona Government, 2016). Apart from the Border Governors' Conference, other examples of relations between subnational governments in the United States and Mexico include the Arizona-Mexico Commission, the Border Legislative Conference, the Chihuahua-New Mexico Border Commission, and the Commission of the Californias (McMillan, 2012).

Similarly, several spaces exist in which relations between subnational governments in the United States, Canada, and Mexico have become institutionalized. Samuel McMillan observes that economic globalization led to the creation of cross-border organizations in U.S. states that border on Canada or Mexico, "drawing them into issues involving trade, border security, immigration, and environmental concerns" (2012: 78). These cross-border organizations include the Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers, the Council of Great Lakes Governors (CGLG), the Idaho-Alberta Task Force, the Montana-Alberta Bilateral Advisory Council, the Pacific Northwest Economic Region, and the Western Canadian Premiers and Western Governors Association (McMillan, 2012). These and other similar regional organizations are described in the next section.

### **The Conference of Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers (CGLSLGP)**

This conference was founded in 1983 and is comprised of the following members: the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin in the United States, and the provinces of Ontario and Quebec in Canada. Through the conference, governors and premiers work together to promote economic growth in the region, estimated at US\$5 billion, but also to protect the world's largest fresh-water system (CGLSLGP, 2016).<sup>3</sup> The conference is the result of

<sup>3</sup> For more specific information about this organization, see <http://www.cglslgp.org>.

over 30 years' work by the Council of the Great Lakes to encourage and facilitate environmentally responsible economic development.

### **The Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers (NEG/ECP)**

This conference covers a significant part of the transnational activity in the region. One of the most enduring trans-border, regional mechanisms, it was established in 1976 and has paid especial attention to issues such as sustainable development and the environment. Similarly, the member states have formulated a series of actions to reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>4</sup> The founding members are 11 subnational governments: 5 provinces in Canada (New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Quebec) and 6 states in the United States (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont).

### **The Southeastern US-Canadian Provinces Alliance (SEUS-CP)**

This strategic alliance between the southeastern U.S. states and Canada's provinces was established in 2007 in Montreal, Quebec, to promote trade and investment opportunities between and among its members. U.S. member states include Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee; whereas Canadian members are the provinces of Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, and Quebec. This alliance holds an annual conference headed by the governors of each state, and the Canadian premiers or their representatives (business and industrial leaders). It enables the leaders of southeastern U.S. states and Canadian provinces to negotiate with a network of leaders from both the public and private sectors. The most relevant issues addressed are new communications technologies, advanced manufacturing, and clean technology (SEUS-CP, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> For more details about this conference, see Healy, Van Nunatten, and López-Vallejo (2014).

### **Council of State Governments-Eastern Regional Conference (CSG/ERC)**

The purpose of the Council of State Governments-Eastern Regional Conference (CSG-ERC) is to facilitate the exchange of ideas among policymakers, business leaders, and the academic community of the 18 member states. These subnational governments include the 11 northeastern U.S. states, from Maine to Maryland, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands; and Canada's provinces of Quebec, New Brunswick, Ontario, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island. The conference headquarters has been located in New York City since 1937. For more than 70 years, its members have concentrated on training public officials regarding the problems and challenges facing the region. By facilitating cooperation among its members, this forum promotes multi-state or regional solutions to common problems. Similarly, it conducts research and policy analysis; holds seminars and conferences; and periodically publishes newsletters related to various topics such as agriculture, energy/environment, health, transportation and regional trends.

### **The Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER)**

Founded in 1991, the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER) is a public-private, non-profit organization whose members are the U.S. states of Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Montana, and Washington, and the Canadian provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, plus the Yukon and Northwest Territories. Its mission is to increase the economic well-being and quality of life of the region's citizens, while maintaining and improving the environment. Among its goals are to coordinate provincial and state policies throughout the region; identify and promote "models of success"; promote greater regional collaboration; enhance the region's competitiveness in both domestic and international markets; leverage regional influence in Ottawa and Washington, D.C.; and achieve continued economic growth while preserving the region's natural resources (PNWER, 2016). This organization was born out of the original vision of establishing a collaborative body in the region to face the common problems and promote the interests of the Canadian provinces and U.S. states.

### **Summit of North American Governors and Premiers**

In late October 2015, Canadian premiers met with the governors of the United States and Mexico at the very first Summit of North American Governors and Premiers in

Colorado. This summit boasted the participation of a total of seven U.S. governors, six Mexican governors, and two Canadian premiers. The aim was to promote cross-border dialogue and seek joint opportunities in the economy, politics, energy, sustainable development, and the environment. The six Mexican governors who attended the summit were from the states of Hidalgo, Jalisco, Puebla, Quintana Roo, Yucatán, and México and came as representatives of Mexico's National Conference of Governors (Conago). The U.S. governors of Colorado, Utah, Michigan, South Dakota, New Mexico, the Virgin Islands, and Illinois participated in the summit as members of the National Governors Association (NGA); and the Canadian premiers of the Yukon and New Brunswick participated as representatives of the Council of the Federation (COF) (NGA, 2015). It was a cooperative meeting of the three national associations that brought together subnational authorities of the three North American countries.

Considering all of the above, the involvement of subnational governments at the international level in North America is significant and diverse. I have detected the three forms of paradiplomacy identified by Duchacek (1990). We can say that subnational relations are not only limited to bordering states (transborder regional paradiplomacy), but that cooperation organizations and forums between distant subnational states in neighboring countries have also been created (regional paradiplomacy). Cases of international relations between subnational states of distant countries also exist (global paradiplomacy). Recently, the number of international offices of Canadian provinces in Asia has increased, especially in China. Nevertheless, it is evident that transborder regional paradiplomacy predominates in the case of Canadian provinces and U.S. states.

## DIMENSIONS OF CANADIAN PROVINCES' PARADIPLMACY

Canadian provinces have developed transnational relations with their counterparts in the United States to solve common problems and manage resources, as well as to promote economic exchanges and attract investment. In other regions of the world, similar dynamics are taking place. Fry (2011) underlines that the Flanders region (Belgium), Catalonia and the Basque Country (Spain), and Quebec (Canada) have the most active foreign relations programs in terms of money spent and personnel devoted to international activities. The Canadian province with the most extensive international relations is Quebec, followed by Alberta, Ontario, and British Columbia. According to Lecours, Canada's provinces' motivation for international activity "is primarily functional," as "it serves to further economic interests through the

facilitation of exports and the attraction of foreign investment as well as to share information, and sometimes coordinate policy, with neighboring U.S. states" (2009: 127). Similarly, some Canadian cities such as Montreal (Quebec), Vancouver (British Columbia) and Toronto (Ontario) "have also developed an international dimension" (Lecours, 2009: 127).

In Canada, provincial governments are free to act internationally within their areas of jurisdiction, laid out in the Canadian Constitution. The federal government is expected to consult the provinces before signing an international treaty that affect provinces in their areas of jurisdiction (Fry, 2011).

Vengroff and Rich point out that "Quebec has been the most active province when it comes to paradiplomatic activity" (2006: 119). They highlight the dimension of Quebec's paradiplomacy: "It has a fully staffed ministry solely dedicated to international relations. Since 1964, Quebec has signed more than 550 international agreements, of which more than 300 are still in effect, with 79 different countries." The same authors also remark that this province has a considerable presence overseas, with a network of 28 separate offices abroad in 17 countries, including the United States, Latin America, Europe, and Asia (2006: 119). Furthermore, Quebec has created its own Ministry of International Relations with more than 550 personnel and an annual budget exceeding US\$100 million (Fry, 2011).

While most paradiplomatic activities of Canadian provinces are directed at the United States, their focus differs notably according to the provinces' economic, social, and geographic characteristics. Thus, British Columbia's activities have concentrated on issues such as forestry and salmon, Alberta has focused on oil and cattle. These differences reflect each province's economic strengths. In terms of regional cooperation, British Columbia has directed important paradiplomatic efforts to forging links with its neighboring states of the U.S. Pacific Northwest; and the Atlantic provinces have directed most of their efforts to developing relations with the nearby states of New England in the United States (Petter, 2006). Considering all this, economic interest is one of the main factors explaining the expansion of Canadian provinces' international relations in recent decades.

During this era of economic globalization, characterized by an increasing interconnection between countries, many subnational governments under federal systems have decided to be more dynamic in international relations. "Think globally and act locally" has become predominant "in an era of globalization as local and regional levels of government attempt to implement policies that will assist their local constituents to take advantage of the positive features of globalization while mitigating the negative effects" (Fry, 2004: 9).

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS BETWEEN CANADIAN PROVINCES AND MEXICAN STATES

International activities of subnational states in Mexico have expanded over the last two decades or so in various areas, such as the economy and trade, and also in the political realm. Several subnational governments in Mexico have an office or, in some cases, a ministry, assigned to managing international relations, and several states have representative offices in the United States, in regions with important immigrant populations originating from their jurisdictions (Parks, 2012).

Mexico's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SRE) has labeled the external actions and the increasing participation of sub-states and municipalities in international affairs as "federative diplomacy," "paradiplomacy," and "local diplomacy" (SRE, 2014a). According to the SRE, this kind of diplomacy is an effective tool for inserting local governments and their communities into the globalization processes and economic integration taking place in the international sphere. The subnational states face challenges that require greater competitiveness and efficiency, such as attracting foreign investment, promoting their interests abroad, participating in international cooperation projects, and establishing ongoing connections with their migrant communities abroad (SRE, 2014a).

Mexican subnational states have increased their international activities since the early 1990s, due mainly to the economic globalization started in the 1980s and the political democratization achieved in 2000. According to Schiavon (2004), Mexican states' international activities have taken place in at least six ways: 1) establishing representative offices by the subnational states in other countries' capitals or cities; 2) organizing highly advertised journeys of state governors to other countries; 3) sending missions of local officials abroad; 4) hosting international trade fairs for local products; 5) deepening relations between subnational states at the regional level (specifically between border states); and 6) local officials participating in meetings of international organizations.

Mexican subnational governments and Canadian provinces signed 23 mutual cooperation agreements between 1998 and 2009 (Parks, 2012). The areas covered included trade, agriculture, forestry, and the environment. Moreover, the number of agreements between Mexican states and Canadian provinces has significantly increased since 2006, mainly between a small number of non-central governments (Quebec, Alberta, Ontario, Manitoba, and British Columbia) and the Mexican states of Nuevo León, Jalisco, Campeche, Mexico City, and Veracruz (Parks, 2012).

By 2016, specific cooperation agreements between Mexican states and Canadian provinces had increased to 25 (SRE, 2016). Most of these were signed by Jalisco and Manitoba; Jalisco and Alberta; Jalisco and Quebec; Nuevo León and British Columbia;



Nuevo León and Quebec; Nuevo León and Quebec-Americas Office for Youth; Campeche and Nova Scotia; Guanajuato and Quebec; and Mexico City and the International Centre for Research and Development Canada. The main areas of cooperation were health, education, science and technology, training, sports, environment, pollution, the economy, industry, trade, tourism, culture, technology, and agriculture, among others. The Mexican states that signed the most agreements with Canadian provinces were Jalisco and Nuevo León, while the most active Canadian provinces in this regard were Alberta and Quebec.

Some Mexican states have international relations offices. Jalisco is the state with the highest level of international activities. It has established twinning agreements with 11 states and provinces in six countries. These agreements cover various topics, including education, health, tourism, culture, commerce, and environmental protection, as well as science and technology, among others. Jalisco established these agreements with Alberta and Manitoba in Canada; and with Wisconsin, Maryland, Missouri, Idaho, and Washington in the United States. The majority of agreements reached with U.S. states concerned migrants' needs. The accord with Alberta included a temporary worker program promoting safe, legal, well-structured migration (Gobierno de Jalisco, 2013).

Furthermore, Jalisco has established international agreements of specific cooperation in different areas with two subnational states and two countries. It signed specific cooperation agreement with Quebec in 2009 regarding such diverse themes as education, cultural industries, animation, economics, tourism, and information technology (Gobierno de Jalisco, 2013). In the educational field, Jalisco has an impressive list of international cooperation accords, including more than 170 agreements with partners in over 30 countries.

For its part, the Mexico City government has recently established the International Affairs Office (CGAI), responsible for managing the process of internationalizing Mexico City. It has implemented several programs to promote trade, tourism, and cultural exchange to advance Mexico City's attractiveness internationally and to strengthen ties of friendship and cooperation with cities and countries across the hemisphere and the world. The case of Mexico City is important because it is not only the capital of the country but also the social and economic center of a metropolitan area of more than 20 million people. The CGAI is responsible for directing and coordinating official efforts to position Mexico City as a global actor, one that addresses strategic issues for the city through dialogue and international cooperation, while achieving its objectives for growth and development (CGAI, 2015). Mexico City has signed specific international cooperation agreements with Quebec in Canada but also with other subnational entities in the U.S. (Chicago and Los Angeles).

Nuevo León is another important subnational state in Mexico in terms of international activities. It has forged international relations through twinning and cooperation agreements with several countries, subnational governments, and international organizations. In North America, Nuevo León has established agreements with British Columbia and Quebec in Canada and with Texas in the United States. The areas covered by these agreements are diverse: with British Columbia, technology and forestry; in Quebec, education, culture, and the economy; and with Texas, education.

As shown, several subnational states have increased their international activities in order to promote their interests abroad, mainly trade and attracting foreign investment but also exchanges in areas such as the environment and sustainable development, as well as education, science, and technology, among others. The specific forms of cooperation range from twinning agreements to more specific collaboration and the establishment of representative offices abroad, to mention but a few. These international activities undertaken by subnational governments are crucial, as many local problems are being tackled in these transnational spaces of collaboration between subnational actors from different countries.

## CONCLUSIONS

Increasing economic integration in North America has facilitated other forms of integration through the actions undertaken by subnational governments. This has occurred due to the fragmentation of the central state's power, which has led to the emergence of various sources of authority both at the national and international levels.

This article has examined subnational governments' international relations, especially within the North American region. It has found that the levels of interaction between Canadian provinces and U.S. states are very significant, as can be seen in the various forms of cooperation examined here. Relations between Canadian provinces and Mexican states are less significant, as they are limited to a small number of cooperation agreements. This can be explained by the high levels of decentralization in both Canada and the United States, where subnational governments have more capacity to formulate policies and control public spending, especially in Canada. Therefore, federalism and centralization proved to be more relevant factors accounting for the development of paradiplomacy in the region. This is confirmed by the high levels of international activities of Canadian provinces with their counterparts in the United States.

The participation of subnational governments contributes to the governance of the region through spaces of transnational cooperation with other subnational units,

which in most cases become institutional forums. These forums have brought together several Canadian provinces and U.S. states to coordinate endeavors to address common challenges in different areas, such as the environment, natural resources, sustainable development, security, culture, as well as education, science, and technology. Most of these agreements and policies are circumscribed to the jurisdictional areas of subnational governments, but at the same time, they reveal a certain degree of autonomy with regard to the central government.

Accordingly, subnational governments contribute significantly to North America's governance through the formulation of regional policies to address the common regional challenges mentioned above. In this way, subnational governments are increasingly important actors in the region's governance, mainly through their international relations with their counterparts as well as other international actors.

As has been shown, paradiplomatic activities are highly diverse and have different motivations, making it difficult to encapsulate such activities within the single concept of paradiplomacy, particularly considering the characteristics and aims of the subnational actors. In further studies, it will be necessary to distinguish the different kinds of paradiplomacy.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### ARIZONA GOVERNMENT

2016 "Border Governors Conference," <https://tourism.az.gov/border-governors-conference>.

### BALTHAZAR, L.

1999 "The Quebec Experience: Success or Failure?" *Regional & Federal Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 153-169.

### BÉLANGER, C.

2008 "Canadian Federalism—Division of Powers (ss. 91-95 of the Constitution Act 1867)," Marianopolis College, November 14, <http://faculty.marianopolis.edu/c.belanger/QuebecHistory/readings/Canadadivisionofpowers.html>.

### BURGESS, M.

2006 *Comparative Federalism: Theory and Practice*, New York, Routledge.

## CGAI (COORDINACIÓN GENERAL DE ASUNTOS INTERNACIONALES)

2015 *Ciudad de México Internacional, 2012-2015*, Mexico City, Gobierno de la Ciudad de México.

## CGLSLGP (CONFERENCE OF GREAT LAKES AND ST. LAWRENCE GOVERNORS AND PREMIERS)

2016 <http://www.cgslslgp.org/>.

## CSG/ERC (COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS EASTERN REGIONAL CONFERENCE)

2016 <http://www.csg-erc.org/>.

## CURZIO, L.

2000 "El federalismo mexicano: balance y perspectivas," in G. Ibarra and A. L. Ruelas, eds., *México y Canadá en la globalización: fronteras tensionadas en América del Norte*, Mexico City, Porrúa.

## DUCHACEK, I.

1990 "Perforated Sovereignties: Towards a Typology of New Actors in International Relations," in H. J. Michelmann and P. Soldatos, eds., *Federalism and International Relations: The Role of Sub-national Units*, Oxford, Clarendon Press.

## EMBAJADA DE MÉXICO EN ESTADOS UNIDOS

2012 "El embajador Arturo Sarukhán participa en XXX Conferencia de Gobernadores Fronterizos en Albuquerque, Nuevo Mexico," October 3, <http://embamex.sre.gob.mx/eua/index.php/es/comunicados2012/591-el-embajador-arturo-sarukhan-participa-en-xxx-conferencia-de-gobernadores-fronterizos-en-albuquerque-nuevo-mexico>.

## FRY, E. H.

2011 "Federalism and Foreign Relations," in G. T. Kurian, J. E. Alt, S. Chambers, G. Garret, M. Levi, and P. D. McClain, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Political Science*, Washington, D.C., CQPress.

2004 "The Role of Sub-National Governments in North American Integration. Thinking North America," Ottawa, Institute for Research on Public Policy.

## GOBIERNO DE JALISCO

2013 *Relaciones internacionales de Jalisco. La estrategia de la Dirección de Asuntos Internacionales del despacho del C. Gobernador*, Guadalajara, Gobierno de Jalisco.

GOUJON, R.

2017 "Preserving Order amid Change in NAFTA," Stratfor, March 14, <https://www.stratfor.com/weekly/preserving-order-amid-change-nafta>, accessed March 21, 2017.

HAGUE, R., and M. HARROP

2004 *Comparative Government and Politics*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan.

HEALY, R. G., D. VAN NIJNATTEN, and M. LÓPEZ-VALLEJO

2014 *Environmental Policy in North America: Approaches, Capacity, and the Management of Transboundary Issues*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press.

HEYWOOD, A.

2010 *Global Politics*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan.

HOCKING, B.

1993 *Localizing Foreign Policy: Non-Central Governments and Multilayered Diplomacy*, London, St. Martin's Press.

KINCAID, J.

1999 "The International Competence of US States and Their Local Governments," in Francisco Aldecoa, ed., *Paradiplomacy in Action: The Foreign Relations of Subnational Governments*, New York, Routledge.

KUKUCHA, C. J.

2008 *The Provinces and Canadian Foreign Trade Policy*, Vancouver, UBC Press.

KUZNETSOV, A.

2014 *Theory and Practice of Paradiplomacy*, New York, Routledge.

LECOURS, A.

2009 "Canada," *Foreign Relations in Federal Countries*, in H. Michelmann, ed., Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press/Forum of Federations.

MÁRQUEZ-PADILLA, P. C.

2014 *Justicia internacional. Ideas y reflexiones*, Mexico City, CISAN, UNAM.

McMILLAN, S. L.

2012 *The Involvement of State Governments in U.S. Foreign Relations*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan.

NAÍM, M.

2013 *El fin del poder*, Bogota, Debate.

NGA (NATIONAL GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION)

2015 "North American Leaders Meet for First-Ever Summit," October 31, <http://www.nga.org/cms/home/news-room/news-releases/2015--news-releases/col2-content/north-american-leaders-summit.html>.

OECD (ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT)

2015 *Government at a Glance 2015*, Paris, OECD.

2013 *Estudios Económicos de la OCDE: México 2013*, Mexico City, Centro de la OCDE para América Latina.

PAQUIN, S.

2010 "Federalism and Compliance with International Agreements: Belgium and Canada Compared," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, vol. 5, nos. 1-2, pp. 173-197.

PARKS, D.

2012 "Nuevos polos de poder e influencia," in A. Bugailiskis and A. Rozental, eds., *México y Canadá: la agenda pendiente*, Mexico City, CISAN, UNAM.

PETTER, A.

2006 "Canadian Paradiplomacy in Practice: Confessions of a Paradiplomat," paper presented at the conference "The International Relations of the Regions: Subnational Actors, Paradiplomacy and Multi-Level Governance," Zaragoza, October.

PIERRE, J.

2013 *Globalization and Governance*, London, Edward Elgar.

PNWER (PACIFIC NORTHWEST ECONOMIC REGION)

2016 "Background and History," <http://www.pnwer.org/about-us.html>.

ROSENAU, J. N.

- 2006 *The Study of World Politics: Globalization and Governance*, vol. 2, New York, Routledge.
- 2003 "Governance in a New Global Order," in D. Held and A. McGrew, eds., *Governing Globalization: Power, Authority and Global Governance*, Cambridge, UK, Polity Press.

SCHIAVON, J.

- 2014 "Mexico's Substate Diplomacy Vis-a-Vis North America," in R. Velázquez, E. H. Fry, and S. Paquin, eds., *The External Relations of Local Governments in North America after NAFTA: Trends and Perspectives*, Mexicali, Mexico, Universidad Autónoma de Baja California.
- 2013 "Prólogo," *Relaciones Internacionales de Jalisco*, Guadalajara, Gobierno de Jalisco.
- 2004 "La política externa de las entidades federativas mexicanas: un estudio comparativo con seis federaciones," *Integración & comercio*, vol. 21.

SCHOLTE, J. A.

- 2005 *Globalization: A Critical Introduction*, Houndmills Basingstoke, UK, Palgrave MacMillan.

SEUS-CP (SOUTHEASTERN UNITED STATES-CANADIAN PROVINCES ALLIANCE)

- 2016 <http://seuscp.com/us/>.

SRE (SECRETARÍA DE RELACIONES EXTERIORES)

- 2016 "Coordinación política," [www.coordinacionpolitica.sre.gob.mx/](http://www.coordinacionpolitica.sre.gob.mx/).
- 2014a "América del Norte del siglo XXI: construyendo la región más dinámica y competitiva del mundo," <http://saladeprensa.sre.gob.mx/index.php/es/comunicados/3728-050>.
- 2014b "Gobiernos locales," <http://www.sre.gob.mx/coordinacionpolitica/index.php/diplomacia-local>.
- n.d. [www.coordinacionpolitica.sre.gob.mx/](http://www.coordinacionpolitica.sre.gob.mx/).

UNDP (UNITED NATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME)

- 2004 *Decentralized Governance for development. A Combined Practice Note on Decentralization, Local Governance and Urban/Rural Development*, New York, UNDP.

## UNITED STATES EMBASSY IN MEXICO

2014 "Bilateral Trade Fact-Sheet," July, [http://photos.state.gov/libraries/mexico/310329/july2014/2014\\_07\\_Bilateral%20Trade.pdf](http://photos.state.gov/libraries/mexico/310329/july2014/2014_07_Bilateral%20Trade.pdf).

## VENGROFF, R., and J. RICH

2006 "Foreign Policy by Other Means: Paradiplomacy and the Canadian provinces," in P. James, N. Michaud, and M. J. O'Reilly, eds., *Handbook of Canadian Policy*, Toronto, Lexington Books.

## VELÁZQUEZ, R., EARL H. FRY, and P. STÉPHANE, eds.

2014 *The External Relations of Local Governments in North America after NAFTA: Trends and Perspectives*, Mexicali, Mexico, Universidad Autónoma de Baja California.

## ZÜRN, MICHAEL, SONIA WÄLTI, and HENRIK ENDERLEIN

2010 "Introduction," in H. Enderlein, S. Wälti and M. Zürn, eds., *Handbook on Multi-Level Governance*, Cheltenham, UK, Edward Elgar.

## WHARTON, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

2016 "The Hidden Costs of a Possible U.S.–Mexico Trade War," August 5, <http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/hidden-costs-possible-u-s-mexico-trade-war/>, accessed in August 2017.