

THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF PARADIPLOMACY

Edited by
Jorge A. Schiavon,
Joanna Ciesielska-Klikowska,
Tomasz Kamiński, and
Rafael Velázquez Flores

First published 2026

ISBN: 978-1-032-99509-0 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-041-00209-3 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-60868-4 (ebk)

Chapter 8

COMPARATIVE PARADIPLOMACY

Jorge A. Schiavon and Rafael Velázquez Flores

(CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003608684-11

The funder of the Open Access of this chapter is
Universidad Iberoamericana.



Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

8

COMPARATIVE PARADIPLOMACY

Jorge A. Schiavon and Rafael Velázquez Flores

Introduction

The comparative study of paradiplomacy is relatively recent. However, the comparison of domestic and foreign policies of States has been an important academic tradition for several decades. Comparative Foreign Policy (CFP) is a branch of knowledge that combines elements of both the discipline of International Relations and Political Science (Lantis 2017). In addition, this type of analysis also requires economic, sociological, legal, and other considerations. The same is true for Comparative Paradiplomacy (CPD), whose main objective is to analyze the international relations of subnational governments (SNG) comparatively, based on specific criteria and factors to identify their differences and similarities. Therefore, many of the strategies of CFP are replicable in the study of CPD.

The study of CPD helps understand phenomena in the framework of world, domestic, and subnational politics, especially conflicts and cooperation processes. To do this, it is necessary to consider internal and external variables that allow the comparative study to be carried out. In this regard, several authors have made significant contributions to this end in the area of CFP, which applies to CPD analysis.

A prominent author of CFP was Rosenau (1980). He classified States by: size (large or small), political system (open or closed), and economic development (developed or underdeveloped). At the same time, Rosenau proposed five levels for analyzing foreign policy: the role variable, the social, the governmental, the individual, and the systemic. Almond (1958), a leading specialist in comparative politics, also contributed to the development of the CFP. He proposed that, in order to conduct CFP, three fundamental aspects should be analyzed: (1) historical background; (2) the characteristics of the foreign policy decision-making process; and (3) the essence of foreign policy, which contemplated interests, objectives, and means.

Another important effort to develop a theoretical basis for FPA was the research project known as CREON (Comparative Research on the Events of Nations) (Hermann 1992) which proposed seven theoretical perspectives for the comparison of foreign policies which are also applicable to paradiplomacy: (1) personal characteristics of political leaders, (2) structures and decision-making processes, (3) political features of regimes, (4) national attributes of societies, (5) properties of the international system, (6) previous behaviors, and (7) changes in

the situation that affect foreign policy. Likewise, Beasley et al. (2012) compared 13 countries from different regions, using population, GDP, military spending, the number of military personnel, the Human Development Index, the type of government, and the freedom status of each country. Their book contemplates external, internal, and individual variables. Then, Laura Neack (2018) draws on different theories and analytical models. She uses Kenneth Waltz's three levels of analysis, Robert Putnam's double-level game, and Graham T. Allison's models (rational actor, bureaucratic model, and organizational models). She also contemplates other options, such as realism, institutional liberalism, and other alternative theories.

In terms of CPD, the most important contributions to the literature are Kuznetsov (2015), Tavares (2016), and Schiavon (2019). All of them use several of the previous strategies of FPA to study paradiplomacy: Kuznetsov seeks to organize and summarize the different theories that have been used to study paradiplomacy; Tavares analyzes comparatively the implementation of paradiplomacy; finally, Schiavon conducts a deep comparative study of the paradiplomatic activities of eleven federal States of all regions of the world. Finally, Velázquez Flores et al. (2024) conduct a CFP analysis of 25 countries worldwide using a methodology that combines all previous efforts of FPA and CPD. This methodology will be presented in this chapter, arguing that it can be used to conduct systematic CPD analysis of the paradiplomatic activities of subnational governments between countries in all regions of the world, or within these countries.

Explaining Paradiplomacy Comparatively

A SNG's capacity for international action is closely linked to the power it has to achieve its policy objectives. It is evident that any SNG can set the objectives that best suit it and formulate the paradiplomacy strategy that it considers most appropriate. However, achieving the proposed objectives and achieving the expected results depend on the SNG's capacity for international action. In effect, the international action capacity of a SNG is the possibility of achieving their interests based on certain subnational, national, and international circumstances. However, it must be remembered that the capacity for paradiplomatic action is variable because it changes according to the relative power that a SNG has vis-à-vis other SNGs and its national State.

In CPD analysis, a fundamental step is evaluating a SNG's capacity to achieve its interests. In fact, one of the permanent objectives of SNG is to maximize such capacity. The tangible and intangible variables that determine this capacity are: economic power, economic development, size and geographical position, population, technological-material bases, natural resources, international prestige, social cohesion, internal political stability, among others. These variables are, at the same time, factors that determine the behavior of SNG in the international arena (Figure 8.1).

Geographical factors are fundamental in the design of paradiplomacy. In fact, geopolitics is a significant variable for the behavior of SNG on the world and national chessboards. For example, the size of the SNG and its geographical position can have a decisive influence on the type of relationships it has. For example, SNGs that have international borders can generate border conflicts or, at the same time, can bring greater cooperation schemes.

Within the geographical variables, climate, access to the sea, hydrographic characteristics (possession of rivers and lakes), and orographic characteristics (terrain) can influence the type of international behavior of SNG. In this same logic, possessing natural resources or their scarcity confer advantages and disadvantages on SNG. A large possession of these

Endogenous variables	Exogenous variables
<i>Tangible variables</i> 1. Geography 2. Natural resources 3. Agricultural and industrial production 4. Population 5. Technological development 6. Military power <i>Intangible variables</i> 1. Political system 2. Political stability 3. Organization of decision-making process 4. Social cohesion 5. State ideology 6. International image and prestige	1. International events 2. Balance of power 3. Degree of interdependence and polarization of system 4. Existence and functioning of international organizations 5. International public opinion 6. Pressure from other States 7. Interests of other transnational actors

Figure 8.1 Variables that impact the international capacities of SNG.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

resources usually improves the margin for paradiplomatic action. There may be SNGs with great natural wealth, but they do not have the technology to exploit them. In this case, this feature represents a disadvantage due to the dependency factor.

Demographic factors also have an important impact on SNG behavior. The most critical variables are population, location (rural, urban, border, or coastal), age, health, birth and mortality rates. SNGs with large populations usually have advantages because it means it has more workforce, purchasing power, and the possibility of having more bureaucratic personnel. However, if a SNG is highly populated, but its inhabitants do not have access to sources of employment or educational opportunities, then the trait becomes a disadvantage. The above situation can generate a SNG with high migration rates. Since the population cannot find employment options in their territory, they must migrate elsewhere in search of better opportunities.

Economic factors also determine the conduct of SNGs at the global level. For example, the economic development model established by a national government is also intimately linked to paradiplomatic policy strategies. With a model open to trade and foreign investment, SNGs will be incentivized to have a greater presence in the international system. On the other hand, with closed and protectionist models, SNGs will carry out fewer paradiplomatic actions. Therefore, a profound change in the economic development model may also imply a substantive shift in paradiplomacy. On the other hand, the level of economic development directly impacts SNG's paradiplomacy. The most economically powerful SNGs will have greater capacity for international action. On the other hand, the least developed SNGs will generally have a weaker position in their ability to act. In this same economic logic, technological factors are also relevant. SNGs with high scientific and technological development may have a better negotiating position. SNGs that do not invest in these aspects are destined to have a dependency relationship.

Among the internal intangible factors are political-ideological ones. Here, we can first consider the characteristics and functioning of the local political system. Political stability is

a significant variable. A politically powerful SNG will have greater room for action in its international activities. On the other hand, an unstable SNG becomes more vulnerable to external threats. Social cohesion is also essential. The absence of political polarization and the population's support for their government can strengthen the capacity for action on global issues. Ideological factors can also determine the type of international behavior. SNGs with liberal and democratic ideology will act differently from SNGs under totalitarian regimes or centralized power. Among democratic countries and SNGs, the possibilities of cooperation are greater, and the number of options for conflict is reduced.

Socio-cultural factors are also determinants of SNG paradiplomacy. The most prominent variables are the traditions, SNG's identity, values, and culture. Some SNGs seek to project their culture as a distinctive element of their paradiplomacy. This activity can improve their image abroad, generating significant soft power that can be used as an instrument to achieve external objectives. The cultural wealth of SNGs attracts tourism, which can generate foreign exchange income and job creation. One function of paradiplomacy is promoting the SNG's image to attract tourism.

Identity is a determining variable in the paradiplomacy of SNGs. SNGs that identify with each other usually develop bonds of solidarity and cooperation. Those that do not can generate conflictive interactions. Finally, some SNGs seek to project their socio-cultural values abroad.

Within the external factors, the balance of power in the international system is essential. This aspect refers to how power and wealth are distributed in the world. It can be unipolar, bipolar, or multipolar. The balance of power determines the rules and processes that are adopted in the game of international politics. In this case, the role of international organizations is essential to maintain a certain balance of power. The argument here is that a profound change in the power structure has a direct impact on paradiplomacy: more stable, globalized, and interdependent international systems generate the incentives for more paradiplomatic actions.

Paradiplomatic objectives are those purposes that a SNG establishes beyond its borders to meet the population's needs or solve problems. In general, they seek to modify a previously established situation. The objectives must be concrete formulations derived from the interests of the SNG and the prevailing global situation, and according to the SNG's capacity for paradiplomatic action. They must be clear and aimed at solving a problem or achieving a specific goal. In addition, the objectives must be realistic since it is useless to set impossible goals.

On the other hand, paradiplomatic strategies are specific activities that help achieve the SNG's policy objectives. In general, strategies are more concrete than objectives. However, the strategies are often difficult to identify due to their hidden nature. In setting strategies, SNG decision makers establish who, when, and how an action will be taken. That is, strategies are in the minds of decision makers before taking an action. For example, if the objective is to promote economic relations, one strategy may be to sign interinstitutional agreements with other SNGs worldwide.

Paradiplomatic instruments are those mechanisms institutionalized and recognized by the international community that help achieve the objectives and determine the type of relationship between two or more SNGs. SNGs use intermediate (commercial) and soft power instruments (public, cultural, sports, academic diplomacy, and decentralized international cooperation for development). The instruments, like the strategies, are very varied. Paradiplomatic negotiation is one of the most used and sometimes most effective. To

promote cooperation, SNGs prefer to use diplomatic channels to settle their differences and foster better relations.

Finally, paradiplomatic actions result from the complex paradiplomatic decision-making process. Before acting, those in charge of executing it choose the option they consider most appropriate to achieve the desired objective, from among several alternatives. Before choosing one, SNG officials evaluate each of the different options for action. Each option has advantages and disadvantages. In general, the one that can bring the most benefits, the one that represents the least costs, the one that can best achieve the objectives, and the one that best responds to the national interest is chosen. The alternative selected must be realistic, following the nature of the matter and the SNG's capacity for international action. These steps represent the decision-making process. Once the decision is made, the evaluation and feedback process follows immediately. This step is essential because the paradiplomatic action can be reconsidered or maintained, according to the results obtained.

The Relevant Actors in CPD

There are various actors involved in paradiplomacy, both governmental and non-governmental. In most cases, the executives of the SNGs are the actors who have a decisive influence on paradiplomatic decisions because, in general, they have formal and informal powers that place them as leaders of other government actors. Their main powers to execute paradiplomacy are generally contained in the local laws. Other powers derive from custom and the functioning of the local political system. In general, SNG executives can take a broader view of the SNG's interest. In addition, they have a complex structure to obtain information that comes from within their territory, as well as from abroad. In general terms, the main functions of SNG executives are to coordinate paradiplomacy, sign interinstitutional agreements, and appoint paradiplomatic agents, among others (Figure 8.2).

Other key actors in the design of paradiplomacy are bureaucratic agencies, that is, those administrative structures and institutions that support the SNG executives and participate in the process of formulating and implementing paradiplomacy. In other words, they are the people in charge of executing the instructions of the SNG executives. As a consultation mechanism in international affairs, many SNGs have an agency or office that advises the SNG executive in decision-making.

Within the framework of the SNGs, the ministries, secretariats, or offices of International Affairs are in charge of designing and executing paradiplomacy. Within this body, there are professional personnel in charge of advising, providing information, executing instructions, promoting the SNG abroad, and protecting the interests and rights of their diaspora outside the country. However, there are also other secretariats that have links abroad. For example, the ministries of economic promotion and finance are responsible for promoting exports and attracting foreign investment. Other ministries include education, tourism, health, social security, environmental protection, communications, and others. These offices also have an impact on paradiplomatic decision-making.

Generally, the SNG executive is in charge of formulating and executing paradiplomacy. However, pressure groups and social actors seek to get the government to decide according to their interests. The most prominent are business organizations, public opinion, ethnic groups, academia, non-governmental organizations, and other civil associations. Businesses are regularly the most influential non-governmental actors in paradiplomacy because of their

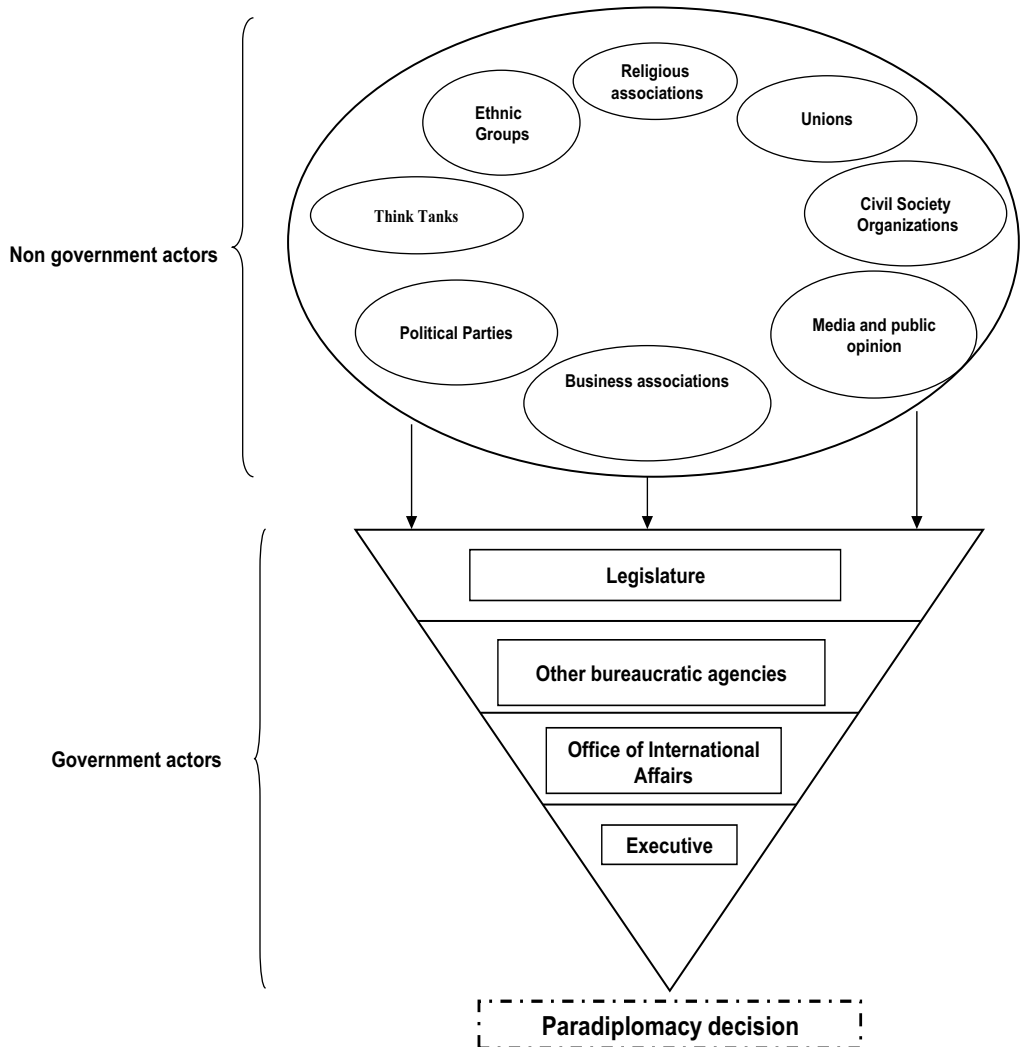


Figure 8.2 Relevant actors in SNG's paradiplomacy.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

economic power and lobbying capacities. On their own or in partnerships, enterprises seek to influence the decision-making process to respond to their own economic interests.

Public opinion can also influence the decision-making process in paradiplomacy. There are usually two types of audience. The first is made up of people who do not have much interest and have little information about international events. This group has a reduced influence. Only in cases of high-impact events can this group become interested in international issues. The other group comprises people who are interested in and are informed about international affairs. This group is usually relatively small, but sometimes it is more effective at influencing paradiplomatic decisions.

Ethnic or cultural groups can have considerable influence on paradiplomacy, depending on the country in question. For example, Quebec, Cataluña, and the Basque Country try to influence their countries' foreign policy decision-making process. NGOs also seek to influence the design of public policies, especially on issues like human rights, the environment, and democracy, among others.

In designing paradiplomacy, SNGs should consider the preferences of civil society, taking into account the views of the private, social, non-governmental, and academic sectors. A paradiplomacy that does not consider the population's needs and does not listen to them is more difficult to sustain in the long term.

External, Internal, and Individual/Institutional Variables for CPD Analysis

The variables for the analysis of CPD are broad and of a diverse nature. To build a methodological basis to conduct CPD worldwide, this chapter classifies the factors that determine the formulation and execution of paradiplomacy into three large groups: systemic (international), national and subnational (internal) elements, and individual and institutional elements.

The first group comprises two fundamental variables: the balance of power and the pressure exerted by other countries. In other words, the functioning of the international system and its structure are enormous conditioning factors that determine the behavior of SNGs. Similarly, the interests and objectives of other actors also affect the response that a SNG will have to that situation. Therefore, a comparative analysis requires considering these two variables.

A second group includes domestic and subnational variables. First, geopolitical factors are involved, such as the size of the SNG, its place in the world by size, the extent of the coastline, the availability of natural resources, and its geographical position. The first two indicators are measured in square kilometers, and the next two in qualitative terms. For this last criterion, the options are high or low availability of natural resources and a highly strategic position or not. There is no doubt that geographical factors are determinants in the conduct of SNGs in paradiplomacy.

It is also necessary to consider some economic indicators. One of the most important is the Gross Product (GP). Other economic indicators are foreign trade and foreign investment. These variables are important to measure the economic capacity of the SNG. The argument is that a SNG with high economic power has greater capacity for international action, which is reflected in its paradiplomacy.

The following variables are of a demographic nature. The argument here is that population traits also impact paradiplomacy. The indicators included are: the total population, the percentage of the population in poverty, the urban population, the unemployment rate, its HDI if available, and the GINI Index to measure inequality.

The next set of variables is cultural in nature. Those used for the analysis are the following rankings: foreign visitors; generation of tourist foreign currency; sites declared cultural heritage of humanity; national identity from the cultural point of view; ethnic composition; and identity from the geographical and economic perspective. These cultural factors also have an impact on paradiplomacy and can represent advantages in their dealings with other actors.

Finally, in the elements of an internal nature, there are political factors. The variables included are: the type of government; the regime (democracy or dictatorship, parliamentary or presidential); the ideology of the government in power; political stability; social polarization;

level of corruption, democratic quality, and rule of law. These indicators are very useful for the comparative analysis of SNGs.

The third group comprises the individual and institutional levels. The variables to be compared are: the interest of the SNG executive in office in external issues; the number of representations abroad; the budget of the office in charge of international affairs, as well as the personnel assigned to this institution. These indicators are very valuable for CPD analysis.

Conclusions

Paradiplomacy is a set of actions that a SNG has in the international arena based on its interests. It is determined by internal and external conditioning factors at a specific time, the SNG's capacity for international action, the identity of the SNG in question, and its values. Paradiplomacy includes a series of objectives, strategies, and instruments established by the different governmental and non-governmental actors linked to the decision-making process. The design of paradiplomacy is determined by factors of various nature, such as geographical, economic, political, social, demographic, and technological, among others.

The main objective of CPD is to identify the similarities and differences that SNGs have in their paradiplomatic action. To make a methodologically sound comparison, it is necessary to select both internal and external variables that serve as a comparative basis, as presented in this chapter.

References

- Almond, Gabriel (1958). Introductory: Comparative Study of Foreign Policy. In Roy C. Macridis, ed. *Foreign Policy in World Politics*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Beasley, Ryan K., et al. (2012). *Foreign Policy in Comparative Perspective: Domestic and International Influences on State Behavior*. Los Angeles: CQ Press.
- Hermann, Charles (1992). *Comparative Research on the Events of Nations (CREON) Project: Foreign Policy Events, 1959–1968*. Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research.
- Kuznetsov, Alexander (2015). *Theory and Practice of Paradiplomacy: Subnational Governments in International Affairs*. New York: Routledge.
- Lantis, Jeffrey S. (2017). *Comparative Foreign Policy Analysis*. Oxford: Oxford Research Encyclopedias.
- Neack, Laura (2018). *Studying Foreign Policy Comparatively: Cases and Analysis*, 4th ed. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Rosenau, James (1980). *The Scientific Study of Foreign Policy*, 2nd ed. New York: Nichols Publishing Company.
- Tavares, Rodrigo (2016). *Paradiplomacy: Cities and States as Global Players*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Velázquez Flores, Rafael, Jorge A. Schiavon, Adriana Sletza Ortega Ramírez and Enrique Baltar Rodríguez, eds. (2024). *Introducción al Estudio de la Política Exterior Comparada*. Mexicali: Universidad Iberoamericana, UABC, AMEI, UQRoo & CESPEM.