

The Internationalization of Local Government's Actions in Cameroon: Opportunities and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the international action of local governments since the promulgation of decentralized cooperation law in Cameroon. Following the promulgation of law, No 2004/017 of 22 July 2004 on the orientation of decentralization in Cameroon and the eventual signing into act of decree no. 2011/1116/PM of April 2011 fixing the modalities on decentralized cooperation, it was hoped that local governments in Cameroon were going to excel in international cooperation. In reality, for the past decades, the implication of local governments in international affairs and cooperation has gradually increased in the past decades. The increasing involvement of local governments in foreign policy and foreign relations activities is usually labeled as paradiplomacy. Not only has paradiplomacy spread to subnational or local governments across the world, but the range of issues addressed by local governments is far beyond economic policy, connecting to intermestic issues such as border security, energy, environmental protection, human rights, urbanization, governance, climate change, and migration. The main objective of this paper is to examine the degree of implication of local governments in Cameroon in paradiplomacy authorized by the decentralized cooperation decree of 2011. The main argument sustained in this paper is that despite the shortcomings of the 2011 decentralize cooperation decree in Cameroon, this law represents an opportunity for local governments in Cameroon to internationalize their actions and better position them in the dynamic world where the role of local government through diplomacy is gradually gaining more grounds. In fact, by engaging in international cooperation, Cameroonian local governments could secure more development partners and resources rather than depending solely on the limited subsidies from the central government.

Key Words: Decentralization, decentralized cooperation, paradiplomacy and development

INTRODUCTION

The world is experiencing two broad and seemingly paradoxical trends. On the one hand, countries are becoming ever more integrated economically and in some cases politically. On the other hand, power is devolving from national governments to regional and local governments. These trends are particularly evident in many countries today: the effects of global economic and political events are increasingly felt in localities around the country, and those localities are playing a larger role on the world stage.

Since the late 1990s, local governments in the world specifically in Africa have increasingly marked international relations. They are considered today as major actors in international relations. This is because their scope of intervention today is also a preoccupation of most states in the world today. For instance, questions such as climate change, environmental protection, urbanization, and Sustainable Development Goals are increasingly been championed by local governments. To render themselves effective and influential, local governments preceded by creating Global, regional, and national local government associations. At the global level is the World Organization of United Cities and Local Governments, in

Africa is the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa with regional representations. Cameroon through the United Cities and Councils of Cameroon (UCCC) is a member of the Central African regional organization of the UCLGA.

To facilitate the adhesion of Cameroonian local governments in international cooperation like their pairs from other countries and regions, the government of Cameroon decided to enact Decree No. 2011/1110/PM of 26 April laying down the procedures for decentralized cooperation, the latter shall mean any partnership relationship between two or more local authorities or their grouping, to achieve common objectives. Article 26 (2) on the orientation of decentralized cooperation in Cameroon permits local governments in Cameroon through conventions to adhere to international organizations. It is against this background that this study seeks to find out; to what extent the international actions of Cameroon's local governments has been effective since the enacted of the decentralized cooperation law in Cameroon in 2011.. In an attempt to answer this question; this paper conceptualizes the notion of local government and international cooperation and successively presents the state of paradiplomacy in Cameroon, the challenges of paradiplomacy implementation in Cameroon, and the stakes and way forward of local governments in international cooperation in Cameroon.

I-Profiling Paradiplomacy

It is often asserted that modern diplomacy, characterized by the establishment of permanent missions that are resident in the capital of a foreign country, finds its origin in the Peace of Westphalia (Van der Pluijm and Melissen, 2007). However, the foundations of diplomacy as such were established long before 1648, in times when states, as they are known now, did not yet exist and cities pioneered as foreign policy entities. Diplomacy thus existed before the existence of states. In ancient Greece, for example, city-states like Athens and Macedon were regularly sending and receiving embassies of an ad hoc character and appointed ambassadors to engage in negotiations on behalf of the city-at-large. Later, in Renaissance times, powerful Italian city-states like Venice and Milan were the first to establish permanent diplomatic missions abroad and to create an organized system of diplomacy (Nicolson, 2001).

After the Treaties of Westphalia, cities like Venice were not able to prolong their monopoly over foreign policy and diplomacy became the domain of the newly established European states. The standardization of diplomacy after the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and the co-evolution of diplomacy and states in the time thereafter further intensified state-centredness in both the theory and practice of international relations in general and of diplomacy more specifically (Van der Pluijm and Melissen, 2007). Although it could be argued that, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, foreign affairs is still primarily a task of national governments and their ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs), the state is no longer the only actor on the diplomatic stage (Ibid).

Associations of states, NGOs, and multinational corporations, for example, increasingly play a role in diplomacy (Davenport, 2002; Langhorne, 2005; Muldoon Jr, 2005). Despite substantial academic attention to these three groups of new actors, academic discussion has focused less on the increasing role of another actor in diplomacy, namely the city. This omission is remarkable given the increasing importance of cities around the world.

In 2007, for example, for the first time in human history, more people will live in urban than in rural areas. In addition, on a global scale, over 100,000 people a day move to cities. It is therefore clear that cities now matter more in the world than ever, making some even-term cities the one socio-political unit that is growing in power in the era of globalization (Savir, 2003).

The decentralization of political power or administrative responsibilities is a process that is studied mostly for its impact on political institutions and public policy (Lecours, 2008). 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 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.

Paradiplomacy as it is conducted by sub-state governments in developed societies can have many different focuses. Not all regional governments have similarly approached international relations. 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 to develop an international presence to attract foreign investment, lure international companies to the region, and target 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 their U.S. counterparts, also fit in this category (Ravenhill 1999). 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 on 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 (Nagelschmidt, 1999).

At least, one French region, Rhône-Alpes, also features this layer in its paradiplomacy. 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 Africa (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. Paradiplomacy with this layer tend to feature prominently in 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 (Paquin, 2003). 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 national character of the community they represent.

Of course, political considerations need not necessarily involve identity. Substate governments may have other *political* objectives than gaining recognition as a distinct community or a nation. They may, for example, seek to influence the behavior of a neighboring region. These layers are cumulative (Lecour, 2008). Indeed, virtually all paradiplomacy in advanced industrialized countries features 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 comprehensively and to attach many different objectives to it (Ibid). 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 favors the strengthening of local or regional institutions.

II-Conceptualizing paradiplomacy and local governments in Cameroon

Paradiplomacy or what in the Cameroonian context is referred to as decentralized cooperation is one of the statesmanship's manifestations: it refers to the Central State, the Sub-National Governments, and third foreign entities. In Cameroon, Article 2 of Decree No. 2011/1110 / PM of April 26 establishing the terms of the decentralized cooperation defines the procedures for decentralized cooperation. According to this article, the term decentralized cooperation "is understood as any partnership relationship between two (02) or more local authorities or their groupings, to achieve common goals. Decentralized cooperation can take place between Cameroonian local authorities or their groups on the one hand or between them and foreign local authorities on the other hand.

The issue at hand concerns the kind of relation, and the operating spaces, that could exist between the abovementioned players. Firstly, a fundamental distinction must be stressed, to identify the field of our investigation: We are moving on legal boundaries, by the State's unity and sovereignty rules, in a decentralized and multilevel framework, under the principles of subsidiarity and local autonomy. Therefore, we are not getting in the other midfield, where the so-called "proto-diplomacy" plays another game, since, in that case, subnational entities aspire to become independent from the State. Secondly, paradiplomacy is just one of the many ways to define the non-central government's involvement in international relations through the establishment of contact with foreign public and private entities, or most simply the practice of foreign affairs by no-central governments (Keating, 1999).

Indeed, paradiplomacy stands for "parallel diplomacy", and even though the term could not fulfill all the nuances of such a broad phenomenon, we chose it instead of "subnational foreign policy", "decentralized cooperation", "federative diplomacy" and other existing formulas, basically, to its "popularity" (Tavares, 2016). However, while it is true that the term "paradiplomacy" was coined in the second half of the last century, and that Rohan Butler, Ivo Duchacek, and Soldatos are considered some of the theoretical fathers, it is certain that, even before, sub-national governments have been engaged in diplomatic relations, through myriad ways and with several results (Ibid).

Moreover, being a multifaceted phenomenon, the literature offers different versions of its origins. For instance, some argue that decentralized cooperation originated after the Second World War, during the decolonization and the Cold War, through ground-breaking twinning between cities. In the beginning, the agreements involved mostly French and German municipalities interested in reconciliation. Indeed, this form of cooperation first aimed at peace, through cultural exchanges (Ibid).

However, the history of paradiplomacy dates back even before, as a matter of fact, in 2013, we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Union International de Villes, the mother of today's United Cities and Local Governments, whose end is to maintain permanent relations between municipalities from all over the world (Payre and Saunier, 2000).

Finally, just to give another interesting precedent, as early as the first part of the 1900s, Cuban Professor Ruy Lugo Viña envisioned international relations between municipalities as a peacekeeping instrument among nations (Crónica del V Congreso histórico municipal interamericano, 1959). After all, the principle of local autonomy is rooted in most of the Central and South American Constitutions yet since their approval. Thus, it is a fact that during the 1900s, Local authorities, albeit timidly, emerged as new international actors, by interfering in one area traditionally monopolized by the States stepped out from Westphalia.

In this regard, it is useful to bear in mind what established Article 1 of the Montevideo Convention about the "State" and its international personality, by requiring four necessary qualifications: a) a permanent population, b) a defined territory, c) a government d) the capacity to enter into relations with other States. Thus, traditionally this last feature has been a prerogative of the States, which, for a long time, were considered the only international players.

II-State of Paradiplomacy in Cameroon

The state of paradiplomacy in Cameroon in the past years has been characterized by its institutional radiation and the multiplication of twinning conventions. One of the major institutional actors that have effectively contributed to radiating Cameroon's paradiplomacy is the United Councils and Cities of Cameroon (UCCC). UCCC is a member of United Cities and Local Governments of Africa; which is an umbrella international organization for cities, local and regional governments, and municipal associations throughout the world that is concerned with representing and defending the interests of local governments on the world stage. Established as the African section of the world organization UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments), UCLG Africa now boasts a membership of 44 national associations of local governments from all regions of Africa, as well as 2000 cities that have more than 100,000 inhabitants. As such, the organization represents nearly 350 million African citizens. Cameroon through the UCCC is a member of the nine countries (Cameroon, Chad, Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ang...) that make up the Central African Regional Office of the UCLGA (UCLGA, 2020). The benefits of delivering services through our regional offices enable the UCLGA to localize member development initiatives providing targeted solutions for, the Promotion and Development of National Associations, building the Capacity of Active Members, and the Incorporation of Inclusive and Sustainable Best Practices

Furthermore, Cameroonian paradiplomacy has also shown its radiation through the dynamism of some local government authorities who are members of top African local government organizations. For instance, Mrs. Celestine Ketcha Courtès, the former mayor of the council and now the minister of Urban Planning and Development has served as the Vice President of UCLG Africa for the Central Africa Region (UCLGA, 2020). Furthermore, All-female Cameroonian mayors are members of the Network of Locally Elected Women of Africa (REFELA), a network geared at Consolidate the networking of women elected at the national, local, and African levels, through the Network of Locally Elected Women of Africa, and promote the sharing of experiences and best practices in the field of territorial governance.

In reality, Cameroon's paradiplomacy from the point of institutional cooperation has been very rich and dynamic. Furthermore, another mechanism with which Cameroonian local governments have manifested their dynamism in paradiplomacy is the city's twinning initiatives.

Twinning with Foreign Councils

Historically, the modern concept of town twinning, conceived after the Second World War in 1947, was

intended to foster friendship and understanding among different cultures and between former foes as an act of peace and reconciliation and to encourage trade and tourism. The practice of twinning started in the form of “town twinning” (or municipal twinning) during the 1950s in Europe.

To protect Europe from another devastating war and promote general peace and unity among all European countries, various regional organizations were established after World War II to bring populations from different municipalities together through various cultural exchanges and friendship events (Hafteck, 2003). These organizations have fostered strong local businesses and economic and social relationships between European municipalities over the years. One of the largest regional organizations, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), for example, brings together more than 100,000 local and regional authorities through 40 national associations in 29 countries in Europe today (CEMR, 2020).

Today town twinning represents a significant Institutional development; central for development effectiveness. While World Bank projects have been found to provide many benefits for client countries, their effects on institutional development have been modest (Ouchi, 2004). Twinning of cities is one of the World Bank’s several modes through which the Bank funds technical assistance projects, along with long-term and short-term advisors, formal and informal training, and equipment and supplies(Ibid).

By bringing citizens from different countries and cultures closer together, and by fostering cooperation between local elected representatives – the closest sphere of government to the citizens the twinning movement is characterized by originality and strength that are all its own. Twinning in Europe today has created a dense network of some seventeen thousand links between small, medium-sized, and large towns and cities. The legal framework for the establishment of socio-cultural exchanges between two municipalities, whether or not located in the same country, the official partnership constituted by twinning concerns a large number of municipalities which are often twinned with several cities.

Decree No. 2011/1110 / PM, chapter 4, establishes the special framework cooperation between Cameroonian and foreign regional and local authorities. According to Articles 30 – 33, any draft decentralized cooperation agreement between Cameroonian local authorities or their groups and foreign local authorities is subject to the prior approval of the Minister responsible for local authorities It is against this background that several Cameroon local governments have recently engaged into twinning with foreign local governments notably in Europe. Among several countries with whom Cameroon local governments have established twinning partnerships are France and Germany as outlined below.

Gien (45)	» Soa
Halluin (59)	» Nkong Zem
Hérouville-Saint-Clair (14)	» Loum
Lamalou-les-Bains (34)	» Esse
Nogent-sur-Oise (60)	» Fomopea
Saint-Germain-au-Mont-d’Or (69)	» Baham
Stains (93)	» Mengueme
Strasbourg (67)	» Douala

This is the situation with Germany. For instance, a practical example is the partnership between the German city of Schopfheim (Baden-Württemberg) and the municipality Cameroonian Dikome (North West Region) was formalized in 2000 (Burger, 2014). Its origins date from the end of the 19th century when Protestant missionaries had established a station at Dikome. Even today, the Protestant parishes of the two

municipalities are active members in the network of organizations and individuals who make the living partnership (Ibid). The twinning agreement also gives rise to an exchange of speeches between the local elected representative and the head of the delegation; the first expresses emotion and pleasure, replaces the exchange within the general framework of the partnership, recalls and values the path traveled by the partner since the beginning of the cooperation and quickly presents the prospects for exchanges for the future; the second expresses gratitude and recognition, evokes the importance of the role played by the partner to support and accompany changes at the local level and, concludes on new avenues of cooperation.

Even if it is necessary to take into account the relative periodicity of these meetings, their protocol character places their stake elsewhere (Mougnok, 2007), in a function of ritualization of the intercultural meeting: rite of the official reception, with its pomp, its speeches on the unfailing friendship between the French people and the Cameroonian people, rites which will have the effect of symbolically reducing the cultural gap, of marking the way for effective cooperation commitments (Petiteville, 1995). Besides the twinning mechanism, a series of projects have been realized in Cameroon as a result of decentralized cooperation.

III- Challenges of Paradiplomacy Effectiveness in Cameroon

A close observation of the regulatory and institutional framework guiding the international actions of local government in Cameroon gives the impression that they are excelling well in paradiplomacy. Yet most local governments in Cameroon face serious difficulties integrating into the international dynamics of local governance. Whereas local government authorities in other parts of the world and Africa have been able to impact their communities through paradiplomacy, the situation is still uncertain in Cameroon. This can be explained by several factors varying from; Structural and institutional challenges.

Structural Challenges

One of the main challenges faced by local governments in excelling in paradiplomacy is the limit imposed by the law on decentralized cooperation on local government actions at the international level. In reality, the decree no. 2011/1116/PM of April 2011 fixing the modalities on decentralized cooperation in its article 26 limits international cooperation only to foreign local governments or associations. Whereas other entities that are not necessarily local governments can significantly contribute to supporting local governments to attain their objectives.

Local governments in Cameroon cannot cooperate with any public international organization with a judicial personality such as the UNO, European Union, and the African Union. Paradoxically, these international organizations have organs or laws that handle matters linked to local government and at times have supported local governments in many countries. In the UN system, there exists the Decentralize Governance Commission placed under the Department of Economic and Social Affairs Capacity Building, and at the African Union there exists the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralization, Local Governance, and Local Development adopted on June 27, 2014, and went into force on January 13, 2019.

At the same time, specialized international NGOs and CSO organizations are meaningful instruments that could constitute good development partners with local governments in Cameroon if laws are elaborated to guide their actions and cooperation with local governments in Cameroon. One of the major challenges local governments face in Cameroon has to do with providing education. But how do local governments succeed if they cannot sign a convention with UNESCO or any international NGO or CSO for sustainable cooperation in the domain of education?

Further, the heavy bureaucratic procedure is another major handicap to the radiation of local governments in Cameroon. In Cameroon, two major ministries; the Ministry of Decentralization and Local Development and the Ministry of External Relations are in charge of coordinating and supervising the international

actions of local governments. All international actions or negotiations engaged by local governments must be submitted to the appreciation of the Ministry of Decentralization and Local Development. At times, the ministry takes much time in the treatment of the files given that it has through several hands from the sub-divisional, divisional, and eventually to the ministry of decentralization and local development in collaboration with the inter-ministerial committee composed of members from other ministries decides on the file.

INSTITUTIONAL DIFFICULTIES

In Cameroon, statistic indicates that those who wield power and authority in local government areas in Cameroon are generally retired top administrative civil servants. It is quite rare to see young youths who run local governments in Cameroon. The manning of local governance requires some skills and expertise in some particular fields geared to effectively providing services to the local population. In most cases, most local governments sort to capacity-building mechanisms to ameliorate their knowledge of local governance. But the problem is that we cannot build capacity that does not exist in a person. Some local government authorities are completely novice to the notion of local governance and its practices and talks less of the international dimension of such. A close investigation and observation on the field indicates that very few local authorities seem to understand the dynamics of local governance, especially on the international scene in the age of globalization. The success of any local government in providing services to its population highly and partially depends on the dynamics of its international action.

Furthermore, some local government authorities have been accused recently of embezzlement and corruption. Some have been jailed for very high prison sentences. The vitality of any institution depends on the type of person manning it. In other words, a local government area will not witness any development if the executive lacks vision and the capacity to spur development.

If local governments or authorities lack the necessary expertise or knowledge to engage in international cooperation, they could solicit the services of consultants. Cameroon is one of the highest African countries that train students on questions on local governments and international relations. International Relations has graduated more than 10,000 students with good knowledge of international relations and paradiplomacy dynamics, yet less than 5% of them have been solicited or recruited by local governments to assist them in crafting and executing international cooperation projects and conventions.

IV-Stakes and Way Forward of Paradiplomacy in Cameroon

In recent times, local governments have become influential actors. The assertion that international relations were purely an affair among states and international organizations is no more tenable as the international actions of local governments have greatly shaped international relations for decades now. Michael Keating opines that the increasing involvement of regional governments in the international arena lies both in changes at the level of the state and international system and in political and economic developments within regions themselves (Keating, 2013). Globalization and the rise of transnational regimes, especially regional trading areas, have eroded the distinction between domestic and foreign affairs and by the same token have transformed the division of responsibilities between state and subnational governments. Thus, local governments stake of local government in present global issues such as climate change and sustainable development goals.

Paradiplomacy and Climate Change

In the past years, several local and regional governments around the world have started to engage in a real international or para-diplomatic climate agenda. Given that states alone cannot effectively mitigate climate

change, the role of local governments has become very important. In Cameroon for example, the Municipality constitutes a key player in adapting to climate change. Indeed, the skills transferred to the local governments, as defined in Law N ° 2004/018 of July 22, 2004, laying down the rules applicable to local governments are very broad.

The 2011 decree on decentralized cooperation also allows local governments to collaborate with foreign local governments constituting a channel of cooperation for the mitigation of climate change. Strategically, the National Plan for Adaptation to Changes Climate (PNACC) developed in 2014 by the Ministry of the Environment, the Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED), took into account the place of local governments in this process of adaptation to climate change. More specifically, the PNACC identifies 20 project adaptation sheets for climate change, including 5 cross-cutting and 15 sectoral (FEICOM, 2018).

In this plan, the local governments and, Communities and the Special Council Support Fund For Mutual Assistance (FEICOM) are associated with the majority of projects as partners or sources of funding. Indeed, although some LGs like those of the Far North Region of Cameroon are more sensitive to climate change because of its impacts in the area, these questions and already faced incidences of change climatic. The paradox here is that most local governments have not engaged in paradiplomacy to join the League of local governments mitigation on climate change.

This of course has prevented local governments in Cameroon from getting access to climate change funds. Faced with the difficulties, the Special Council Support Fund For Mutual Assistance, thanks to the support and technical assistance from the Global Fund for Development of Cities (GFDC) and the Network of African Community Financing Institutions Local (RIAFCO), engaged in the process accreditation as representative of local governments in Cameroon as beneficiaries to climate change funds.

As noted earlier the main obstacle for local government's accessing paradiplomacy are mostly due to the legal framework at the national and international level. Although subnational governments lack legal personality in international law, and despite limitations within national law, the legal ground on which subnational diplomacy is based might be shifting. Climate change has offered subnational governments an opportunity to act across borders, and transnational networks are facilitating this process. The challenge that remains is how to reconcile central governments' monopoly over international relations with the subnational interest, avoiding ambiguous situations where the legality of subnational diplomacy can be contested.

Local Governments and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, or "Agenda 2030", is a blueprint for the future well-being of the planet. Its targets are aspirational, but the stakes are high, as our planet faces unprecedented economic, social, and environmental stresses (Reddy, 2016). Sustainable development can be viewed as an integrated agenda and fundamental principle, that endeavors to provide solutions to economic, social, and environmental challenges. The interlinkage and interweaving of all its dimensions is one of its intrinsic characteristics (UNDP 2012:23). It would seem that the greatest challenge would have to respond to all the goals cohesively and in an integrated manner. In this context, the mandate of the General Assembly of the United Nations at the Sustainable Development Conference was that the;

Goals should be action-oriented, concise and easy to communicate, limited in number, aspirational, global in nature, and universally applicable to all countries, while taking into account different national realities, capacities, and levels of development and respecting national powers and priorities (UNDP 2014f:15).

Tentatively, 17 sustainable development goals have been agreed on and they are: end poverty/ hunger and achieve food security; improve nutrition and sustainable agriculture; ensure healthy lives; ensure equitable

quality education/promote lifelong learning opportunities; achieve gender equality; availability of water/sustainable sanitation; access to affordable and reliable energy; sustainable inclusive economic growth and full employment; build resilient infrastructure/sustainable industrialization; inclusive safe cities/ and human settlements; ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns; combat climate change; sustainable oceans, seas, and marine resources; protect, restore and promote terrestrial ecosystems, manage forests/ halt biodiversity loss/ combat desertification; promote peaceful, inclusive societies, provide access to justice and build effective and capable institutions and strengthen implementation and global partnership for sustainable development (Reddy, 2016).

In other to avoid the mistakes encountered in the application of MDGs, all actors of international relations must implicate themselves at their various degrees to make successful SDG goals. One of such important actors is local governments whose dynamism on the international scene has been so remarkable. In reality, the role of local government in the achievement of the SDGs has been highlighted in several quarters internationally. It is envisaged that local government will be critical to the process of attainment of the SDGs as they are at the coalface of service delivery and in direct contact with local communities.

Consequently, the notion of localization has to be taken very seriously by the international community and national governments, which have to ensure that there is the required support politically, financially, managerially, and technically in a country context, particularly in developing countries where the provision of basic services is still high on the development agenda. In the final analysis, the global objective of the SDGs is the improvement of the quality of life in local communities, more specifically in a country and continental context, and that should be the driving force in localities. It has also become abundantly clear that the local dimension of development has increasingly become entwined with global and national issues. Presently, human security, climate change, health, employment, and migration, are high on the national and international agenda; however, solutions to these challenges over a longer period would necessitate local planning and decision-making, which is an integral part of local governance.

Perspective of Paradiplomacy for Cameroonian Local Governments

As the role of a state as an international actor lessens, cooperation between individuals or groups from several countries or across regions gets stronger (Yami and Darmawan, 2014). The understanding of one-door policy these days doesn't necessarily translate to a policy that is controlled by a diplomatic legal institution. The desire to cooperate without the involvement of a complicated bureaucracy decentralizes local collectivities to create cooperation between regions in different areas, these spirits then came to be known as Paradiplomacy.

Making Paradiplomacy a Soft Power Diplomacy Instrument in Cameroon

The long-standing paradiplomatic practices in developed countries were part of the continuation of the history of integration in each country (Mukti, 2018). According to Lecours (2008), paradiplomacy practices could be categorized into 3 groups, namely, first, the relations and cooperation of regional governments or 'sub-states' which are only oriented to mere economic objectives such as market expansion, investment development abroad, and reciprocal investment. This relationship does not involve complex motives, such as politics or culture.

This type of transnational interaction is commonly practiced by states in the United States and Australia. Secondly, paradiplomacy involves various fields in cooperation or multi-purposes, between economics, culture, education, health and technology transfer, and so on. The concept of this relationship refers to a decentralized cooperation model of foreign cooperation or decentralized cooperation. Some provinces in Germany or Lander, practicing the relationship of this model, as well as the Rhone-Alpes regional government, France, established relations with several states in Africa such as Mali, Senegal, and Tunisia, and also with Vietnam and Poland.

The third category is a complex paradiplomacy that involves specific political motives and regional nationalist identities. They try to establish international relations with enormous enthusiasm to express the specific and autonomous national identity of their region which is different from most regions in their country. Practicing this model includes Flanders-Belgium, Catalonia-Spain, Quebec-Canada, and the Basque Country (Lecours, 2008).

In the context of Cameroon, to implement authority in the field of paradiplomacy as a soft power diplomacy instrument, there is a need to regulate the law decentralize cooperation, and harmonize with Cameroon's foreign policy. This will enable local governments to take several forms of activities such as international exhibitions, competitions, mission exchanges, negotiations, and conferences. The ingredients can be through tourism, sports, education, trade, and arts.

The advantage of soft power diplomacy is the low level of resistance from other communities with different cultures so that they can convey messages to other nations peacefully and effectively (Nye 2009). Nye adds that the regional government can also take the following methods, (1) the establishment of permanent offices in other countries, especially in the world trade and financial centers; (2) the exchange of visits by sub-national government officials in one country with sub-national government officials in other countries; (3) dispatch of technical missions, trade promotions and investments; (4) the establishment of a foreign trade zone as carried out by 30 states in the United States; and (5) other efforts are to participate in international organizations or conferences (Ibid). This model of diplomacy provides an important element in paradiplomacy activity, namely pragmatic flexibility in establishing international cooperation, as suggested by Nue Cornago (Cornago, 2000).

In addition to using these methods, the Cameroonian local governments can emulate the paradiplomacy carried out by South Korea, namely the appointment of an honorary advisor to certain cities abroad, taken from South Koreans who reside in the country (Gyeongsangbuk Province, 2005). This honorary advisor's duty is as a liaison between various parties in the city where he lives, both the foreign government and foreign businessmen, and other parties, to establish connections with parties from the local government in South Korea who have appointed him to this position. Indeed, international relations and cooperation made by the regional government will largely be oriented towards improving regional economies and supporting various work programs in leading sectors such as education, health, and tourism so that the involvement of non-state international actors will be felt.

There are multinational corporations (MNCs), international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs), foundations, and individuals who can form networks to support each other together with state actors and local governments. The increasing intensity of relations and the increasing diversity of international actors must be considered as a potential for international diplomacy.

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt today that states are no longer the sole actors in international relations. The increasing implications of local governments especially in developed countries have tremendously marked international relations. Developed countries are regulating and giving more visibility to their local governments to be very competitive on the international scene. Some states now use their local governments as instruments of foreign diplomacy. Paradiplomacy is part of a broadening of the universe of international affairs, in which states are no longer the sole actors. Regions operate alongside firms, trade unions, social movements, and transnational organizations like Greenpeace or Oxfam. This universe is complex, fragmented, and unstructured. The global market is particularly complex and many regions have had great difficulty in finding ways to operate within it.

Against this background, the state of Cameroon needs to ameliorate the regulatory and institutional framework that favors the efficient action of Cameroonian local governments on the international scene. Just like developed countries, the state of Cameroon can make local governments an instrument of diplomacy, especially in the age of globalization where the state is no longer the sole actor in international relations. Cameroonian local government if well-regulated and supervised can potentially contribute to the economic development of the nation and at the same time contribute to the radiation of Cameroon diplomacy on the International scene.

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