On the Normalization of Sub-State Diplomacy

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Received: 2 June 2009; revised: 25 October 2009; accepted: 30 November 2009

Summary
Against conventional approaches that tend to minimize the importance of sub-state diplomacy, this article argues that this reality is presently undergoing a process of legal and political normalization throughout the world and deserves greater attention from both diplomatic practitioners and experts. This process, which is embedded in wider structural transformations, is driven simultaneously by two competing forces that are present in virtually all states: first, international mobilization of sub-state governments themselves, since they increasingly pursue relevant political objectives in the international field through their own methods and instruments; and second, the various attempts to limit and control that activism deployed by central governments through various legal and political instruments. After a brief discussion on the notion of normalization in critical social theory and its validity for diplomatic studies, this article examines the normalization of sub-state diplomacy through four, closely interconnected conceptual lenses: normalization as generalization; normalization as regionalization; normalization as reflective adaptation; and, finally, normalization as contentious regulation. Normalization enables the diplomatic system to operate in an increasingly complex environment while simultaneously affirming its own hierarchical structure. The limits of that normalization process, as well as its wider implications for diplomatic theory and practice, are also discussed.

Keywords
diplomacy, sub-state, paradiplomacy, constituent units, foreign relations, normalization, international socialization

Introduction
Although rarely spectacular, neither in form nor content, the international activism of sub-state governments is rapidly growing across the world, discreetly transforming diplomatic routines and foreign policy machineries. The institutional contours and political relevance of that reality have been extensively studied over recent decades from the point of view of disciplines as diverse as international law,1

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1 See Luigi Di Marzo, Component Units of Federal States and International Agreements (Alphen aan den Rijn: Sijhoff & Nordhoff, 1980); Renaud J. Dehousse, Federalisme et relations internationales (Brussels: Bruylant, 1991); and Manuel Pérez-González (ed.), La acción exterior de los länder, regiones y comunidades autónomas (Oñati: IVAP-HAEE, 1994).
international relations and comparative politics, and international political economy. In contrast, specialists in diplomatic studies have only exceptionally considered sub-state interventions in the international realm as noteworthy. Reflecting on that situation in one of his innovative contributions to the field, and after careful examination of existing sub-state diplomatic activities in the Nordic space, Neumann convincingly pointed out that this issue deserves closer attention by practitioners or scholars concerned with coherence between diplomatic practices and conventional diplomatic discourses.

Literature on sub-state diplomacy has never attracted mainstream attention in diplomatic studies, nor in the field of international relations, but it has become the subject of intense scholarly debate. Initially, the most influential works were more descriptive than explanatory in content. They identified the many international strategies implemented by diverse sub-state governments in areas as diverse as foreign trade and investment, tourism promotion, environmental protection and human security, as well as in other social or cultural domains. However, in addition to these basically descriptive accounts, the most influential literature in the field has always concentrated specific attention on the way in which decentralization of international relations, as sub-state diplomacy implies, may affect conventional understanding of diplomacy as an exclusive dominion of sovereign states.

Following pioneering work in the field by Duchacek and Soldatos, this phenomenon has frequently been described as ‘paradiplomacy’. Although the conceptual validity of this notion has often been questioned, paradiplomacy can be defined in simple terms as:

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[...] sub-state governments’ involvement in international relations, through the establishment of formal and informal contacts, either permanent or ad hoc, with foreign public or private entities, with the aim to promote socio-economic, cultural or political issues, as well as any other foreign dimension of their own constitutional competences.8

But beyond any attempt to clarify its content, paradiplomacy has most certainly been a particularly contested concept given that it suggests a contentious connection with diplomacy — and not simply with the international realm — while simultaneously affirming its own separated autonomy. That connotation is absent in other possible notions, such as that of ‘constituent diplomacy’, which is consistently suggested by Kincaid, or that of ‘multilayered diplomacy’, as advocated by Hocking. These, in contrast, tend to emphasize the consensual and inclusive dimensions of this reality over its possible controversial aspects.9 However, and in order to avoid possible terminological disputes, ‘sub-state diplomacy’ can perhaps be a more appropriate denomination for a reality that is becoming commonplace in the daily policy-making processes of many local and regional governments throughout the world and is increasingly accepted by the diplomatic system itself.

This article, however, will consider exclusively the case of those diplomatic practices that are deployed by intermediate or regional governments, leaving the case of ‘city diplomacy’ outside its scope. This decision deserves some justification. Not in vain, it has been aptly suggested that:

[...] the vast array of entities commonly labelled ‘regions’ actually encompasses a wide range of quite different phenomena.10

This lack of conceptual precision significantly complicates the process of systematizing research efforts. Regions can be sub-national, international, trans-national, or supranational in scope. They can be formalized institutions as well as non-formalized entities. They can be basically economic, cultural or political realities, or simply a matter of spatial continuity. Regions can also be a collective sense of belonging. This conceptual ambiguity poses a serious challenge for positivist approaches to empirical research, but it has quite different implications for interpretive social sciences.11 Indeed, conceptual flexibility can also be a fruitful

11) For a basic introduction to interpretive social sciences, see Mark Bevir and R. Rhodes, ‘Interpretive
venue for enquiry. After all, in spite of the crucial differences that are present among them, the Canadian provinces, Spanish autonomous communities, Brazilian and Indian states, Russian republics, Bolivian departments and Italian regions — as is the case with many other meso-level governments that are easily recognizable throughout the world — share common features that are difficult to ignore. All of them are government bodies with relevant competences and significant administrative resources, and, undoubtedly of greater importance, all of them are more than a city but less than a sovereign state. That meso-level position entails important implications in terms of their ultimate nature and political relevance. The internationalization of cities, for instance, can hardly be considered a challenge to the integrity — neither territorially nor simply symbolically — of the state’s sovereignty. In contrast, diplomatic efforts deployed by territorial units or regional governments are generally submitted to more careful political monitoring, by both central or federal governments as well as the diplomatic system, precisely because of suspicions regarding that possibility.

Bearing these precedents in mind, and in contrast with relevant contributions in the field of diplomatic studies that tend either to deny or minimize their possible relevance, this article asserts that so-called ‘normalization’ of sub-state diplomacy is a politically relevant process. In addition, the article argues that this process is highly indicative of the crucial transformation that diplomacy is currently experiencing worldwide. Bringing the insights of Foucault on social control through normalization processes to the diplomatic field, we can say that normalization enables institutional diplomatic structures to operate in an increasingly complex environment. Normalization simultaneously allows the flourishing of diplomatic innovation that growing pluralization of international life produces, while simultaneously affirming the hierarchical structure of the diplomatic system. Normalization can consequently be defined as a mode of control that recognizes an otherwise deviant practice as valid, while the limits of these practices are fixed and carefully monitored.

Embedded in broader structural transformations — in economic, institutional, cultural, technological or environmental domains — these normalizing processes
are simultaneously driven by two competing forces that are present within virtually all states: first, the mobilization of sub-state governments themselves, as they are increasingly pursuing, by their own means, relevant political objectives in the international field; and second, the various attempts to limit and control that activism that are implemented by central governments through diverse legal instruments and political means. For the purpose of clarity, this process of normalization will be consecutively examined through four different, closely interconnected conceptual lenses: 1) normalization as virtual generalization; 2) normalization as differentiated regionalization; 3) normalization as reflective adaptation; and 4) normalization as contentious regulation. The limits of this process of normalization, as well as its wider implications for diplomatic theory and practice, will also be discussed. However, this exploration of the normalization of sub-state diplomacy does not aim to be celebratory. It will not depict a parsimonious and fluid process but a contentious and controversial one, albeit generally peaceful and never conducive to war. Through these processes of normalization, the international activism of sub-state governments, which were once considered by many academics and practitioners to be deviant, irrelevant, nonsensical or simply exceptional, finally becomes accepted. However, as will be suggested, this process is never finished. Sooner or later, the political controversy reappears.

It can arguably be said that, formulated in this way, the notion of normalization implies that the described process has a top–down direction, one in which central governments are the masters of the game, always aware of its political design and ultimate objective, while sub-state governments simply try, once and again, to find new venues for their international projection under the close scrutiny of their respective hosting states. But in order to understand normalization in the diplomatic field, top–down as well as bottom–up processes are equally relevant. Although they are situated in very different places of enunciation, both state officials and sub-state representatives, in dealing with these issues, deploy a mixture of utilitarian bargaining and communicative reasoning. Their respective actions and arguments are certainly affected by a speech context, in which the most powerful side is usually the one representing the voice of the affected state through its central government representatives. But their interventions are also embedded in a wider functional and normative context. That context to some extent modulates the attitudes that both sides will observe when dealing with the need to assess the political convenience and appropriateness of sub-state diplomacy, as well as its necessary adjustment to the prevailing diplomatic system.

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15) On the ways in which the disciplining and normalizing processes described by Foucault are embedded in wider structural conditions operating on a global scale, see Jan Selby, ‘Engaging Foucault: Discourse, Liberal Governance and the Limits of Foucaldian IR’, *International Relations*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2004, pp. 324-345.

16) On these notions, as well as on their validity for understanding innovation and change in the diplomatic milieu, see Harald Müller, ‘Arguing, Bargaining and All That: Communicative Action, Rationalist
That process of mutual adjustment between sub-state and state government officials can also be described in terms of international socialization. This notion has recently been defined by Checkel in the following terms:

Socialization is defined as a process of inducting actors into the norms and rules of a given community. Its outcome is sustained compliance based on the internalization of these norms. In adopting community rules, socialization implies that an agent switches from following a logic of consequences to a logic of appropriateness; this adoption is sustained over time and is quite independent from a particular structure of material incentives and sanctions.17

But in spite of the fruitfulness of that notion, and from the point of view that inspires this article, the normalization approach is preferred for four basic reasons. First, mainstream literature on international socialization is generally centred on further exploring the middle ground between rationalist and constructivist approaches to foreign policy and international institutionalization.18 Conversely, the literature has generally ignored structural dimensions, which have an important explanatory weight for this article’s purposes. Second, sub-state governments are invariably ignored in the most influential literature in the field. Despite its growing interest in NGOs, private groups or epistemic communities, central governments are the sole relevant governments for this body of literature. Third, as happens with its original sources in social theory and political science, literature on international socialization tends to focus on the consensual dimensions of political life, while this article, on the other hand, emphasizes the contentious dimensions of this normalizing process.19 Finally, in contrast to prevailing approaches to international socialization, this article is less interested in explaining how sub-state diplomacy reveals the internalization of existing diplomatic norms than in the opposite — that is to say, how the diplomatic system responds to the growing international activism of sub-state governments across the world.

Normalization as Virtual Generalization

This section takes as its point of departure the assumption — basically understood as non-controversial — that we are witnessing the generalization of sub-


19 For instance, in spite of her careful attention to domestic complexity, Flockhart ignores the importance of sub-state governments in her very innovative work. See Trine Flockhart, ‘Complex Socialization: A Framework for the Study of State Socialization’, *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2006, pp. 89-118.
state diplomacy over virtually the entire world. Against conventional views, the international activism of sub-state governments is neither exclusive to federal countries nor to firmly established democracies. It is undoubtedly particularly salient in the case of some federal countries, such as Canada or the United States, as well as in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Germany and Switzerland, but it is also relevant in many unitary and decentralized countries, such as France, Italy, Spain or the United Kingdom. More interestingly, and beyond the Western world, sub-state diplomacy is becoming increasingly present in countries as diverse as Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, China, India, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, Russia or South Africa.\textsuperscript{20} As Paquin has succinctly pointed out, the growing involvement of sub-state governments in the international realm has become so ‘intensive and extensive’ across the world, that its ultimate significance certainly demands greater attention.\textsuperscript{21}

Efforts to promote foreign trade and investment, the maintenance of permanent delegations abroad, the extension of international agreements through diverse soft-law mechanisms, limited participation in international treaty-making processes in cases where it is constitutionally established — for example, Austria, Belgium or Germany — intensive participation in multilateral negotiation schemes on a geographical or functional basis, direct relationships with international organizations, the frequent sending and hosting of international missions, the launching of occasional political statements on international issues, place branding and public diplomacy campaigns, foreign aid programmes and cross-national environmental cooperation schemes . . .; all of the above, and many other instruments with their corresponding administrative and budgetary provisions, are becoming common practice for sub-state governments worldwide. In fact, with this reality in mind — and particularly intense in cases where constituent units have legislative powers — Criekemans has convincingly suggested that the boundaries between paradiplomacy and diplomacy are perhaps watering down.\textsuperscript{22}

The causes of this trend are very diverse, but in broad terms it can be said that under present global conditions, sub-state governments have to respond to a


number of economic, environmental, technological, cultural and security problems. These go far beyond the conventional imaginary in which the differentiation between domestic and foreign policy was historically formulated. This structural change imposes the need to create new public and private institutions, new modes of attribution of responsibility and legitimacy, and new global norms. It is probable that the driving force behind the new, international dynamism of sub-state governments is the territorial and institutional impact of global economic restructuring over the past two decades. The expansion of commerce and the removal of barriers to trade and foreign investment through various liberalization schemes, as well as the new regulatory framework for global competence, have greatly affected local and regional economies, additionally eroding sub-state autonomy.\(^{23}\) The combined effects of a new economic geography, institutional restructuring, new technological facilities, cross-national migration and new environmental concerns have, in short, all helped to propel sub-state governments towards a new era of global competitiveness. After a very original analysis on the ways in which regional governments represent themselves in the public sphere through their official websites, Dijkink and Winnips conclude that regions nowadays compete internationally:

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[. . .] \text{not only on the basis of traditional location factors — transport, taxes, and labor market — but also by calling up the image of an entirely alternative society which is portrayed as both } \text{'flexible' and 'capable'} \text{of reinvention, adopting a new } [. . .] \text{rhetoric which invariably relies on a mixture of cultural and technological arguments.}^{24}
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This understanding of the situation gives sub-state diplomacy its distinctive discursive tone, one that can be encountered all over the world with only minor variations, in places such as Texas in the United States, Shandong in China, Andalusia in Spain, Gauteng in South Africa, or Kansai in Japan, to name only a few. Of course, in spite of these general aspects, sub-state involvement in foreign affairs generally acquires specific profiles depending on the precise political and constitutional systems that are present in each sovereign state, as well as in each broader, regional context. However, it is worth noting that global dynamics seem to prevail over domestic conditions.\(^{25}\) But relevant dynamics here are not solely functional. Significant normative dimensions are also highly influential. Social


\(^{25}\) For an accurate reflection on the importance of these issues, see Marcelo A. Medeiros, ‘Sub-National State Actors and their Role in Regional Governance’, in Andrea Ribeiro Hoffmann and Johanna Maria van der Vleuten (eds.), Closing or Widening the Gap: Legitimacy and Democracy in Regional Integration Organizations (London: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 103-116.
disintegration and uncertainty, conflicting attributions of responsibility, territorial alienation from core regions within the affected states, political reassertion of cultural singularities, awareness about new, institutional, legitimating needs…; all of these aspects provide us with a new understanding of how sub-state governments are expected to react to this new global context. As a result of this interplay, sub-state diplomacy is becoming more and more intensive not only in matters of functional relevance — such as trade, investment, infrastructure and environmental resources — but also, although to a lesser degree, in normative issues such as ethno-political claims, human rights advocacy or international solidarity.

**Normalization as Differentiated Regionalization**

In spite of its pervasive influence, the global dynamics discussed in the previous section cannot completely explain the specific profiles that sub-state diplomacy acquires in different areas of the world. Regional integration schemes have had significant implications at a domestic level, creating both new, institutional constrictions and opportunities, and fostering the mobilization of sub-state governments in the international realm. When contemplated in a comparative perspective, the relationships between the wider structural conditions posed by regional integration schemes such as the European Union (EU), North American Free-Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Mercosur (Mercado Común del Sur, or Common Market of the South) or the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the diverse modes of international activism adopted by sub-state governments within each of these areas, become clear. In other words, there is a structural link between what has been called ‘macro-regionalism’ and ‘micro-regionalism’. While macro-regionalism creates new structures of opportunity, as well as new constraints, through economic integration and institutional building, micro-regionalism reveals a significant ability for policy learning and adaptation alongside sub-state governments within each of these macro-regional spaces created by sovereign states. This adaptive process, which is particularly salient in the field of cross-border and other issue-thematic cooperation schemes, seems to prevail over the constitutional framework of the hosting states, facilitating a remarkable isomorphism in sub-state diplomacy within each of these broader integration schemes. This process of regionalization allows sub-state governments in different countries to adopt idiosyncratic forms of international projection within each of these areas. Sub-state governments with diverse constitutional powers and

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institutional strength are consequently able to cooperate with each other in spite of their heterogeneity. Within the limits of this brief article, this section will offer some examples regarding the ways in which this process actually works.

The European case is particularly relevant for illustrating the structural link between sub-state diplomacy and both regional cooperation and integration schemes. In addition, it shows how the normalization process that we are discussing has been effectively implemented by both the European Commission and EU member states simultaneously, following the path previously set by the Council of Europe. Although the EU initially undermined important sub-national competences, its evolving institutional framework — over the course of various consecutive reforms — has finally established a somewhat favourable political context for sub-state mobilization. This process has substantially transformed administrative cultures among EU member states and has enabled the spread of a shared perception concerning the need to provide institutional venues for mobilizing sub-state governments across the European region and beyond.28

For those not familiar with the European integration process, it is worth mentioning the milestones in the EU’s institutional recognition of regional governments as actors of political relevance: first, the creation in 1994 of the Committee of the Regions with its consultative role on issues such as territorial and social cohesion, education and culture, public health, transport and infrastructure; second, the recruitment of regional authorities as partners in implementing European structural policies; and third, the provision that EU member states can be represented in the Council of Ministers by representatives of their respective constituent units. The latter has been effectively implemented by Austria, Belgium, Germany and, more recently, Spain. Moreover, through significant funding incentives, the EU has actively promoted the launch of multiple, cross-border and inter-regional cooperation schemes across the continent. All of these aspects have been of significance in contributing to the growing acceptance of multi-level governance as one of the driving forces behind the whole European integration process. On analysing this reality, it is important to stress that the initiatives adopted by the EU have always been designed in a particularly inclusive manner. In so doing, the EU deliberately attempted to enable the most disparate incarnations of sub-state governments to participate in these innovative venues for policy-making in the European polity. Furthermore, through the provision of these institutional venues for political participation, the EU has been quite successful in responding to sub-states’ claims for greater political recognition, which were particularly intense in countries such as Belgium, Spain, Italy and the United Kingdom. Although problematic issues such as ethno-territorial claims remain to

be solved, it can in short be argued that sub-state diplomacy has encountered quite a favourable context in the EU, with political space for participation and significant incentives — in the form of economic support — for the institutionalization of sub-state international activism.

The European case sharply contrasts with that of North America. Although very different in nature and scope, NAFTA has also provoked significant sub-national mobilization in the United States, Mexico and Canada. Sub-state governments’ concerns over the erosion of their autonomy within new sub-continental trade and investment liberalization schemes were difficult to contain. NAFTA, indeed, soon revealed the institutional shortcomings in addition to the important implications of its political design on the constitutional systems of its member states, as well as the limitations of policy convergence in areas such as trade, investment and the environment. Canadian provinces and US states have also been particularly active in denouncing the critical implications of the World Trade Organization (WTO) on sub-national competences. Their continual complaints about the erosion of constitutional competences have nonetheless provoked a reluctant, albeit increasingly clear, federal recognition of their role in global trade. As a result, US states and Canadian provinces are discovering that — given their economic power and social legitimacy — they are able to influence federal positions on relevant international issues such as global trade, security, human rights or environmental problems. A recent study reveals, however, quite unsurprisingly, that US state governors with greater institutional powers, budgetary control and electoral support are more likely to achieve higher degrees of foreign policy activity. The case of Mexico requires a different approach. The combination of economic liberalization and democratic pluralism has revitalized Mexican federalism, fostering the political mobilization of its constituent units both at domestic and international levels. However, increasing territorial inequalities and competences are posing a serious challenge to political stability in Mexico. In coherence with NAFTA’s lack of common institutions and huge structural asymmetries, the relationships between Mexico’s constituent units and their US counterparts tend to be, even in the case of cross-border cooperation schemes, quite competitive. In contrast, relationships between US states and Canadian

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provinces, which are particularly intense on environmental issues, are considerably more cooperative.

Disputes over borders and political authoritarianism have for decades prevented the emergence of powerful regional governments in Latin America. Nonetheless, the consolidation of democracy and renewed efforts to impel regional integration under schemes such as Mercosur or the new Andean Community have greatly facilitated a new era of decentralization across the continent. In the case of Mercosur, some important steps have been taken to recognize the growing role of sub-state governments in the promotion of economic integration and political confidence. Simultaneously, sub-state governments have started to experiment with different modes of international mobilization, with the aim of promoting diverse policy issues, fostering greater international cooperation in trade and investment, infrastructure and important environmental issues. This trend is particularly evident in Argentina and Brazil because of both their strong federal systems and the growing sub-national implications of Mercosur, although it is also notable even in unitary countries such as Chile or Peru. However, in order to complement this new openness, Latin American chanceries have also developed new instruments to monitor these forms of sub-state international activism better.

In Argentina, in 1992, legal and administrative measures were adopted in order to maintain the growing internationalization of the provinces under certain control. A similar pattern was followed in Brazil. In 1997, Brazil’s federal government reorganized the Ministry of Foreign Affairs so as to include new institutional provisions adapted to this new reality. In addition, in the context of past economic crises, the World Bank directly offered substantial loans to various Brazilian states and Argentinean provinces, facilitating their internationalization in quite an unexpected way. Although far more discretely, given the political conditions of the affected states, sub-state diplomacy is also becoming visible in countries such as Bolivia, Chile, Colombia or Peru. In the case of Bolivia, sub-state diplomacy is rapidly acquiring a new ethno-political profile, which is provoking serious concerns within Bolivia’s central government. However, in other cases, such as those of Chile and Peru, sub-state initiatives are generally promoted by central governments themselves — as a new and promising tool for regional inte-

35) Sub-state multilateralism has been particularly relevant in the context of MERCOSUR. See, for instance, the many initiatives adopted by the North-East Argentina Regional Foreign Trade Commission (CRECENEA), Southern Brazil Commission for Development and Trade (CODESUL) (online at http://www.crecenea.org.ar/html/crecenea-codesul.htm), as well as by the South American Midwest Integration Zone (ZICOSUR) (see online at http://www.zicosur.net/Nueva_ZICOSUR/ingles/), all accessed on 10 November 2009. On these processes, see Jorge Tapia (ed.), El marco jurídico-institucional de la integración fronteriza subregional (Iquique: Arturo Prat University, 2003).
36) See Eduardo Iglesias et al., Las provincias argentinas en el escenario internacional (Buenos Aires: CARIUNDP, 2008).
migration and building cross-national confidence — by launching a number of cross-border cooperation schemes for issues such as education, the environment, tourism, or technical infrastructures. 38

Because of the overwhelming influence of countries such as Russia, China, India and Japan, in addition to the notable differences that exist among them, it is difficult to extract general conclusions about sub-state diplomacy in the immense zone between the post-Soviet space and the so-called Asia-Pacific rim. Consequently, the following paragraphs will simply attempt to summarize the most significant developments in each of these crucial countries, in order to ascertain their respective influence in shaping specific forms of sub-state diplomacy.

The demise of the Soviet Union contributed quite unexpectedly to giving a particularly high profile to sub-state diplomacy in the so-called post-Soviet space. After the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, the new Russian Federation assigned a special role to sub-national involvement in foreign affairs. In order to assure its new legitimacy, the federal government decided to include the Russian regions' constituent units in their foreign policy and diplomacy designs. Regions were allowed to maintain international relations and to sign certain international agreements on the basis of their own competencies, while the central government was committed to not reaching agreements with neighbouring states, nor to subscribing or modifying international treaties without consulting the affected regions. Regions were also allowed to establish missions abroad as well as to receive official delegations from equivalent regions in foreign states, and regions' governors were routinely included as delegation members in official diplomatic missions and international negotiations. Through the development of this tolerance, the Russian Federation tried, during the Yeltsin era, both to reduce ethnic demands — for example, in Tatarstan — as well as to promote rapid integration in the global economy. 39 Certainly, this tolerance was much more restricted for some critical regions, but with the exception of the republics of the Caucasus, only rarely have Russian regions adopted foreign policy positions in head-on opposition to those of the federal government. 40 This friendly environment, which was encountered by most Russian regions during the 1990s with regard to their international activism, along with its resonance in neighbouring states, 41 was nonetheless interrupted under Russian President Putin's leadership. His efforts to

38) See Sergio González Miranda, Arica y la triple frontera: Integración y conflicto entre Bolivia, Perú y Chile (Santiago: Aríbalo, 2006).


concentrate political power at the core of the Russian presidency hindered the international activism of Russian republics for some time. The Law on Coordination of Foreign Relations and International Trade of the Subjects of the Russian Federation, which was passed in January 1999, established that international agreements by the regions would only be allowed if they went through a complex process of securing approval at the federal level, but still allowed sub-state international relations in fields such as trade and investment, science, environmental and cultural cooperation, and humanitarian relief. However, according to recent assessments, Russian sub-state diplomacy is at present still significantly active.

The Chinese case also presents some interesting peculiarities. In the framework of its experimental transition to capitalism, China promoted the international projection of its provinces for strictly economic purposes. But later, this narrow economic approach was revised under a renewed foreign policy doctrine in which provinces were called upon to play a major role. This process began in coastal regions such as Guangdong, among others, with the aim of promoting de facto economic integration with Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan. But the increasing economic disparities between coastal provinces and the more depressed northern, inland and western provinces later provoked significant complaints from the remaining provinces, which facilitated their international mobilization too. After the Tiananmen crisis, China adopted a new diplomatic strategy, seeking to elude its international isolation through innovative foreign policy instruments. In this context, sub-state diplomacy, with the exceptions of Tibet and Xingjian, was welcomed by Beijing. As a result of these overlapping dynamics, Chinese provinces are among the most active actors all over the world in the field of sub-state diplomacy. They have been able to extend a particularly dense network of relationships with diverse public and private counterparts across the world. Moreover, a number of case studies show the important role played by the Chinese diaspora in the shaping of these paradiplomatic efforts.

In contrast with the Russian and Chinese cases, the Japanese case has received very little attention among specialists. Japanese prefectures have also, however, been very active in the international realm. In addition to being especially active in the economic and environmental fields, Japanese prefectures have found their

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more distinctive contribution to sub-state diplomacy across the world in the promotion of pacifism and nuclear disarmament.45

Conversely, the Indian federal system has not had sub-national sub-state diplomacy facilitated until very recently.46 Ethnic claims and border disputes have always complicated Indian foreign policy designs, but it has been suggested that the very existence of ethnic ties across borders — as in the case of Kashmir, Punjab or Assam — could be turned into different forms of cross-border cooperation that would favour economic development and regional stability.47 In addition, during recent years, and because of the considerable economic success of southern states, a certain north-south cleavage seems to have emerged. Some Indian states, such as Kerala, Karnataka, Andra-Pradesh and Maharastra are becoming increasingly active in the economic field. Others, such as Jammu and Kashmir, have only recently begun to show a new international ambition. However, these mobilization efforts depend largely on personal leadership, political coalitions and party politics in the broader Indian political system. Nevertheless, despite federal governments’ concerns on the issue, the most relevant force driving Indian constituent units to develop new transnational ties are, without doubt, the disciplining schemes resulting from both India’s membership of the WTO and the World Bank’s direct financing of sub-national debt.48

Within the ASEAN space, and in coherence with its overall lack of supranational ambition and its low institutional profile, instead of missions around the world and incentives for foreign investors, the internationalization of constituent units in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines has been largely the result of a variety of informal, economic cooperation schemes in border areas. Through the configuration of the so-called ‘growth triangles’, a particularly efficient division of labour among regional governments was promoted with spectacular economic results. The oldest and most celebrated ‘growth triangle’ is the one that links Singapore, Malaysia’s Johor province and Indonesia’s Riau Island, although dozens of them were created in recent decades.49 While the concept of ‘growth triangles’ has caught the public’s imagination in Asia, these transnational economic experiments also had important social implications, in the form of increasing income inequalities, territorial imbalances and ecological distress. In addition, the effects of the economic crisis and new security concerns are

45) See Jain Purnendra, Japan’s Subnational Governments in International Affairs (London: Routledge, 2005).
49) A reflective balance on these initiatives can be found in Katsuhiro Sasura, Microregionalism and Governance in East Asia (London: Routledge, 2004).
currently complicating the progress of these sub-state cooperating schemes. However, they have over time become a sort of catalyst for political change.\(^{50}\)

Finally, it is worth commenting on the African case. Although the socio-economic and political conditions of the vast majority of African states make the normalizing of sub-state diplomacy a difficult task, some relevant developments have been registered during recent years. In accordance with the general objectives of state-building and democratization, it has been suggested that starting from the potential of some bordering regions it will be possible to give new impetus to preventive diplomacy and economic development. At present, this trend is particularly evident in the case of South Africa, but in the near future it could extend to other African countries.\(^{51}\) Based on the existing de facto integration among some neighbouring economies, new regional cooperation schemes — such as the renewed Southern African Development Community (SADC) — have increased opportunities for sub-state diplomacy. Certainly, the social benefits of these new, transnational projects generally fostered by South African provinces remain to be seen, but they are having a significant demonstrative effect on countries such as Nigeria, Ethiopia and Uganda, among others.\(^{52}\)

In short, this brief exploration of sub-state diplomacy across the world seems to confirm that in addition to global dynamics and the specific constitutional differences that exist among sovereign states, sub-state diplomacy acquires specific profiles depending on the changing opportunities and constraints that are posed by the broader regional cooperation or integration schemes that are present throughout the world. When regional integration schemes have produced common institutions and supra-nationality, sub-state governments have encountered a particularly favourable context for the recognition of their political relevance in many policy issues. In these cases, innovative venues for sub-state participation in multi-layered diplomatic processes have also been created. This would be valid for the EU, and, albeit more modestly, Mercosur, but not yet for the NAFTA case. In contrast, when new regionalism basically remains an intergovernmental issue, as happens in the ASEAN, sub-state diplomacy also adopts a low, institutional profile, being generally economic in content, and proving to be less relevant politically.

Finally, in cases such as those of Russia, China or India, in which the centralization of power is more marked, sub-state diplomacy has also flourished but only to the extent that it has proven to be a political instrument with enough flexibility to facilitate better integration in diverse macro-regional integration or coope-


tion schemes, although it is ultimately submitted to the foreign policy priorities of federal governments. More importantly, this article suggests that the resulting modalities of sub-state diplomacy can be understood as a form of commitment between constituent units’ mobilization efforts and the necessary adjustment to the changing regional context that states themselves are, more or less willingly, obliged to promote actively if they want to escape from international isolation and ostracism. In this sense, it can be argued that the normalization of sub-state diplomacy is also becoming regionalized.

Normalization as Reflective Adaptation

In addition to the global and regional dynamics discussed above, and in order to have an accurate understanding of the specific profiles that sub-state diplomacy adopts throughout the world, it is important to recognize the complex relationship between these changing structural conditions and the dimensions of political agency at play, as Lecours has aptly indicated.53 That is precisely what this section aims to emphasize under the guiding notion of normalization that is understood as ‘reflective adaptation’. Our point of departure is the assertion that sub-state diplomacy is not simply the determined outcome of certain structural conditions, either at a global level within broader regional integration schemes, or at the core of each sovereign state. Sub-state diplomacy is always a form of political agency that reveals a political will for greater recognition in the international realm as well as an assertion of institutional autonomy in a context of increasing complexity.

It is noteworthy, for instance, how easily adaptable the practices, institutions and discourses of sub-state diplomacy have proven, even in the most disparate contexts. This ease reveals an interesting process of policy learning and reflective adaptation to the changing structural contexts alongside sub-state governments worldwide. This process of adaptation, however, does not signify a move towards uniformity. Prominent differences exist, in ends and means, among sub-states governments with regard to their form of involvement in the international realm. These differences are the inevitable outcome of their very diverse geopolitical context, constitutional nature, demographic size, institutional conditions, cultural distinctiveness, economic resources, and so on. Precisely for these reasons, it is particularly significant that such heterogeneous entities have been able to cooperate in some efficient and stable forms despite their huge institutional differences. Their cooperation has been possible through a process of mutual policy learning and reflective awareness about the best way to conciliate their will for international projection and the specific opportunities and constraints in a diplomatic world that is tailored to fit sovereign states. In addition, that process entails

a kind of selective normalization of sub-state diplomacy, which is promoted by sub-state governments themselves in order to gain greater effectiveness and legitimacy.

As seen in the previous section, this selective adaptation first facilitated the extension of diverse cooperation schemes among authorities of different countries but under similar structuring contexts. However, these networks were later extended throughout the world, putting even the most heterogeneous entities in contact. Built on the basis of these precedents, these policy learning and policy diffusion processes are increasingly relevant in the most diverse policy domains. They are particularly prominent in some clearly functional fields, such as economic cooperation, environmental issues, science and technology, transportation and basic infrastructure, but they are also becoming more and more relevant in areas of normative concern such as ethnic conflict, public health and education, cultural diversity, human security, humanitarian relief or development aid.54 Furthermore, it can be argued that it is precisely the relevance acquired by many of these initiatives that makes it possible for states themselves — or more properly speaking, central governments and supreme courts — to realize sooner or later that the international activism of their constituent units, which they tend to understand as basically annoying, is much more extended and much less disturbing than they initially figured. In this sense, it can be said that through these processes of mutual reflective adaptation, sub-state diplomacy has become significantly normalized.

Normalization as Contentious Regulation

Participation by diverse territorial constituencies in foreign trade, environmental management, cultural exchanges or diverse political negotiations beyond the contours of their hosting states has been a durable and widespread feature of diplomacy over the course of history. Notwithstanding, as a result of both the functional and normative imperatives that shaped the modern system of states, that plurality of practices was later significantly reduced. The centralization of diplomacy, which was greatly facilitated by the codification process of diplomatic law, was largely

54) Some of the most important regional networks are the Assembly of European Regions (AER), http://www.aer.eu/en/home.html; the International Association of French-Speaking Regions (AIRF), http://www.regions-francophones.com/; the Latin-American Organization of Intermediate Governments (OLAGI), http://www.olagi.org/sitio.html; and Northern Forum, http://www.northernforum.org. Among the most active-issue thematic international networks are the Network of Local Authorities for Information Society/it4all, http://www.it4all-regions.org/it4all/; the Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development/nrg4SD, http://www.nrg4sd.net/; the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR), http://www.cpmr.org/index.php; and the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), http://www.aebr.net/. Even the most sceptical observer will be impressed by the intense activity of these networks (all websites were accessed on 10 November 2009).
achieved at the price — more or less abruptly — of silencing that old diversity of voices. As early as 1931, Harald Stoke pointed out in quite solemn words that:

Generally speaking, two types of federations may be distinguished with reference to the conduct of foreign relations: those which allow a degree of international intercourse to members of the union, and those which deny all such intercourse. The federations of the latter type are much numerous than those of the former.55

But on contemplating the existing practice over the world, it can be said that this reluctance has been notorious, even in such exceptional cases when constitutional systems acknowledge that constituent units play a certain role in the domain of international relations. In past decades, however, diplomacy has been gradually adapted to the growing demands of global capitalism and to the increasing complexities and pluralization of social life, challenging its conventional understanding as mere statecraft. This new context has facilitated a new international activism alongside sub-state governments that appear to be both difficult to contain and necessary to regulate. Consequently, and in an attempt to respond to that new situation, states all over the world have, during recent decades, established different legal and institutional mechanisms in order to acknowledge, albeit reluctantly, a new and more active role by sub-state governments in their foreign policy designs and diplomatic machineries. As with the heterogeneous practice that they try to regulate, these mechanisms are not fully uniform, but they are widely extended with important implications not only for each directly affected state, but also for the whole community of states. Sooner or later, all states need to consider both the treatment that they are expected to offer to foreign constituent units, as well as the treatment that they understand that other states should offer to their own constituencies. Consequently, when countries as diverse as Australia, Brazil, India, Mexico, Spain and South Africa decide to reform their foreign policy schemes in parallel forms, opening the doors to a new diplomatic role for their constituent units, the adaptive process becomes evident.56

These processes of recognition at a domestic level, which are widely spread over the most disparate countries around the world, have in addition shaped the reciprocal basis for what can be considered a formative process of a new customary practice in the field of diplomatic law.57 To analyse thoughtfully the diverse legal and institutional mechanisms that exist in each state across the world is, of course,

56) Evidence about it can be found in the chapters on Austria, Belgium, Germany and Spain, in Brian Hocking and David Spence (eds.), Foreign Ministries in the European Union (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).
outside the scope of this article. Fortunately, there is substantial literature with an in-depth analysis of developments in this field in a vast array of countries. However, a brief characterization of that diversity seems necessary in the context of the aims and rationale of this article. In some cases — such as Austria, Belgium, Germany or Switzerland — constitutions assign an international role to constituent units, recognizing a certain international dimension to their exclusive or shared competences. This legal clarification — later enhanced through various constitutional amendments — generally facilitates a climate of intergovernmental cooperation and mutual respect with regard to the internationalization of sub-state governments. But more frequently, constitutions reserve exclusive powers in the international sphere for central or federal government, ignoring any international dimension for sub-state competences, as is the case for Australia, Canada, France, Italy and Spain, among many others. In these cases, the existing legal framework has been the result of frequent disputes, leading to legal controversies that were later resolved by the ruling decisions of supreme courts. In other cases, and in the context of the democratization process, some federal states — such as Argentina, Brazil, India, Mexico, Russia and South Africa — as well as unitary states — for example, Bolivia, Chile and Poland — have adopted diverse legal and administrative reforms in order to facilitate a greater, albeit carefully limited, role for their constituent units in the international realm.

But in order to understand the real significance of that plethora of legal reforms, judicial decisions and political instruments, it may be useful to take distance from the legal–positivist approaches that are commonly adopted in the scholarly treatment of this reality. Not in vain do the political implications of these conflicting legal arguments on the limits of sub-state diplomacy vary considerably in each case, but ultimately there is always a form of empirical compromise between the scenarios desired by each party, the truly available options, and, finally, the achieved outcomes. After all, as Michelmann has recently pointed out:

The cooperation of the two orders of government requires consultation through durable and adequately conceptualized institutions of intergovernmental relations, and it requires the willingness to make compromises. Effective cooperation is essential.58

In sum, when the crudest power politics are not at play — such as in Chechnya — sooner or later that compromise adopts the grammar of political bargaining and deliberation, consequently reaffirming the contours of a stable, albeit recognizably plural, political community. However, it is worth emphasizing that strictly legal arguments never resolve the case. Only factual politics will resolve the case.59

59) For the concrete case of Tatarstan, the ambivalences of that game have been aptly examined by Katherine E. Graney, ‘Projecting Sovereignty in Post-Soviet Russia: Tatarstan in the International Arena’, in
Yet factual politics have a double sense here: first, they can be circumscribed to the existing power relationships between central and sub-state governments within the affected state; second, and far beyond the contours of a particular state, the political context can also be understood with regard to the many implications of the restructuring of the global political economy upon states’ sovereignty. These implications — whether in the economic, political, social, or legal domain — are shaping both new opportunities and constraints for policy innovation and institutional change within and beyond states. Some additional reflections can help us to understand how these two driving forces could operate simultaneously.

Sub-state diplomacy is frequently controversial, not because of its material scope or its supposedly undesirable legal consequences for the affected states, but to the extent that it appears as symbolically relevant — significant expressions of certain values that seem to question precisely those other values that sustain the centralization of international relations as optimum. As mentioned above, this symbolic dimension usually reveals a will of recognition as well as a more or less controversial assertion of political subjectivity.60 It is that assertion of a differentiated subjectivity that is perceived as a challenge by hosting states. On this matter, Paquin has convincingly argued that:

Against common beliefs, nationalist claims are negotiable and can be the object of compromise.61

In a similar vein, Wolff has recently pointed out that:

Rather than seeing paradiplomacy as a threat, it should be embraced as a necessity and an opportunity in the process of managing and ultimately resolving what might otherwise be protracted self-determination conflicts.62

But it is worth commenting that even in those cases where a clear will of differentiation with regard to the hosting state exists — as happens in Catalonia, Flanders, Quebec or Tatarstan — sub-state diplomacy only rarely turns into what Duchacek called ‘protodiplomacy’ — that is, those ‘initiatives and activities of a non-central government abroad that graft a more or less separatist message on to its economic,

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60) In real practice, however, it is not always easy to differentiate symbolic concerns from functional issues. This is something particularly clear in the case of cross-border cooperation where ethno-cultural, socio-economic and environmental issues are frequently mixed. For a reflective overview on this, see James Anderson, Liam O’Dowd and Thomas M. Wilson (eds.), New Borders for a Changing Europe: Cross-Border Cooperation and Governance (London: Frank Cass, 2003).


social, and cultural links with foreign nations’, even at the risk of provoking serious conflict. \(^{63}\) That would be the case of Trans Dniester, Puntland or Somaliland among other so-called ‘states within states’. \(^{64}\) These attempts to simulate full sovereignty in the international realm are, however, incompatible with the stable and confident political context that conventional sub-state diplomacy needs to enjoy in order to be truly effective and, ultimately, non-conductive to unaffordable intergovernmental conflict. As Lecours has pointed out in simple but convincing words:

> The development of a sustainable paradiplomacy requires the establishment of adequate channels of consultation and coordination between regional and state officials. Obviously, this necessitates some level of acceptance on the part of state officials […]. Assuming that there is such basic acceptance, the intensity of the consultation and coordination will depend first and foremost on the nature and extent of paradiplomacy. If the foreign action of a sub-state unit is modest, […] a fairly informal process of information-sharing may very well be enough to place state officials at ease. If paradiplomacy is more ambitious, […] the relationship […] needs to go beyond information-sharing to include genuine consultation and, even, coordination. \(^{65}\)

Considering the game from another angle, states also need to establish criteria for judging the accordance of certain sub-state diplomatic practices with the new standards that they are reluctant — but ultimately inclined — to accept in conformity with the changing rules of the game. In this case, the underlying rule is very easy to identify: the maintenance of sub-state diplomacy as a relatively low-profile activity that is always submitted to the ultimate consent of the affected sovereign states. The precise contours of these limits are nevertheless very difficult to specify. But some recent controversies can serve to illustrate how elastic the criteria sustained by states with regard to the limits of sub-state diplomacy can be, depending on their diverse perceptions and interests. In August 2009, the US State Department harshly protested after Scottish authorities decided to hand over the notorious Lockerbie airline bomber, Abdel Basset al-Megrahi, to Libyan authorities on ‘compassionate grounds’. Yet only two months earlier, the United Kingdom had regarded President Obama’s direct negotiations — without British Foreign Office consent — with Bermuda’s government over the release of four Guantanamo Bay detainees to the British overseas territory as ‘humiliating’.

In contrast, the growing recognition of sub-state governments as legitimate interlocutors or important policy partners in some multilateral institutions generally offers a more consensual profile. Both the Council of Europe and the Euro-


European Communities were pioneers in this field, opening some venues that were to some extent later emulated by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Mercosur respectively. But that trend is also becoming increasingly visible among some institutions of the UN system, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). The venues for this have been diverse. Sometimes, sub-state governments simply declared themselves committed to their respective declared goals, offering complementary resources and consequently contributing to the effective achievement of their objectives. In these cases, sub-state governments do not have as their objective any form of formal membership. They simply aim to be recognized as relevant partners in global development efforts. Examples of this are the unilateral signing of ‘Agenda 21’ by many regional governments throughout the world, or more recently the campaign of the United Nations ‘Millennium Development Goals’. But in addition, and particularly when they are acting as donors, constituent units are also able to sign diverse Memorandums of Agreement (MoA) with institutions such as UNDP, UNICEF, FAO, UNIFEM, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), among others. These agreements are usually implemented in a consistent and non-controversial way, generally under the silent supervision of the Official Development Assistance (ODA) agencies of each of the affected states, and the goodwill of executive teams in international organizations. Even the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has recently opened its doors to sub-state governments, albeit in a rather more selective way. Under the so-called State Partnership Programme, the US Department of State has been able to link the US states’ National Guard to their overseas operations under NATO rule.66 These forms of recognition have nonetheless always had a low institutional profile, invariably submitted to the ultimate consent of the affected member states. They constitute an important innovation in multilateralism, which is opening the door to new forms of multi-level governance on a global scale.67

Perhaps of more relevance is the way in which institutions such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have recently entered in direct contact with constituent units in countries such as Argentina, Brazil or India. Although these relationships were for technical reasons initially facilitated by federal governments, their consequences are far-reaching, given that the decentralization of borrowing can contribute in a critical way to states’ territorial imbalances.

and institutional fragmentation. But beyond these specific cases, sub-state international mobilization is frequently a rather contentious process in which, in the words of Sagan and Halkier:

[... ] different public and private actors have attempted to institutionalize their particular visions and priorities, frequently questioning both the external delimitation and the internal constitution of regions.68

Considered through these lenses, the difficulties encountered by states to regulate new sub-state diplomacy can be reconsidered. Contemporary, legal and political regulation of diplomacy, as happens with many other on-going regulatory efforts all over the world, is a contentious process in which the initial will of the states, even the will of the most powerful among them, has to be tempered, taking into account not only the global functional dynamics propelled by world trade and investment, technological innovations or environmental challenges, but also the changing legitimizing needs of late–modern capitalism. Consequently, the real driving force behind the normalization of sub-state diplomacy is the pervasive pressure that is posed by the new global political economy and its transformative forces.69

Conclusion

This article offers an interpretative exploration on the normalization of sub-state diplomacy. Normalization can be defined as a mode of institutional control that recognizes as valid — albeit reluctantly — an otherwise deviant practice, while the limits of that practice are immediately fixed and carefully monitored. In the international realm, normalization enables the diplomatic system to operate in an increasingly complex environment, facilitating its own adaptation and durability. Normalization allows the selective incorporation into the diplomatic field of important innovations that are produced by the pluralization of global life, simply because they are — both for functional and normative reasons — too relevant to be ignored. But it simultaneously reaffirms the hierarchical structure of the diplomatic system.

For the case of sub-state diplomacy, four main venues for that normalizing process have been identified here. First, the notion of normalization as generalization has been suggested as a way to emphasize that the growing involvement of

sub-state governments in the international sphere undoubtedly constitutes its main normalizing force. Sub-state interventions in the diplomatic realm — once considered exceptional or deviant — are becoming normal, simply because their practices, institutions and discourses are increasingly widespread throughout the world in the most disparate institutional contexts and are rapidly changing perceptions and attitudes within the conventional diplomatic system itself.

Second, investigation confirmed that in spite of the crucial importance of global dynamics, the shaping of specific forms of sub-state diplomacy across the world cannot be understood without closer attention to the structural link between sub-state mobilization at an international level and the wider context posed by the specific forms that are adopted around the world by so-called new regionalism. Moreover, the resulting modalities of sub-state diplomacy can also be seen as a form of commitment between sub-national mobilization efforts and the necessary adjustment to the changing regional context that states themselves are ultimately obliged to promote in different ways so as to avoid international ostracism. In this sense, the normalization of sub-state diplomacy is also becoming regionalized.

Third, the article emphasized that sub-state diplomacy is not simply the determined outcome of certain structural conditions. It is always a form of political agency that reveals a political will for greater recognition in the international realm, as well as an assertion of institutional autonomy in an increasingly complex context. The above-mentioned process of regionalization does not, however, impede the mutual adaptability of sub-state diplomacy throughout the world. That adaptability is, in addition, demonstrative of quite a singular process of transnational policy innovation and learning alongside sub-state governments. It reveals a capacity for reflective adaptation to changing structural contexts and that also facilitates its growing institutional recognition by the diplomatic system.

Finally, the article analysed the main legal and institutional mechanisms that states have deployed in recent decades, in order to acknowledge, albeit reluctantly, a new role to be played by sub-state governments in both their foreign policy designs and diplomatic machineries. As with the heterogeneous practice that they try to regulate, these mechanisms are not completely uniform. Rather, they are widely extended with important implications not only for each directly affected state, but also for the whole community of states. For, sooner or later, all states need to consider the treatment that they are expected to offer foreign constituent units, as well as the treatment that they understand other states should offer their own constituencies. However, as shown in this article, the regulatory process is never completed. Sooner or later, political controversies reappear, for sub-state diplomacy, like conventional diplomacy, is also, as Sharp has convincingly pointed out:
a discrete human practice, constituted by the explicit construction, representation, negotiation and manipulation of ambiguous identities.\textsuperscript{70}

The most salient difference would nonetheless be that in the case of sub-state diplomacy, negotiation and manipulation of ambiguous identities, which Sharp aptly identifies as the core of diplomatic culture, take place not only among states but also within them. If this statement has some plausibility, sub-state diplomacy would be another, particularly ubiquitous, illustration of the way in which some current existing diplomatic practices exceed the ‘representational capabilities’ of mainstream diplomatic discourses.\textsuperscript{71}

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\textsuperscript{71} On both the formative process as well the current exhaustion of classic diplomacy’s representational dimensions, see Costas M. Constantinou, \textit{On the Way to Diplomacy} (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 1-30.