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Sub-state Governments as Rising International Actors

The Case of Human Security¹

ABSTRACT The aim of this article is to go beyond a state-centric perspective in security/development studies and to present sub-state governments as rising political actors in international affairs who are able to provide human security in developing countries. To this end, this article presents how sub-state governments reach this target through non-military means, specifically through the instruments and mechanisms of development assistance policy. The analyzed sub-state governments were limited geographically to the cases from the European Union. This limitation is necessary for methodological purposes – the EU as a non-state and to some extent supranational organization provides an institutional and political support for sub-state governments' involvement in international issues, allowing to bypass central governments. This article derives from the assumption that human security is strongly correlated with development assistance, following the logic of the UN Report on Human Security of 1994. Despite the fact that little has been written on sub-state governments' activity in development policy/human security, they are active in all dimensions of human security.

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KEYWORDS: human security, sub-state governments, development assistance, paradiplomacy, security-development nexus

Introduction

In recent years, the emergence of sub-state governments as full-fledged actors in certain domains of international politics has become routinized through the processes of institutionalization and has fallen into the ongoing process of political normalization². Rapid changes in the international environment fostered by the processes of globalization which had altered the structure of international relations led to a greater inclusion of sub-state actors as international players. However, despite a tangible intensification of sub-state governments' external actions, they lack international competence and are not "natural international actors", meaning that their political actorness cannot "be taken for granted"³. This article aims to analyze sub-state governments as emerging political actors in international relations with political aspirations of taking up the role of human security providers in developing countries. To this end, and with regard to the lack of political and economic resources of sub-state governments, this chapter reveals how sub-state governments reach that objective through non-military means, specifically through the instruments and mechanisms of development assistance policy. For methodological purposes, sub-state governments are limited geographically to the cases from the European Union. The EU provides an institutional and political support for sub-state governments' engagement in international issues, allowing them to bypass central governments. At the EU level, decentralization of global donors in development assistance is supported as a concept of decentralized cooperation in development policy⁴. This article derives from the assumption that human security is currently strongly correlated with development aid, following the logic of the UN Report on Human Security from 1994. In the context of the scarce literature on sub-

² The concept of "normalization" refers to the transformation in structural processes, and it is here 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". See more: N. Cornago, *On the Normalization of Sub-state Diplomacy*, "The Hague Journal of Diplomacy" 2010, vol. 5, no. 1-2.

³ A. Lecours, *Paradiplomacy: Reflections on the Foreign Policy and International Relations of Regions*, "International Negotiations" 2002, vol. 7, no. 1, p. 95.

⁴ See more: European Commission, *The Thematic Programme „Non-State Actors and Local Authorities in Development”*, COM (2006) 19 final, Brussels, 25.01.2006; European Commission, *EU Code of Conduct on Division of Labour in Development Policy*, COM (2007) 72 final, Brussels, 28.02.2007; European Commission, *Local Authorities: Actors for Development*, COM (2008) 626 final, Brussels, 8.10.2008.

state governments as actors in security, this article adopts an exploratory research design, applied "in the interests of getting to know or increase our understanding of a new or little researched setting, group, or phenomenon"⁵.

Sub-state Governments on the International Scene: Actors in Security

The process of launching and conducting external activities by sub-state governments is not a new phenomenon in international relations. Early research on what is labelled in academic discourse as paradiplomacy⁶ tended to limit its interests strictly to federal countries. The first glance leaves an impression that this assumption could be correct, while in political practice relatively broad competences are assigned to federal units, which is guaranteed by constitutions or other domestic laws. With the assignment of even a minimum power of decision-making, federal systems allow "for the expression of regional goals as well as for a coordinated expression of national agendas"⁷.

Studies on paradiplomacy, which trace back to the 1980s as studies on foreign activities of federal units, were conducted in many cases by those whose academic expertise came from federal studies⁸, and some even proposed to use the terms of "multi-layered diplomacy"⁹ or "constituent diplomacy"¹⁰ to overcome the ambiguities related to the concept of "paradiplomacy"¹¹. However, limiting paradiplomacy exclusively to federal units would fail to enable processes of public policies in contemporary

⁵ J. Ruane, *Essentials of Research Methods. A Guide to Social Science Research*, Pondicherry 2004, p. 12.

⁶ Paradiplomacy broadly refers to the "involvement of regional governments in the international area". See more: M. Keating, *Regions and International Affairs: Motives, Opportunities and Strategies*, "Regional & Federal Studies" 1999, vol. 9, no. 1; I. Duchacek, *The International Dimension of Subnational Self-Government*, "Publius" 1984, vol. 14, no. 4.

⁷ G. Mahler, *New Dimension of Canadian Federalism. Canada in a Comparative Perspective*, Toronto-London 1987.

⁸ A. Kuznetsov, *Theory and Practice of Paradiplomacy: Subnational Governments in International Affairs*, Abingdon 2015.

⁹ B. Hocking, *Localizing Foreign Policy. Non-Central Governments and Multilayered Diplomacy*, New York 1993.

¹⁰ See: J. Kincaid, *Implications of Constituent Diplomacy for the European Communities: Issues from U.S. State Experiences*. In: C. Lloyd Brown-John (ed.), *Federal-Type Solutions and European Integration*, Lanham 1995.

¹¹ The ambiguity related to the concept of paradiplomacy is grounded in the lack of consensus on the meaning of the prefix "para". It could be interpreted as an abbreviation for "parallel" (diplomacy conducted in parallel with traditional state diplomacy), which signalizes a neutral meaning. However, it could be interpreted as deriving from the Greek word of "para", what could be interpreted etymologically as "in opposition to" (diplomacy conducted in opposition to traditional state

politics, which occur in federal as well as in non-federal states and could be labelled as the framework for paradiplomatic activities. For instance, in non-federal countries such as France, United Kingdom or Italy regionalization brought “more leeway to conduct a certain level of autonomous foreign activity”¹² in recent years.

In general terms, autonomous constituent units of federal and non-federal states vary at the domestic level in terms of their competences in policy-making power. At the international level, sub-state governments face structural and legal limitations derived from domestic constitutional settings. From the legal perspective, a distinguishing feature is reflected in different degrees of autonomy the constituent units are assigned to. In case of the European federated units, legal grounds for autonomy are drawn up in constitutions. For instance, in case of Belgium, the constitution not only provides a framework for autonomy, but explicitly assigns its constituent units specific powers, including a treaty-making power in the field of their domestic jurisdiction, and the right to participate in treaty-making in the areas of concurrent jurisdiction¹³.

The external dimensions of federated units are regulated by their constitutions¹⁴, or specific laws assigning autonomous positions to sub-state governments¹⁵. In some cases, the general principle of *in foro interno* and *in foro externo* has been explicitly adopted to provide constituent units with the external competences in issues attributed to their domestic competences¹⁶. Despite that, the overall competences are clearly limited. Sub-state governments cannot become members of international organizations¹⁷ or alliances, they are generally not allowed to conclude treaties (with some

diplomacy). See more: M. Duran, *Mediterranean Paradiplomacies. The Dynamics of Diplomatic Reterritorialization*, Leiden–Boston 2015.

¹² J. Blatter [et al.], *Foreign Relations of European Regions: Competences and Strategies*, “West European Politics” 2008, vol. 31, no. 3, p. 464.

¹³ See more: P. Bursens, F. Massart-Pierard, *Kingdom of Belgium*. In: H. Michelmann (ed.), *Foreign Relations in Federal Countries*, Montreal 2009.

¹⁴ For instance, the Belgian Constitution provides the federated units with specific competences in art. 167 § 1-3, and the German constitution regulates the issues in art. 32 § 1-3.

¹⁵ For instance, the Catalan Statue of Autonomy of 2006 regulates the issue of foreign affairs in art. 193-200.

¹⁶ In 1994, Spanish Constitutional Tribunal in the sentence 165/1994 permitted sub-state governments with constitutional provisions for international relations. A similar approach was implemented in Belgium in constitutional reforms in 1988 and extended in 1993. See more: *Tribunal Constitucional de España, Sentencia 165/1994, de 26 de mayo*, <http://hj.tribunalconstitucional.es/es/Resolucion/Show/2682> (accessed: 12.12.2017); P. Bursens, F. Massart-Pierard, *op. cit.*; D. Criekemans, *Regional Sub-state Diplomacy from a Comparative Perspective: Quebec, Scotland, Bavaria, Catalonia, Wallonia and Flanders*. In: D. Criekemans (ed.), *Regional Sub-state Diplomacy Today*, Leiden 2010.

¹⁷ With some specific exceptions, as in the case of La Francophonie, which provides a significant platform for its members in light of preserving their culture and language. For that reason, La Francophonie plays an important role in Wallonia's international relations. See more: A. Lecours,

exception regarding their domestic competences), therefore lacking the power of *ius contrahendi*, and they are prohibited from undertaking international obligations. Given that their political and economic resources are limited in scope, sub-state governments are required to rely on state channels of traditional diplomacy.

An ambiguous political status of sub-state governments is part of a greater puzzle in the context of the security domain, which traditionally has been perceived as a fundamental issue assigned to sovereign states¹⁸. However, with the paradigm shift in security studies, introduced in the 1980s¹⁹, the concept of security has been extensively redefined and re-conceptualized in literature. As a result, the extension of the notion of security has supplemented the military dimension of thereof with certain non-military aspects, creating as a result a space for such concepts as political, environmental, economic or human security. This distinction is closely related to the “two prevalent philosophies of security”. The first perception of security remains synonymous with power accumulation (the more power is accumulated, the more secure relevant actors are), while the second philosophy tends to perceive security as an act of emancipation (relation between relevant actors, regarding issues such as human rights and justice)²⁰.

Nevertheless, the reconceptualization of security cannot be limited to the extension of the scope of the concept itself. The other tendency reflects attempts towards the inclusion of a new type of actors as security providers. As noted by Noe Cornago, despite the fact that a local dimension of international security has been called into question, the value of sub-state governments’ external actions has been neglected as potentially having an impact on the redefinition of international security²¹. However, Cornago, who places his analysis beyond the grand theories of security, focuses on examples of sub-state governments’ engagement in security, specifically where constituent units achieved success performing as international actors. In the case-study analysis, he explores how sub-state governments made efforts to redefine the domain of international security through their foreign actions (specifically, channels of pa-

op. cit. In the context of the EU, a specific role is played by the Committee of Regions, whose establishment gave sub-state governments opportunities to express their local interests internationally. See more: L. Hooghe, G. Marks, *Europe with the Regions: Channels of Regional Representation in the European Union*, “Publius” 1996, vol. 26, no. 1.

¹⁸ See more: K. Booth, *Theory of World Security*, Cambridge 2007; B. Buzan, L. Hansen, *The Evolution of International Security Studies*, Cambridge 2009.

¹⁹ See more: B. Buzan, *People, State and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, Brighton 1983.

²⁰ P. Williams (ed.), *Security Studies. An Introduction*, Abingdon 2008, p. 6.

²¹ N. Cornago, *Diplomacy and Paradiplomacy in the Redefinition of International Security: Dimensions of Conflict and Cooperation*, “Regional & Federal Studies” 1999, vol. 9, no. 1, p. 41.

radiplomacy), through which sub-state governments reduced transnational ethnic tensions and tackled environmental and migration issues²². Nevertheless, the references to sub-state governments in the literature on security/development studies remain limited in scope and has not gathered an international attention from academic circles.

Human Security: Merging Security with Development

In 1994, the UN Human Development Report recognized the necessity of redesigning security agenda at the level of the international community, acknowledging the experience of changing security landscape which requires a new approach to security. Assuming that contemporary conflicts and states of insecurity derive from social and economic conditions, the Report stated that “the search for security in such a milieu lies in development, not in arms”²³. The search for a new paradigm was founded on three fundamental assumptions. First, human security can be equalized with human development. In other words, there is a strong correlation between security and development. Second, changes in the international environment altered by the forces of globalization have blurred the boundaries between domestic and external threats to security, resulting in a situation when “the threats to human security are no longer just personal or local or national”²⁴. Third, the concept of security goes far beyond state-centric frameworks. Security in that meaning puts human beings at its center. At the conceptual level, security encompasses a wide scope of daily issues, from job security to healthcare or environmental security. As a result, international organizations made one step further to recognize that threats to human existence are non-military in nature, in a sense that the lack of political stability leading to breakdowns in the provision of state services poses more dangers than conflicts²⁵. To this end, a new paradigm of (human) security is reachable through the channels of non-military means. Since the concepts of human security and human development are framed as synonyms, development assistance policy has been introduced as an instrument for tackling global threats. The newly introduced security-development nexus, merging these two concepts into

²² *Ibidem*.

²³ United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 1994*, http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/255/hdr_1994_en_complete_nostats.pdf (accessed: 12.12.2017).

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

²⁵ C. Peoples, N. Vaughan-Williams, *Critical Security Studies. An Introduction*, New York 2010, p. 123.

one coherent narrative, was embraced “in a spirit of aid-industry optimism born out of feelings of policy innovation and mandate renewal”²⁶.

Within a decade following international mobilization for the global war on terror, the European Union adopted Security-Development Nexus as a fundamental principle both in its development assistance and cooperation and in its security agenda. The European Security Strategy of 2003 indicated that “security is a precondition of development”²⁷, while this notion provides a basic principle for strategies launched in relations between the EU and Sahel, the Gulf of Guinea, and the Horn of Africa²⁸. At the EU level, the nexus between security and development led to the merger of mechanisms and instruments related to development assistance and security policies, the extension of means and instruments under the competence of relevant political actors in the EU, and the creation of new actors in the institutional framework of the EU with competences in both security and development domains (High Representative and Vice-President of the European Commission)²⁹.

Dimensions of Human Security: The Role of Sub-State Governments

Following the logic of the 1994 Human Development Report, human security has been divided into seven main categories: (1) economic security, (2) food security, (3) health security, (4) community security, (5) personal security, (6) environmental security, and (7) political security. In recent years, sub-state governments from the European Union have been involved in activities encompassing all aspects of human security, mainly and nearly exclusively through the channels of development assistance. The institutionalization of development assistance has its multidimensional results.

²⁶ M. Duffield, *Development, Security and Unending War: Governing the World of Peoples*, London 2007, p. 54.

²⁷ European Council, *European Security Strategy 2003*, <https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/file/10/download?token=ubYn8qBQ> (accessed: 12.12.2017).

²⁸ See more: Council of the European Union, *Council Conclusions on the Gulf of Guinea 2014*, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/141576.pdf (accessed: 12.12.2017); Council of the European Union, *Council Conclusions on the Horn of Africa 2011*, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/126052.pdf (accessed: 12.12.2017); European External Action Service, *Strategy for Security and Development in Sahel 2011*, http://www.eeas.europa.eu/africa/docs/sahel_strategy_en.pdf (accessed: 12.12.2017).

²⁹ See more: H. Merket, *The EU and the Security-Development Nexus: Bridging the Legal Divide*, “European Foreign Affairs Review” 2013, vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 83–101.

Sub-national actors from the EU have launched country-oriented and issue-oriented development assistance programmes (e.g. Wales for Africa, launched by the Welsh government in 2006; Scotland has developed programmes in Malawi, Rwanda, Zambia and Pakistan; Catalonia provides long-term programmes in 11 countries). Also, they have founded representation offices in developing countries (e.g. Flanders locates its General Representation in Pretoria, with two other offices in Lilongwe and Maputo, focusing strictly on development cooperation), initiated common programmes for developing countries and set up special administrative units for conducting development aid policy (e.g. Conseil Wallonie-Bruxelles de la Cooperation International in Wallonia, Hamburger Council for Sustainable Development Policy appointed by the Hamburg Senate; in Catalonia development policy is coordinated by the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation in the Regional Government of Catalonia and executed by the Agency for Development Coordination, ACCD).

According to the UNDP Human Development Report, the economic dimension of human security includes an assured basic income and tackles negative results of lack of thereof. In practice, it harks back to a longstanding battle against homelessness, poverty and growing unemployment rates, and advocates for specific adjustments to the market reality. Under the banner of Wales for Africa programme, the Welsh Government provides a grant mechanism for Wales-based donors to launch development assistance programmes for sustainable livelihood in developing countries.

Awarded donors aim at tackling financial poverty, supporting small-scale enterprises or increasing the rates of employment through the programmes of adjustment designed for the most underprivileged. For instance, in recent years grants have been awarded by those donors who launched their projects in village communities in South Africa (i.e. Craft Enterprise Development meant to develop business and craft skills for women with the purpose to enhance their market opportunities), in Tanzania (i.e. Supporting Village Clusters meant to provide 150 people with access to tools and skills with the purpose of further training to help local people adjust to local markets) and Uganda (i.e. Money for Honey meant to increase household incomes through the provision of access to beekeeping). Food security, which has been specified as a physical and economic access to basic foods, remains a fundamental aspect of human development, linking development with humanitarianism. The Government of Scotland provides local grant mechanisms for Scotland-based donors to support individual and collective engagement in the provision of food security in developing countries. For instance, in 2015 the Scottish Government established grant programmes in Malawi (i.e. CIFA Trust for Malawi aimed to strengthen village communities in terms of achieving nutrition security) and in India (Gaia Education aimed to build

the capacity of local people and to achieve food security). Health security is defined broadly as encompassing issues from access to healthcare, through access to water and basic sanitary facilities. In this context, the Government of Catalonia has a long-term tradition of cooperation with authorities in Mozambique to achieve certain progress and improvements in terms of healthcare, which in the Catalan strategy is related to basic human rights (the right to health)³⁰.

Community and personal security is defined as protection of people, a state of lack of threats of violence from the state or individuals and other groups. It is specifically designed to help those whose vulnerable conditions make them more prone to be threatened (women, children, ethnic minorities). To face complex threats, sub-state governments make common efforts. For instance, in December 2016 the Government of Catalonia and the Government of Flanders signed an agreement on foreign aid to work together in Mozambique to reduce the intensification of gender violence³¹. Environmental security was expected to be achieved through the provision of access to water and through the reduction of negative results of deforestation. For that reason, the Welsh Government launched a programme called Million Trees for Mbale in a highly deforested area in Uganda to combat negative effects of climate change and provide sustainable supplies of food³². The political category of human security honors the protection of one's ability to be protected within the framework of human rights. Sub-state governments generally express their willingness to participate in global development assistance, emphasizing their commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and - since 2016 - to Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), which replaced their forerunners. For example, in 2010 Wales organized the First Wales International Development Summit, which brought together experts and practitioners in fields such as gender, education and human rights. In her 2017 speech, the Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon stressed that in 2015 Scotland was one of the first countries to sign up to the UN SDG and she confirmed Scotland's willingness to "make a positive contribution to the wider world" in context of protecting

³⁰ Agència Catalana de Cooperació al Desenvolupament, *Master Plan for Development Cooperation 2011-2014*, http://residus.gencat.cat/web/.content/home/lagencia/accio_exterior/cooperacio/master_plan_for_development_cooperation_2011_2014.pdf (accessed: 12.12.2017).

³¹ Flanders' Department of Foreign Affairs, *Governments of Catalonia and Flanders signed a Foreign Aid Agreement*, <http://www.fdfa.be/en/governments-of-catalonia-and-flanders-signed-a-foreign-aid-agreement> (accessed: 12.12.2017).

³² United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, *Wales-Mbale Climate Change Tree Planting Project*, https://unfccc.int/files/secretariat/momentum_for_change/application/pdf/2_uganda_reforestation.pdf (accessed: 12.12.2017).

human dignity³³. Moreover, sub-state governments have adopted national strategies or guidelines reflecting their engagement in the protection of global human rights. During International Human Rights Days in 2013, Scotland launched its flagship project for human rights promotion – Scotland’s National Action Plan for Human Rights (SNAP), a transformative programme of action. In SNAP, Scotland directly stated that “human rights considerations are at the heart of Scotland’s International Framework including its international development cooperation, bilateral engagement and engagement with international organizations”³⁴. Similarly, Flanders in its policy documents seeks to integrate human rights as a cross-cutting theme in its external relations. In the context of development assistance, the Government “aims to invest in an increasing respect for fundamental social rights in emerging and developing countries”.

Conclusion: Why Sub-State Governments Matter?

As Ivo Duchacek pointed out, international attention is rarely lavished on local dimensions of international relations, and as such sub-state governments “can hardly compete for public attention with wars, (...) and other forms of conflict or cooperation among sovereign nations”³⁵. Nevertheless, the narrow-oriented notion of what security is and what it enables would lead to the reduction of methodological and theoretical assumptions in research on political actorness in security. The aim of this paper was to outline the engagement of sub-state governments in the provision of only one of the security dimensions, namely human security, which since the late 1990s has been correlated with human development in the international community’s agenda. The aforementioned examples were intended to highlight the fact that despite limited political and economic resources sub-state governments from the European countries are active in all aspects of human security. The question should be asked why this issue matters in the domain of political science. First, we are facing the situation of tangible intensification of sub-state governments’ engagement on the international scene, not

³³ Scottish Government, *Scotland’s Place in the World: First Minister’s Stanford University Speech*, <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-place-in-the-world-first-ministers-stanford-university-speech/> (accessed: 12.12.2017).

³⁴ Scottish Human Rights Commission, *Scotland’s National Action Plan for Human Rights 2013–2017*, <http://www.snaprights.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/SNAPpdfWeb.pdf> (accessed: 12.12.2017).

³⁵ I. Duchacek, *Perforated Sovereignties: Towards a Typology of New Actors in International Relations*. In H. Michelmann, P. Soldatos (eds.), *Federalism and International Relations. The Role of Subnational Units*, Oxford 2001, p. 2.

only in terms of a number of sub-state governments involved but also domains of involvement. In many of the cases brought up in the previous part, launching and conducting development assistance programmes to provide human security is a relatively newly emerged process. It has been accompanied by the changes in thinking about global development, paving a way towards a more participatory approach in global development assistance system. Second, with the engagement in such uncontested and uncontroversial domains as development aid policy, sub-state governments are opening the backdoor to international relations, presenting themselves as full-fledged actors in international politics. As such, it challenges the position of relevant central governments in terms of power to control. To this end, sub-state governments bypass state-centric institutions and procedures through programmes independent from central governments. Third, the political practice of sub-state governments' engagement becomes routinized and preserved, in the meaning that sub-state governments become recognized by international organizations such as the EU as legitimate actors in global development system. Fourth, in the light of ineffectiveness of global efforts in development assistance and human security provisions, the participation of sub-state governments generates a new plausible solution for unresolved issues. In that context, small-scale programmes launched and conducted by sub-state governments, not pushing for greater ambitions, are more plausible to be successful, while they are intended to result in horizontal instead of vertical effects.

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