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Introduction

Modern states use all instruments of foreign policy. Nowadays, they increasingly accept new means of its implementation that are broadly defined as soft power – public diplomacy and promotion of a state's international interests. While the objectives of classical diplomacy, which are connected with political and military security of a state, need to be implemented within the means of a state's central authorities, other objectives can be and are implemented within decentralized authority bodies on regional and local levels. At present, domestic and foreign policies overlap and a state's monopoly in international relations, especially in some areas, is growing weaker and weaker. In this context of searching for new means that are favourable for the development of societies should the increasing role of international contacts established by regional authorities be perceived. This kind of activity is called "paradiplomacy."

Aleksander Kuznetsov describes paradiplomacy as "a commitment of sub-national actors of national states to international relations" (Kuznetsov, p. 2). This group of actors consists of regions (e.g. Russian okrugs and republics, Canadian provinces, autonomous communities of Spain and Lands of Germany) but also smaller administrative units (e.g. cities). The authors use the Kuznetsov's broad definition during realization of this project, though it must be pointed out that the research was mainly limited to the level of regions. The city diplomacy phenomenon, which is quickly becoming important in international relations, was discussed in the case of China only.

It should be noticed that academic researchers and experts of the analyzed states find the term "paradiplomacy" quite new, even though it has already constituted the subject of empirical research to a lesser (India) or greater extent (China, Russia). Therefore, when conducting interviews, it was necessary to explain to the interlocutors how to understand the concept because it was neither clear nor obvious to them.

Paradiplomacy has been analysed in relation to the increasing interdependencies between globalization and regionalization. The idea can be noticed in Anthony Giddens' works, who conceptualizes the relations between the global and the local in such a manner that the distance

between the local and the remote shortens and vice versa (Georgantzas, Katsamakas, Solowiej 2009).

Furthermore, an important issue, which should be noticed, is that international relations on the level of regions are not governed by international law. On the one hand, they function as international subjects, including opening their own foreign representative offices. On the other, international civil law concerns states, thus regions must be subjected to domestic legislation.

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The most important research problem in the project was an attempt to reply to the question, what does the international activity of regional authorities in the biggest Asian states, i.e. China, India, and Russia, depend on? We asked many detailed research questions. Is paradiplomacy dependent on a state's decentralization level? Or, is it dependent on regional economic capacity? Is paradiplomacy a means of foreign policy implemented on state's level, and if so, to what extent? How do companies' activities affect the international activity of regions? To what extent do central authorities affect (boost or block) international activities carried out on lower authority levels? What is the nature of paradiplomatic activities of Asian regions, does the economic aspect play an important role. Which seems natural? Finally, we asked whether specific features characterizing paradiplomacy in three different big Asian powers can be defined?

The authors put forward three hypotheses concerning regional international activity in the analysed Asian states:

H1. Paradiplomacy conducted by regional authorities is a means of central government foreign policy and it is used to achieve a state's political goals.

H2. The international activity of regional authorities depends on a state's decentralization level, however, it also depends on creating, by central authorities, appropriate conditions, e.g. incentives and approval, to implement this kind of activity.

H3. Economic capacity and the level of regional economic internationalization boost the international activity of regional administration.

The structure of this volume reflects the logical sequence of research tasks. The first chapter discusses the current state of research on paradiplomacy, explains the terminology complexities and thoroughly describes the method of empirical studies that was used. The subsequent chapters are devoted to three Asian states. In every chapter similar issues are described, one by one, which, in turn, helps to compare regions in India, China, and the Russian Far. The described issues are connected with the legal and institutional environment, where regional international activity is implemented, with discussing paradiplomacy discourse and academic achievement in a given state. Finally, every chapter contains a case study of the most internationalized regions.

A. Kuznetsov's explanatory model was used as a starting point for the case study analysis, however, it was slightly modified to the authors' needs (see Chapter 1). It is based on six basic research questions:

1. What are the factors that favour paradiplomacy in the analysed region?
2. What is the legal basis – what does diplomacy conducted by the analysed states look like?
3. What is the main motivation of the analysed regional authorities to partake in international relations?
4. How is paradiplomacy organized and institutionalized in the analysed region?
5. What is the central government's attitude to international activity of regions? What kind of goals encourage central authorities to give permission to regional authorities to carry out such activity?
6. What are the consequences of paradiplomacy to the general public and the entire nation?

These questions were the basis for the interviews conducted with the representatives of the analysed regions in all three states.

The last part of this volume is devoted to a comparative analysis of the international activity of regions and the level of paradiplomacy development in India, China, and the Russian Far East. The authors used a tabular summary and a descriptive comparison according to the adopted variables.

Indeed, research studies concerning paradiplomacy in Asia are still in their initial phase. We hope that this volume will increase awareness of regions' increasing role in international relations in Asia. Certainly, it will not explain all determinants of this complicated process. We are aware that not only the described factors but research methodology as well can and should be subject to scientific discussion. Undoubtedly, the

analytical tools applied to examine the phenomenon of paradiplomacy require further improvement. Comparative studies concerning regional international cooperation, which are currently almost exclusively focused on Europe and North America, should also be further developed. We expect that this volume, which we are proud to present to our readers, will to a certain extent fill the existing research gap and inspire further and deeper analysis.

References

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