

Paradiplomacy for Non-recognized States: Case of Palestine

Dalal Iriqat

Arab American University of Palestine, Ramallah, Palestine

This paper endeavours to elucidate the intricacies of Palestinian Paradiplomacy, focusing in the political impetus pioneered by its principle actors, namely the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and subsequently, the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). Additionally, attention will be directed towards the creation of the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (PMOFA) and its subsidiary, the Palestinian International Cooperation Agency (PICA), albeit briefly discussed. Drawing inspiration from Alexander S. Kuznetsov's seminal work "Theory and Practice of Paradiplomacy: Subnational Governments in International Affairs" (2015), this paper tries to scrutinize the trajectory of Palestinian paradiplomacy and its evolutionary course over time. When it comes to activity and growth, Palestinian paradiplomacy has a unique profile. The way in which topics pertaining to nations are not yet recognized has a great deal of bearing on current discussions and academic research about urgent political concerns like the right to self-determination and human rights. The analysis of *de facto* states via the prism of paradiplomacy naturally arises from the dominant state recognition procedures in international politics.

Keywords: PLO, nationalism, non-state actors, self-determination, paradiplomacy, Palestine, foreign affairs

Introduction: Diplomacy Beyond International Relations—Paradiplomacy

Paradiplomacy is revealed as a component of diplomatic practice involving a wide range of players outside of nation-states when diplomacy is examined outside of the conventional framework of international relations (IR) theory. This covers initiatives pertaining to public diplomacy/place branding, peacebuilding and reconciliation, dialogue between civilizations, and strategic communication. The rise of these critical approaches has facilitated the integration of diplomatic studies with other branches of IR, emphasizing the importance of broadening the scholarly discourse surrounding diplomacy.

One of the foundational functions of diplomacy, as delineated in the Treaties of Westphalia in 1648 and subsequently enshrined in the Vienna Conventions of diplomatic and consular relations in 1961 and 1963 respectively, is representation. Diplomatic missions serve as a means of according or denying political recognition to states, nations, peoples, or organizations, either directly or indirectly. It is customary for states to utilize diplomatic channels to recognize one another. The dispatch of diplomats to a host country signifies mutual consent, thereby conferring *de facto* and *de jure* recognition and political status, as stipulated in the Vienna Conventions.

The diplomatic history of Palestine presents a somewhat distinctive case, exemplified by the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), which, despite not constituting a sovereign state, attained political recognition following its endorsement as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people at the Seventh Arab League Summit Conference in Rabat, Morocco, on October 28, 1974.

Dalal Iriqat, Ph.D., associate professor, Department of Social Sciences, Faculty of Graduate Studies, Arab American University of Palestine, Ramallah, Palestine.

The resolution recognized the right of the Palestinian people to create an autonomous national government led by the PLO, giving it state-like rights even in the absence of official state recognition. As such, the PLO serves as a political organization that is treated like a state and duly represents the Palestinian people in international forums. The PLO case study emphasizes the relational aspect of international relations by smoothly aligning with the idea of paradiplomacy in practice. Among its many roles, diplomacy is a means of bestowing or refusing political recognition, which influences the development and recognition of political actors and changes the character of international relations.

Paradiplomatic actions have a significant impact on central governments' international and domestic policy, operating at the grassroots level of influence. Some academics argue that there aren't many theoretical models that can explain how regional governments have taken on international agency. In order to fill this gap, Alexander S. Kuznetsov examined the function of subnational governments in international relations and proposed a theoretical framework for paradiplomacy in his 2015 book.

This paper examines paradiplomacy in Palestine by referencing previously published works, publications, interviews with prominent members of the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (PMOFA), and easily accessible online materials such as media sources and discussions about Palestinian diplomacy and IR. Furthermore, Kuznetsov's theoretical framework is utilized as a study instrument to tackle significant inquiries concerning Paradiplomacy for Palestine.

As the emphasis of international diplomacy increasingly shifts to modern issues and concerns like climate change, nuclear proliferation, democracy, and sustainability, the Palestinian people's fight for statehood and self-determination never goes away. The pursuit of statehood continues despite the impacts of globalization and technological development, which have promoted increased interconnection among countries and created common global concerns. As a result, in line with the changing nature of international relations, diplomatic players now include a wide range of non-state actors in addition to nation-states.

Palestinian Paradiplomacy

In the examination of paradiplomacy, Alexander S. Kuznetsov's seminal work delineates 11 pivotal dimensions that serve as analytical frameworks in the social sciences. These dimensions encompass constitutional, federalist, nationalist, international relations (IR), border, globalized, geopolitical, global economic, environmental, diplomatic, and separatist paradigms (Kuznetsov, 2015).

Delving into the Palestinian context, a profound resonance with the separatist dimension emerges as the most pertinent avenue for exploration. The emergence of so-called non-recognized states, particularly accentuated post the disintegration of communist federations such as Yugoslavia and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), has injected a significant separatist dimension into paradiplomacy studies. This dimension underscores the relentless quest for statehood and international recognition by subnational entities, exemplified by entities like Kosovo, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia (Bartmann, 2006, pp. 169-178). André Lecours and Luis Moreno aptly assert that nationalism inherently propels regional governments towards international engagement, necessitating a theoretical alignment between paradiplomacy and sub-state nationalism (Lecours & Moreno, 2001, p. 2). Their perspective accentuates the intrinsic correlation between paradiplomacy and identity construction, with cultural preservation and promotion serving as pivotal tenets fueled by nationalist fervor.

In the Palestinian context, a nationalist and cultural lens illuminates the international foray of sub-national entities aspiring to assert their distinct identity, cultural heritage, and linguistic diversity, thereby seeking

enhanced political and economic autonomy. The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), in its capacity as the official representative of the Palestinian people, embarked on an arduous journey towards statehood, epitomizing the challenge of non-recognized states grappling for legitimacy and self-determination amid the intricate web of international politics.

Recognizing states in global politics mainly involve understanding *de facto* states with a nuanced viewpoint through the lens of paradiplomacy, the determination for international recognition of Palestinian autonomy is reflected in an interplay between legal tools and diplomatic mediums in garnering worldwide support and unity to acquire the needed votes. The acknowledgment by the United Nations of Palestine as a non-member observer entity marks a significant development for Palestine in international relations, that enhances Palestine's connections with international organizations and conventions; expanding Palestine's diplomatic presence around the globe amplifies its voice and underscores the essential role of local and non-state actors in international diplomacy. It is interesting to witness how diplomatic international discussions are shifting from limitations of nation states to non-state actors in shaping international affairs.

The challenge of classifying states is underscored by the difference between declarative and constitutive theories, where political considerations often outweigh legal principles in state recognition (Grant, 1999). It is worth noting that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), recognized as the soul representative of the Palestinian people played a major role in the internationalisation campaign for self-determination and full recognition of state.¹ Sub-state diplomatic roles are indispensable, especially when self-rule remains a central and national theme within political dialogues.

Statehood recognition rests on two approaches: the constitutive approach, depending on recognition by other sovereign nations, and the declaratory criterion rooted in the 1933 Montevideo Convention. Despite fulfilling all requisites of statehood, power politics can impede formal recognition for territories such as Palestine, as we saw in 2011, South Sudan was granted full recognition by the UNSC despite lacking the international reports supporting its readiness for state functions, like the case of Palestine; on 23 September 2011, Palestine submitted its application to the United Nations Security Council for full membership, but the vote didn't pass, a year later on 29 November 2012, and through several Arab and other friendly states, Palestine submitted a draft resolution to the General Assembly in a bid to upgrade its status to observer state at the United Nations, the General Assembly accorded Palestine non-member observer state status with 138 in favor, 9 against and 41 abstentions. On April 18, 2024, UNSC votes on Palestine's request for full membership, vote passed with 12 in favor but the USA vetoed the resolution!²

Palestine actively engages in sub-state diplomacy, seeking global support for its self-determination. This melding of conventional diplomatic channels with sub-state diplomatic initiatives reflects the dynamic and ever-evolving landscape of modern global politics of the 21st century.

Motives for Paradiplomacy in Palestine

Kuznetsov categorizes motivations into political, economic, cultural, and cross-border housekeeping factors that drive regions to engage in international endeavors. Several internal and external factors are speeding up the

¹ On 22 November 1974, the Palestine Liberation Organization was accorded observer status at the United Nations according to GA Resolution No. 3237.

² 12 states voted in favor of: Algeria, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Guyana, Ecuador, Russia, China, France, Slovenia, Malta, Japan, Republic of Korea; 1 Against: USA; 2 Abstentions: UK, Switzerland.

rate of Palestinian paradiplomacy.

Eleven such variables have been found and categorized as internal or external elements. Examining these elements helps to clarify the motivations for Palestinian paradiplomacy overseas.

Globalization, democracy, and the internalization and domestication of foreign policy are examples of external causes of paradiplomacy that have a big impact on Palestine's involvement in international affairs. Palestine must adjust since globalization, an all-encompassing global phenomena, affects almost every international activity as well as state affairs around the globe. Globalization has reduced the cultural and economic barriers between nations, providing subnational entities with providing greater chances for cross-border economic cooperation to subnational entities such as Palestine. As a result, Palestinian chambers of commerce participate in trade agreements with international counterparts, promoting cross-border trade and economic ties.

Democratic movements have facilitated global political transformations, and this has been associated with an increase in regional involvement in international issues. One attempt at democratization in Palestine has been participation in international nongovernmental organizations' initiatives focused on state-building, democracy promotion, and public empowerment. However, there have been challenges to democratization; since 2005, there have been reported limitations on the practice of human rights and political participation in national elections. The blurring of boundaries between low and high politics, as well as between internal and foreign policy, further emphasizes the significance of democratic trends in the formation of Palestinian paradiplomacy.

It is clear that the conduct of paradiplomacy is influenced by different factors including the nuances of federal development, the scope of central governmental engagement in foreign affairs, the dynamics of external forces, the intricacies of political discord, the distribution of subnational authority, and the nature of bilateral ties with proximate nations.

Yasser Arafat has endorsed the aspiration of the Palestinians to secure recognition, sovereignty, and international validation. This marked increase in community-based and personal paradiplomatic initiatives. Yasser Arafat led the diplomatic advocacy for the Palestinian populace on behalf of the Palestine Liberation Organization. The degree of Palestinian participation in global affairs is contingent upon the diplomatic approaches of states and the competencies of domestic leaders.

The ambition of these initiatives is to elevate the international standing of Palestine, actively engaging in the rectification of misperceptions linked to the Israeli occupation and affirming Palestine's stature as a credible and integral participant in the international community.

Even though paradiplomacy in Palestine also fulfills cultural, economic, and cross-border administrative roles, politics remains its main driving force, although there are political goals for increased autonomy or full self-rule still present.

Palestinian Paradiplomacy Beyond the PLO

According to Kuznetsov's view, paradiplomacy in Palestine was established via a sequence of historical events, the bulk of which was led by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The recognition of the PLO as the authentic representative of the Palestinian people dates back to the 1970s, and was further cemented on November 15, 1988, when the PLO's legislative body, the Palestinian National Council (PNC), issued an independence proclamation. This constitutes the legal foundation for Palestine's paradiplomacy.

The Oslo peace process in the 1990s led to the formation of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in 1994, with subsequent elections held in 1996. While the PNA was designated to manage internal governance, the

overlap between the PLO and the PNA persisted in representing Palestinian interests internationally. Despite the establishment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) as the official body for international relations (IR) following the Oslo Accords, the superior status of the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people remained unchallenged, as evidenced by the Palestinian Basic Law of 2002.

A pivotal development occurred with the creation of the Palestinian International Cooperation Agency (PICA) in 2015, operating under the umbrella of the MOFA. PICA emerged as a strategic tool for public diplomacy, coordinating international projects and promoting South-South and North-South Cooperation to advance Palestinian interests on the global stage.

Parallel to traditional diplomacy, Palestinian paradiplomacy encompasses various facets such as economic, cultural, parliamentary, military, and defense diplomacy. These efforts align with the broader global agenda outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations, emphasizing international cooperation and development.

However, the evolution of Palestinian paradiplomacy also reflects broader trends in global governance, particularly in the context of subnational entities engaging in external relations. Stefan Wolff characterizes paradiplomacy as the foreign policy capacity of sub-state entities to pursue their specific international interests independently, contributing to the decentralization of international debates and the internationalization of domestic issues.

Town twinning initiatives are excellent instances of city diplomacy, which is a developing branch of paradiplomacy. Palestine has engaged in cross-city cultural and economic contacts, but more may be done to enhance subnational exchanges on the international scale.

Although there are many paradiplomatic initiatives, Palestine still faces challenges in coordinating and centralizing efforts. The essential objectives of Palestinian autonomy and self-governance should always be prioritized within a well-thought-out foreign policy approach, even if certain decisions are influenced by trade, economics, or cultural ties. To sum up, Palestinian paradiplomacy has utilized various avenues and organizational structures to advance its goals on a global scale, despite having to navigate the challenges of aligning with internal diplomatic priorities.

Conclusion

This study explores the realm of Palestinian paradiplomacy by referencing the academic works of Alexander S. Kuznetsov with the main objective to provide a comprehensive historical overview of the field from the early 1970s to 2024, the study aimed to comprehend the factors that led to the emergence and growth of paradiplomacy in the context of Palestine.

Examining the legal structures regulating Palestinian paradiplomacy and clarifying the connections among the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) were main focuses of this study. It was found that the PLO experiences confusion and overlapping of duties because the Palestinian Basic Law does not clearly define the specific responsibilities of the PNA and MOFA, especially in terms of international relations and treaty negotiations. Therefore, the focus is mainly on the PLO, which ends up overshadowing the MOFA's official paradiplomatic efforts, PICA is actively engaged in advancing the development of Palestine and plays a crucial role in paradiplomacy, carrying out its national duties effectively.

The origins of Palestinian paradiplomacy can be linked to the establishment of PLO-supported representative offices, which later became the official representation of Palestine after being recognized as a permanent member of the UNGA in 2012.

It is important to highlight that paradiplomacy complements traditional diplomacy instead of replacing it, nevertheless, the growth of paradiplomacy presents challenges for national governments aiming to uphold the autonomy and consistency of their foreign policies, yet it could also be viewed as a valuable resource that could bolster and advance national diplomatic efforts.

To sum up, the growth of paradiplomatic endeavors indicates a paradigm change in which non-central governments are more involved in international relations. The thing that matters now is how to incorporate paradiplomacy into national foreign policy frameworks so that it may be utilized to support and improve the state's larger diplomatic efforts.

References

- Alvarez, M., & Oddone, N. (2020). Revisiting paradiplomacy in the context of COVID-19. *E-international Relations*. Retrieved 15 March 2022 from <https://www.e-ir.info/2020/08/05/opinion-revisiting-paradiplomacy-in-the-context-of-covid-19/>
- Bartmann, B. (2006). In or out: Subnational island jurisdictions and the antechamber of paradiplomacy. *The Round Table*, 95(386), 541-599.
- Butler, R. (1961). Paradiplomacy. In A. O. Sarkissian (ed.), *Studies in diplomatic history and historiography* (pp. 12-25). London: Longman.
- Cornago, N. (2012). On the normalization of sub-state diplomacy. *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 5(1-2), 11-36. Retrieved 15 March 2022 from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233521043_On_the_Normalization_of_Sub-State_Diplomacy
- Grant, T. D. (1999). *The recognition of states: Law and practice in debate and evolution*. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Hooghe, L., Marks, G., & Schakel, A. (2012). *The rise of regional authorities: A comparative study of 42 democracies*. Oxford, New York: Routledge.
- Iriqat, D. (2019). Palestinian nation branding via public diplomacy. *International Relations and Diplomacy*, 7(5), 202-216. Retrieved 2 May 2022 from <http://www.davidpublisher.org/Public/uploads/Contribute/5d005eec16e36.pdf>
- Iriqat, D. (2020). Israeli politics during COVID-19 and the impact on Palestine. In S. Erakat, and M. Raheb (eds.), *The double lockdown: Palestine under occupation and COVID-19* (pp. 40-49). Bethlehem: Diyar Publisher.
- Kuznetsov, A. S. (2015). *Theory and practice of paradiplomacy: Subnational governments in international affairs*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Lecours, A., & Moreno, L. (2001). Paradiplomacy and stateless nations: A reference to the Basque Country. Retrieved 27 February 2022 from https://digital.csic.es/bitstream/10261/1472/1/paradiplomacy_stateless.pdf
- Tewari, F. (2017). Paradiplomacy in India: Evolution and operationalization. *ORF Occasional Paper*, 117, 1-27. Retrieved 15 March 2022 from <https://www.orfonline.org/research/paradiplomacy-india-evolution-operationalisation/>
- Tewari, F., & Pant, H. V. (2016). Paradiplomacy and India: Growing role of states in foreign policy. *Observer Research Foundation*. Retrieved 2 May 2022 from <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/paradiplomacy-and-india/>
- United Nations. (1949). The Geneva convention relative to the protection of civilian persons in time of war of august 12 1949. Retrieved 15 March 2022 from https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.33_GC-IV-EN.pdf
- United Nations. (1974). PLO sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people—LAS rabat summit—Resolution. In *Seventh Arab league summit conference: Resolution on palestine*. Retrieved 15 March 2022 from <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-194621/>
- United Nations. (2005a). Vienna convention on consular relations 1963. Retrieved 15 March 2022 from https://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/9_2_1963.pdf
- United Nations. (2005b). Vienna convention on diplomatic relations 1961. Retrieved 15 March 2022 from https://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/9_1_1961.pdf