

12-31-2020

Catalan Identity and Paradiplomacy Strategy in Catalonia's Independence Movement

Windy Dermawan

International Relations Department, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Universitas Padjadjaran,
windy.dermawan@unpad.ac.id

Akim Akim

International Relations Department, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Universitas Padjadjaran,
akim@unpad.ac.id

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Recommended Citation

Dermawan, Windy and Akim, Akim (2020) "Catalan Identity and Paradiplomacy Strategy in Catalonia's Independence Movement," *Global: Jurnal Politik Internasional*. Vol. 22 : No. 2 , Article 7.

DOI: 10.7454/global.v22i2.485

Available at: <https://scholarhub.ui.ac.id/global/vol22/iss2/7>

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CATALAN IDENTITY AND PARADIPLOMACY STRATEGY IN CATALONIA'S INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT

Ignatius Hubert, Windy Dermawan, and Akim

International Relations Study Programme
Universitas Padjadjaran

Email: ignatius17004@mail.unpad.ac.id, windy.dermawan@unpad.ac.id & akim@unpad.ac.id

Submitted: 27 May 2020; **accepted:** 4 December 2020

Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan menganalisis bagaimana identitas Catalan, dalam konteks konflik Catalunya dengan Pemerintah Spanyol, berkontribusi terhadap hubungan luar negeri wilayah tersebut dengan publik global melalui aktivitas paradiplomasi. Untuk memenuhi rumusan riset tersebut, dalam artikel ini penulis menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif melalui studi literatur. Ditemukan bahwa Catalunya, sebagai wilayah otonom Spanyol, memiliki sejarah, bahasa, dan kebudayaan yang khas dan berbeda dari wilayah Spanyol lainnya. Untuk melindungi identitasnya, muncul gerakan yang memperjuangkan otonomi lebih luas, bahkan kemerdekaan, bagi Catalunya. Konflik ini memuncak pada 1 Oktober 2017 ketika pemerintah Catalunya melaksanakan referendum kemerdekaan untuk masyarakat Catalan dengan mayoritas memilih merdeka dari Spanyol. Semenjak saat itu, gerakan kemerdekaan di Catalunya mengalami berbagai perubahan hingga saat ini, di mana salah satu upaya Catalunya untuk mencari dukungan dari publik global adalah dengan kegiatan paradiplomasi. Dalam hal ini, dapat diperhatikan bahwa aktivitas paradiplomasi yang dilakukan Catalunya merupakan bentuk upaya Catalunya mempertahankan identitasnya, yang membawa masalah konflik internal Catalunya dengan pemerintah Spanyol menjadi semakin dinamis dan kompleks. Temuan dalam penelitian ini dapat menunjukkan implikasi penting terhadap resolusi berbagai konflik internal serupa, terutama yang mencakup identitas dan paradiplomasi.

Kata kunci:

Catalunya, kemerdekaan, paradiplomasi, resolusi konflik, studi identitas

Abstract

This article seeks to analyse how Catalan identity, within the context of its conflict with the Spanish government, contributes to its foreign relations with the global public through paradiplomacy. This article uses qualitative research method with literature study. It finds that Catalonia, as one of Spain's autonomous regions, have a distinct history, language, and culture from other Spanish regions. To protect their identity, there have been an emergence of movement for greater Catalan autonomy, even independence. This conflict reached climax on 1 October 2017 when the Catalan government initiated an independence referendum amongst Catalan people, with the majority voted for independence from Spain. Since then, the Catalan independence movement has faced many changes until now, with one of the moves done by Catalonia to seek support from global public through their paradiplomacy. As such, it is worth noting how paradiplomacy done by the Catalan government was an effort to protect the existence of their identity, which increases the complication and dynamics of Catalan and Spanish governments' internal conflict. Findings from this study may show important implications for the resolution of similar internal conflicts, especially those involving identity and paradiplomacy.

Keywords:

Catalonia, independence, paradiplomacy, conflict resolution, identity studies

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary state of world politics, conflict is not uncommon. With limited resource available for the taking, it is no wonder that people, sometimes of differing beliefs, ideologies, ethnicities or even states may cross one another in the effort to amass it (Cashman, 2013). And then came the conflict between different parties under the banner of state, that was the norm of international politics leading up to the two world wars (Croxtton, 2013). However, in recent time we can observe a diminishing trend of new conflict between state. Instead, we saw an increase in a new face of conflict on our horizon, one that came from within; otherwise known as internal conflict (Sudira, 2017). This type of conflict (especially one based upon identity) is the one we are going to explain deeper within this article, drawing from the case of Catalonia's bid for independence from Spain and their subsequent paradiplomacy efforts.

Catalonia is one of Spanish province located in the northeast of Iberian Peninsula and has been a part of Spain since the 15th century (Buffery & Marcer, 2011). Throughout history, Catalan integration into Spain has been dynamic, sometimes conflictual, whether the oppression from the Spanish side in terms of politics and culture, or movement for independence and greater autonomy from the Catalan side (Ross, 2007). One of the main causes of this heated relationship is because Catalonia also has a rich and distinct cultural heritage and identity which have been developed for almost 1000 years (Eaude, 2008). Catalonia's unique cultural heritage was often used as a basis for their independence movement plight.

Catalonia initially managed to achieve greater autonomy from Spain due to the 2006 Statute of Autonomy ("Catalonia endorses autonomy plan", 2006). This statute encompassed a freedom to manage the province's own financial matters, to levy its own taxes, and to enforce greater judicial authority within their territory. The relationship of Spain and Catalonia deteriorated in 2010, when this statute was overturned by Spain's supreme court for being deemed as unsuited to Spain's constitution (Annisa, 2019). As a long-awaited response, on 1 October 2017, the Catalan government supporting independence allowed an independence referendum to be held for the citizens of Catalonia. This referendum resulted in the Catalan government claiming that 90% of voters chose to be independent from Spain ("Catalonia independence: Separatists on trial", 2019). The Catalan government then declared itself independent from Spain on 27 October 2017, which faced a harsh crackdown from the Spanish government.

Since then, this conflict and the discussion to resolve it has reached a deadlock; the Spanish government on one side argued against Catalan independence on the basis of sovereignty, while Catalonia argued for independence on the basis of its unique cultural heritage and identity which they believe are endangered by Spanish imposed rules. This deadlock leads to Catalonia finding different route to achieve their goals. One of them is through paradiplomacy; which is defined as external relations done by actors of sub-state level (in this case provincial government, albeit being a contested party) (Lequesne & Paquin, 2017). Historical precedence of Catalan paradiplomacy encompasses means such as institutionalising their foreign engagement through regional bodies, sending delegations abroad to European intergovernmental organisations, and building transnational networks in order to promote their interest abroad.

This essay seeks to explain the Catalan conflict deeper, with the hope of understanding the root problems behind the conflict and attempt to analyse its' variables. This article's initial hypothesis was that the root of problem causing this internal conflict originated from Catalan identity crisis within Spain.

This article notes how analyses on the Catalan conflict have been done before by numerous researchers throughout the ages. Here, this article will highlight a few of them that is relevant to this article's own writing. The ones explaining about identity conflicts (mainly views on Catalonia internal conflicts) are written by Marinzel (2014), Castells (2014), Tzagkas (2018), Olomjobi and Omony (2019), and Annisa (2019). The main difference between these previous studies and this article's is how identity was used as a consideration within Spain's internal conflict and then further employed by Catalonia to engage in paradiplomacy outreach efforts to the global public. This was then used further as a basis to analyse the contemporary relations between these two parties.

Other literatures that this article used, was about the act of paradiplomacy done by Catalonia as a sub-state actor to fight for their identity cause in the international arena; writings which specifically explaining about this was authored by Lecours and Moreno (2001), Lecours (2008), Zamorano and Morató (2014), Vicuña (2015), and Segura and Etherington (2017). The main difference between this article's research and other past studies is that these past studies focused more on the historical factors and precedence behind the rise and fall of the Spanish-Catalan relationship from past to the present. Meanwhile, this article focuses more on analysing the contemporary relations between the two conflicting sides as a climax of a long identity struggle between Catalonia and Spain. In this light, paradiplomacy effort done by Catalonia towards

global public was done to safeguard the existence of their identity. This brought a whole new level of complication towards Spanish-Catalan relationship itself.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

As explained before, this article uses the concepts of paradiplomacy from International Relations in explaining the Catalan independence movement. Paradiplomacy is defined as external relations done by actors of sub-state level (Lequesne & Paquin, 2017). Although as an academic interest paradiplomacy is not new, it is nonetheless important and increasingly so in the contemporary world because of globalisation (Magone, 2006). Some of the main issues conferred in the act of paradiplomacy itself may include international development, human rights, multilateral relations, and efforts to attract decision-making centres, even security issues (Paquin & Lachapelle, 2005). These fields are especially noteworthy since Catalonia's own paradiplomacy was done around the scope of those fields; or as it is more commonly referred to as political paradiplomacy.

Political paradiplomacy, as opposed to other types of paradiplomacy (cultural or economic paradiplomacy), describes the policies and actions launched by sub-state actors to fulfil or meet certain political principles or objectives, rather than increasing economic gain or cultural ties (Kooistra, 2017). The main reason why sub-state actors would engage in political paradiplomacy is to build, campaign for, and strengthen the presence of their own minority national identity (even to the point of contradicting the origin state's own interest) (Lecours, 2008). This is done by means of using international actions abroad (Paquin, 2018) or, in the case of Catalonia, it is to gain greater support and recognition for their identity cause against Spain.

Identity is a social construct which makes up a person or a group's perspective towards another person or group in the society, which have differing characteristics from them (Stets & Burke, 2000). This research will cover how group identity is constructed based on a set of common characteristics among its members throughout history and how it causes internal conflict within the confine of its society (Fukuyama, 2018). Identity is constituted by language, cultural heritage, flags, traditional way of life, and other denominating factors which segregate certain social group from larger entity (Carbonell, 2018). This identity is nurtured throughout history and becomes the main commodity that any actor could use in their political paradiplomacy (Tzagkas, 2018; Olomojobi & Omony, 2019; Annisa, 2019).

In the case of the internal conflict in Spain, identity plays a part in generating friction and conflict between the governments of Spain and Catalonia. It is because identity creates a shared perception among the people who owns them, and all symbolic or material threats made to this shared identity play critical roles in initiating or sustaining a destructive pattern of intergroup conflict among different identities (Brewer, 2011). Even when identity is not the initiating factor behind a conflict, its implication is inevitable and universal in hosting a much more complex issues within the run of the conflict (Khazanov, et. al., 2004; Broch-Due, 2005). Here identity can even be further explained as the basis of much larger scale conflict, even resource conflict between two parties who feel that they have a right over disputed resources because of their identity factors (White, 2017); as is the case in one of Catalan disputed sectors of interest from Spain, its economy.

This identity based internal conflict is especially conspicuous in the case of the Catalan conflict, for Catalan identity does not only constitute a culture and a way of life. It is also seen as a larger power and class struggle between the centre (Spanish government) and the periphery (Catalan government) (Real Instituto Elcano, 2019). Therefore, as explained by Miley and Garvía (2019), the Spanish government cannot fully enforce their majority rule over Catalonia, without appearing to be tyrannising their minority identity (Melich, 1986). This internal conflict is only made worse by Catalan paradiplomacy which arises as a perceived challenge towards the Spanish government over their sovereignty and territorial integrity (Vicuña, 2015).

Identity here is used to describe the reasons as to why social groups will do whatever they can, even going so far as to go into conflict and seek international support to protect the survival of their identity. Specifically, within this explanation on identity, this article explains how internal conflict commonly involve identity conflict as its triggers, as seen in Catalan independence conflict and how identity is then used as a cause to be fought for by the Catalan people as an international paradiplomacy agenda. Paradiplomacy, especially political paradiplomacy, in this article serves to explain the methods used and the efforts done by Catalonia to seek global public support to favour their identity as a distinct entity from Spain and, furthermore, how it complicates the conflict between Spain and Catalonia. This article then analyses the implication of internal identity conflict happening throughout history and how Catalan paradiplomacy towards global public hampers Spanish-Catalan relations as a lesson learned for the resolution of conflicts with similar nature worldwide.

RESEARCH METHOD

This article uses qualitative research method, by documentary study on a select number of relevant literatures as a means of data collection. Meanwhile, as a means of data triangulation, this article will compare all the data collected from different sources with one another, ensuring its validity and neutrality. This article mainly uses references from up-to-date and most credible and accountable data sources for the current condition of Spain, including news outlets, journals, books, past research, and articles. To ensure the validity and objectivity of the data, this article uses more than one references from different sources, then cross-compare (triangulate) it with one another to avoid subjectivity or bias.

DISCUSSION

Spanish Internal Conflict

Figure 1 depicts how each party's stance, interests, and objectives are aligned within the conflict. Mastering these aspects is the key to grasp a better understanding on the conflict itself. We can see how there is a different perspective between Catalonia (left) and Spain (right) in viewing Catalan independence movement.

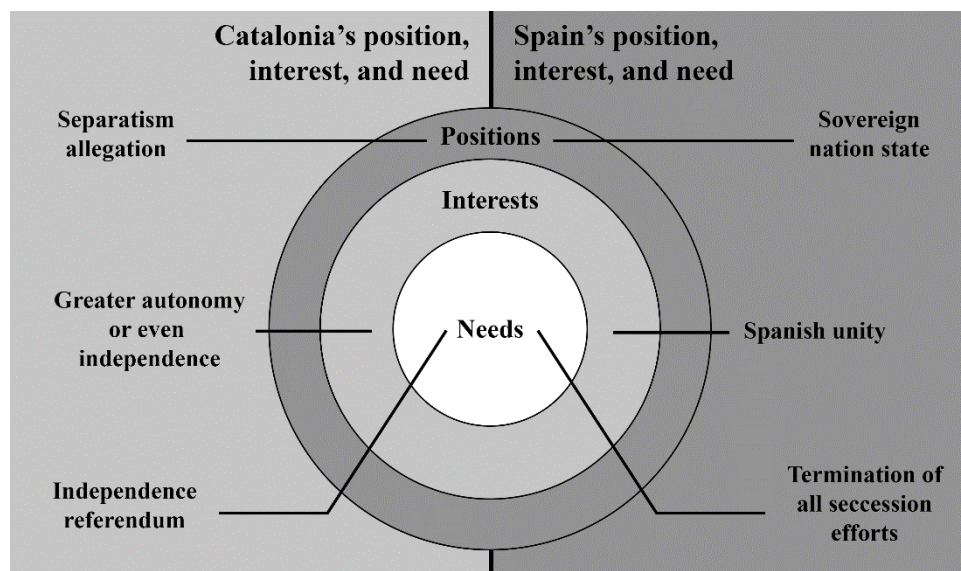


Figure 1. The Onion Analogy of Catalan Conflict
Source: formulated by the authors

This article maps those differing perspectives. On the Catalonia's side, due to the action of the Catalan government to enact the independence referendum and

declaring themselves independence from Spain, Catalonia is accused of doing separatist act against Spain. As a result, Catalonia suffered a freezing of its government along with the apprehension of some of their politicians. In the case of its interest, Catalonia has an interest in fighting to gain a greater autonomy from Spain and even independence to conserve their identity. Meanwhile, what Catalonia needs concretely is a referendum for self-determination that can determine their independence from Spain.

On the other hand, Spain is an internationally recognised sovereign nation. Spain's position, in this case, is absolute and unchangeable because of its sovereignty, unless an amendment to their own laws were to be made. Spain's interest in this case is to defend the integrity of its territory and sovereignty by repressing further development of separatist sentiment from Catalonia or other provinces. The needs that Spain identifies include the total termination of all separatist movements from Catalonia in all its forms and to stop the idea of separatist notion from not only Catalonia but also from every other Spain provinces in order to protect its territorial integrity.

In the Catalan conflict, we find two parties with differing goals, interests, statuses, powers, and means (Payne, 1991). When we consider the historical relations between the two parties as the background of this conflict, we can see that this conflict is one breaking point of a long-running series of tensions among them (Alland, 2006). This breaking point of conflict is increasingly fragile when we add the dimension of identity and international involvement through paradiplomacy into the conflict equation.

Within the context of the Catalan conflict, there are differing assumptions and perspectives from each side about themselves and especially towards the other party which ended up triggering the occurrence of conflict between these two parties. Roy and Judy Eidelson (2003) described this condition by explaining about five distrusts dimensions that can lead to conflict in the society, that are superiority, injustice, vulnerabilities, distrusts, and hopelessness. From these five dimensions, this article believes that the dimensions of injustice, vulnerabilities, and distrusts are the dimensions that fit most suitably as the causes for the Catalan conflict. First, Catalans feel they are being treated unfairly by the government of Spain, whether through cultural identity oppression, autonomy, or even fiscal policy (Castells, 2014). This causes vulnerability for Catalans due to the fear that their traditional culture may be corroded (Edles, 1999; "Catalonia Spain: Pro-unity marchers parody secessionists", 2018; Martin, 2018; Wilson, 2018) and their economic welfare may be disturbed by the greater Spanish influences (Jones, 2017; "Catalonia plans an independence vote whether

Spain lets it or not”, 2017; Rodriguez, 2020). As such, for Catalonia, there is a dimension of distrust that exists and keeps increasing throughout history about the performance of the Spanish Government in managing the affairs both in the country and in the region, especially regarding their cultural and economic interests (Frum, 2017; Karmis & Rocher, 2018).

However, this is also true for the Spain as the Spanish government is also increasingly wary of how Catalonia is managing its regional affairs, steering it towards the direction of nationalism throughout its political history (Linz, 1973; Keating, 1999 & 2001; Hargreaves, 2000; Balfour, 2017). This distrust is made even more salient by Catalonia’s use of paradiplomacy, which is perceived as a direct threat to Spanish authority (Vicuña, 2015). In this light, Spain also has its own feeling of vulnerability when considering the economic, human resource, and territorial loss that Catalan independence would bring upon them (Thomas, 2018). As such, we must see this internal conflict as a two-way street which implicates one party just as heavily as it implicates the other (Narotzky, 2019). This is the reason why the normalisation of relationship after Catalan declaration of independence becomes more complicated, and the resolution of this conflict is nowhere near completion even at the time of this writing (Faber & Seguí, 2019).

The widespread dimension of distrust within the Spanish-Catalan society, brings with it a greater conflict implication. Specifically, according to Wallenstein (2002), during the formation of a nation, identity-based conflict may occur, in which different groups of people, both with distinct identities but occupy the same area, are pitted against each other. The underlying key issue in such conflict is the need for each group to ensure their security, amidst certain discriminatory practices which disrupt these groups’ abilities to coexist within the same geographical space. Generally, this kind of conflict is directly tied with a form of nationalism which groups situated in these conflictual areas uphold. This is more commonly known as internal conflict and it is the one that ends up happening within Catalonia with centralised policy planning, discriminatory practice, and repressive action from the Spanish government (Llobera, 1990; Nogué & Vicente, 2004; Castells, 2014; Maritzel, 2014; Epatko, 2017; Tzagkas, 2018).

Here, we can see the parallel between the concept of internal conflict and Catalan independence movement. The Catalan independence movement is geographically confined within the province of Catalonia. It emerges out of the

vulnerabilities of Catalan identity and culture that are threatened by Spain's domination, as well as the principle of Catalan identity which the Catalan people fight for. Wallensteen then explained how among thirteen historical cases, only about a fourth of them reached end agreements (Wallensteen, 2002). There are even less examples of unilateral victory of either side of the conflict, with most ending in a mix between resolution, integration, federalism, regional autonomy or even left until undetermined time (Wallensteen, 2002); a grim premonition for the Catalan conflict. This is so even without considering the way that paradiplomacy is used as a means to reach each party's own interest (especially those of Catalonia's) and how it brings the international dimension into this internal conflict, which is seen as further aggression and threat from the Catalan side.

The Perspectives of Identity in International Relations within Catalan Independence Movement

We have understood from the explanation before how history helps to brew conflict between parties associated with differing identities. We have also understood how Catalonia has managed to use this condition, or rather forced by this condition, to engage in the act of paradiplomacy to fight for their cause in the international arena. Now we can delve deeper into what does identity truly means as a concept in international relations and for the Catalan people. So that we may understand better how this conflict came to be, how it can further increase in complexion, and how to possibly fend off further escalation.

We can observe how identity is something that has been long collectively owned by the Catalan people as a historical pride and mutual connection that unite them. This identity has survived many attempted eradications under Spain, and it serves, as it always has been throughout the years, as a banner for the Catalans to band together beyond location, education, occupation, and generation (Llobera, 1990; Balcells, 1996). As such, separating the people and their identity is not only hard, but virtually impossible since it has penetrated every circle of Catalans' social life throughout history (Conversi, 1990), even in their interaction with one another and with their Spanish counterparts (Alland, 2006). Any change and disruption towards the longevity of this identity may be met with resistance from the Catalan people and its government.

Within the Catalan conflict, we can see the use of Catalan language, flag, and identification of oneself as Catalan people with different heritage from Spain as a form

of collective identity shared together among the Catalan society (Moreno, Arriba, & Serrano, 1997). This identity has been actively used by Catalans as a uniting factor among themselves and as a dividing factor between them and the rest of Spain (Payne, 1991). Therefore, the existence of such culture must be conserved. This identity conservation is then further used as a paradiplomacy commodity to advance Catalans' agenda in the international arena, namely their political interest to be independent from Spain.

Even so, this Catalan identity might even be considered as a normality when we account for how Spain itself is very multicultural and accommodative to differing cultures within their territory (Alaquás, 2019). This is what makes Catalan identity has been developing very widely throughout its history, even until now. If it were to stand alone, identity would not really be something that could cause a conflict. However, when this identity is faced against a different and conflicting identity, particularly when used as a political leverage to fulfil a particular interest, then identity can actually worsen the situation as we can see happening in the Catalonia conflict.

As such we can conclude, in the context of Catalonia independence movement, how identity does not only constitute a symbol and demands used during the independence movement, but, in reality, the Catalan identity is actually one of the main sources of this conflict. Therefore, any conclusion of this conflict must also resolve the nature of identity conflict happening between the contesting parties. This remediation of relationship must include a greater recognition and chance for the Catalans to express their own culture within Spain's territory without worrying that they will lose their culture, replaced by the mainstream culture of Spain. This anxiety towards cultural identity loss is one of the main reasons why the Catalan side used their identity as a paradiplomacy ammunition, and also one of the main reasons why this conflict reaches stalemate for so long.

Catalan Political Paradiplomacy

As we have understood from previous studies explained beforehand, the contemporary political current of the world is strongly shifting towards greater accommodation for non-state actors in the international arena. This also includes belligerents and other contesting parties as dictated by international law, which means that Catalonia may also take part in foreign relations. As a textbook example of political paradiplomacy, we will

delve deeper into the means and objectives of Catalan political paradiplomacy, which serves as an intervening variable within the context of this conflict.

Catalan ability to materialise foreign relations with external parties began in 1978 when Spanish Constitution recognised Catalonia, the Basque Country, and Galicia, as historic nationalities. The constitution regulates both the self-governing of these regions and the unification of them as a part of the Spanish nation (Segura, 2017). Most of the paradiplomacy acts of Catalonia are done functionally, meaning its objectives are related to the fulfilment of policy commitment, especially in the field of economy. However, political dimension cannot totally be dispelled from Catalan paradiplomacy, which also contains symbolic actions with the aim of achieving international recognition for Catalonia's differing national identity (Segura, 2017). It is, in fact, a key for Catalan struggle for self-determination and independence, actualised in the form of both vertical mobilisation (sending delegation to EU for defending Catalan own interests in the global stage) and also horizontal mobilisation (participating in other European regional activities such as the Association of European Border Regions, Conference of Regions with Legislative Power, Working Community of the Pyrenees, Euroregion, and Four Motors for Europe) (Segura, 2017). This shift in paradiplomacy strategy towards more politicised promotion of the Catalan identity and nationalism was confirmed through official policy statements in 2013, legalised with the International Action Plan of the Catalan Government 2010-2015, and then formally institutionalised with the establishment of the Public Diplomacy Council, Foreign Institutional Relations and Affairs of Catalonia, and Ministry of Transparency, in charge of overseeing the instatement of Catalan governmental representatives in United Kingdom and Ireland, the Holy See, United States, Italy, Austria, Portugal, France and Switzerland, as well as Morocco (Segura, 2017).

However, it is much more complicated to pinpoint when exactly Catalan affairs with foreign partners started to become confrontational in its nationality-seeking interest with Spain. Vicuña (2015) argued that these type of Catalan paradiplomacy have two distinctly different starting points. The first is the 2006 Catalan Statute of Autonomy and the second is the 2012 re-election of Artur Mas into the Catalan government. Generally, because the 2006 Statute of Autonomy gives clear legal coverage and defines the role of Catalan leader in the world stage, it allows for the development and professionalisation of Catalan paradiplomacy. This was of course a liberal Catalonia interpretation of the regulation made by the Spanish state, which, according to Spanish

interpretation instead, also spells how regional paradiplomatic authority all came from the state and the inevitability of Spanish unity. Catalan's own interpretation of the legislation and their policy as its extension differs variably from administration to administration. However, according to Vicuña, the starkest effort of Catalan government to interpret these rules in favour of independence was done under the administration of Artur Mas who advocated the "right to decide" as a possible means of independence from Spanish state. This took a new route from original Catalan paradiplomacy objectives which had been focusing more on the economic sectors, and a new interpretation to the provision of "right to decide" which traditionally refers to achieving fiscal pact with their parent state.

With this brewing domestically, Catalonia work with a series of paradiplomatic tools, such as lobbying, participation in international agendas, high profile visits, and public diplomacy in the international arena to gain sympathy and even international support. However, according to Vicuña, this does not automatically mean that Catalonia is using protodiplomacy in their struggle for independence. Protodiplomacy itself is described as a type of paradiplomacy that communicates separatist message from its parent state, according to Kuznetsov (2015) and Duchacek (1990). This is because throughout its history, Catalan paradiplomacy has not always actively aimed to gain independence in and of itself. Rather, it is aimed at achieving consensus towards Catalan status as an international actor and arranging a network of alliances that can be useful in the event of an eventual secession, as well as ultimately legitimising an internally approved process of self-determination (Vicuña, 2015). This is, in essence, political paradiplomacy, which does not necessarily translate toward protodiplomacy; but in a way, works in line with it to achieve greater recognition for Catalonia's plight.

It is also worth noting how Catalan paradiplomacy does not exclusively come in the form of political paradiplomacy, as it also encompasses cultural ones done by the city of Barcelona and its local effects, as a strategy for attracting capital and promoting local development (Zamorano & Morató, 2014). The success of this type of paradiplomacy have been observed in other examples as well, such as the Bandung City use of *Asia Afrika Cerdas Kota Summit* as their paradiplomacy strategy to achieve greater international recognition and increase international cooperation with foreign stakeholders (Suharyadi, 2016). As such, it is no wonder how this other avenue of Catalan paradiplomacy assisted the economy of Barcelona, as Catalonia's capital, to bloom after the 1978 recognition of Catalonia as a historical nationality. This

paradiplomacy action allowed the capital to flourish its economy and infrastructure to support service economy, which brought along social legitimacy for Barcelona and Catalonia worldwide. As this was happening in conjunction with previously explained form of political paradiplomacy, the two cannot really be separated, and as Zamorano and Morató (2014) explained, Catalonia's cultural policies have more often than not been partially influenced and used as a tool to promote Catalan national identity.

Then, how did Spain react towards this action? In 1980 to 1990, after an extensive suppression of Catalan's paradiplomacy, Spain central authority took a cautious acceptance stance towards regional external activity in general, which, they underlined, did not and would not touch the core of international relations of Spain. This relative normalisation of Catalonia paradiplomacy was challenged with the rise of Partido Popular's administration which rejected outright the participation of regional parties in the EU. However, within the next two periods, this policy was overturned with the decentralisation approaches of Zapatero's administration. This included the formalisation of the regional external activities within their regional constitution, which in turn must be within Spain's national constitution framework. Contemporarily, the approach of Spain is in the nature of diplomatic offensive to counter the argument of Catalonia (Segura, 2017). This approach is taken by Spain to seek acknowledgement from international community that the Catalan conflict is an internal Spain domestic political dispute, which is not of international concern. Catalonia also faced opposition towards the legal framework of their paradiplomacy act; that was done as Spain passed of the Law of International Action and Services of the State which subjected external actions of regional actors to the guidelines, aims, and objectives of central government, and also by the challenge of the Catalan Law of International Action and Relations with the EU (Segura, 2017).

This development is in line with the argument of Lecours and Moreno (2001), who suggested that the link between nationalism and paradiplomacy is conditioned by domestic and international opportunity structures (institutional & constitutional). It is traditionally understood that nation state is the most important or even the only bridge between domestic and international realm (Soldatos, 1990). However, paradiplomacy challenges this notion by directly bypassing the role of nation state aggregation of interest and allowing regional actors within the nation state to connect with other state or non-state actors, with complete or partial disregard towards national territorial borders of the host nation (transnational) (Lecours & Moreno, 2001). Even though

Spain nowadays tries to limit this paradiplomacy movement of Catalonia, interestingly, this paradiplomacy could have not happened in the first place without the domestic regulation Spanish government allowed to pass, as have been explained before. Also, it would have not been possible without the existence of dialogue partners outside the border of the state, which allow the regional non-state actors to project their own interests, build networks, and gain support with little to no involvement of their original state, sometimes even directly going against their original state's political interest; such is the case with Catalonia. Lastly, Lecours and Moreno also explained how paradiplomacy serves as a means for identity and nation building; that it sustains and promotes specific interest such as cultural preservation, or in the case of Catalonia, the right to self-determination in defence of their unique identity.

So then, a question arises, whether this form of Catalan paradiplomacy poses a challenge towards the national sovereignty of Spain itself, and as such, may become a hurdle in the normalisation of Catalan-Spanish heating relationship. To which, this article argues that it very well maybe a formidable challenge to Spain's own unity and territorial integrity. Firstly, because the right of self-determination which Catalonia fought for internationally with their paradiplomacy action might potentially cause a loss in terms of territory, income, and even international respect for Spanish authority over their territory. Secondly, Catalonia's successful advocacy for their right to self-determination might trigger a further loss of territory from other Spanish provinces such as the Basque, the Catalan countries, and the Galicians, each with their own unique plight and identity, similar to Catalonia's own (Newton, 2017). Therefore, Catalonia's advancement of this agenda internationally is in direct confrontation with Spain's own interest and might potentially damage their relationship, further complicating normalisation effort between both parties, as historical precedence suggested.

CONCLUSION

This article finds that one of the main causes behind Catalan internal conflict is identity-based discord among the Catalan people and the rest of Spain. Among other things, this identity is further used by Catalonia as a source for its paradiplomacy abroad to gain popular support for its independence plight. This paradiplomacy then became a strain in the Spain-Catalonia relationship, since its nature of movement might potentially harm Spain's own national interest.

As such, without undermining the importance of this conflict for both parties, we can take the lesson learned from this incident in preparation of facing similar future conflicts. The first lesson from the conflict is the nature of the internal conflict itself, born from the conflicting identities of Catalonia against Spain. Second, a greater recognition and respect of both parties' statuses is needed to build trust towards and from one another. Third, paradiplomacy within this conflict can be viewed as an inflammatory factor from the perspective of the Spanish government. Meanwhile, from the Catalan people's perspective, options for actions taken at the regional and national levels are increasingly limited by the Spanish government's action.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to convey our gratitude to the students of Universitas Padjadjaran class of 2017 who took the conflict resolution course for all the constructive discussions and input in the preparation of this initial manuscript. We would also like to express our gratitude to our colleagues in the Department of International Relations, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Universitas Padjadjaran; especially the Head of International Relations Department, Mr. Dadan Suryadipura, S.IP., M.IPol., for granting us the chance to conduct this study.

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