

Aymara paradiplomacy: Empowerment on the border

Paradiplomacia aymara: Empoderamiento en la frontera

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Abstract

This article analyzes paradiplomacy along the border in more than 50 municipalities in Bolivia, Chile, and Peru through the “Aymaras without Borders Strategic Alliance.” Despite the historical construction of differentiated national identities between these three countries, a literature review reveals the existence of unprecedented cross-border relations. Meanwhile, it can be concluded that paradiplomacy has been an effective non-violent strategy for the last 15 years. Keywords: diplomacy, paradiplomacy, cross-border relationships, regional political project.

Resumen

Este artículo analiza la paradiplomacia fronteriza realizada por más de 50 municipios de Bolivia, Chile y Perú llamada Alianza Estratégica Aymaras Sin Fronteras. A pesar de una construcción histórica de identidades nacionales diferenciadas entre estos tres países, a través de una revisión bibliográfica, aparece una inédita relación fronteriza. Además es posible concluir lo acertada que ha sido esta estrategia no-violenta en los últimos 15 años.

Palabras claves: proyecto político regional, diplomacia estatal, paradiplomacia, relaciones transfronterizas.

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Introduction¹

Many news articles and academic papers repeatedly state that we are immersed in a new social order due to various changes such as globalization, among others.

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The rapid pace of innovations and their consistency and repercussions have engendered innovations in more traditional social practices. “All of this is generating new challenges for all the social systems in which individuals participate, with major socio-cultural, socio-economic, political, and educational changes” (Hernández & González, 2006, p. 3).

In addition to affecting different social arenas or macro-contexts, however, these changes have chipped away at interpersonal micro-structures between individuals. For example, in the economic arena, the strategy of centralized global accumulation (so-called neoliberal globalization) deployed over the last three and a half decades articulates new modalities of wealth creation and appropriation that enable multinational monopolies and oligopolies to gain access to extraordinary sources of profit:

A new international division of labor based on the configuration of global production chains and massive inexpensive labor; the incorporation of the majority of natural resources from both the lithosphere and the biosphere into the capital valuation process; the privatization of the means of production and strategic economic sectors; the over-exploitation of direct labor, boundless overpopulation, and forced migration, including attempts to subsume scientific-technological work, which also involves the migration of highly qualified workers.

However, neoliberal capitalism currently faces a general crisis that is forcing humanity to address the question of whether it will continue to favor the interests of capital or respond to the need to drastically improve the living and working conditions of the majority of the population, thus guaranteeing the reproduction of human life and symbiosis with the Earth’s environment (Márquez, 2010, p. 436).

One such example is the non-violent strategy employed for many years by the Aymara people in Chile, Bolivia, and Peru. This example of cross-border paradiplomacy has been highlighted primarily in academic contexts, and it remains largely unknown to the public, even though it has been successful in achieving its objectives and transcends the borders of three countries. Therefore, this article aims to describe this example of cross-border integration through a literature review that begins by analyzing the concept of paradiplomacy and proceeds to explore indigenous paradiplomacy and the specific case of Aymara paradiplomacy. Written from a cultural studies perspective, this article emphasizes the ethnic and cultural diversity that coexists along the border of the three countries through a particular form of ethnic Aymara paradiplomacy.

Aymara is the name given to native people in South America who have inhabited the Andean plateau around Lake Titicaca for thousands of years, since Pre-Columbian times, with a population that extends between what is now western Bolivia, southern Peru, northern Chile, and northeastern Argentina.

We should recall, as noted by Laetitia Rouvière, that for Bolivia, Chile, and Peru, the historical construction of national borders as a material expression of national sovereignty and a symbol of the mobilization of patriotisms made the War of the Pacific (1879-1884) a truly foundational event.

This war can undoubtedly be considered a war over resources between political centers for control over saltpeter in the region. However, the “war on paper” waged for more than a century, and the commemoration of the heroes of the era contributed to the construction of national identities that were differentiated from those of neighboring countries based on the memory of the conflict (Rouvière, 2009, p. 14).

Indeed, history demonstrates that traces of this conflict were particularly accentuated by the military “Chilenization” of conquered regions.

The space of the border has been the setting for regular military mobilization campaigns until the installation of landmines near the border, proof of the potential for conflict that continues to exist in the region. However, the appearance of this triple border also made it possible to create and deepen exchanges based on the geographic and demographic characteristics of the region: a rural highland area occupied mainly by Aymara populations (approximately 140,000, 77% of which are in Bolivia, 13% in Peru, and 10% in Chile) whose socio-economic situation is the result of similar processes of marginalization within their respective countries. Trade and popular celebrations have been primary nexuses of cross-border social life since the 19th century (Rouvière, 2009, p. 14).

Rouvière (2009) argues that the Aymara population in Chile was incorporated into the Tarapacá Region as a result of the War of the Pacific:

Aymara history, then, is deeply connected to the construction of the triple border, and leaders have a strong argument for investing in the significance of the border to make the line of demarcation central to sub-regional integration, presenting it as “natural” (Rouvière, 2009, p. 22).

Paradiplomacy

In recent years, other actors in addition to the state, which is the traditional actor in international relations, have been incorporated into this space. Although not entirely international subjects, local and regional governments and state institutions have built legal ties and ties of friendship with their counterparts abroad and become part of international regimes and organizations that regulate state activities and establish guidelines for operating in this environment without recourse to foreign ministries in their respective countries. Cusipuma (2010) explains this situation, adding: “A local-global dimension is being developed in international relations, and its complexity is such that special treatment must be used to avoid conflict between the different levels of government regarding their activities abroad” (Cusipuma, 2010, p. 1).

The reconsideration of state objectives also explains the emergence of new actors.

Although the aim is still to preserve the integrity and unity of states, the development of economic and trade sectors has assumed more importance today, whereas the military (considered the only means of achieving initial objectives) has taken a backseat (Cusipuma, 2010, p. 7).

As stated by Aranda, Ovando, and Corder (2010), *paradiplomacy* is a conceptual tool that has gained a strong foothold in the arena of international relations in the last 20 years.

The experiences of regions such as Quebec in Canada or the Basque Country in Spain constitute reference points in that the regions have assumed the challenge of designing and establishing international businesses, both in terms of cross-border cooperation and the

establishment of international links based on a series of sub-national actors (Aranda, Ovando & Corder, 2010, p. 35).

The neologism appeared in the 1980s. Originally, “Duchacek defined international actions by non-central governments (NCGs) as ‘microdiplomacy,’ then established a difference between cross-border (neighbor) diplomacy, cross-regional diplomacy (without a common border), and global paradiplomacy (issues that concern the entire world)” (Carreón, 2007, paragraph 2).

On the other hand, Roberto Miranda states that paradiplomacy refers to international actions that are performed by sub-state actors within the framework of globalization; that is, under the framework of non-traditional or unconventional diplomacy: “With this type of diplomacy, the sub-state actor has sought to differentiate itself from government practices by central state organisms” (Miranda, 2005, par. 9).

For Noé, paradiplomacy refers to “participation in international relations by non-central governments through the establishment of permanent or ad hoc contacts with foreign public or private entities for the purpose of promoting various socio-economic or cultural issues [...]” (Cornago, 2010, p. 56).

In this sense, for example, there are many experiences that were generated in European countries and in North America. On the other hand, unconventional diplomacy meant that the creators of foreign policy would deploy its management over the processes driving international relations. “Hence, as the global setting becomes more complex, it becomes ever more difficult to sustain conventional political diplomacy without the support of unconventional political diplomacy” (Miranda, 2003, p. 9).

In Latin America, the processes of internationalization and strategies of integration in local spaces began not formally but through the affective links forged by immigrants. They were the first to internationalize regions based on long letters home describing the cities in which they chose to live. Subsequently, subnational governments joined the concern to internationalize their regions, though with a focus on development. The processes of integration among these actors began in border areas, which is known as cross-border paradiplomacy. “The central element here is geographic or physical contiguity, and it is most likely the method that is most widespread and frequently utilized by governments in regions situated along the border with another country” (Aranda & Reig, 2008, p. 435).

Cross-border paradiplomacy is an important mechanism for internationalization, though it is not the only mechanism. Other methods exist for achieving involvement in the international setting: “[...] twin cities, bilateral agreements, networks, associations of municipalities, programs that support decentralized cooperation” (Taupier, 2010, p. 4).

Regarding the possibility of paradiplomacy in Latin America, presently, it is necessary to make constitutions compatible with the changes occurring as part of the process of globalization of foreign policy issues, actors, procedures, and instruments. This task is complex, particularly in unitary states with a centrist cultural tradition and presidentialist political regime. Ovando adds that:

In effect, the entire political culture in Latin America, and particularly diplomatically, suffers from a marked opacity and secrecy that lead executive powers in Latin American countries to be attributed exclusivity in the management of foreign policy. This statist tendency exists because the state has been a central actor in the modernization of the continent and has been a distinctive feature of the socio-political profile of Latin American nations. This is because, in these countries, the state, as the principal unit, was an essential actor with no counterweight in the modernization of societies (Ovando, 2013a, p. 8).

Vicente Torrijos notes that, for contemporary Latin America:

Foreign policy decision making, traditionally in the hands of a few individuals, especially in presidentialist and unitary political regimes, will become blurred. In fact, this is already occurring through an ever broader, more complex and participatory arrangement of consultative councils, sectoral conferences, advisory committees, and inter-sectoral committees (Torrijos, 2000, p. 25).

Indigenous Paradiplomacy

History demonstrates that, from the very moment European conquerors arrived on American soil, indigenous peoples engaged in various forms of resistance to the invading powers. During the 19th century, indigenous peoples combined the tactics of military resistance and negotiation through the signing of treaties.

A key milestone in the contemporary period was the rise of the global movement for indigenous rights. During the 1970s, rather than being occupied with the issues of the dominant society, indigenous peoples in North America were involved in a process of creating a new ideology and greater social cohesion.

This new perspective involved greater promotion of their own culture, and activities were highly moralistic regarding sex, alcoholism, and family, reasserting cultural and religious heritage and opposing individualism in favor of the collective (Gross, 1982, p. 2).

As Viviana Ortega states, the indirect result was:

[F]orms of political action by the movement such as publicity campaigns targeting the media and parliaments, demonstrations, the blocking of roads, and the occupying of lands. The cumulative effect of these protests has been a public image, official resistance, the obtaining of concessions, etc. (Ortega, 2011, p. 6).

Another indirect effect can be observed in the work of other international organizations. For example, the International Labor Organization (ILO) revised its standards for the treatment of indigenous and tribal peoples in 1980, and member states were called upon to pay attention to the rights and interests of these groups and guarantee them a voice in decision making regarding development plans that would affect their territories.

The third period lasts from 1984 to 1990, when the World Council of Indigenous Peoples emphasized the reaffirmation of:

[T]he diplomatic role of the international movement, as demonstrated by the uprising of the Miskito Indians in Nicaragua, in which the Council negotiated with the Sandinista government. Meanwhile, in this era, the Council was also interested in including Asian indigenous peoples and debating the internal restructuring of the institution. This series of meetings throughout North America and Latin America occurred over the course of a decade and forged the international movement, a movement whose main strategy has been *acting globally* (Ortega, 2011, p. 10).

In the Latin American case, there was a connection between the return to democratic regimes in the 1980s and 1990s and the recognition of indigenous peoples. This democratizing process provided space for the public articulation of the ethnic identities of organizations that were born in authoritarian political contexts under or near the leftist political parties and popular movements that were dismantled. Although this new political scenario was initially favorable, the steady transformation of state institutions to make room for neoliberal reforms created a new situation of political fragmentation that led to greater mobilization by indigenous organizations (Ortega, 2011, p. 11).

By 1985, we observe the emergence of organizations created one or two decades earlier, such as the Shuar Federation in Ecuador (1964), the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca in Colombia (1971), and the Kataristas in Bolivia. This era is characterized by international debate regarding indigenous demands in international forums. Organizations emphasize the visibility of their leaders, the establishment of networks, mobilization outside the state, the emergence of a movement outside local communities, and the issuance of demands that are not part of a national project but rather specific to the organizations themselves. There are also significant diversity, debate, goal setting, strategizing, and new tactics.

A new convergence point for the international movement arises in 1992 with the “500 Years Campaign.” Indigenous rights networks operated through hundreds of organizations to generate a response to the quincentenary. As Rodolfo Stavenhagen states, “inspired by the struggle of anti-colonial and national liberation movements... the Indian peoples of Latin America are presented as the victims of colonialism” (Stavenhagen, 1997, p. 69).

The emergence of the Latin America-wide movement has reinforced the debate surrounding territorial autonomy connected with other issues such as legal pluralism, citizenship, representation, and multiculturalism. According to Héctor Díaz Polanco:

It can be stated that the system of autonomy refers to a special regime that configures self-government for certain communities (within a state or nation) that choose authorities from within the collective, exercise legally attributed powers, and have basic powers to legislate internal matters in the community and administer its affairs (Díaz, 1991, p. 151).

Araceli Burguete adds that autonomy can be considered a “new paradigm” in struggles for decolonization among indigenous peoples, documenting the process of its construction over the last 40 years in Latin America (Burguete, 2010, p. 63).

Meanwhile, Díaz Polanco holds that the concept of autonomy is strongly and inextricably linked to rights of self-determination and the notion of “peoples”:

Hence, the discussion centers upon who and what: that is, whether the indigenous themselves constitute “peoples” and whether they have the right to self-determination. The two terms are inseparable because the peoples are the legal subjects in question. Thus, the first challenge is to specify who are the peoples, and accordingly, their corresponding legal status may be determined (Díaz, 1998, p. 8).

The strongest movements in the region are in countries with large indigenous populations, such as Bolivia, Guatemala, Ecuador, and Mexico, though debates have also occurred in countries with smaller indigenous populations, such as Colombia, Brazil, and Chile. The political context of the return to democracy and economic dismantling led to a decline in the role of the state and the greater politicization of indigenous identity and the organizations in the movements.

Since the mid-1980s and early 1990s, constitutional changes that favor the recognition of indigenous groups have been made, with some rights established in countries such as Guatemala (1985), Brazil (1988), Nicaragua (1988), and Colombia (1991)—something that has not occurred in other countries. These changes have opened up a new legal and political space for relationships between indigenous groups and the state (Stavenhagen, 1992, p. 437). As Stavenhagen acknowledges, “indigenous organizations would not have progressed as much as they have in all these years without external support” (Stavenhagen, 1997, p. 68).

Gilberto López and Rivas claim that autonomies:

[P]rovide a solution to conflicts—including armed conflicts—within multiethnic states that, as in the case of Nicaragua and Mexico, reassert *de facto* or constitutionally recognized autonomies as a new form of organization of these states. In such cases, the autonomies can spur processes of national reconciliation that strengthen ethnic and national loyalties while complementing the development of the autonomy process (López & Rivas, 2006, p. 12).

The indigenous scene in Latin America during the 1980s and 1990s relied on a complex structure of different types of incentives that promoted the indigenous cause in the region, with the first factor being:

A favorable structure of political opportunity, both nationally and internationally. The second is successful political organization based on previous organizational networks and an efficient protest repertoire. The third factor is a discourse of political identity that is capable of effectively framing indigenous issues, delimiting their protagonists and antagonists (Máiz, 2004, p. 141).

In this scenario, Guiomar Rovira Sancho notes that indigenous peoples responded by combining identity politics with internationalization. In this instance, globalization guaranteed these actors new access to power beyond the state that had historically oppressed them: “In the space between power and hegemony, tribal peoples construct their relations with the global community” (Rovira, 2007, p. 133).

Aymara Paradiplomacy

With regard to the Aymara people, as identified by their colonial history and territory, and particularly in the case of the inhabitants of the states of Tarapacá in Chile and neighboring Oruro in Bolivia:

Not even the Andes mountain range has been an obstacle to their attempts at physical integration. A symbolic example is the link between the carnival in Oruro and the religious celebration of La Tirana, where the brass bands and *diabladas*, among other elements, have their origins in the Bolivian region (González & Ovando, 2014, p. 45).

Sergio González and Cristian Ovando add that these regions existed before the construction of national states and that:

They had commercial and cultural ties during the colonial period based on the mining center at Potosí for a much longer period of time than that of the current republics, forming part of a broader territory that Carlos Sempat Assadourian called the “Peruvian space” (González & Ovando, 2014, p. 45).

In the case of northern Chile, and particularly its relationship with Bolivia since the end of the 19th century—and irregularly throughout the 20th century—a series of paradiplomatic initiatives have occurred (through mayors, civic committees, business unions, etc.) that would be framed by a sense of territorial alienation because they have always perceived themselves as being far from the country’s dynamic centers of development. This distance from the center would be the cause and the expression of the reassertion of identity, which is characteristic of paradiplomacy in peripheral regions, particularly in centralized, unitary states.

Census data from the three countries (see Table 1) demonstrate that, within the area of influence of “Aymaras Without Borders,” “the allied population reaches 179 550 inhabitants, of whom 77% are Bolivians, 10% are Chilean, and 13% are Peruvian Aymaras. The data are arranged as follows:” (Vera, 2011, pp. 38-39):

Table 1: Distribution of the Aymara population by country

| Country | Population (inhabitants) | Percentage |
|---------|--------------------------|------------|
| Bolivia | 138 560 | 77% |
| Peru | 22 807 | 13% |
| Chile | 18 183 | 10% |
| Total | 179 550 | 100% |

Source: Vera, 2011, p. 39.

Paula Vera (2011) refers to the contemporary Aymara nation as a “testimony people,” characterized by:

Having been part of an autonomous great civilization that first resisted European colonization and subsequently sought its ethnic reassertion, pointing to the construction of a modern nation that was culturally varied by traditional Western influences and its attempt to adapt to circumstances imposed by the globalized world; however, it continues today to maintain the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic unity that upholds its identity and conscience, conserving its vitality and thus marking itself as a “living culture” (Vera, 2011, pp. 39-40).

One of the main indicators of ethnic identity today is language, and therefore, references to Aymara people almost simultaneously identify persons that speak the language by the same name.

Although this association is not entirely correct, to identify the roots and history of the Aymara, as will be observed below, research and studies are strongly based on tracking Aymara speakers over the years (Vera, 2011, p. 40).

Paula Vera (2011) argues that any mention of Aymara history must begin by recognizing that:

The origins of Aymara ethnicity are very diffuse and confused because, historically, within the category of Aymara speakers, there have been endless

migrations, expansions, and relocations; meanwhile, sister languages to Aymara and toponymic languages spread throughout the entire region. For these two reasons, there are great discrepancies within academic debates with respect to the Aymara (Vera, 2011, p. 40).

Among the most accepted theories is that Aymara origins are connected to the decadence of the Tiwanaku Empire and the configuration of the Aymara kingdoms or estates that occupied the contemporary border region between Bolivia, Chile, and Peru (Vera, 2011, p. 40).

However, returning to the present, it is important to note that Aymaras Without Borders has its roots in problems due to neglect and shortages in the region, as well as the generalized sense of crisis permeating Tarapacá since its beginnings. Regarding its functions, we argue that, in general, these pioneering activities have offered new development alternatives:

a) taking advantage of new opportunities in foreign trade, b) increasing peace and security through decentralized cooperation, c) allowing for the emergence of pivotal platforms in border areas and international corridors, and d) enabling the formation of cross-border social networks, including ethnic and family networks, that increase cultural density (Ovando, 2013b, p. 119).

Regional and municipal governments have been the most visible agents of international cooperation and competition in South America's Southern Cone at the governmental level; however, they should not be considered the only agents of paradiplomacy. Indeed, paradiplomacy can refer to all forms of international activity performed by non-traditional actors, including multinational corporations, international workers' organizations, religious communities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), industries, and the media (Carreón, 2007).

The Aymaras Without Borders Strategic Alliance, established in 2001, has its origins in the Andean Regional Fair (FERAN) held in the town of Putre, Chile, with the participation of the Mayors of Rural Municipalities in the border areas of Bolivia, Chile, and Peru. The idea was to "bring together will and actions, particularly in productive sectors, to raise the standards of living in the communities and reverse the existing conditions of poverty" (Vera, 2011, p. 59). This three-country initiative:

Constitutes a plurality of political and social actors that, from contiguous regions in these three countries, promote greater integration and are characterized by demands made in their respective regions and political centers regarding reassertions in favor of cross-border development (Ovando, 2013b, p. 117).

By way of characterization, we can say that the total Aymara population consists of approximately 1 590 000 individuals spread throughout a zone that includes the extreme southern region of Peru (the departments of Tacna, Moquegua, and Puno), western Bolivia (La Paz, Oruro, Potosí, and Cochabamba), and the extreme northern reaches of Chile (the Tarapacá region). Bello (2012) explains that:

According to the 1993 census, there are approximately 300,000 Aymara living in Peru, including monolingual and bilingual Aymara speakers, which represents 18.9% of the total (INEI Peru, 1993); in Bolivia, the monolingual and bilingual Aymara population reaches 1,237,658, or 77.8% of the total

(INE-Bolivia, 1992); and in Chile, monolingual and bilingual Aymara number 50,000, or 3.14% of the total (Bello, 2012, pp. 10-11).

No municipal association has existed in Peru since 2001, the year in which the Aymara Without Borders Strategic Alliance was created, and the cross-border alliance faces serious difficulties in bringing together the mayors.

The members of the NGO known as CEPAD (the Center for Development Promotion and Assistance, which later became the International Trans-Border Development Corporation) promote partnerships in Tacna and the cross-border area. The Peruvian mayors generally express very limited interest in this type of project (Rouvière, 2014, p. 45).

Daniel Bello (2012) writes that it is interesting to note that:

This initiative arises from the border areas—the municipalities—and not the central government, even more so given that the three countries involved have a long history of disagreement and conflict and even maintain pending litigation, both over borders and over the use of hydrological resources. In this manner, the approach of the AE [Aymarans Without Borders Strategic Alliance] is diametrically opposed to that of the federal governments, and it constitutes an experience of sub-regional integration and paradiplomacy that can generate positive dynamics that the nation-states have been incapable of creating (Bello, 2012, p. 155).

Bello adds that, through coordination and cooperation across borders, “the organization seeks to implement and manage policies that strengthen community development in the following areas: agriculture, infrastructure, small business, natural resources, energy, culture, education, health, civil rights, political participation, and economic development” (Bello, 2012, pp. 154-155).

In its beginnings, it brought together 56 municipalities in Bolivia, Chile, and Peru, comprising a demographic of 180 000 persons. The mayor of Putre, Francisco Humire Alejandro, was a natural leader for the project:

[W]hich has attracted interest among international organizations such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the NGO known as CESPI, as well as others. It has also incorporated federal governments such as Chile’s, regional governments such as those of Tarapacá and Tacna, and national NGOs such as the Center for Multidisciplinary Studies and Services (INTI) in Bolivia (González, Ovando, & Rouvière, 2008, p. 37).

In terms of the relationship between municipalities and their respective regional governments in the context of this project, Francisco Humire believes that the former have a clearer understanding of cross-border development but must work with regional governments, though without compromising the final goal: tri-national Aymara unity (Ovando, 2013b, p. 121). In Humire’s own words, the most important thing is precisely their ethnic character: “we have a cultural livelihood that makes us different from other regions because we are Aymara. The [Aymarans Without Borders] Strategic Alliance seeks to strengthen the indigenous movement, fostering the resurgence of an organization that has a millenarian past that it is necessary to reassert” (González et al., 2008, p. 38).

Cristian Ovando argues that, in terms of its motivations, Aymaras Without Borders can be characterized as a combination of economic and cultural aims, seeking new markets for its products and tourism promotion on ancestral lands; meanwhile, since its beginnings, it has attempted to reassert collective Aymara identity marked by the distance from political centers, particularly based on its vision of development with identity with the help of ILO Convention 169. They seek greater recognition to tend to cross-border development that is managed from their own territories (Ovando, 2013b, p. 121).

The relevance of this project, according to Ovando, lies in the fact that this proposal goes beyond the mere exchange of goods and services, given that it would be validating new and complex levels of international action through the institutionalization of a development strategy linked to a new cross-border territoriality. This aspect has not been without controversy.

Hence, in the year 2004, during negotiations with the Chilean Foreign Ministry to create the association and establish its legal status to gain access to international financing (through the Inter-American Development Bank and World Bank), this body objected to its being called a “Tri-National Association,” removing the qualifier. Due to a lack of public funds for its implementation, in 2006, the initiative froze, and hence, the Chilean government oversaw an investment project with international cooperation through the Inter-American Development Bank. However, this was always under the strict control of the Ministry of the Interior through the Subsecretariat of Regional and Administrative Development (SUBDERE) (Ovando, 2013b, p. 121).

In this regard, Laetitia Rouvière writes that an IDB official stated in an interview that:

There are ways of executing the project because they have a tradition, they really know how to coordinate, to work together, they have agreed on the proposal, etc., and the impression we always had here is that the collective action among municipal representatives in these three countries was very strong (Rouvière, 2014, pp. 40-41).

The researcher notes that “there is a significant distance between the knowledge that the financiers have of the environment in which they provide technical assistance, or the discourses driving it, and concrete practices of power in the localities” (Rouvière, 2014, pp. 40-41).

Some 2 000 kilometers away from these municipalities, in the Chilean capital city (the center of decision making *par excellence*), they contributed to reasserting a highland Andean identity that attempts to rearticulate a vernacular space under the protection of ILO Convention 169. This is not to say that Aymaras Without Borders does not sustain pro-autonomy positions, though it is reintroducing a divergent spatial imaginary (Filipi, 2010, p. 26) that is distinct from those produced by the modern state conventions that delimit borders. Therefore, it sustains a dual paradiplomacy by being instrumental and symbolic. In this manner, added to the economic content (sustainable development) is communicative action geared toward the reproduction of an ancestral collective identity through the self-affirmation of their cultural representation (Cornago, 2010, p. 123). Aymaras Without Borders is itself a challenge to national elites that questions the centralization of diplomatic activity and criticizes the historical process of centralized resource management. Elusive to cooptation

by states that are uncomfortable with the international reach of its experience, the Strategic Alliance demanded administrative reforms, wielding them in broad forums such as the Border Committees (*Comités de Frontera*). It touched an even more sensitive chord, considering that this space of cross-border interaction was the setting of the War of the Pacific (1879-1883), which continues to have diplomatic consequences today. Additionally, the dynamic of imagined territorialization, which concerns territories in different countries, is also a manifestation of the internalization of international politics and demonstrates the profound interpenetration of local, regional, national, and foreign spheres.

The above constitutes another challenge for national and local governments. Although these forces are interpreted as a threat at the national level, local governments should cultivate skills in the management of cross-border interdependence to optimize their own territorial development.

On the whole, Aymaras Without Borders presents a challenge to national elites in the three countries in which it questions the basic foundations of state sovereignty and the centralization of diplomatic activities (Aranda & Ovando, 2012, p. 4).

It is also particularly evasive to attempts at normalization, given that, although it may have the blessing of states that have wagered on administrative reforms to pave the way, it is uncomfortable for them in their international image, particularly as it relates to territory that was the epicenter of a war that continues to generate diplomatic disputes today (Ovando, 2013b, pp. 121-122).

In recent years, the Aymaras Without Borders Strategic Alliance has been significantly consolidated and captured the attention of numerous international actors, becoming a destination for abundant international cooperation funding and the subject of many case studies because of its innovative nature (Marteles, 2009, p. 195).

The “Aymaras Without Borders Development Project” aims to address problems within Aymara-descendent populations on the border in the highland Andes region of the northern tri-border area, responding to the lack of services and infrastructure, legal barriers (tariffs), and sustainable development policies in harmony with ancestral lifeways and the cross-border environment. Serious threats to community survival have arisen due to a lack of shared plans for territorial management that incorporate the cultural uses of the land, combined with a lack of cross-border phytosanitary agreements, affecting and limiting traditional vertical exchanges among Aymara communities (alpaca and llama farming, the trade in quinoa, llama meat, traditional crops, and medicinal and aromatic plants), in addition to growing depopulation in a region that suffers from poor employment opportunities and a lack of access to highway systems. Responses from the state at the federal and regional levels articulated economic development projects that ignored and cast aside the customs and traditions of the Aymara populations, generating wealth that was not accessed by local communities, despite the state’s interest in controlling a tri-border region of geopolitical importance that is vulnerable to crimes such as the smuggling of electronics and vehicles (González, 2012, p. 298). In this scenario, Aymaras Without Borders emerged “demanding the implementation of cross-border economic development strategies based on the social, natural, and cultural capital of the Aymara people” (Vásquez, 2012, p. 6).

By 2014, Aymaras Without Borders included the Chilean towns of Putre, General Lagos, and Camarones in the Arica-Parinacota region and Pozo Almonte, Pica,

Colchane, and Camiña in the Tarapacá region. Their inclusion, in addition to membership in the Association of Rural Municipalities, implied a joint action protocol with the cross-border environment. By 2011, only the town of Huara remained outside Aymarás Without Borders. Although without specific accords with border municipalities, the mayor of Huara, Carlos Silva, a member of the *Partido Radical* (PR), has actively promoted dialogue with Bolivia. On the Chilean side, the block is currently led by town council members Sixto García and Miguel Ángel Núñez, from Camiña and Pica, respectively. As stated by the ex-mayor of Curahuara de Carangas in Sajama province in the Department of Oruro, Alejandro Choque Castro, the success of Aymarás Without Borders is due to “how we in the Aymara culture understand ourselves as having the same roots, the same past, the same common history” (Bustillos, 2016, par. 4).

However, Choque Castro (cited in Bustillos, 2016) argues that, in the last two years, the Alliance has only been strictly upheld in Bolivia because, in practice, the tri-national relationship has been suspended (especially in the Chilean municipalities) as a result of Bolivia’s presentation of a legal case against Chile in the International Court of Justice at The Hague. “Because of the issue we all know about, the issue of cross-border municipal integration froze,” Choque Castro claimed (Bustillos, 2016, par. 7). We may recall, as Laetitia Rouvière notes, that diplomatic relations between Chile, Peru, and Bolivia have been conflictive since the Chilean annexation after the War of the Pacific (1879-1883). Between 2008 and 2013, Peru and Bolivia brought Chile to the International Court of Justice to recover part of their corresponding territories (Rouvière, 2014, p. 41).

However, the idea of converting the “tripartite, tri-national region” into a development pole remains alive, particularly considering the great potential it holds for tourism, ranching, and quinoa. A growing problem in the area in recent years is the high rate of migration, which is a common concern for the three countries.

Alejandro Choque Castro points to the tourism development plan, with the coexistence, for example, of Sajama National Park in Bolivia and Lauca National Park near the border in Chile. The idea was to establish “integrated tourism” between the two parks. Other current plans include “the issue of camelids, taking advantage of the slaughterhouses that are present in Curahuara and that will soon be present in Turco, both for domestic markets and for export through Chile and its free trade zones; the same is true with quinoa. We wanted to export jerky” (Bustillos, 2016, par. 6).

Conclusions

Border spaces are often associated with the concepts of marginality and the periphery. Meanwhile, they are often considered zones of conflict. In fact, on the triple border between Bolivia, Chile and Peru, the memory of the War of the Pacific has contributed to the construction of differentiated national identities. The potential for conflict can also be observed in regular military mobilizations, land mines that are still located near the borders, and cases before the International Court of Justice at The Hague.

However, as we have observed, the Aymarás Without Borders Strategic Alliance is an interesting case for analyzing processes of encounter and association between social groups that are located along the borders of different neighboring countries. Over the last 15 years (though it has been frozen for the last three years), Aymara paradiplomacy on the border has united more than 50 municipalities in Bolivia, Chile, and Peru seeking

to challenge the primacy of the interests of capital and create adequate living and working conditions for the majority of the indigenous population, guaranteeing the continuation of human life in symbiosis with the natural environment.

The integrationist viability of this alliance, which, as a product of litigation between Chile and Bolivia at The Hague, has ceased to be cooperative and become nearly nonexistent, will also depend on the economic, social, political, cultural, and physical viability of the strategies, plans, and aspirations developed by the members of the Strategic Alliance. This will determine whether it can move from a combination of political and economic strategies mobilized by two types of potentially contradictory memories at the national and sub-regional levels to an alliance that truly seeks integration. Unless it resumes this path, it will become yet another failed cooperation project in Latin America.

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