

Federalism and Foreign Affairs: The International Relations of Mexican Sub-State Governments

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Abstract—This article analyzes the international relations of sub-State governments (IRSSG) in Mexico. It aims to answer five questions: 1) What explains the recent and dramatic increase in their international activities? 2) What is the impact of federalism on the foreign affairs of the federal units? 3) What are the levels or degrees of IRSSG and how have they changed over the last years? 4) How do Mexican federal units institutionalize their international activities? 5) What are the perceptions and capacities of the federal units in their internationalization process? The first section argues that the growth in the IRSSG is generated by growing interdependence and globalization in the international system, and democratization, decentralization and structural reform in the national arena. The second section sustains that the renewed Mexican federalism has generated the incentives for SSG to participate more intensively in international affairs. The third section defends that there is a wide variation in their degree of international participation, which is measured in three moments in time (2004 2009 and 2014), and explains how this activity has changed in the last decade. The fourth section studies the institutionalization of the IRSSG in Mexico through the analysis of Inter-Institutional Agreements (IIA). Finally, the last section concentrates in explaining the perceptions and capacities of Mexican sub-State governments to conduct international relations.

Keywords—Federalism, foreign policy, international relations of sub-state governments, paradiplomacy, Mexico.

I. INTRODUCTION

GLOBALIZATION has significantly increased the costs of isolation for national states in the international system and has also reduced the control of the state over its territory and population, generating a substantial increase in the number and nature of actors with interests in international affairs. As a result, globalization is more intense and, therefore, the costs for the sub-state governments and actors to remain isolated are much higher. New actors with international incidence have decreasing costs of participation in external affairs, generating incentives for these players, among them sub-state governments, to participate more actively in international issues.

Specifically, for the Mexican case, the country has witnessed a remarkable internationalization since the 1980s. For example, because of the incentives generated by globalization and interdependence, Mexico changed its economic model and development strategy from a closed

economy with strong state intervention and an import substitution industrialization model (ISI), into an open economy which promotes economic development through the integration to the international market and the promotion of exports [1]. In only 15 years, from 1993 to 2008, the sum of imports and exports increased from representing 30% to 65% of GDP [2]. The economic liberalization generated incentives for greater competition between sub-state units in the global market, to place their exports, attract foreign direct investment and tourism, and benefit from international cooperation. Facing a more open and competitive global market, the external activities of sub-state governments increased to find markets for their exports and sources of foreign investment and international cooperation to boost local development.

Parallel to the globalization and interdependence of the international system, since the 1970s, there has been a wave of democratization and decentralization around the globe. The return to democracy in the developing world and the growing decentralization of powers have provided the incentives for sub-state governments to participate in areas that used to be monopolized by the central government, including international affairs. Democratization opened the political space for a more ample and diverse representation of the local governments, while administrative decentralization gave these actors powers and resources to conduct public policies which are closer to the local preferences.

This article studies the IRSSG in Mexico. It seeks to answer five questions: 1) What explains the increase in the IRSSG in Mexico? 2) What is the impact of federalism on the IRSSG? 3) What are the levels of IRSSG and have they changed over the last years? 4) How do Mexican SSG institutionalize their international activities? 5) What are the perceptions and capacities of the SSG in their international relations? The first section argues that increasing IRSSG is generated by the combination of two sets of variables: a) growing globalization in the international system, and b) democratization in the domestic arena, coupled with decentralization of powers and structural economic reforms. The second section argues that the renewed Mexican federalism generated the incentives for SSG to participate more intensively in international affairs. The third states that there is an important variation in their degree of international participation, which is measured in three moments in time (2004 2009 and 2014), and explains how the IRSSG has changed in the last decade. The fourth section studies the institutionalization of the IRSSG through the analysis of IIA. Finally, the last section explains the perceptions and capacities of Mexican SSG to conduct international relations.

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II. THE MEXICAN INSTITUTIONAL SETTING

The Mexican Constitution establishes that Mexico is a presidential and federal system, with strong bicameralism (two symmetric and incongruent Houses of Congress). Thus, in terms of the institutional division of power, it is a system with the strongest possible formal level of separation of powers. However, because of more than 70 years (from 1929 to 2000) of hegemony or dominance of the official party, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), Mexico functioned as one of the most centralized political systems of the world. The extremely powerful federal executive in Mexico can be understood by analyzing the relation between two central political actors in the system: the president, who has served as Chief of State and Government, and the official party. According to Weldon [3], presidential power depends on: 1) the constitutional powers of the executive, 2) the legislative strength of the president's party; 3) the degree of discipline exercised by the leaders over party members; and, 4) the competition that the president faces from rivals within his own party.

Due to the authoritarian system and the non-competitive nature of the elections that sustained the Mexican political system before 2000, the PRI had majorities in both houses of Congress from 1929 to 1997. The President was also the de facto leader of the party. Combined with no congressional or presidential reelection, and the party delegation to the President of the power to designate his successor and control key party nominations, this created a supremacy of the federal executive over Congress and sub-state governments. This was implemented through nomination of party candidates to state and municipal posts. The president could freely remove governors from power, via the PRI-controlled Senate or through negotiated resignations. Even in the last years of the authoritarian regime, the control over the 32 federal units still existed. As an example, under President Carlos Salinas (1988-1994), 16 constitutionally elected Governors were removed from their posts during his administration [4].

As the practically undisputed leader of a highly disciplined party that held uninterrupted congressional majorities in both Houses of Congress for close to 70 years, the federal executive was far from restrained by constitutionally limited powers. The other relevant political actors in the system had incentives to ally with the executive and support his policy preferences because he controlled, due to the rule of no reelection, their career advancement possibilities [5]. Thus, even if there were several de jure veto points in the Mexican institutional system due to the presidential, bicameral and federal divisions of power, the Mexican president was able to control de facto all the political actors in the system. To put it simply, he had the power to enact his preferred policies, including foreign policy, that is, the external relations of the Mexican federal state that is an exclusive power of the federal executive. There were no space and incentives for sub-state governments to actively participate in the definition of public policies, especially in the foreign policy realm. Sub-state governments conducted very limited foreign affairs before 2000, that is, the international activities of domestic actors other than the federal state, like

sub-state governments, transnational enterprises, interest groups, among others.

Due to these characteristics of the Mexican political system, during the authoritarian period (1929-2000), the president was able to impose his public policy preferences most of the time, because the other two branches of government and the sub-state governments were under his control, and therefore they supported his preferred policies, particularly in foreign policy. However, once the official party lost the presidency and its majority in the Houses of Congress in 2000, the federal president lost his extra-constitutional powers, keeping only those granted by the Constitution, and opening political spaces for increased participation of sub-state governments in public affairs, including foreign affairs.

The institutional variables (presidentialism, bicameralism, and federalism), and the foreign policy powers of the President have remained constant since the enactment of the 1917 Constitution, even after the democratization process. However, due to the changes in the composition of the Houses of Congress and the sub-state governments, and a decreasing party discipline, foreign policy and international affairs domination by the federal executive changed to a situation where the president was no longer able to impose his preferred external policy, but had to coordinate the international interests and activities with other political actors, especially the Legislature and sub-state governments.

In 1982, the president's political party, the PRI, controlled 74.8% and 98.4% of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate respectively, which generated a very low party fragmentation in the system (ENP Representatives: 1.720; ENP Senate: 1.032); at the same time, Mexican federalism did not operate since 100% of state governors were from the PRI, generating the maximum possible degree of unitary government. Also, party discipline of PRI congressmen was almost absolute, since their future political careers depended directly on the informal PRI leader, the president. Finally, sub-state expenditure was only 17.8% of total government expenditure. Therefore, it should not be surprising that the combination of the previous variables made the division of powers and federalism unimportant institutional variables, thus generating a system without real checks and balances, where foreign policy reflected the preference of the federal executive because of its domination over the system.

Nonetheless, even if the institutional configuration remained constant throughout the period, the democratization and decentralization processes changed the distribution of power considerably after 1997. On one hand, by year 2000, party fragmentation increased dramatically, especially in the Senate (ENP Representatives 2.769 (2000), 3.520 (2006), and 3.550 (2012); ENP Senate 2.786 (2000), 3.596 (2006), and 3.320 (2012)), and divided government became a reality. The Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) won the presidency in 2000 and 2006, but no party could control an absolute majority in any of the Chambers: the PRI had a plurality in 2000 in both (42.2% and 46.1% in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate respectively); even if PAN strengthened its presence in 2006, it did not obtain an absolute majority (41.4% and 40.6% in

Deputies and Senate, respectively). The PRI won the presidential elections in 2012; however, it was only able to gain a plurality of the seats in Congress (Deputies: 42.8%, Senate: 42.1%). On the other hand, juxtaposed government also became a reality after 2000, because PAN only controlled one fourth (25.0%) of state governorships both in 2000 and 2006. The PRI was able to revert this by 2012, when 62.5% of the Governors were from this party. At the same time, party discipline started to decline in all three major parties (PRI, PAN and Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD)), due to the factional struggles within them; party discipline declined from practically total discipline (1.0 in the Rice index) to, depending on the party, between 0.882 to 0.993; parties which control the Executive (PRI before 2000 and 2012-2015; PAN from 200-2012) present higher levels of disciplines than opposition parties in Congress. Finally, sub-state expenditure increased in more than 40% in one decade, accounting for 25.4% of total government expenditure by year 2000, and almost 100% by 2006, when it reached over 34%, where it has stabilized since then.

Therefore, due to the increasing party fragmentation and decreasing discipline, which generates divided and juxtaposed governments, the institutional configuration of the system (especially federalism) achieved renewed and substantial importance in the Mexican system since 2000. The changes in these variables directly affected the provision of public policies, including foreign policy, functioning as permissive variables for increasing external activities in the other branches and orders of government. Thus, the total domination by the federal executive of international affairs is now history, and sub-state governments are increasingly participating in foreign affairs.

In an open and competitive global market, and a more plural economic and political system in Mexico, the IRSSG will pursue three main objectives: 1) finding markets for their exports, 2) attracting foreign direct investment, tourism, and international cooperation for productive activities within their territory, and 3) strengthening ties with their emigrant populations to promote their protection and to encourage the flow of remittances and the productive investment of a proportion of them.

III. THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF THE IRSSG

The foreign policy rules in Mexico can be found in the Constitution. Even if there is no ruling in the Constitution that gives the federal units the power to have a direct participation in international affairs, there is neither an explicit prohibition. Article 124 of the Constitution establishes that “the powers that are not explicitly defined in the Constitution [...] are reserved for the states”. In the specific case of treaties, it is more precise by establishing that “states cannot, in any case, enter alliances, treaties or coalitions with other States or foreign powers [...]” (article 117.I). The Constitution also establishes that the Supreme Court of Justice (SCJ) will serve as a constitutional court whose responsibility is to solve the conflicts of competences between the three levels of government (federal, state and municipal) (article 105),

including foreign policy and international agreements.

The specific attributions on foreign policy issues are defined in the Organic Law of Federal Public Administration, whose article 28.I, establishes that the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (SRE) has the attribution to coordinate the external actions of all the ministries and agencies of the federal executive and sub-state governments, without affecting their attributions. The SRE’s main attribution is to conduct foreign policy by participating in all types of treaties, agreements, and conventions of which the country is part. Regarding the negotiation of treaties, the legal bases can be found in the Constitution and the Law for the Conclusion of Treaties of 1992. This law refers to two types of international instruments: first, the treaty, which is the agreement typified in the Constitution that, in order to be valid, must be approved by the Senate, and second, the IIA, which is defined as “the agreement ruled by public international law, concluded [...] between any ministry or decentralized agency of the public federal, state or municipal administrations, and one or many foreign government agencies or international organizations [...]” (article 2.II).

One of the most important contributions of this law is that it incorporates the figure of IIA, which establish the legal basis that allows sub-state governments to have greater participation in the international arena. However, the same law explicitly establishes that “the areas covered by inter-institutional agreements must be strictly circumscribed within the faculties of the ministries or decentralized agencies of the different levels of government” (article 2.II). Also, this law establishes that the bureaucratic agencies that enter into this type of agreements must keep the SRE informed, and that this ministry has the power to do a revision and determine if the agreements are legal, in which case, it registers them and keeps their official record (article 7). However, in practice, many of the agreements signed by the states and other agencies of the different levels of government have not been formally reviewed and approved by the SRE, and thus there is no precise record of all these legal instruments.

Most of the international counterparts of Mexican sub-state governments are governmental, accounting for over two thirds of all IIA. Some IIA have been signed with international organizations (12%) especially from the United Nations system, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) (3%), and private partners (17%), mostly universities and research centers. The state of Chiapas is the only one that concentrates most of its international cooperation with partners other than governments, like international organizations, NGOs and private actors, like the United Nations, the European Union, and foreign universities. On the other side, more than one third of the states (12 out of 32) have only concluded IIA with governmental counterparts.

It is important to remember that the international activities of Mexican sub-state government are restricted to those areas in which they have powers; therefore, it is not surprising that the areas covered by the IIA signed by them are concentrated in those issues in which they are legally capable of subscribing them. Since the central objective of the IRSSG is to promote

state and local development and welfare, the areas of cooperation most widely included in the IIA are those directly related to these objectives: strengthening human capital through education, culture, science, technology, and human resources training; generating welfare through the promotion of trade, investment and tourism; and, to a lesser extent, improving the environment, urban development and security [6].

Given that the Constitution grants the federal executive the exclusive power to conduct foreign policy, the activities of sub-state governments in international affairs, from a legal point of view, are not part of the national foreign policy. The federal units have not tried to displace the federal government in foreign policy issues and the relation between the federal and sub-state governments has been complementary. It is important to underline that Mexican states are using the international sphere to increase their power, not necessarily in relation to the federal state, but to strengthen their own capacities and local development. Instead of being a zero-sum game in which the benefits of the international activities of sub-state governments could be seen as costs for the federal government, it appears to be a positive-sum game, in which the external actions of the states improve their levels of development and welfare, benefiting the country as a whole.

The only cases in which there has been confrontation between the federal and state governments is when the latter have tried to sign IIA that are not circumscribed to the state's powers or faculties. For example, there was a case when a state government was negotiating a IIA with a Caribbean country to increase the levels of academic and scientific cooperation between them; one of the articles of the agreement included the provision of visas to facilitate the academic exchange. Since granting visas is an exclusive power of the federal government, this article was declared invalid by the SRE when it revised the IIA. In another occasion, a Mexican state located in the border with the United States stated negotiations with its US counterpart on the other side of the border to facilitate the trade of goods and services between them, that is, a local version of a free trade agreement. Trade policy is a federal area of competence, and thus, when the SRE knew that this negotiation was taking place, it reacted immediately, and contacted the Mexican and US states to declare such negotiations and possible IIA as null. Being so, foreign policy, from a legal perspective, is still the exclusive responsibility of the federal executive. Even so, the states have shown a considerable increase in their level of foreign affairs over the past two decades. However, the level of activism is not the same for all units. Therefore, it is important to classify and explain their varying degree of international participation.

IV. THE GROWING IRSSG IN MEXICO

In the literature on the IRSSG in Mexico, the measurement and classification of the level of activity of states and municipalities in the international affairs is relatively recent [7], [8]. Kincaid [9] has established that the most important areas of international activity of the US states are export promotion, foreign investment attraction, service to their

emigrant community abroad and international cooperation. Michelmann and Soldatos [10] agree and provide evidence that these areas of interest are valid in different countries around the world. Specifically, in order to achieve these interests, according to Nganje [11] among many others, the IRSSG place in at least six areas: 1) opening of offices of representation abroad; 2) highly publicized trips of local executives abroad; 3) missions to promote the SSG abroad; 4) international exhibitions to promote local goods abroad; 5) cooperating with other SSG in regional or global issues; and, 6) participation of local officers in international meetings or organizations. In the Mexican case, one more activity should be included: the establishment of offices to provide services to migrant communities abroad, particularly in the United States [12].

Using these activities as proxies of the IRSSG, the following step is to measure the IRSSG in Mexico and to classify the Mexican federal units based on it. The proposed levels of IRSSG, from lesser to greater (0 to 3 possible points), are: 1) low (1 point or less); 2) medium (more than 1, less than 2 points); 3) high (more than 2, less than 3 points); and 4) very high (3 points), and each of the three first categories can be subdivided in low, average, and high in equal terms.

In only five years (between 2004 and 2009) the international relations of the Mexican states increased considerably. It is important to notice that, on average, the international activity of the federal units rose from 1.38 to 1.91 points, that is, 0.53 points in just five years, equivalent to a growth of 40.09% in the IRSSG. By 2009, none of the federal units ranked at the low level. The federal units whose level of international relations increased more drastically between 2004 and 2009 were the Distrito Federal (2.10 points), Estado de México (1.10), and Chiapas (1.10), while Durango, Michoacán, Nuevo León, and Yucatán increased their international activity in 0.90 points. Only three states (Colima, Sinaloa, and Sonora) did not increase their international activities, while no state reduced them in net terms.

Five years later, in 2014, the IRSSG once again grew. In absolute terms, the international activity increased in similar terms as in the previous five years (0.51 points); however, in relative terms, taking 2009 as the base year, the external actions only grew 32.81% between 2009 and 2014. The accumulated growth in the decade (2004-2014), using 2004 as the base year, was of 85.70%. It is important to note that all the federal units, except for Colima and those that had already reached the highest level in 2009, increased their international relations between 2009 and 2014, and none of them had a reversal in its internationalization. This means that those international actions that were enacted in the first period (2004-2009) are to some extent institutionalized and maintained or increased during the second period (2009-2014). However, the rate of growth decreased from 42.09% to 32.81% from the first to the second period. The federal units that presented the highest increments in their international relations in the decade were the Distrito Federal and Querétaro (both with 233.33%), followed by Aguascalientes and

Durango (166.67% both).

In sum, the IRSSG in Mexico has grown substantially in the last decade, increasing at the national level from a medium-average in 2004, to medium high in 2009, to high-average in 2014. This means that Mexican states have been impacted by the changes in the international and domestic systems in the last decade, and have reacted accordingly, seeking to generate local development through their internationalization in a more globalized world and a more open economic and political system domestically. Higher levels in international activity have generated more economic opportunities in terms of markets for their exports and foreign direct investment in their territories, both generating local development. However, there is an important variation in these international activities not only in time, but most importantly between federal units. The next section seeks to understand better what explains these substantive differences between the Mexican sub-state governments.

V. MEASURING INTERNATIONALIZATION THROUGH IIA

IAs are the legal instruments through which sub-state governments conduct, within the Mexican legal framework, international relations with foreign government agencies, international organizations and other private and public actors. The areas of cooperation covered by these agreements are to be strictly circumscribed within the faculties of the state or municipal actors. Sub-state governments have to keep the SRE informed of their negotiation and conclusion, and if this ministry determines that the agreements are legal, they are registered in the official record, the Register of Inter-Institutional Agreements (RIIA), which is publicly available through the SRE's web page. Since not all the sub-state governments register their IAs before the SRE, this register does not include the totality of all existing agreements; however, it does include all the IAs recognized as legal by the Mexican government, that is, those that are legally binding according to Mexican and international law, as was previously discussed.

As of December 31, 2014, the RIIA included 668 IAs, signed by Mexican state and municipal governments with international counterparts. Using this information, a database was created to identify the number of agreements signed, when the agreements were signed (period, presidential administration, pre/post-NAFTA), who signed them (state or municipal government), who is the international counterpart (government, international organization, NGO, private), what type of agreement was signed (sisterhood or other) and the areas of cooperation covered by them.

There is a huge variation in the number of IIA signed by Mexican sub-state governments. The range of variation goes from 0 (Baja California Sur) to 139 (Jalisco). Over two thirds of the IAs (468 out of 668, representing 70.05% of the total) have been signed by only 10 states (less than one third of the Mexican federal units). The most active states are, in decreasing order: Jalisco (139), Chiapas (74), Estado de México (49), Nuevo León (39), Distrito Federal (38), Michoacán (37), Chihuahua (28), Quintana Roo (23), Puebla

(21), and Guanajuato (20). The two states with the most IIA (Jalisco and Chiapas) concentrate almost one third IIA (31.89%).

Now then, taking into consideration the level of government that signs the IIA, there is a balance between state and municipal actors: 366 (54.79%) were signed by state authorities, and 302 (45.21%) by municipal governments. Since the Distrito Federal is not divided into municipalities, but into political delegations (which have legal restrictions to sign IAs), all 38 IIA were signed by the former. The preferred type of IIA concluded by Mexican sub-state governments is sisterhood agreements, which account for 41.47% of all the IIA that have been signed.

It should be no surprise that four out of the five of the federal units with the largest number of IIA (Jalisco, Chiapas, Estado de México, and Distrito Federal) are also the states that reached the highest level of international activity (very high) since 2009, and all 10 of them have a high to very high level of external actions by 2014, as was previously discussed. On the other hand, the four states that have five or less IIA registered (Baja California Sur, Colima, Sinaloa, and Tlaxcala) share two characteristics: first, they have had considerably lower levels of external activities during the last decade (average at best), and second, their international actions have only increased marginally (within the average category) over the last 10 years. Therefore, it can be argued that Mexican federal units use IIA as legally binding mechanisms to regulate and sustain their international relations with foreign counterparts, especially those units with higher degrees of external activities.

The clear majority of the IAs (96.86%) were signed after the initiation of NAFTA on January 1, 1994, and the opening of the Mexican economy. NAFTA opened two areas of opportunity for local development for Mexican states: a huge market with reduced barriers for their exports and an important source of foreign direct investment. These two opportunities generated the incentives for Mexican sub-state governments to actively promote themselves internationally, thus generating decentralization in the area of external economic promotion and its institutionalization through IIA. As it was previously discussed, there is an increasing international activity of Mexican sub-state governments through time. Before NAFTA, during the de la Madrid and Salinas' administrations (1982-1988 and 1988-1994) and before, only 21 IAs were signed (3% of the current total); the number of IIA increased during the presidential administrations after NAFTA was implemented: Zedillo, 86 (14%), Fox, 119 (22%), and Calderón, 336 (50%). Under the current Peña administration (2012-2018), in only two years (2012-2014), 71 (11%) IIA were signed and registered before the SRE.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

This article has tried to explain the variation of the IRSSG in Mexico. It argued that the growing international activity of Mexican SSG was triggered by the globalization and interdependence in the international system. However,

Mexican federal units reacted a few decades later than other industrialized and democratic federal countries because domestic economic and political liberalization was necessary for the SSG governments to have the powers and incentives to go international. Therefore, with increasing democratization and decentralization, federalism became a relevant variable in the Mexican political system, opening the door for an increasing IRSSG, and thus international activities at the sub-state level started growing in an accelerating pace since the late 1990s, especially after the implementation of NAFTA in 1994.

Mexican foreign policy is an exclusive domain of the federal government. However, as it was widely explained, the Mexican legal framework gives ample powers to Mexican SSG to conduct international relations in those areas in which they have legal capacity, therefore being inclusive in terms of legal powers. However, the federal government practically never consults or includes SSG in international negotiations or foreign policy design or implementation, thus being exclusive in terms of intergovernmental coordination. In sum, the IR of Mexican SSG can be considered as complementary, since even if there is practically no coordination between the federation and federal units in international affairs, each of them conducts in a relatively harmonious way the international activities for which they have powers, without any visible conflict between levels of government.

Based on the institutionalization and the economic and political activities of Mexican SSG, it was clear that the IR of Mexican SSG increased considerably during the last decade. All the federal units increased their international relations in these 10 years, and none of them had a reversal in its internationalization. Another conclusion can be reached about the international relations of Mexican sub-state governments by analyzing the IIAs signed by them: there is a considerable variation in the number of agreements signed by Mexican states and their municipalities; the clear majority of them are signed by states with high or very high levels of sub-state diplomacy.

Now, in terms of the offices responsible of the internationalization of Mexican SSG there are several important findings. First, two thirds of the states have a centralized coordination of their external affairs, and these areas are of relatively recent creation. On average, they are relatively small, with the average staff of these agencies being 9.31; however, there is a huge variation, from an office of one to a team of 52 people. The most active federal units have the largest agencies (Distrito Federal, Puebla, Estado de México, and Chiapas) with a staff of 20 or more, and with one exception, the staff members are proficient, other than Spanish, in English (25). However, proficiency in other languages is very limited (only a few have staffers that speak French, German, Portuguese, Italian, and Chinese). Also, only nine Mexican states have representation offices abroad.

The states recognize that the most important challenges that they face in terms of their consolidation are insufficient budgets, lack of highly professionalized staff in international affairs, insufficient staff members, the lack of an official legal

framework, and limited mechanisms of coordination with the federal government and other federal units. As expected, the federal units that have higher levels of IRSSG and have concluded more IIA are those that will have more and better trained personnel, more institutionalized agencies, and better legal and institutional frameworks.

The most important international activities conducted by the federal units are directly related with promoting local development and welfare (attract foreign direct investment, tourism, international cooperation in education, culture, science and technology, promote exports). Their most important institutional relation is with the SRE, where all (but one of them) have direct and constant relations. Also, the clear majority have contact and relations with Mexican Embassies and Consulates around the world. Once again, those units with higher levels of IRSSG and IIA, are those with the highest the number and scope of the activities and partners in the internationalization strategy of their units.

Now then, even if the clear majority knows about the resources available (SRE's website and guide) to support and facilitate their internationalization of sub-state governments and evaluates them positively, there are still some federal units that have no idea about these resources. The federal units have a very positive perception of their relations with SRE and AMAIE, and the good news is that almost 85% of them consider their international relations as complementary to the country's foreign policy, not competitive or conflictive.

Finally, given the growing globalization and interdependence at the international level, and the increasing decentralization and democratization of the political systems the IRSSG will keep on growing. Thus, it is important that legislations be perfected and updated, to guarantee that the IRSSG are conducted within a framework of legality. If it is and it is also synchronized with the country's foreign policy, thus being complementary to it, the IRSSG can be considered positive for SSG and local societies, since it allows for greater and better schemes of cooperation with the world in order to promote local development.

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