

Sub-National Governments In North American Governance



The international relations of sub-national governments in North America are crucial for the region's governance because important decisions are made at the sub-national level. The dynamics of regional governance embrace not only trade relations, but also other kinds of links that have emerged and developed out of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), including agreements to cooperate in specific areas. Sub-national governments' international activities strive for economic development by promoting investment and exports, but they also attempt to forge cooperation agreements in the fields of education, the environment, labor, and tourism, among others. In the United States and Canada, sub-national governments have seen their power and influence grow in a context of federalism and decentralization that have given rise to new forms of governance. They have also emerged as international actors, becoming the avenues for solutions and proposals for the most serious, complex global problems in the early twenty-first century.

In Canada, some provinces have established extensive international relations, both with the countries of North America and with those of other regions. Quebec is an outstanding case as the province that has earmarked the most resources and personnel for international activities. But Alberta and British Columbia have also ventured into these waters. Mexico's states have increased their international relations, too, particularly over the last 20 years, as the result of different political and economic developments. Some have even attracted foreign investment and linked their production to that of other states or provinces in the region, forming value chains. For all these reasons, I think it is fundamental to examine and assess these dynamics of governance.

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