

# Toronto and São Paulo: Cities and International Diplomacy

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## Abstract

With globalization, the largest cities in the world have been growing in economic importance. And their local powers have often been enhanced as a result of decentralization reforms over the past two decades. In this context, cities—and particularly their mayors—have been reaching out to other cities and jurisdictions to pursue a variety of goals. One term for this process is “paradiplomacy,” but most of the literature on the subject gives little attention to the local political dynamics behind these initiatives. In this article, we explore these local dynamics through a comparison of two major cities, Toronto, Canada, and São Paulo, Brazil. The cases show that external initiatives, both in scope and direction, vary according to the political strategies of the elected mayors. These strategies are strongly affected by the local context and by the political logic of mayoral leadership.

## Keywords

cities, paradiplomacy, Toronto, São Paulo, mayors

## Introduction

As the world becomes more urban, cities—especially the largest cities—have been growing in economic importance. Politically, their demographic and economic influence has generally resulted in greater powers and added

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functions, as decentralization trends solidify around the world. But as these powers have increased, many cities have taken on a more international profile. When they do this—and we will present evidence of the trend in this article—how have their political leaders (in this case, their mayors) adjusted to these new challenges and opportunities, and how does this change our understanding of local politics? We will explore these questions by means of a comparison of two important cities: Toronto in Canada, and São Paulo in Brazil.

## Toronto and São Paulo: Some Comparisons

In terms of their total populations, Toronto and São Paulo are very different in size. Toronto, the capital of the province of Ontario, and the largest city in Canada, had approximately 2,600,000 people in the central area in 2011, and some 5,100,000 in the Greater Toronto Area, sometimes called the Toronto region or GTA. São Paulo, with 11,254,000 in the municipality of São Paulo, and 19,890,000 in the region in 2011, is the capital of São Paulo State, and the largest city in Brazil. Both cities are the financial and commercial capitals of their respective nations.

Both cities are part of federal systems. In the case of Brazil, the 1988 Constitution (Brazil's fifth) gave exclusive powers to three levels of government, including the local (municipal) level. Among the most important powers designated for local governments were primary health care and public health, primary education, roads, sewerage and transportation infrastructure, culture, and parks and recreation. At the same time, a new Ministry of Cities was created nationally, which, after 2002, applied the policies laid down in the Statute of the City, a national law (Friendly 2013). But of all the cities in Brazil, São Paulo is the wealthiest in the country, with an average per capita income of approximately US\$23,000. Like other large cities in the country, it has a sizable civil service (estimated at 130,000 in 2015) and a substantial budget. Revenue of the city is US\$1,305 per person. In 2014, São Paulo had an operating budget of R\$43.4 billion, or approximately US\$16.3 billion. For the 11.9 million residents, this represents an expenditure of US\$1,373.67 per person. The city is governed by an elected mayor, who enjoys a four-year (single renewable) term. Elections are held at two-year intervals in alternate years from the election for governor of the state of São Paulo. There are 55 elected council members, elected by proportional representation from party lists. The current mayor is João Doria of the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (*Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira*, PSDB), a centrist party. The previous mayor (Fernando Haddad) represented the Workers' Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores*, PT), a left-wing party.

As for Toronto, like other cities (and municipalities) in the country, it falls under the exclusive constitutional jurisdiction of the province—Ontario—of which it is the capital city. In Canada’s written constitution (the Constitution Act, 1867, and the Constitution Act, 1982, and their amendments), cities and municipalities are entirely subject to the authority of the Province in which they are located. Ontario works with municipalities through a number of ministries, but mainly the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and the Ministry of Housing. While there is an Ontario Municipal Act detailing the powers and structures of Ontario municipalities, Toronto has its own act, the City of Toronto Act, 2006, which gives it some taxing powers not available to other cities in the province. In Canada, there is no national ministry dealing with cities, although cities (often with their provinces) can arrange with the national government for assistance in areas of infrastructure (especially transportation), health, and security.

In terms of resources, Toronto had an operating budget of approximately CAD\$11.8 billion in 2016, or approximately US\$8.9 billion at prevailing exchange rates. This would mean an expenditure of about \$3,179 per person for the 2,800,000 living in the city. If, to this, we add the capital budget of CAD\$3.3 billion per year (US\$2.50 billion), the total expenditure per person comes to US\$4,099 per person. A wide range of local services (including police, waste disposal, public transit, parks and recreation, and land-use planning) are carried out by an employment force of some 53,000, under the authority of an elected mayor and council. The mayor is elected (at large) every four years with no term limitation. Political parties are prohibited at the municipal level. The Toronto mayor has one vote in a council that includes 44 elected councilors, selected on the basis of single wards of approximately 55,000 population each. The Toronto mayor, in the last election in 2014, received the most votes of any politician in Canada, with 395,775 votes, for 40.28% of the votes cast. The election had a record turnout of 60% of registered voters.<sup>1</sup>

A better understanding of how each of these cities has responded to the challenge of internationalization will illuminate some of the new dimensions and growing importance of what we can call the “diplomatic turn” of cities in the postmillennium age.

The research in this article is based on data collection between December 2014 and May 2016, including two field visits in each city during those years. These cities were chosen because of a formal partnership (which supported expenses for such a project) between the University of Toronto (the Global Cities Institute) and the University of São Paulo (Institute of International Relations); in this partnership, the two Toronto writers of this article were supported by colleagues from São Paulo, both in discussing the work and in

carrying out the research in both cities. In total, 16 interviews in both cities were conducted with a city councilor and a former mayor in Toronto, public servants managing international relations functions in both cities, trade officials in both cities, and academics in both cities working on city diplomacy. All interviews were transcribed and in the case of the interviews in São Paulo, translated into English. Interview transcripts were analyzed using grounded theory, in which repeated ideas are collected systematically, leading to the construction of theory. In addition to the interviews, municipal documents and press reports from both cities were consulted to inform both cases' context, history, and background.

This study, like many other comparative studies of cities in a rapidly changing world, has a number of limitations. Two are of particular importance: the period studied, and the type of cities selected. In terms of the time period, we have gone back to the 1990s for São Paulo and Toronto. But earlier municipal governments may very well have treated international issues differently, and we cannot predict how the current international situation will encourage (or discourage) cities from acting in the future. As for the two cities, they are the major commercial cities in their respective federal countries, but other cities (either in more important countries, or capital cities) may operate differently with respect to international relationships with other cities. Still, the similarities of the two cities, even though they are on different continents and at different levels of economic development, make this case-study comparison both interesting and suggestive.

## **Cities on the International Stage: An Evolving Pattern**

From the point of view of urban studies and even economics and comparative politics, cities in many countries in both the North and South have benefited from increased responsibilities for basic services, and an enhanced economic role both nationally and internationally. These developments have come about largely as a result of decentralization and constitutional reforms on one hand, and the increasing economic, social, and cultural importance of cities in the globalizing world system, on the other hand. As these trends have solidified, the international activities of cities have proliferated. These activities—as important as they are becoming—have generally been the subject of only sporadic research.

Early suggestions about these new trends were visible decades ago. During the 1970s and 1980s, a number of American cities became active in supporting foreign-policy-related political causes such as promoting a nuclear test-ban treaty, supporting nuclear-free zones, divestment from South African

holdings, and support for Central American refugees by acting as “sanctuary” cities (Hobbs 1994).<sup>2</sup> In the case of France, a number of laws and administrative actions during the 1980s and 1990s gave local authorities (cities as well as regions) the legal and organizational tools to operate overseas and to undertake contracts and agreements, so long as the functions involved were part of their legal domain (Rousset 1998, chap. 2). But in other European countries, cities (such as London) have actively pursued Olympic bids through international diplomacy (Acuto 2013b), they have promoted the “branding” of their cities to attract tourism (Ulldemolins 2014), and they have twinned with other cities, taken part in study tours, and participated in innumerable city networks (Beal and Pinson 2014; Campbell 2012; Fry, Radebaugh, and Soldatos 1988; Jayne, Hubbard, and Bell 2011).

### *The Internationalization of City Policies: Four Research Themes*

One important line of argument among urban researchers is that cities have internationalized their activities at least partly as a “learning” initiative. Tim Campbell’s (2012) book, *Beyond Smart Cities: How Cities Network, Learn, and Innovate*, contains very extensive evidence from cities around the world about their relationships with cities in other countries. The emphasis in these relationships, drawn from interviews and direct observation, is on how cities learn from each other, whether through networks, or in bilateral relationships. This theme is reinforced in a book by Robin Hambleton, who discusses “international lesson drawing” as a major element in how cities currently operate (Hambleton 2015). Related to these ideas of international learning is the notion of performance benchmarking whereby cities—in a struggle for external resources—rank themselves, and are ranked by others irrespective of national boundaries (Ammons 2012; Moore, Nolan, and Segal 2005; Yigitcanlar and Lönnqvist 2013).

A second important theme in the academic literature dealing with cities in the international arena is the notion of competitiveness. Analysis of city competitiveness is extensive (Begg 2002; Garcia and Judd 2012; Hu 2015; Savitch and Kantor 2002; Urban Studies 1999). As early as 1995, the former mayor of Seattle, Washington, Charles Royer, wrote, “[s]uccessful cities of the future, both large and small, and regardless of where they are on the world map, must use all their resources if they hope to compete and prosper in a new world economy” (Royer in Duffy 1995, p. x). But, as recent research indicates, comparative studies of urban competitiveness tend to bypass city agency, and to concentrate on the actions of enterprises and firms within the city, or on the qualities of the city that are attractive to outside firms and high-level technical and creative professionals (Florida 2005).

As cities engage themselves internationally, the diplomatic function, which involves actively seeking and negotiating relationships and investments in the world at large—rarely,<sup>3</sup> if ever, mentioned in formal lists of powers and functions of municipalities or local governments—has become of increasing importance for many large cities, including both Toronto and São Paulo. This is a third, and very important, theme. To compare the international initiatives of São Paulo and Toronto, we will examine their “paradiplomacy” activities. The term “paradiplomacy,” while used very rarely in urban studies and comparative politics, is well known in the field of international relations (Tavares 2016). Paradiplomacy can be defined as subnational diplomacy, or the diplomatic actions of subnational units (such as provinces or cities) outside their normal jurisdictional sphere of activity. But it is the dynamics of how paradiplomacy relates to *local* politics that is the subject of this article.

Clearly, for cities to carry out this paradiplomatic function successfully, they need to support it both organizationally and politically in a systematic fashion. In the cases of both cities, the key focus for these initiatives has been the interests of the mayor. As Acuto (2013b, p. 482) notes, “we . . . need to pay some careful attention to the leaders at the helm of these cities as the key drivers of this internationalization, both theoretical as well as diplomatic, of the city in the twenty-first century.” This is the fourth important theme in the literature.

The theme of mayors as central actors in the international sphere has been highlighted by Benjamin Barber, whose popular book (*If Mayors Ruled the World*) argued that elected mayors have a number of political attributes that should be deployed at the international level. While he spoke mainly of mayors of very large cities, the attributes Barber described include much higher political approval ratings than legislators or chief executives of nation-states (Barber 2013, p. 84), a strong practical rather than ideological approach to current problems, and being personally engaged in their cities and their issues. As a result, suggested Barber, and because cities are already deeply involved in international networks (chap. 5, Table 3, 118–19), they ought to play a much more active role in international fora dealing with such problems as global warming, international terrorism and violence, and a variety of social issues. As mayors, he argued, they are better able and positioned to deal with many of these issues than are nation-states through established international institutions. Writing at the same time on the critical role of mayors internationally, Michele Acuto (2013a) asked “how do city leaders influence global governance?” His answers included five types of agency: the promotion of regimes for regulation and collective action, hybridization of governmental alignments into public–private governance structures,

entrepreneurial diplomacy that breaks with the constraints of national boundaries, and playing a key role in shaping the everyday dimension of international affairs through normative mediation.

These arguments have considerable resonance, but they stop short at the question of the political motivation of the actors themselves. The central questions this article poses—in an admittedly exploratory fashion—are as follows:

- **Research Question 1:** What is the political logic behind mayors operating internationally?
- **Research Question 2:** What factors might explain differing approaches of important mayors over time?

The better we understand these factors, the better we can understand the growing importance of cities internationally.

Two comparative studies give us some direction in our search for explanatory factors related to the political logic of urban paradiplomacy. An article by Lionel Martins and José Manuel Rodríguez Álvarez (2007, p. 407) that looked at the phenomenon of “glocal” leadership in European cities, citing the cases of Madrid, Rome, and Budapest, concluded that the dynamics of international connections on the part of these cities,

tend to give rise to strongly personalized local politics . . . this new style of government leads to the emergence of a new mayoral political class in Europe in which mayors use the international arena to become more charismatic figures in both local and supralocal political systems.

At the same time, we are told by Vincent Beal and Gilles Pinson that the interest of urban mayors (at least in Europe) has shifted from maintaining their local political base to promoting international networks based on the creation of public policies (Beal and Pinson 2014). As we shall see, the enlargement of the personal image of the mayor tends to apply to the Toronto case, while the promotion of complementary public policies with overseas collaborators seems better to apply to the case of certain São Paulo mayors. As a study of the international activities of 10 (mostly European) cities concluded (Lefèvre and d’Albergo 2007, p. 319), city strategies in this field “tend to follow different paths based on their own ‘digestion’” of the global changes that have affected their development.

The two following sections of this article look at the comparative experience of São Paulo and Toronto. Our particular focus will be the political logic of mayoral action in both cases.

## **São Paulo and the Brazilian Model of Paradiplomacy**

Over the past 30 years, Brazilian subnational governments have been carrying on their own international relations.<sup>4</sup> Despite interest in paradiplomacy in the early 1960s, the 1964 military dictatorship led to limited subnational autonomy and foreign-policy concentration in central government (Setzer 2013). Through democratization in the 1980s, state governments gained greater freedom, and in 1987, the city of Rio de Janeiro was the first local government to establish an international relations office.<sup>5</sup> Such activities had been under development for decades in an uncoordinated way, without being integrated into a strategy by local governments (Salomón 2011). In Brazil, paradiplomacy is a parallel way of doing international relations by subnational governments without bypassing the bureaucracy, which is seen to be disconnected from urban management.

Porto Alegre was a pioneer, setting up an international cooperation and fundraising office in 1995 supported by the Workers Party (PT).<sup>6</sup> Most international relations structures in Brazilian cities emerged from initiatives by governments run by PT (Matsumoto 2011; Salomón 2011). In the 1990s, PT had not yet made it into national politics, but had won important local victories. In Porto Alegre, as in other PT-governed cities, the mayor was in exile during the dictatorship and had international contacts, which were used to attract resources and international support. PT's involvement in paradiplomacy can be explained by three factors: (1) the prevalence of leftist leaders in the international cities movement though PT's political alignment with such networks, (2) the international diffusion of best practices as a channel for city marketing within a progressive ideology, and (3) the use of paradiplomacy as a domestic strategy by mayors (Salomón 2011).<sup>7</sup> In São Paulo, the first international relations efforts occurred under PT Mayor Luiza Erundina (1989–1992), although this ended with the election of conservative Paulo Maluf, likely influencing the larger paradiplomacy project by PT governments.<sup>8</sup>

Paradiplomacy in Brazil resulted from three drivers: democratization and political decentralization, regional integration, and economic stability through the 1990s (Tavares 2014). First, the 1988 Constitution made Brazil one of the most decentralized countries in the world in terms of the distribution of fiscal resources and political power (Souza 1996). Despite municipal government autonomy, the Constitution's prerogatives leave little room for subnational governments, although "there is an understanding that the Constitution does not prohibit such activities" (Vital 2016, p. 83). While international relations are the exclusive responsibility of the federal government, according to the Constitution, subnational governments can seek funds



internationally and sign agreements with foreign subnational governments (Salomón 2011). Second, starting in 1995, the Mercocities Network strengthened paradiplomacy in Brazil. Created to stimulate the participation of local governments in regional integration, Mercocities helped to induce the international activity of some municipalities and states and contributed to a consultative forum for Mercosur's municipalities and federated states. Finally, in 1995 under Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Brazilian diplomats began using the concept of "federative diplomacy" to legitimize the international activities of Brazil's subnational governments for business opportunities and cooperation (Rodrigues 2008). In 1997, the Federative Relations Office (*Assessoria de Relações Federativas*) was created under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to systematize contact between subnational entities and the Foreign Ministry, representing the federal government's recognition of the importance of new actors' participation in international relations (Araújo 2012). The PT government that came to power in 2003 with Lula stimulated and integrated subnational activity into its national development strategy (Nunes 2005).

In addition, in 1996, delegations from Brazilian local governments attended Habitat II in Istanbul, an important event for the development of city paradiplomacy as municipal governments became involved in an international local government movement. The very participation in municipal internationalism greatly influenced the Brazilian version of paradiplomacy (Salomón 2011). In São Paulo, the city's formal approach to paradiplomacy has fluctuated with each mandate, underlining the influence of the governing party in the approach to international relations (Araújo 2012).

### *The Beginnings of Paradiplomacy Under Marta Suplicy (2001–2004)*

In 2001, Mayor Marta Suplicy's PT government created the Municipal International Relations Secretariat (*Secretaria Municipal de Relações Internacionais*; SMRI) to facilitate, coordinate, and implement international relations between São Paulo and foreign entities, to provide assistance to the mayor's office in international activities, and as an institutional channel to connect with consulates, embassies, and international representatives (Rosa 2014a). This became a model for other international relations offices in Brazil (Salomón 2011). A lack of autonomy of federal foreign-policy entities coupled with a need for international activities led São Paulo to exercise paradiplomacy more intensely, while the strategic objectives of SMRI also led São Paulo to be assertive in international relations (Onuki and Oliveira 2013). There was also a political motivation for the creation of SMRI (Araújo 2012). As Kjeld Jakobsen (2006) noted, these actions were justified by the fact that

the main consequences of violence and poverty are found in cities, which should assume responsibility to address these issues.<sup>9</sup> A Secretariat report (SMRI 2004) noted SMRI's role in strengthening the role of cities as places for the exchange of successful practices, part of the administration's "image of the city" based on social inclusion to transform São Paulo's problems through international experiences (Araújo 2012; Jakobsen 2006).<sup>10</sup>

SMRI's agenda included participation in city networks,<sup>11</sup> effective experiences of public management, projects for multilateral organizations, exchange of public policies and cooperation agreements with other cities, and partnerships with multinational businesses. As the co-president of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), Suplicy played a key role in the local government movement, showing that international activism could be politically useful domestically (Salomón 2011). SMRI organized the United Nations (UN) Conference on Trade and Development in 2004 and led the Network 10 fight against urban poverty (URB-AL), which supports cooperation between European Union (EU) and Latin American local governments through thematic networks on urban policies.<sup>12</sup> Another role was seeking resources for local development from abroad. Indeed, "fund-raising is frequently the main *raison d'être* of municipal foreign policy and one of the greatest motivations for a municipal government's decision to establish an international relations structure" (Salomón 2011, p. 55).<sup>13</sup> Like other Brazilian cities and states, São Paulo formed teams specialized in writing proposals and negotiating with international agencies.

According to Izabel Araújo (2012), the outcomes of SMRI's operations were positive: The city gained space internationally, acquired prestige and resources, developed projects to benefit the city, and generated opportunities for international cooperation for other secretariats at city hall. SMRI, thus, acted as a "support secretariat" to coordinate, implement, and act as an intermediary with other secretariats (Rosa 2014a; Vital 2016).

### *Paradiplomacy as International Investment and City Marketing: José Serra and Gilberto Kassab (2005–2012)*

In 2005, José Serra of the Brazilian Social Democratic Party (*Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira*; PSDB) won the municipal election, announcing the closure of the SMRI to cut costs. With this reversal, combined with the shift in government and the mayor's lack of interest, SMRI's objectives, approach, and results changed radically. Many projects ended abruptly, the city's actions in international forums were reduced, as was the search for technical cooperation agreements (Pavanelli 2012; Todesco 2015). SMRI become more administrative, with indefinite roles and less strategic planning.

The focus of SMRI was, first, to advise the mayor on the ceremonial aspects of receiving international delegations, and second, to raise funds and encourage foreign investments (Vigevani 2007). Although the Secretariat's participation in city networks was reduced, in less political arenas, its involvement increased, such as in the Metropolis Network. These changes were, in part, a result of the change in mayor and party, with different beliefs and political visions than the previous PT administration. Under PT governments, cities had a proactive position of marketing the city and promoting policy change, while under Serra, São Paulo's "image" was as a unique city but also multicultural and inclusive, and a place with unparalleled qualities compared with other parts of the world (Araújo 2012).

In 2006, José Serra ran for governor of São Paulo State and Gilberto Kassab of the Liberal Front Party (*Partido da Frente Liberal*; PFL), a right-wing party aligned with PSDB, became mayor, indicating bureaucrats to SMRI with close ties to the private sector (Vital 2016).<sup>14</sup> Under Kassab, two goals were fostered: (1) promoting the city's development through international cooperation and (2) strengthening its international position (SMRI 2007). The focus was similar to the Serra era, but the emphasis was on attracting international public and private investments while still selling the city's image (Araújo 2012). There was an increase in activities promoting São Paulo globally, such as World Expo in Zaragoza, São Paulo week in Tokyo, and "city diplomacy" carried out by São Paulo's consulates around the world. Despite reducing São Paulo's participation in city networks, fortifying São Paulo in transnational platforms such as the C40 network gave international visibility to the city (Rosa 2014a).

### ***Paradiplomacy as Progressive Policy Promotion Under Fernando Haddad (2013–2016)***

In 2013, with the election of PT Mayor Fernando Haddad, the SMRI went through a restructuring process, gaining a new federal relations role and a new name: Municipal Secretariat of International and Federative Relations (*Secretaria Municipal de Relações Internacionais e Federativas*; SMRIF), becoming more involved in activities with Brazilian local governments. SMRIF works around three main areas: (1) as the liaison between São Paulo's *prefeitura* (or city hall) and other Brazilian *prefeituras*; (2) acting in a public relations function with consulates, chambers of commerce, and supporting trade issues; and (3) supporting the local administration in establishing best practices with international partnerships that help to improve local city management (Vital 2016). Haddad was more vested in SMRIF than in the two previous governments. In the first years of his mandate, activities within

SMRIF increased in number and diversity, which “allowed it to assist in the construction of a new narrative of São Paulo, based on urban issues and the strengthening of the city’s qualities” by working alongside other secretariats to construct an international agenda (Vital 2016, p. 120).<sup>15</sup>

Vicente Trevas, secretary of SMRIF under Haddad, notes that the goal is “to profit from relations with other cities in order to improve ourselves . . . We want to establish relationships in order to exchange experiences.” As Leonardo Barchini Rosa (2014b), former SMRIF secretary, noted, “We believe that we need to resume the political role of the secretariat in international forums, city networks and organizations linked to the United Nations” and to support trade promotion and city management, “seeking international experiences that may benefit the administrative bodies of the municipality.” This return to a more political focus under Haddad had the goal of inserting São Paulo into a wider context of the active participation of cities in global issues (Vital 2016). For example, the exchange of public policies, such as bike lanes and public lighting, led to an “effervescence of the perception of São Paulo as the cradle of good practices and urban solutions among global developing country cities” (Todesco 2015, p. 67).

Although the international relations of São Paulo are mostly impelled by SMRIF, in 2013, SP Negócios (formerly Companhia São Paulo de Parcerias), a mixed capital company, was created to promote investments in the city, stimulate the city’s image abroad, and establish institutional partnerships. Working alongside SMRIF, the creation of SP Negócios indicates the recognition of the importance of investing in strategies to attract investment, but in a structure independent from SMRIF (Vital 2016).

There are signs that paradiplomacy in Brazil no longer epitomizes a parallel approach to diplomacy, as nationally, PT is no longer the opposition party and, therefore, more connected to the party in power. Still, under Luiz Ignacio “Lula” da Silva of PT, Brazil built an international image as a relevant political actor and together with an auspicious economic climate, positive effects both at the federal and subnational levels resulted. Brazilian cities and states have gained significant interest internationally, suggesting the need to fully consider the role of cities in international diplomacy (Vital 2016).

## **Toronto and the Canadian Approach to Paradiplomacy**

Toronto’s postwar history is a story of gradual expansion, population growth, and economic diversification. In the period from 1945 to 1980, Toronto developed as a major cultural center (reinforced by the growth of the English-language Canadian Broadcasting Corporation facilities), a manufacturing

hub for North America, and a financial node for Canada after a number of major national banks and insurance institutions left Montréal and moved to Ontario. Partly as a result of the linguistic nationalism of the government of Québec in the 1970s, many Montréal professional and business families as well as new immigrants began to choose Toronto over the former financial capital. During this period, Toronto was governed at two levels: by a metro government (established in 1953) and at the basic level, by five local “city” (or municipal) governments: Etobicoke, North York, East York, Scarborough, and Toronto. The central “core” city in this arrangement was Toronto, where the major banks and most of the managerial class were resident. By the year 2000, Toronto was North America’s

third or fourth most important financial centre, its second biggest live-theatre location, and its second or third largest film production centre. Its universities, particularly the associated medical research institutions, compete continually for staff and research funds with the best in North America. The automotive sector remains a major pillar of the regional economy, directly responsible for one in every six jobs in the greater Toronto area. (Berridge 2000, p. 16)

While the city’s horizons were largely regional or continental up to this time, Toronto did enter the process of bidding for the summer Olympic Games in 1996 (when Atlanta was eventually chosen) and for 2008 (when Beijing was chosen). However, because the voting for the host city is normally in the hands of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) about seven years before the games, Toronto was expected to promote itself whenever possible to IOC members and events. In 2001, Mel Lastman, the mayor of Toronto (1997–2003), was invited to Mombasa, Kenya, where African IOC delegates were to be meeting. Lastman, who had developed a successful household appliance business locally before going into politics, had little international experience aside from regular visits to his winter home in West Palm Beach, Florida. In response to a question about the IOC invitation, he said at a press conference,

What the hell do I want to go to a place like Mombasa? Snakes just scare the hell out of me. I’m sort of scared about going there, but the wife is really nervous. I just see myself in a pot of boiling water with all these natives dancing around me. (Quoted in Levine 2014, p. 327)

Mayor Lastman further blotted his copybook at the time Toronto was severely affected by the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) virus in 2003. In April of that year, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued an “unprecedented” advisory, “recommending that visitors to Toronto postpone

all but the most essential travel” (Naylor 2003, p. 37). Taken aback at another press conference, and in the light of the fact that incidences of infection were clearly falling in Toronto at the time, the mayor again showed his ignorance of international institutions and diplomacy. Referring to the WHO, he said,

I can tell you definitely we are in better shape today than we have been in a month . . . Where did [the WHO] come from? Who did they see? . . . They sit somewhere, I understand Geneva, I don’t even know where the hell they came from, but Geneva or someplace and they make decisions . . . (Quoted in Naylor 2003, p. 38)

The comedian Jon Stewart could not resist:

You know, I was thinking of going to Toronto, but I’ve heard the mayor is kind of a dick. By the way, for more information on Toronto, pick up a copy of the mayor’s new city guide, *Toronto: What the Hell?* (Quoted in Levine 2014, p. 328)

Many Torontonians felt that the international image of their city was at an all-time low.

### *David Miller: A Stronger and More Internationally Connected Office (2003–2010)*

The interest of Toronto in international connections began to change after 2003, when David Miller was elected as the new mayor. Miller (who was a lawyer with a Harvard degree in economics) had some previous involvement in extra-local relations when he was a councilor under Lastman. Lastman chose Miller to attend (on behalf of Toronto) meetings of other Canadian mayors and to meetings at the international level (David Miller, ex-mayor of Toronto, personal communication, April 22, 2015). Although his mayoralty (which lasted until 2010 when he chose not to run again for personal reasons) was fraught with budgetary, transit, and union challenges, Miller took a much more active interest in international issues than had his predecessor.

In the process, he was supported by a new City of Toronto Act, passed by the Province of Ontario in 2006, which stated clearly in Section 134 that, among other things, the duty of the mayor was “to provide leadership to council; [and] to act as the representative of the City both within and outside the City, and promote the City locally, nationally and internationally . . .” In the preamble to the same Act, the province recognized “that the city of Toronto, as Ontario’s capital city, is an economic engine of Ontario and of

Canada,” and it further recognized “the importance of providing the City with a legislative framework within which the City can build a strong, vibrant and sustainable city that is capable of thriving in the global economy.” A major principle stated in the first section of the Act was that (unlike the situation before), “[t]he Province acknowledges that the City has the authority to enter into agreements with the Crown in right of Canada with respect to matters within the City’s jurisdiction” without requiring prior assent from the province. So long as the city concerned itself with powers and functions, which it could legally exercise, there was no longer any restriction in principle to prevent it from connecting to cities or entities abroad that could promote its interests.

To reinforce this new movement toward a more global approach, Miller worked closely with the city staff to develop a protocol for “intergovernmental relations.” The document, published in November 2008 as the Corporate Intergovernmental Relations Protocol (City of Toronto 2008), committed all city divisions to work collaboratively and to “project a common position.” The scope of the protocol included consultations at the provincial and federal levels, agreements with other governments, alliances with other cities, and city participation in international networks and activities (City of Toronto 2008, p. 5). In a major section titled “International Activities,” the document stated the major benefits accruing to the city as a result of this “activity,” and illustrated these points with six major examples: international networks such as C40, trade missions, attending and participating in international events, hosting international delegations, engaging with peer cities through the City’s International Alliance Program, and developing technical partnerships with “cities in need” (City of Toronto 2008, p. 14).

### *Rob Ford and the “Gravy Train” (2010–2014)*

There was little time to determine the effectiveness of this protocol, as there were fewer than two years before a new mayor was to take office. The twin mantras of the new mayor, Rob Ford (elected in October 2010), were to “stop the gravy train” and “to run the city like a business” (Stren 2012). During the four years of the Ford regime (which was punctuated at the end by the council abrogating his powers and running the city without him, beginning in 2013), there was a virtual halt to all international travel and promotion of the city outside the country. In his constant battle to show that he had saved money for Toronto taxpayers, Ford took a dim view of “junkets” or foreign travel.

One of the few publicized trips the mayor took (that was not to Boston or Chicago where his family company had business interests) was to Austin, Texas, to visit a music festival. While he was there, he was questioned by

reporters about the coincidental arrest of one of his friends and occasional drivers, Alessandro Lisi, in Toronto for possession and trafficking of marijuana. In Austin, Ford was able to avoid questions on the arrest, while his brother Doug faced more direct and insistent questioning on the arrest in Toronto.<sup>16</sup> Although the Toronto mayor was somewhat of a celebrity around the world because of his wildly unpredictable and unconventional behavior, most of his personal energy was focused on Toronto and on dealing with scandals and personal issues in his life (Doolittle 2014; Filion 2015).

### *John Tory: Restoring Toronto's Place in the World (2014–)*

The next, and current mayor, John Tory, has been partner in an important law firm, held executive positions in a number of important local corporations, and is a former leader of the Ontario Progressive Conservative party. In the October 2014 Toronto election, he won with 394,775 votes overall, substantially beating his two main rivals Doug Ford (the brother of the former mayor), and Olivia Chow (a former councilor and Member of Parliament (MP), and wife of the late Jack Layton, leader of the national opposition party, the New Democratic Party). In his campaign, the most prominent issue was transit, with Tory promising to put a new, largely underground system in place to supplement the existing network. His proposal was called “Smart Track.” Although international promotion of the city was not one of Tory’s campaign promises, he nevertheless did not shy away from opportunities when they arose. In his first publicized overseas trip, to London, he told a reception at the Canadian High Commissioner’s office, to loud chuckles in the audience, “that [Toronto’s] reputation on the world stage had been suffering for a number of years” (Pagliano 2015). And in December 2015, he travelled to Paris, where he participated in the Climate Summit for Local Leaders, and, with 639 other mayors, signed the Paris Town Hall Declaration, which committed cities to reducing greenhouse gas emissions (Pickering 2015). Upon his return to Toronto, Tory said that the city had “stepped out of leadership ranks in the last four years, and I think our progress has suffered as a result. I think it is now time to get back to work” (Vella 2015). To reinforce this pledge, Tory led an important mission to Los Angeles in February 2016, to promote the city’s film and television industries (City of Toronto 2016). The trip, planned to coincide with the Academy Awards, organized “an evening with Canada’s Stars” with a red carpet and reception, followed by a lavish dinner at the Four Seasons Beverly Hills Hotel. A leading film industry executive praised the mayor:

I would say, in his relatively short time as Mayor, he has shown our industry more care and attention than any other previous mayor, and this trip to Los



Angeles is designed as being far more sale and appreciation-oriented than any previous Mayor's trip. (Kuitenbrouwer 2016)

A year later, in late January 2017, the mayor took an even larger delegation to Hollywood, in this case, with a delegation of 22 Toronto companies and organizations. In a press release, the same film executive who had praised the mayor for the first visit had this to say:

Our screen industry community has unified to finance this mission and support our mayor because he understands the economic impact and the job creation associated with our \$1.5 billion industry . . . For a mayor to travel and visit our clients twice in two years . . . that's a tremendous show of support by our City's leadership or our industry's 30,000 jobs, and our clients will not soon forget this high level of engagement and appreciation. (City of Toronto 2017)

Later the same year, Tory took a delegation of three councilors and 50 representatives from the business community to Israel for 10 days. The councilors who attended represented wards with a substantial Jewish population.<sup>17</sup>

Unlike São Paulo, which has a large secretariat dealing with international relations, Toronto deals with these issues through its existing staff complement supporting the standing committee on Economic Development, currently led by Councilor Michael Thompson. In a discussion with the authors at a meeting of that committee, it was revealed that the staff complement supporting overseas visits and promotion is 1.5. (The staff complement in São Paulo is close to 50.) And when Toronto councilors travel to São Paulo, as they did in 2014, they work closely with the office of the Ontario trade official stationed in that city (Todd Barrett, personal communication, December 9, 2015). While councilors and even the mayor may include their own staff in overseas ventures, we can only conclude that overseas promotions and what we might call paradiplomacy is still a slight and at best, emerging function of the City of Toronto.

## **Discussion: Understanding Paradiplomacy in Toronto and São Paulo**

Although it may have been rash to argue that mayors should (or even could) rule the world (Barber 2013), it is certainly true that mayors have been playing an active role on many fronts, not only in their own backyards but also internationally. While the literature on paradiplomacy is decidedly murky on the role of mayors (as opposed to the role of cities), there has been an increasing interest in the governance capacity of city leaders from the perspective of international

relations (Brütsch 2013; Curtis 2011). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the role of cities in international politics was embedded within a larger discussion of the diplomatic role of subnational actors (Carnago 2010). But with few exceptions (Acuto 2013a), there has been little analytical thinking about the place of city leadership in this process, let alone theorizing of such relationships. One important place to start is the influence of local political dynamics on international initiatives.

In both cities, as we have seen, paradiplomatic activities have fluctuated considerably over the last several decades. In the case of São Paulo, paradiplomacy rose to new heights under Marta Suplicy and to a lesser extent, under Fernando Haddad. In Toronto, David Miller did much to put Toronto in an international spotlight, while Mayor John Tory seems to be trying to bring back that spirit currently, following a neglect of international issues under the previous mayor. Much of this fluctuation has to do with the way the mayor views the city's place in the world. As a Brazilian academic noted in an interview, "the left wing draws power and support from an international level while . . . the right wing is much more locally based because it is concerned with reducing taxes" (Osmany Porto de Oliveira, personal communication, December 11, 2015). But moderate right-of-center mayors, as in the case of the current mayor of Toronto and his visits to Israel and Hollywood, may also draw on local support from important business and community groups through international trade missions.

The response of these mayors to the paradiplomatic opportunities they are offered is a function both of their general political orientation, as well as the various groups to which they are associated—or from whom they wish to gain support—in their cities. These groups tend to be more powerful, and more varied, in the largest and most globalized cities. Anecdotal literature reporting the international travel and extrajurisdictional initiatives of mayors tends to reinforce this suspicion. For example, James Hahn (2001–2004), the 40th mayor of Los Angeles, continued the interest of former mayors (such as Richard Riordan and Tom Bradley) in international trade. As Steven Erie (2004, p. 226) told us, with an enhanced L.A. charter giving him more power over appointments relating to the globalized economy, Hahn "used his control of the city's airport system to build bridges to the Mexican American community, which had strongly supported his [electoral] opponent, Antonio Villaraigosa, in the hard-fought 2001 mayoral campaign." And when he met with the President of Mexico in his first international trip, he was treated as a virtual head of state (Erie 2004, p. 226). Other well-known examples of major American mayors using their international connections to enhance their local political standing must include Mayor Michael Bloomberg of New York (2002–2013), a mayor who traveled widely outside the United States, and

who was for many years one of the key members of the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (originally started by Mayor Livingstone of London), which now includes some 90 of the world's largest cities. These cities represent most of the largest cities in seven major geographic regions of the world. The geographic spread of these cities parallels in some respects the philanthropic interests of Bloomberg Philanthropies (which also supports the organization), and Bloomberg L.P., a worldwide data and media company. But the international climate change initiatives by Mayor Bloomberg reinforced his local efforts to improve the conditions for public health locally, which included converting the city's vehicle fleet to one with cleaner emissions, proposing congestion pricing for the city's downtown business district, phasing out the most highly polluting forms of heating oil, and attempting to reform the city's solid-waste management system (Berg 2015, pp. 86–90) and, in addition, represented the international interests of the financial and diplomatic professionals so prominent in his local political base. A final example of the connection between mayors and extrajurisdictional issues is the movement by U.S. mayors (particularly of the largest cities) to defy the policy of the U.S. national government to halt assistance to so-called "sanctuary cities" (cities that support undocumented immigrants). As Mayor Rahm Emanuel of Chicago put it,

I want to be clear: We're going to stay a sanctuary city. There is no stranger among us. Whether you're from Poland or Pakistan, whether you're from Ireland or India or Israel and whether you're from Mexico or Moldova, where my grandfather came from, you are welcome in Chicago as you pursue the American dream. (Robbins 2017)

A large comparative study of European mayors clearly shows that the mayors of the largest cities, responding to a wide range of interests and extrajurisdictional pressures, are the most likely to promote visionary international futures for their cities (Bäck, Heinelt, and Magnier 2006, p. 190). The political support function that the mayor derives from these activities is very similar to the support that other subnational leaders (such as state governors, provincial premiers) gain from international travel. For example, a study of the chief ministers of five Indian states shows that since the mid-1990s, they have taken an increased interest in foreign relations, but that each of five ministers identified has used international travel to strengthen very context-specific and particular aspects of their domestic political support base (Wyatt 2017). Some of the differences between mayors in our two case-study cities can be summarized, as we can see from Table 1. Perhaps the most striking feature that this table shows is the clear alternation between international

**Table 1.** Politics and Paradiplomacy in Toronto and São Paulo, 2001–2016.

City	Mayor and Year	Political Perspective	Approach/Examples
São Paulo	Marta Suplicy (2001–2004)	Left (Worker's Party, PT)	<i>Cities as places of exchange</i> (coordinating international relations foreign entities, examples included local government movement, URB-AL, exchange of public policies)
	José Serra (2005–2006)	Centrist (Brazilian Social Democratic Party, PSDB)	<i>Restrained paradiplomacy</i> (more administrative roles; examples included receiving international delegations, raising funds/ investments)
	Gilberto Kassab (2006–2012)	Right (Liberal Front Party, PFL) <sup>a</sup>	<i>Privatization of paradiplomacy</i> (alignment with private sector, focus on international cooperation, strengthening the city's international position)
	Fernando Haddad (2013–2016)	Left (Worker's Party, PT)	<i>Political paradiplomacy</i> (additional federal relations role; acts as liaison between São Paulo/ other Brazilian cities, as public relations internationally, to support best practices to improve local city management)
Toronto	David Miller (2003–2010)	Left	<i>Active internationalism</i> (passed City of Toronto Act, developed a protocol for intergovernmental relations, active in C40)
	Rob Ford (2010–2014)	Right	<i>Retracted paradiplomacy</i> (halted most international travel, energy focused on Toronto)
	John Tory (2014–)	Right	<i>Paradiplomacy as business and brand promotion</i> (two trade delegations to Hollywood, IT visit to Israel, signed Paris COP agreement)

Note. PSDB = Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira; PFL = Partido da Frente Liberal; PT = Partido dos Trabalhadores; COP = Climate Change Conference (Conference of the Parties); IT = information technology; URB-AL = Fight Against Urban Poverty.

a. PFL became *Democratas* (DEM) in 2007. In 2011, Kassab founded the Social Democratic Party (PSD).

roles and perspectives, from one mayor to the next, in both Toronto and São Paulo.

Although the approaches to paradiplomacy differ considerably by mayor and political orientation, the ability to carry out international relations on the part of subnational governments is part of a new complexity in the leadership role. Indeed, as Carlos Milani and Ribeiro (2011, p. 31) wrote, “[m]unicipalities express a form of political agency that reveals a political will for greater recognition in the international scenario, but also some institutional autonomy in a global context that is [becoming] more complex and pluralistic.” This means that another variable, and one that differs considerably in the two cases, is the autonomy to conduct paradiplomacy through permanent institutions within local governments. As Monica Salomón (2011, p. 51) noted, “the principal factors shaping subnational direct involvement in foreign policy are the powers (whether formally granted or not by the country’s constitution) accruing to subnational governments in the national political framework.” In fact, this very basic difference in institutional structures was, at least until recently, the most marked difference between the two systems. Although Toronto, with the new City of Toronto Act, has more legal justification now to operate internationally using diplomatic tools, it has not incorporated this legal right into its administrative and policy structure nearly to the same degree as has its counterpart Brazilian city. While there will undoubtedly be economic and political pressures on the city (and its mayor) to operate more actively in the international arena, the complexities of Canada’s federal system, as well as a culture of localism, may inhibit the elaboration of a more explicit and coherent policy.

## Conclusion

Toronto and São Paulo are thousands of kilometers apart, differ greatly in their history and culture, but both are the commercial and cultural capitals of their (large) federal countries, and both have been increasingly involved in paradiplomatic projects over the last several decades. This article has looked at the paradiplomatic initiatives of both cities comparatively, focusing essentially on the policies and initiatives of the mayors. We have seen that paradiplomacy has a longer history in São Paulo than Toronto, but that it has followed a very erratic path in both cities. Since the late 1990s in Toronto, the city (at least seen through the agency of its mayor) went from a period of almost complete ignorance and rejection of the international sphere, to a period of active involvement, to be followed by rejection of international trips as “junkets” or self-indulgent luxury travel by politicians, to the present period (beginning in 2015) when the city—and its mayor—have undertaken

a number of overseas initiatives and have signed international agreements. The paths and strategies of the mayors can be traced when we follow the political logic of their choices, on the basis of their perspectives on governing, on one hand, and their constituency base, on the other.

Paradiplomacy is much more established in Brazil, in spite of constitutional limitations on the function. In the end, most of the larger cities in the country have developed secretariats of international relations, some larger and more important than others. In the case of São Paulo, paradiplomacy began in the late 1980s, continuing to a greater or lesser degree in different ways with each successive mayor. In São Paulo, local politics has been a continuous shift between right-wing and left-wing parties, with mayors from the Right opposing overseas initiatives, while mayors from the Left have supported them. The director of the Secretariat of International Relations until 2016<sup>18</sup> headed a professionally top-heavy staff of 50, and reported directly to the mayor, a member of the Worker's Party.

Comparing the two cities helps us to understand three important trends. First, comparing major commercial capitals in the North and the South shows that the paradiplomatic function is important, and becoming even more significant in both. As big-city elected mayors take a more central role in the resolution of many important international issues (climate change, the free movement of tourists and migrants, international trade), they need to have a clear sense of the limits and potential of their powers. New regulations and protocols, written both by cities and by their national governments, will in the future have to be drawn up.

The second trend that this account underlines is the increasing centrality of city regions in the international political and economic system. As cities have a larger role in their own economies (to the point that the large cities account for more than 75% of gross domestic product [GDP] in the United States; Katz and Bradley 2013, p. 1), their political, cultural, and social influence will become even more central. Mayors may not be ready to rule the world, but they will in the future be increasingly active players on the world stage. In this developing process, their political logic will be central to our understanding of their actions.

The third trend, which follows from the first two, is that "local" politics in the largest cities will increasingly be related to the international ties that businesses, cultural, and ethnic groups, and policy networks maintain as part of a new global reality. Solving collective action problems at the local level will cease to be a purely local function; local politicians will use other jurisdictional levels and other national platforms to complement their local political base. This extended local politics can only enrich our policy options.

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## Notes

1. By contrast, at the federal election in 2015, the turnout was 69.1%, and the leader of the majority party, Justin Trudeau, received 26,391 votes in his home district of Papineau.
2. Now (in 2017) with the election of President Trump, the issue of “sanctuary cities” and their role in supporting “undocumented” immigrants has again become prominent.
3. As one of the few examples, article 9 of the Swiss Constitution states, “Exceptionally, the cantons retain the right to conclude agreements with foreign states on matters of public economy, neighborhood, and police relations, provided such agreement contain nothing contrary to the Confederation or the rights of other cantons.” Article 10 distinguishes between cantonal international relations with neighboring subnational units and sovereign states: “Official intercourse between cantons and governments of foreign states or their representatives takes place through the agency of the Federal Council [that is, the Swiss National Executive and its Department of Foreign Affairs]; (2) with respect to matters enumerated in Article 9, the cantons may however correspond directly with subordinate authorities and officials of foreign states” (cited in Duhacek 1988, p. 131).
4. Milani and Ribeiro (2011) studied 72 Brazilian municipalities with more than 50,000 people and found that 70.8% of the municipalities exercised some form of paradiplomatic activity, while 40.2% had an organizational structure responsible for the management of the city’s international relations. The majority of subnational governments with some kind of institutionalized international relations structure, however, have been concentrated in the South-Southeast, Brazil’s most developed area (Sombre Saraiva 2004).
5. The states of Rio de Janeiro (1983) and Rio Grande do Sul (1987) were the first to set up international relations offices.
6. Under the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT), Porto Alegre used participatory budgeting as an international strategy in the creation of the city’s brand, rapidly diffusing the practice to other PT-held cities in Brazil, to Latin America, and Europe. This strategy resulted from a strategy of the city’s paradiplomatic structure, the Special Department for International Cooperation and Fundraising (Salomón and Nunes 2007).

7. Examples of networks that Brazilian local governments were involved with at the time include Metropolis, Fight against Urban Poverty (URB-AL), and Mercocidades. The key example of a best practice used by PT is participatory budgeting, which Porto Alegre helped to export through international relations with Latin America and Europe and fit within the innovative models of government that the PT sought to establish in the cities under its control both as a laboratory and a political platform (Porto de Oliveira 2017).
8. Between 1993 and 2001, São Paulo had no organ dedicated to international relations.
9. Kjeld Jakobsen was secretary of Secretaria Municipal de Relações Internacionais (SMRI) between 2001 and 2002.
10. One challenge was to counteract the negative image left by the government of Celso Pitta (1997–2000) of urban violence, abandonment, and corruption (Jakobsen 2006) through city marketing strategies. This emphasis on São Paulo’s “global city” image generated controversy among academics (Wanderley 2006).
11. Under Suplicy, SMRI participated in 14 city networks (Onuki and Oliveira 2013). These included National Mayors Front (FNP), Mercocities Network, Latin American Federation of Cities, Municipalities and Associations (FLACMA), Union of Ibero-American Capital Cities, Network of Local Authorities on the Information Society, International Council for Local Environment Initiatives (ICLEI), Educating Cities Network, Glocal Forum, URB-AL Program, United Cities and Local Government (UCLG), and the Metropolis Network.
12. In other Brazilian cities, URB-AL pushed municipalities to have a specific staff to deal with international relations with the European Union (EU).
13. Economic and trade promotion have not typically been an area of paradiplomacy for local governments, especially as PT governments have not had good relations with business sectors. As the economic core of Brazil, São Paulo has used instruments more common to central or mid-level governments.
14. *Partido da Frente Liberal* (PFL) became *Democratas* (DEM) in 2007. In 2011, Kassab founded the Social Democratic Party (*Partido Social Democrático*, PSD).
15. Todesco (2015) reports that *Secretaria Municipal de Relações Internacionais e Federativas* (SMRIF) is part of approximately 37 groups and city networks.
16. As one close observer commented, “[our previous mayor] basically went to cities in the US where his family company had business dealings, and used the city’s money and others who went along on those trips to create legitimacy for his own business” (Mairi Macdonald, personal communication, April 17, 2014).
17. Jews are a sizable group in Toronto, with an estimated population of some 100,000. In the 2014 election campaign, one of Tory’s major opponents (Doug Ford) was accused of sharing anti-Semitic beliefs with his brother, the former mayor.
18. In the municipal elections of October 2016, Mayor Fernando Haddad was defeated by a mayoral candidate from another party. This new mayor of São



Paulo is Joao Doria, from the Center-Right Brazilian Social Democracy Party, and a new director of SMRIF was appointed. Although the direction of paradiplomacy is still unclear, very likely, a more conservative government will result in significant changes to SMRIF.

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