

PARADIPLOMATIC INVOLVEMENT OF INDIAN STATES: SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE STATE OF ASSAM

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Abstract

Though traditionally, the federal government of nation-states had sole hold to engage in cross-border activities, in due course of time, particularly after the cold war, due to the force of globalisation and regional integration caused by complex interdependence the regional political units of sovereign states have also started to participate in issues of international relations. The trend of cross-border involvement was evident in Western nations; later in the subsequent period has also become prevalent in developing countries like India. With the help of many factors, including the formation of coalition government at the centre and the adoption of LPG (Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation), Indian states have paved the way to approach cross-border issues. Like the rest of India, under the aegis of the Union Government of India, Assam, the gateway Northeast, has also been involved in trans-border activities.

Keywords: Paradiplomacy, Coalition government, LPG, Look (Act) East Policy.

Introduction

Subnational presence on the international scene has become a fact of life in an interdependent world.

—Ivo Duchacek.

The Idea of a “nation-state” emerged following the establishment of the “Treaty of Westphalia” in 1948. Nation-state or state is regarded as the highest of all associations and possesses essential elements, including sovereignty, population, territory and government. Most states of the world are federal and unitary; some exist between the two. Though the world’s

states differ in many outlooks, they are the same in several aspects. Having a Constitution is one such similar aspect. The Constitution of most states, whether federal or unitary, entrusted some issues having cross-border concerns, such as foreign policy formulation and implementation, in the hand of the centre with varying degrees of autonomy. Hence, the involvement of federal units or sub-state actors in foreign policymaking seems odd (Sridharan, 2003). However, many such instances of sub-state actors’ influence or participation in non-domestic or foreign policy matters can be found to ensure political, economic, and socio-cultural ambitions abroad. Many scholars have considered sub-state actors’ involvement in cross-border issues as complementary and contradictory to the interest of their host country. In this world of complex interdependence in due course of time due to globalisation and regional integration, the involvement of constituent units in international affairs has become an evident phenomenon and brought a paradigm shift to the Westphalian concept of sovereign States as exclusively responsible for the conduct of diplomacy (Chatterji & Saha, 2017). As a result, many scholars have considered that the centre has lost its unitary grip over transnational issues or foreign policy formulation and implementation. Kripa Sridharan (2003) stated, “the exclusive grips of centre in this area is slowly being weakened by the activities of the units/members in federal unions. These units are variously called states, regions, provinces, lander, cantons and so on”. However, at the same time, it has also been seen that the regional political units of many countries can engage in trans-border activities only within the framework provided by their host state (Wolf, 2007). In this article, an attempt has been made to analyse the meaning and concept of Paradiplomacy, the factors behind Indian paradiplomacy and the paradiplomatic involvement of Assam within its given framework.

Meaning and concept of paradiplomacy

Though the genesis of modern diplomacy can be traced back to the city-state, their involvement in international relations cannot be termed as paradiplomacy, as the then city-states were sovereign and independent (Tavares, 2016). The modern form of international exchanges of local governments can be found in the late nineteenth century when some crown colonies under British rule, such as Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales, Queensland, Quebec, Tasmania, and Western Australia, appointed their agents to either London or Paris (Tavares, 2016). Sao Paulo, a sub-state unit of Japan, signed an international pact with Japan for the first time

on matters related to Japanese immigration into Brazil (Tavares, 2016). The emergence of transnational regimes in security, trade, human rights and other areas due to complex interdependence impacted specific issues directly coming under the jurisdiction of constituent units, which later resulted in the integration of foreign and domestic economies as well as the erosion of the division of responsibility between the federal government and sub-state units (Keating, 2013). Consequently, sub-state units got involved in cross-border engagements to promote their economy, culture, language etc. (Wolf, 2017).

Traditionally, the national governments of sovereign states were empowered with sole jurisdictions in foreign policy formulation, as the Constitutions of sovereign nation-states entrusted the sole authority to its hands (Jacob, 2016). Subsequently, in due course of time, particularly after the cold war, the growing complex interdependence among the nation-state, as well as some changes in international and domestic milieu, paved the way for sub-state units of sovereign states, popularly known as states, provinces, canton, lander etc. to involve in some trans-border activities (Sridharan, 2003). The trend or practice of involvement of sub-state actors, also known as federal units, constituent units, subnational units etc., in the process of foreign policy formulation and implementation, sometimes for its own sake or sometimes for the interest of the host nation to which it belongs is variously known as paradiplomacy, subnational diplomacy, constituent diplomacy, micro-diplomacy, federated state diplomacy, foreign policy capacity, foreign policy localisation, plurinational diplomacy, protodiplomacy, sub-state diplomacy, micro diplomacy, multilayered diplomacy, catalytic diplomacy, local diplomacy, local government external action, local foreign policy, regional diplomacy, post-diplomacy etc. (Knznetsov, 2015; Tavares, 2016). All these terms indicate the transborder involvement of non-central governments with different degrees of engagement. The factors that have paved the way for sub-state units to involve in paradiplomacy include increased regional integration, globalisation, devolution and decentralisation caused by the opportunity structure created at the regional, national, continental and global levels, different sets of motivations, including economic, cultural and political, an amalgamation of foreign and domestic issues etc. (Hazarika, 2020). Besides fulfilling own socio-cultural, political, economic etc. interest, sometimes for its own sake and sometimes for promoting central government's policies via participating in cross-border issues, impacting the centre's decision and policies concerning matters related to a foreign country, establishing diplomatic relations with nations, seeking support for independence, sending

representatives to international or regional or sub-regional organisations etc. is one of the significant reasons of sub-state units' approach to cross-border involvement (Hazarika, 2020).

Different scholars have defined the transnational engagement of regional government in many ways. For the first time, in the 1980s, Ivo Duchacek and Panayotis Soldatos used the term "Paradiplomacy" in their writing (Tavares, 2016). Regarding the term paradiplomacy, Ivo Duchacek viewed that 'Para' precisely indicates what it is all about. The word para means the parallel trans-regional or direct international activities of sub-national actors; that can support, complement, correct, and challenge nation-state diplomacy (Tavares, 2016; Kuznetsov, 2015). However, some other thinkers have critically pointed out that paradiplomacy cannot be considered complementary to mainstream diplomatic activities as the subnational government have its nature and personality (Tavares, 2016).

Similarly, trained diplomats have also critically questioned the term "diplomacy" used within paradiplomacy (Tavares, 2016). In their view, diplomacy is an instrument of statecraft carried out by diplomats, the representatives of sovereign states in the international arena (Tavares, 2016). Ivo Duchacek, in his article 'The international dimension of sub-national self-governments', used the term micro diplomacy to indicate the external involvement of regional government or regional diplomacy (Kuznetsov, 2015). He also defined the term proto diplomacy, which describes the initiatives and activities of non-central governments abroad that have more or less separatist messages (Kuznetsov, 2015). Then John Kincaid used the term 'constituent government,' which indicates states, provinces, cantons, landers, and republics (Kuznetsov, 2015). The term 'constituent' gives a clearer view of the actor performing trans-regional activities (Kuznetsov, 2015). Kincaid distinguishes constituent diplomacy from subnational diplomacy and paradiplomacy based on the degree of autonomy involved in international issues (Rob Jenkins, 2003). He preferred the term constituent diplomacy over subnational and paradiplomacy as it bypasses the need to label the international activities of constituent states as inferior, ancillary or subsidiary to that of the Centre or Union (Asthana & Jacob, 2017). The term paradiplomacy can be understood as the involvement of sub-state units, belongs to whether the federal or unitary country, in the issues having cross-border implications for promoting their own as well as the centre's policy within the parameter set by their host government (Chatterji & Saha, 2017). Besides, the term "paradiplomacy"

will be primarily used for the present study as the cross-border involvement of states in India is not independent; instead, it takes place within the framework given by the country's party dynamics. The paradiplomacy of constituent units of different countries was studied under federal literature to analyse the impact of Paradiplomacy on federalism and intergovernmental relations rather than on paradiplomacy as a new political phenomenon (Jha, 2014). Later the study of paradiplomacy in the literature on Foreign policy and International Relations also became evident (Sridharan, 2003). Though the regional political units are neither legitimate international actors nor the involvement of states and local governments are constitutionally valid, their importance in cross-border matters cannot be ignored (Jha, 2014).

To understand the paradiplomatic involvement of Indian states, it is reasonably necessary to have a basic understanding of the political and the financial system of India along with the devolution of political and financial power of the centre with the emergence of the coalition at the centre and the adoption of Economic Liberalisation Policy by 1991. In the next part of the article, an attempt has been made to analyse the party dynamics in India and the enhanced financial autonomy of regional political entities after the adoption of LPG.

Paradiplomacy in the context of political and financial system of India

The Republic of India has adopted the Parliamentary system rather than a presidential one, following specific contextual elements of the State. India's parliamentary system consists of both federal and unitary elements. Before partition, the Constitution Assembly favoured the adoption of the mainstream or decentralised model of federalism in India (Tillin, 2019). However, after the independence, despite being a country with such diversity, the Constitution Assembly of India had proposed to entrust significant subjects, including foreign policy, defence, communication etc., in the hands of the Union government of India along with the residuary power to ensure country's unity and integrity or to restrain the country from breaking up in the future (Arora, 2007).

The Indian model of federalism has been referred to as a quasi-federal or diminished version of an existing model due to the lack of autonomy enjoyed by the regional government of India in comparison to the provincial government of mainstream federal structures such as the USA, Switzerland, Australia, and Canada (Arora, 2007). However, the Indian version of

federalism is neither derived nor diminished; instead, it is original, novel, and distinct in itself, with a centralised model and a reasonable level of interdependence between the federal government and the states, including the provision of Constitutional amendment to address issues related to the accommodation of diversity (Tillin, 2019). The Constituent Assembly of India divided the Indian federal system primarily into two levels of government, namely the Central and State governments, to demarcate their respective jurisdictions and to carry out their entrusted roles under the protection and supervision of the Constitution and Supreme Court of India (Tillin, 2019). Due to its adaptability, unlike the mainstream federal structure, the Indian kind of federalism could be transformed from unitary to federal and vice versa depending on the needs and opportunities of any circumstance (Tillin, 2019). Hence, 'flexibility' is considered a unique and salient feature of the Indian federal structure. Therefore in most cases, it has been seen that in normal times the Indian federal system functions as federal while becoming unitary to resist unwanted changes (Tillin, 2019). Besides, the base or element for intergovernmental collaboration and cooperative federalism has been incorporated in the Indian Constitution since its formation, though the term 'federal' is absent (Tillin, 2019). Hence, the "Indian version of federalism" is the consequences of the context and the circumstances that existed during the time of the adoption of the Indian Constitution, most notably the continental size of India, which necessitates the sharing of decision-making rights, the occurrence of partition of India, the vision of the political elites of India, influence of other constitutions, the impact of Government of India Act, 1935, the goal for state-led industrialisation, social integration and rehabilitation of refugees from Pakistan (Khan, 2003; Arora, 2007).

The division of political power between the Centre and states in India is asymmetrical in different ways. The division of political power between the centre and states in India is asymmetrical in different ways. This asymmetry includes the allocation of inferior status to Rajya Sabha, the provision of enhancing the centre's jurisdiction under articles 249 and 312, power of the centre to alter the existing boundaries of Indian states without having any approval from the state(s) concerned, provision of discretionary power of the governor etc. Along with these, the legislative power between the centre and states is divided under Article 246 into three lists, i.e., Union, State and concurrent (Maini, 2014). Among all the three lists, the Union list of India includes certain major subjects of India, such as Defence; Foreign Affairs; atomic energy; Diplomatic, consular and trade representation;

Participation in international conferences, associations and other bodies and implementation of decisions made thereat; Entering into treaties and agreements with foreign countries and implementing of treaties, agreements and conventions with foreign countries; War and peace; Foreign jurisdiction; Maritime shipping and navigation; Trade and commerce with foreign countries; import and export across customs frontiers; Taxation Powers and Financial Resources etc. (Jha, 1999). On the other hand, the state list includes the subjects like public order, police; local government; Public health and sanitation; hospitals and dispensaries, communications, agriculture, water; land; Fisheries etc. (Seventh schedule, Ministry of External Affairs). Finally, the concurrent list empowers the Centre and state to make legislation on the subjects like Criminal procedure; criminal law; Marriage and divorce; Transfer of property other than agricultural land; Bankruptcy and insolvency; Economic and social planning; industrial and labour disputes; Social security and social insurance; employment and unemployment; Education etc. (Seventh schedule, Ministry Of External Affairs). Nevertheless, whenever there is any conflict over the laws on the Concurrent List, the centre prevails (Tillin, 2019). Moreover, the Union government of India is given residuary power under Article 248 (Asthana & Jacob, 2017). It has granted the centre the sole authority to enact laws on any subject not included by the Concurrent List or State List (Indian Const. article. 248). Besides, the Article 253 of Indian Constitution ensure the legislative power of Parliament's to effect international agreements (Indian Const. art. 253).

The Constitution has also divided financial authority between the federal government and states by placing significant taxes in the hands of the federal government, such as taxes on income and wealth derived from non-agricultural sources, cooperation taxes, taxes on production, and customs duties, while putting less significant taxes in the hands of the states, such as sales taxes, state excises, and stamp and registration fees, which are insufficient to cover state expenditures and responsibilities (Tillin, 2019). As a result, the centre gives funds to states as per the advice of the finance commission (Jha, 2019). Moreover, central ministries can also provide grants directly to states either as "central sector projects" or as "centrally sponsored schemes" (Phukon, 2021). Besides, almost all the subjects of the state list have a direct or indirect connection with the subject 'Economic and social planning; therefore, the Inclusion of the respective subject in the concurrent list ultimately helps the centre to control states' acts on the subject (Phukon, 2021). The centralised financial federalism that prevails in India causes the

dependence of regional political units on the Union government of India for financial assistance, even to implement those programmes and policies entirely entrusted to the hands of states. Moreover, because of financial centralisation during pre liberalised era, industrial development and investment in Indian states depended on the political consideration of the then Central Government of India (Jha,2014). The centre determined the places for establishing public and private sector units without following any objective criteria (Jha, 2019). Similarly, during single-party domination, the states with the same party government received more discretionary grants than those ruled by opposition parties (Sharma & Sweden, 2017).

However, later, the formation of a coalition government at the centre with the help of regional parties and the adoption of Economic Liberalisation Policy resulted in the devolution of political and financial power, particularly during the coalition era. For the first time, the regional parties stepped into the centre's coalition, during the Janata alliance in 1989 (Jaganathan, 2019). In the year 1998, the NDA-led coalition government with regional parties from the south and east India came into power only for a few days and then by the year 1999 NDA led BJP ruled until the expiration of its full term (Tillin, 2019). Then, from 2004, the UPA alliance was continuously in power for ten years with the help of a regional alliance (Khan, 2003). The weakness of national parties and the share owned by regional parties in decision-making processes provide a fertile ground for the regional parties to influence the decision-making process of the Centre (Pattanaik, 2014). Later, the multi-party presence at the centre via coalition alliance replaced the trend of one-party domination in India (Jaganathan, 2019). Besides, the dependence of coalition alliances headed by national parties on the consensus and support of regional political parties has made the regional parties proactive and politically vocal in domestic and external matters (Jaskolska, 2021). Hence, though formally, the national parties of India had a stronghold over the centre and the states of India, they had started to lose their majority hold, particularly from 1989, due to the active presence of regional parties both in the centre and states (Mehra, 2013).

Moreover, the devolution of financial power became evident in India with the adoption of the Economic Liberalisation Policy in 1991 during the tenure of the Narshimha Rao government (Basu, 2016). Following the adoption of LPG, the centre's discretionary authority over industrial licensing has terminated (Jha, 2019). Additionally, states have progressively begun to assume a strategic position in a market-driven economy, which ultimately caused the transformation of a command economy to a market economy (Tillin, 2019).

The regionalisation of power ended with the victory of NDA led BJP (Arora & Kailash, 2021; Sweden & Sharma, 2017). Despite being the single largest party, the BJP, led by the NDA, has a different perspective on state involvement in foreign policy than the previous one-party government at the central level. It has encouraged states to participate in foreign policy formulation (Bywalec, 2018). The implementation of cooperative federal practices and its promotion of competitiveness among the regional political entities show the emphasis given by the single-party majority government over states. However, at the same time, partial treatment of the BJP government towards states regarding their presence in foreign policy issues is also prevalent.

Factors behind Indian Paradiplomacy

The trend of sub-state actors' involvement in foreign policy formulation was formally evident in the West. However, later due to globalisation and regional integration, the practice of sub-national diplomacy also became prominent in developing countries like India (Sridharan, 2003). Besides, the autonomy of sub-state actors' involvement in cross-border engagement depends on the political system of the State, whether federal or unitary, the pattern of distribution of power between centre and units, the presence of well-demarcated or disputed border, the presence of ethnic similarities with foreign states etc. (Chatterji & Saha, 2017). In the era of globalisation, interdependence has become an inevitable characteristic of every nation, irrespective of its ideology and forms of government. Such interdependence made the force of paradiplomacy also blatant in developing countries like India (Kripa Sridharan, 2002). The Constitution of India has also authorised the union government with absolute power in foreign affairs (Stefy V Joseph 2016). However, due to external factors like globalisation and changes in the country's internal political and financial milieu, India's central government cannot ignore the cross-border concerns of its regional units despite having sole authority on matters of international transactions and foreign affairs.

The inclusion of regional political parties in the Centre's coalition has paved the way for Indian states to participate in the decision-making process of domestic and non-domestic issues of the Centre. The rise of regionalism in states and the establishment of a coalition government at the national level have fundamentally altered India's political landscape (Khan, 2003). During the phase of coalition politics, the consideration of states' consensus became

important not only in internal but also on external issues (Blarel & Willigen, 2021). The longevity of the coalition government depends entirely on the consent and support of each party that is part of the coalition alliance (Mehra, 2013). The regional political parties have realised the importance of their presence in the coalition government for the continuity of the government. In such circumstances, states' bargaining power has begun to increase, and the regional parties have started raising their voices on every issue related to their interest, including foreign policy formulation and implementation, which later enabled them to engage in the issues of cross-border relevance (Tewari, 2017; Sridharan, 2003). For instances, due to the strong opposition from the state government of West Bengal under the leadership of Mamata Banerjee, the Teesta River Water Agreement was dropped in 2011 to conclude, despite having a consensus between the federal government of India and Bangladesh to conclude the concerned treaty (Hazarika, 2020). It became possible for the TMC government of West Bengal to go against the centre's decision, as it had a secured amount of seats in the then UPA alliance.

Adopting the Economic Liberalisation policy has also allowed Indian states to participate in trans-border commercial policy creation, execution, and evaluation (Rudolph & Rudolph, 2001). Following the LPG Policy in 1991, the Central Government of India retreated from supporting welfare programs (Tillin, 2019). As a result, assistance from the central government became insufficient for the states of India to attain their infrastructure development which is essential for the benefit of the market economy (Tewari, 2017). In addition, India's states cannot borrow money independently (Sridharan, 2003). As a result, Indian states have faced opportunities and problems: reduced Centre's aid and access to the global market. Hence, to reap the benefit posed by the economic Liberalisation Policy and overcome the challenges that arose due to the reduction in the Centre's funds, the regional political units have decided to be directly involved in commercial diplomacy, which later resulted in the commercial paradiplomacy in India. As part of commercial paradiplomacy, the states of India have begun to adopt many trans-border initiatives, including organising investor summits, travelling abroad to attract FDIs, raising loans from external financial agencies such as ADB, WB etc., participating in world economic forums, and adopting different initiatives for overseas diaspora in pursuit of remittance from foreign investors.

The geographical existence, socio-cultural, historical, racial, economic, linguistic, etc., and proximity that the Indian border states share across the border, have also placed them in an advantageous position in foreign policy

formulation. Moreover, any cross-border decision of the Union Government of India concerning its neighbouring countries would definitely impact the interest of its border states (Pattanaik, 2014). Besides, the border regions also possess first-hand experience and information on many cross-border issues (Pattanaik, 2014). Along with these, due to the growing complex interdependence and regional integration, the border region of India has also been suffering from many issues, including illegal immigration, smuggling of drugs and weapons, informal cross-border trade, trafficking of children and women etc., which could have a severe impact on the economic stability and the security of the region. As a result, due to the presence of all such circumstances Government of India has begun to emphasise the concerns of its border regions in case of dealing with respective neighbouring countries. Taking the concerns of west Bengal and the Northeastern states of India during the conclusion of the Land Boundary Agreement in 2015 is one such instance which indicates the importance of including border states during the process of foreign policy formulation concerning the respective neighbour (Hazarika, 2020).

Encouragement from the Centre can also be considered another vital factor of paradiplomacy in India. The Central government of India has also been encouraging the states of India to participate in trans-border issues from time to time (Maini, 2017). For many a time, Chief Minister and state-based non-state actors accompanied Prime Minister and other Union ministers abroad (Jacob, 2016). The single majority party government under the leadership of Modi has been upholding cooperative and competitive federalism, thereby consistently supporting increased states' involvement in trade and FDIs (Maini, 2017). Besides, the Union government, under the leadership of Modi, created the State Division of the Ministry of External Affairs in 2014 to institutionalise the role of states in foreign policy (Lok Sabha Unstarred question No. 2970, 11.05.2016).

Paradiplomacy in Assam

In the past, Northeastern region was considered as the most globally connected region India (Kokho, 2022). It was closely linked to Bhutan, Bangladesh, China, and ASEAN countries (Hazarika, 2022). Assam (Presently, North East India) has a long history of trade internationalisation with a high level of openness; as, along with West and different parts of India; Assam had trans-border trade connectivity during the Ahom era with neighbouring nations like China, Burma, Bhutan, and Tibet through various passes of the Eastern Himalayas as well as via sea routes to meet the domestic

requirements (Gogoi, 2020). Later, during British colonisation, the Northeast got separated from Myanmar, and then the then independent kingdoms of the Northeast were included in the Indian Union in the post-independent period. Further, without considering its closer proximity to its neighbouring countries, all forms of cross-border connections in the region gradually halted in the name of security concerns (Bhaumik, 2014). As a result, the ever-accessible Northeast shifted to a landlocked one that had further severely impacted the region's overall development (Gogoi, 2020).

Paradiplomacy has also become evident in the state of Assam. Like the rest of India, Assam has also been actively involving in paradiplomatic activities. Following the end of the cold war and the adoption of LPG, India has shifted its focus to its eastern neighbours or ASEAN members by adopting the Look East policy (Act East Policy) to harness the economic opportunities offered by the ASEAN and to counter the expanding influence of China in the region (Majumdar, 2018). Most of the literature makes it evident that previous New Delhi governments deliberately forbade themselves from implementing any plans or initiatives for the improvement of the North East region because of the threats from China; thus, it is evident that the North Eastern Region, including Assam, is falling behind in several development indicators due to New Delhi's negligence (Borah, 2019). However, unlike the previous aggressive measures taken in the Northeast, New Delhi began to implement economic and infrastructure development projects with the introduction of LEP, through which the Government of India started to emphasise on Cross border connectivity of the North Eastern Region, including Assam, to restore transboundary social and economic integration (Osada, 2022). In the context of LEP, the geographical existence of India's Northeast became vital, as it shares a land border with one of the ASEAN members, i.e. Myanmar. The Union government of India has decided to connect Southeast Asia through land routes via the Northeast of India. New Delhi made developing the North East a top priority to deepening its relationships with ASEAN and East Asian nations like Japan (Borah, 2019). Subsequently, under the initiative of Act East Policy, India started to adopt several unilateral or multilateral initiatives with its eastern neighbour in different sectors, including infrastructure, education, agriculture, communication, transportation, trade & commerce, culture etc. (Toppo, 2016). Moreover, India has adopted several connectivity projects in collaboration with many ASEAN countries and Japan to reconnect the Northeast, including Assam to Bangladesh, Bhutan, ASEAN and Japan via road, sea and air (Borah, 2019). Besides, the geographical existence of Assam has also become vital in the context of the

sub-regional initiatives to which India is a member (Pattanaiik, 2016). India has shifted its focus from regionalism to sub-regionalism and adopted many unilateral, bilateral and multilateral initiatives in several sectors such as energy, tourism, infrastructure, transportation, trade and commerce etc., so that it can build closer relations with its neighbouring nations which would be beneficial for national as well as regional interest (Kumar, 2016). Therefore, in the context of Assam, the developmental model created by the centre's foreign policy i.e. the Look (Act) East Policy is the major reason behind its cross-border involvement in foreign policy making. Moreover, the Northeastern states are surrounded by foreign countries like China, Myanmar, Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh, where Assam shares its boundary with Bangladesh and Bhutan (Hazarika, 2022). Hence, Assam became crucial to India's economic and strategic concerns because of its location and the long history of cross-border economic and cultural exchange with its eastern neighbours (Majumdar, 2018). The success of India's Act East policy (Act East Policy) is firmly dependent on the active involvement of Assam as well as other states of North East India. Besides, Assam, as a border state, is in a favourable position to deal with border issues because of its geographical contiguity and socio-cultural, economic, ethno linguistic, historical, etc., linkages across the border (Hazarika, 2022). Along with these, as a border state of Assam has also been suffering from the problems like illegal immigration, smuggling of drugs and arms, kidnapping, extortion, insurgency etc., which can only be solved via diplomatic negotiations with neighbouring countries in which the concerns of Assam also become important (Bhaumik, 2014). Besides, the changing of India's security-centric approach, the emergence of the Northeast as a transit country, and India's successful diplomacy to ensure connectivity between the Northeast states of India and its neighbours have also provided a fertile ground for Assam to engage in trans-border activities (Borah, 2019). Hence, in such background Assam's paradiplomatic engagement has been developing, and the state government of Assam has been actively participating in this regard by constructing its own mechanism to address its cross-border issues, under the guidance of the Central government of India. Additionally, Assam's effective paradiplomatic engagement will positively impact India's relations with its eastern neighbours including Japan.

Moreover, the development deficit is one of the significant constraints in the Northeast. Besides, the region's infrastructural development is essential to ensure cross-border connectivity (Gogoi, 2020). On the other hand, scarcity of finance on the part of the Union and states has made the problem of

development deficit more severe. Consequently, the Union government of India has encouraged the states to approach foreign investments. Therefore, the foreign policy-driven developmental model is the primary factor behind NE states' paradiplomacy.

The state administration of Assam has been making the best efforts possible given the constrained framework New Delhi has provided. The Government of Assam established the Act East Policy Affairs Department on May 22, 2017, to promote the centre's Act (Look) East Policy by connecting the region with South East Asia (Hindustan Times, 2017). With the establishment of this department, Assam became the first state to institutionalise its participation in foreign policy making and strengthen its cross-border engagement with State, sub-state, and non-state actors of different parts of the world. The department has been preparing for the timely implementation of policies and programmes taken under the Act East Policy and facilitating an environment for investment and rapid industrialisation in the state (AEAD, Government of Assam). Assam shares ties to South Asia, South East Asia, and East Asian nations like Japan in terms of geography, culture, tradition, ethnicity, religion etc., from the pre-colonial period. As a result, it is clear that including Assam's legitimate interests will allow India to pursue an effective neighbourhood strategy as well as New Delhi's Act East Policy. Thus, for Assam the adoption of LPG, geographical existence and the Act (Look) East Policy provide a base for Assam to restore its pre-historic relations with its neighbouring countries. Assam has been engaging in cross-border activities with countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Japan, and member States of ASEAN to revive its traditional political, economic, and cultural relations.

Conclusion

In Indian context, the paradiplomatic involvement of Indian states has both positive and negative consequences towards the overall interest of the country. Though, during the time of coalition era, in some cases the then Central government of India was bound to act in accordance of the interest of states that to protect its political interest but at the same time in many other cases more particularly during the single majority government the states of India are able to act only within the given framework. Thus, the degree of Indian states' engagement in foreign policy formulation is depending on party dynamics to a large extend. Moreover, states' involvement in cross-border activities is also depends on party politics. Many a times, it has been seen that, the central government of India restrains the foreign visits of Chief

Ministers from opposition or other political parties. Moreover, in some other cases, the trans-border involvement of regional political units in India is encouraged by the central government probably due to the linkages of the fulfillment of the overall interest of India and the cross-border involvement of the respective state. Hence, in India the paradiplomatic involvement of Indian states to a large extent depends on the interest of the Union government of India. However, the legitimate interest of states needs to be considered during the time of foreign policy formulation and execution.

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PERSONALITY AND NEGOTIATIONS: A STUDY OF ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE AND PERVEZ MUSHARRAF AND AGRA TALKS

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As an individual's motive may change or may not change the state's status quo position, the individual's cognition decides whether an individual leader is inclined towards war or peaceful negotiation. Thirdly, personal traits involving behavioural aspects like a bellicose or peaceful individual and delusional elements such as the grandiose vision of leaders shape other states' behaviour. Also, the leader's ambitions and objectives alter or destabilise the international system. Lastly, the social context of actors influences the negotiation process. The above discussions entail the imposing role of personality on negotiation and diplomacy; in this context, the paper has explored it theoretically. The paper has examined the role of personality in negotiation by taking one case each from India and Pakistan. It will analyse the individual characteristics of Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Pervez Musharraf and their impact on the diplomatic process involving peace and conflict by examining the Agra talks in 2001.

Personality and Negotiation: Theoretical Discussions

Understanding various dimensions of personality has been done in recent times and in different ages where several philosophers and thinkers have investigated and dwelled on human behaviour. Their quests have been wider than investigating to understand personality and its characteristics. Their reflections pertain to the tensions between society and individuals; added to it, their apprehension was to bring ideal constructs to resolve all tensions. In this regard, Plato's ideas of individual qualities based on different attributes such as reason, courage, and appetite explain the corresponding composition of society based upon differentiation of needs where the king represents courage, the philosopher consists of reason, and merchants dwell on appetite (Plato 1969). In the same period, ancient Indian philosopher Kautilya talked of several characteristics attributing a king to success or failure (Saran 2017:12).