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The Paradiplomacy of India's Chief Ministers

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Abstract: Since the mid-1990s states governments within India's federal system have taken a greater interest in foreign relations. They have sought indirect influence, by lobbying the central government to take account of their preferences, and direct influence by seeking investment, making links with international organisations, other national and subnational governments. This article considers how chief ministers engage in parallel diplomacy noting how they draw on regional cultural resources and make connections with a regionally defined diaspora. The article finds that some chief ministers have embraced the role of 'chief diplomat' while others take a more discreet approach to international activity. Comparing the cases of Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu reveals the political logic for expanding, de-emphasising or avoiding international engagement.

Key words: Paradiplomacy, India, Chandrababu Naidu, Foreign Direct Investment, diaspora, culture, federalism

Introduction

Since the mid-1990s Indian states have sought more influence in foreign policy-making. This has partly been indirect with state governments putting pressure on the central government to take account of their preferences. The weakness of national parties between 1989 and 2014, and the place of regional parties in national coalitions emboldened state leaders to make demands on the centre (Kailash 2011). Economic changes encouraged state governments to participate directly in India's foreign relations by making links with international organisations, other national and subnational governments. State governments have also engaged with overseas companies in pursuit of foreign direct investment (FDI). State governments began to take more of an interest in their overseas diaspora. In the midst of these developments India's chief ministers have been challenged to take up the role of 'chief diplomat' for their states. In this article I map the international activity of a sample of chief ministers. I identify their diplomatic styles and seek explanations for those variations.

The significance of subnational diplomacy has been debated in the literature with some authors seeing it as complementary to conventional national diplomacy. Others argue that subnational activity can conflict with national diplomacy and produce more fragmented outcomes. Duchacek (1984) drew attention to the contribution made by subnational governments to international politics, an activity he termed 'micro-diplomacy'. He suggested subnational governments in border regions would be particularly keen to engage with the authorities of contiguous regions on the other side of the border but he also explored interactions between units that did not share a border, which he termed 'global micro-diplomacy' (1984, 13-14). Soldatos (1990) presented a schema of the external activity of subnational units. He used the term 'paradiplomacy' (which is an abbreviation of the longer phrase 'parallel diplomacy') and considered the extent to which subnational diplomacy might diverge from national initiatives. His judgement was that for the most part subnational actors dealt with mundane issues (or 'low-politics') which limited the potential for conflict between different levels of government (Soldatos 1990, 49). Kincaid (1990) used the term

‘constituent diplomacy’ to refer to the ‘international activities undertaken by the constituent governments’ (1990, 54). These constituent governments included municipalities and the provincial governments in a federal system. He argued that the content of this diplomacy could be significant and bring subnational units into competition and conflict with their own national government (ibid, 55). In this article I have tended to use the term paradiplomacy as most of the subnational diplomacy I have reviewed does not come into conflict with national policy making. If anything the conflict runs the other way. National foreign policy is not always consistent with the objectives of state governments.

The institutions of the Indian state discourage subnational diplomacy, though as we shall see below there has been a recent shift in the official discourse. The Indian constitution does not give the states a defined role in foreign relations. The union executive has the main responsibility in this area with a subordinate role for parliament. The executive can make treaties without parliamentary approval, though parliament has the power to pass any legislation needed to implement a treaty (Saxena 2007, 25-6). There is also a lack of consultative mechanisms allowing states to raise concerns on foreign policy matters with the central government (Saxena 2007, 28). When state governments engage in diplomacy they do so informally (Mattoo & Jacob 2009, 176-177). The centre can also guide and constrain the activity of state governments. Chief ministers and other members of state cabinets are expected to keep the Cabinet Secretariat and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) ‘informed’ of any overseas travel plans, and they are required to get ‘political clearance’ (Government of India 2014). Members of parliament and state legislators are expected to get the permission of the central government if they wish to visit the United Nations (*The Hindu* 2012). The requirement to liaise with the MEA means that trips can be vetoed. The chief minister of Bihar, Nitish Kumar, has been denied permission to travel to Nepal by both the UPA government (in 2008 and 2010) and by the NDA (in 2015) (*Times of India* 2015). Furthermore when travelling overseas chief ministers are expected to stay away from issues which might be controversial or impinge on the centre’s interests in national security.¹ A further constraint on subnational diplomacy is a common assumption that overseas travel by politicians is frivolous or wasteful.² Even so in recent years most state governments in India have expanded their external relations. While the centre has reservations about the consequences of an enlarged foreign role for the states their potential contribution has not been completely overlooked. Some of the concerns of chief ministers in the border states have been recognised and several prime ministers have taken regional leaders with them on visits to adjacent states in South Asia.

Institutional modifications have been made recently, with the formation of the States Division of the Ministry of External Affairs in October 2014. The division is supposed to foster ‘the principle of cooperative federalism and aims to facilitate and deepen the external linkages of the States/Union Territories.’ (MEA 2016, p. 181) This followed up on Narendra Modi’s argument made prior to the 2014 election, that the states needed to be more involved in the making of foreign policy (Jacob, 2016, 3). However the consequences of the changes since 2014 have been limited. As Jacob concludes ‘the thinking within the government regarding cooperative federalism on the foreign policy front is persuaded by economic development and investment promotion rather than strategic or hard security concerns.’ (ibid, 16) Restrictions, such as those on posting staff abroad, remain in place on state governments and the mechanisms for consulting and briefing states remain weak. (ibid, 17)

The academic literature on the subnational diplomacy of the Indian states addresses two major themes. Firstly, the significance of subnational diplomacy is assessed and debated (Jenkins 2003, Mattoo & Jacob 2009, Plagemann & Destradi 2015, Sridharan 2003). Assessments of subnational paradiplomacy often take a view from the centre, considering, for example, the implications of regional interventions for the coherence of Indian foreign policy (Mazumdar 2011, 173-5, Staniland & Narang 2015, 209-10), whereas the political imperatives at the state level are subject to less scrutiny. Secondly, several writers have identified causal factors that explain the intensity of diplomatic activity. The intensification of subnational diplomacy is frequently explained with reference to the causal factors of economic change and party system change (with the associated turn towards coalition politics) (Sridharan 2003, 468). Mattoo and Jacob identified four factors that *make possible* the growing participation of state governments in the conduct of Indian foreign policy: the special status of some states (especially Jammu and Kashmir), the ‘political weight’ of a leader, the presence of regional parties in national coalitions, and economic liberalisation (2009, 185). The border states are likely to want strong links with the authorities on the other side of international borders. Issues of concern include local trade, immigration, policing the border, smuggling, river waters, communication links, and cross-border cultural ties (Pattanaik 2014, 39-42). The larger questions of security and territorial integrity are also a concern for border states (Maini 2014, 2). Of the 29 states in the Indian union 18 have an international border if we include Tamil Nadu which, while it does not have a land border, has many of the concerns of conventional border states.³ In a focused paper on three states Maini (2014) sought to explain the latitude given by the centre to border states engaged in subnational diplomacy. In particular he asked whether partisan differences between the centre and the state limit the diplomatic ambitions of state level leaders (Maini, 2014: 8). The incorporation of cultural themes in subnational diplomacy has been well-noted (Maini 2014, 15; Pattanaik 2014, 37-8). To these causal factors I would add that there is a ‘pull factor’ whereby overseas governments consider it worthwhile engaging with state governments for political and economic reasons.⁴ While these explanatory explorations are very important for the understanding of subnational diplomacy in India, explaining the intensity of paradiplomacy is not the main focus of my article. My objective is to assess variations in commitment to paradiplomacy and to link the different practices of paradiplomacy to the political strategies of regional leaders. I am keen to unpack what motivates regional leaders as they take up, or avoid, foreign engagements.

Paradiplomacy is an area in which individual agency and the personal preferences of political leaders can be significant (Keating 2000, 8). McMillan’s (2012) study of state governors in the United States (US) gives further insight into how personal interests might influence diplomatic activity. His study pays particular attention to the ways in which governors seek out investment and export markets, becoming the ‘chief economic ambassadors’ for their states. New incumbents may neglect the international work of their predecessors. He also finds that longevity in office gives a governor time to develop their international activity. Finally a governor’s career path, which might include prior experience in national politics or an ambition to seek national office, can encourage an international outlook (McMillan 2012, 127-8, 192, 195-6). In the case of India Mattoo and Jacob argue that the ‘political weight’ of regional leaders enables them to influence national policy making; a point they illustrate with reference to the cases of Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, and Tamil Nadu (2009, 183). This

article takes this valuable insight further, elaborating on the diplomatic styles adopted by different chief ministers and assessing their motivation for foreign engagements. As prelude to this larger discussion it is helpful to consider how paradiplomacy sits in relation to the wider topic of diplomacy.

Berridge defines diplomacy as activity that enables 'states to secure the objectives of their foreign policies without resort to force, propaganda, or law.' He adds that diplomacy is likely to involve 'communication between officials... gathering information, clarifying intentions, and engendering goodwill' (2002, 1). Cooper et al (2013) make a distinction between the making of foreign policy and the implementation of that policy by diplomatic activity. Cross (2008) notes a divide in the literature between those, such as Putnam (1988), who concentrate on bargaining and others who emphasise that negotiations between diplomats are facilitated by interactions over long periods of time. Putnam argues that diplomacy is conditioned by domestic considerations. He argues that international negotiations are complex and require a leader to persuade other negotiators as well as a domestic audience of the merits of an agreement. In other words diplomacy involves playing a two-level game; this game may involve dissimulation about a negotiator's objectives (1988, 429, 433-4).

Putnam's approach has echoes in the literature on economic reform in India. Jenkins comments on the political risks of introducing economic reform and argues that one response is to introduce reforms by stealth (1999, 107-8, 189-90). Kennedy observes that individual states have taken up reforms to a greater or lesser extent since 1991 with the objective of promoting economic growth. She looked in detail at the two cases of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu noted a great deal of overlap in the substance of policy but a wide divergence in the 'discursive framing of [the] response to liberalization' (p.30). Chief Minister Naidu was keen to back reform, whereas the regional parties in Tamil Nadu avoided 'wherever possible taking a public stand in support of market reform' (44), resulting in the curious situation whereby 'Andhra Pradesh's government does *less* than it announces, Tamil Nadu's does *more*.' (46). Seeking to explain this Kennedy argues that the narrative used to promote reform is modulated as political leaders balance the interests of different groups. The Government of Andhra Pradesh was more concerned to signal its pro-reform intentions to external investors and domestic elites whereas ruling parties in Tamil Nadu were more concerned not to alienate poorer voters (52-3). Such rhetorical strategies resemble a two-level game whereby chief ministers set an economic trajectory and try not to alienate different interests. I argue in this article that chief ministers engage in a version of the two level game in their paradiplomacy. Their diplomacy involves an element of rhetoric and performance as they signal different audiences.

The paradiplomacy of chief ministers needs to be placed in political context. Chief ministers hold significant responsibilities in the Indian federal system of government. Yet their political survival is not guaranteed if they do not use the advantages of office skilfully (Manor 1995, 49-50). Chief ministers, who are often also party leaders, respond to the competition from opponents and seek to shift the pattern of political competition to their advantage (Wyatt 2015a, 167-8). The post-1991 economic reforms were a potential threat to state leaders and where necessary they adjusted their political strategies to account for these changes. Chief ministers faced fiscal difficulties as the centre changed the rules for allocating resources and responsibilities, encouraging them to seek out FDI to strengthen their state economies

(Rudolph & Rudolph 2001, 1543-4). However they also gained new opportunities for rent seeking and raising party funds (Jenkins 1999, 133-6).

I have looked in detail at the three cases of Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu. In addition, I reference Narendra Modi's diplomatic activity as Chief Minister of Gujarat in the conclusion. Tamil Nadu is in many ways a border state, though it throws up insights on issues not directly connected to borders. The other two cases, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala, do not have international borders. The cases of Tamil Nadu and Kerala provide opportunities for comparisons within case as two different chief ministers from two different parties held power during the period analysed. I have reviewed a wide range of press reports and official documents to get a sense of how each chief minister has approached the task of paradiplomacy. Some chief ministers have confined themselves to a narrow range of activities such as receiving overseas visitors, lobbying the central government and hosting occasional investment summits. Others have been more proactive: soliciting cooperation, making personal contact with the diaspora, travelling overseas and hosting regular investment summits.

The article is organised as follows. The next section of the article reviews the ways in which Chandrababu Naidu has guided the subnational diplomacy of Andhra Pradesh with particular emphasis on the period since May 2014. Naidu is a useful case to begin with. The scale and scope of his diplomatic activity indicate what is possible for an Indian chief minister to do.⁵ Naidu's diplomatic career reveals themes, such as the links with business and strategies for political survival that can be explored in other cases. The second section of the article compares the different approaches taken by the chief ministers of Kerala between 2006 and 2016. The third section explores the diplomacy of the chief ministers of Tamil Nadu. The analysis outlined is drawn together in the final section of the article.

Andhra Pradesh, Chandrababu Naidu since 2014

Chandrababu Naidu caught media and academic attention by taking early advantage of changes in India's liberalising economy to seek out resources from international investors and aid donors for his home state of Andhra Pradesh (Rudolph & Rudolph 2001, 1542). During his first period as chief minister between 1995 and 2004 he was renowned for having button holed Bill Gates and Bill Clinton, getting both to visit Hyderabad. He was a regular visitor to the World Economic Forum at Davos, making six visits between 1995 and 2002 (*New York Times* 2002). He also secured a large amount of funding and loans from external donors including the World Bank.⁶ Naidu hosted numerous conferences and attended other events to draw investors towards Andhra Pradesh. Naidu's first period in office was brought to an end in 2004 by an opposition coalition headed by the Congress Party that heavily criticised his image as a reformer (Suri 2004, 5495).

Naidu returned to office as chief minister of Andhra Pradesh after his party, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) won the 2014 assembly elections. He resumed his role as a promoter of his state as an investment destination. This has included extensive diplomatic outreach. The creation of the new state of Telangana resulted in a smaller Andhra Pradesh but gave Naidu an opportunity to establish a new state capital, Amaravati. Naidu is using this green field development to leverage investment into the state. Using Government of Singapore planners to draw up the master plan has given him reason to make four trips there. Naidu has also

visited Japan, United Kingdom and China seeking investors and finance for the city project. Naidu participated in the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2015 and, on his tenth visit to the forum in 2016, he stopped off in Zurich to meet potential investors (*Business Standard* 2015; *The Hindu* 2016). Naidu's son, Nara Lokesh undertook an unofficial tour of the United States in May 2015 to seek investment and rally support for the TDP among the Telugu diaspora (*Firstpost* 2015).

Following Rudolph & Rudolph (2001) it would be apt to categorise Naidu's diplomatic style as *entrepreneurial*. In his first nine year in office he was willing to innovate and break with convention, and leveraged his powerful position in national politics to develop contacts with international leaders and the World Bank. Naidu's diplomacy is strongly connected to an economic strategy for Andhra Pradesh, with an emphasis on the modern service sector (Mooij 2007, 38-9), and he does not take up 'political' issues in the same way that other chief ministers have. Naidu's economic diplomacy fits well with the business elite of Andhra Pradesh. The TDP is well connected to the dominant castes in the state. These groups are in a process of transition from agriculture into other entrepreneurial activities including services, construction, contracting and manufacturing. This milieu is supportive of inward investment and urban development. In short, Naidu's commercial diplomacy is consistent with the interests of the entrepreneurs and businesses that are close to the TDP (Mooij 2007, 46-7; Kennedy 2004, 65).

Interpreting Naidu's paradiplomacy as a political imperative or being a part of a survival strategy seems overstated. Especially as his electoral performance in 2004 seemed, if anything, to suffer from his enthusiasm for reform. Yet there is a discernible political logic to his diplomacy. Being a champion for Andhra Pradesh is part of Naidu's personal image. Mooij argued that the circumstances in which Naidu came to power, deposing a very charismatic leader of the TDP, meant he had to work hard to fashion a distinctive image (Mooij 2007, 44-5, 50). Hence, using technology, drawing Andhra Pradesh into the global economy and advocating the development of the state has become an integral part of that persona. Naidu's economic diplomacy takes on political significance as it is linked to his patronage network. A by-product of the flows of inward investment in the late 1990s and early 2000s was an inflated land and real estate market around Hyderabad which benefited those with political connections and advanced knowledge of investment locations (Suri personal communication). The recent plan to construct the new Amaravati capital promises similar gains for those close to the regime (*Times of India* 2014a). Naidu's overseas visits seeking investment for the new capital are creating resources for some of his supporters and assists with the management of his party. Naidu has used entrepreneurial paradiplomacy to strengthen his personal position and the governing regime of Andhra Pradesh in a number of ways.

Kerala, 2006-2016

There are very good reasons for senior politicians in Kerala to engage in parallel diplomacy. The state depends heavily on the global economy with large numbers of its citizens working overseas and remitting income to the state. In 2013-14 the chief minister stated there were 2.4 million expatriates producing remittance income of Rs. 72,000 crore (*The Financial Times* 2015), a figure equivalent to about 18% of the state GDP. The Government of Kerala has a department, the Non-Resident Keralites' Affairs Department (NORKA), which looks after the

welfare of migrants. Yet paradiplomacy in Kerala does not have the same profile as in Naidu's Andhra Pradesh. Kerala had two chief ministers between 2006 and 2016. V.S. Achuthanandan, a leader in the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM) headed the government between 2006 and 2011. He was a *passive* diplomat who did not use foreign relations to build a personal image. When the Left Democratic Front (LDF) coalition was defeated in 2011 by a Congress-led coalition, the United Democratic Front (UDF), Oommen Chandy returned as chief minister (he had previously served in the same post between 2004 and 2006). Chandy saw more opportunities in paradiplomacy but was aware of the risks of being too entrepreneurial, instead opted for a *cautious* diplomatic style.

V.S. Achuthanandan did not see the role of chief diplomat as an important part of his political strategy. While he did receive visitors to the state and facilitated some inward investment his overall attitude to FDI was ambivalent. Some projects were encouraged while others were delayed. He entered office with a reputation for hostility to FDI and taking a tougher line than other senior leaders of India's left parties (*Rediff* 2006). Yet the 2006 to 2011 LDF government did seek out some overseas investment with attention being paid to potential investors in the Middle East, Singapore, Malaysia and Russia (*Khaleej Times* 2007). The Vallarpadam container port project initiated by Congress leaders in 2005, and part funded by Dubai Ports World, was taken through to completion while the Left Front was in power. However the high profile smart city Information Technology (IT) Special Economic Zone (SEZ) project in Kochi languished between 2006 and 2011 as Achuthanandan took various positions on how the land was to be owned. This investment, majority funded by a Dubai investment fund, was only signed off in the final months of the LDF government.

The CPM was divided, with an important faction being more enthusiastic about reform and inward investment than the chief minister. In a meeting with US consular staff in August 2008 members of the reform-oriented faction asked for help with attracting US firms and downplayed the dispute over the Coca-Cola bottling plant in Palakkad district. Achuthanandan was not averse to FDI, also telling US consular staff in 2008 he would welcome some investment, but in general he was more guarded about inward investment and did not relent on the Coca-Cola issue (*The New Indian Express* 2011). He certainly did not feel obliged to travel overseas seeking investment. The line taken by the CPM was that the government would welcome investment in IT, bio-technology and tourism. In other words the government would seek investment selectively. As far as I have been able to ascertain V.S. Achuthanandan made no overseas trips while serving as chief minister between 2006 and 2011. In January 2009 he announced plans for his first overseas trip (to Dubai) but the visit does not appear to have taken place. Achuthanandan was alert to the dependence of the Kerala economy on external factors, he took a close interest in the activities of NORKA and gave moral support to the IT sector (including foreign firms with operations in Kerala) (Scoop.co.nz, n.d.). In summary, Achuthanandan leaned towards a *passive* diplomatic style even though a receptive diaspora and Kerala's modest rates of economic growth provided reasons for travelling abroad.

Oommen Chandy, who led the UDF Congress alliance to victory in the 2011 assembly elections, was what we might term a *cautious* diplomat. In his previous stint as chief minister Chandy actively solicited FDI and resumed this role in 2011. Chandy was more inclined to travel though his trips were not that frequent, a total of five between 2011 and 2015. Three of

the visits were to the United Arab Emirates and another to Bahrain.⁷ These trips allowed Chandy to discuss investment projects and to meet some of the diaspora that work in the region. The UDF was more flexible on FDI than the LDF, being more open to industrial investment but Chandy made it clear that environmental considerations could not be overlooked. He hosted a high profile event, Emerging Kerala, in September 2012 to draw investors to the state (*Mint* 2012). This was the first major investment conference in the state since the Global Investor Meet organised by an earlier UDF government in 2003. As well as reaching out to international investors Chandy promoted the event to a range of overseas diplomats (*The Hindu* 2012). Rather like the Vibrant Gujarat conferences, Emerging Kerala was intended to be a biennial event but this has not been followed through.

The diplomatic orientation of Kerala's recent chief ministers can in part be explained by the economic orientation of the state. Attracting inward investment is seen by many as desirable but environmental constraints, including a shortage of land, make this difficult to achieve. The diaspora is more important as a driver of diplomacy for economic and political reasons. Oommen Chandy's overseas visits to the Gulf states reflects this. While Chandy was more active as a chief diplomat than Achuthanandan political considerations encouraged him to be cautious. The nature of the party system, with regular alternation on the basis of small swings in the vote, is one factor. The balance of opinion in the state is more towards the left and Congress politicians act accordingly. Achuthanandan's political strategy was to demonstrate his popularity among voters as a way of compensating for a relative lack of support among CPM legislators. Travelling abroad would have been inconsistent with Achuthanandan's image as a leader from a humble background close to ordinary people (*Open* 2016). A Naidu-style trip to Davos would have been anathema to Achuthanandan. This reticence cannot be attributed to party orientation as the previous LDF chief minister, and CPM member, E. K. Nayanar was a fairly regular official traveller between 1996 and 2001.⁸ In terms of a two-level game Achuthanandan gave the impression he was indifferent or hostile to external capital which played well to his core supporters. The extended delay to the smart city project and the lack of an investors' meet helped him perform for this domestic audience. He qualified his position with some positive, but quiet, signals to external investors.

Chandy was less constrained by factions within his party, though he faced some opposition from internal critics as well. Ideologically he has fewer issues with FDI but he is aware that some voters in Kerala are hostile to pro-capitalist reforms. He defied the policy of the national Congress government and opposed FDI in the retail sector in 2012 (*Wall Street Journal* 2012). When it comes to diplomacy it is politically expedient to take an interest in the welfare of overseas Keralites and seek out investment from Gulf states in non-controversial projects. Pushing ahead with infrastructure projects offered some prospect of increasing economic growth, enhancing Oommen's image as a moderniser and avoiding controversy (*Financial Express* 2015). These projects can have an international dimension when they involve public-private partnerships, such as the Kochi metro which attracted funding from the French government.⁹ These two chief ministers were politically shrewd in their practice of subnational diplomacy. Chandy engaged with subnational diplomacy carefully trying to gain some advantage while minimising political costs. Achuthanandan's political strategy required low key involvement with paradiplomacy.

Tamil Nadu, 1996-2016

The state of Tamil Nadu is dominated by two regional parties, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and the All-India Anna DMK (AIADMK). M. Karunanidhi was chief minister when the DMK was in office between 1996 and 2001 and also from 2006 to 2011. The AIADMK governed between 2001 and 2006, and has controlled the state government since 2011, winning another term in office in 2016. J. Jayalalithaa was the chief minister for most of this period of AIADMK government.¹⁰ The case of Tamil Nadu is much discussed in the literature on subnational diplomacy in India (Mazumdar 2011; Sridharan, 2003; Plagemann & Destradi, 2015). The status of the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka is of great interest to the people of Tamil Nadu (Jones 2012). The largest political parties in the state, the AIADMK and the DMK, have negotiated a path between public sentiment and pressure from the national government taking a range of positions on the issue. Many ordinary people in Tamil Nadu support the demand for *eelam* (a separate state for the Sri Lankan Tamils) but this is not the position of the Government of India. For the most part the AIADMK and the DMK have succumbed to national pressure and taken what many in Tamil Nadu see as unprincipled positions on issues such as eelam and India's intervention towards the end of the Sri Lankan civil war. However beginning in 2012 the DMK did assert itself and obliged the UPA government to support a call for a UN investigation into war crimes committed at the end of the civil war. This broke with India's preferred approach of respecting the sovereignty of other states (Plagemann & Destradi, 2015, 738). The DMK also disrupted New Delhi's preference for pursuing quiet diplomacy with Sri Lanka. What is not discussed in the literature is the way in which chief ministers of Tamil Nadu have done very little to develop their personal profile by engaging in the types of subnational diplomacy taken up by senior politicians in other states since 1991. Economic, cultural and diasporic paradiplomacy have a low profile. These aspects of external relations are showcased in limited ways and usually by receiving overseas visitors to Chennai.

Neither Karunanidhi nor Jayalalithaa showed enthusiasm for travelling outside of India. Extensive queries and searches have only uncovered one official visit since 1996. This was a visit to Singapore made by Karunanidhi in 1999. The agenda of the visit included discussion of Singaporean investment in Tamil Nadu and a meeting with members of the Tamil diaspora (Singapore Government 1999). This reluctance to travel sits awkwardly with the economic strategy pursued by the state. The Government of Tamil Nadu favours the development of manufacturing and services, and, unlike the neighbouring state of Kerala, has few reservations about attracting FDI. Indeed the state is known for having attracting a number of large multinational investments, especially in the automotive sector (Kennedy 2004, 35-7). Acquiring land for these projects did not cause political difficulties, in contrast to the controversies around land acquisition in West Bengal. The state holds land in reserve for new projects as well helping manage the purchase of private land for investors (Vijayabaskar 2014). The World Bank has a longstanding relationship with Tamil Nadu but this tends not to attract public attention. One exception to this was the interaction with the World Bank when the state was working through a fiscal crisis between 2002 and 2004. The state was set to agree a structural adjustment loan from the bank in 2004. However this was abandoned when the ruling AIADMK suffered a heavy mid-term defeat in the 2004 Lok Sabha election.

The economic strategy of Tamil Nadu ought to incline the chief ministers of the state towards more active diplomacy. The government favours FDI, advocates the development of industry and the state has a problem with youth unemployment. However the accumulated advantages

of the state make it possible for chief ministers to avoid promotional activity of the type favoured by Naidu. Tamil Nadu is a fairly desirable investment location, land and good human capital is generally available, which means the state will attract a certain amount of investment without aggressive promotion (Harriss & Wyatt 2016). The diaspora offers opportunities for making international links but the state does not depend on remittances in the way that Kerala does.¹¹ The one imperative that politicians cannot ignore is the status of the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka. For the most part this issue has been managed by lobbying the central government. The political considerations that might encourage or inhibit paradiplomacy are not strongly biased in either direction. The business lobbies, who would like more promotion of the state, are not able to easily influence chief ministers (Harriss & Wyatt 2016). The business interests of politicians are widespread but for the most part are not connected to the global economy (Wyatt 2015b). The populist political culture of the state means that neither party is obviously enchanted with big business but there is no ideological hostility to commercial enterprise (Wyatt 2013). Both Karunanidhi and Jayalalithaa had well fashioned images. Karunanidhi has an earthy sense of humour and is well known as a champion of Tamil culture. Jayalalithaa projected herself as a strong leader and efficient administrator. In other words neither needed to reinvent themselves as pro-business reformers. Yet neither would have suffered reputational damage from travelling overseas. Indeed the still popular founder of the DMK, Annadurai, famously enhanced his reputation by travelling to Yale University in 1968. Other, more junior politicians, travel overseas on official business without much comment. Among those junior politicians is MK Stalin who is expected to become president of the DMK when his father stands aside.¹² The chief ministers of Tamil Nadu could have been more active international representatives of their state but they have chosen not to do so.¹³

Conclusions

I take up the specific issue of chief ministerial diplomacy in the latter part of this section and before that I discuss three issues relevant to the wider issue of Indian paradiplomacy. Firstly, there is clear evidence that the Indian states are regarded as important political and economic locations by external powers, which I referenced above as a factor ‘pulling’ international actors into India. To take just two examples, both the UK and Singapore have committed symbolic and material resources to engaging with state governments in India. The UK commitments have been mentioned. As regards Singapore the former Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong has travelled frequently to India meeting state level leaders, including Modi and Naidu. Exporters and investors are very ready to do business with India. Secondly, interaction with the diaspora was a feature of the activity undertaken by the chief ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, and Gujarat (see below). This aspect of subnational diplomacy needs further investigation in other cases to assess how this diplomatic activity is carried and to gather more data on how the home states try to exploit these links. Thirdly, the use of subnational diplomacy as a preparation for higher office, noted in the wider literature (McMillan 2012, 127-8), is confirmed by Indian cases. Naidu always denies national ambitions but as the question arises fairly often his modesty needs to be viewed critically. As noted above MK Stalin has incorporated overseas travel into his political apprenticeship. India’s current prime minister, Narendra Modi, engaged in subnational diplomacy while he served as chief minister of Gujarat. In August 2003 Modi promoted the Vibrant Gujarat summit in London and addressed a well-attended rally at the Wembley Conference Centre. However the UK government did not make official contact with Modi during the visit (Price

2015). His later overseas trips as chief minister gained official recognition and had a strong economic focus. He visited China (2006 and 2011), Singapore (2006) and Japan (2012) (Malik 2013; *The Straits Times* 2015). Modi also participated in the Asian meetings of the World Economic Forum in China. These visits helped Modi to demonstrate an interest in economic development and fashion an image of economic competence (*Economic Times* 2007). Modi's recent prime ministerial diplomacy was foreshadowed in his chief ministerial visits. He took care to assert his Gujarati identity and make connections where possible with the diaspora from the state. This was clear in his 2003 visit to London, which was followed by a visit to Switzerland where he was able to retrieve the ashes of the Gujarati freedom fighter Shyamji Krishna Varma who died in Geneva in 1930. Modi returned from Switzerland via Mumbai, where spoke about Varma at various public events (*Rediff* 2003b). Modi anticipated his entry into national politics by building an international profile.¹⁴

Comparing the subnational diplomacy of the five chief ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu reveals varying interest in paradiplomacy. Chandrababu Naidu is deeply committed to promoting Andhra Pradesh with regular overseas visits and energetic public relations. Oommen Chandy was a cautious chief diplomat who concentrated on fostering cordial relations with the Gulf states. V.S. Achuthanandan, J. Jayalalithaa, and M. Karunanidhi tended to be reactive in their diplomatic role.

The personal political strategies of most of the leaders discussed above could incorporate a diplomatic dimension. Achuthanandan is the obvious exception. Those that have most to gain are those new to senior leadership or facing important changes in the political environment of the state. Naidu faced uncertain circumstances in 1995 and again after the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh. He took control of the TDP unexpectedly in 1995 and looked to restructure government and party to secure his position. MK Stalin is in fairly similar position. He is seeking to establish his own image and distinguish himself from his father. In contrast Karunanidhi and Jayalalithaa have well established strategies for seeking and holding office.

The expanding opportunities for engaging in parallel diplomacy give chief ministers another means for strengthening their personal position. Successful paradiplomacy can bring material resources to the home state to the benefit of voters and party members with business links. Overseas links might be favoured by the constellation of interests that support the developmental model of the state. Paradiplomacy is a symbolic resource as well which chief ministers can use to enhance their personal image with prestigious meetings and gain credit for proclaiming the virtues of their regional culture to an international audience. Finally, engaging in subnational diplomacy can be a way of preparing for a move into national politics (McMillan 2012, 127-8). However, paradiplomacy can be costly to a governing chief minister. Facilitating inward investment involves making concessions to big business. Providing easy access to land and resolving labour disputes might be very unpopular. Large projects might have an unwelcome environmental impact and require additional infrastructure spending. Dealing with cross-border issues entails a double risk of alienating local voters and/or antagonising the national government. Cross border issues become more complicated when the chief minister's party is a member of a national government. The image and reputation of the chief minister might be shaped negatively by any of these ramifications of external activity. Above all chief ministers will be keen to minimise the electoral risks of

paradiplomacy.

Paradiplomacy can be used in various ways to strengthen a leader's standing. Incorporating the culture of the home state in their diplomatic initiatives reinforces the regional narratives with which a chief minister associates or promotes. Entrepreneurial politicians can use subnational diplomacy as a way of modifying or titivating their personal image. They can seek to 'borrow' charisma from leaders they meet and claim external validation for their achievements. Nitish Kumar's extended visit to Pakistan in 2012 illustrates this well. His enthusiasm for the visit reinforced his 'secular' image, a none too subtle message to prospective Muslim voters in Bihar, and spoke at length about his governance achievements (*Rediff* 2012). Economic paradiplomacy provides opportunities to build connections with, and make allies of business leaders. Those businesses stand to gain a great deal if the chief minister can locate new investment opportunities or facilitate joint ventures. Successful paradiplomacy results in investment, job creation and perhaps the prestige of producing a well-known brand. Chief ministers can use their travels to make connections with wealthy members of the diaspora who are potential investors and donors to party funds. Paradiplomacy offers resources for ambitious state level leaders to use as they lead their parties and compete with their rivals.

Notes

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¹ It was clearly signalled that Mamata Banerjee's public statements during her visit to Bhutan in 2015 did not touch on the many sensitive issues which might logically have been discussed (The Telegraph (2015)).

² Both Mamata Banerjee and Chandrababu Naidu were sharply criticised by opposition politicians in their respective states for making overseas visits (Times of India 2014b; Deccan Chronicle 2014).

³ The people of Tamil Nadu feel an affinity with the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka. Cultural and intellectual links are strong. The ethnic violence in Sri Lanka caused thousands of refugees to migrate to India beginning in 1983. There are strong parallels with the experience of West Bengal.

⁴ The UK has relatively weak trading links with India (Wyatt 2016, 235), and has been looking at ways of rectifying this including maintaining good relations with state governments in India. Thus, David Cameron met with Mamata Banerjee in Kolkata on his way to Delhi in 2013 and the UK has Deputy High Commissioners in several India states.

⁵ Naidu has almost certainly been consciously imitated by other chief ministers. K. Chandrashekar Rao, the chief minister of the new state of Telangana, was quick to travel to several overseas destinations seeking investment, including a ten day trip in September 2015 which took in the meeting of the World Economic Forum in China (Economic Times 2015a). A convergence between the styles of Narendra Modi and Naidu can be observed. Both have used overseas travel to enhance their image as developmentally oriented leaders. Now that Modi is Prime Minister, the comparison may be less apt, but the Twitter timelines of each leader have intriguing similarities (including an abundance of pictures of the leader greeting visiting dignitaries).

⁶ The depth of Naidu's commitment to reform has been discussed critically by a number of commentators including Manor (2004, 264-6) and Suri (2004).

⁷ In response to an RTI request the Government of Kerala stated that Chandy had made five overseas trips since 2011 (The Hindu 2015). However, in spite of exhaustive searches I have not been able to locate details of the fifth trip. It may have been a private visit overseas which did not attract media attention.

⁸ Achuthanandan is elderly but it is unlikely that health issues kept him from travelling while he was chief minister. Four years after leaving office, and at the age of 92, he made a well-received visit to Bahrain in December 2015.

⁹ The French multinational Alstom supplies rolling stock for the metro.

¹⁰ Her 2001-2006 and 2011-2016 terms were interrupted when she was convicted in separate corruption cases and had to stand down from office pending appeals. In each case she won on appeal and returned as chief minister. Her final term in office was cut short by her death in December 2016.

¹¹ Tamil Nadu has almost the double the population of Kerala. In 2013 Kerala received 33% of India's total remittance income. Tamil Nadu received 12% (*Business Standard* 2014).

¹² While Karunanidhi prefers to stay in Chennai, his son and presumptive heir, MK Stalin travels regularly. Stalin has variously been Mayor of Chennai, a member of the legislative assembly, a state cabinet minister, deputy chief minister, head of the DMK youth wing and party treasurer. While a minister in the DMK government Stalin visited Japan in 2008 seeking finance from the JBIC for water and transport projects. Not long after becoming deputy chief minister Stalin was in Singapore in November 2009 seeking technical collaboration *The Hindu* (2009). In 2010 Stalin visited South Korea and China seeking investments. In late 2012, after the DMK lost control of the state government, but was still part of the governing coalition at the centre, Stalin made overseas visits to the UN in New York and to a conference in London, to publicise the plight of the Sri Lanka Tamils (*New Indian Express* 2012).

¹³ The reasons for this reluctance are far from clear. One possibility might be the fear of a coup within the ruling party. When the previous leader of the AIADMK went to New York for medical treatment in 1987 individuals positioned themselves to succeed him (*India Today* 1987). Jayalalithaa has been careful to protect herself from such intrigue. For the DMK, Karunanidhi's indifferent health has limited his mobility for a number of years.

¹⁴ One prescient (or overly enthusiastic) journalist described Modi's speech in 2003 at the Wembley Conference Centre in London as 'the opening shot of his prime ministerial campaign' (Rediff 2003a).