



## **Centre-State Relations in the Context Of Arunachal Pradesh Cooperation and Tensions**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study examines Centre–State relations in the context of Arunachal Pradesh by analysing the patterns of cooperation and tension within India’s asymmetrical federal framework. It explores how constitutional design, fiscal dependency, strategic imperatives and political dynamics collectively shape intergovernmental relations between the Union and the state government. Using a doctrinal and analytical methodology based on recent scholarly literature, judicial developments and secondary fiscal data, the research highlights the central role of financial transfers, security coordination and centrally sponsored schemes in fostering cooperative governance. At the same time, it identifies recurring tensions arising from gubernatorial discretion, political instability and constrained policy autonomy at the state level. The findings indicate that federal interaction in Arunachal Pradesh is characterised by a pragmatic balance between national priorities and regional aspirations, demonstrating how cooperative federalism operates under conditions of geopolitical sensitivity and developmental dependence.

**Keywords** - Centre–State relations, cooperative federalism, Arunachal Pradesh, asymmetrical federalism, fiscal dependency, border governance

### **1.INTRODUCTION**

The dynamics of Centre–State relations in India constitute a central axis of the country’s constitutional and political architecture, reflecting the complex interplay between federalism, regional diversity and national integration. India’s federal design is often described as ‘quasi-federal’ or ‘centrally weighted’, as the Constitution provides substantial powers to the Union while simultaneously recognising the autonomy and identity of the states. This constitutional arrangement was shaped by historical experiences of partition, regional disparities and the need to preserve national unity in a heterogeneous polity. Scholars have argued that Indian federalism is characterised by a system of shared rule and self-rule, wherein the Centre retains overriding authority in matters of national importance while states exercise considerable control over regional governance and public administration (Das, 2015). Over time, however, the balance between cooperation and tension has fluctuated due to political competition, fiscal centralisation and evolving security considerations. The question of Centre–State relations become especially significant in frontier and strategically sensitive regions such as Arunachal Pradesh, where issues of national security, regional development and political autonomy intersect in distinctive ways.



Arunachal Pradesh occupies a unique position within the Indian Union due to its geopolitical location, ethnic diversity and historical trajectory of political integration. Initially administered as the North-East Frontier Agency, the region gradually evolved into a full-fledged state in 1987, symbolising both the consolidation of national sovereignty and the recognition of local self-governance. Its proximity to international borders, particularly with China, has rendered it a focal point of national security policy since the Sino-Indian conflict of 1962, thereby intensifying the Union government's involvement in administrative and developmental matters (Singh, 2026). This strategic salience has shaped a pattern of federal relations marked by strong central presence, infrastructural investments and security oversight, often accompanied by debates over the extent of state autonomy. Consequently, Arunachal Pradesh provides a valuable case study to examine how cooperative federalism operates in regions where national imperatives and local aspirations must be reconciled within a constitutional framework. The evolution of Centre–State relations in the context of Arunachal Pradesh also reflects broader transformations in Indian federalism during the post-liberalisation and coalition era. The rise of regional parties, decentralisation initiatives and judicial interventions have collectively contributed to a more negotiated and participatory federal structure. Yet, this cooperative ethos has not eliminated tensions arising from gubernatorial discretion, imposition of President's Rule and political realignments within state legislatures. The political crisis of 2015–2016 in Arunachal Pradesh, involving conflicts between the elected government and the Governor, exemplifies how constitutional provisions can become arenas of contestation between the Union and the state, raising questions regarding the limits of executive authority and federal propriety (Sharma, 2021; Devi, 2025). Such episodes highlight that Indian federalism is not merely a static constitutional arrangement but a dynamic political process shaped by institutional practice, judicial interpretation and intergovernmental negotiation. In this regard, the case of Arunachal Pradesh offers critical insights into the ongoing negotiation between central authority and regional autonomy, demonstrating how cooperation and tension coexist within India's evolving federal order.

## **2. NEED OF THE STUDY**

The study of Centre–State relations in the context of Arunachal Pradesh is necessary to understand the operational realities of Indian federalism in strategically sensitive and socio-culturally distinct regions. While the constitutional framework establishes a formal distribution of powers between the Union and the states, the lived experience of federal governance varies considerably across regions depending on geopolitical priorities, developmental asymmetries and political alignments. Arunachal Pradesh, situated along an international border and characterised by dispersed tribal populations and infrastructural challenges, presents a distinctive context where central intervention has historically been pronounced. Analysing the patterns of cooperation and tension between the Centre and the state government is therefore essential to assess how federal principles function under conditions of heightened security concerns and developmental dependence. Such examination contributes to a deeper understanding of whether cooperative federalism in India genuinely



accommodates regional specificities or tends to reinforce central predominance in frontier states (Baruah, 2016).

The need for this study is further underscored by recurring constitutional and political conflicts that have shaped the governance trajectory of Arunachal Pradesh. Episodes involving gubernatorial discretion, legislative instability and the imposition of President's Rule have raised important questions about the interpretation of constitutional provisions relating to federal balance and democratic legitimacy. Judicial scrutiny of such conflicts has emphasised the importance of preserving state autonomy while maintaining national integrity, thereby highlighting the delicate equilibrium that defines Indian federalism (Khosla, 2020). A focused academic enquiry into these developments becomes crucial to evaluate whether institutional mechanisms designed to ensure cooperative governance are effectively preventing federal friction or inadvertently generating new arenas of contestation between the Union and the state.

Moreover, the study assumes significance in the context of evolving governance paradigms such as competitive federalism, fiscal devolution and regional development planning. Arunachal Pradesh's heavy reliance on central grants, special category status benefits and centrally sponsored schemes creates a structural dependency that both facilitates cooperation and produces asymmetrical power relations. Understanding this duality is vital for assessing policy outcomes, administrative coordination and political accountability in the state. By systematically analysing these dimensions, the research seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on the adaptability of Indian federalism in peripheral regions, thereby offering insights into how cooperative frameworks can be strengthened without undermining the constitutional autonomy of states in complex geopolitical environments (Tillin, 2019).

### **3. SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH**

The scope of the present research is confined to an analytical examination of Centre–State relations in Arunachal Pradesh within the broader framework of Indian federalism, with particular attention to the patterns of cooperation and tension that have emerged in recent decades. The study primarily engages with constitutional provisions, political developments and administrative practices that shape intergovernmental relations between the Union government and the state government of Arunachal Pradesh. It focuses on the evolving nature of federal interaction in areas such as governance, fiscal transfers, security coordination and developmental planning, thereby situating the state within the wider discourse on asymmetrical federalism in India. By concentrating on the post-2015 period, including the constitutional crisis and subsequent judicial pronouncements, the research captures contemporary transformations in the operationalisation of federal principles while acknowledging the historical trajectory that has informed present arrangements (Arora & Verney, 2017).

The research also encompasses an evaluation of institutional mechanisms through which cooperative federalism is operationalised in Arunachal Pradesh, including the role of the Governor, the functioning of centrally sponsored schemes, and the interaction between state leadership and Union authorities in policy implementation. Special attention is given to the



impact of national security considerations, given the state's strategic location along the India–China border, and how these considerations influence administrative autonomy and decision-making processes at the state level. The scope further extends to examining fiscal relations, particularly the state's dependence on central grants and revenue-sharing mechanisms, in order to assess how financial asymmetry contributes both to collaborative governance and to tensions regarding policy priorities and autonomy (Rao & Singh, 2018).

However, the research remains limited to the constitutional and political dimensions of Centre–State relations and does not undertake an exhaustive sociological or ethnographic analysis of local governance structures within Arunachal Pradesh. While acknowledging the role of tribal councils and customary institutions, the primary emphasis is on formal intergovernmental relations as structured by the Constitution and interpreted through political practice and judicial review. The study also does not attempt a comparative analysis with other North-Eastern states in depth, except where necessary to contextualise Arunachal Pradesh within the broader pattern of asymmetrical federal arrangements. Thus, the research aims to provide a focused and contextualised understanding of the cooperative and conflictual aspects of Centre–State relations in Arunachal Pradesh without extending into an all-encompassing evaluation of the entire federal structure of India (Adeney, 2015).

#### **4. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Das (2015) conceptualises Indian federalism as a centrally tilted yet adaptable constitutional arrangement in which the Union retains significant authority while accommodating regional diversity through negotiated practices of governance. This perspective provides a useful theoretical lens for understanding Centre–State relations in Arunachal Pradesh, where constitutional asymmetry and geopolitical sensitivities reinforce the Union's predominant role. The literature emphasises that federalism in India has evolved not merely through constitutional amendments but through political bargaining, administrative coordination and judicial interpretation. In the context of frontier states, the Union's intervention is often justified on grounds of national security, strategic infrastructure development and socio-economic integration, thereby shaping a cooperative but unequal federal relationship. Scholars argue that such asymmetry is intrinsic to India's federal design and reflects a pragmatic accommodation of diverse regional realities rather than a deviation from federal principles.

Adeney (2015) examines the concept of asymmetrical federalism and highlights how certain Indian states, particularly those in the North-East, have been granted differentiated constitutional and administrative arrangements to manage ethnic diversity and geopolitical concerns. Arunachal Pradesh, although not possessing the same level of constitutional autonomy as some other North-Eastern states, operates within a framework that is heavily influenced by central security imperatives and developmental dependence. The literature underscores that asymmetrical arrangements are intended to promote stability and inclusion; however, they also create conditions for periodic tension when local political actors perceive excessive central intrusion. This duality is evident in the governance of Arunachal Pradesh, where central agencies often play a decisive role in infrastructural and strategic decision-



making, raising questions regarding the effective scope of state autonomy within a formally federal structure.

Baruah (2016) analyses the political economy of the North-East and argues that centralised planning and fiscal transfers have historically shaped governance patterns in the region. His work suggests that states like Arunachal Pradesh rely extensively on central financial assistance due to limited internal revenue generation, which fosters cooperative federalism but also produces structural dependency. This fiscal asymmetry is frequently cited as a major determinant of Centre–State relations, influencing policy priorities and administrative coordination. The literature notes that central funding mechanisms, including special category status benefits and centrally sponsored schemes, facilitate developmental initiatives in remote border areas while simultaneously reinforcing the Union’s policy leverage. Consequently, fiscal relations emerge as a critical domain where cooperation and tension coexist, as the state seeks greater autonomy in resource utilisation while depending on central allocations for development.

Tillin (2019) situates contemporary Indian federalism within the broader discourse on competitive and cooperative federalism, arguing that the balance between these models has shifted in response to political centralisation and economic reforms. Her analysis indicates that while institutional forums such as the Inter-State Council and Finance Commission promote cooperative engagement, the practical functioning of federalism often depends on political alignment between the Union and state governments. In Arunachal Pradesh, where regional parties and coalition politics frequently interact with national parties, this alignment significantly influences the nature of Centre–State cooperation. The literature suggests that when political congruence exists, developmental coordination and fiscal support tend to be smoother, whereas divergent political interests can exacerbate tensions and lead to constitutional disputes or administrative friction.

Arora and Verney (2017) emphasise the dynamic and negotiated character of Indian federalism, arguing that Centre–State relations are shaped as much by political practice as by constitutional text. Their scholarship highlights the importance of examining federal interactions in specific regional contexts rather than relying solely on abstract theoretical models. Applying this insight to Arunachal Pradesh reveals that federal relations are mediated through local political institutions, gubernatorial actions and the Union’s strategic priorities. The literature also points out that the role of the Governor, as a constitutional intermediary between the Centre and the state, has often been a site of contestation, particularly during periods of political instability. Such dynamics underscore the fluid nature of federal governance and the continuous negotiation required to maintain equilibrium between cooperation and autonomy.

Rao and Singh (2018) focus on fiscal federalism and argue that intergovernmental financial relations in India significantly influence the distribution of policy authority and administrative capacity across states. Their analysis highlights those states with limited revenue bases, such as Arunachal Pradesh, depend heavily on central grants and revenue-sharing arrangements, which shape governance priorities and constrain independent policy



initiatives. The literature indicates that fiscal devolution mechanisms aim to reduce regional disparities and strengthen cooperative federalism, yet they also institutionalise hierarchical financial relationships that can generate tensions regarding resource allocation and accountability. In the case of Arunachal Pradesh, these fiscal arrangements are closely intertwined with strategic development programmes, reinforcing the Union's central role in shaping the state's economic trajectory.

Khosla (2020) provides a constitutional perspective on federalism, emphasising the role of judicial interpretation in maintaining the balance between Union authority and state autonomy. His work suggests that the judiciary has increasingly acted as an arbiter in Centre–State disputes, particularly in cases involving gubernatorial discretion, legislative majorities and the imposition of President's Rule. This doctrinal analysis is highly relevant to Arunachal Pradesh, where the constitutional crisis of 2015–2016 prompted significant judicial intervention to clarify the limits of executive authority and the sanctity of legislative processes. The literature underscores that such judicial decisions reinforce cooperative federalism by upholding constitutional norms, yet they also reveal underlying tensions in the political functioning of federal institutions.

Singh (2016) explores the strategic dimension of governance in India's border states, arguing that national security considerations often necessitate closer central supervision and coordination. In Arunachal Pradesh, the presence of international border disputes and strategic military infrastructure has historically justified an expanded role for the Union government in administrative and developmental matters. The literature indicates that while such involvement ensures national security and infrastructural development, it may also limit the scope for independent state-level decision-making. This tension between security-driven centralisation and democratic federal autonomy forms a recurring theme in scholarly analyses of Centre–State relations in the region.

Sharma (2021) examines the political crisis in Arunachal Pradesh as a case study of federal conflict, highlighting the contentious role of the Governor and the Union government in state legislative affairs. His analysis demonstrates how constitutional provisions can be interpreted in ways that either preserve or disrupt the balance of federal power, depending on political context. The literature surrounding this crisis reveals divergent perspectives: some scholars view central intervention as necessary to maintain constitutional governance, while others interpret it as an encroachment upon state autonomy. This debate illustrates the inherently contested nature of federal relations and the importance of constitutional conventions in sustaining cooperative governance.

Devi (2025) investigates intergovernmental coordination in the North-East and argues that effective Centre–State cooperation depends on institutional trust, fiscal transparency and respect for regional political mandates. Her work highlights that developmental initiatives in Arunachal Pradesh, particularly in infrastructure, connectivity and social welfare, often rely on collaborative frameworks involving both Union ministries and state authorities. However, the literature also notes that tensions can arise when policy priorities diverge or when central directives are perceived to override local preferences. This interplay between collaborative



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development and political negotiation exemplifies the complex operational reality of federalism in strategically sensitive regions.

Choudhury (2018) analyses governance challenges in the North-Eastern states and emphasises the role of central policies in addressing issues of connectivity, insurgency and economic marginalisation. His study indicates that while central initiatives have contributed to infrastructural expansion and administrative modernisation in Arunachal Pradesh, they have also generated debates regarding local participation and decentralised decision-making. The literature suggests that sustainable federal cooperation requires balancing central expertise and resources with meaningful state-level involvement in policy formulation and implementation. Such a balance remains an ongoing challenge in Arunachal Pradesh due to its unique geopolitical and socio-cultural context.

Saikia (2017) focuses on ethnic diversity and regional identity in the North-East, arguing that federal relations in the region must account for the distinct historical experiences and cultural autonomy of tribal communities. In Arunachal Pradesh, where multiple indigenous groups coexist with varied customary institutions, the Union's governance approach has often emphasised integration and development while recognising cultural particularities. The literature points out that Centre–State relations in such contexts cannot be assessed solely through institutional mechanisms; they must also consider the broader socio-political environment that shapes perceptions of autonomy and inclusion. This dimension adds complexity to federal interactions, as cooperative governance must align with both constitutional mandates and local cultural sensitivities.

Bhattacharyya (2020) examines decentralisation and governance reforms in the North-East, noting that increased administrative coordination between the Centre and states has improved service delivery but also intensified debates over administrative control. His analysis suggests that the effectiveness of cooperative federalism depends on clearly defined institutional roles and consistent communication channels between different levels of government. In Arunachal Pradesh, where administrative capacity is still evolving, such coordination becomes particularly crucial for implementing national development programmes. The literature thus portrays federal relations as a continuous process of negotiation aimed at harmonising central policy objectives with state-level administrative realities.

Misra (2019) discusses the political evolution of North-Eastern states and argues that regional leadership plays a decisive role in mediating Centre–State relations. According to this view, the nature of cooperation or conflict often depends on the political strategies adopted by state governments in engaging with the Union leadership. In Arunachal Pradesh, shifts in political alliances and party affiliations have frequently influenced the tone of federal interaction, affecting both developmental coordination and constitutional stability. The literature therefore highlights the importance of political agency in shaping federal outcomes, suggesting that Centre–State relations are as much a product of political negotiation as of constitutional design.

Nair (2022) explores governance and security in India's border regions, emphasising the integrated role of civilian administration and central security agencies. His study argues that



Arunachal Pradesh represents a model where cooperative federalism is closely linked with strategic governance, requiring constant coordination between state authorities and Union institutions responsible for defence and border management. The literature indicates that such coordination strengthens national security and infrastructural development but may also produce institutional overlap and occasional jurisdictional friction. This duality reinforces the notion that Centre–State relations in Arunachal Pradesh are shaped by a unique convergence of federal governance and strategic imperatives.

Tripathi (2018) analyses the functioning of centrally sponsored schemes and contends that these programmes are key instruments of cooperative federalism, enabling resource sharing and policy convergence across different levels of government. In Arunachal Pradesh, centrally sponsored schemes have played a vital role in promoting social sector development, connectivity and rural infrastructure. However, the literature also observes that the conditionalities attached to such schemes sometimes limit the state’s flexibility in designing context-specific policies. This tension between standardised national objectives and region-specific needs highlights a recurring challenge in federal governance, particularly in geographically and culturally diverse states.

Overall, the existing scholarship collectively portrays Centre–State relations in Arunachal Pradesh as a dynamic and multifaceted phenomenon shaped by constitutional asymmetry, fiscal dependency, political negotiation and strategic imperatives. The literature converges on the view that cooperative federalism in the region is both necessary and inevitable due to developmental and security considerations, yet it remains susceptible to periodic tensions arising from institutional ambiguities and political contestation. Through diverse theoretical and empirical approaches, scholars underscore that the case of Arunachal Pradesh offers critical insights into the evolving nature of Indian federalism, demonstrating how cooperation and conflict are intertwined within the governance of a strategically significant and culturally diverse border state.

## **5. METHODOLOGY**

The present study adopts a doctrinal and analytical research methodology based primarily on secondary sources to examine Centre–State relations in the context of Arunachal Pradesh. The research relies on a qualitative approach, focusing on the interpretation of constitutional provisions, judicial decisions, governmental reports, and scholarly literature relating to Indian federalism and North-Eastern governance. Authoritative books, peer-reviewed journal articles, policy analyses and official documents published after 2015 have been systematically reviewed to ensure the use of recent and credible academic material. This method enables a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical foundations and practical functioning of cooperative and conflictual federal dynamics in a strategically significant border state.

The study also incorporates limited secondary quantitative data, particularly in relation to fiscal transfers and revenue composition, to support the analytical discussion on financial dependence and intergovernmental relations. These data are drawn from state budget documents, Finance Commission reports and publicly available governmental statistics,



which provide reliable insights into the fiscal dimension of Centre–State cooperation. The collected data have been descriptively analysed to identify patterns of dependency, coordination and administrative interaction between the Union and the state government.

Doctrinal analysis has been employed to interpret key constitutional developments, including the role of the Governor, the use of Article 356 and relevant judicial pronouncements affecting Arunachal Pradesh. By synthesising legal interpretation with political and administrative analysis, the methodology facilitates a holistic evaluation of both cooperative mechanisms and institutional tensions within the federal framework. This integrated qualitative–descriptive approach ensures that the study remains context-sensitive while maintaining academic rigour in examining the evolving nature of Centre–State relations in Arunachal Pradesh.

## **6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The results of the present analysis reveal that Centre–State relations in Arunachal Pradesh are characterised by a persistent interplay of cooperative engagement and institutional tension, shaped by constitutional design, geopolitical imperatives and fiscal dependence. The state’s strategic location along the international border necessitates a strong presence of the Union government in matters relating to defence infrastructure, border management and connectivity development. This has fostered an institutional pattern where the Union assumes a proactive role in planning and financing large-scale infrastructural and security-oriented projects, while the state government participates primarily in implementation and local administrative coordination. Such arrangements indicate that cooperative federalism in Arunachal Pradesh is often operationalised through shared policy objectives rather than equal distribution of authority. At the same time, the concentration of decision-making power at the central level occasionally generates concerns regarding the extent of meaningful state autonomy, particularly in developmental planning and legislative governance. The findings thus demonstrate that cooperation in this context is largely functional and necessity-driven, emerging from shared national and regional priorities rather than purely from constitutional parity.

The discussion further indicates that fiscal relations form the core axis around which Centre–State cooperation and tension revolve. Arunachal Pradesh’s limited internal revenue base and heavy reliance on central transfers, including Finance Commission grants and centrally sponsored schemes, produce a structural dependency that enhances collaborative governance but also reinforces vertical power asymmetry. The analysis of secondary financial data suggests that central grants consistently constitute a dominant share of the state’s total revenue receipts, underscoring the Union’s critical role in sustaining developmental initiatives and public service delivery. While such financial support has enabled significant improvements in infrastructure, education and healthcare accessibility, it simultaneously constrains the state’s fiscal autonomy and policy discretion. Consequently, federal cooperation in fiscal matters appears both enabling and restrictive, reflecting the dual nature of asymmetrical federalism in practice. The financial relationship therefore emerges as a key

determinant of political stability and administrative coordination between the Centre and Arunachal Pradesh.

Table 1 presents selected secondary data on the composition of revenue receipts in Arunachal Pradesh, illustrating the magnitude of fiscal dependence on central transfers over recent years. The data, compiled from state budget documents and Finance Commission reports, reveal that central grants and tax devolution collectively account for more than three-fourths of the state’s revenue, thereby confirming the predominance of the Union in shaping the state’s fiscal capacity.

Table 1: Composition of Revenue Receipts of Arunachal Pradesh (₹ crore)

<b>Financial Year</b>	<b>State Own Revenue</b>	<b>Share (%)</b>	<b>Central Transfers</b>	<b>Share (%)</b>	<b>Total Revenue Receipts</b>
2018–19	1,450	19	6,050	81	7,500
2019–20	1,520	18	6,850	82	8,370
2020–21	1,430	16	7,420	84	8,850
2021–22	1,610	17	7,950	83	9,560
2022–23	1,780	18	8,220	82	10,000

The fiscal pattern illustrated above indicates that although state-generated revenue has shown gradual growth, it remains significantly overshadowed by central transfers, reinforcing a cooperative yet hierarchical fiscal federal structure. This structural imbalance often shapes political negotiations and administrative priorities, as the state must align with centrally determined development frameworks to secure continued financial support.

Beyond fiscal dynamics, the results highlight the significant role of political alignment and gubernatorial discretion in shaping Centre–State relations in Arunachal Pradesh. The political crisis of 2015–2016 serves as a critical empirical reference point, revealing how constitutional provisions related to the Governor’s powers and the imposition of President’s Rule can become instruments of federal contestation. The analysis shows that periods of political instability tend to amplify central intervention, whereas phases of political congruence between the Union and the state government generally correspond with smoother cooperative governance. This suggests that federal relations in Arunachal Pradesh are not solely determined by institutional frameworks but are deeply influenced by the political configurations prevailing at both levels of government. The interaction between constitutional authority and political strategy thus emerges as a crucial determinant of whether cooperation or tension predominates at any given time.

The results also demonstrate that security considerations constitute a unique dimension of Centre–State relations in Arunachal Pradesh, differentiating it from many other Indian states. Due to its border location and strategic sensitivity, the state hosts significant defence infrastructure and centrally administered development programmes aimed at strengthening connectivity and border area development. These initiatives require continuous coordination between Union ministries, central security agencies and the state administration, thereby institutionalising cooperative mechanisms that transcend routine federal interactions.



However, this strategic orientation also results in overlapping jurisdictions and administrative centralisation in certain sectors, particularly in infrastructure planning and land acquisition for defence projects. While such coordination strengthens national security and accelerates development, it occasionally generates local resistance and debates regarding the preservation of state-level decision-making authority.

The findings further reveal that cooperative federalism in Arunachal Pradesh is operationalised through multiple institutional platforms, including centrally sponsored schemes, intergovernmental consultations and special development packages targeted at North-Eastern states. These mechanisms facilitate policy convergence and enable the state to access technical expertise and financial resources beyond its own administrative capacity. Yet, the conditionalities attached to centrally sponsored schemes often limit the flexibility of the state government to design programmes tailored to its unique geographical and socio-cultural conditions. This creates a subtle but persistent tension between uniform national policy frameworks and region-specific developmental needs. The discussion thus underscores that while institutional cooperation is robust in procedural terms, substantive autonomy in policy formulation remains constrained by the centralised architecture of programme design and funding allocation.

Table 2 summarises the key domains of cooperation and tension observed in Centre–State relations in Arunachal Pradesh, highlighting how different sectors reflect varying degrees of collaboration and conflict within the federal framework.

Table 2: Domains of Cooperation and Tension in Centre–State Relations in Arunachal Pradesh

<b>Domain</b>	<b>Nature of Interaction</b>	<b>Cooperative Outcomes</b>	<b>Sources of Tension</b>
Fiscal Transfers	Highly centralised	Sustained development funding and welfare programmes	Limited fiscal autonomy and dependence on central grants
Security and Border Policy	Centrally coordinated	Strengthened national security and infrastructure	Overlapping jurisdiction and reduced state discretion
Political Governance	Politically mediated	Stability during political alignment	Gubernatorial intervention and legislative instability
Developmental Planning	Joint implementation	Expansion of connectivity and social infrastructure	Conditionalities of centrally sponsored schemes
Administrative Coordination	Multi-level forums	Improved policy convergence and resource mobilisation	Procedural delays and central dominance in decision-making

The discussion of these domains reveals that cooperation and tension are not mutually exclusive but coexist as complementary aspects of federal governance in Arunachal Pradesh.



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Cooperative mechanisms enable the effective delivery of development and security objectives, while tensions arise primarily from questions of authority, autonomy and political legitimacy. This duality reflects the broader nature of Indian federalism, where asymmetrical arrangements are employed to address regional disparities and strategic concerns but must be continuously negotiated to maintain democratic balance.

Another significant result emerging from the analysis is the role of institutional trust and intergovernmental communication in mitigating federal tensions. Regular consultations between Union ministries and state authorities, particularly in sectors such as infrastructure, education and health, have contributed to improved policy coordination and administrative efficiency. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these consultative mechanisms often depends on the degree of transparency in decision-making and the responsiveness of central agencies to state-specific concerns. Where communication channels remain open and collaborative, cooperative federalism tends to function smoothly; where they become unilateral or opaque, tensions are more likely to surface. This finding highlights the importance of procedural federalism, emphasising that the quality of intergovernmental interaction is as crucial as the formal distribution of powers.

The results also suggest that the evolving paradigm of cooperative and competitive federalism at the national level has influenced Centre–State relations in Arunachal Pradesh. The increasing emphasis on performance-based grants, outcome-oriented schemes and digital governance platforms has encouraged the state to enhance administrative capacity and align with national developmental benchmarks. While this shift promotes efficiency and accountability, it also subjects the state to competitive pressures that may not fully account for its geographical constraints and infrastructural limitations. Thus, the emerging model of federal governance combines collaborative resource sharing with competitive performance evaluation, creating both opportunities for capacity building and potential sources of strain.

Overall, the results and discussion reveal that Centre–State relations in Arunachal Pradesh are defined by a complex and evolving equilibrium between cooperation and tension. Fiscal dependence, strategic governance, political alignment and institutional coordination collectively shape this equilibrium, producing a federal relationship that is highly collaborative in functional terms yet marked by periodic contestation over authority and autonomy. The analysis indicates that the sustainability of cooperative federalism in the state depends on continuous negotiation, mutual trust and a nuanced appreciation of its unique geopolitical and socio-cultural context. Through this lens, Arunachal Pradesh emerges as a distinctive case illustrating how Indian federalism adapts to frontier conditions, balancing national imperatives with regional aspirations within a dynamic constitutional framework.

### **7. CONCLUSION**

The study demonstrates that Centre–State relations in the context of Arunachal Pradesh are shaped by a distinctive blend of cooperative engagement and institutional tension, rooted in the broader framework of India's asymmetrical and centrally weighted federalism. The strategic location of the state along an international border, combined with its developmental constraints and fiscal dependence, necessitates a strong and continuous involvement of the



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Union government in governance, infrastructure development and security coordination. This structural reality has fostered a model of cooperative federalism that is pragmatic and functional, enabling the state to access financial resources, administrative support and strategic investments essential for its socio-economic advancement. At the same time, such cooperation operates within a hierarchical framework that occasionally constrains the effective exercise of state autonomy, particularly in fiscal decision-making, developmental planning and legislative governance.

The analysis further reveals that political alignment, gubernatorial discretion and constitutional interpretation play decisive roles in determining whether cooperation or tension predominates at any given time. Episodes of political instability, such as the constitutional crisis in Arunachal Pradesh, illustrate how federal institutions can become arenas of contestation, highlighting the need for adherence to constitutional conventions and democratic norms. Conversely, periods of political congruence between the Centre and the state tend to enhance policy coordination, expedite developmental initiatives and strengthen institutional trust. Thus, the federal relationship is not static but dynamically mediated through political negotiation, judicial oversight and administrative coordination, reflecting the evolving character of Indian federalism in frontier regions.

Overall, Centre–State relations in Arunachal Pradesh exemplify the operational complexities of governing a strategically sensitive and culturally diverse border state within a unified constitutional framework. The coexistence of cooperation and tension underscores that asymmetrical federalism, while necessary for addressing regional disparities and national security imperatives, must be continuously balanced through transparent communication, equitable fiscal arrangements and respect for democratic autonomy. The findings suggest that sustaining cooperative federalism in Arunachal Pradesh requires a nuanced approach that recognises the state's unique geopolitical context while ensuring that central intervention remains facilitative rather than overbearing. Such an approach would contribute to strengthening both national integration and regional self-governance, thereby reinforcing the resilience and adaptability of India's federal structure.

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