CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Although the Government of India terms ULFA as a terrorist group, the survey shows that general people, police and politicians, term ULFA as a rebel group. ULFA itself terms themselves as revolutionary political organization engaged in a liberation struggle against India. Some of the intellectuals have termed ULFA as terrorists or extremists. The different view on ULFA expressed by different sections of the society depends on the ideology, activities and sentiments.

The views of the respondents, except Pro-talk ULFA cadres, who belong to the Kamrup district of Assam, reflects the general sentiments of the people of the district which can be extrapolated to the state of Assam.

In response to question regarding foreign countries related with the activities of ULFA respondents viewed as a proxy war activities. Talukdar and Kalita view the foreign relations as ‘enemy of an enemy as a friend’. Most of the literature surveyed considered the links of ULFA with foreign countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Myanmar etc. as a technical necessity. ULFA’s support to the Kargil war on behalf of Pakistan and the ULFA-ISI links are termed as a wrong decision by most of the people surveyed, but the Pro-talk ULFA cadres view the support to these causes as a technical necessity to the fight against India. The views of the Ex-ULFA cadres differ in this regard; most members are silent on this issue, while nearly half of them considered these decisions as wrong on the part of ULFA.

Denying that the ISI of Pakistan supplied arms, Arabinda Rajkhowa claims that ULFA procured weapons as any other insurgent groups. But the head of the factional group, ULFA (I), Paresh Baruah disclosed to Bertil Lintner that Pakistan supported ULFA to set up their activities in Assam, mainly to divert the deployment of 8th Mountain Division from Kashmir to Assam, which would suit Pakistan’s interest. Lintner claims that the linkage of
Pakistan is understandable from the view that they wanted less army presence in Kashmir, but China maintains a linkage with extremist groups in the North-East India out of strategic and commercial interest. With respect to the linkage with Bangladesh, sour diplomatic relations with India after the construction of the Farrakka barrage in the Ganga in 1975 as well as other political factors was responsible for the ULFA-Bangladesh relations. Intelligence reports indicate that Chinese arms are making entry into India from Bangkok via Chittagong Hill Tracts, Romar bazar, and Solopy known as the golden triangle. Cox bazar was known as an important gun running point.

Sustenance of any movement depends on the sympathy it generates among the people. The people of Assam were overwhelmingly supportive of the ULFA in the earlier stage of their struggle. This view is reflected in the response to the questions posed to the common people, politicians and victims of violence in the district of Kamrup. Gradually, during the 1990’s, this support waned. Literatures available on ULFA also reflect the same trend in support by the people of Assam. Most of the respondents declined to comment on their support to the ULFA’s causes.

Aim of the organization is creation of independent scientific socialist nation in Assam; this is stated by Aditya and Nath in their discourses on ULFA. Nath goes on to state that the word independent does not local or partial self-governance, but as a sovereign nation in the world. The current social system in Assam is now under colonial exploitation, which is reflected in the economic and political infrastructure. Overthrowing this colonial system and thereby establishing a stable and strong socialistic system in Assam is the aim of ULFA. Deka, on the other hand, stresses on the three words ‘ULFA’s Swadhin Asom’ or ULFA’s Independent Assam, meaning self-determination for the people of Assam as the main aim of ULFA.
Regarding the objectives of ULFA, Deka, Talukdar and Kalita and Nath reiterates the objectives present in the constitution of ULFA, which is a society free from all kinds of exploitation. The growth of ULFA, mainly the creation of the ideology that the cadres followed was focal issues like exploitation of wealth, identity crisis and attitude of governments. The surveyed Ex-ULFA cadres joined the organization based on these issues. According to Pangging, the think-tank of the ULFA were unsure that the corrupt and indifferent government both at the centre and the state would not be able to conserve the national identity of the Assamese people and were involved in exploitation of the natural wealth of Assam. To counter this, ULFA emerged. Devi also lists a sense of alienation, negligence, rampant corruption, geographic location, economic imbalance, frustration among the youth and insecurity were the main causes for growth of ULFA.

The impact of the emergence of ULFA in both social and political life in Assam, the respondents in this study were of the opinion that there was some impact. The responses vary among the groups surveyed, general people viewing the impact as positive and negative, but the law enforcement agencies as negative only. The Ex-ULFA cadres, both Pro-talk and surrendered groups, view the impact as positive.

Social impact of emergence of ULFA on positive sides was seen as abolition of various anti-social activities like alcohol, gambling, prostitution and corruption, un-cultured Hindi songs, establishment of social unity by most of the people surveyed, general people, police personnel and victims of violence. In addition to these, ULFA made attempt for sensitizing indigenous Assamese crisis, increase of cultural awareness, major problems like drug addiction, gambling, lottery and social reformation, by politicians, Pro-talk ULFA cadres. Ex-ULFA cadres were of the opinion that ULFA was successful in addressing major issues like infiltration, nationality, identity crisis and demographic changes. General people surveyed think that ULFA was more successful in social reforms than the other issues.
Madhab states that genesis of most of the North-East insurgencies is either to preserve the unique indigenous identity or the lack of economic development.

On the negative social impact of ULFA, distrust among the common people, disintegration of social fabric, abduction and extortion, boycott of political functions and election and impact of education leading to brain drain were seen as the main factors by all sections of the surveyed people, barring the Ex-ULFA cadres. Among these factors, creation of distrust among the people was the most cited factor by all sections.

The creation of ULFA and its sustenance is seen as a political problem by all the sections of the people surveyed.

Most of the general people not connected in any way with the ULFA, the politicians, police and Ex-ULFA cadres view the ULFA as opportunists. This question did not elucidate any response from the politicians and the victims of violence.

Although the police personnel surveyed denied that they offered protection to Ex-ULFA cadres, the rest of the respondents opined that a nexus between Ex-ULFA and police existed. The K N Saikia Commission exposed the link between the Ex-ULFA cadres and security forces with their involvement in the secret killings of ULFA members’ families.

Rehabilitation of Ex-ULFA cadres by offering them economic packages on surrender and amnesty to the underground cadres to visit their families was not viewed as a permanent solution to the ULFA problem by the general people, politicians and the police personnel. The Ex-ULFA cadres put more emphasis on larger rehabilitation packages.

The following tactics for a permanent solution to ULFA problem in Assam was put to the respondents - Extra-judicial measures, anti-terrorism laws, peace talks, rehabilitation programmes, rigid border security and International pressure on ULFA. Of these, anti-terrorism laws were seen to be the most effective in curbing ULFA by most of the police

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personnel. Pro-talk ULFA, obviously, lays more stress on the peace talks than other measures, which is also supported by the views of the general people. Literary works on ULFA by different authors differ on their conclusion to the problem, those from the mainland India supporting military action with anti-insurgency laws and diplomatic relations with border nations, while those from Assam preferring a more moderate approach like peace talks. Most of the victims and the Ex-ULFA cadres favour revoking the anti-insurgency laws from the state.

The views of general people and Pro-talk ULFA on the police administration are overwhelmingly bad, while that of the police on the public support to anti-terrorism was very good. This shows that the general people do not want the perpetual state of terrorism in the state, but there is less faith in the machinery executing anti-terrorism activities. The crux of the problem lies in the general distrust of the people on police, which has been intensified by the actions of security personnel in their fight against the ULFA.

The porous international border of the state is claimed by many authors as one of the major drawbacks to fight against the ULFA. The result of the present investigation paints a different picture. The respondents were of the view that the porous border is not a hindrance to fight against the terrorists. Strong state machinery, political will and strong diplomatic pressure are needed to stop the cross-border infiltration of terrorists.

The major question whether the peace initiatives in its current form would be successful in solving the issue of ULFA is replied in the negative by most of the respondents barring the Pro-talk ULFA. This is evident from the fact that they have already initiated talks with the centre. Although the government recognizes only two such groups, the surrendered or captured ULFA leaders going by the name of Pro-talk ULFA and the faction which declared independence from the surrendered faction, ULFA (Independent) led by Paresh Baruah, the general people would add the third group, the Ex-ULFA or surrendered ULFA,
popularly known as SULFA to be a stakeholder in the peace process. While the Pro-talk group is for talks, the independent faction is silent against the process. The third group which enjoys state support and has cornered juicy business interests by virtue of them being ex-militants, creates a perception of mistrust on the minds of the people that the peace process, if it is successful, will create more such opportunistic individuals.

That the original mandate of the ULFA of a sovereign Assam has lost force is evident from the response of the respondents. The politicians, who are dependent on the democratic political system, are overwhelming unsupportive of the stand of ULFA on sovereignty. Those who have been hurt by the terrorist activities, the family members of the victims of violence, also do not support this stand. Assam Public Work’s survey in 2008 also gives the same picture that the general people do not recognize ULFA’s claim to sovereignty. Writers who have a leaning towards the militants, those ex-cadres like Pangging, still hopes for a sovereign Assam. Civil society initiatives like the Jatiya Avibartan led by Hiren Gohain has also cleverly side-lined the issue of sovereignty. The anti-talk faction of the ULFA still maintains the demand of sovereignty which is not supported by the respondents.

Indigenous control over natural resources in Assam is still supported by most of the respondents, implicating that the people are still not satisfied by the amount of royalty meted out to the state by the centre or how the royalty is being used locally for development of the state.

The Pro-talk and the Ex-ULFA cadres have now, by and large, returned to the mainstream, the former living in designated camps while the latter engaged in business. Regarding the views of the respondents on the members joining active politics, most of the respondents from all sections of the society, general people, police, politicians, victims, ex-ULFA and Pro-talk ULFA cadres, responded in the negative. A prominent leader of the Pro-talk cadres, Hira Sarania was elected to the Lok Sabha in the recently concluded Lok Sabha
elections from Kokrajhar. This shows the change in the Ex-ULFA cadre’s ideology of boycotting the Indian political mechanism. Instead of fighting the system, they are joining it may be to change it from inside. The futility of an armed struggle for social and political change has now been felt.

Regarding the violation of human rights by the security forces in the anti-insurgency operations, most of the respondents barring the politicians and the police, feel that human rights were violated by the security forces. The victims of violence were mainly general people, with only a small minority from the families of the ULFA cadres. Most of the atrocities were perpetrated by secret killers (50%) and the security forces (22%), while only 4% are attributed to the insurgents. Most of the atrocities were committed on suspicion and in fake encounters, without the person being in contact with ULFA or being involved in anti-social activities. Many of the killings were for giving shelter to militants, either willingly or unwillingly.

Although most of the victims approached the judiciary or the human rights commission, only half of them got a positive response. The different laws empowering the security forces to fight insurgents have tied the hands of the judiciary in dealing with such cases of human rights violation. In spite of clear implication of the involvement of police and the Ex-ULFA cadres in secret killings by the Saikia Commission of enquiry, the guilty are not punished.

In the political scenario of the state, the ULFA played a major role in disrupting elections by issuing threats to politicians. There was a nexus between a particular political party and ULFA, the latter helping them to win election. Most of the politicians were non-committal about the involvement of ULFA in their political career. Those who replied in the positive were helped by the ULFA in winning election by issuing threats to the opposing candidates. Those replying in the negative lists threat to life, money extortion and hindrance
in election campaign as the methods by which ULFA exerted their influence in the political system. Using militants to disrupt the political process like elections is common in India, cases being reported from Kashmir, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal. ULFA is seen to be directly involved in the election by most of the respondents, mostly in 1985, 1996 and in 2001.

Declining social and parental control in the post AASU led Assam movement period, lack of industry etc. forced these youths to channelize their energy into the most glamorous of activity, wielding guns. Nath\textsuperscript{121} arguing that the insurgency problem in Assam is basically a result of a failed state and military approach to problem solving. According to him, poor governance, rampant corruption, inequitable distribution of wealth, regional disparities in income and economic development, military approach to issues like Assam agitation on foreigners issue, perceiving the Assamese peoples fear of becoming minority in their own land as separatism followed by brute repression by the Centre, thereby giving birth to secessionist sentiments, the continued slide down of the per capita income of the state, all are symptoms of a failed state.

The effect of the AASU led movement can be directly visualized in the affiliation of the ULFA cadres. The cadres were drawn either from AASU or AJYSP, 88% of the Pro-talk group and 58% of the Ex-ULFA’s were members or leaders of these organizations. They were already motivated, aware about the issues and objectives of ULFA. Nath\textsuperscript{122} states that most of the cadres of ULFA were drawn from these two organizations. For the cadres, self-determination was the main issue in the ULFA struggle. Some Ex-ULFA members also list secession, extreme nationalism and extremism as minor issues.

\textsuperscript{122} Nath, Manoj Kumar, ULFA, Xeujia Xapon, Tezrangaltihax, Aank-Baak, Guwahati, 2013.
Infiltration, national identity, demographic change or identity crisis and inter-state migration were seen as major factors in the emergence of ULFA by both the Pro-talk and Ex-ULFA cadres. The Ex-ULFA cadres surrendered because they were fed up with the violence, but judging by the pattern of arrest of these members, it is seen that 88% were not arrested under any anti-insurgency laws. This implies that only a handful (12%) of the cadres surveyed were actually involved in insurgency, the majority surrendering only to reap the benefits of the economic package offered by the government.

The ethnic civil war in Srilanka on demands of a partial self-government which took the lives of more than 60000 civilians and with innumerable loss of property finally ended after 30 years with strong International intervention, mainly India which was militarily stronger. Although the social and economic consequences of the conflict could be partially reversed, the loss of thousands of lives is irreversible.

In the case of Northern Ireland, the religious conflict which started in 1860’s resulted in complete social segregation of communities. Positive political outcomes such as the signing of the peace agreements between the Catholics and the Protestants and the laying down of the arms by the IRA came about because the NI conflict was violent and there was pressure on the British government from the international community to make sure that a peaceful outcome between the IRA and the NI government was achieved by having a peace agreement between both the Catholics and the Protestants. As a result of the conflict, Catholics today enjoy better treatment by the Protestants as the world started to pay attention to the plight of the Catholics and the discrimination they were facing because of the civil war. This attention forced the NI government and the British government to gradually seek ways to treat the Catholics better and give them equality. Hence, while the conflict created harm, it also led to fairer treatment for the Catholics eventually.
In both these cases, International intervention can be viewed as a major factor in resolving crisis or civil war.

Although the root cause varies, India is also fighting the same kind of war as Srilanka or Britain in containing groups whose aspirations are at crossroads with the mainstream. In Kashmir and in Assam, the legacy of the extremism is never ending, creating suffering to the civilians, social alienation, and economic slowdown.

New Delhi’s policy or rather the lack of policy in dealing with extremism is a ‘wait and watch policy’ for ‘battle fatigue of the militants to set in’ in a hope that the genuine demands of the people would go away over time. For permanent peace and development, the government must come up with a solution which, while keeping within the boundary of the constitution of India, offers lasting peace. Political pressure from a strong nation would make the leadership in the centre to take serious note and to resolve the crisis amicably.

Based on the results and observations, the following findings were drawn from the study:

- ULFA and Government activities have been increased suspicion and disintegration of social fabric in the society of Assam.
- Insurgency-counter insurgency activities victimized and violated the human rights of people in Assam.
- ULFA and Government activities affected the socio-political life in Assam in general and particularly in the Kamrup district.
- The Robinhood image of ULFA has been declining.
- The original issues like control over natural resources, protection of indigenous people of Assam are still relevant.
- The social reformation steps of ULFA like punishment to the alcoholic did have a positive impact on Assamese society.
• Easy money and syndicate system becoming a common feature.
• The Assamese nationalist thinking has been increased.
• The feelings of exploitation and deprivation growing in the minds of people of Assam.
• ULFA created awareness among the people of Assam against Hindi Song culture.
• ULFA influenced in the elections in Assam by band call, supporting political parties in elections of Assam.

Conclusion

This study aims to explore and understand the effect of ULFA on the social and political scenario of Assam. In this quest, surveys were undertaken to find out the responses of different groups of people, actors in the great game of insurgency, particularly of ULFA in Assam, which has been continuing in this region for the last three decades. The responses received from the individuals, summarized in the previous chapters show that social and political life of the people has been invariably changed by the long drawn-out battles between the militants and the security forces.

The social life of the people of Assam was greatly affected by the emergence and activities of ULFA. The organization, which was started in 1979, gradually became large. Coming at the juncture when the anti-foreigners movement was in full swing, they created a niche among the students, who were already primed by the movement against illegal Bangladeshis. Although this movement was primarily non-violent, the pent up anger at the step motherly attitude of the Center and police highhandedness resulted in the AASU and AJYSP members joining ULFA. That the organization was a violent offspring of the AASU led movement can be debated, but the manner in which it was created, particularly the timing, strongly suggests that ULFA was the creation of the governments, both at the centre and at state, inept handling at mitigating aspirations of the people of Assam.
The questionnaire aimed at the different sections of the society, e.g., police, public, victims, politicians, Ex-ULFA and Pro-talk ULFA cadres shows a cross-sectional view on the social change being affected. All the sections view ULFA more as a rebel group, ignoring the secessionist demands of the ULFA and not as terrorists or extremists.

Although the common people always cooperated in anti-insurgency activities of the police, they were conditioned to welcome any guest, even if they be militiants. This has resulted in the common people bearing the most pain in the fight, first from the security forces, then from the surrendered groups and the ULFA. The developmental activities of the region were at best at standstill and the issues with which the governments changed, still remain problems. Unabated migrations, decreasing economic avenues, lack of infrastructure, increased unemployment were seen as problems. The way the peace talks are progressing is also discouraging.

On the positive impact of ULFA on Assamese society, ULFA were successful in curbing anti-social activities to some extent, showing there were some positive impact of the ULFA on the Assamese society. Being an insurgent organization, there were negative impacts also like increase in suspicion, hinder in elections and increase in brain drain from Assam etc.

The views expressed by the people on the effect on social life of the people by the ULFA movement show that it had more bad than good affect. Although the positive steps taken by ULFA succeeded at the beginning, the negative side surpassed the good works. Public punishment was seen as a major effect on the social reformation effort by ULFA followed by indigenous issues. The issue of control of natural resources by the local people was still seen as valid.

Politicians were against the abduction, bomb explosion and extortion activities of ULFA. Public support for ULFA is seen as decreasing, attributed to foreign links of ULFA.
The ULFA problem is seen as a political one. The socio-political impact of Ex-ULFA activities is seen more on the negative and the ULFA were not successful in protecting the socio-political integration in society, but everybody feels that there were some positive social impacts of ULFA.

The sad chapter in the ULFA regime is evident in the victims, who got burnt on both ends. Most of the victims were general people, cultivators and businessmen, who, willingly or unwillingly were involved in the fight. Half of the victims were victimized by secret killers. A combination of ULFA, Ex-ULFA, police, secret killers etc. terrorized the people, most of the victims killed in fake encounters and on suspicion of giving shelter to insurgents. They faced harassment from police, violating human rights. Regarding the social impact of ULFA, majority sees the positive along with negative social impacts.

The Pro-talk ULFA cadres think that they played a constructive role of social and cultural life of Assam and were not silent on evil social issues. ULFA, according to them, was successful in sensitizing about indigenous issues, cultural awareness, eradicating social evils with public punishment for social reformation. The roles played by the Ex-ULFA were also constructive and they were vocal on social issues like corruption, lottery, gambling etc. All of them feel the activities of ULFA as well as the Pro-talk and Ex-ULFA was affecting socio-political life in Assam. On the social impact of ULFA, there were positive social impacts like abolition of antisocial activities. The negative social impacts were seen as less.

Majority of the people think that the activities of the ULFA, Ex-ULFA and Pro-talk ULFA affect politics in Assam. Regarding a permanent solution to the ULFA problem, stringent anti-terrorism laws under a strong political regime would bring lasting peace. Porous international border is a hindrance to the solution of the ULFA problem. ULFA created problems in elections. The general public did not think that there was a positive role of ULFA in the socio-political integration of Assamese society. Nearly two-third of the
people sees the ULFA problem as a political one. There was both positive and negative political impact of ULFA, but the negative impacts were more than the positive ones. Almost all people do not favour ULFA/Ex-ULFA leaders joining politics. The views of the politicians reveal that there was a strong politician-ultra nexus. Some portions of the politicians surveyed had sympathy for ULFA and other extremist groups. Although they do not support the anti-government stand of the ULFA like bandh calls on Republic Day, Independence Day, demand for sovereignty etc. most think that the ULFA problem is a political one. The socio-political impact of Ex-ULFA activities were viewed mostly in the negative. ULFA offered threats to opposition party, threat to life, money extortion and opposition to holding political rally and ULFA was directly involved in the outcome of 1985, 1991 and 2001 elections. Most of the respondents do not support ULFA joining parliamentary politics.

Almost all Pro-talk ULFA have positive opinion on major political issues like infiltration, nationality, identity, demographic change and control over the natural resources. Unlike the other groups surveyed, they do not believe that the ULFA problem is a political problem. They do not want to join active politics; favour an amendment of the constitution to make the government responsible to public sentiment and hope that the charter of demands to the central government would solve the ULFA problem. The Ex-ULFA cadres believe that ULFA revolution was reformist, not a civil war with the government but was a class struggle in favour of indigenous people of Assam. Thus the emergence of ULFA on the issues of infiltration, nationality, demographic change and inter-state migration, is seen more of a social one than a political one. This change of ideology of the two groups, one who has surrendered and is leading plush lives, sometimes by intimidating established businesses and the other leading a semi-confined life in the designated camps, shows that with proper strategies, the menace of insurgency can be curbed. All it requires is political will and a clean
and strong administration. Whether the problem of ULFA is a social or a political one, concerted efforts are needed on both fronts to make the ‘misguided youths’ see reason and to end the conflict.