1.1. Introduction

United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) is an insurgent organization founded on 7th April, 1979 at the site of Rang-Ghar, a historic structure constructed by Ahom King Pramatta Singha (1744-1751 AD). The ULFA is a separatist group from Assam, among many other such groups in North-East India classified as a terrorist group by Govt. of India, while the US State Department lists it under “Other groups of concern”\(^1\). The ULFA considers itself a ‘revolutionary political organisation’ engaged in ‘liberation struggle’ against India for the establishment of a sovereign, socialist Assam through an armed struggle. ULFA claims itself that it is not a secessionist organisation, because Assam was never a part of India. The ULFA’s aim was for an independent Assam (Swadhin Asom) inclusive of all communities who live in Assam, even if they do not speak Assamese language. ULFA declared- “our struggle is against the colonial rule of Delhi.”\(^2\)

The term ‘insurgency’ denotes an armed rebellion by a section of the population against the legally constituted governments with the sympathy of the local population obtained through coercion or voluntarily. The literal meaning of insurgency is a rebellion. It is an act of revolt. Insurgency is not synonymous with terrorism, separatism; guerrilla warfare etc. but many faces of insurgency are secessionism, super-national and ethnic movements. Major General S. G. Gomtatkere defines insurgency “is a ‘reciprocal violence’ in

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\(^1\) Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia, Accessed Friday, May 08, 2015
\(^2\) Constitution of ULFA
which both the establishment and the challenger require the support and sympathy of the sizeable section of society”

“Insurgency is an extra-constitutional, compositely progressive and variegated struggle launched against the incumbent authority by the consciously mobilized sections of indigenous masses for the fulfilment of certain conceptual goals, manifesting emancipation”

Paul Wilkinson says “Insurgency is a relatively value neutral concept denoting a rebellion or rising against any government in power or the civil authorities … In the contemporary international system, and historically, insurgency is generally manifested as low-intensity conflict rather than as full-scale conventional warfare...”

The Oxford dictionary defines the meaning of insurgency as a rising in opposition to lawful authority; rebellion. An insurgent is a rebel.

In the Webster’s dictionary, the meaning of insurgency is the quality or state of being an insurgent; a condition of revolt against a government that is less than an organized revolution and is not recognized as belligerency. An insurgent is a person who revolts against civil authority or an established government or one who acts contrary to the policies and decisions of his political party.

It is clear from the above definitions that insurgency aims at voicing the legitimate rights of a particular group of people who have long been suffering from political and economic injustice within the state. But it is an illegitimate phenomenon to fight for legitimate rights of particular strata of a society through an armed struggle. It is an unconstitutional movement that is launched against the majority by a minority. It is a

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4 Anand, V.K., Conflict in Nagaland, Chanakya Publication, Delhi, 1980
struggle between non-ruling and ruling authorities in which the former consciously employs political resources like organisational skill, propaganda and demonstrations and instruments of violence to establish legitimacy for some aspects of the political system it considers illegitimate. Insurgency is like a virus, attacking a cell from within; they seek political power within a nation state by overthrowing an established government\textsuperscript{7}.

ULFA’s struggle for emancipation from suffering of economic, political injustice was a legitimate demand. At the earlier stage people of Assam supported ULFA for their Robinhood image through pro-social activities. But in later time ULFA lost their support base due to their activities. The legitimate demand of ULFA against the social, economic, political injustice to Assam become illegitimate through the violent activities like bomb blasts, extortion, intimidation etc. People of Assam are the real and ultimate victim of the violent activities of ULFA.

Radical social, political and economic changes are the goals of insurgency and an insurgent is the agent to bring such changes. The process for change is always initiated by the insurgent, whose freedom is unlimited except the fear of being detected by the state machinery which restricts his movements to some extent. Since the insurgent is from the very place where insurgency takes place, he has access to the social fabric besides his relatives and friends, which helps him secure public support and take shelter in the midst of the common people.

Assam is famous for the tradition of entertaining guests whenever they get the opportunity. This sentiment is exploited by the insurgents to their benefit. Even mere survival is a great victory for an insurgent to carry out his activities silently.

Although military or armed forces are essential to counter the threats posed to the state by insurgency and there are numerous examples of using these forces throughout the

\textsuperscript{7}Mochaities, R.Thomas, The ‘New’ Terrorism: Myths and reality, Pentagon Press, 2007.
world, but it is not the total and permanent solution of the problem. Conflict transformation rather than conflict resolution can also offer a lasting solution.

Few countries can claim to have faced problems of secessionism and insurgency as serious as those of India. India faced such problems right at its birth in 1947 in Hyderabad and Naga Hills. Soon after that the state faced the problem in the then Madras province and Telengana. In the succeeding decades surfaced insurgency, terrorism and militancy problems in Mizo hills, Kashmir, Punjab, Assam etc.

Post-1947, in keeping with their traditions, some tribes of the North-East India took recourse to violent means to express dissent. Thus in the first three decades of India’s Independence, the North-East was characterised by socio-political instability, which resulted in economic backwardness. But New Delhi’s policy of winning them over through politico-military means has been seen to be succeeding. Liberal economic package also are helping the region to come out of its isolationist attitudes.

Although the British started systematic administration in the region, its extension and systemization was a post-independence phenomenon. This was viewed suspiciously by certain extremist elements, and condemned as interference in social, political and economic spheres of their tribes.

In spite of sustained endeavours, India has not solved the problem of violence fully. Most tribes have come round and settled to democratic ways within India, some still carrying out their movements.

Insurgent groups reflect the following statement through the perpetrators as key criteria of insurgency such as-

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8 Mahanta, N.G., Confronting the State: ULFA’s Quest for Sovereignty, Sage publications India Pvt Ltd., New Delhi, 2013
i) **Violence**: The only characteristic of insurgency generally agreed upon is that insurgency involves violence and threat of violence. The property destruction by liberation group considered as violence.

ii) **Psychological impact and fear**: The insurgent group carried out its activities in such a way that it created fear psychosis in the minds of the people. Insurgents attack on national symbol, to show their power and to attempt to shake the foundation of the country or society affected very badly the nation as a whole. The negative impact on the government and the state is far reaching.

iii) **Perpetrated for a political goal**: Many acts of insurgencies have a political purpose. The violent activities are political tactics, which are used by activists when they believe that no other means will affect the kind of change they desire. The purpose of insurgency is to exploit the media in order to achieve maximum attainable publicity as an amplifying force multiplier in order to influence the targeted audiences, to reach short and mid-term political goals or desired long term end states.

iv) **Deliberate targeting of non-combatants**: The insurgents have specific selection of civilians as direct targets. Their suffering accomplishes the insurgent’s goals of installing fear, getting their message out to an audience or otherwise satisfying the demands of their often political agenda.

v) **Unlawfulness or illegitimacy**: The activities of insurgents are unlawfulness or illegitimacy, though this criterion is inherently problematic and not universally accepted.

vi) **Pejorative use of insurgent**: The terms of insurgents are often used as political labels to condemn violence or the threat of violence by certain actors as immortal, indiscriminate or to condemn an entire segment of a population.  

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The tactics used by insurgents are often a large-scale, unresolved political conflict. The type of conflict varies widely include—Secession of a territory to form a new sovereign state; Dominance of territory or resources by various groups; Imposition of a particular form of government; Economic deprivation of a population and opposition to a domestic government or occupying army. Both the militants and the state depend on threat, coercion and military intervention, use of small arms and light weapons to achieve their goals.

Specific types of responses to insurgency activities include: Targeted laws, criminal procedures, deportations and enhanced police powers; Target hardening, such as locking doors or adding traffic barriers; Pre-emptive or reactive military action; Increased intelligence and surveillance activities; Pre-emptive humanitarian activities; More permissive interrogation and deletion policies; Official acceptance of torture as valid tool; Media exposure against insurgency activities.

Detailed studies on the problem of insurgency in Assam revealed that the state has been constrained by both insurgency and counter-insurgency activities. These are penetrating in almost all fronts of private as well as public life of the people. The heavy loss of men and materials, unbearable suffering of the families of the victims due to insurgency and counter-insurgency activities reduce the status of human beings to that of wild animals. The social fabric has been broken into pieces. The gap between the public and the administration has not only widened, their relationship has also been constrained by mutual suspicion and tension.

The problem of insurgency in the state started more than thirty five years ago. Thousands of lives have been lost. Sorrows and sufferings of the families of the deceased persons are acute and deep rooted. Extortion of money, killing of persons, illegal trades etc. are increasing day by day. Political leaders are also giving provocative and contradictory comments and blaming each other for any incident that occurs in the state.
These kinds of activities are responsible for creating very complicated and conflicting situation in the state.

While the Assam movement failed to make the government to give due hearing to their demands through non-violent and democratic means, a section of the leaders started a violent movement bringing the situation from bad to worse. Even now the process of dialogue between the governments and the ULFA leaders is most welcome. It shows the significance of the democratic or non-violent method in the process of solving the problem.

1.2. Causes of creation of ULFA

The feelings of deprivation among the people of Assam since 1826 is claimed to be the major cause of creation of ULFA. The suppressed voice which is deeply ingrained in an Assamese inner mind is mirrored in the phenomena known as ULFA. While dealing with the violent movement with a strong hand, the State must give patient hearing to them to be successful in its effort to control it.

The non-fulfilment of aspirations of different ethnic groups and the feelings of negligence and exploitation amongst them may be considered as a driving force that propelled ULFA. It is true that the organization is losing its base in urban as well as in rural areas, but the original issues on which the organization had risen, resource control and of land are relevant even now. The unchecked illegal immigration across the border and the internal migration from different parts of the country alienate the indigenous people of Assam in their own historical homeland.

While looking to the past one finds that in 1853 Maniram Dewan and Ananda Ram Dhekial Phukan submitted memorandums to Moffat Mills. Nilomony Phukan, Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury and Gyannanath Bora wanted secession of Assam from India. Asamiya
Samrakhini Sabha (1937) and Assam Deka Dal submitted a memorandum to Jawaharlal Nehru for secession of Assam from India. Ahom Association in a meeting held on 28th September, 1944 at Lakhimpur, demanded a sovereign Assam. In January, 1948, Asamiya Samrakhini Sabha (Assam Jatiya Mahasabha) under Ambikagiri Roy Choudhury demanded for declaration of a separate country.

In the context of then undivided Assam, there were important developments which explains the notion of divided sovereignty by the Congress party, the discourse on sovereignty in Jorhat jail during 1940-41 and Assam Congress’s insistence on a separate constitution of Assam on the eve of grouping plan in July 1946.

Gopinath Bordoloi was arrested on 11 December 1940 as the first individual satyagrahi. Other stalwarts of freedom struggle like Bishnu Ram Medhi, Fakharuddin Ali Ahmed, Gauri Kanta Talukdar, Lakheswar Barooah, Maulana Tayyebulla, Omeo Kumar Das and Krishna Das were also arrested. During the jail term, Bordoloi initiated discussions on the future political system of Assam and requested all the prominent Congressmen to participate in the discourse. Some of the important issues which were discussed in the meetings were future territorial boundary of India, Assam’s future political relations with India and Assam’s internal problems and their solution. As regards to the relationship between the centre and the provinces, the group was confronted with two general issues which they considered the two sides of the same coin: Where should sovereignty lie, with the centre or the provinces and to whom should the residuary powers be assigned. According to Tayyebulla, some, including him refused to oblige, calling these meetings as the Rastra Gathan Sabha of Bordoloi having no substantial support from others. Tayyebulla tried to demean such meetings and asserted that the object of these meetings was to find ways and means of bringing about an independent national state of
Assam, separated from, and independent of India either with the help of Indian National Army (INA) or the Japanese.  

Fakharuddin Ali Ahmed was the most important protagonist of the concept of provincial sovereignty that would enable the provinces to delegate certain powers like defense, external affairs, etc. to the Centre, granting of residuary power to the states. It is not known whether Ali Ahmed also advocated separation of Assam, but the group in general favoured maximum amount of autonomy to the states. Thus, prominent Congressmen of Assam, way back in the 1940s, advocated a confederation-like system where the states would have maximum powers and the constituting provinces would delegate some power to the Centre. The meeting which took place on 12 January 1941 was of particular significance.  

The second perspective of the Congress leaders can be gathered when Assam was to be included with the Group C scheme of the Cabinet Mission. The Governor of Assam summoned the Assam Legislative Assembly on 16 July 1946 to elect 10 representatives to the Constituent Assembly as per the provision of the Cabinet Mission Scheme. Gopinath Bordoloi moved the resolution: “Whereas this Assembly after a very careful consideration of the statement made by the British Cabinet delegation and the Viceroy on May 16 last is of the opinion that the province of Assam has an undoubted claim to have the constitution of the province framed and settled by its own representatives elected to the Constituent Assembly, and that it will be detrimental to the interests of the province of Assam to form any section or sections or group or groups with any other province of British India for the purpose of settling the constitution of the province of Assam and whereas this Assembly is of the opinion that no group constitution should be set up for any group of provinces including there in the provinces of Assam and that no provincial subjects in which the

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10 Barooah, Nirode Kumar, “Gopinath Bordoloi: Indian Constitution and Centre-Assam Relations”, Publication Board of Assam, Guwahati, 1990
province of Assam is interested or concerned should be dealt with by any such section or
group of provinces this Assembly directs its ten representatives elected by it as laid down
in the manner as set forth below: That the said representatives shall frame and settle a
constitution for the provinces of Assam at a meeting or meetings at which only they, that
is, representatives elected for the Constituent Assembly, by the Assam Legislative
Assembly shall take part”¹¹.

The same Assembly resolution also instructed the representatives not to take part in
any meetings and to resist all or any attempt made to set up a group constitution for the
settlement of questions related to the province of Assam. Bordoloi said that there were two
motives behind the motion. The first was that Assam’s representatives would alone frame
the provincial constitution; secondly, in all matters in which Assam would have relations
with other provinces, she would not be governed or dictated by majority of votes of the
group¹².

From the beginning, Assam had to fight for more financial gain which was rejected
by the Central leaders. Omeo Kumar Das said, “My province Assam has been the source
of contribution to the central exchequer to the extent of nearly rupees eight crores annually
in the shape of excise and export duty on tea and petrol. But the subvention that was given
to Assam was only rupees thirty lakhs. I don’t find any change in the outlook today.”¹³

It was believed that under a single citizenship the distinctive composite character of
the Assamese people would not be maintained. Girin Phukan argued “The Assamese elite
apprehended that common citizenship would not safeguard the interest of the Assamese
people.”

¹¹ Assam Legislative Assembly Proceeding, 1946, 9:785-797
¹² Bhuyan, A C and De Sibopada (Eds.), “Political History of Assam”, Government of Assam,
1980, 3:366-371
¹³ Assam Legislative Assembly Proceedings, 1, 1949, 20
The following were the three apprehensions of the Assamese elites.

1. Assam was worried about the attitude of the Central leadership in extracting Assam’s natural resources to the maximum extent possible without giving the return benefit to Assam. Bordoloi explained this to the cabinet Mission and to the other Central leaders. In order to enable Assam to utilise its resources in its own interest, Bordoloi urged maximum autonomy to the state.

2. To protect Assam’s identity from unchecked immigration, it wanted autonomy so that it could regulate its own citizenship policy. For this purpose, the Assamese elite demanded dual citizenship.

3. The provincial leaders were worried about gradual dominance of the non-Assamese trading and middle-class community over the culture and economy of Assam.

The protagonists of the freedom struggle in Assam contemplated a province which will be autonomous to fix its own destinations as an inseparable unit of the Indian state.

The leaders of the Indian freedom struggle barring Gandhi and a few others were in a great hurry to capture power. In the process they neglected some of the genuine issues of the region. The question of settling the refugees from newly created East Pakistan in the state was great concern for Assam. The period from 1947 to 1985 saw attempts for assertion of resources, language and identity by the people of the region. The exploitation of the oil sector of Assam and no interest in establishing a new refinery was the example of central government’s apathy towards Assam which started a movement for the establishment of a large refinery in Assam in 1975.

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14Mahanta, N.G., Confronting the State: ULFA’s Quest for Sovereignty, Sage publications India Pvt Ltd., New Delhi, 2013
Conflict with the Indian State through regional movements and militancy was seen during the period from 1979 to 2005. The Assam Movement against illegal foreigners surfaced the already palpable secessionist feeling in Assam and laid down the foundation for the growth of a militant movement by ULFA. The secessionist sentiments have been articulated in different regional movements, Language Movement, 1960; Refinery Movement, 1967; Movement on the issue of medium of instruction, 1972 and Anti-foreigner Movement, 1979-85. The regional political party that came out as a result of the Assam Accord failed to address the structural issues such as resource control, more powers to the state and economic development of the state, resulting in the feeling of exploitation by the Centre. For majority of the Assamese this was the last fight to ensure their identity and culture.

A peasant-based movement, Krishak Mukti Sangram Samity (KMSS), established in 2005, whose struggles for land, forest and water resources acquired a new dimension. This movement was started in the Doyang-Tengani region of the Golaghat district in 2002-2003 for protection of land and forest rights. When the government started evicting settlers, two organisations named Brihhattar Tengani Unnayan Sangram Samity and Dayang Mukti Sangram Samity were formed under the leadership of Akhil Gogoi. The movement extended its activities in the districts of Nagaon, Dhemaji and Lakhimpur in order to raise voice for poor peasants and forest dwellers.

ULFA in Assam represents, in the terminology of Dough McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly, a ‘contentious politics’.\(^\text{15}\) It represents a continuum with other non-violent social movements, political parties and interest groups. Claimants like ULFA can acquire access to power and can adapt to institutional politics and they become more like interest groups or political parties, like ULFA’s Pro-talks leader Hira Sarania who

\(^{15}\) Baruah, Sanjib, Separatist Militants and Contentious Politics in Assam, India. Asian Survey, pp. 49, 2009
contested in Lok Sabha election from Kokrajhar constituency as independent candidate and who, later on was expelled from the organisation for violation of rules and regulations. From that point, ULFA’s violence is an instrumental violence, the basic premise of which is to bring certain structural changes in the behaviour and functioning of the Indian State.

Insurgency is conceptualized as a product of lack of development and unemployment by a group of contemporary writers. Security experts view groups like ULFA as puppets in the hands of foreign forces. On the other hand, academicians, particularly from the region, tend to ascribe the failure of the State as the premise for militancy, overlooking the role of external forces. Such contradictory half-truths distort the actual ground reality.

Factors influencing the growth of insurgency are discussed below.

**Other armed groups that subsequently merged into ULFA:**

ULFA was not the first organization to have espoused the cause of secessionism by violent means in post-Independence period. Before the growth of ULFA, there was a number of small armed fringe outfits that tried to fight with the Indian State. These groups had acted as the precursors for separatist environment in Assam and facilitated an atmosphere for the growth of ULFA. There were some distinct militant groups before the full-scale launch of ULFA.

Most notable among them were the militant wing of the Assam movement against illegal foreigners, Assam People’s Liberation Army (APLA), Brachin National Liberation Army (BNLA), United Liberation Front (ULF) and Lachit Sena. There were some other loose extremist groups in Assam like North-East Regional Defense Army (NERDA).

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Seven Unit Liberation Army (SULA), and United Liberation Army of Seven States (ULASS) etc. There was yet another group called Jagrata Matri Mukti Bahini (JMMB) around Pathsala area of lower Assam. Some other organizations which took up arms but took no time to fizzle out were Lachit Bahini, Mukti Sena, Adam Sena, etc.

Non-violent Organizations were AASU, Jatiyatabadi Dal and Asom Yuvak Samaj etc.

Militant wings of Assam movement against illegal foreigner’s launched by AASU: Assam Liberation Army (ALA) was formed on the line of PLA of Manipur under the leadership of Atul Bora, Bharat Narah, Lachit Kalita, Debo Dutta Borkotoki, Dilip Kumar Mahanta, Abhijit Sarma, Jaynath Sarma and others. Assam’s first serial bomb blasts are said to have been committed by the ALA on 1st January 1983 and 31st December 1992. Jaynath Sarma was the chief of a volunteer force near Mangaldai that tried to mobilise youth against the illegal foreigners.

Assam People’s Liberation Army (APLA): APLA was born on 10 December 1979 at the residence of Chandra Choudhury of Jamugurihat. Debodhar Kalita was the chairman; Lalu Bhuyan, Jiten Bhuyan, Paran Baruah, Debo Barua, Nimesh Saikia and Khagen Kalita were the vice Chairmen; Arpan Bezbaruah was the general secretary while Putul Bora, Bijoy Chakraborty and Hiten Goswami were in charge of foreign affairs. The APLA had its own student’s wing under Abhijit Kalita known as All Assam Liberation Organization (AALO).

The organization attracted a large number of youths from lower Assam and had a larger membership than ULFA. The APLA was larger and better organised than ULFA at first, and it concentrated on cadre-formation. Most of the APLA leaders gave up the path of armed secession following the Assam Accord and installation of the Asom Gana
Parishad government under Prafulla Kumar Mahanta. APLA vanished with the majority of its member returning home and a few obstinate ones joining the ULFA.

Under the leadership of Munin Nobis and Sailen Dutta Knowar, some Guwahati based APLA members refused to give up the secessionist path and joined ULFA after the surrender of Arpan Bezbaruah. Both Munin Nobis and Sailen Dutta Knowar were to play a crucial role in establishing ULFA in lower Assam and were the undisputed leaders of the Kamrup district committee till their surrender in 1992.

**Brachin National Union (BNU):** Brachin National Union was another important armed group that tried to liberate Assam, the North-East region and the larger parts of Chindwin river regions. Naren Gohain alias Noyan Singh alias Baba of Nagaon was the most important leader of the organization. In fact, Naren Gohain can be said to be the pioneer of arrested rebellion in Assam. His attempt for an armed group started in June-July, 1975 when he tried to mobilise about 10 Assamese for an armed resurrection with the help of Naga groups in Mokokchung areas of Nagaland. After the failure of the first attempt, he tried once again in 1977-78 when he contracted NSCN in Mon district of Nagaland. Both the attempts had failed and he started working with Assam Jatiyatabadi Dal which was the next best option for solving the nagging problems of Assam.

Naren Gohain was never satisfied with the current state of affairs. In the Pen friend section of Assamese magazine Trishul (June-July issue, 1979), he requested for ‘friends with revolutionary minds’ which was accepted by Biman Das of Podumoni village in Puranigudam and Durlabh Tamuli who were members of PLA. Gohain subsequently became a top leader in PLA after obtaining training in Myanmar and Bangladesh. However, he was caught in 1982 by 17th Rajput rifles in Manipur and was kept in jail for several months in Alipur, Imphal and Nasik. After coming out from jail, he along with Tomba Singh of Manipur and Lalthanhawla opened BNU. However, later on, the
organization under the leadership of Gohain became more Assam centric. Some other members of the organization were Tuntun Moral, Biswajit Bhuyan and Robin Deka of Guwahati; Biren Sharma of Mangaldai; Sambhu Saikia and Amiya Bora of Nagaon.

The main aim of the organization was to create an independent sovereign state comprising western part of the Chindwin River and North-Western to South-Western part up to Cox Bazar of Bangladesh, including all North-Eastern states and Kamatapur. The term ‘Brachin’ was derived out of the combination of the first two syllables of the Brahmaputra and Chindwin rivers.

United Liberation Front (ULF): ULF was formed in 1981-82 in upper Assam in which Borun Saikia and Indra Hazarika were the important leaders. Their activities were mostly concentrated in Tinsukia and Dibrugarh districts and its aim was to drive out the illegal foreigners from Assam. This group later joined into ULFA.

APLA was more driven by the nationalist issues of Assam like Delhi’s exploitation, lack of control over resources, illegal immigration and plunder of resources by the North Indians, etc. The BNU’s aim, on the other hand, was bigger and larger. They wanted to create a big federation as they believed all the exploited units of the region need to come together for a unified struggle against New Delhi. But the organizations slowly fizzled out and many of their cadres either had surrendered or joined ULFA. There were series of segregated militant activities in Assam from 1983 till 1985. Dilip Sharma from Jagiroad’s Oriya Gaon Chariali and Kishore Hazarika (he was killed by ULFA) from Mangaldai in 1983 tried to create militant wings with an aim to create an independent Assam. Sunil Nath, a CPI (ML) activist, Partha Pratim Bharali, the then general secretary of Arya Vidyapith College, Sailen Dutta Konwar, a student leader from B Barooah College, Munin Nobis, the then general secretary of Cotton College and many more were attracted to the secessionist ideology and were of the firm belief that Delhi would not listen
to the voice of non-violence. Most of them had joined APLA and then became members of ULFA.

1.3. Theoretical perspectives

Several theoretical approaches have been advanced to explain how and why insurgency problem spread out through the world. Some of them are elaborated here.

**Franz Fanon theory:** How does one explain the necessity and justifiability of violence as a historical necessity by ULFA? Franz Fanon could provide theoretical understanding to the method of violence. Dedicated to the Algerian revolution, Fanon was concerned with the theory and praxis of violence. In his early writings, Fanon analyzed the phenomenon of alienation under the conditions of French colonialism. He justifies violence on the grounds of socio-psychological plank; means-ends relationship where violence is legitimized as means to bring change in the structure of the society.\(^{17,18}\)

He argues that superstructure of exploitation will disappear only through a struggle for political liberation. ULFA asserted that ‘real threat to the national identity of the people of Assam under the colonial occupation and exploitation of India has become the basic problem’. Under such situation, the armed struggle for self-defense was understood to be a compulsive objective reality.

The key factors accounting for political protest are associated with the group’s available resources, its organizational infrastructure and the social environment in which it operates.\(^{19}\)

Therefore, how an organization moulds its network, mass contact, strategy and ideology, enforces discipline; recruits cadres, etc., would determine its sustainability.

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\(^{17}\) Fanon, Franz, The Wretched of the Earth, Penguin books, 1963


\(^{19}\) Cohen, J.L., Strategy or Identity: New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movement, Cambridge, 1985, pp. 67
**Ted Gurr’s relative deprivation approach:** Among the theoretical explanations for political violence, the relative deprivation approach is of particular distinction. Its central point asks the question, what brings a group to a stage where it chooses to exercise political violence in anti-institutional action? The approach of Ted Gurr does not focus on the group’s objective deprivation but rather on its subjective feelings of deprivation.20

The basic assumption of this theory is that political violence continues as inseparable part of the human experience and is not simply a passing social event. A group’s route to violence begins with dissatisfaction and frustration with the present conditions and the group’s belief that it is entitled to more rights or resources than it presently possesses. Over time, its dissatisfaction undergoes a process of ‘politicization’; members of the group see their problem as stemming from a political structural source, blame that source for their predicament and reason that change will be gained only through political struggle and no other means. Finally, the citizens give vent to their rage against the political actors and institutions they find responsible for the present circumstances.

The degree of their anger is affected by the breadth of the gap between their value expectations, or what group members believe they are entitled to and hope to maintain in their possession, and value capabilities, or the political assets or services that members believe themselves capable of attaining. As the gap between these two criteria grows, the group’s belief in its capacity to actualize its rights to goods or services decreases. Furthermore, resource scarcity and demand enhance the likelihood of violent outbursts. An additional factor affecting the prospect of violent confrontation is the length of the time that feelings of rage within the group were repressed.

**Rawl’s theory of Justice:** John Rawls “A Theory of Justice” (1971) states that justice is the prime basis of all government and through various means governments have to ensure

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ULFA feels that they are deprived their due justice. The theory of justice can be applied to overcome the arms conflict between government and ULFA.

**Utilitarian theory:** The utilitarian theory propounded by J. Bentham has to some extent roots with the ULFA problem. Instead of maximizing the pleasure and desires of individuals, the governments would be maximizing the welfare of the individuals so that minimizations begin frustration of wants and preferences.

**Natural Laws Theory:** The natural law theory propounded by Hobbes, Lock and Rousseau has link with the concept of insurgency to some extent. It advocates right to be free from victim of fear and torture. ULFA think that they are victims of exploitation of their due justice. So, they fought for the causes which link with natural law theory.

The **Theory of Resistance** as advocated by Gandhi is the concept of ‘Popular Sovereignty’ is to democracy and the concept of ‘Satyagraha’. Satyagraha has two dimensions- an ethical norm and mode of action. The first is idealistic and moral and second is pragmatic and practical. Satyagraha is nothing but ‘clinging of truth’. A man comes across cruelty, exploitation, oppression and injustice in various walks of life. These he has to oppose by the means available in his hand and which are known to him. While resisting the evil one must rely on truth i.e. non-violence. In narrower sense, Satyagraha means resisting evil through soul-force or non-violence which has several forms. The form of non-cooperation means non-cooperation, not with the evil doer but with the evil deed. Non-cooperation in political form may consist of giving up titles and honors bestowed by the government, resignation from the government service, withdrawal from the police and military, non-payment of taxes, boycott of courts, schools and legislatures and running of

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21 Sarma, Manashi, Baruah, Minati, Das, Arpita, Bora, Pankaj, Rajkhowa, Priti Chaliha, Political Theory and Indian Politics, AsomiPrakashan, Guwahati, 2012
22 Das, Hari Prasad, Chakraborty, Santu and Das, Dibakar Chandra, RajnitiBigyanParichoy, Jyoti Prakashan, Guwahati, 2005
23Hazarika, Niru, Insurgency and Beyond, Sarighat Offset Press, Guwahati, 2011
parallel institutions to perform these functions. Satyagraha may also take the form of fasting. But it is the last resort to be adopted and must be based on righteousness and common interests of the people as a whole. It may take the form of civil disobedience in the political spheres. It is nothing but mass resistance against the government when negotiations and the constitutional methods fail. It is called civil because it is non-violent resistance by people who are ordinarily law abiding citizens and also because the laws which they choose to disobey are not moral laws and are harmful to the people. It may also be called civil because those who break the laws are to observe the greatest courtesy and gentleness in regard to those who enforce law.

Gandhi regarded resistance against evil to be both a right and a duty of every citizen. “… Civil disobedience is an inherent right of a citizen. Civil disobedience therefore becomes a sacred duty when the state has become lawless, or which is the something corrupt.” To Gandhi “you assist an administration most effectively by obeying its orders and decrees. An evil administration never deserves such allegiance. Allegiance to it means partaking of the evil. A good man will, therefore resist an evil system of administration with own soul. Disobedience to the laws in an evil state is therefore, a duty.” But at the same time the efficiency of the resistance depends on the ability to convince men about the need for such resistance.

The success of resistance invariably depends on the ability to enlist the support of the majority on his side.

The Public Choice theory challenges the traditionally established public interest theory of democratic government. Under this Public Interest theory the belief was that in a democratic state the representatives are elected by the people to take care of public interest and they will give priority to the public interest to the personal interest. Immediately after

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24 Hazarika, Niru, Insurgency and Beyond, Saraighat Offset Press, Guwahati, 2011
Indian independence both the representatives and the permanent officials did not give any scope to have suspicion in their honesty and commitment. But gradually they deviated from it and the process of criminalization of politics, politicization and commercialization of bureaucracy has begun at the cost of public interest giving enough space to have suspicion in their work, word and thought. Now it has come to light that most representatives and the permanent officials are the maximizers of their selfish interest. Several factors are responsible for this state of affairs. Some of the factors are Political parties, Pressure Groups, Education, Family, Media and Social Values.

**Azar’s theory of Protected Social Conflict (PSC)**: The theory of protected Social Conflict can be applied to the conflict between the ULFA and India. The theory emphasized the sources of PSC by predominantly within rather a between states. The theory identified four clusters of variables as preconditions for their transformation to high level of intensity. The four clusters of variables are Communal content, Deprivation of human needs, governance and the State’s role, International linkages can be applied to the situation in Assam.

In the communal content, ULFA tries to point to the cultural distinctness of Assamese people against the mainstream Indians. The feelings of alienation get escalated and entrenched through human rights violations and the security apparatus.

The deprivation of human needs serves as one of the important causes of ULFA conflict. Assam was ranked fourth in terms of per capita income at the time of independence of India. In 1993-94, 40.9% of the population was below the poverty line.

The role of governance and the State is a critical factor in the satisfaction or frustration of individual and identity group needs. The weak participatory institutions, the

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hierarchical bureaucratic rule, corruption in government bureaucrats mostly from outside are the causes for the growth of ULFA.

Azar analyses international linkages in particular political economic relations and the network of political–military linkages constituting regional and global patterns of clientage and cross border interests as one of the factors of a Protected Social Conflict. ULFA has been operating from foreign countries for long. Burma, Bhutan and Bangladesh played a role in providing or refusing shelter to ULFA. ULFA’s Chairman Arabinda Rajkhowa attended the annual session of the UN working group on indigenous population in Geneva in 1997. In the same year a delegation of ULFA including Arabinda Rajkhowa, Anup Chetia and Sasha Choudhury went to Geneva and tried to enter the unrepresented Nations People’s Organisation (UNPO)26.

The conflict of ULFA and India can be regarded as a protected social conflict as per Azar’s analysis. The 36 years of its existence evidence as of the protractedness of the ULFA and India conflict27.

1.4. Research questions:

Following are the research questions:

- Have ULFA and Government activities increased suspicion and disintegration of social fabric in the society of Assam?
- Have insurgency–counter insurgency activities victimized and violated the human rights of people in Assam?
- Have ULFA and Government activities affected the socio-political life in Assam?

26 Deka, A K, ULFA – the Peace Process in Assam, IPCS special report -21
1.5. Objectives of the study:

Following are the objectives of the study:

1. To analyze the organization of ULFA and their activities.
2. To study the human rights violation of common people through insurgency and counter-insurgency activities.
3. To explore the impact of ULFA on social fabric in society.
4. To study the impact of ULFA on Kamrup district in its socio-political aspect.

1.6. Methodology

This study is purely empirical cum theoretical in nature. For the study, it requires qualitative and as well as quantitative methods. Basically, it requires mostly primary and secondary data. For this purpose, the interview schedule, case study method, and focused group discussion are applied. The researcher took secondary data also from different books, journals, newspapers; internet etc. for this study. The researcher took simple random sampling and purposive sampling for collection of data. The stratified and cluster methods are also being applied for the study of Assam in general and four blocks of Kamrup district namely- Hajo, Kamalpur, Rangia and Sonapur Blocks are taken to study the socio-political impact on Kamrup district in particular.

In the Hajo block, the villages Checha Mukh, Pub Checha Mukh, Kalitakuchi, Bezpara (Kalitakuchi), Ketekibari, Kulhati, Halogaon, Bathan, Dehar Kuria of Adhiarpura and Major Suba of Singimari were visited by the researcher. In the Kamalpur Block the village of Palara, Khastarsuba of Borka, Bunmaja, Sonapur, Kalakuchi, Panitema, Athgaon, Baihata, Borka, Pub Borka, Kamalpur, Dhanuka and Raipat were visited. In Rangia block the village of Kekrikuchi, Rangiya, Kanya, Udiyana (Balagaon), Jayantipur, Lachi Bishnupur, Kothragaon, Gariyakuth, Kendukuna, Amartal, Tarini, Hahara,
Dwarkuchi, Moranjan, Dipteswari and Kausargaon were visited. In Sonapur block the village of Nartap, Khetri, Belguri, Sonapur, Deulguri, Digaru, Dhupguri, Pachim Ulani, Reba Maheswar and Dharambam were visited to collect data for General people, SULFA, Victim families and Politicians. Besides these, the following villages were visited by the researcher; Alengidal, Bahjani, Sariya, Santipur (Mahina, Dhamdhama), Nij Juluki (Barama), Choudhuryopara, Amayapur of Nalbari district. For Pro-talks ULFA leaders the researcher visited 6 (six) designated camps out of 9 (nine) situated at Solmari Banbhag (Banekuchi) and Nakhara (Lachima Barbari, Natun Baniakuchi) in Nalbari district in which there are almost 30 and 230 members in the camps respectively. In the designated camp at Noapara of Bongaigaon district there were almost 61 Pro-talks ULFA leaders. In the Khardang designated camp of Goalpara district there are 39 Pro-talks ULFA leaders. At the Ghorabandh designated camp of Darrang district there are 30 Pro-talks ULFA cadres/leaders. In Sivsagar district, Sarimukhia of Lakowa where there were 82 members was also visited. The police stations of Hajo, Dadara (a sub centre of Hajo), Kamalpur, Kayna, Rangia, Khetri, Sonapur and Nalbari were also visited. In Guwahati Thapnasuba of Lokhra, MASS office, AGP head office, BJP Office at Uzanbazar, Rajiv Bhawan etc. were visited. Politicians Nurul Hussain, Ex-Minister of AGP, Moidul Islam Bora, Ex-Minister of AGP, Thanewar Boro, Ex-Minister of AGP, Manoj Saikia, Spokesperson of AGP and Mohan Basumatary, Ex-MLA were interviewed.

Analysis on ULFA deemed as one of the significant issues and the effects of it on socio-political sides in Assam is the core issue before Assamese society. What factors are responsible for the youth of the state joining insurgency movement is based on the data from the primary sources, which includes interviews with (1) surrendered ULFA who laid down arms (Ex-ULFA) (2) Pro-talk ULFA (3) Victimised persons (4) General people (5) Politicians and (6) Police Personals. For this purpose a quasi-structured interview schedule
has been prepared and 300 respondents were taken, 50 from each category on the basis of simple random sampling.

In addition, the “case study” method was used to gain an in-depth understanding of the socio-political impact on Assamese society of ULFA activities. The affected families of anti-insurgency, including secret killings were also taken in consideration. Besides it, the family members of ULFA militants were interviewed. Certain selective propositions have been considered during the process of interviewing the respondents. Records regarding the surrendered ULFA (Ex-ULFA) members were not available and state authority in Assam were unwilling to share information regarding it with the researcher. On this basis, interviews were conducted with the leaders as well as normal cadres to gain more insight from different planes. The locations of meeting places with the insurgents are quite different from one another. Through tedious and sustained efforts, it has been possible to establish contract with them besides building up confidence and trust to enable the insurgents to be ready for an intensive session.

In reference to the conflict situation in Assam to understand why certain youths of the Assamese society joined the insurgency movement in the ‘Brahmaputra valley’, the act of listening to first hand testimonies of SULFA (Ex ULFA)/Pro-Talk ULFA who have been involved with the movement, provides an introspective insight at designated camps. Focus interview were also done while visiting the 6 (six) of the 9 (nine) designated camps in Assam.

1.7. Study area

Located between 24°N latitudes and 89°E and 96°E longitudes the state of Assam covers an area of 78,438 sq .km. It is bordered by Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh in the north, Nagaland and Manipur in the east, Mizoram and Tripura in the south and
Meghalaya, West-Bengal and Bangladesh on the west and south. The two physiographic units— the east-west stretching Brahmaputra valley in the north and Barak valley in the south are separated by the two other units Karbi plateau and Barail hills. The state of Assam is drained by a network of two river systems, i.e. the Brahmaputra and the Barak. Assam experiences sub-tropical monsoon type of climate characterized by heavy summer rainfall, dry winter and high humidity. The maximum summer temperature is around 35-38°C and minimum winter temperature is between 6-8°C. Assam has a total population of 31,169,272 and the Kamrup district has a population of 3,596,295 as per 2011 census.

The actual study area for this present work is Assam and the Kamrup district in particular. Four blocks of Kamrup district viz. Hajo, Kamalpur, Rangia and Sonapur were selected for the study.

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29 Population Census, 2011
1.8. Review of literature

The proposed study is an attempt to give a picture on ULFA and its socio-political impact on Assam with special reference to Kamrup district in a comprehensive manner. Writings related to similar aspects of insurgency related to other countries, India, North-
East India and Assam have been consulted to have a broad understanding of the contours of the problem. A review of literature on these aspects are analysed as hereunder.

The Book “Confronting the State- ULFA’s Quest for Sovereignty” of Nani Gopal Mahanta (2013) elaborates the birth of ULFA in “Confronting the State - ULFA’s Quest for Sovereignty”, how the Assamese nationalism movement which started in the pre-independence era has turned to a secessionist movement, the Assam agitation and gives a detailed account of the activities of ULFA. The related effects, like secret killings and international links with other organization are also highlighted.

Prateeti Barman (2010) in the book, “Changing Perception of Freedom” states that secessionism has been a perpetual problem of the North-East region. The author has tried to find out from the civil society as what do they think of the prolonged problem of ULFA and what keeps it alive. The book also looks into the genesis of ULFA and other separatist movement of the North-East India.

Chandra Bhusan (2007) in the book “Terrorism and Separation in North-East India” clarifies the historical background of terrorism in the North-East, causes of separatism, its impact on the states, several militant organizations and their operating procedures, the role of various agencies in their creation and sustenance and the measures taken by the government to curb militancy.

The book, “Insurgency and Economic Development in North-East India”, edited by Paramananda Sonowal (2007) includes many articles by eminent scholars in their fields which attempts to understand and tries to find avenues for lasting solution to the problem of insurgency in the North-East region of India. All facets of the insurgency problem, historical, political, economic, socio-psychological, logical etc. are debated to find a common consensus to the problem of ULFA in Assam.
Sanjib Baruah (2013) in “Durable Disorder” argues that prolonged counter-insurgency operations have eroded the democratic fabric of the region. The result is a growing dissonance between the idea of an ethnic homeland and the actually existing political economy of the region that makes ethnic violence and internal displacement quite predictable. He also explores the economic inclusion of the region into the global economy in the 19th century and the resultant conflict between global and local resource-use regimes.

Sanjib Baruah (2009) in the compilation of essays “Beyond Counter-Insurgency, Breaking the Impasse in North-East India” by different writers provides analyses of conflicts arising in the North-East region of India. They summarize that the conflicts occur at three levels – poverty and underdevelopment, post-colonial politics and the agency of diverse actors with multiple motives. They argue that neither development nor a military solution would provide lasting peace. Concerted efforts to establish the rule of law, accountability and faith in the institution of governance can break the long standing cycle of extremism and violence.

Different authors in the compilation of essays “India’s North-East : New Vistas for Peace” edited by Pushpita Das and Namrata Goswami (2008) provides valuable insights on the issue of insurgency, development and security and suggest concrete measures tackle the issues plaguing the states in the region. They stress on local participatory initiatives to counter the insurgents of different hue and ideology to free the region from underdevelopment and violence.

Nirendra Dev (2009) in the book “The Talking Guns: North-East India” elaborates the life in the strife-torn North-East from the perspective of the security forces and explores the innovative forms of anti-India resistance from the militants with foreign
support. Denying local support to the militants, a clean government and timely completion of assurances and projects would bring down militancy to its knee.

The compendium of essays “Perilous Journey” edited by Rakhee Bhattacharya and Sanjay Pulipaka (2011) dwells upon multi-disciplinary issues that continue to fracture Assam, migration, insurgency, cross-border activities, counter-insurgency and development issues. The rise of militancy in a state, whose economy was leading in the first few decades after independence and which became the most backward after liberalization is explored in detail.

The book “Operational All Clear: Assam-Bharat Sanghat” by Tushar Pangging gave an in-depth study on the incidents particularly about the arrested leaders of ULFA in Bhutan, children of ULFA leaders, Killed and missing leaders, camps in Bhutan, news published in newspapers, protest against Bhutan operation by 15 organisations of North-East etc.

The book “Ishya-Anishya Satteo Kiso Katha” written by Kaberi Kasari Rajknowar elaborates about her study life at Barama and practical experiences during the time she spent in ULFA. Besides, the writer wrote about how the relationship occurred with Arabinda Rajkhowa, as Chairman of ULFA and as a husband. In the book the role of RAB (Rapid Action Battalion) is also highlight during her arrest.

In the book “ULFA” by Mrinal Talukdar and Kishor Kumar Kalita, the authors give a historical background of ULFA, the foreigner’s problem and how the Assamese nationality sentiment emerged through different movement. The book also highlighted about the establishment of AASU on 8th August, 1967 under the Secretaryship of Bharat Luhar and All Assam Independent and Youth Association under the secretary ship of Gyanendra Choudhury. Army atrocities on people of Assam are also highlighted.
The book “Jatiya Bibhrantir Nirasan” written by Dr. Hiren Gohain elaborates about the relevance of regionalism in Assam, the background and significance of the National Convention and ULFA’s Charter of Demands.

The book “Agnigarbha aru Subha Uttaranar Prasestha” of Dr. Hiren Gohain analyses the future of ULFA, the relations of ULFA and AASU and the role of MASS. The peace talk proposals of ULFA, objective of National Convention, division of ULFA are also stated.

The book “Paresh Baruahar Sandhanat” of Rajiv Bhattacharya narrates the story of a journey to meet Paresh Baruah. The writer also highlights the situation in the NSCN (K) camp.

The book “Assam- Bharat Sanghat- Patabhumir Para Paribartita Paristitilai” of Tushar Pangging highlighted about the background of conflict and its past history of Swadhin Assam, law and administration, colonial conflict and national liberation struggle.

The book “ULFA” of Manoj Kumar Nath (2013) states about the emergence of ULFA, organisational structure, aims and objectives, link with other organizations, bank robberies, and training camps in Lakhipathar, ULFA-URMACA conflict, President’s rule and army operations, peace process etc. are highlighted.

The research project “A study on the social background of insurgents in Assam with special reference to ULFA” of Kh. Elizabeth Devi of Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change, Guwahati highlighted about the ULFA; the causes for its growth, insurgent groups of North-East and socio-economic background of ULFA.

The book “Planter Raj to Swaraj Freedom Struggle and electoral Politics in Assam (1826-1947) of Amalendu Guha writes about the British conquest of North-East India, Assam proper and Sylhet, non-cooperation and Diarchy system, swarajism, assembly politics and left nationalism and final bid to power also highlighted.
The “Noxious Web - Insurgency in the North-East” of Kriankshankar Mitra highlighted about the ISI link with other North-East insurgent organizations, Arms deals, Nexus between Politicians and Insurgents, Sanjoy Ghose tragedy, terrors on traders, ULFA etc. are highlighted.

The book “Among insurgents walking through Burma” of Shelby Tucker highlighted about the journey through Burma by insurgent groups.

The monograph “Terror, Poverty and Development: The Agony of Assam” of Jitendralal Borkakati stated that 38 insurgency groups including 11 Muslim terrorist groups and 12 groups are active in Assam. The author gives a precise account of the four groups demanding separate or sovereign state, ULFA’s demand for sovereign socialist Assam, Bodoland Liberation Tigers (1996) for separate state, United Liberation Front of Barak Valley (2002) demand for separate homeland for the tribal population of Karimganj and Hailakandi districts and DHD (Dima Halim Daogah). The author described the causes for the growth of insurgency in Assam and how did Assam become under British imperialism. The author gives five arguments against the ULFA’s demand for a sovereign state. It also shows ways to solve the vexed problem in Assam.

The book “Terrorism in India’s North-East –A Gathering Storm” of Col. Ved Prakash highlighted the genesis and causes of insurgency, Counter-insurgency operations, different insurgent organizations of Assam, organization of ULFA, ULFA’s links with other organisations, training camps of ULFA in Bhutan, the activities of ULFA also highlighted.

A.P. Maheswari in “The Folds of Insurgency” has attempted to identity how insurgency affected different people in different ways. It has presented that the police could not solely on its own stream, eradicate insurgency.
The book “Terrorism, National Security and Economic Development” of Surya Narain Yadav highlighted about need for strategy against the terrorism, national security, economic development are highlighted.

The book “Terrorism Implications of Tactics and Technology” of R C Mishra analysis about the tactics of terrorism, social and psychological analysis of terrorism is highlighted.

In the book “Ethnic conflict & Secessionism in South-East Asia: Causes, dynamic, solution”, edited by Rajat Ganguly and Ian Macduff, an analysis of ethnic conflict in many countries of South and South-East Asia, its flaws and contradictions in the process of post-colonial nation-building have been highlighted. This volume explains such ethnic conflicts in the region in order to understand not only the internal destabilisation and havoc that have been created, but also their dynamics and wider impact. The essays focus on the political alienation, the disturbed social matrix and the economic deprivations that are most often at the root of these secessionist movements. Maintaining that many of the ongoing conflicts have the potential to unravel the states in South and South-East Asia, three important and inter-related issues from a theoretically informed and comparative cross-regional perspective have been addressed.

In the volume “Insurgency in North-East India”, edited by B. Pakem, the burning and sensitive problem in North-East, the insurgency problem is closely scrutinized. It is an academic exercise in examining the social base of the insurgent groups, the reasons for their sudden collapse leading to the signing of Peace Accords and their future programmes. Questions on what are the tasks ahead for the government of India and the concerned State Governments of the region, why deployment of troops does not solve the problem and the negative side of the army’s role was highlighted.
The book “Strangers of the Mist-Tales of Wars & Peace from India’s North-East” written by Sanjoy Hazarika, gives a detailed account of violence in the North-Eastern region of India on an unprecedented scale leading to emergence of several insurgencies, separatist movements and outfits like United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), the Mizo National Front (MNF) in Mizoram, Tripura National Volunteers Force (TNVF) in Tripura. It also explicitly mentions about the overwhelming pressures exerted by the border nations of Bangladesh and Myanmar who have encouraged migration to North-Eastern region, harbouring and training of militants etc. The author drawing extensively on original documents and interviews with the most important personalities in the region analyses the various reasons for the unrest in the jungles of North-East India and suggests ways in which peace could be brought to this troubled region.

In the book “Periphery Strikes Back” by Udayan Mishra gave an in-depth analysis in detail the socio-historical and political factors which led to the secessionist insurgency in states as different as Nagaland and Assam and shows how the future of the nation-state in India depends a lot on the ability to resolve the questions that is being thrown up by the struggles for a Swadhin Asom and an independent Naga Lim. The different incidents and analysis in the book give a vivid picture of India’s North-Eastern region’s complex mosaic of ethnic nationalities at different stages of socio-economic and political growth that the Indian nation-state is facing today. But, it is the secessionist movement in Assam which seems to pose a much more serious challenge to the nation-state, especially in view of the fact that the Assamese has had centuries of socio-cultural interaction with the rest of the sub-continent and had played a major role in the national struggle. Today, with its really complex ethnic situation, the surmountable problem of influx and demographic change and the backward “colonial” state of the economy, Assam has emerged as the problem state of the Indian Union.
The volume “Insurgency in North-East India- The Role of Bangladesh” edited by Dipankar Sengupta and Sudhir Kumar Singh, seeks to explain the persistence of terrorism and armed rebellion in India’s North-East, which in some places is at least half a century old. It also seeks to examine the role of Bangladesh and Pakistan, which are currently busy in fermenting trouble in this region. This volume in particular shows how Assam that struggled to be a part of the Indian Union almost against the wishes of Congress High command is in the grip of violent separatist movements. The contributors show how persistent economic exploitation, neglect, disempowerment of the local governments as well as encouragement of infiltration by illegal migrants from Bangladesh for short term political gain have embittered sections of the local population leading them to take part and support militancy and separatism. In this volume, in an excerpt from the Keynote address by D. Gopal highlight the role of Bangladesh in insurgency in North-East. Dilip Gogoi narrated on the topic “Quest for Swadhin Asom, explaining insurgency and the role of the State in Assam.”

“North-East India: Politics & Insurgency” written by Chandrika Singh, presents political-historical account of the North-East India right from beginning to date. This book highlights the insurgency situation of the region where numerous militant and anti-national organisations are causing serious threat to national integrity and it discusses factors responsible for anti-national activities of the militants.

In the book, “Nationalist Upsurge in Assam” edited by Arun Bhuyan, seeks to cover the nationalist upsurge in undivided Assam 1857 to 1947. Topics covered include the growth of nationalism, the role of different class and communities in freedom movement, the economic fallout of foreign rule etc.

In “ULFA’s Swadhin Asom” written by Kanaksen Deka in Assamese language, the author describes instability situation brought by ULFA during the period covering the
writing of the book in Assam. This book makes an attempt to cover all the incidents that destabilizes the life of the state by ULFA where the database is not free from controversies.

In the book “Insurgency Movement in North-Eastern India”, written by Phanjoubam Tarapot, a comprehensive study on the prevailing situation in the sensitive North-Eastern part of India has been highlighted, dealing with factors that led to the formation of different underground organisations in the region. Also, the book provides the version of the underground leaders on the cause of insurgency movement in the region and gives a first-hand account of the formations amongst, the power struggle amongst the insurgent leaders, their ideologies and strategies.

Syamal Kumar Roy’s “India’s North-East and the travails of Tripura” provides an in-depth analysis of the policy responses to insurgency and threats to India’s security in different phases and from different contours. And after examining the various lapses and infirmities of the Government’s policy, the author presents a policy-framework based on his personal analysis for the North-Eastern region. Moreover, the book based on major premise ascertained that there should not be any single policy for the North-East.

In the book “ULFA (United Liberation Front of Assom): A political analysis”, Samir Kumar Das describes the politics of ULFA and analyses the economic, political and ideological backgrounds and their conjunction that led to the emergence and persistence of ULFA over the years. It also presents a biography of it since it was born in 1979 till 1991. The book evaluates at appropriating the theoretical and political practice of ULFA made by two dominant discourses of our times: nationalist on one hand and globalist on the other. It also makes an attempt to turn one’s attention to one of the most neglected dimensions of social analysis-the assertion of the Assamese community.
In the book “Swadhinata Sopun Aru Dithak: A Khiharankari Anusandhan, by Paragmoni Aditya is based on the culmination of the struggles and fights of ULFA based on the information gathered from Parag Phukan, an ULFA cadre and other sources. In this book ULFA’s hopes and dreams and other sides of the ground realities are highlighted.

The book, “Insurgency and Beyond” of Niru Hazarika, is an in-depth study of insurgency problem of Assam. It explains historical background of ULFA and their activities. The book studies the counter-insurgency activities of State such as, Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act - AFSPA of 1958 (amended in 1972), Operation Bajrang, Operation Rhino etc. This book highlighted the role of youth power to change the socio-economic and political environment in Assam. This book highlights the causes of the growth of ULFA especially the illegal migration problem in Assam as well as India for its national integration and sovereignty. The SULFA issue and secret killings in Assam are also clearly presented. In the introduction it is stated that insurgency is an agency of radical social, political and economic changes and insurgent is the agent to bring such changes.

Military or armed forces are essential to solve the insurgency problem. But it is not the total and permanent solution of the problem. It is stated that state is constrained by both insurgency and counter-insurgency activities which are penetrating in almost all fronts of private as well as public life of the people. But both the militants and the state depends on threat, coercion and military intervention, use of small arms and light weapons to achieve their goals.

The writer highlighted the political background and various causes for the growth of ULFA in Assam. She properly placed the insurgency problem and youth unrest in Assam. This book covers three districts of Assam- Dibrugarh, Nagaon and Nalbari which
are mostly insurgency prone districts of Assam. The insurgency, counter-insurgency and secret killing activities which affected the people are also highlighted.

The book “Counter Insurgency and the Global War on Terror” of Robert M. Cassidy shows that numerous insurgency or guerrillas came from Asia, Africa, South America and the periphery of Europe in 21st century. It stated, the paradox of pain is this - big powers exhibit much less tolerance for causalities in small wars than do their opponents.

The book “Terrorism and Terrorist Groups of North-East” by Pear Ali Ahmed is an in-depth study of terrorism /insurgency problem of North-East India especially in Assam. It stated that insurgency or terrorism is an isolated and biggest issue of our country. Since 1947 while the Naga’s refused to join the Union, the insurgency problem of Mizoram, Manipur, ULFA and NDFB etc. in Assam are highlighted. Ninety insurgent groups of North-East region, 10 active and 29 inactive insurgent groups are outlined. It tries to describe the historical background of Assam which included the creation of insurgent groups in Assam. The author highlighted the insurgency and counter-insurgency (Secret Killings) activities which victimized the civil people from both sides. The dilemma of ULFA and SULFA nexus and armed forces are also cited.

The book “Hot Brew” of Nitin Gokhle described how and what circumstances led to the growth of ULFA in Assam. It also shows that many members of ULFA were the member of AASU and the circumstances by which the AGP government formed from the AASU. It also describe that the ULFA built their Robin Hood image in 1980s and ultimately harmed the Government. The book highlighted about how much affected the tea industry by ULFA activities in Assam. The insurgency and counter- insurgency activities of ULFA and Army including Operation Bajrang, Operation Rhino are also described. It highlights the secret killings during the Mahanta Govt.
In the book “Broken Chair”, Arup Borbora states that the conflicts between the ULFA and the Govt. of India resulting in massive and widespread violation of human rights. The armed conflict started as result of deprivation of the human right of self-determination of the indigenous people. The violence and arms conflict have taken more than 13 thousands lives in Assam during the period.

Besides, some of the above mentioned books, articles from journals like Frontline, writings on conflict and resolution published by Institution for Conflict Management, New Delhi help in providing a basic idea on the insurgency situation in North-East India and Assam in Particular.

1.9. Significance of the study

The study on insurgency problem of ULFA in Assam and the Kamrup district in particular and its impact is very important from the socio-political point of view. The violent activities of ULFA had destabilized the civil, law and order and peace harmony among the people of Assam. Peace and development of Assam has deteriorated due to activities of ULFA. Insurgent activities and development cannot go simultaneously. Detecting the major causes for the growth of ULFA in Assam is a serious issue before the Assamese society. Identification of the major causes and historical background for the creation of the insurgent group, validity of the claims made by ULFA and the justifications given by them for their demands, subsequent effects of ULFA on the civil society, etc. bear great significance if Assam has to catch up with the mainstream of India in terms of development. Identification and mitigations of the issues in creation of ULFA will solve the development bottlenecks thereby ushering peace to the region.

The Kamrup district was selected because it contains the capital of Assam and all major ULFA activities were centred on it. The activities of ULFA are represented by the
actions of the outfit being carried out in this district. At the initial stage there were hardly
15 ULFA members in Lower Assam, mostly from the Kamrup district. There were two
ULFA training camps located at Kalakuchi of Kamalpur Block and Silapuri of Bamundi
area of Hajo Block.

The Blocks selected were Hajo, Kamalpur, Sonapur and Rangia. Hajo was selected
because Ananta Kalita, the living victim of secret killings was from this block. The
Publicity Secretary of ULFA was also from this block and there was an ULFA training
camp in the Bamundi area. Kamalpur was chosen because there is a ULFA camp at
Kalakuchi. Besides a number of major incidents involving ULFA, FCI regional Manager P
C Ram was abducted and killed in this block. Rangia was selected because of its vicinity
with the International Border with Bhutan, which housed a number of ULFA camps before
Operation All Clear in 2003. The major communication link was through this block. The
Sonapur block was selected because of its semi-urban nature. The first secret killing (after
Usha Court incident) happened in this block.

1.10. Limitations

Being an underground extremist group, it was not possible to elucidate information
from the active members of the outfit, and thus, this study was based mainly on the pro-
talk and surrendered ULFA members and the family members of the victims. Being a
sensitive issue, the respondents were very often, not eager to expose the facts. To complete
the perspective, general people and police personnel were also interviewed. The scope of
the work is limited to the Kamrup district only and findings reflect the situation prevailing
in a regional scale.