CHAPTER VI

COUNTER INSURGENCY MEASURES:
THE DOMESTIC AND
INTERNATIONAL ASPECTS
Counter-insurgency, in the most simple terms, means to combat insurgency. According to B. Singh and Ko Wang Mei, counter-guerrilla warfare is an effort to save the nation from a multiphased attack by guerrillas. In the Indian context, significant threat comes from the northeastern states due to the existence of numerous groups who have sworn to fight the 'forced' Indian occupation. Any kind of insurgency and militancy is a serious threat to the internal security and stability, in view of the sensitive position of India in the face of hostile neighbours. Moreover, it threatens the political structure of the country, and consequently the entire political socio-economic fabric of the country. Thus, there is an urgent need to formulate a constructive and concrete strategy to combat such threats, and at the same time, measures must be adopted and implemented to look into the grievances and aspirations of the people which when left unattended, drive them to take up extreme steps.

Counter-insurgency is a difficult task. It is not

limited to the army alone, it involves a multitude of agents which have to work in close coordination, to successfully counter the activities of the insurgents. It has been proved beyond a shadow of doubt that when military means alone is adopted, neglecting the political and social dimension, counter-insurgency cannot claim to have any far reaching success. There are innumerable obstacles in effective counter-insurgency measures. It is important to identify them to overcome its limitations.

Problems in Counter-Insurgency Measures

Insurgency in the northeast has taken its toll on human lives, economy, hampered the all round development and has continued to act as a divide between the tribals and non-tribals. This has prevented integration and cross-cultural exchange and most importantly, there has been no solutions to the age long war. It is significant to note that today, there are as many as eighteen insurgent groups, which is a big jump from the days when the N.N.C. and M.N.F. were the only major groups.  

To some extent, it would appear that the insurgency menace has been brought under considerable control officially with the Mizo accord, Assam accord, Naga accord (Shillong accord) and Tripura accord having been reached. But the ground realities are quite different. There is continuing discontent and continual refusal to accept the accords as legitimate and a true representation of the aspirations of the people by groups, who were not party to the agreement, or a change in the perceptions and attitude of those who were members in signing the accords. 3

3. The Naga accord (Shillong accord), 11 November, 1975 was rejected by Phizo, the President of N.N.C. and Isak Chishi Swu and Th. Muivah, General-Secretary, as they were not consulted and represented. It was signed between the Government of India and a section of underground leaders who isolated Phizo and his close aides. The situation in Assam is no different. In January 1992, the ULFA leaders Arobindo Rajkhowa, Arup Chetia, Sunil Nath and Pradip Gogoi without consultation with the Commander-in-Chief Paresh Barua started negotiations with the Government to end militancy in Assam. Much hope was generated but the talks yielded nothing positive and ultimately reached a dead end when the leaders turned their backs and slipped out of Assam to rejoin Paresh Barua in Bangladesh. The Government of Assam could secure the so-called agreement only from those leaders Munim Nobis, Sunil Nath and Kalpajyoti Neog, but the agreement died even before it was actually signed with the hard-core leaders still holding sway in most parts of Assam. Tripura continued to burn.
There are innumerable problems facing counter insurgency. Often, than needed counter-insurgency, in the ultimate analysis confines itself to combating the violent activities of the insurgents ignoring the underlying causes of grievances that bring about such insurgency. Counter-insurgency to be effective, requires close coordination of different efforts directed to root out the primary causes and the isolation of any, would hamper the efforts. In a complex situation as the northeast, there are innumerable obstacles in the way of successful counter-insurgency operations and this is clearly indicated from the fact that, even after more than four decades of the first insurgency breaking out, the states are still reeling under the effects of insurgencies which has multiplied manifold and shows no sign of abating. It would appear apparently that counter-insurgency has done little to check the growth of insurgency.

In the northeast, the biggest hurdle has been winning the confidence and trust of the local population by the forces engaged in counter-insurgency operations. There is a general tendency on the part of the tribals to distrust

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The accord signed with the Tribal Volunteer Forces has come to naught with other groups like the All Tripura Front, All Tripura Tribal Force and smaller groups continuing to carry on with their struggle. The situation continues to be far from being normal.
plainsmen based on experience and limited contact. Moreover, to complicate matters most non-tribals who came in contact with the tribals also had pre-conceived notion that the people were backward and uncivilized. The mutually preconceived perceptions and its implications has hampered the possibility of mobilising a constructive working force of the local population to assist counter-insurgency operations.

Moreover, the image of the "men in uniform" must be at its lowest in the hills of the northeast. The army has earned a reputation not for its success in combating insurgency, but were rather known because of the excesses committed on the local population. The human rights violations occur in such constant regularity whether in Assam, Nagaland or Manipur that the army has come to be identified as "the enemy" by the local population. The failure to secure their co-operation and support has placed the army at a disadvantage and severely hampered its efforts for "without whole-hearted support from the masses, counter-guerrilla warfare, 

4. The army is empowered with the highest authority in combating insurgency by such acts as - The Assam Disturbed Act, 1955, The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Regulation 1958, The Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Powers Ordinance 1958, Armed Forces Special Powers Act 1972. All acts of the army are protected by these laws and this enables some of them to carry out their tasks without any conscience.
like guerrilla warfare must necessarily fail'.

The counter-insurgency measures in the northeast are also seriously handicapped by geographical factors - its terrain and close proximity to the international borders. The mountainous features of the land work to the advantage of the insurgents whose strength lies in its 'hit and run policy'. Insurgents move in small bands to enable quick movements in operational activities and also to enable them to beat a hasty retreat when required. There is also less risk of attracting attention from the patrolling units, and the thick forest provide them good cover. Fighting against the insurgents on their home ground is one of the toughest aspects of counter-insurgency measures, in spite of their motto 'Fight the guerrilla like a guerrilla'. Insurgents avoid open confrontation, their strategy of ambush which works successfully on most occasions, keeps the army constantly on its toes. The alien land surface which is most unfriendly to strangers limits easy ground movements of the forces and also acts as a psychological deterrent. The continued success of the insurgents has been largely due to

5. Singh and Mei, n.1, p.69.

6. Ambushes provide the insurgents the upper hand it requires to surprise the military forces. The insurgents have the advantage of disappearing into the thick jungles after such operations.
their intimate knowledge of the terrain and the ability to exploit it to their best advantage.

Besides such disadvantages, there is the prevailing problem of shared boundaries with Bangladesh, Myanmar and Bhutan which has facilitated easy movements of the insurgents across international borders. The existence of East Pakistan prior to 1971 was one important factor which helped prop up the Naga and Mizo insurgencies. The easy access to the safe haven across the borders had played a key role in the success of insurgents in combating its opponents. The relative isolation of the northeast presents an ironic element - it is the main cause of the discontent and disillusionment prevailing in the states resulting in open conflict against the Indian government, and yet it has also worked to their advantage in carrying on their struggle with the support of its immediate neighbours.

The absence of a specially trained unit and a comprehensive counter-insurgency policy has limited the effectiveness of the forces responsible to eliminate insurgency. To effectively combat insurgency, "guerrillas must be fought with guerrillas methods by specially trained units which can be trained and equipped without great cost and without
detriment to the force."  

During the early phase of rising discontent which is expressed vocally and at times through violent means, the local administration must act swiftly and quickly assess and determine its potential and dangers. The Naga and Mizo insurgencies were treated mainly as 'law and order' problem and a patronising attitude was adopted by the Assam government which turned out to be one of its biggest blunders. No doubt 'the maintenance of law and order ranks with national defence as a primary work of the government but a general categorising of the manifestation of deep seated resentment of the people as 'law and order' problem insulted the integrity and intelligence of the people.

According to the Constitution of India, as laid down in Article 246 the public order, police and administration of justice are under the state list and according to Article 355, it is the duty of the Union Government to protect the state from internal disturbances. The twin sharing of responsibility requires skillful coordination of activities between the state and the Union Government. The Union


Government retains and administers a number of sensitive and critical areas that have their ultimate bearing on the administration of law and order. Assam Rifles, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Border Security Force, Indo-Tibetan Border Police and Intelligence Bureau are some of the para-military police organisations under the Ministry of Home Affairs put under the care of the Central Government to provide a support structure to the police administration of the states. Under the provisions of the Armed Forces (Emergency Duties) Act 1947, army troops can be employed for maintenance of law and order by the Central Government.\footnote{9} The early phase of an uprising which is militant by nature, as in the northeast can be prevented to a large extent by adopting a sensitive approach to the grievances of the people and their concerns. They must be accorded due respect and the failure to do so often results in further alienating the people. The presence of a specially trained unit specialising in counter-insurgency measures is required. They must be trained solely for the purpose, keeping in mind the factors that have always worked against counter-insurgency forces - psychological factors, the inhospitable terrain, mature understanding of the local people and a humane approach to the problem.

\footnote{9}{Ibid.}
The army, Assam-Rifles and Central Reserve Police Force are often pressed into combat against the insurgents. However, the lack of success has revealed the disadvantages of their approach. They have been able to contain the violence to a certain degree, but not in putting an end to the insurgency movements.

The state, no doubt, must maintain security and internal stability, but it must also not lose sight of the people's aspirations. Had the Government of Assam and Government of India been alive and responsible to the people's expectations and dealt with the problems with sympathy and understanding, events in the north-east could have possibly been different.

The fighting capabilities of the State Police are more often useless against the insurgents who wield semi and automatic weapons with deadly precision. In the State of Assam the ULFA holds much control. It has been proposed to replace the .303 rifle, presently issued to Assam police battalions, with 7.62 SLR in a phased manner. The upgradation and modernisation of the entire weaponry, arms and equipment of the armed police force were long overdue.\(^{10}\)

The memorandum submitted by the Assam government to the

\(^{10}\) The North East Times (Guwahati), 11 October, 1993.
Tenth Finance Commission Chairman, Mr. K.C. Pant expressed concern over the lack of resources to meet the insurgency problems. And moreover, the enormous expenditure the State had to bear, in view of security arrangements had resulted in the eventual slowing down of developmental activities. The frequent breakdown of law and order had resulted in difficulties in transportation, non-availability of skilled personnel and consequent increased cost of projects and decline of business confidence had threatened the stability of the state, according to the memorandum.

The counter-insurgents are also handicapped by the fact that they are thrust upon to carry out a delicate task of winning the confidence and trust of not only the common man but of bureaucrats, police officers, intellectuals, artists etc. who have an important role to play in the overall success of their campaign. Yet, it is in this very crucial point that a wide gap is usually found.

The Intelligence Bureau (IB) of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs has also an important role in providing timely intelligence on law and order situation of the country. This intelligence agency is entrusted with collection, analysis and dissemination of factual information about various matters relating to law and order. The IB is required to work in close co-ordination with the Home Minister.
and Home Department at the state level which are supported by the state police. However, in reality the game played often proves to be very different. This is demonstrated by the fact that decisions made at Dispur often reached ULFA before it could reach local officials.11 In Assam, the then Home Minister, Mr. Brighu Phukan was alleged to have harboured strong links with the ULFA. Moreover, the Assam Chief Minister, Mr. Mahanta was accused of leaking a classified document of the Union Home Ministry to the ULFA. A charge he vehemently denied. A copy of the sensitive document was found in a camp of the ULFA during army operations after President's rule was imposed. The communication had urged the state government to seal a particular road between upper Assam and Burma through Nagaland which was frequently used by the ULFA recruits to reach the training camps in the neighbouring country.12

The first major strike of operation Bajrang was at Lakhipathar which was regarded as one of the main base of the ULFA.13 However, when a raid was conducted by the army they found nothing but an abandoned camp with no worthwhile


arrests made nor weapons seized. ULFA had been tipped off more than a week earlier of the possibility of an army assault. ULFA's preparedness was visible from the fact that as far back as 17 November, Paresh Barua ordered ULFA cadres to vacate the headquarters at Lakhipathar. The intelligence leak was at a high level for the information about the army assault was known only to a handful of officials in the Home Ministry and the army command. 14

Apart from the obvious sympathy of the Assam government, ULFA also commanded, to a significant extent the support of the local police force, particularly the lower cadres. They belonged mainly to the local population who tend to develop sympathy for the militants, which was alleged to have hampered normal duty obligations. Mandatory checkings were always superficial and arrests were rarely or never made. 15 Lower ranks began associating with ULFA. They began with passing information of potential raids and security plans and went on to give travel routes of senior officers on the hit-list of the militants. In turn, they were paid handsomely. 16

In the past during the MNF insurgency in Mizoram, one

of the most macabre killing to hit the headline was the murder of the then IGP, G.S. Arya, DIG, C.B. Sewa and S.P., U.S.P.K. Panchapagesan on 14 January, 1975. The officers were in the midst of closed door meetings when their assailants walked into the room and opened fire from their automatic weapons. It was unimaginable that they could walk in unchallenged and also make a clean getaway without any help from agents inside the office.

Thus, it becomes extremely important to identify and weed out those who harbour soft spots for the insurgents. The leakage of high level secrets, plans and strategy destroys the effectiveness of counter-insurgency operations. When the army cannot take the local police into confidence for fear of jeopardising its operations the counter-insurgency operations becomes really difficult. Counter-insurgency forces cannot work in isolation and when the operations are hampered this way, there can be no significant success.

Most importantly, the northeast inhabitants are a close-knit society with strong affiliations to their tribal roots. The society is basically homogeneous and there is no disparity between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' which makes their society an integrated one. Breaking down the barrier of clan loyalty or any attempt to drive a wedge is an impos-
sible task. This slows down any move to penetrate into the
defold of the insurgents and with the low image of the army,\textsuperscript{17} a civilian would rather maintain a stoic silence than pro-
vide useful information. Intelligence is the principal
source of information on guerrillas and intelligence had to
come from the population, but the population will not talk
unless it feels safe, and it does not feel safe until the
insurgent's power has been broken.\textsuperscript{18}

One of the biggest stumbling block to counter-
insurgency is the support the insurgents receive from exter-
nal powers in terms of arms and ammunition, training base.
The insurgents are equipped with sophisticated arms' lethal
and effective, which are supplied or sold by the foreign
agents. Moreover, the access across the international
borders have limited the possibility of the army following
in pursuit. The insurgents bases are mostly located on
foreign soil, prohibiting raids and attacks in spite of the

\textsuperscript{17} The army, in the northeast are rarely looked upon with
awe and respect. They have not been successful in
winning the trust and confidence of the people. Their
unpopularity has lowered their image so much so that,
young men do not aspire to join the force. Any little
interest in doing so, is met with surprise and skep-
tism. The army are mostly regarded as the visible
manifestation of the repressive rule of the Indian
state against the people of the northeastern states.

\textsuperscript{18} David Gulula, \textit{Counter Insurgency Warfare, Theory and
Practice}, p.72.
facts and intelligence available to the counter-insurgents.

The Army Operations in the North-East

Counter-insurgency operations in the north-east is one of the toughest tasks the army has been called to undertake. The problems faced by the army have been mentioned and it would appear that the army has to carry out what it has been called for, against all odds. Under the provisions of the Armed Forces (Emergency Duties) Act 1947, army troops can be employed for maintenance of law and order by the Central Government. Generally, the army cannot be used for law and order duties for more than ten days without the sanction of the Centre. When army assistance is called for, the strength and composition of the force and the manner of carrying out its duties are solely determined by the army authorities. A liaison officer is deputed to interact with the civilian authorities and internal security schemes are prepared by local station commanders, in consultation with the highest civilian official available, to deploy troops effectively.¹⁹ The army can also be requisitioned as a preventive measure and army troops can be asked to perform 'Flag Marches' and to patrol the areas as 'stand-by' for

¹⁹. K.M. Mathur, n.8, p.186.
In the deployment of army and para-military forces to deal with insurgency, there must be concrete and definite goals and plans to smash the very core of the insurgents and it is not known if such definite goals were given. These forces have been working in Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur and Assam and their operations in these places have had mixed results.

The Assam Disturbed Areas Act was introduced in 1955 to enable the deployment of army and para-military forces to deal with the rising insurgency problem in Nagaland. The Act was extended to Mizoram too on 2 March 1966 following the uprising of the MNF. Between 1953 and 1955 Assam had introduced two special Acts, namely, the Assam Maintenance of Public Order (Autonomous Districts) Act of 1953 and the Assam Disturbed Areas Act of 1955. This was followed by the promulgation of (a) The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Regulations 1958; (b) The Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Powers Ordinance, 1958; and (c) Regulation 5 of 1962 (The Nagaland Security Regulation 1962).

20. Ibid.

21. The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act has been severely and bitterly opposed by the people of the northeast. There have been gross violation of human rights under the Act. The immunity the forces enjoy as per the Act that "no prosecution, suit or legal proceedings can be instituted against him, without previous sanction of
These Acts gave far reaching powers to the armed forces within the area declared as "Disturbed Area". They were empowered to arrest without warrant, any person who has committed or is about to commit a cognizable offence, or against whom reasonable suspicion exists that he has committed or is about to commit a cognizable offence. It also gives the army to search any premises without a warrant and to destroy any arms dump, prepared or fortified position or shelter from which armed attacks are made or likely to be made.

The clauses of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Regulation of 1958 and the Central Acts empower an army personnel down the rank of a non-commissioned officer the power to shoot and kill and more importantly the Regulation provides that no prosecution, suit or other legal proceeding shall be allowed against any Armed Forces officer in respect of acts carried out in Naga Hills and Tuensang Area on or after 23

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the Central Government (Section 6) has impinged 'the fundamental rights under Articles 20 and 21, the act also effectively takes away the citizens rights to prosecute murderers and criminals from amongst the armed forces, under the Indian Penal Code.'

There has been a sustained campaign to repeal the Act, initiated by the Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR).

December, 1957. In the absence of conciliatory measures as often happening in the height of insurgency the excessive powers enjoyed by counter-insurgency forces only resulted in increased oppression and harassment to the local population; and the chances of obtaining co-operation and intelligence becomes very slim. Thus, the army had all the required legal measures on its side to wage an effective campaign against the insurgents. However, in the long run, exercise of such powers became the very cause of its failure in effective counter-insurgency measures.

The tryst between army and northeast started long back in 1954, when it was called to assist the civil administration to face the growing menace of insurgency in Nagaland and even after more than three decades the army and the insurgents continue to be locked in what seems to be an endless cycle of war.

Operation Bajrang

The first army operation in Assam was code-named Operation Bajrang and such an army assault was deemed necessary in view of the deteriorating overall situation in Assam with murder, kidnappings, intimidation, extortion and arson ruling the day. ULFA had emerged as a force to reckon with and its activities since the 1980s had become violent,
bolder and regular that an immediate military crackdown was of utmost necessity. The AGP government led by Mr. Prafulla Mahanta had failed to curb the growing menace of militancy. The official Presidential proclamation dismissing the AGP government soon came in the wake of Chandrashekhar assuming office as Prime Minister on 27 November, 1990.

At 4 A.M. on 28 November, a few hours after the AGP government had been dismissed - heavily armed troops in jungle combat uniform and camouflaged gear swept out of barracks in trucks, jeeps and light armoured personnel carriers. Helicopters took off from army and Indian Air Force bases to drop paratroopers and were prepared to give covering fire should ULFA resist. Operation Bajrang had begun in earnest and carried on for five months till it was recalled.

With the onset of Operation Bajrang, ULFA with its terrorist and secessionist activities was declared an unlawful organisation and thus banned. However, success was difficult to come by for the army and the surprise element of its counter attack was absent due to reasons mentioned earlier. The whole operation did not yield the expected positive results, but significant progress was made at the same time.

The attack at Lakhipathar, the main base of the ULFA proved beyond a shadow of doubt the nexus between political leaders and the banned outfit. Another important base busted was at Saraipung which revealed the extent of how well equipped the ULFA cadres were in their propaganda and training methods. It was also a clear indication of the capacity of ULFA to move silently and swiftly from its bases as well as its ability to organise large training camps.

Operation Bajrang was called off in April 1991 much against the wishes of the military, for the operation had not completed its tasks set before it. No major arrests had been made and all top leaders of the ULFA had managed to escape from the army. Besides the arms seized were not the 'famed' automatic and semi-automatic weapons the ULFA were known to be in possession of. The job was definitely far from over and yet, the operation had succeeded in putting the ULFA on the defensive and the momentum had to be taken advantage of, and yet it was not to be.

24. The sensitive documents were seized by the army.
25. S. Hazarika, n.11, p.203.
26. Assam was scheduled to go for elections in June 1991 and with such an announcement, there was no option but for the army to move out.
Operation Rhino

The ensuing elections saw the return of the Congress to power, ousting the AGP from power by winning 126 seats.27 The veteran politician, Hiteswar Saikia was sworn in as Chief Minister after a gap of six years on 1 July, 1991 to head the strife-torn state and set it in order. The Chief Minister embarked on a policy of conciliation and offered amnesty to the ULFA cadres to come overground. The government released eleven of the 'wanted' militants as part of a general amnesty that freed a total of nearly 400 ULFA suspects from prison. The army was aghast and furious.28 This act nullified all what Operation Bajrang had set out to do and managed to accomplish leaving the army's operation to nothing.

Yet, in spite of the government's conciliatory approach there was no lull in the activities of the ULFA. In fact, there was a renewed vigour in their activities which threw the government in a tight spot. Since the Saikia Ministry took office, there had been cases of 21 killings, 87 abduc-

27. The AGP had split into Mahanta and Phukan groups which was a severe blow to their chances of making a come back on Assam's political scene. Mahanta's group secured 19 seats and Phukan's group only 3.

28. Sanjoy Hazarika, n.11, p.213.
tions and money worth Rs. forty-five crores extorted. The most daring kidnapping and killings were that of Sergei Gritchenko, a Russian Engineer, T.S. Raju another engineer and B.P. Srivasta besides a number of political killings.

Clearly, the ULFA was taking the government for a ride and had no intention of giving up their activities nor accepting the government's offer. The government also saw through the ULFA's game. Saikia had had enough. The Chief Minister sent word to Delhi that there was no option but an army crackdown to bring the rebels to heel. He had exhausted his political options and had released twenty-one of twenty-four militants sought by ULFA. The Army had to be called in again to confront the ULFA, twice in less than a year's span.

Unlike Operation Bajrang, Operation Rhino was well-prepared in intelligence, strategy and means to face the ULFA. A lesson had been learnt. In Delhi, the Prime Minister, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao convened a special meeting of the Union Cabinet and a decision was made to accede to the

30. Sanjoy Hazarika, n.11, p.214.
request of the state government for army assistance.31

Operation Rhino had begun. On 15 September, 1991 four army divisions were pressed into action, the 57th, 21st, 4th and 2nd Divisions of nearly 14 brigades. The troops were moved in from Siliguri, Rangiya and Arunachal Pradesh under the command of Head-Quarters 4 Corps in Tezpur. The troops were placed in the Upper Assam districts of Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, North Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Sonitpur and Nagoan.

Operation Rhino was launched with precision unlike Operation Bajrang, which was handicapped from the start with important details of its impending operation having been leaked. Operation Rhino was backed by reliable intelligence and logistics support and had been successful in maintaining the element of surprise. The army's brief was to neutralise the ULFA, to prevent killings, extortions and kidnappings in the state.32 The army also gained the upper hand by effectively scaling the inter-state boundaries and the international boundaries and this measure prevented the ULFA leaders and cadres from slipping out of Assam.

31. On 5 September the Assam Chief Minister had sent a telegram to the Union Government requesting for assistance in the wake of escalating violence and that the para-military forces were inadequate to tackle the situation. On 8th September another communication was sent requesting for army assistance.

On the first day of Operation Rhino, four camps of the ULFA on the Assam-Arunachal border were raided and ULFA cadres arrested. Consequently more and more ULFA cadres were caught and their camps raided which pushed them against the wall. Within a few weeks of the second assault on ULFA, the results were showing, 4,300 suspects had been captured by the army. After initial interrogation, 1,770 were released. The remainder were handed over to the police for further questioning. In addition to the capture of weapons, the army said it had seized the equivalent of seven million rupees (about 230,000 dollars).33

Moreover, unlike Operation Bajrang which had failed to nab any important leader, under Operation Rhino hard-core leaders like Anup Chetia, Sunil Nath, Hirakjoyti Mahanta fell into their hands.34 Clearly the operation had played its cards well, and its preparedness had paid off.

The ULFA started sending feelers to the government to initiate for a dialogue to set in motion the path to a negotiated settlement of the Assam problem. On the new year of 1992 the ULFA declared we, hereby confirm our resolve

33. Sanjoy Hazarika, n.11, p.217.
34. Sunil Nath was the spokesman of the ULFA. Hirakjoyti Mahanta was the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the ULFA. He was killed. Anup Chetia was the General Secretary.
(i) to accept a solution of the Assam problem within the Constitution of India, (ii) to abjure violence, (iii) to deposit arms at an appropriate time mutually decided upon.

However, this turn of events was too good to last. Paresh Barua, the commander-in-chief of the ULFA was furious and denounced the capitulation of the ULFA leaders in his absence. He was not a man to give in so easily and the pressure extorted by him proved too much that ultimately, the top-rung leaders who had initiated the talks made their way to Bangladesh, never to return. The circle has been completed. ULFA was not to surrender. It eventually broke into two groups, pro-talk and anti-talk. Today Assam, continues to be a troubled state with immediate solutions in no sight.

However, this is not to conclude that Operation Rhino did not fulfil the tasks set before itself. In many ways, it had, more than it anticipated, proved successful in dividing the ranks of the ULFA and thus, weakening the organisation. Moreover, the operation was careful in avoiding the blunders of Operation Bajrang. Mr. Saikia made it clear that his government would be accountable for the army's action in the course of the current offensive.35

Strict instructions were given to the army against commit-

ting any kind of excesses and violation of the rights of the population at large. However, ULFA had proved to be too elusive to be totally crushed and marginalised from the people.

**Manipur:**

Insurgency in Manipur is decades old, and is one of the most intricate and sensitive, owing to its complex composition of insurgents in the hill areas and in the valley and the rivalries that exists between the hill insurgents. The whole area is one of the toughest place to operate for any counter-insurgency forces - army or the para-military forces. Manipur has always been more or less under the para-military force. The Assam Rifles has been stationed in Manipur since 1917 and has over the decades been a permanent fixture and it is to its credit and it has been largely successful in being accepted by the peoples as a part and parcel of Manipur.

Since the inception of insurgency in the hills and in and around Imphal valley, the state has been quite helpless

36. The hill insurgents are mainly the NSCN (Isac-Muivah) and the ongoing feud against the Kuki National Army (KNA) has set the state ablaze leading to tragic loss of lives and property.
in dealing with the situation. 37 There has been numerous ambushes, murders, intimidation, extortions that the state administration had become virtually paralysed. There was an urgent need to curb their activities. 38 So it was not long before the Central Government issued a notification on 26 October, 1979 and banned the major groups - the Revolutionary People's Front, PLA, PREPAK, and the Red Army.

In September, 1979, the Disturbed Areas Act was imposed on thirty-one villages in the valley, under Section 3 of the Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Powers Act, 1958. However, such measures were not adequate and there was pressure to call in the army, yet in some quarters it was felt that the time was not ripe for such a measure. The then Chief Minister, Mr. Dorendra Singh wanted one more opportunity to request the underground to come overground. On 20 May, 1980, the Chief Minister made a general amnesty to the underground through an unscheduled broadcast on AIR.

The Chief Minister appealed to the insurgents to join the national mainstream and he promised to provide adequate rehabilitation facilities (jobs, housing and financial

37. The NSCN broke away from the N.N.C. and its operations began to be based mostly from the Ukhrul area of Manipur. The PLA began its operations in the late 1970's followed soon after by other groups.

38. The dictates of the insurgents ran larger than that of the state administration.
assistance for business undertakings). Besides the offer of amnesty, the possibility of army intervention was vocally rejected by the All Manipur Women's Association and All Manipur Girls Association. Pressure was mounted on the Chief Minister who was compelled to assure that the army would not cross the prescribed limits.

The deteriorating situation resulted in army operations in May and one of its first task was to seal the 20 km. belt along the India-Burma border in Tenugopal district to prevent any insurgent movement. Troops were deployed and concentrated on the main trouble spots - Pallel, Churachandpur and Imphal. In and around Imphal the operation required about 100 officers, and men per square km. of the area covered. The army was also to an extent successful in busting the politician-insurgent nexus when a raid of the state PWD Minister's residence led to the arrest of two wanted men.

Moreover it also succeeded in driving the PREPAK into disarray with the arrest of Suren Macha along with his top lieutenants. The army's combing operation in Sinajamei and Naorem Leikai areas of Imphal led to the arrest of 16 important PLA members including Mr. L. Raghunmani Singh and a number of arms were also seized. The army did succeed in putting the insurgents on the defensive yet no real tangible
results were reached because Manipur today continues to be on a path of bloodbath, insurgents versus counter-insurgents, insurgents versus insurgents and further complicated by ethnic violence.\textsuperscript{39}

\textbf{Mizoram:}

Mizoram today slowly but steadily is marching towards progress and development but it was not long before the state was submerged by insurgency. The mid sixties saw the rise of secessionist movement under the leadership of Lal-denga which plunged the Mizo hills into an abyss of terror, killings and extortion for more than two decades till the accord was ultimately reached on June 1986.

The years spanning the turbulent period was a trying time for the administration and local police which were ineffective and ill-equipped in dealing with the alarming violent turn of events. The armed revolt on the night of 28 February, 1966 jolted the state and Union Government to the gravity of the situation in the Mizo Hills. The M.N.F. insurgents attacked the Aizawl Treasury and decamped with money worth Rs.64,000 along with arms and ammunition. Simultaneously, armed attacked were carried out at other important places in Kolasib, Lunglei, Champhai, Sairang and

\textsuperscript{39}. \textit{Times of India}, 1 November, 1980.
Demagiri. The Assam Rifles came under heavy fire from the M.N.F. The 1st Assam Rifles at Aizawl was attacked while their posts at Lunglei and Champhai were overrun. The 5th B.S.F. post was also attacked and arms and ammunition were looted. The M.N.F. proclaimed independence and set up government called 'Mizoram Sawrkar'.

The Central Government took immediate measures to quell the armed insurrection in an effort to restore a degree of normalcy in the hills. On 2 March, 1966, the whole district was declared 'Disturbed Area' under the Assam Disturbed Areas Act, 1955 by the Government of Assam and the Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Powers Act, 1958 was also promulgated to give the army sweeping powers to embark upon its counter-insurgency operations. Besides, the army pressed into service air raids and bombings on select targets around Aizawl resulting in innumerable sufferings for the common people who had to vacate their homes and move to safe areas.40

Paratroopers were also stationed at Lunglei and reinforcements were also made by helicopters on 7 March, 1966.

40. The air raids which were directed against the civilian population in retaliation to the armed rising in the Mizo Hills was a turning point in the course of events. It further alienated the people who had to bear the brunt of the army offensive. The bombing of its own citizens was a gross violation of human rights.
The army column preceding to Lunglei threatened to get it bombed because Lunglei was under the complete command of the M.N.F. The M.N.F. was declared an unlawful organisation on 6 March, 1966.

The army operations began from March 1966, and the responsibility of bringing back normalcy was entrusted to them and to aid the civil administration in its duties. As in any army operation, arrests of underground personnel were made and arms and ammunition were recovered. There were some insurgents who also surrendered. But the hard-core inner circle were nowhere to be found. The M.N.F. chief Laldenga, his family and top aides slipped out of Aizawl in late March 1966 to East Pakistan where they were accorded safe refuge. Most of the top-rung leaders had already gone underground in the wake of army offensive.

In spite of the army being asked to use minimum force and render maximum protection to the local population, there were reports of the use of unnecessary force on civilians, dishonouring women, torture, threats which eroded significantly the image of army. Villages were burnt at random. Whenever the advancing columns met with resistance and sniping, they burnt the villages. For instance, Khawngbawk,

Pangzawl, Pukpui and many more villages were burnt. This greatly affected the people who begged the M.N.F. not to confront the troops near their villages, as they had to suffer from secure repercussion.

One of the most notable measures of the army was the grouping system which was better known as Operation Security. This was an attempt to isolate the insurgents from the people on whom they depended for food, intelligence tips, shelter and also to keep a tight check on the sympathisers of the M.N.F. The system was to shift villages from small villages to bigger ones where the army would be able to monitor the activities. The grouping of villages was resented by the villagers who were not prepared to leave their homes and land for new settlement and the adverse psychological impact was also tremendous.

The villagers had to live under strict rules and regulations which was hated by the villagers and eventually it did not yield the desired results of alienating the guerril-

42. Ibid., p.186.

43. Tlabung village, for example, was surrounded by the Army at night and when day broke the villagers were herded together and ordered to march with little of their belongings they could carry to Thingsulthliah village, the grouping centre. Their village with whatever property left was then burnt to the ground.

44. This scheme was not a new one. It had been adopted in Malaya, Algeria and South Vietnam.
las from his own kith and kin. The bonds of tribal loyalty was too strong to be pulled apart through schemes or measures adopted by the army. The idea of dividing the Mizo insurgents from the average Mizo specially in a classless and close-knit Mizo society based on ethnic affiliations, cultural unity, commendescent, social custom and common economic pattern of life was difficult. 45 In these camps, the villagers were issued identity cards which had to be produced wherever asked for, and were interrogated often singularly or collectively and also had to work as 'coolies' for the army. Their economic life-pattern was disturbed for they were no longer able to work freely in their 'jhums'. 46

The Mizos were fed up with the grouping system and ultimately it was challenged by the educated Mizo leaders on grounds of violation of Human Rights. The Gauhati High Court issued a stay order to the Governor putting a stop to the illogical and unwarranted practice of groupings.

The counter-insurgency operations enjoyed very limited success in the Mizo Hills. There was a breakdown of communication between the forces and the civilians which

45. R.N. Prasad, n.41, p.203.

46. Critics of the Grouping system termed it no better than concentration camps where the poor villagers were left to the dictates and mercy of the army. The system was a failure for it did not succeed in isolating the insurgents effectively.
hampered the operations. The tenacity and the dogged determination of the M.N.F. was chiefly responsible for the limited success of the counter-insurgency operations achieved in the face of grave adversity. They continued to engage in 'war' against the forces for over two decades.

**Nagaland:**

The state of Nagaland has experienced one of the most turbulent period in history with the demand for a separate Naga nation. In spite of so called 'Naga Accord' the Naga question remains unresolved and it spans not only Nagaland but the neighbouring state of Manipur as well. Decades of negotiations, army crackdown, loss of lives, untold sufferings have not dimmed the insurgent's demand for a separate homeland. The hope and expectations have kept the struggle alive in spite of the sacrifices which every insurgents had to make even at his own personal cost.

The Assam Disturbed Areas Act (1955) was utilized to declare Mokokchung Disturbed Area, and the Assam Rifles and Assam Armed Police were pressed into operation, which was not expected to last for more than a month. However, it was more than what they had bargained for. The lack of success in suppressing the insurgents required the service of the army to counter the insurgents.
The disturbed area was extended and by January 1956, the whole of Naga Hills was declared a 'Disturbed Area', and the army was put into action and by middle of 1956, more than a division of Indian forces had been pressed into service. The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Regulation, 1958 and the Special Powers Ordinance, 1958 was converted into an Act, the Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Powers Act, 1958. The purpose in bringing these two Acts into force was to enable the Army to confront the insurgents without any legal constraints or limitations. In the next two years, 1,400 Nagas were killed according to Indian Government figures, against 162 killed in the Indian Army.

Most importantly, the Indian army had no understanding and little compassion for the Naga way of life and their more than brutal method of overstepping their power created a sense of fear and hatred amongst the local population which proved to be largely detrimental to the army operations.

In a letter to the then Prime Minister the NFG stated that "since April 1956 India has considerably increased her armed forces to launch genocide operation in Nagaland. From henceforth, the Indian troops resorted to large scale arson, arrest, killings, all over Nagaland and the Nagas were herded to the jungle and to different concentration camps,"
where thousands of innocent Nagas, men and women, children died of starvation. Nagas were forbidden to cultivate paddy field, foodstuffs were burnt down along with houses and granaries.\textsuperscript{47}

The common man had to bear the brunt of the army's wrath and suppression. In any situation, where insurgents and counter-insurgents are at war, the common man is the worst sufferer being caught between the security forces and the insurgents. The Indian army troops also conducted themselves in the most uncivilised manner dishonouring women and indulging in inhuman acts which has till today remained ingrained in the minds of the Nagas and according to Sir Charles Pawsey, the Indian army's behaviour would never be forgotten or forgiven.

The army had also introduced a grouping system in 1956 which entailed a difficult phase of shifting villagers to bigger villages and grouping them together. This was an attempt to cut the insurgents link to its life-line. The system was an exercise in futility for no purpose was served except it brought untold sufferings to the people disturbing their social, political and economic balance and bringing added resentment against the Indian army.

\textsuperscript{47} Proclamation of the Naga Federal Government.
Insurgency, today remains a prominent feature in Nagaland and its politics. The demand - an independent sovereign nation - has not withered. Over the years, the problems have multiplied, still eluding solution. The confrontation between the security forces and the insurgents has continued unabated.

**The Response to Counter-Insurgency Movements**

The counter-insurgency operations in the northeast is one of the toughest and most difficult task to face the Indian army and the para-military forces during peace time. The general difficulties faced by them have been already mentioned in the earlier part of the chapter. The challenges are far and many and it would also be asking too much to expect a clean-up process without any set-back. However, it is not asking too much that a certain code of conduct is expected from the armed forces in the discharge of their duties for they are put into service not against the whole civil population but against a group of armed insurgents who are fighting for their goals through insurgency.

The general response to the army operations have been distrust, fear, anger and identifying the army as the enemy and these sentiments were strongly felt specially during the early Naga and Mizo insurgency. The magnitude of the army's
presence was a shock for the tribals who had otherwise been peace-loving and lived a secluded life. The counter-attack on the insurgents was felt more by the common man who earlier did not have much contact with non-tribals. Besides the communication gap between members of the armed forces and the people resulted in misunderstandings. Verbal exchanges were near impossible and thus, resulted in numerous cases of illegal detention, torture etc. The forces used threats intimidations and were highhanded in their dealings with the civilian population. The army raid on Yongpang village, 15 November, 1954 where sixty men and women were killed, and according to Bendangangshi 'the political officer had been boasting previously that he would teach a lesson to the Nagas....' The hair of one of the victims was reported to have been kept for good luck charm. The philosophy of destroying the enemy on which the training of army personnel is based is surely not appropriate in counter-insurgency.

The hunt for the insurgents in the absence of arrests had to be made through the common man to provide information which were often unreliable. The intelligence gathered through official means proves inadequate for the main bank

48. Bendangangshi, Glimpses of Naga History, Gauhati, 1993, p.84. Bendangangshi was a member of the NFG. After coming overground, he joined politics and was twice elected to the Assembly.
of intelligence reports lie with the common man who is the eyes and ears of the insurgents. The general tendency is to remain loyal to them irrespective of their sufferings and problems.

The common man remains isolated and alienated from the army which proves to be a setback for them. Moreover, collaboration with the Army is regarded as a treachery and the family's prestige is lowered socially, hence majority of the people would rather maintain a stoic silence even in the face of the personal sacrifice they would have to make.

The Indian army has conducted massive search and arrest operations in hundreds of villages in Assam. Many victims of abuses committed during the operations are civilians, often relatives or neighbours of young men suspected of militant sympathies. Villagers have been threatened, harassed, assaulted and killed by soldiers attempting to frighten them into identifying suspected militants. Arbitrary arrest and lengthy detention of young men picked up in these periodic sweeps, or at random from their homes and from public places is common and detainees of the armed forces are regularly subjected to severe beatings and torture.49

The grouping of villages which were introduced in the Naga and Mizo Hills was unsuitable and illogical. On theory, the idea may be feasible but the reality proved far different. The move which was, as mentioned earlier, to isolate the insurgents was not backed by a sound economic and administrative set-up. Their implementations were hasty and without any regard to the convenience of the affected people. The 'jhums' suffered due to lack of proper management as a result of the increased distance from the village and curfews imposed. Moreover, the issue of identity cards with their constant checking and frequent interrogation dealt a severe blow to the normal functioning of daily life, so much so that the grouped villages were commonly referred as 'concentration camps'.

The counter-insurgency measures have had significant success from the military point of view and practically too it has managed to put the insurgents on the defensive. But a clear cut victory cannot be claimed, for the insurgents at times may lie low or back down, but they are certainly not out. The launch of a major military offensive results in the insurgents lying low, only to strike back once the pressure is off.
Measures to Combat Insurgency

The entire northeast, for more than one reason has found the need to express its grievances and disenchantment with India through armed uprisings. The insurgency in the northeast has threatened the stability and security of the country and to meet the challenges posed by the insurgents, the government had deployed the army to counter them at one stage or the other. However, insurgency has not been effectively quelled in the northeastern states and the army's reputation amongst the civilian population has been dismally low.

Insurgency is not a mere law and order problem, it is much more and the government has often blundered by treating it as one during its initial phase, without pausing to look into the true causes of such uprisings. The uprisings in the tribal areas were not a sudden occurrence which caught the administration and police by surprise, there had been visible simmering discontent and verbal expressions of their unhappiness and desire to remain outside the Indian Union.50 The northeast for decades had been unable to positively join the national mainstream due to its desire for secession and

50. The Nagas had as early as 1929 demanded independence to the Simon Commission which had visited Kohima. The MNF also demanded the same in 1965. The PLA in 1978.
its consequent fall out. There was always a sense of neglect and biased treatment meted out to them by the Government of India, and such sentiments coupled with a deep seated desire for their own state, provided ample grounds for the cropping up of insurgency movements for whenever and wherever something is neglected and left unorganised, the opportunity for exploitation is open to the guerrillas.

The government must learn from its past failures in checking insurgency. There were visible signs of anger which it choose it ignore. The Assam Official Language Act, 1960 which declared Assamese as the State language was considered as a means to do away with the tribal languages and force upon them an alien language. Though repealed later, the psyche of the hill tribes had been disturbed. Such measure in the wake of secessionist movements was a gross mistake.

The government must make a proper and correct assessment of the prevailing situation and embark on a policy of tackling the genuine problems through constructive measures.51 To a large extent the causes of insurgency are

51. Lok Sabha, August 13, 1986: The Minister of State in the Department of Internal Security, Shri Arun Nehru stated: "In order to curb the activities of the NSCN, security measures have been stepped up and vigil on the borders intensified. The State/UT Governments have been advised to utilize the provisions of Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, 1985 to curb the activities of extremists."
economic by nature - a problem that can to a large extent, be rectified through well-intended policies and a meaningful programme of development. The hill areas in the North East, over the years, had not seen any worthwhile development and progress. Till today the economic infrastructure is yet to be developed, and limited progress has been achieved in the field of road communication, power, industries and even in the field of agriculture. This gave the insurgents the much needed platform for their propaganda to seek a separate state where their problems would be looked into and results achieved.

The government must take the initiative in bringing about all round economic development and increasing employment opportunities. Such steps will deter the common man especially the youth from the path of violence and insurgency. It takes the cause away from the rebels and wins friendship and allegiance for the incumbents.52 Prior to the M.N.F. armed insurgency, unemployment was the bane among the new class of educated young men. After completing their graduation, there were no avenues for their employment which

52. Singh and Mei, n.1, p.71.
left them desperate and disgusted. In Manipur too, the number of unemployed youths is on the rise and is also the prime cause of frustration which inevitably lead them to anti-social activities. Working opportunities should be open to all, with emphasis on ability, professional training and competency, not personal ties and spoils. A sense of justice should prevail.

In the field of agriculture, the northeast has remained backward. The people were busy trying to make ends meet and the system of 'jhum' practised in the hills was not productive enough to sustain a growing population or to bring about prosperity and a threat to the ecology too. No worthwhile steps were taken to make the switch from 'jhum' cultivation to terrace cultivation. The capital involved cultivation was beyond the capacity of poor villages. The harmful effects of the practice of the 'jhum' cultivation was clearly demonstrated by the 17 May, 1995 calamity in Mizoram. There occurred landslides of an unprecedented scale whereby large chunks of hill slopes were swept away. The calamity claimed 40 lives, destroyed about 5,000 houses,

53. The graduates who joined the M.N.F. were Zamawia, Thangkima, Lalkhawliana, Lalthangliana, Lalhrima Sailo, S. Lianzuala, Lallianzuala Sailo, Zoramthanga, Malsawma Colney, Sakhawliana, Bualhranga, Sainghaka, Hrangthanga Colney etc. Many went on to become the leading force of the M.N.F.

54. Singh and Mei, n.1, p.73.
including government buildings, and submerged the main power generating unit in Lawngtlai area of the district, which is home to the Pawi autonomous district council.  

The team of experts led by Mr. N. Rama Rao, Joint Secretary in the Union Agriculture Ministry, identified ‘jhumming’ as one of the key factors besides the lack of proper drainage and the increase in high rise RCC structures. The team also noted with concern for the failure of the Agriculture Department to devise suitable schemes to wean away jhumming families from the primitive mode of cultivation and was surprised that even the Forest Department used jhumming practices to cut down trees.

Today, the northeast comprises of seven different states, but it has not been long since most of them were part of the state of Assam. The resentment and bitterness was genuine and widespread and with diverse interests, culture, customs, traditions and religion it was fool hardly to expect the hill tribes to accept the political situation for long. The breaking up of Assam was inevitable and much animosity could have been avoided if the government had been more sensitive and accorded them the demand for a separate

55. Hindustan Times, New Delhi, 4 September, 1995.
56. ibid.
state. The Mizo Union had demanded a separate state as far back as 1963 even before the MNF were demanding independ-
ence.\textsuperscript{57} Nagaland was elevated to the status of a full-
fledged state on 1 December, 1965 but by then such measure
lost its impact and it was too late to stop the insurgency from spreading. According greater political status in proper time would have largely soften the blow of being incorporated with India which was against the desire of the majority of the people.

Moreover, counter-insurgency involves winning the confidence of the local population and in order to do so, popular social programmes must be carried out. The security forces must be humanely projected and must behave so in a like manner. Winning the trust of the people is as important as winning the military space against the insurgents. For instance, free supply of medicine and check-up especially in the villages is an area which could be pursued so that the villagers may benefit from the army presence. The forces must adhere to the policy of befriending the people and isolating the insurgents. While the necessity of in-
ducting armed forces to deal with violence and volatile law and order situation cannot be over-emphasised and is a neces-

\textsuperscript{57} The Mizo Union (MU) was the first political party in Mizoram. It was regional in character and its inter-
est's centered round that of the Mizons and their future.
sary evil, it had been proved time and again that there is no alternative to the time-tested remedy of conciliation and pacification.

The international dimensions must be seriously looked into. The case in which insurgents can cross the international borders in the north-eastern states has often proved to be their trump card. Hence effective guarding of these borders is of utmost necessity to check the movement of the insurgents so that they are denied of the safe haven and easy passage in procuring weapons. The terrain of north-east including the areas on both sides of the international boundary except some portions on Indo-Bangladesh border are rugged and hilly, covered with thick forests; and road communication is very poor; hence the borders are quite porous. The number of armed posts and the force deployed need to be substantially increased to deter the movement of the insurgents across the border. The problem in guarding the border is compounded by the presence of ethnically similar people on both sides and their constant movements across the border. The central government being responsible for protection of the international borders, makes use of army or para-military troops who are based along or near the border at certain intervals and at tactically convenient places. Personnel of these organisations invariably not
being locals, are not acquainted with the people. It will also not be worthwhile to put more men to make them effective as huge force would be required. The efforts of the forces manning the international border should be supplemented by intelligence cover of the area and by association of the state police. The state police invariably neglects this work. Proper policing of international borders is important not only to deprive the insurgents of the much needed shelter and assistance but also to enable the counter insurgency forces to operate more freely even to cross international borders in pursuit of armed rebels.

The Indo-Myanmar border has been traversed by the insurgents, be it Nagas, Mizos, Meiteis or Assamese, and training in foreign country and assistance were obtained. Even lately the hilly areas along this border was being used, by the insurgents to go to Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh for bringing weapons, and even running training camps there. This clearly indicated that the policing of this border has not been effective and a concerted effort by central and state governments is called for.

The Indo-Bangladesh border is one of the most sensitive areas for more than one reason. It has been the centre of storm as the Assam students agitation had called for sealing it due to mass immigration from Bangladesh and thus, upset-
ting the demographic balance. Not only has it been used for crossing over to India by the immigrants, the insurgents have also used the long border stretch to their advantage as well - it has become the easiest escape route.

The allegations made by India to the support provided by Bangladesh to the northeast insurgents during the visit of the Bangladesh Prime Minister was denied even in the face of documents and pictures testifying to the facts. Bangladesh has a score to settle with India where interference in others' affairs is concerned. The Border Security Force (BSF) has been accused by Bangladesh of providing shelter to the Shanti Bahini, the Chakma insurgent group at the Indo-Bangladesh border. The Chakma issue has proved to be a thorn in the flesh in Indo-Bangladesh relations. The bilateral relations must be worked out and common interests pursued - new agricultural techniques, fresh cropping patterns, control of flood waters and the increased use of quick growing rice, wheat and other grain variety, because unless friendly relations exist, it can be expected that northeast insurgents will continue to receive help from Bangladesh and other neighbours.

The insurgent movements in the northeast, Kashmir and

58. Sanjoy Hazarika, n.11, p.326.
stationing of armed personnel along the Indo-Chinese borders requires the deployment of troops and this factor has taxed the army significantly where soldiers are concerned. However, the recent agreement between New Delhi and Beijing to diffuse border tension and withdraw troops considerably from the borders have a far reaching impact on the northeast counter-insurgency operations - more troops to engage in the operations. China is no longer regarded as military threat and it has along been since China stopped its active support to the northeast insurgents. 59

Myanmar and India has also made significant moves in bilateral relations. Myanmar and the close links it shares with the northeast is as old as history itself and though not so powerful in terms of military might as Pakistan, Myanmar has been the safe sanctuary of most north-eastern insurgency groups - NSCN, PLA, UNCF, and had also in the past, the MNF.

Myanmar and India have had talks which aimed at opening border trade to legitimise the ongoing smuggling trade which is carried on, specially between the border town of Moreh in

59. Lok Sabha, Ninth Session, July 22, 1982, the Minister for External Affairs, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, stated that 'the Government was not aware of any training of Naga rebels in China recently' in reply to Shri Phool Chand Verma question, 'Whether Government is aware that Naga rebels are still being trained by China?'
Manipur and Tamu in Myanmar. The southern parts of Mizoram also sees active trade going on with the border towns of Myanmar. Moreh is a busy town where goods from both countries are hawked by people sitting on bare ground. Border trade was formally opened at Moreh in April 1995 and such trade items were mustard rape seed, pulses, bean, fresh fruits and vegetables, garlic, onion, chillies, spices, bamboo and minor forest products.

The need for a joint council of the various Director Generals of Police along with the Army and Assam Rifles and other para-military forces have been expressed in order to closely coordinate and monitor the insurgents who move from state to state within the northeast. Cooperation and sharing of intelligence reports and access to information will put pressure on the insurgents and their activities.

In spite of the numerous setbacks the security forces are faced with in the northeast, their presence is equally necessary and important. The insurgents cannot ignore and belittle their presence. The counter-insurgency measures must be revamped and modernised to suit the complex situation of the northeast where the terrain, psychological

60. The talks were held at Tamu and Imphal. The Myanmar delegation was led by the Director-General of Home Affairs, U Aung and the Indian delegation was led by Chief Secretary and Advisor to the Government of Manipur, N.V. Goswami.
perspectives, relating to the common man, understanding the grievances of the people and their aspirations are concerned. The northeast must be understood in all its peculiar forms before any kind of offensive is to be carried out.

**ARMY PERSONNEL AND VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

The presence of the counter insurgency forces in the northeast have gained much publicity and widespread focus on human rights abuses. The difficulties faced by them in their line of duty is not lost on anyone. The tasks faced by them is enormous and uphill, which requires a strong sense of discipline, patience, mental strength and physical endurance. The odds against them are numerous.

However, the overall response to the counter-insurgency forces has been widely negative in the entire northeast. The forces who have been stationed to flush out the insurgents and to restore peace and order in the strife-town areas are viewed with much disrespect, apprehension and abhorrence. The attitude towards them has not grown overnight. It is the culmination of years of contact and personal experiences which made the civilian population averse to their presence.

The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act 1958 has over the years become the most misused and exploited by the forces.
Being free from any responsibility for acts committed by them in the discharge of their duties, the armed personnel have the tendency to grossly over-react. The counter-insurgency measures have used high-handedness which has led to criticism in their functions and methods adopted to carry out their tasks.

(i) COUNTER-INSURGENCY AS A STATE OF TERRORISM

Counter-insurgency has come to unleash a reign of terror when looking for insurgents and their supporters, the Government forces have failed to distinguish between insurgents and peaceful civilians. This has inevitably led to substantial harrassment of the latter. The counter-insurgency forces are often frustrated by their lack of success against the insurgents and this factor makes them prey upon the civilian population who are at their mercy.61

61. The brutality of the forces are plenty but in recent times, the most gory outburst took place in the town of Mokokchhung (Nagaland) on December 27, 1994. The 16 Maratha Light Infantry went beserk after the shooting of their Commanding Officer, Lt. Col. Poonacha. Indiscriminate firing took place which left 10 people killed and 7 missing according to the Ao Genden, the Apex Council of the Ao Naga tribe. Led by Major Deepak Sharma, the Company Commander, they broke open the shops, dragged out the people sheltering, outside and indiscriminately beat them up. Hundreds of people including women and children were taken to the main traffic point, forced to crawl on hands and knees and remain lying on the ground. Bordoloi, Utpal - It was a black bay in Mekenchung. Deccan Herald, 21 January 1995.
The harassment meted out towards women in particular has been of the worst kind and degree, unparalleled elsewhere. Crimes against women have been perpetrated in the most inhumane nature.\textsuperscript{62} Such unwarranted behaviour has turned public behaviour against them and in such circumstances, no progress is over made.

The common man is also powerless in the face of intimidation from them and any suspicion whether legitimate or otherwise invites severe repercussions. In this respect, violations of human rights are a common occurrence. Suspects taken into custody receive the brunt of severe violence during interrogations and cross-questionings. Besides suspects, the family and relatives of suspected insurgents often face undue harassment from the security forces.

The enormous powers at the disposal of the security forces

\textsuperscript{62}. On 22.8.71, Christian women signatories despatched a letter to the then Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi where they appealed for action against the crime of the 1st Maratha on July 11, 1971. They herded all the women folk into a house. Then the Captain handpicked four girls, Peleo, Shachano (17), Mseno (15) and Nianbeni (12) who were taken out and led inside the local church, where they were brutally assaulted and raped. The letter further stated that "what happened in Yankeilli village on 11 July, 1971, concern directly the well-being of our own fellow workers, the modesty of women and the sanctity of our churches. In this eastern corner of India, thousands of miles away from New Delhi, numerous incidents of one sort on the other are taking place purported by the security forces posted in Nagaland due to the political situation."
forces have evoked demands for its repeal. It has come to be termed as 'draconian' and widespread demand has been growing for its withdrawal. Many incidents of torture, intimidation and humiliation have been unprovoked and unjustified leading to the growing separatist movements. Thus, laws purportedly meant to deal with separatist movements in effect engender division. In this context all talks of 'joining the mainstream' is humbug till these dual standards are done away with.63

COUNTER-INSURGENCY AS AN AGENT OF DESTRUCTION:

Counter-insurgency measures have often provoked more destructive offensive on the part of insurgents which has led to more damage of both life and property. The counter-insurgency operations invites retaliation by the insurgents who are forced to show renewed strength and assertion of their presence. The continued cycle of insurgency and counter-insurgency has led to more damage of both life and property which has affected the common man as a consequence of intermittent disruptions of normal civilian life.

The tug of war between them has weakened public admin-

istration to certain extent that anti-social elements have found it easier to carry on their activities and quietly flourished. Amidst the confrontation, there are common incidents of groups of people posing as insurgents and collecting money, intimidating people and seizing the opportunity to settle personal scores. Bad elements of society, thus take advantage of the prevailing situation.

The most harmful consequence of the violence has been the near destruction of the Northeast premier National park, Manas in Assam. Manas is one of India's largest National parks and yet since 1989, is on its way to be declared as 'World Heritage Site in Danger'. The thick tiger forest has come to witness violent clashes between the security forces and the Bodo extremists. In February 1989, the extremist raided the headquarters of the Panbari range in the core areas of the reserve and set fire to 20 government buildings besides a large number of vehicles and decamped with one rifle and two guns. Moreover, the Assam Government deployed trooped in the area which proved harmful for the park. The environmental damage was high and the ecological damage was also severe. According to park authorities, an estimated Rs.1 crore is needed to restore the destroyed

Moreover, due to the deteriorating situation, poaching in the reserve forest increased. The increased rate of rhino horn, tiger bones encourages such activities.

The only solution to the problems lie in an effective policy to solve the insurgency problems in the northeast. Unless this happens, the unwarranted destruction of lives, properties and land will not abate.

COUNTER-INSURGENCY, AN EXPENSIVE EXERCISE:

The deployment of counter-insurgency troops in the north-east has its origins in the 1950's and continues so till today. The area and terrain has been the most inhospitable, inaccessible and acted as a psychological barrier to the counter-insurgency forces. Their presence has been a permanent feature and yet, till today, their withdrawal does not seem imminent with the continued growth of insurgency movements.

There has been very limited success to the exercise and yet, they are also indispensible to check the activities of

65. ibid.

66. 1 kg. of rhino horn can fetch as much as 50,000 US dollars, a tiger penis 1,700 US dollars and powdered tiger bone fetches 500 dollars per gram in far-eastern countries. ibid.
the insurgents. However, the maintenance and cost of their deployment has been high in terms of expenditure - men, material and finance. The amount incurred in the deployment of troops can only be roughly estimated. Although no one in the armed forces is willing to even hazard a guess on the amount of money spent on the operations so far, experts say it could be anywhere between Rs.9,000-10,000 crore over the last 10 years.67 Further, at one time, nearly 40,000 army personnel were deployed in Assam to combat the militant ULFA and the cost of operations, including rations. POL (petrol, oil and lubricants) and other miscellaneous expenses were estimated to be in the range of Rs.300 crore.68 The money pumped into the northeast is very high and there have been questions whether the results have justified the high costs.

The area lacks in development process and the amount could well be utilized for such. However, the northeastern states are to a larger extent dependent on the forces because the state police are not equipped nor trained to combat insurgency. They have come to be a 'necessary evil'.

The measures undertaken for counter-insurgency is grossly inadequate. The Union Government has failed to curb the growing dissidence among the people. There appears to a

68. ibid.
hasty desire for peace, which has resulted in the signing of accords, which have not been effective in ushering lasting peace. The worn out practice of declaring the affected areas as 'disturbed' and the imposition of the Special Armed Forces Act, 1958 must be checked for it has done very little towards the success of counter-insurgency.

69. According to Shri C. Madhav Reddi (MP, Adilabad) regarding the Tripura Accord stated in the Lok Sabha on August 30, 1988: 'While I agree that is an historic agreement, but it is possible that the history may be repeated. The history of various accords signed by us - the accord signed with Assam, the accord with Mizoram and the Tamils in Sri Lanka and many other accords - is going to be repeated in the matter of implementation of these accords because we have been signing these accords sometimes in haste.'