CHAPTER III

CAUSES OF INSURGENCY MOVEMENT IN NORTH EASTERN INDIA
Insurgency in the northeast, is the product of more than one factor. There is significant evidence to testify to the volatile pre-conditions, which existed prior to the actual armed outbreak. The underlying factors, prevalent as they were, required just a spark to ignite the tension ridden atmosphere. The culmination of latent and immediate factors resulted in successive wave of insurgency across the northeastern region.

The insurgency movements have come to greatly challenge India's security and internal stability with the more militant outfits demanding no less than secession from the Union. The time-frame of the insurgency movements appears to have no limits. Since the early 1950's to the present day, there has been very limited respite in the continued growth of insurgency. Its presence has come to be accepted as a permanent feature of the northeast and has given rise to ill-deserved conclusions, that the people have nothing else to do but take up arms to settle their problems. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The root causes of the present situation are to be found in many areas of political, social and economic realm. Most importantly too, the historical past also throws sig-
significant light on the overall discontent and grievances of the people towards the Indian Government. In tracing the causes, it is important to keep in mind how closely the past and present are interwoven and linked together. The deep seated grievances and dissatisfaction of the people over the years, coupled with other factors of localised importance has given rise to the innumerable problems today.

THE ROLE OF THE BRITISH

The British consolidated their rule in the North East after the Battle of Yandabo (24 February 1826) by driving the Burmese out of Assam. The Britishers came into contact with the region much later than it did with the rest of the country, and their rule ushered in tremendous change which has had a lasting impact.

The British annexation of the northeast was a gradual

1. The Brahmaputra Valley prior to the advent of the British was ruled by the Ahoms which was marked by great progress and development. However, the 18th century saw a gradual decline of the Ahoms due to weak and unscrupulous rulers who were driven only by self-interests. During the reign of Chandrakanta (1811-1818), the Burmese King was asked for help to drive out his enemies and this marked the Burmese incursion into Assam. It was followed by a reign of terror and they became more ambitious and the turn of events captured the attention of the British Government of Bengal. They wanted to check the Burmese design and the Anglo-Burmese wars which concluded with the treaty effectively put an end to Burmese rule and marked the new era of British rule.
process which was determined mainly by economic considerations. The control over Assam in 1840 led to the annexation of the hill tribes over a period of time. Manipur and Tripura which were princely states, were reduced to subordinate status in 1851 and early 18th century. Political control over Nagaland was established in 1878. Meghalaya was annexed in 1872-73 and Mizoram was brought under control in 1889. Arunachal Pradesh was administered by an Assistant Political Office posted at Sadiya in 1882. 2

The British did not harbour much interest in the northeast. They were contented to follow an isolationist policy of non-interference. However, such a policy changed dramatically with the prospects for tea-industry in Assam, which was suitable between the 27th Parallel-28th Parallel. In 1832, Robert Bruce was sent to Assam to look into the feasibility of tea-cultivation and the Assam Company was set up as a result of his report. Moreover, with the Charter of 1833 which abolished the Company's commercial interests, there opened up the prospects of colonialization with import

2. The Northeast was administered as part of Bengal till 1874, when Assam was constituted into Chief Commissionership. In 1905, Assam and East Bengal were amalgamated into separate Lieutenant Governorship. However, in 1912 Assam was reconstituted and placed under Chief Commissionership and finally in 1919 was reconstituted as Governorship.
of private enterprise and capital from Britain. All developments in Assam during the years 1840-59 centred round tea and the Assam Company.

The protection of their economic interests prompted them to adopt measures of annexation towards the hill tribes. The tribals carried out raids on the tea-gardens which caused economic loss and threatened the lives of the workers. The tribals at the same time were also threatened by the continued expansion of the tea-gardens into their traditional hunting grounds. The extension of the British tea-plantation on the foothills of the Lushai country was taken by the chiefs as an encroachment upon their 'future lands'. Had not the Lushais disturbed the working of the tea-gardens in Cachar and Sylhet which were under the British ownership... the British, probably, would never have gone into the Lushai Hills for occupation of the territory. Likewise the raids carried out by the Nagas forced the British to subjugate the Naga hills.

4. ibid.
5. K. Zawla, Mizo Pi pu te leh an thlahte Chanchin (History of Mizo's Ancestors and their descendents), Aizawl, Hmar Arsi Press, 1976, p.82.
MEASURES ADOPTED BY THE BRITISH

The British rule saw the introduction of policies in the hill which has had significant impact. The origins of present day insurgencies to some extent are traced to the measures introduced during their administrative control over the hills.

(i) INNER LINE REGULATION: The Chin Hills Regulation was introduced on 13th August 1896 and the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation was introduced in 1873. These measures were to restrict movements and contacts between the hill tribals and plainsmen. The implementation of the Inner Line Regulation was enforced in the Lushai Hills on 13 August 1896. The North Eastern Frontier Agency (NEFA) was covered with the Act in 1873 which authorised local authorities to prohibit British subjects generally, or those of specified classes, from going beyond a certain line, laid down for the purpose, without pass or licence issued by the Deputy Commissioner. Likewise the Naga Hills was subjected to the

7. The Superintendent or the Deputy Commissioner had the power to order a person, who was not a native of the area to leave within a specified time, if his presence was felt to be injurious to the peace and good administration of the area. Disobedience was punishable and the order could not be challenged in any civil or criminal court.

regulation in 1873.

The restrictions imposed was thought necessary to protect the hill tribes from the exploitative nature of the plainsmen and at the same time, to curb the frequent clashes which took place between the British subjects and the tribals. It also aimed at protecting the rights, privileges, customs, traditions and way of life of the tribes. The regulation marked the beginning of the isolation of the Northeast, especially the hills and this was the genesis of feelings of separatism in the mind of the tribals. The absence of contact insulated the tribals in their own world and this led to being cut off from the political, economic and social development which took place gradually in the rest of the country.

The most significant blow took place during the freedom movement which swept across the country. Barring the Assam plains, the hills were unaffected and there was no sense of unity and identification with the cause. The differences between them was accentuated in the absence of economic, social political relations. These factors were, in the subsequent years greatly exploited by the insurgent leaders who wanted to gain ground by emphasising the irreconcilable

differences between extremely diverse people. The tribal psyche was ingrained with the belief that their future was not identical with the rest of the country. The thought became the dominant factor in influencing secessionist tendencies in the North East.

**BACKWARD TRACTS:** Under the Government of India Act 1919, the Governor-General in Council had the authority to declare any British territory as a "Backward Tract". He was empowered to apply the Act to the backward tracts with such exceptions and modifications as he considered necessary. The Governor-General in Council was empowered to direct that an Act of Indian Legislature would not apply to the territory or would apply with such exceptions and modifications as he might prescribe. The Act covered the Lushai Hills, the Naga Hills and North Cachar Hills. The Assam Government had no jurisdiction over the areas so declared. This gradually led to the growing disinterest of the Provincial Government over the years and resulted in the neglect of the hills which alienated the people further.

The promulgation of the Act was criticized by the national leaders as it was indicative of the British intention to further isolate the tribals from the political

10. Animesh Roy, n.6., p.45.
development of the country. This was because 'there was no scope of popular participation in the government as there was no elected representative of the Excluded Areas.' The protection of the tribes from the demographic engulfment and from the cultural assimilation by dominant groups is acceptable as sound policy. But it is also noted that the resultant non-involvement and non-participation of the Lushais in the wider socio-political process sustained the independent orientation of the tribes, the further consequence being that their regional sentiment was reinforced to the extent of setting them feel they were never a part of India. The absence of political participation denied the tribals the power and authority to assert their desires and political demand at a critical juncture. Its tragic fall out was the consequent development of insurgency. All the subsequent political developments including insurgency in the Lushai Hills and Naga Hills and the creation of small states and Union Territories in the area could be traced to the creation of 'Excluded Areas' by the Act of 1935.

On the recommendation of the Simon Commission (1927),

11. ibid., p.47.
the backward tracts\textsuperscript{14} of Assam were categorised as 'excluded areas' and 'partially excluded areas'. These areas were regarded as too backward to have any advanced form of government and such areas were beyond the pale of the provisional and federal legislatures and they were thus to be directly ruled by the Central Government through the Governor. In the case of partially excluded areas, discussion in the Legislative Assembly was not barred subject to the overriding authority of the Governor.\textsuperscript{15} The financial and constitutional affairs of the areas were entrusted to the Central Government.

The introduction of the Inner Line Regulation (1873) and the recommendations of the Simon Commission (1927) had far reaching effects on future relations between the hill people and plainsmen. The segregation of the people brought about racial awareness which acted as a major catalyst for future insurgency movements.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{14} Prior to the attainment of statehood Nagaland (1963) and Mizoram (1987) were parts of Assam.

\textsuperscript{15} R.N. Prasad, Government and Politics in Mizoram 1947-1986, North Book Centre, New Delhi, 1987, p.46.

\textsuperscript{16} According to B. Dattaray: In the British days large group of tribal communities were kept aloof from the perview of British administration. In the context of the North Eastern tribes there were two broad policies. (a) A large number of war mongering tribes were used as interlopers by the British. The latter extended certain material benefits in their favour and utilised their muscle power against the other tribes who were
There was lack of communication at the political, economic and social level. The people in the hills were left untouched by events which took place in the rest of the country. There was no sense of unity, being isolated and left to themselves. The educated leaders in the Naga and Lushai hills began to question their future with the impending independence of India. The future of the hills was regarded to be outside the regulation of independent India since a common future with India was not envisaged by them.

The divide between the people was too wide to be bridged. The policy of the British had ensured that. They were guided by economic considerations. The raids carried out by the hillsmen on the tea-gardens was a serious handicap and the Britishers wanted to stop it. These measures ensured to a large extent the isolation of the people. They were unable to keep pace with the progress and development elsewhere in the country in the ensuing years.

The serious consequences lie in the resulting divide on making sporadic attacks on the British tracts. (b) Some of the areas inhabited by the tribes were declared as Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas. When the relationship of the recalcitrant tribes vis-a-vis the British was stabilised, Exclusion and/or Partial Exclusion Policy was adopted and aimed at reducing the administrative expenditure on the concerned tribes from the British pocket. The tribal areas so declared, were left to manage their own affairs in the matter of internal management of the communities so far as it did not clash with the British administration.
racial issues. The dissimilarities in race, culture, creed, history, and customs gradually came to be highlighted and emphasised. The lack of contact between diverse people acted as an agent of divide. The diversity acted as an obstruction rather than a unifying force.

CHRISTIANITY AND ITS IMPACT:

The most important impact the British had upon the hill tribes especially in Mizoram, Nagaland, the tribal belt of Manipur and Meghalaya was the introduction of Christianity. Prior to the coming of the British, the tribes were primarily animists and they worshipped the forces of nature. They led simple lives governed by their traditions and customs and attributed living soul to all objects and to natural phenomenon. They were also guided by spirit - good and evil - and their lives revolved round in appeasing the spirits.

The British as mentioned did not have much economic interests in the hill areas and the people were very much left to their own in the initial stage. However, this policy was not so in the religious field. They encouraged Christian missionaries to spread the gospel among the tribals. Missionaries like Rev. Daniel Evan Jones, Lorrain, Salvidge, D.E. Jones, Edwin Rowlands etc. had come from the
Presbyterian Church of Wales. Meghalaya was reached earlier by the missionaries from the same church. Christianity reached Naga Hills in 1836 and missionaries like Rev. Brown and Mrs. Brown, Mrs. D.T. Cutter were the first missionaries to spread the gospel.

Christianity transformed the lives of the tribals. What they could not learn from the political rule of the British they did so and much more from the Christian missionaries. The Christian missionaries, besides spreading the gospel, took great initiative in improving the basic lives of the people through education, health and hygiene. It was particularly so, in the field of education that the missionaries made significant impact. They introduced the Roman script in Mizoram and Nagaland which boosted the development of the languages and its literature since the Mizos and the Nagas were without a script of their own. They established Lower Primary, Upper Primary, Middle and High Schools through which they used to do spiritual and educational teaching work for the people which in turn helped the spread of Christianity in Mizoram.17

The first church in Naga Hills was established in 1872

17. ibid., p.67.
in an Ao village by Rev. Clark. His wife took an active role in educational activities and she opened a girls' school. The first church in Angami area was established in 1883. The first Tangkhul Church was set up by Rev. Pettigrew in 1889. Gradually, it spread to other Naga areas till the missionaries were asked to leave Naga Hills on account of the insurgency movements in 1955.

In the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, the Welsh Mission and the Church of England took up the responsibility of spreading Christianity and the American Baptists went to Garo Hills.

There was a tremendous spiritual awakening among the hill tribals following the missionary work carried out by the various Churches. The tribals discarded their old religion and embraced the new religion totally. Their eyes opened towards western civilization which was passed on to them by the missionaries.

The hill tribes were not influenced by the religions, and culture of India except for the Meiteis, who converted to Hinduism in the 18th century under the rule of Gambhir

19. The tribals, especially the youth are till today drawn towards anything western - in their choice of music, clothes, cinema, etc. Very little of anything `Indian' is popular and to some extent, looked upon with dis-taste.
Singh. The by-passing of the Indian culture among the hills tribes was to an extent instrumental in the lack of brotherly feelings between the people of the hills and the rest of the country. Religion is a unifying force which binds people together and its absence has prevented closer affinity. The "religious card" was exploited in the course of the insurgency movements which widened the divide further. From the British rule to the insurgency period, religion has not fostered the desired unity and co-operation. The assertion of religion has come to widen the gulf between the people. There have been allegations against the Christian missionaries for encouraging the tribals to rebel against the Indian Union by moulding them towards a culture alien to India's. This was allegedly a continuation of the 'divide and rule' policy which the British had deliberately fostered on free India to destabilize the country.

The Christian missionaries also came under a lot of criticism and were accused of taking an anti-India stand. The missionaries involved in the hill areas were subjected to suspicion to the exact nature of their work. They were accused of donning the garb of missionaries when they had been solely guided by the goal of separating the people of India. According to Shukla the modus operandi of the missionaries were - (i) To instill in them a fear that the
Hindus are out to dominate them and by destroying their age-old customs and traditions they will obliterate their separate identity; (ii) To allure them towards materialistic Western culture and modes of living by imparting English education through the convents and missionary colleges; (iii) To cultivate in them the thought of a separate nationality and wean them away from the national mainstream by projecting demands for a separate nationhood. Criticisms were also made on the grounds that in the areas where the missionaries carried out their work, insurgency has broken out, e.g., the Naga Hills, Mizo Hills, Assam and the other Northeastern states. In Tripura, the Tripura Baptist Christian Union is alleged to have been playing some role in integrating the tribals to act violently against the lawfully established Government in Tripura.

However, to conclude the missionaries who came to India were a part of huge conspiracy to disintegrate India is wrong. They carried out tremendous social changes and development in the northeast, and attributing these to pre-conceived designs holds no truth. The developments of


insurgency was the offshoot of a number of causes.

**Post Independent Factors**

The dawn of independence on the Indian horizon saw India emerge a sovereign independent state, after years of freedom struggle. Except for the Assam plains, the hill areas were left totally untouched by the national struggle for independence. The sense of nationalism or patriotic fervour which was a binding force elsewhere in the country, was not felt in the hills. The north-east was virtually isolated from the events leading to independence.

The people of the northeast, particularly in Nagaland and Mizoram saw this as an opportunity to revert back to their old ways of independent living. They had never felt to be a part of India even under the British rule, and with independence, they saw no reason to be under the Indian government. Thus, when India attained her independence, the tribal leaders of the north-east raised the demand for autonomy to preserve what was left of their tribal heritage. They wanted the British to leave the tribals to their own rule once they left. The threat perception to their culture and customs under Indian rule assumed significance with the imminent transfer of power to the new Indian government.

Consequently, when in 1947, the insulated hill tribals
became a part of independent India without self-consciously involving them in the struggle for independence a section of the newly educated tribal elites questioned their integration with independent India. It was in this context that the question of independence and secession of the Nagas and later of the Mizos emerged. Though their political integration with India was more or less complete, their emotional integration and identification with pan-Indian nationalism remained weak, nagging and incomplete.22

The determination of the hill tribals was clearly evident when the N.N.C. declared independence on 14 August, 1947 just a day earlier under the leadership of Phizo. Moreover on 16 March 1951, a plebiscite was held by the Nagas at Kohima on the issue of their independence. A overwhelming majority was secured in favour for independence. A few years later, the M.N.F. on 1 March, 1966 declared independence and declared the district as "independent Mizoram" and in the declaration of independence stated that "...in the name and by the authority of the good people of this country solemnly publish and declare that Mizoram is, and of rights ought to be free and independent, that they are absolved from all allegiance to India and its

However, there was no question of the newly independent state of India parting with any area it had acquired under the British rule. The States Reorganisation Commission 1951, had envisaged an integrated north-east India in the form of an enlarged Assam. This was to be the costliest mistake ever made for the Nagas and Mizos were not willing to accept anything short of independence. The hill areas of Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya were all incorporated into Assam which was deeply resented by the leaders.

The aspirations and interests of the tribals were completely ignored and the political authority vested in Assam over them was unacceptable. The Assam government was viewed with jaundiced eyes and became 'the' enemy. There was no identification with Assam or the Assamese who were viewed as non-tribals. The extension of authority was regarded as an interference and no welcoming committee ever

23. MNF Declaration of Independence. The declaration further stated verbally and in writing, put forward to the Government of India, their desire for creation of free and independent Mizoram for bringing about Human Rights and Dignity, which the Mizos by nature ought to have, but the Government of India, mislating the Charter of the United Nations and its Universal Declaration of Human Rights re-affirmed in the principles of Bandung Conference, have ignored the voice of the Mizo people, and are determined to continue domination and colonisation ruling over us with tyranny and despotism by instituting self-designed administrative machinery with which they endeavour to mislead the world to win their confidence."
greeted the bureaucrats who went to work there. Moreover, the enactment of Assamese as the official language in 1960 was disputed by the various leaders who regarded it as unfair as Assamese was an alien language to them. The leaders of the All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC) regarded the bill as "a clear proof of unfair attitude and firm determination of the Assamese community to avail themselves of undue advantage and thereby enhance their domination over the hills people." 24

Post-independence saw the emergence of educated tribal leaders who were exceedingly conscious of their distinct ethnic identity, which they vociferously articulated in order to fulfil their political aspirations under the changed situation. They were also acutely conscious of their oppressed status in the Assamiya ruling class dominated Assam as an integral part of India. 25

The Indian Constitution, to meet the aspirations of the people in the Sixth Schedule, granted autonomy in the form of District Council to the Nagas, Mizos, Khasis, Jaintias, Garos, Karbis and Dimasa Kacharis in internal matters. However, it was gradually realised that the autonomy granted

to them through this statutory provision was not adequate under the Assamiya dominated state legislature and government.26

**Sense of Neglect and Exploitation**

The northeast located at the far flung eastern corner of the country has lived in an isolated world even in the not-so-distant past. The amalgamation of the tribal areas with Assam created a sense of distrust among the tribals who did not like to be under Assamese domination. Having been left to their tribal customary rule under the British, they could not take advantage of the various developments that took place under the British particularly, in the development projects. The post-independent era made little change in the development of the northeast.

It is an area endowed with natural resources but largely due to non-exploitation and under utilization of its potential, it has failed to make much headway in developmental works. All the complexities of a backward economy are found in this regard, which accommodates diverse cultural traits and where infrastructure is feeble and capital for

26. ibid.
investment is pitiably absent. Development and its process is largely influenced by political directions through programmes, promotional efforts, and by the use of ideology and doctrine. Widespread social, institutional and organizational changes are implied in the process of breaking the poverty barrier, or the vicious circle and bring into a self-generating economy. This requisites were found to be missing, not because of lack of local initiative but the relative unimportance the northeast occupied in the Central Government priorities. In the five decades of developmental planning, the northeast have lagged behind and did not show the expected results.

Its peculiar geography has virtually left the northeast with an inescapable common destiny. It is a compact geographical unit but isolated from the mainland save through a slender and vulnerable corridor, flanked by alien territories. Assam remains the gateway through which all her neighbours have to establish contacts with the rest of the country. Tripura, projected in the heart of Bangladesh and surrounded on almost all sides by foreign territory has


to wholly depend on transport links with Assam even for her bare existence. Nagaland, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh depend on Assam even for their internal communications. Whatever contacts Mizoram and Manipur have with the rest of the country are through the Surma Valley of Assam.\textsuperscript{29} The northeast states are widely interlinked and depend on one another for its survival. The importance of transport and communications are vital but the northeast remains backward in this area. The air link with the other parts of the country is also negligible especially in Mizoram, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh. Expansion of the existing airports or construction of new ones have been neglected by the Central government which has caused inconvenience and hardships to the people.\textsuperscript{30} Air links are vital especially when the floods cause havoc during monsoons and all transport virtually come to a halt and basic needs do not reach the people in the interiors. The effort, no doubt for improving roads are the state government concern, but the allocation of the funds must be forthcoming from the Centre and this

\textsuperscript{29} J.P. Saikia (ed.), n.28, p.99.

\textsuperscript{30} Inconveniences and hardships are gravely felt by the Northeast students who pursue their education outside. The time duration required to travel handicaps their movements and the high cost of air travel does not offer much alternative. Often, it is said that they spend more time travelling than enjoying their holidays at home.
has been negligible. Prior to the birth of the new states, Assam neglected the hill areas where motorable roads were few and far-between.

In agriculture, the majority of the cultivators practiced 'jhum cultivation' or the slash-and-burn system of farming which is detrimental to the environment, topography and moreover, less productive. The people carried on cultivation only for subsistence and under Assam, the hill areas were neglected and no serious attempts were made to find alternative means of occupation and livelihood. There was no meaningful efforts to wean away the farmers from the wasteful method of cultivation. The options were few and served little for their sustenance.

The underdevelopment of the agricultural sector is also the result of limited irrigation facilities except in Assam. The proportion of irrigated area to the cultivated area till recently was as low as 1.71 per cent in Mizoram, 6.28 per cent in Arunachal Pradesh, 8.97 per cent in Tripura, 13.75 per cent in Meghalaya, 17 per cent in Manipur and 31 per cent in Nagaland. The irrigable areas in the hills occurred in scattered patches, which require disproportionately large irrigation command involving high cost which require multi-stage vertical lifts.  

31. J.P. Saikia, n.28, p.102.
The northeast has a good base for industrial development but till today these potentials have not been exploited to their maximum capability. Small scale and cottage industry holds promise and in this area the infrastructure is already available which simply has to be maximised. In the field of power the northeast has tremendous potential, said to be of the order of 30,000-40,000 M.W. By March 1985, 786 M.W. of installed generating capacity had been achieved.32

The economics of the northeast are interlinked with national economy and the development of the northeast is vital for the country as a whole. However, it is ironic that the slow but steady growth of development could not take place earlier. The backwardness of the northeast, is a direct fall out of the British policy of isolation and the neglect it faced following India's independence.

The people of the northeast have always expressed wounded feelings of neglect and exploitation owing to their relative backwardness. In spite of high literacy, there are not enough means to absorb the output, inadequate number of technical institutions, and lack of opportunities which add to the multiple facets of backwardness and sense of exploitation.

Moreover, economic exploitation from people outside the northeast, has intensified their grouse against the 'outsiders'. Owing to the racial religious, cultural and other dissimilarities, the hill tribes have perceived a sense of 'un-Indianness' from the rest of the country. Many a time the Centre has been accused of differential treatment towards the northeast.

The sense of neglect and exploitation aroused alarming negative sentiments against India, particularly so after independence. There was widespread feelings that the future of the tribals within India was doomed and there was no way out of the bleak scenario unless they become independent and looked after their own affairs. Moreover, never having felt to be a part of India, their new found status within the state of Assam seemed to give credibility to their fears.

**Identity and Demographic Factors**

The crux of the problem in the northeast has always been the question of identity. The hill tribes have expressed reservations in the question of nationality identifiable as 'Indian'. This difficulty is the result of several factors which have influenced the minds of the people greatly. The inability to be and feel Indian has also been accentuated by the attitude of the plainsmen towards them.
It is unimaginable that till recent time knowledge about the northeast was negligible and inconsequential. The men in the street thought of and knew everything beyond Calcutta as just Assam.\textsuperscript{33} There was complete ignorance the rest of the area and there has been little change.

The hill tribes having led a closed life also were not much aware of the rest of the country. The northeast more or less 'forced' itself to be taken into account and consideration especially so after the Chinese Aggression in 1962 which jolted New Delhi to the strategic importance of the northeastern frontiers.

The region has also been unable to join the so called mainstream Indian life, particularly so, as a result of the British policy and the sequence of events after independence which alienated the people further. India is a diverse country consisting of mixed races of Aryans, Dravidians and Mongoloid stock, their origins and migration written in history. However, due to lack of contact, the hill tribals were not aware of historical developments in the rest of the country and that increased the gap. The rest of the people who were not tribals were regarded as plainsmen, who were

\textsuperscript{33} M. Horam, \textit{North Easts India, A Profile}, 1990, p.3.
given names in local lingo to identify them. They were all classified as one race. At the same time, the plainsmen were equally ignorant about the diverse customs, culture, language and traditions which existed among the various tribes and were all thought to be one and the same. Such misconceptions about one another could not be easily done away and with the virtual neglect of the northeast and the prevalence of the Inner Line Regulations the process of integration had been checked.

The identity issue was one of the main planks the Mizo National Front (M.N.F.) utilized to win support for its cause. According to the M.N.F. "during the fifteen years of close contact and association with India, the Mizo people had not been able to feel at home with Indians or in India. They do not, therefore, feel Indian. Being created a separate nation they cannot go against nature to cross the barriers of nationality." Such propaganda highlighted the

34. Mayang (Meitei), Dakhar (Khasi), Vai (Mizo), Diphreme (Angamis). There is a further tendency to call all non-tribals "Indians". The categorisation is also used as a blanket term and not necessarily as derogatory.

35. Till today, there are strong misconceptions about the North East. There are many who regard the land and people to be living in an uncivilised state, living in jungles, eating wild animals and hunting heads.

36. The main objective was to be independent from the Indian Union.

dissimilarities which influenced to a large extent the consciousness of the people.

The people of Nagaland, who were the first to raise the banner of self-determination in the north-east under the Naga National Council (N.N.C.) the identification issue was the most distinct. Naga nationalist sentiment is based on the fact that the Nagas are different from Indians. The Nagas resent being called Indians for they believed that they were never under Indian rule. The Naga leaders had submitted a memorandum in 1929 to the Simon Commission stating that 'we should not be thrust to the mercy of the people who could never have conquered us, and to whom we are never subjected', but to leave us alone to determine for ourselves as in ancient times'.\textsuperscript{38} The feeling of the proud tribes were injured when it looked imminent that the British were contemplating passing on political authority of the hill areas to the Indian government prior to independence. Moreover, Alistair Lamb writes in his book, Asian Frontiers, "The Peoples of the Assam Himalayan (like the Abors, Mishmis and the Apatanis), the people of the hills along the southern edge of the Brahmaputra Valley (like the Khasis) and the Burmese frontier tracts (like the Nagas and Mizos) none of

\textsuperscript{38} Memorandum submitted to the Simon Commission on 10 January 1929 by the Naga Club.
these could be described as Indian if that term were to be defined on the basis of culture.\textsuperscript{39}

The numerous differences which exists in traditions, customs and religion has also widened the gap significantly. The society in the tribal areas is an egalitarian one and there are no 'rigid status determining economic status and the caste system is therefore naturally absent'.\textsuperscript{40}

Christianity, as mentioned earlier has had the greatest impact in revolutionising the lives of the tribals. It opened a new world to them. Christianity came to be the dominant religion in Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, to some extent in the hill areas of Manipur.

The rest of the country was narrowly viewed as Hindus which was regarded as an anti-thesis of Christianity. There existed a widespread fear that the 'Indians' would force upon them their religion once they ruled over them. A fear psychosis was generated by the leaders of the tribals who used the 'religious card' to expound their aims and goals. The fear and ignorance of the people were exploited to some extent to achieve the desired results.

The difficulty in acquiring an 'Indian identity' and a

\textsuperscript{39} V. Elwin, \textit{The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century}, Bombay, 1969.

\textsuperscript{40} M. Horam, n.34, p.69.
growing desire to break way from the imposed 'alien' rule and domination, was instrumental in the growing restlessness in the tribal youths who wanted to break free.

**Unemployment**

The unemployment factor has played a major role in the numerous problems of the northeast. Unemployment has been the bane of the northeast youths. During the British rule, the work of the missionaries was remarkable in the field of education, the result of which is seen in the high literacy rate of the northeastern states. According to the 1991 Census, Mizoram has the second highest literacy rate with 81.23 per cent, Nagaland 61.30 per cent, Manipur 60.96 per cent, Tripura 60.39 per cent, Assam 53.42 per cent, Meghalaya 48.26 per cent and Arunachal Pradesh with 41.22 per cent. 41 The states which had the maximum Christian missionaries show a remarkable consistency in the literacy growth rate. Education has done much for the people for it has transformed their lives and given them political consciousness. More importantly, there was a gradual shift from traditional tribal values to modernity. There is a slow but definite breaking up of tradition bound customs and prac-

The peoples' lives gradually underwent changes with education and modernity. The old pattern of life was loosened, especially in the towns and there emerged a shift in employment avenues. The new educated class began to look for employment in various government offices. They were confident and enthusiastic to join the government services. However, contrary to their expectations, opportunities were not favourable to them. The jobs were dominated by non-tribals, who had more work experience and higher qualifications. Employment opportunities proved limited and scarce. The government failed to provide opportunity for employment which was suitable to their qualification. With education, the youths aspired for a better standard of living. The exposure to a more enlightened world infused a desire in them to better themselves and their people. These aspirations were not met by the then administrative machinery. The educated elites particularly in Nagaland and Mizoram began to aspire from independent homeland. A.Z. Phizo, T. Sakhrrie, Laldenga were men who aspired more for their people. Grouses were held against the government for not providing opportunities to them. Moreover, higher education was pursued personally with much financial constraints outside their homes and on return to find nothing
was a severe blow to the psyche of the youths.

In recent times with most of the states being entities on their own, the unemployment scenario has undergone some change for the better but not enough. Expectations from local leaders at the helm of political affairs were high but such expectations have come crashing down. Corruption in state administration is, in fact, the principal cause of growing discontentment. Moreover, political patronage denies deserving candidates of employment. Disillusionment often leads to violent outbreak of frustration. The alleged close nexus between politicians and persons willing to pay certain amount in return for favours, and also the practice of favouring members from the same political affiliations has hampered the policy of the "right person for the right job" equation. The many youths who do not have the means nor the close nexus to politicians pay a heavy price for no fault of theirs. This induces many a young man to resort to

42. The corruption has left many youths disillusioned who do not have the means to "grease" the palms of politicians and other influential people. It also demoralises them when public servants fail to uphold the sanctity and responsibility of their jobs. Moreover, there is very limited scope for technical and higher education which has compelled students to pursue their studies outside. In Assam, there are three Engineering colleges, and none elsewhere in the northeast. There is also only one veterinary college (Assam) for the entire region. There are four medical colleges (Assam - 3, Manipur - 1) which has to accommodate the entire burden. It is grossly inadequate.
other means.

After independence, the hill areas under Assam was governed under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule. There was a District Council to allow the tribes 'to develop according to their own genesis', but the responsibility of development was never vested on the elected representative body of the district. It is rather curious that District Councils were kept outside the scope of developmental planning and development administration.\(^{43}\) This resulted in the neglect of the hill areas by the Assam government in developmental and economic programmes. Development involves proper utilization of manpower and unemployment is the result of unjudicious utilization of manpower.\(^{44}\) Unemployment occurs to two levels - in the rural areas and urban areas which differ in their nature. In the rural areas, unemployment revolves around the unavailability of land to work on and in the urban areas it is due to various reasons - the inability of the government to absorb them, absence of trained personnel, political interferences etc. Both factors pushed the youths towards a violent form of redress.

\(^{43}\) M. Horam, n.34, p.77.

\(^{44}\) ibid.
Immigration: External and Internal

The northeast region faces innumerable problems and one of the most significant is the immigration problem. Immigration has been defined as to come to a foreign country and take up residence. In actual practice besides residence, land is taken up and when immigration takes place in millions it creates a serious imbalance in all aspect of economy, political social and demography between the indigenous people on the one hand and the immigrants on the other. In northeast India, Assam and Tripura have been inundated by this problem. To understand the situation, a look into history is required.

Prior to British rule, Assam was practically closed to the outside world except for few expeditions carried out by the Mughals and the Burmese. However 1826, the British took over Assam and a new chapter in the history of Assam began. The colonisation gradually broke the isolation of Assam by linking it with the colonial capitalist world economy, a break which was historically very significant for Assam and the Assamiyas. Initially, Assam was made a new

45. *The New Mirriam Webster Dictionary.*

46. The Mughals attacked Kamrup as early as 1257 under Tugril Khan. It was in 1661 that the Mughals under Mir Jhumla were successful.
division of Bengal. However, in 1874, it became a new province of British India. Very significantly, this new province included the thickly populated Sylhet region which historically and ethnically belonged to Bengal. This arrangement ended only with the partitioning of the country in 1949, when Sylhet opted to join East Pakistan.47

The British had colonised Bengal way back in 1757 and thus, under their colonization much progress had been made in educational fields and there was a new western educated middle class in Bengal. With the colonization of the new province of Assam, the British felt it more practical to carry out the administration with the help of the already educated Bengali group of elites. It was thus possible for the colonial rulers to avoid investment in western education in Assam, and avail instead of the services of the already surplus educated unemployed persons from Bengal Presidency.48 The work machinery was taken over by the Bengalis who were competent and capable to serve under the British, a complete monopolisation of jobs took place. In addition, many more Bengalis came to Assam as lawyers, teachers, private doctors, shopkeepers, jewellers, tailors

47. Seminar, February 1990.

and so on. This was the genesis of constant stream of movement to the plains of Assam from Bengal. The consequence of this was to be felt years later with tragic consequences. The immigrants from Bengal were middle class who cornered the white collared jobs but there was another threat to the demographic balance from the immigrants from East.

The immigrants from Sylhet were mostly agriculturists who were in search of land and had crossed over to Assam. These immigrants were mostly Muslims unlike those from Bengal who were caste Hindus. As a result of continued influx the primary sector of the economy, i.e., agriculture had virtually passed to immigrant Muslims, cultivators who had migrated in course of five decades preceding independence. They constituted nearly 20 per cent of Assam's total population and by dint of their toil most of them have become peasant-proprietors from landless origin. With the increase in their numbers the immigrants also began to be active politically. The Muslim League was formed and it became the platform through which the aspirations and pro-


tection of the interests of the immigrants were voiced.

More importantly, the language issue was assuming important dilemma. The influx of educated Bengalis from Bengal was a boon for the British for they had already become well versed in English and therefore were more suitable for employment in the British administration. Soon after, Assamese was replaced by Bengali and Bengali became the language of the courts and the medium of instructions in schools in Assam. Consequently the Bengali language came to be the dominant language. In 1873, Assamese was recognised as the court language but the inroads made by Bengalee was difficult to push aside. The dominance of Bengalee over Assamese was a severe blow to the local people and this marked the genesis of intolerance towards the immigrants.

The influx of immigrants was a threat to the economic, social and political lives of the Assamese who were awakened from their idyllic bliss. With development it had becoming more difficult to accept the inroads the immigrants had made into their land, employment avenues and administration. Deep feelings of resentment and simmering discontent were felt which in course of time led to the students' agitation in 1979-86 and the emergence of the United Liberation Front

51. H.N. Rafiabadi, Assam - From Agitation to Accord, New Delhi, 1985, p.106.
of Assam (U.L.F.A.).

In the state of Tripura too, the problem of immigrants is significant and more so because the local indigenous people have been outnumbered completely. The tribal population now consists of only 30 per cent of Tripura's total population. The influx of foreigners into Tripura has been mainly from Bangladesh and the immigrants are mostly Bengalis and to some extent, Chakmas from the Chittagong hill Tracts.

The majority of the tribals inhabit the hilly infertile areas. The Bengalis inhabit the fertile urban areas. The influx of immigrants not only threatened the land of the tribals but also the employment opportunities. Typically, settlers from the plains tend to grab the land from the tribals and hog all the lucrative and private sector jobs.52 The tribals were educationally more backward and could not compete with the plainsmen who had the advantage.

The general backwardness of the state, coupled with the disadvantageous situation of the tribals, have witnessed militant outbreaks. The tribals are in a belligerent mood for they see no way out through constitutional means for the redressal of their problems. They have come to believe in

52. Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 23 February 1987. The restoration of tribal land has been the demand of the TNV and ATTF.
the power of the gun as the only way to make their presence felt in a state which is originally and rightfully theirs to rule.

Thus, it is seen that immigration poses a threat to the stability and security of the country when a section of the indigenous population take up extreme measures to protect their interests. The States of Assam and Tripura are glaring examples which has threatened the very security of India.

**Internal Immigration**

Immigration occurs not only from outside but internally too. The northeast region because of its diverse origins and development is particularly sensitive not only from external but internal migrants from different parts of the country. The northeast tribals consider all non-tribals as markedly different from them.

The northeast region being economically backward and the people ignorant, offers enormous opportunity for exploitation by the business class from all over the country, especially the Sindhis, Biharis, Marwaris and Bengalis. They also have the financial backing required. States like Nagaland and Mizoram are relatively free from economic inroads made by the business class till today, as they are
protected by the Inner Line Permit System. The State of Meghalaya has witnessed much tragedy in recent times due to the threat the local people have felt from outsiders who have strong economic presence.\textsuperscript{53} Big business is virtually in the hands of 'outsiders' like the Sindhis who have been the target of the students' ire in recent times. Besides, the business community, the immigrants from Nepal are also a sore point with the Khasis who they feel have taken up the labour force in the State.

The economic exploitation has had serious impact on the peace and security of the State with the murmur of growing disenchantment with New Delhi gaining ground. In recent times tell-tale graffiti appeared on the walls of the town such as 'This is Khasi land, not India'. The writings on the wall, literally may be of small nature, but as seen elsewhere in the State, it could be the seed of a more serious problem unless tackled sensitively and without delay.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{53} As soon as dusk falls, non-tribal shops down the shutters and clerks who work in the various Central Government establishments in Shillong hasten to return home. \textit{Pioneer} (New Delhi), 23 March 1995.

\textsuperscript{54} The Khasi Students' Union (KSU) main demands have been: deletion of names of post 1951 settlers from the electoral rolls before issuing voter identity cards, shifting of 'sweepers' colony from Burra Bazaar, changing the job reservation policy for local tribesman, separation of the Assam. Meghalaya joint cadre system,
The Khasi students had forced the government to abandon its plan to construct a railway line to Byrnihat in Meghalaya. This was to protect the state from being swamped with labourers and skilled workers from outside the State. There has been much opposition to the proposed uranium mining in West Khasi hills by the Atomic Mineral Division due to environmental hazard and threat to public health. The Khasi Students Union President expressed fears of foreigners' influx to their state as it would negatively affect the Khasis socially, politically and economically. Meghalaya did not want to go the Assam and Tripura way and was prepared to take all necessary steps to prevent it.

The U.L.F.A. in Assam has also made the business community its target for extortion and levying heavy taxes. Their grouse is that the money accumulated by the business traders are not invested in the state which thus does not benefit the people at large. They call it 'bleeding Assam dry'. The sense of injustice and exploitation gave way to open expressions of hatred against the exploiters. The tensions run deep in the hearts of the people and it requires only a small spark to ignite the tension into a full-fledged confrontation. Mizoram, which has otherwise upgrading a polytechnic to an engineering college and establishment of a Medical college.

...Continued...
been a relatively violence free state, however, remains vulnerable to the tension between tribals and non-tribals. Recently, the killing of a Mizo truck driver and the assault of another Mizo on the Cachar-Mizoram border by the non-tribals led to a massive retaliation against the non-Mizos in the capital, Aizawl. Business establishments owned by them were looted and ransacked and an estimated 2,000 victims fled the state. Such outbreaks are a recurring phenomena which has continued to confront the entire northeast.

THE DRUG BARONS AND THEIR NETWORK:

The northeast lies close to the Golden Triangle of Laos, Thailand and Myanmar making it vulnerable to the designs of the drug barons. Coupled with the ever increasing number of insurgency groups operating in the area it is a complex problem for the law enforcement to tackle. The strategic importance of the northeast has been of immense concern to New Delhi in the light of its sensitive border areas. Now, there is a new menace threatening the country from countries next door in the form of drug barons and their network.

The drug barons have been expanding their operations and it is in this respect that the neighbouring countries
play a significant role. The growing involvement of ISI in the abetting terrorism in the area has also come to light. The insurgency has been fuelled by the activities of the ISI whose main objective has been to wreck the stability of India from within and it is prepared to adopt any measures for achieving such goal. This has plunged the north-east with the dual problem of insurgency and drug trafficking. In particular, States like Manipur has felt the maximum negative impact of the problem followed by Nagaland, Mizoram and the other States.

Manipur is particularly sensitive to this problem owing to its close proximity to Myanmar and in this respect the small town of Moreh assumes importance. Moreh lies at the foot of Manipur's Yumadoung hills which skirt the Kabaw Valley in Myanmar. The town of Moreh is an important place where business is conducted between the two border areas without a hitch. Everyday 600-700 people cross the three border gates controlled by the Border Security Force

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55. One estimate made three years ago put the quantity of pure heroin passing through the region at 25 kg a day. Most of the shift comes from Myanmar and passes through the Barak Valley of Assam before entering Bangladesh for supply to European outlets. *Sunday*, 24-30 March 1986.

56. Kabaw Valley was handed over by the British to the Burmese, and an agreement for compensation was signed on 25 January 1834. The compensation paid to the Manipur King was a monthly stipend of five hundred sicca Rupees.
(BSF) to do business or visit relatives. Moreover, 'heroin' and electronic goods worth hundred of crores of rupees a year reportedly pass through Manipur's non-descript border town of Moreh alone and it is over the control of this traffic that the bloody Kuki-Naga strife started two years ago. The State of Manipur is more vulnerable for manufacture of heroin takes place near the border with poppy grown in Manipur. The chemicals required for extracting the drug from the opium are being smuggled across the border from India. Moreover the dominance of drug barons like Khunsa and Lo Hsing-Han in Myanmar poses much difficulty in tackling the problem.

There are also strong indications that the ruling military junta have a big role to play in the network of drug operations and smuggling into India via the northeast. Men like Khunsa and Lo Hsing-Han are alleged to be patronised by the regime who allow them to carry their expansion unhindered. The purpose basically of the drug barons are the international market via transit points such as Manipur which proceeds on to exist point like Bombay, Delhi and

59. ibid.
Bangalore. The alleged involvement of local politicians, army jawans, police and the local people only make matters worse. Heroin is sold at a very cheap price in Manipur which would otherwise be exhorbitant in the Indian market and even more so in the international market. The lure for easy and quick money cuts the risks involved and many people become attracted to this trade.

Addiction to drugs has been the bane of the northeast and the fall out of the problem has assumed gigantic proportions. The problem of drugs, its addiction and trafficking has effected the socio-economic balance of the state. The youths, in particular have fallen prey to the menace due to multiple reasons. The frustrations of unemployment have driven many a young man to take up drugs in a superficial effort to dim his miseries. Also, the 'high cost' of obtaining jobs has deepened the sense of injustice and prompted the youths to take up arms, drug trafficking and increased addiction. The freer the drug barons are to grow opium and process heroin, the higher the volume of narcotics flowing into Manipur. The higher the volume the broader the State's drug trafficking network and the higher the number

60. In the back alleys of Imphal and Aizawl, a kilogram of heroin costs Rs.3 lakhs but by the time it reaches its destination in Europe and America it fetches something like Rs.50 lakh if not more. Sunday, 24-30 March 1996.
of local heroin addicts.61

The tragedy of addiction is to be found in the alarming rise of AIDS in the northeast.62 Heroin is freely available here and the youth in particular get hooked to heroin or its by products which are injected into the veins through hypodermic needles. Addicts frequently share needles which are contaminated when not sterilised and the ignorance of the dangers involved put the youths in a high risk category. According to an estimate there were over 25,000 IVDUs (Intra-Virus Drug Users) in these states with the infection rate of 45 per cent in Manipur and 7 per cent in Nagaland.63 The society on a whole has suffered much in all respects.


62. In Manipur alone till September 1994, more than 3,347 HIV positive cases have been detected between the age group of 21-30 years. There have been 18 AIDS deaths till 31 October 1994. [Indian Express (New Delhi), 28 November 1994.] The seven northeatern states account for less than one per cent of the country's population, but contribute nearly 16 per cent of the HIV cases in the whole country during the period 1990-1994.

63. Eastern Panorama, March 1994. Besides, heroin, morphine, opium, and Ganja find easy market in the north-east. Other addictives like sniffing glue and petrol are also rampant. The Excise Department Government of Mizoram issued notification for reward to persons who would give information leading to the seizure of drugs as indicated below:

(1) Heroin (No.4) and its salts - 1 kg. Reward Rs.20,000/-.  
(2) Morphine base and its salts - 1 kg. Reward Rs.8,000/-.  
(3) Opium - 1 kg Reward Rs.220/-.   
(4) Ganja - 1 kg Reward Rs.80/-.
The growing degeneration of the youths due to addiction and smuggling have been taken advantage by Pakistan through its agency ISI, by encouraging anti-India propaganda and encouraging secession. The US House of Representatives report also indicted the ISI and also mentioned that Pakistan seems to have spoken of channelling aid to the PLA through Myanmar.64

However, at the same time the insurgent groups propounding populist reforms have taken up measures to combat the narcotic trade. Drug peddlers are severely dealt with and the consumption and sale of liquor has been targeted at. Warnings and threats are given and failure to comply results in dire consequences. The PLA play an important role in this regard. The ULFA has also targeted the perpetrators of such practices, giving out severe forms of punishment and reprisal.

The alleged involvement of politicians in supporting the underground activities and covertly patronising the insurgents has given a free reign to their movements. The insurgents become confident of political patronage and emboldens them to carry out their activities. Life becomes easy for them and it lures the unemployed and vulnerable youths to abandon other options and take up arms instead.

64. Frontline, March 1994.
At the height of the Naga-Kuki conflict, the Manipur Ministry was rocked by allegations that the Deputy Chief Minister, Mr. Rishang Keishing, a Tangkhul Naga was providing aid to the NSCN and on the other hand the Minister Mr. Dongel was also accused of supporting the Kukis, being a Kuki himself. It is an apparent outcome of one's bond to one's tribe and at the same time to exploit the situation in one's favour. One of the most sensational arrest of a politician over alleged links was that of Mr. A.S. Arthur. He belonged to the Tangkhul Naga tribe and following his arrest, nine firearms, including seven unlicenced guns were recovered from his possessions. In the light of the ongoing ethnic feud in the state, his arrest was a clear indication of the depth the feud had penetrated into. The guardians of peace were instead involved in propping up the warring sides. In Assam, Mr. Lachit Kalita, General Secretary of the Congress (I)'s city committee was arrested on 16 August 1994 for his alleged involvement with the ULFA and booked under Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Preven-

65. His arrest made headlines in the local dailies and created a hue and cry in the wake of controversies over the alleged nexus between the political leaders and underground elements which has been an instrument for hurting charges among political rivals in the state for quite sometime but never proved. Eastern Panorama (Shillong), February 1994.
The armed insurgency movements are the culmination of historical factors, political aspirations denied and the lack of economic development which was not at par with the rest of the country. The political development in the country failed to encompass the northeast which inculcated feelings of alienation and isolation. The growth and development of an 'Indian' identity was blocked by the cultural and race divide which further became the main plank of propaganda by the radical leaders to justify their refusal in accepting Indian authority.

The northeast, after more than four decades of independence has continued to struggle to come to terms with being a part of the entity - India. In actual terms, very little headway have been made in this respect. No doubt, the seven states have emerged as full-fledged Indian states and barring Tripura, the Indian National Congress holds power in the other states, which would seem to indicate the

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66. The police said Mr. Kalila was arrested on the basis of statements of some captured ULFA activists who said that he conspired with the outfit to kidnap the former treasurer of the Assam Congress (I), Mr. Hemanta Talukdar. Mr. Kalita has been accused of personally trailing Mr. Talukdar and transporting arms and ammunition in his own car and storing them at his residence here. The police added that Mr. Kalita, along with a senior ULFA leader from Nalbari, converted about Rs.17 lakh into US dollars for transfer abroad to purchase firearms. *Telegraph* (Calcutta), 18 August 1994.
absence of any further confrontation against the Indian state. Yet, the reality is dramatically different as has been seen.

The unabated presence of insurgency movements has dominated all aspects of life and there appears to be no respite from it. The Government of India has had limited success in its effort to bring in peace in the strife torn area. The time span for resolving the crisis has been too long. There cannot be any permanent solution if even after more than forty years, no concrete and visible measures have evolved to contain insurgency in the northeast.