INTRODUCTION

There has been a growing concern among researchers and scholars on the genesis of ethnic consciousness among various cultural groups, stressing to preserve their ethnic origin or ethnicity. Ethnic consciousness has often led to movements with secessionist tendencies causing political turbulence in an ethnically diverse state. Such tendencies have their roots in specific historical circumstances. This kind of ethnic consciousness, deep-seated and augmented, has provided a potent platform for waging war with the state. The closing decades of the twentieth century have witnessed a phenomenal rise in ethnic movements and such tensions have been growing over various regions of the world and South and South East Asia in particular. In the past few years, the intellectuals and politicians have laid stress on reaching solution to such conflicts through Constitutional Reforms. In India it has been argued that by reforming and changing some parts of the Constitution, a number of objectives related to ethnic problems can be solved.

At the turn of the century, the countries of South Asia offer an ambivalent picture. The international system as well as the political landscape of the region underwent dramatic changes in the last decade. A multi-polar world is likely to emerge formed by new trading blocs, regional powers and constraints of global economic competition. A new wave of democracy has reached South Asia, which today is the most populated democratic region in the world. At the same time, the social fabric of all South Asian countries is threatened by serious problems of governance. Widespread poverty, political violence and ethnic conflicts still shape the political system of most of these countries.

Under the conditions of growing interdependence in the economic field and a rising demand for democratization and self-determination, security within the countries as well as within the region can no longer be defined by military terms alone. The challenge lies in looking at regional security from different viewpoints. This will include the role of social capital, the challenge of unresolved territorial disputes, the dilemmas of ethnic conflicts and democratic consolidation, the problems of migration and the influence of non-governmental organizations. "The future task for all governments will be to find
viable solutions between the domestic and international economic constraints and the political aspirations of their people."

One important constituent of understanding the problem will involve a hard-headed instrumental approach to the understanding of ethnic conflicts in modern nation-states. With the birth of modern states, leadership went into the hands of an ever-expanding population of secular individuals eager to reinforce its legitimacy. However, when these potential bureaucrats/leaders moved to the metropolis to take up positions in the state, they found no room for themselves there and returned to their respective ethnic groups to lead sometimes violent, ethno-political movements with strong overtones of secession.

There are many scholars like Geertz and Shils, Anthony Smith, Hamza Alavi etc, who have worked on ethnic issues and identify different reasons on persistent rising of ethnic movements. There are some scholars who strongly view that a scientific economic planning, skillfully implemented, involving the troubled regions can be an effective means to meet the ever-growing demands of the movements. But in fact, often such movements grow up based on not entirely economic derivation rather on a perceived sense of deprivation in terms of cultural hegemony and acculturization. The Bodo's complaint of the Assamese hegemony and cultural subjugation is one such instance. Threat to the extinction of a particular regional language is another reason for such movements to start, as in the case of Assamese against Bengali's; Bodo's against the Assamese.

Had economic development the panacea then there would not have been a Quebec Movement, in Canada, which is a highly developed country. Radhey Mohan opines, "Today we often take it for granted that economic changes like industrialization will break down cultural and social barriers eliminate cultural tension and weld a single culture out of diverse interests and elements. If this were true there should have been no

2 Geertz, C; "The Integrative Revolution" in C Geertz (ed.), Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Africa and Asia, New York, 1963
4 Alavi Hamza in Ross Mallick, Development Ethnicity and Human Rights in South Asia, Sage Publication, New Delhi, 1998
separatist Scottish Movement in Britain".\(^5\) Not only that, the economic process which is 'mistakenly' expected to have a magic effect on the regionalist orientation of the people, can turn out to be the cause of complex problems and tensions in relation to cultural integration and balance. Everybody, small or big group, would love to have a larger share of the cake hence are bringing forth cultural clash, which would eventually lead to cultural exclusiveness. Though, neglect of economic development could be a factor in exacerbating the ethnic conflict, it solely cannot be the factor in ethnic movements.

**Understanding Ethnicity**

Most social scientists agree that ethnicity is one of the most misunderstood and misused words in the study of politics. This is not surprising, given that it is very ambiguous when one has to define 'ethnicity'. In the positive viewpoint, ethnicity is a warm, comfortable feeling, which gives a sense of belonging to a group of people. In this definition ethnicity is also about 'shared memories' or 'fake memories'. Leadership and trust within the ethnic group are benefits that are otherwise absent in multi-ethnic groups. On the other hand there is a strong undercurrent in multi-ethnic states that looks at ethnicity and its expression as a problem in itself. Based on an idea of a single and unified culture and integration of all the units in a composite whole acceptance and accommodation of other cultures are ruled out. This concept of the nation in third world societies is incipient and when challenged by other groups, it often destablises the nation and brings about a crisis in nation-states resulting in intensifying the ethnic national movements and leaders to both suppression and negotiations by the state.

**Defining Ethnic Nationalist Movements**

There are various theories, which describe ethnic nationalist movements in various forms. While some theories question the basis of such conflicts as one of economic development negligence; others feel that such ethnic nationalist movements should be taken as an indicator of a vibrant democracy which provides space for asserting ethnic rights. Ethnic movements hence often challenges the state and ethnic nationalist movements that

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\(^5\) Radhey Mohan, edited Composite Culture and Indian Society, article by Radhey Mohan New National Ethos Needed, P.48, Jaipur, 1992
contest the sovereign authority of the modern state often lead to protracted internal conflicts and the apparent breakdown of non-violent modes of political participation. Where the state suspends access to the political process for nationalist minorities, militants often emerge to demand autonomy or secession by violent means. In this process of conflict escalation, democratic norms and practice (which are initially present) appear to be the first victim. The government, in turn, will often characterise the militancy as ‘terrorism’ and inherently antithetical to state security and democratic values. But to what extent does this common account of ethnic conflict capture the nuances of ethnic nationalist mobilisation? Are there non-violent processes of ethnic nationalist politics that are often obscured by the advent of state repression and ethnic militancy? If so, what role do such processes play in the definition and development of nationalist movements in their confrontation with the state? Some of these are discussed in this work.

Atul Kohli, for example, argues that periodic demands for more control and power by a variety of ethnic groups – that is, self-determination movements ought to be expected in multicultural democracies, especially in developing-countries democracy. The fate of these movements - that is, the degree of cohesiveness these groups forge; whether they are accommodated or whether their demands readily escalate into secessionist movements; and their relative longevity- largely reflect the nature of the political context, though group characteristics around which movements emerge and the resources these groups control are also consequential. Kohli goes on to describe this more specifically. He says two dimensions of the political context appear to be especially relevant, namely, how well central authority is institutionalised within the multicultural democracy and the willingness of the ruling groups to share some power and resources with mobilized groups. Given well-established central authority and firm but compromising leaders, self-determination movements typically follow the shape of an inverse “U” curve: a democratic polity in developing-country encourages group mobilization, heightening group identities and facilitating a sense of increased group

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efficacy; mobilized groups then confront state authority, followed by a more-or-less prolonged process of power negotiation (reservation of seats for elections, special autonomy, peace accords – (Mizo Accord); and such movements eventually decline as exhaustion sets in, some leaders are repressed, others are co-opted and a modicum of genuine power sharing and mutual accommodation between the movement and the central state authorities is reached. But is it necessary that such ethnic conflicts are allowed to grow hampering economic development and social security of the people as such conflicts are process of multicultural societies?

**Institutions and Ethnic Violence**

Self-determination movements are deeply threatening to weakly instutionalized states. If leaders of such states are relatively accommodating towards movements, such examples in the developing world are rare, suggesting that instutionalization of authority structures and leadership strategies may not be entirely independent of each other then peaceful break-up or reorganization of the state is the most likely outcome. By contrast, unaccommodating leaders, especially those who control significant coercive resources, are likely to drive the situation towards considerable turbulence, at minimum, and, at maximum, towards a civil war and possibly even a violent break-up of the state.

In short, how well the authority of the central-state is instutionalized and what the leadership strategy is occurs as two important aspects of the political context that influence the pattern of self-determination movements. To repeat, the nature of the groups that are mobilized (i.e., what resources these groups control and whether the groups are organised around race, religion, or language) as well as how intensely such groups come to view their situation as unjust are issues that are by no means irrelevant to the fate of these movements. Understood in this manner, self-determination movements constitute a political process whereby the central-state and a variety of ethnic groups discover their relative power balances in developing-country democracies.

India’s democratic record suggests that two related sets of political processes have guided the management of power conflicts in the country. First, a delicate balance has been
struck and re-struck between forces of centralization and decentralisation. And second, the interests of the powerful in society have been served without fully excluding the weaker groups\(^8\). The record on both of these fronts is far from perfect; the failures have put a great strain on Indian democracy. Nevertheless, accommodation of those who mount powerful challenges by granting them greater autonomy and share of resources have been central to strengthening democracy, though not in all cases. *Where the decentralisation of power has been legitimised through Constitution, it has performed better and where it is not, it has given rise to more ethnic conflicts and demands for autonomy, separation and even secession.*

**Contextualising North East India:**

In the India's Northeast recurrent breakdowns, violence and separatism have remained inevitable. Even the most enlightened and accommodating ‘management’ strategies from New Delhi could not avoid such episodes, in nearly the entire Northeast. Different ethnic groups have been demanding autonomy/creation of separate states (Bodos in Assam) or demanding autonomous regions (Karbi Anglong) that have grown over the years. Since our Constitution already provides space and provision for special treatment to the North-East region, the federal government initiated and concluded different accords with the ethnic movement leaders. Unfortunately very few observers have paid much attention to the fact that institutional arrangements for processing those demands were also carefully designed during the very founding moments of the independent Indian state. The notion of federalism implied in such institutional design was that of cooperation with the centre, the regional government and the subregional units for generating nationwide development of political, economic and human resources. The creation of autonomous units within a state was part of special concession given to accommodate autonomy demands from tribal areas of Assam. In fact, provision for creating institutions that responds to autonomy demands, without conceding the nature of states, was incorporated in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. This was specially crafted to be applied to the administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. The creation

of Autonomous District Councils and Regional Councils were specified by this schedule. Regional Councils were to be permitted within autonomous Districts if different scheduled tribes happened to reside in the same District. The Sixth Schedule was to serve as a special 'self-contained code' for governance of the tribal areas.

It is important here to deliver James Manor's argument that excessive accommodation of a variety of demands can at times backfire. The reorganisation of Assam into seven states is a glaring example, which amplified problems with more demands for separate statehood. What one analyst called the "passion for equity" in India has also hurt India's economic development and contributed to the de-institutionalisation of its polity. Successful accommodation of demands often presupposes an effective central state. When accommodation itself leads to fragmentation and threatens the viability of a centralized state, then other problematic political response may follow; the rise of right wing religious nationalism in India is partly a response to such perceived fragmentation.

Mizoram and Assam both have witnessed violent insurgent movements and armed conflict with the Indian state to get certain concessions. The insurgent movement in Mizoram ended with the conclusion of Mizo Accord through a Constitutional Reform. The Mizoram Accord (1986) signed by Laldenga, Lal Thanhawla and the Union government brought an end to the Mizo insurgency. This Accord provided for permanent peace with the Mizo National Front (MNF) and its affiliates abjuring violence and secession. An amendment to the Constitution in 1986 introduced a number of safeguards relating to Mizoram, as agreed upon. Since then Mizoram have seen relatively peaceful and no major incident of insurgency have been witnessed.

In the case of Assam, with the signing of the Assam Accord (1986) a major breakthrough was achieved though certain sections of society remained dissatisfied. The Bodos felt that the Assam Accord didn't fulfill their wishes and hence they also looked forward for autonomy on the lines of Mizoram. The Bodo movement followed both the non-violent and violent path for nearly a decade till the Bodo Accord was signed. The Bodo Accord evoked the hope that this would fulfill their inspirations and their community would progress. But

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lack of political will, both, on the part of the state and the center with no back up from the Constitution led to non-implementation of the provisions of the Bodo Accord. And the failure of Bodo Accord turned the peaceful movement into a more violent one.

The All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) took over the leadership of the Bodos and it launched a movement for greater autonomy of Bodoland on March 2, 1987, with the demand for creation of a full fledged state of Bodoland outside Assam. The two strategically located Bodo-inhabited Districts – Kokrajhar and Darrang – became the nerve centres of the militant struggle. When the ABSU launched its movement, it released a list of 92 demands but over time these essentially centred around the three major political issues: (1) formation of a separate state named Bodoland on the north bank of the Brahmaputra; (2) establishment of Autonomous District Councils in the tribal dominant areas on the south bank of the Brahmaputra; and (3) incorporation of the Bodo Cacharis of Karbi Anglong in the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

The ethnic rage of Bodos in Assam is mainly against the Assamese and outsiders. It is the single most numerous indigenous ethnic communities in Assam. The All Bodo Students Union, which led the Bodo movement initially, had build a wide front of Bodo forces. The concept of 'homeland' state, as elaborated by ABSU and United Tribal Nationalist Liberation Front (UTNLF), implies the status of a union territory within the federation for the plains tribal of Assam. Demands were also made for the creation of District Councils under the provision of the Sixth Schedule.

The Bodo Accord of 1993 between Assam Government (AGP) Bodo leaders and Union government (Congress government) was signed. The Accord did not concede either a state or a union territory to be carved out of Assam. Instead it provided for a statutory structure of autonomy within the state of Assam in the form of Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC). The Council was equipped with legislative and executive organs. But the protective provisions made by the Congress government at Centre did not help them and

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10 Though the Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) promised to attain Udayachal state, the ABSU with its dynamic leadership gravitated toward militancy, and with its grass-root popularity became the spearhead of the Bodo struggle.
the AGP rule in Assam made the situation worse. The post Accord experience was disappointing. The ruling Congress party at the Centre failed to reciprocate the confidence of Bodo leaders in federalising institutions for autonomy within the state. Vital provisions of the Accord were violated and as a result insurgency begun and the Accord failed.

**Overview of Literature**

Theoretically there have been many path breaking studies on nation and nationality formation. Some of the studies have equated ethnicity as one of the most important factors for nation formation. Some of the important studies are reviewed here.

Greetz and Shils's define ethnicity as coming together of ethnic (indigenous) people by a perceived sense of threat\(^{13}\). Greetz and Shils are of the view that when groups bound together by primordial ties confront a political or social threat they organize themselves for political action and (try to) become nations. Nationalism as a form of consciousness (self) and the nation as a political category are therefore, an enlargement of sentiments and organizational units found together earlier in history\(^{14}\).

Hamza Alavi has described ethnic conflict in South Asia as a special characteristic of the 'Salariat', which the British created for the sole purpose of manning the lower echelons of the colonial administration and army\(^{15}\). The argument is that since government jobs were the main source of employment, the private sector being insignificant, most educated people (the potential salariat) had to seek employment with the state. To link her statement we can say that ethnic groups (such as Mizos, Assamese, Bodos, Manipuris) who were far off from influence over the state found their way blocked by other dominant groups. Bodos feel dominated by Assamese, Assamese by Bengalis and Mizo and Manipuris too by Bengali and other outsiders. So, the dominated groups were led to

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\(^{13}\) Geertz, C. "The Integrative Revolution" in C Geertz (ed.), Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Africa and Asia, Pp 105-57, New York, 1963

\(^{14}\) Ibid.

\(^{15}\) Alavi Hamza in Ross Mallick, Development Ethnicity and Human Rights in South Asia, Sage Publication, New Delhi, 1998
believe that their chances of getting jobs would improve with the creation of a state, of
t heir own.

Studies on the tribal movements or ethnic conflict in North-East India are indeed few,
though some of them are worth mentioning. S.K. Chaube's *Hill Politics in North-East
India* points out that basically, the major factor behind the political turmoil in the region
has been the concept of nationalism, which partially ignored the smaller identities,
territorial boundary criss-crossed different ethnic consolidation.\(^{16}\)

Paul Brass' book titled *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, expresses views on 'ethnicity and
nationalism' based on two focal arguments. One is- ethnicity and nationalism are not
"givens" but are "social and political constructions"; the other is that, they are "Modern
phenomena inseparably connected with the activities of the modern centralizing state".\(^{17}\)
The theory of elite competition is presented to show how both ethnicity and nationalism
arise out of specific types of interactions between the leadership of centralizing states and
elites from "non-dominant ethnic groups" especially in the periphery of these states. In
the book, Paul Brass tests his theory and discusses the various patterns of ethnic
mobilization and formation through case studies with special emphasis on South Asia.

*Regional Security, Ethnicity and Governance: The Challenges for South Asia* edited by
Justus Richter and Christian Wagner\(^{18}\) critically examines ethnicity, not as a primordial
attachment that stems from the given of a social system but as something that can be
created and recreated by the elite to suit certain economic and political circumstances. To
find solutions to some of these conflicts it leans towards explanations that look forward to
international assistance. Writes David Carment: "Evidence taken from other conflicts,
such as those in the Balkans and Latin America, indicates that outside actors can limit the
scope and intensity of secessionist ethnic conflict and in some cases set in motion the
process of resolution of these conflicts through concentrated efforts at peace-building.
Few of Asia's protracted conflicts have proven to be salient enough to attract major

\(^{16}\) Chaube S. K. *Hill Politics in North-East India*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1978
South Asia*, Berkley, 1998
powers' interest beyond belated efforts at peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction (as in East Timor and Cambodia)." In this book ethnic conflict is not a remnant of autocracy or oppression. Using case studies of countries in South and South-east Asia, the book emphasises how ethnic conflict in the political institutions of liberal democracy evolved after the post-colonial nation-building exercise. It emphasises that ethnic violence does not go with autocracy, imperialism and oppression but with popular rule, community, authenticity and self-expression.

The scope of the book is not limited to ethnic conflict. It discusses discrimination against minorities and the accommodations that minorities make in the countries of their residence. At times such accommodations are marked by ethnic conflict, but they seldom take the form of ethnic violence. In South-East Asian countries such as Malaysia and Singapore, where the focus is on who gets the larger share of the pie, ethnic minorities survive without recurrent ethnic violence. The book focusses on case studies from Indonesia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka where ethnic conflict has led to violence and secessionist demands. The book sketches when and how ethnic conflicts turn into ethnic violence with strong demands of secession. In the end, it tries to find some broad solutions for conflict management.

Rajni Kothari's book Politics in India is an analysis of the “sharp decline” in the role of the state and the growing loss of faith in the political process. These have resulted in “new assertions of peripheral and forcibly displaced communities against rampant destruction of their environments and natural resources”. These have created the basis for tribal uprisings for safeguarding their lifestyles to “less stringent defense” of cultures, regional identities, nationalities which constitute a broader range of popular awakening, protests and movements. Rajni Kothari's observation is that “peoples commitment to and faith in democratic values have been rising precisely when they have been in decline among the elites”. He states that the need is to “shift from a government of humans to human governance”, i.e., of bringing back human concerns to the centre, of regulating both the state and civil society, recreating an ethical order which would become a source

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19 Ganguly Rajat and Macduff Ian edited, Ethnic Conflict & Secessionism in South & Southeast Asia: Causes, Dynamics, Solutions; Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2003
20 Kothari Rajni, Politics in India, Shipra Publication, New Delhi, 1992
of values. He conceptualises the role of “grassroots movements” as a source of humane governance. Up till now, power and decision-making is concentrated in a few urban and rural areas. There is an urgent need for decentralization. Kothari states that in a “Plural and highly diffused society of India’s size”, the political process can be “effectively and predictably” carried on only by operating through a “decentralized structure of governance”. According to him, the best way of removing backwardness is to involve the people of the area in making vital decisions that affect them”.

Udayan Misra in *North-East India: Quest for Identity*, deals with the Naga National Question and Assamese national question. The emphasis is laid on the typology of the two nationalisms. The author points out that the poor assessment of the content of the insurgency by the Government of India let the situation go out of control.

The study by V.I.K. Sarin, *India's North-East in Flames* emphasizes that the transition from traditional economy to modern economy created an upheaval in the tribal societies. Immigration and question of land alienation are given proper attention to understand the turmoil among the tribes who choose the path of insurgency with the aid of foreign countries.

Nirmal Nibedan in his book *North-East India: The Ethnic Explosion*, pinpoints the ethnic and nativistic aspect behind the development of an explosive situation. The author gives an overview of all the current underground movements with special emphasis on the historical background of the Mangloid tribes of this region.

B.C. Bhuyan’s edited book *Political Development in North-East* contains seventeen papers of which five are on tribal movements for autonomy in Assam. A. K. Nag draws attention in his work *The Mizo Dilemma* to certain issues raised by the growing ethnic aspirations and how it presses a threat to national integrity.

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21 Misra Udayon, North East India, Quest for Identity, Omsons, Delhi, 1991
24 Bhuyan B.C. Political Developments in North East, Omsons publication, Delhi, 1989
25 Nag A. K. The Mizo Dilemma, Omson publication, Delhi, 1990
R.N. Mishra’s book is a study of regionalism and its articulation in the political process focusing attention on the “interactions of the primordial sentiments and civil politics”. It is a case study of Orissa. Mishra states that the Indian political system is passing through a “Multiple crisis stage” such as crisis of identity, legitimacy, penetration, participation, integration and distribution. He addresses the crisis problem which stems from two sources. He states that “ethnic factors, besides economic and geographical factors, survives in a geographical background and involves such matters as autonomy and administrative decentralization, the cult of homeland and local patriotism26”.

Besides the above mentioned books, Arvind Das contends how the ethnic minorities who are “broadly known as tribal” are waking up after centuries of exploitation and becoming components of a class in the making. According to him, ethnicity is a “culturistic concept” and is “dynamic”. It is linked with the struggle for democratic decentralization and this is what the book is mainly talking about. The focus of his study is on the Indian national as a whole.

Sajal Basu identifies two main “streams of movement” – social justice and ethnicity which produces a major challenge to both the centralized state and the globalizing impacts from beyond the nation state. A powerful tendency is the “growing assertion of diversity, of pluralizing impulses, of growing differentiation within societies, of the strong upsurge of identities and their search for autonomy and self – determination.” He also notes the growing justification of human consciousness and identities “in their vision of democratic restructuring of the social and political order.” He also studies the factors that have given rise to resurgence and reassertion of groups who were “left behind or marginalized27”.

**Objectives of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to draw attention to ethnic conflict/movements that stems out for political concessions and the impact of the accords/peace processes initiated on the federal system. The history of insurgency in North East is rarely narrated in the

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26 Mishra R.N, Regionalism In India Politics, Jaipur Pub. Jaipur, 1992
27 Basu Sajal, in K S Singh ed, Tribal Movements in India, Manohar Publication, New Delhi, 1983
context of an equally long history of peace, social collaboration, political reconciliation, democratic participation and innovation in institutional building and sustenance. India has witnessed many such ethnic movements and the demands ranged from outright secession to separate statehood to more autonomy. In fact, such demands have given rise to many regional political parties and also other political institutions. Such regional political parties have been pressurizing the Indian government for decentralization, to have a true federal system in word and spirit. Hence, the present study would be both historical and explanatory one. It would also suggest possible ways to restructure the federal system and Constitutional Reform, as done in the past, to accommodate ethnic demands.

Another objective of the study is to explore the reasons, why one Accord followed with a Constitutional Reform (Mizo Accord) was able to satisfy the ethnic group but another such accord (Bodo Accord) without a Constitutional Reform was not able to satisfy the ethnic groups and the post Accord experiences gave birth to more ethnic movements and insurgency. It is vital to implicate the failure of such Accords and failure in implementation of vital clauses in the Accords. The study will look up at whether such Accords can be concluded with ethnic movement groups with Constitution reform to reduce ethnic movements and insurgency to be curbed in a peaceful way.

The breaking up of Assam into smaller units has perhaps now reached a limit beyond which anymore fragmentation is better to be avoided and whatever further marginal adjustments need to be made are to be carried out at a sub-state level. Much of the answer lies in reviewing the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. If autonomy is granted through Constitutional Reforms/amendments it would be binding on both on the Union and State Government to implement measures without escaping responsibility.

Hypothesis

- “Constitutional Reform is an important method of accommodating autonomy demands without allowing disintegrating factors to culminate into ethnic explosion.”
• "Ethnic dissonance can be addressed through democratic decentralization which is an important instrument of Constitutional Reform".

• "Constitutional reform can play an important role only if the contending/contesting groups can come to some agreement in form of treaties or accord".

To meet this multi-ethnic challenge, the state should absorb the shocks of such ethnic conflicts with the solid instrument of Constitutional accommodation by granting them autonomy and thus by making them feel they are not the so-called 'they' but part of this democratic system and to achieve this state must come into some form of agreement with the ethno national movements in form of some treaty or accord. The state should also strive to provide such conditions that ethno national movements can be prepared for talks and accommodation.

Significance and Scope of the Study

The north-eastern part of India consisting of seven states, has witnessed several ethnic movements at various point of the time. Such ethnic movements and other issues combined by political evolution have led to demands for autonomy and separate statehood and often independent states, too. The federal government in turn, trying to put an end to such ethnic movements operated/used military force and other kind of suppressions through state apparatus. But after a prolonged period, it allowed the creation of autonomous District councils, reorganized the state boundaries and created new states. In spite of all this, the whole region is in the process of a complex multi-faceted transition still producing ethnic conflict, insider-outsider confrontation, trauma and tragedy.

Constitutional Reform, particularly related to Schedule Sixth of the Constitution, and restructuring of the federal provisions would facilitate devolution and delegation of powers in the North-East region. This would be an act of astute management of the troubled regions where the demand for autonomy is so vibrant. The unique historical, geo-political and cultural character of the region requires that offering such autonomy to
tribal people would turn it into a stable and strong region. Constitutional accommodation and reform had been seen as more viable solution to such movements and conflicts than temporary arrangements and suppression from the state. In the past, astute political management and Constitutional accommodation have harmonised many diversities, despite visible turbulence and confrontation. The Schedule Sixth of the Constitution already provides special protection to the people of Hill regions.

Most of the studies that have been carried out deal either with the historical origins of the different ethnic movements or dwell upon the causes and ideological base of such movements. Very few studies have emphasized the role of Constitution in solving such ethnic conflicts. India’s Northeast has witnessed such ethnic movements more than any other part of the country. Such ethnic movements have led to signing of many peace accords and Constitutional Reforms to accommodate the demands. The study will try to look at how by creating new institutions and accommodating different ethnic demands through Constitutional Reforms ethnic movements and insurgency could be managed and violence and social turmoil can be brought to an end. The Schedule VI of the Indian Constitution, which provides special provisions for the tribal areas, would be an important focus of the study. The study has taken two states, Assam and Mizoram, as case studies. The difference lies in one Accord i.e Mizo Accord is with the back up of Constitutional Reforms and the other one, the Bodo Accord is without any Constitutional Reforms.

This work on North East India is an attempt to study the use of Constitutional Reform in an ethnically diverse region, which has witnessed ethnic conflicts for a prolonged period. The study is also an attempt to probe into the causes of the ethnic conflicts, how the federal or state governments has tried to solve these conflicts by accepting the demands for autonomy or by creating sub-states within the state through Constitutional Reforms/amendments and to what extent the Constitutional Reform has worked.

The study will observe the two Accords (Mizo Accord signed in 1986 and Bodo Accord in 1993 to understand why at the initial stage of their formulation the Accords appeared to
satisfy the demands and needs of the local people but gradually failed to respond properly particularly in the case of the Bodos. An analysis of the two Accords will throw light on why such Accords, in spite of having generated enough content, gradually turn and rear up discontent and violent movements. And in brief in chapter four, it has also upon the New Accord of the Bodos called, Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), which was signed in 2003 and various reactions of the Bodo populace seeking to know to what extent the new Accord will succeed.

A discussion on ethnic movements, particularly demanding autonomy, will provide a basic understanding of their grievances and also explain why such movements become unmanageable if allowed for a prolonged period to survive. It would also help us in understanding that when such demands are not met for long, it takes a violent turn and insurgency becomes part of it. This study looks at ethnic movements, in general, with Bodo movement and Mizo movement as a case and prelude to the study of the two Accords which would be the main focus of the study. It will delve on the attempt of the state towards seeking solution for such problems through Constitutional means and the concomitant results. A number of Accords and settlements that have been signed have brought former insurgents groups over ground though it has not ended violence completely from the region.

Another important focus is to suggest ways by which ethnic demands could be met with certain Constitutional Reform and also with creation of new institutions or reviving old institutions (as demanded by the ethnic tribes), thus maintaining and managing not only the cultural diversity of India but also its integrity.

The point that needs to be emphasised is that if the Constitution of India can be amended to accommodate and give recognition to different ethnic cultures (for which there is a provision in Schedule VI of the Indian Constitution); the Constitutional order and every day politics it constitutes would be just to this dimension of politics.

The Area of Study

The media's excessive preoccupation with violence and insurgency in North-East India and a narrow reading of its impact, on the part of the observers, are responsible for a
substantial misunderstanding of the region's political processes. As a result, the positive aspects of a community formation, the linkages of the communities with the wider political institutions, as part of north-eastern administration and representative system, and the contribution of these processes to the national system remain largely unexplored.

Hence the two states of North East (Mizoram and Assam) have been selected as both witnessed violent ethnic conflicts and peace negotiations. The conclusion of two Accords (Mizo and Bodo) temporarily helped to bring peace in the state. The accord promised autonomy and establishment of Autonomous District Council, in the troubled region. In fact, the Mizo Accord prompted the Union Government to alter some of the provisions of the Schedule fifth and Sixth of the Constitution to concede their demands.

Sources

The primary sources include various memorandums and both the Accords signed and concluded between the central government, state government and the movement leaders. It also includes the memorandums submitted by the Bodo and Mizo movement leaders to the State/Union Government, since independence. The data of the interview (field work) has been used as primary source.

The secondary sources include the existing literature on the subject and an elaboration of Schedule Sixth of the Constitution. News clipping of both the national newspapers and regional newspaper (only Assamese) have been important sources.

Methodology

The tradition to term ethnic movements that arises for securing demands of ethnic people as 'autonomy movement' in social science is relatively new. Earlier such movements were termed as either sub-nationalist movements, protest movements or insurgency. There are very few attempts to study ongoing movements because of its unpredictable nature. The two Accords will be the main probing area along with the background of the two movements. No other study in precedence to this has been done where assessment of the success/failure of the two Accords has been discussed. The methodological course is that of
case studies on the development cycle of the ethnic movements of the above-mentioned movements and an analysis of the conclusion of the Accords.

The content analysis of memorandums, newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets etc. have been extensively dealt with to bring forth the facts. A rigorous fieldwork with limited respondents was carried out from October 2002 to February 2003 to perceive people's opinion on such Accords. The fieldwork for the Bodo Accord was carried out in three phases in Kokrajhar and Dhubari areas within the demanded Bodo land. The selection of the area has been a deliberate one as both Kokrajhar and Dhubari have been hot spots for the movement leaders, political procession and conferences as well as public meetings. The fieldwork for the Mizo Accord was carried out in Aizwal. The respondent group was both the general people as well as bureaucracy from the council and local leaders. But in the case of the Bodos, it was primarily the political and movement leaders whose interview was sought.

Before the start of the actual fieldwork, a pilot survey was carried out. Both the places were visited to see if there is additional information from the respondents so that questions could be framed and administered to all respondents. Based on the pilot survey, the questionnaires were reframed.

The first fieldwork was carried out in Aizwal as the Mizo Accord is considered to be a success (though to some only in a relative term and not per se by the complete provisions of the Accord). The media in general has considered the Mizo Accord to be a success and so the political leaders but academicians tend to differ. The fieldwork in Bodoland area namely Kokrajhar and Dhubari was carried out after Aizwal. One of the significant feature of the second field work was that, it coincided at the time when the Bodos had planned a huge public meeting in Kokrajhar for the failure of the implementation of Bodo Accord and it’s non-acceptance by the Bodo people. Two other phases of the field survey was carried out during normal times with no political air blowing.

The interview was intensive and often ran in hours. The pilot survey had given ample indication that by quantitative survey only, one could bring out the fact that Mizo Accord was a success and the Bodo Accord was a failure. But such quantitative survey would not have really contributed much in the understanding of the movement as well as reasons of the
failure. So, intensive interviews were planned with Bodo political leaders and members of Bodo Autonomous Council. While in the case of the Mizo, the respondents included bureaucrats, politicians and common people. In the case of the Bodos it was apparent that common people were not well versed with the Accord, in fact, they knew nothing except that an Accord has been signed.

Most of the findings of the field work have been incorporated in the concluding chapter as it attempts to elaborate and analyse the success and failure of the two accords. Elsewhere it has been just references and observations of the field work and not actual data. The name of most of the respondents partiucally bureaucrats and movement leaders have been not mentioned on their request except few who have been elected either to state assemblies or member of parliament.

There were 29 respondents from the Bodoland area and 27 from Mizoram. The sample size was originally thought to be of 25 each.

Chapterization

The chapterization of the thesis is in the following form:

The introduction attempts to contexualise the theme of the study ranging from what is happening in different parts of the world as well as in India with special reference to North East India. It tries to put concepts of ethnic conflict in perspective and provides an overview of literature and justifies the selection of the area of the study undertaken.

Chapter one attempts to give an overview of the existing theories of ethnic movements and conflict with general emphasis on South Asian and South East Asian countries and special emphasis on North-East India. The chapter also probes into factors that exacerbate such ethnic conflicts and movements. It has its major emphasis on understanding the failure of the Bodo Accord, than seeking to know the successes of Mizo Accord on which plently has been written and talked about.

Chapter two and three deals with the historical development of the two ethnic movements (Mizo and Bodo) and delves into various claims and demands postulated before the central
government. In brief it also probes the leadership of the two movements and to what extent they were responsible for mobilizing the masses for the sustenance of the movement. This chapter is essential as a background to the main focus of the study; i.e. the two Accords, Mizo Accord 1986 and Bodo Accord 1993.

Chapter four discusses the institutional arrangements under the constitution’s Sixth schedule and the 73rd Amendment as these have a huge forbearing on both decentralization of power and granting of autonomy under the provisions of the Constitution. The chapter also focuses on the functioning of the institutions created by these two Accords (Mizo Accord 1986 and Bodo Accord 1993) and shows how the initial experience of the Accord was one of optimism and hopefulness, but subsequent violation of the Accord brought the insurgency back or gave impetus for violence in the region. This chapter has also attempted to update the work by including the development that took place in 2003 in the Bodo Ethnic Movement (Accord on creation of Bodo Territorial Council) and looks at the reaction of the various groups and the ray of hope. It is based on experiences with support from academicians, politicians and intellectuals who think on the similar line and what they suggest for the need for decentralization and restructuring some of the provisions of federal system with an emphasis on Schedule Sixth of the Constitution which deals with tribal areas. It has also touched upon the new Bodo Accord (BTC), of 2003, which is in sync with the work seeks to address.

The concluding chapter discusses using the experiences of the field work and data the failure of the Bodo Accord owing to various reasons of non compliance mentioned itself in the Accord. The chapter discusses the various measures in the light of the field work that was carried out in both the states and how the local people perceived the two Accords. It summarises their expectations from the Accord and to what extent Constitutional Reform for such accords are a necessity. Do they think that Constitution reform and amendments should be an essential part of signing of Accord?
A Note on Appendices

There is a comprehensive appendices added to the thesis for cross references. It became essential as during the work respondents often cited specific clauses of the Accords and Memorandums signed. Since the references of Accord, Memorandums and Schedule Fifth and Sixth came too often, it became desirable to put them in complete form to remove any ambiguity and easy check. I have also put the New Bodo Accord called BTC memorandum for comparing the difference between the two Bodo Accords of 1993 and 2003. Also the memorandums are not easily available at all libraries; I put them for wider use.