Chapter III

North-East India and Cross Border Terrorism

North-East India is an Umbrella term. The whole region of North-East India is spread over 263,000 square km. and located at longitude 89.46 degree east to 97.30 degree to east and latitude 21.57 degree north to 29.30 degree to north. At present, North-East India comprising the following seven states viz. Assam, Arunachal Pradesh (previously North-East frontier agency), Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Tripura. The eights states of Skim has been recently added for the purpose of growth only.¹ About 98 percent of the North-East India’s borders are international borders which are mostly porous. North-East India makes up 8.06 percent of India’s territory and is home of 3.73 percent of the population. According to 1991 census its population was estimated as 32 million and its inhabitants could be broadly categorised as hill tribes, plain tribes and non-tribal people of plains. The region accounts for 8.06% of the total land surface of the country and has a population of 3.73% of the country’s total. It is surrounded by China on the North, Myanmar on the East, and Bangladesh on the South and Bhutan in the North-West. Nepal is not far away, and the only land connection with the mainland India is through a narrow corridor in the plains of North Bengal popularly known as ‘Chicken Neck’. It is through this narrow stretch flows the natural and finished resources and products such as tea, gas and crude out of the region, and consumers’ goods, food and other essential and non-essential items into the region.² The region has borders with Bangladesh, Myanmar, China and Bhutan and has its own security implications.³ India’s North-Eastern frontier is one of the South Asia’s hottest problem spots. With as many as 30 armed Insurgent organisations

². Rai, Pradeep Kumar, “Insurgency in North-East India; Cross Border Connection”, Biannual Publication of Centre for Defence Studies Research and Development, Vol. 1, January 2009, p 1
currently operating there and pushing demands ranging from secession to autonomy and to right of Self-Determination, and a plethora of ethnic groups clamouring of their right and distinct identity—at times not just fighting the Indian state but engaged in internecine turf wars-the region has all the ingredients that make for an sustain tension and turmoil. Moreover, the location of the eight North-Eastern Indian states itself goes to explain why it has always been a hot bed of militancy with trans-border ramifications.

The recent decades in history of North-eastern India have been gripped by one determining political phenomenon—i.e., insurgency. According to T.A Subramanian, an insurgency is a protracted struggle, conducted methodically, step by step, in order to attain specific intermediate objectives, leading finally to the overthrow of the existing order, and its replacement by another regime. It is not an accident, for leaders appear first and then the masses are made to move. In international law, the concept of insurgency has recently been accepted as a basis for defining the legal rights and obligations of states in public orders more serious than mob violence and less serious than civil war.

According to one another, North-East is home to about 75 major population groups, and taking into account the sub groups, they speak about 400 languages and dialectic. Lawrence Cline states that some 200 tribal groups and sub-clans with histories of internecine conflicts inhabit this region. Another scholar asserts that North-East India is the home of about 250 ethnic groups and tribes. Tribal conflicts result from the numerically smaller and less dominant tribes resisting the political and cultural domination of the bigger tribes, especially when both the majority and minority tribes share the same territorial space. Identity assertions of the smaller groups can result in violent-inter tribal fights. However cultural identity, the platform on which ethnic ties are built is
fluid concept that is situational and hence, subject to being redefined, invented and imagined.4

Insurgency has been considered as an armed struggle between a ruling authority and non-ruling group in which the armed struggle is carried out side with political movements, demonstrations or passive resistance as an instrument to establish legitimacy for the armed struggle in the eyes of the common man, insurgent movements use violence to purpose their goal and adopt guerrilla warfare in tactics. V.k Anand in his book “insurgency and counter insurgency” a study of modern guerrilla warfare considers insurgency as “an extra constitutional competitively progressive and variegated struggle launched against the incumbent authority by a consciously mobilised section of indigenous definition emphasises the following characteristics of the insurgency. (1). It is an extra constitutional movement. (ii). It is competitively progressive. (iii). It is a movement against an established authority. (iv). It is a mass based movements. (v). It ultimately aims at emancipation.

Topographically, 70% of the region is hilly and 88% of the population is rural based. North-East is often described as ‘Asia in Miniature’ where the brown and yellow races meet and mingle. This land of red rivers and Blue Mountains reportedly has as many as 350 communities and almost as many languages, many of the communities’ vocal about their district culture and identity. Today the people of the North-Eastern India are uncertain of their and equally apprehensive about what future holds for them. Rapid changes in social, political and economic spheres has taken place in the last fifty years or so in the region and the people are passing through what can be described as “one thousand years in a lifetime”. 5

Moreover the region is connected to the Indian mainland by tenuous 22 kilometres long and corridor passing through Siliguri in the eastern state of west Bengal, fancifully described as the “Chicken Neck”. This the region where India’s highest insurgency is located-spearheaded by the Naga tribal separatists who have been clamouring for an independent home land over since India attained independence from the British in 1947. And in four of the eight North-Eastern Indian states, namely Assam, Manipur, Nagaland and Tripura, the violence has reached a level that justifiably be categorised as low intensity warfare-that level of conflict in which fatalities are over 100 but less than 1000 per annum. Between 1992 and 2000, there have been 12,175 fatalities due to insurgency or other types of armed conflict in Indian North-East.6

The region is an ethnic minefield, as it comprises around 160 schedule tribes, besides an estimated 400 other tribal or sub tribal communities and groups. Turbulence in India’s North-East is therefore, not caused just by armed separatist groups representing different ethnic communities fighting the federal or local governments or their proxies to press for some form of autonomy, but also be the recurring battles for territorial supremacy among the different ethnic groups. If the faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland readed by Isak Chishiswuu and Thuingaleng Muivah (NSCN-IM) has been pushing ahead with its demand for an independent Naga homeland to be carved out of India, the Naga and the kuki ethnic group in the state of Manipur, and the Bodo and the Santhals tribes people in western Assam have been struggling no less fiercely to retain control of their ancestral lands and thereby preserve their identity and rights.

What the North-East of India is witnessing is essentially an ethno-national push by these groups to further their sub national aspirations. For instance, the movement for greater autonomy by the Bodos, Assam largest

plains tribal community, led to the group securing a new politico-administrative structure within the existing state of Assam following a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the central government on 10 February 2003. The Bodo majority areas come under the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), a 40 member elective body that would run to the day-to-day administration of the areas under it and undertake development projects to improve the condition of the community and the areas which they inhabit with funds allocated to it by the federal governments, and the state governments. The BTC run initially by an interim team of administrators-held its first elections on 13 May 2005. The 2003 MOU was reached between the government and the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT), the insurgent group spreading’s the autonomy movement. Thus it was not a surprise to find the BLT-floated political party, the bodo people’s progressive front headed by the BLT-Chief–turned politician hagrama mahilary winning the polls and coming to run affairs and the council. The BTC accord is seen as a fulfilment of the sub national aspirations of the Bodos of Assam.7

The region has been caught in a vicious cycle of inadequate economic development and insufficient. The opportunities causing unrest and militancy, and then militancy and violence-which have, ironically, further retarded economic growth gun running, killing arson, extortion, looting and kidnapping have been widespread and in an in an insurgency situation. The aspect of violence is most systematic universal and terroristic. The main targets of attack are governmental officials including security forces, police stations, banks, treasuries and non tribal’s who are considered as “outsiders.”8

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7. The MOU with the BTC, signed on 10 February 2003, reads, “in order to accelerate the development of the region and to meet the aspirations of the people, the government of india will provide financial assistance of rupees 100 crores per annum for five years for projects to develop the socio-economic infrastructure in BTC areas over and above the normal Plan assistance to the state of Assam. For the full text see south Asia terrorism portal: http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/assam/documents/papers/memorandum-feb-02.html, accessed 16 Feb. 2004.

In the North-East states the most serious problem is facing, over the decades, has been large scale influx of foreign Bengali speaking nationals, both Hindu and Muslims from East Pakistani Bangladesh. The massive continuous influx of refugees transforming the ethnic position of the root cause of all political agitation leading to terrorism Land was and is the source of employment for the about 95 percent of the tribal’s population. But most of the tribal’s as disposed of their lands with the non tribal’s obtained for a long. Unemployment consequent frustration of tribal youth created an ideal atmosphere for the growth of insurgency and terrorism. The government took no measures to cheque the massive influx and enlisted lakhs of refugees as voters even when they had not yet received Indian citizenship.9

There are various militant tribal organisations were formed in different states whipping up Anti-Indian and Anti-Non tribal hysteria. Non-tribal formed their militant organizations to fight tribal terrorism and a complete polarisation took place between tribal’s and non-tribal. Apart from mass killing of non-tribal’s, all non tribal was asked to leave to state, those who refused to move out were either gunned down on their huts were burnt down.

The Paramilitary forces and army have to be frequently deployed to restore peace; the state police forces had become completely useless for maintaining law and order and for combating insurgency and terrorism because of infiltration of rebels and subversive elements within the ranks and corruption. For example, when prepak Chief R.K Tulachanda Singh, who carried a reward of rupees 50,000 over his head, was arrested by the CRPF, the armed guard of Manipur rifles allowed him to escape. In the assassination of Inspector General of Police G.S Arya, his DIG and S.P while holding a meeting in the office in January 1975 in Aizwal, Mizoram, by the rebels. The security guards on duty

have failed to put up any the army of helping the underground rebels. Escape of arrested hardcore militant from the police custody was reported frequently.³⁰

3.1. The Nature of Terrorism in North-East

The roots of Naga separatism precede India’s independence. As far back as 1929, under the banner of the ‘Naga Club’, the Nagas petitioned the Simon commission, which was to examine the feasibility of future self-governance in India, but they have left alone to determine their own futures they had in the past and not be forced to be ruled by Indians who had never conquered them. Insurgency is by far the most extreme form of any ethno-political string and the nagas epitomised armed insurrection in the North-East they are comprising about 17 major tribes and more than 20 sub-tribes. The Nagas has always considered themselves to be an independent nation. ‘We are Nagas by birth, Indians by accident’, is a common refrain among these indigenous tribal people.

There are some other factors that add to the complexities of the ever-changing conflict dynamics. The conflicts may be categorised as:

Tribal groups verse the state. The conflicts are mainly triggered by a concept of distinct and separate nationhood, aimed at renegotiating and readjusting relationship either the Indian union.

Tribal verses tribal, these conflicts mainly emerge out of the resistance of numerically smaller and less dominant cultural and political groups, living with a shared place, to the homogenising pressures of the dominant groups. Identity assertion of the smaller groups, consequently result in violent conflicts both with the dominant groups and other contesting groups sharing the same geographical space.

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³⁰ India Today, 15 October 1887, Assam, Terror cult, P 42.
Tribal verses Non tribals, movements such as these mainly revolve around sub-national aspirations and are mostly directed against the union government, having the constitutional authority to accommodate such aspirations through necessary amendments. The brunts of such uprisings are mainly borne by the state governments, who are constitutionally bound to maintain law and order in their respective states.11

The term ‘North-East’, clearly fails to encompass the differences, diversity and the complexities that India’s North-Eastern frontiers represent. However, in regard to contextualizing terrorism, there are sufficient commonalities and linkages among the states that comprise the region to justify such a grouping. The region is characterised by a widespread conflicts mainly revolving around the geography of the region, the multi ethnic character of its people, and the political and economic feeding grounds of discontent, political; expediency coupled with abundance of examples for imitation.

By 1946 there had started a political movement for the assertion of Nagas identity was turning into an insurrection. Angami Zapu Phizo regarded as the father figure of the Naga insurgency.

With Independence the Nagas under the leadership of Phizo demanded an independent sovereign state. They resorted to insurgency with the help of foreign powers to achieve their objective. They collect arms illegally and built up underground militant organisations, the members of which received in training in China and Burma. Nagaland becomes a fully fledged state in December 1963 and since then it turned into a case of terrorism. In November 1975, as a result of Shillong peace accord, they renounced their claims to independence, surrendered their arms with the neutral peace council and brought over-ground their fighting troops into the peace camps. However, Naga

rebels under the leadership of T. Muivah, the General Secretary of the Naga National Convention (NNC) rejected Shillong Peace Accord, went underground and on return after collecting arms and receiving training in China increased their activities. In Nagaland, whenever an insurgent leader starting cooperating with the government, he was assassinated.

Although different contexts and concerns shape the perception of the social forces that drive identity politics, for a separatist movement to emerge, it is imperative that people are convinced that they share something in common against the enemy. It is here that the ethnic terrorists, in comparison to other extremist group, have a far greater capacity to mobilize support as they have already have a built in audience among a well defined group of people.  

Aggressive engagement with the politics of identity, characterize merely every state of North-East India. Espoused by sub national ethnic groups, insurgency inspired ethnic violence in the region, has unmistakably blurred the thin line distinguishing insurgency from terrorism. Best understood as examples of ethnic terrorism, the phenomenon can be described as deliberate violence employed by its practitioners, as a part of a proto-guerrilla movement ‘against symbolic targets’, largely to ‘foster identity as well as to advance standard political goals’. The politics of identity as triggers the phenomenon is believed to give.

Individuals...a connection to political projects based on elements that are very basic to their self - conceptions. Members of these groups see themselves as having in common certain important characteristics that set them apart from the larger population - a commonality that is based on difference.

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common against in enemy. It is there that ethnic terrorists, in comparison to other extremist groups, have a far greater capacity to mobilize support as they already have a built in audience among a well defined group of people. Consequently, their actions get interpreted as expressions of retaliation against subjugation and domination. Mobilizations in such scenario mainly arise against a backdrop of social markers’ that individuals have not consciously opted for. Consequently, claims of group uniqueness fall on receptive ears, with communities willing to believe that they possess singular culture with a distinctive set of repressed and neglected traditions. Such a belief, results in the acceptance of difference as an inescapable reality of social and political life. In the words of Bohman; if new forms of cultural diversity have now produced conflicts and disagreement so deep and troubling that even our standard liberal solutions, modelled on religious liberty and tolerance, no longer seems adequate or stable. To borrow a distinction from David Hume, many current disagreements are not merely conflicts of interests but conflicts of principle.

A defined feature of ethnic mobilization is the restrictive nature of the membership of organisations that spearhead such movements. Rarely does it extend beyond the specific ethnic group. The objective clearly is to foster ethnic unity through aggressive mobilization and to ‘win the census’ by engineering demographic changes that result in ethnic homogenisation. However, it is worth nothing that ‘cultural identity’ the premise on which ethnic ties stand, is a fluid concept.13

3.2. Conflicts in the North-East an Overview

3.2.1 Assam

The Sanskrit name Asom and its anglicized version Assam are not of distant origin. Asom, which means “unparalleled or peerless”, was used to describe the invincible might of the Ahoms, who marched into the country in the 13th century across the patkoi ranges and came saw and conquered. Prior to Ahoms the country was known as pragjyotishpura or the city of eastern lights as it enjoyed the reputation of the seat of eastern astrology and astronomy. Assam would have been a state of large size and greater resource - a strong sentinel of India on the North-East – if tribal people have not been alienated by linguistic, political and economic discrimination. Geography and history have made Assam a multilingual state and refusal to recognise this fact has been a responsible for much of the troubles during the last four decades.

The terrorist movement in Assam had centred around one main issue and the deportation of illegal migration from Assam. It is not that the problem did not exist before independence – it did, but it looks on a more menacing turn after the partition of the country. Large scale migration of Hindus has started almost immediately after independence from of Sylhet district of East Pakistan. It began as a trickle, but soon became a flood. The process of Islamization started by the Pakistan government made Hindus very insecure in East-Pakistan. In addition quite a few of these migrants came over to Assam from economic reasons. Even after the creation of Bangladesh in 1971, this influx this not ceases.

The Assam is agitating for an Autonomous Assam region. Some groups however demand an independent Assam. The situation is rather confusion, as ULFA leaders are divided. However the demand for autonomy has considerable appeal. The terrorism by ULFA aims send the will of the people and weaken the
hold of political opponents in the state. Bomb blasts and assassination have been some features of terrorism there. However, terrorism is still marginal there and once the political aims here even partially achieved terrorism may disappear. Violent agitations and demand for autonomy may continue unabated unless a comprehensive political solution which has the support of the people is found. Bodoland demand is a complicating factor. This agitation shows a preference for large scale violence, this needs to be settled on a political level. Lately a political accord has been reached and terrorism has subsided.14

There is a continued migration into Assam has been the root cause of discontent among the Assamese, who found that they had been reduced to a negligible minority in their own state. The foreigners issue created a lot of turmoil in Assam. The term foreigners was used for Bangladesh (both Hindus and Muslims) and Nepali immigrations who have been coming into the state over the decades but in practical terms the agitation which started in 1979 boiled done a Chauvinistic battle against to the Bengalis.

Between August and December 1979, as many as 16 people were killed in violent incidents; there 316 cases were assault and 120 cases of arson. The threat from the United Liberation Front (ULFA) of Assam cannot be taken lightly in view of their secessionist and terroristic activities. Among these whom they assassinated are former rural development Minister Tankeswar Dhingia, youth congress (1) General Security, Ranjit Barua, the President of the Jorhat Congress (2) Unit and Son of a Former Forest Minister , Rajiv Rajakhowa, Chairman of the United minorities front, they are all assassinated by the militants.

The agitation for the deportation of illegal immigrants had started earlier but it took a more serious turn. The controversial decisions to hold elections against the advice of Governor L.P Singh in the three Bengali majority districts,

when it was not possible to hold them in the other districts because of the agitation by the All Assam Students Union, (AASU) further complicated matters.\textsuperscript{15} The AASU had launched the agitation to put pressure on the government to issue the names of the illegal immigrants from the electoral polls before holding the elections. But the government decision go to ahead with the elections further popularised the population in the Brahmaputra valley and lent credibility to the suspicious and fears of the Assamese people that the government convincing at the fraudulent electoral polls for the political reason.

ULFA which aims at secession is essentially a byproduct of the prolonged Assam agitation. Many of its members belonged to the All Assam Students Union (AASU) which had spearheaded the movement. A break way faction of the original AGP, ULFA is now the gun trotting dreaded underground militants. It maintained a low profile in the state of its growth, but violent incidents during the Assam movement lend support to the suspicious that the ULFA was responsible for the killing of senior IAS officer in Jorhat.\textsuperscript{16}

\subsection*{3.2.2 Manipur}

A princely state which was a union territory till January 1972 when it become a full fledged state in early 1980 Manipur bordering Burma, both in South and the East was the most disturbed state. The primary conflict in Manipur involves a variety of insurgent groups constitutes along tribal identities and demanding sovereign homelands. The two main tribes inhabit the Manipur hills namely, the Nagas and the Kukis and the Meitei’s inhabit the valley. The Angkhul Nagas are mostly supporters of the Muivah group of NSCN; Muivah himself being a Tangkhul the NSCN (M) has been committing terrorist acts in Manipur.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{15} Indian Today, Op. cit, p 42.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Marwah Ved, “Uncivil Wars Pathology of Terrorism in India”, Harper Collins Pub, Ansari Road Daryagang New Delhi, 1995, pp 302-305.
\end{itemize}
Manipur has an old history of left extremists but secessionist took root much later, though Manipur was surrounded by secessionist movement of the Nagas and the Mizos. The unrest among the Meitei youth was one important factor which gave rise to the terrorism in Manipur. In Manipur terrorism got a fresh lease of life under the leadership of Bisheshwaran educated young man with strong leftist leanings.

Insurgency in the valley was unknown at the time of independence of Indian and for many years thereafter. It started much later but insurgency in the hills started along with Nagas insurgency. The Tamkhul tribe in Manipur is a branch of Naga tribes and is a dominant one in Manipur hills. When the Nagas launched insurgency in Naga Hills, the Tamkhul Nagas also joined them a few years later and caused depredations in Tamenglong, Ukhrul and Mao districts of Manipur. Even after the Nagas of Naga Hills ceased their movement, the Tamkhul Nagas are still on war path and continuing guerrilla warfare in Manipur hills and sometimes in bordering areas of Nagaland.

Manipur has always had insurgents whose aid was to free Manipur from the control of the Indian government. The militants and the secessionist organisations, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), and the People’s Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK), led by Bisheswar and R. K. Tulachanda respectively have been very active. Several factors point to the PLA, s growing strength. First it gets sympathy and help from local people. Secondly, intergroup killing in PREPAK encouraged members to join the PLA which is organised under united control. Thirdly the PLA is better because of its ideological motivation.

The year 1995 has seen an increase in violence. On the New Year day, about 25 NSCN activists attacked a congregation of about 700 villagers at Haipi village in Senapati district and five persons were killed in the attack. This was
the first time when the underground attacked such a large gathering. Even in the Imphal valley, several insurgent groups such as the People’s Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) and the Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP), which were believed to have declined, are showing signs of revival.17

The NSCM (M) is very active in the hill districts in Manipur. The incidents of a grenade explosion in the Raj Bhawan and an attempt on the life of the deputy Chief Minister, Chaoha Singh in August 1995 are two recent incidents which give some indication of the militant’s confidence and reach.

The proportion of foreign infiltrations in Manipur is much less compared to Assam. In its drive against outsiders the Meiti militants have not made much difference between non-Manipur Indian nationals and foreign infiltrations. The recent activities of Meiti extremists and the rebellion of the outlawed groups like the PLA and PREPAK, the secessionist movement threatens the very basis of India’s nationhood.18

3.2.3 Tripura

The demographic factor creating serious cultural and land problems is the main reason of insurgency in Tripura. As the turn of this century Tripura was inhabited mainly by tribals belonged to 19 tribals, Tripura being the main tribe. Tripura is one of the states of Indian surrounded by Bangladesh on all sides except a narrow strip which connects it to Assam. This is so because it was earlier virtually apart of east Bengal, geographically if not politically. The main problem in Tripura is the changing demographics and its ramifications, conspicuous by the altered ethno-religious profile of the state.

In this state the tension started with the partition of India in 1946-47 when thousands of Hindu refugees from East Bengal poured into neighbouring

states on its being included in Pakistan. Thereafter there was a steady flow of Hindus and also Muslims from East Pakistan to neighbouring states of India.

The magnitude of the incessant demographic and cultural pressure had for reaching political consequence resulting in the states institution and economic activities becoming the preserve of the non natives or outsiders. The transformation barely took time and within a few decades, the demographic profile of the state stood completely altered. The percentage of the tribal population shrunk from two thirds of one third.\textsuperscript{19}

The present threat comes from the Tripura National Volunteers (TNV) led by Bijoy Harankhal which has been spreading chaos since he took control of that body from the Mizo National Front (MNF) and the Bangladesh government. Militancy began in earnest in 1978 with the formation of the Tripura National Volunteer Force (TNVF) there is another tribal militant organisation that emerged was the All Tripura Peoples Liberation Organisation (ATPLO). The struggles within the state both violent and non-violent, revolved around the issue of the restoration of tribal lands, immigration controls, the expulsion of foreigners, and the reservation of the seats of legislative assembly for the tribals.\textsuperscript{20}

The fact that this state is surrounded by all three sides by Bangladesh except in the North-East, where its borders Assam and Mizoram had made it easy for them to sneak them to back into Bangladesh, which trains them an arms them. Poor communication and terrain help these Naxalite terrorists. The unhappy tribals soon found a militant organisation which demanded restoration of lands, taken away by non-tribals. These demands were formulated in 1967, when the Tripura Upjati Juba Samiti (TUJS).

\textsuperscript{19} Marwah, Ved, Op. cit, pp 298-301.
The TUJS demanded the creation of an autonomous district council under the provisions of the sixth schedule of the constitution, adopted of Kok Borak (the language of the Tripura’s) as the official language, restoration of the alienated tribal lands and the overall economic development of the state. The TUJS extremists started a training camp in Chittagong hill tract for their armed wing known as Tripura Sena, later called Tripura National Volunteers (TNV). Their ideology is to build their separate ethnic identity and socialism and their avowed goal is to drive out non-tribals from Tripura and re-establish supremacy. They have maintained close links with the Mizo underground.

Both the organisations the TUJIS and the “Arma Bengal” came into clash for the 1977 assembly elections. While the CP (M) got the 53 seats the TUJIS only got 4 seats. The fight now got into the field. Anti social and Chauvinistic activities were on the increase in the whole of north-east. The forces of the law and order have become weaker and the terrorism increased. Terrorism was the last painful response of the tribal, who got no justice from the congress and not adequate justice even from CP (M). The charges of exploitation and the land deprivation were wholly true and even the congress government in 1974 got the land revenue and the reforms act of 1960 amended to provide for restoration of all lands transferred by tribals to non-tribals since January 1, 1969. The congress this not enforce this. However the CP (M) must be given credit for the vast that in spite of their Bengali base they tried to save the tribals from the exploitation of non-tribals. They are understood the problems because many of their workers worked in the tribal areas. But the congress (I) Janta and Amra Bangal, a Chauvinistic Bengalee organisation, combined to oppose the CP (M) government’s proposal to give autonomy to tribal areas. They also set up a political wing of the extremist known as Tripura Tribal National Front. Their armed wing has been renamed Tripura National Volunteers which became very
active during 1986. The objective of the extremist was to achieve independence of Tripura to protect the interests of the tribals.  

3.2.4 Mizoram, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh

The Mizoram’s earlier known as the Lushai Hills, lie on eastern borders with Myanmar and Bangladesh. The Lushai Hills were formally included in British India on 6 September 1885. South and North Lushai Hills were united in the Lushai Hills District on 1 April 1888 with its headquarter at Aizwal.

After independence the Lushai hills District continued to be a part of Assam but it was neglected by the Assam government. The Mizos did not feel happy with their Indian link and the terrible famine of 1959 came as a shock to them. It was the notorious Mautum-cyclic famine caused by the flowering of bamboo leaves the relief organised by the government agencies was inefficient and it was inefficient and it was then that Laldenga became a leader of Mizos by organising the distribution of food.

The Mizo National famine front was formed in 1960 as a voluntary social welfare organisation to help the famine victims. The front was able to mobilize strong public support. It later decided to covert itself into a political party. On 22 October 1961 the word famine was removed from the name and hence forth it was known as the Mizo National Front (MNF) which was the main headache to the government of India.

The insurgency lingered in the lushai hills, later called the Mizo hills, until 1986, creating terrible upheavals bloodshed, victimization of innocents, and militarization of the areas, the second hill region after the Naga insurgency of 1950s to engage in a continuous armed fight with the government of India. One of the most prominent aspects of the fighting was the decision by the

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central government early in the conflict to hit hard at the roots and traditions of the Mizos by forcibly evicting them from homes and villages where they have lived for generations. This was a rentless systematic displacement of movement of population, which tore the basic of Mizos society apart as families were uprooted from their settlement in a matter of hours at gunpoint, herded into trucks with that little personal; goods they could gather and taken to a point along the main road where they could be controlled and kept under constant surveillance.

The label of terrorism is difficult to pin on to an ethnic inspired movement like the nagas. Terror was experienced by civil population in the Naga and Mizo hills during the security operations while these could be attributed to the immediate provocation of the armed revolt by groups, fear and apprehension among the innocent war caused by the security operations against the militants, not the other way around.

The insurgency inspired violence in the immediate neighbourhood has significantly impacted the politics in the states of Mizoram, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh Inter-tribal strife and acrimony against ‘outsiders’ have led to the emergence of multiple militant outfits, constituted along exclusionary tribal identities. The law and order issues have generated considerable turmoil. Peace was restored in 1986, after a twenty year long insurgency when a settlement was reached between the militant Mizo National Front (MNF) and the government of India resulting in a granting a full statehood to Mizoram. The militant Mizo National Front got transformed into a regional political party and its leader was appointed a first Chief Minister of a state. There are also two active militant groups in the state, the Bru National Liberation front (BNLF), and the Hmar people’s Convention Democracy (HPD-C).
Meghalaya, the abode of clouds became a state of India in January 1972 comprising of four administrative districts. The inhabitants of this state are Garo, Khasi and Jaintia tribals mostly Christians. It is one of the less troubled states in the region. It has been experiencing turbulence since the 1980s mainly spearheaded by the influential Khasi Students Union (KSU) and the Federation of Khasi, Janta and Garo People (FKJGP). The active militant groups in the state are the Achik National Volunteer Council (ANVC), the Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC) and the People’s Liberation Front of Meghalaya (PLFM). Infiltration of immigration from Bangladesh, Nepal, Burma and Bhutan posed a serious problem to Meghalaya. Bengali settlers, including those who have lived in Shillong and its neighbourhood from centuries were attacked forcibly evicted from their houses set fire to them after looting of property and several of them were murdered in the year 1979.

Disputes between Meghalaya and Assam, Aurnachal Pradesh remained unsolved. These disputes have encouraged terrorist activities and loss of life to innocent persons living in the disputed areas.23

The state of Aurnachal Pradesh believed to be the most peaceful state in the North-East India, has its own share of turbulence much of it clearly spillovers from the events unfolding in the immediate neighbourhood. While the Assam and Nagaland militants use the western part of the state bordering Bhutan as hideouts, its eastern flank has emerged as an effective transit route to Burma and also a huge source for extortion, illegal trade and recruitment. The changlang and the Tripura districts of Arunachal Pradesh, located between Nagaland and the North-Western corner of the Burmese sagaing division have fallen prey to the increasing criminalization of the Naga and Assamese ultras. As elsewhere in North-East India, Arunachal Pradesh is also witnessing the consolidation of the Arunachalese identity, which more often than not manifest

as struggle against the non-indigenous populations, the representatives of the government of India and the immigrants particularly the Chakma and Hajong refugees. An important militant outfit in the state is the Arunachal Dragon Force (ADF), formed in 1996.

3.3. Geopolitical Factors

Proximity to China, Pakistan (East Pakistan up to 1971) Pakistan continues to support the terrorists groups in North-East India has become the major factor responsible for the growth and sustenance of insurgencies in North-East India. It is from its erstwhile eastern wing that Pakistan launches their convert operations in North-East India. Almost all countries in the neighbourhood of North-East India have encouraged North–Eastern insurgent groups to establish camps and sanctuaries across the border from India.

Laldenga first visited Pakistan in 1963 to talk about arms and training with the Pakistan army. This resulted in the procurement of arms and latter the establishment of MNA camps in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), Ruma, Rengtlang, Rangamaty, Chengiachari, Dumdumia, and khagrosore inside East Pakistan in November 1964. There are 40 MNF members go to East Pakistan and returned with arms and ammunition. Another 2000, MNF men went to East Pakistan in 1935 for training and arms procurement.

Between 1962 and 1966, five groups of a total of about 2,400 Nagas went to East Pakistan for receiving training and come back with arms and ammunition. The Nagas sent a number of groups for training to China between 1960 and 1979. The first group of 200 Nagas led by Brigadier Thinuoselie went to China in November 1966. The next group 350 Nagas under the command of Mowu Angami went in 1968 for training in guerrilla warfare and brought back huge quantities of arms and ammunition. The Indian army captured Mowu

24. Hoffman, Bruce, “Inside Terrorism”, Manohar pub, New Delhi, 2006, pp 90-91
Angami and his all groups when they returned from China in March 1969. The third group was badly mauled by the army before it could re-enter Burma. Large segments of the fourth (October 1974) and fifth (January 1975) China-bound groups were also destroyed and dispersed by the army. The sash and the seventh went to China under General Muivah and Ashikho in 1979. They settled down in Burma in their return, from where they launched many attacked inside Indian Territory. The Indian army destroyed and dispersed three China-bound Naga gangs in 1968-1969.\footnote{25
Ibid.}

By December 1965, 800 young men have been recruited in the Mizo National Army and were undergoing training in East Pakistan. At the time of the MNF uprising in March 1966, the MNA headquarters was in Aizawal. On 3\textsuperscript{rd} March it moved in South hlimen, about 300 miles South of Aizawal. On 18 March it was shifted in Reiek, East of Aizawal. By the end of the month of November 1970 to February 1971 along with his foreign minister Lachmingthanga. On its way back, two of the men were killed in an ambush by the Burmese army, and 27 of them was surrendered to the Indian army in Imphal on 30 June 1975. On 23, April 1975, another group of 20 Mizo led by MNA colonel Biakvela arrived in the kachin area on The MNF sent two groups in China, first in 1972 which returned with Chinese gifts of radio, transmitters/receivers, arms, ammunition, gold chains, jungle warfare uniforms and boots, inflatable boats of crossing rivers, books of Mao-Tse Tung and U.S currency.

In 1990, there are various ULFA and NDFB terrorist activities in Assam have emanated from their camps in Bhutan. Bhutan unlike Bangladesh always acknowledged the presence of these camps but did nothing until December 2003 to throw them out. When it realised that the presence of Indian militants on its 265, km border with Assam was seriously undermining its governance of the region. King Jigme Singye Wangchuk decided in late 2003 to assert

\footnote{25. Ibid.}
Bhutan’s sovereignty over a large territory occupied by militants from India before it was too late. With the Indians army strategic support, the Bhutan army smashed all of the 30 ULFA, NDFB, Kantapur Liberation Organisation (a militant group up of west Bengal) camps in Southern Bhutan within the matter of days, killing over 100 militants and driving out the rest. Many surrendered but a large number of insurgents evidently escaped into Bangladesh, their largest heaven. Bhutan very proudly announced in the South Asia Association Regional Cooperation meeting in Islamabad in January 2004 that the mountain kingdom has emerged as model of regional cooperation against terrorism.26

3.4. Collusive Politics of the North-East; Insurgency Terrorism as an Economic Activity

Insurgencies and terrorism in all states of the North-East are being sustained by the enormous amounts of money generated by their activities. In the initial stages of these movements, finances to fund activities were secured through raids, robberies and kidnapping for ransom. In the second stage the area of influence or domination has been established, the money was much easier to come by as ULFA’s discovered to its surprise in 1990. It was amazing for a little and they were prepared to go well beyond what we wanted said one ULFA leader adding this was one we realising how soft the state was how weak the businessmen were, how much black money they had that they could pay up and still have enough for themselves.

Whatever the triggering causes of the various insurgent and terrorist movements in North-East, the proximate casual dynamic of their persistence has acquired a momentum of its own. Within the structures of their dynamic is the underground economy of terrorism\ insurgency as well as the deeply collusive nature of political and insurgent movements in these states. Most insurgent has become resistant to resolution substantially because a complex of vested

interests in the cover grouped economy and political sphere secure significant benefits from their persistence. The complex collusive arrangements between various political groupings administrators and officials, on the one hand, and different militant factions, on the other are more the norm that the exception.\textsuperscript{27}

There are large developmental resources which are directly or indirectly to the militants though a regime or collusion, extortion and intimidation. These revenues are compounded by the massive network of extortion and huge incomes from lucrative illicit enterprises including drug and arms trade.\textsuperscript{28}

There is a collusive arrangement between the legitimate power elites and terrorists grouping in every state affected by insurgency in north-east. There is a total absence of resistance and no faith in the ability of the government to protect private citizen and enterprises from this predatory regime.\textsuperscript{29}

Contemporary scholarship on the subject has focussed interalia, on rise of sub nationality as an assertion of certain ethnic groups by claiming themselves being fundamentally different historically, from the rest of India, in the case of Nagaland, for example, Nagaland or failure to address the legitimate aspirations of the local population or the part of the union government have also been cited as the reason behind the sub national movements in another state, Assam. In Manipur many of the insurgent groups, mostly Meitei, operate in the form vigilance group proclaiming to get the society rid of the perceived vices like corruption and drug abuse.

In November, 2003 Manipur, Assam and Tripura among the seven states of the North-East are witnessing insurgency related violence on continuous basis while insurgents do trigger intermittent violence in Meghalaya and Aurnachal Pradesh in the latter insurgency in spillover from them the persistent

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\item \textsuperscript{27} Sahni, Ajai and George J, "Security and Development in India’s Northeast: an Alternative Perspective", faultlines, Vol. 4, February 2000, p 54
\item \textsuperscript{28} Hoffman, Bruce, Op. cit, p 93.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Ibid p 94
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
activity of any local insurgent group. Insurgency was brought to an end following a negotiated settlement with the erstwhile Mizo National Front (MNF) in 1986 in Mizoram, an effort to end the more than fifty year old insurgency in Nagaland is still under way with negotiating going on which the main insurgent group - Isak Muivah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM).  

Contemporary conflict situation Indias Northeast requires a careful analysis in the light of its historicity in order to explain factors that has given rise to or sustained political violence in the region. Another advantage of this attempt may come up in the form of theoretical framework that would help identify certain indicators in order to describe the pattern of such violence. This exercise may further help predicting the shape of the things to come and suggesting possible measures to tackle them effectively seen in this background, what follows may appear a limited exercise to understand the context of the various insurgent movements in this region. This is also because any attempt to use a uniform yardstick in the region as also asserted by Udayon Misra would also serve a limited purpose. For one states in the region that have seen insurgent movements or where insurgency has ceased to exist following negotiated settlement witness assertion of identities by diverse Socio-Cultural groups vis-a-vis other such groups. Besides that, they also compare their respective nationalities with that of the idea of India and they this did so despite having remained part of the same geo-political unit. Second, nature of movements currently being led by various insurgent groups in the region is diverse-given the purported objectives they proclaim to pursue. 

31 Udayon, “The Periphery Strikes Back; The Challenges to the Nation State in Assam and Nagaland Shimla”, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 2000, p 1
3.5. Operational Pattern and Insurgent Target

After a relative full 1967 and 1969 the insurgency picked up towards the end of 1969 when about 200 armed hostilities re-entered the Mizo hills from the Chittagong hill tracts after training. In a major incident the Mizo insurgents ambushed an army contingent and killed one senior army officer of the rank of major six Jawans at Marpara in 1969. The insurgent groups in the North-East do not fit into the pattern of the guerrilla of the kind that was believed to exist ‘as left wing phenomenon’ up to the world war first. Nor do they follow the operational strategy by the proponents of modern protracted conflicts like Mao and Guevera. In another serious incident, Lt. Governor Mukherjee’s car was ambushed by the terrorists. In contrast to their ideas, the insurgents in the North-East do target, for instance the civilian population indiscriminately and also force them to part with their valuables through extortion, as mentioned about., Paul Wilkinson also holds that the guerrilla or insurgents were different in terms of methods employed and also targets selected for instance, in Assam while the number of insurgents killed in various encounters with the security forces was 282 and 308 respectively for the year 2001 and 2002. However, various insurgent groups also killed 248 and 193 civilians in the corresponding years. Similarly the insurgents in Tripura lost only 30 and 22 cadres only respectively in 2001 and 2002, but killed 237 and 150 civilians in the corresponding years. The data testifies that the insurgent use of force in the region has kept the local population under constant threat to their lives. The insurgent could claim that most of the civilian killed by them were not the original inhabitants of the area of their operation.32

The fact remains that the killed are innocent civilians and the insurgents are using the threat of violence as a tool to inculcate terror in the minds of the local inhabitants. Secondly, the leadership is reported to have adopted

dictatorial approach in its dealings with the rank and file of the organisation. They are also alleged to have confined those cadres forcefully who wish to surrender and reported to normal life for example, within ULFA the ordinarily cadres and paid meagrely between rupees 1000 to 2000 per month the top leadership and their families allegedly live a lavish life in safe hideouts. Also in terms of use of arms, these outfits have access to weapons ranging from AK series rifles to mortars and sophisticated explosives.  

3.6. Major Insurgent Groups in the North-East

The Extremist groups in North-East have been agitating since the 1950s. There are a number of separatist organisations operated in the states of Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur and Assam. While a few of these organisations like in Mizoram, Tripura and in the hill district of Darjeeling discarded militancy and joined the mainstream, others in Nagaland, Manipur and Assam are still continuing their struggle.

The aim of the Naga insurgency is to achieving an independent Nagaland comprising not only areas falling within the state of Nagaland but also the Naga-inhabited areas of Manipur and Burma. The late Angami Zapu Phizo, the first insurgent leader of this region, took up arms when the British left India, China and the erstwhile East Pakistan extended military and financial help to Naga rebels to destabilise India.

A group of diehards refused to accept the government largesse, saying that they did not take up arms of material gains. They broke away to form the pro-communist outfit, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN). The NSCN remains the strongest group in North-East India, given the number of states it operates in as well as the wide range of activities it is involved in. All these years the NSCN activists have been terrorising and assassinating those

who advocated peaceful solution from their bases in North Burma under the leadership of S.S Khaplang (President). Issac SWU (Chairman) and T.Muivah (General Secretary), Both SWU and Muivah underwent guerrilla training in China.\textsuperscript{34}

On April 30, 1988 there was a rift in ranks of the NSCN which led to the removal of T.Muivah, its General Secretary. NSCN with S.S Khaplang Band Thuingaleng Muivah and Isak Chishi SWU as its leaders outfit was formed after the Naga National Council (NNC) spreading’s the Naga movement signed the Shillong Accord in 1975. NSCN was formed in 1980 however in 1998 the outfit spilt. The principal insurgent groups in Northeast India are NSCN(IM), NSCN (K) and NSCN (U) (three Naga factions spanning Nagaland, Manipur, Aurnachal Pradesh and Assam); ULFA anti-talks faction (led by Paresh Baruah), NDFB (Ranjan Daimari and IK Songbijit factions), Karbi Peoples Liberation Tigers (KPLT), Dima Halam Daogah-Jewel (DHD-J), United People’s Democratic Solidarity (UPDS) etc. The NSCN (IM) remains the strongest insurgent group in North-East India, given the number of states it operates in as well as the wide range of activities it is involved in. Its political objectives of unification of all Naga-inhabited areas and self-determination based on the historical Naga narrative, along with the ‘Nagaland for Christ Slogan’ since early 1990s, had contributed to its dominance over the decades. It has entered the 14\textsuperscript{th} year of ceasefire and peace talks with the Union Government of India and projects itself as the sole representative of the Naga peace process.\textsuperscript{35}

Although the blueprint of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) was drawn up sometimes in 1979 by six college dropouts of upper Assam. Arabinda Rajakhowa commander in chief Paresh Baruah. The outfit is active

\textsuperscript{34} Sharma, D.P, “Countering Terrorism”, Lancers Books, PO Box 4236, New Delhi, 1992, pp 254-255.
\textsuperscript{35} For a comprehensive listing of the insurgent groups whose presence has been noted in the northeast India. To visit the site of South asia terrorism portal WWW.satp.org
mainly in Assam, as of now the group has not shown any inclination to join the peace process. It formally came into 1981 when it developed purposeful connections with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland for procuring arms and obtaining training of cadres in handling them. It has been retiring three-pre conditions of inclusion of Assam sovereignty’ in the talks agenda, talks in a foreign country and under the United Nations (UN) supervision. The ULFA stepped up its activities in Assam in 1986, after the AGP’s rise the power with the avowed aim of attaining liberation from the exploitative Indian system.\textsuperscript{36} There are two main groups which have taken up arms for Manipur they are the People’s Liberation Army of Kangleipak (PLA) was formed in 1978 by N. Bisheswar Singh with a purported objective to create a socialist Manipur. The next is the United Liberation Front (UNLF) this was formed in 1964 under the leadership of Samrendra Singh to achieve independence and a socialist Manipur society.

The valley groups in Manipur have been very active in the past few years, resulting in a lot of violence in the state. UNLF has been leading the charge against the security forces with PREPAK, PLA and KCP stepping up their activities in various parts of the valley, particularly targeting the Hindi-speaking people living in Manipur. All UNLF members have no arms because its strategy is to invade India with the military assistance of China to liberate Manipur. Though China was keen to extend military help, Meghan was in no hurry to accept it since he wanted to make doubly sure that China would not gobble up an independent Manipur and that the people of Manipur should be psychologically prepared when the UNLF forces invade Manipur. Besides the PLA and UNLF, other insurgent groups active in Manipur include Kanglei

\textsuperscript{36} Singh, Sudhir Kumar and Sengupta Dipankar, Op. cit, pp 172-173
Yalow Kanna Lup (KYKL) and United Kuki Liberation Front (UKLF) among others.\textsuperscript{37}

NDFB; Ranjan Daimari Alias D.R Nabla is the president of this outfit that was formed in 1988 to initiate a guerrilla war for the sovereign Bodoland. The NDFB suffered a split in 2008 with the anti-talks faction led by Ranjan Daimary continues its activities from its bases along the Assam-Arunachal border and Bangladesh. The arrest of DHD-J Chief Jewel Gorlosa in June 2009 from Bangalore and the killing of its foreign secretary in Guwahati dealt a severe blow to the outfit which is also known as Black Widow. There are other leaders of the outfit the Vice President Dhiren Boro. The outfit that has been alleged to be involved in some of the worst massacres in Assam has not taken away clear stand as regards negotiating with the government.\textsuperscript{38}

\subsection*{3.7. Cross - Border Linkages}

Post-partition, the geo-politics of south Asia altered drastically and India found itself flanked by hostile neighbours, fiercely competing for a share in the geopolitical space. Wedged between a rising people’s republic of China in the Northern flank and in a hostile East Pakistan on the Eastern side, India’s situation was clearly unenviable. Tension on the Northern-Western frontiers, loudly resonated in the east and given the history of India’s uneasy relationship with most of neighbours, North-East India emerged as a threat for foreign involvement. The ultra groups of the region, found willing patrons in the immediate vicinity, as they waged a protracted war against the Indian state. In due course, the territories of Burma, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal also got involved in anti-Indian campaigns. Weak internal controls combined with fragile border controls, aided cross border connections that mainly manifested in financial and organisational support, weapons supply, training, operational

\textsuperscript{37} Singh, Sudhir Kumar and Sengupta Dipankar, Op. cit, p 173
co-operation, smuggling of arm and drugs also movement of population. With 98% of the borders of the region being international, the task of establishing linkages proved to be relatively simple. In this regard, it is significant that the timing of some major insurgencies in the region almost coincided with Indias wars with China and Pakistan in 1962 and 1965 respectively.

3.7.1 The Chinese Connection

From the early 1960s and throughout the 1970s, China was reported to be involved in rendering material and moral support to insurgent groups in the North-Eastern India. The hostile nature of Sino-Indian relations in the aftermath of the 1962 Sino-Indian war was regarded as the main reason for China-Anti Indian stance and the resultant support to be outlawed insurgent groups. In May 1966, the Nagas approached the people’s republic of China for any possible assistance. Subsequently, Isaac and Muivah, leaders of Nagaland National Council with a band of 300 men reached Yunav province in January 1967, where the Nagas rebels were imparted with the knowledge of arms and guerrilla tactics, and they were indoctrinated in Maoism.39

With Chinese support the Naga insurgency became stronger and more intense with better tactics and modern weapons. During the late 1960’s and early 1970’s the Chinese covert support to the Naga insurgents brought about a better understanding between the Burmese and Indian armies. In recent years, especially since 1983, China has come out with a promise to scale down their support to the Nagas and the Mizos. In high-level exchanging during the Vajpayee Government, China promise not to assist to Naga and Mizo insurgencies. The United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) terrorists in Assam have procured arms from the Chinese army.

Speaking in parliament in December 13, 2000, MOS, Home Affairs, I.D. Swami, said that the surrendered ULFA militant had disclosed that some of his colleagues crossed over into China via Bhutan and established contact with the Chinese army in 1993.\textsuperscript{40}

A news reporter of December 2000, quoting unnamed intelligence source, said that a consignment worth an estimated U.S $750,000 reached Cox’s Bazaar, a coastal town in Bangladesh at around the same time; another reported claims that an arms consignment had arrived in Myanmar at a town named Tamu, close to the border with India.\textsuperscript{41}

Following the military offensive by the Bhutanese government against the ULFA, NDFB and KLO militants’ campaign in Southern Bhutan during the third week of December 2003, these militant outfits appealed to China for shelter and help. On 27 December 2003, the leaders of ULFA and NDFB in a joint letter addressed to the Chinese president Hu Jintao requested for shelter and medical facilities for insurgents fluing Bhutan who could be forced to enter Chinese territory ‘extra-legally’. While rebuffing the outlawed Indian militant outfits, China on 31 December 2003 started that the insurgents would be barred from entering and would not be allowed to violate the ‘security and stability’ of its borders with India. A statement issued by the Chinese embassy in New Delhi said that China would “not allow its territory to be used by anybody for activities against other countries”.\textsuperscript{42} India welcomed the stand for China.

China’s ideology and technical support to the North-East ultras, is believed to date back to the 1950s. However, it was only after the 1962 war with India over contested border, that China’s involvement in the region became more unconcealed. Destabilising India by undermining the fragile ethnic framework of the Northeastern frontiers, perfectly serves China’s strategic

\textsuperscript{40} The Indian Express, New Delhi, December 14, 2001.
\textsuperscript{41} “The arms were reportedly to be handedoverultimatelytotheNSCNIM”,http://www.sap.org/news/December/news07.htm
\textsuperscript{42} The Times of India, 1 January 2004.
objective of containing India within the natural boundaries of south Asia, i.e. within the Himalayas and the Indian Ocean. There is sufficient evidence to suggest, that even the years, China had successfully consolidated its presence in an around North-East India. The growing Chinese influence in Burma and in the India Ocean, since the late 1980s, especially after the Junta assumed power in that country in 1988, has direct bearing on the turbulence obtaining in Northeast India. In this regard, it is significant that China’s three largest arms clients are Pakistan, Burma and Bangladesh. Confessions of surrendered militants reveal that ultra groups in both Assam and Nagaland have received major arms consignments from China.

Apart from the Nagas, the Chinese have also extended moral and material support to Mizo and Meitei insurgents of Mizoram and Manipur respectively. There are reports to suggest that the Naga militants have a liaison office in Chinese territory, across the borders with Aurnachal Pradesh. Naga liaison officers are believed to be based in Kunmin (the capital of Yunnan province of China, geographically located closest to Northeast India) and in Lhasa (Tibet), and it is understood that Nagas cadres have established contacts with the Yunnan’s military intelligence. The ULFA rebels have also known to have crossed over to China via Bhutan in the 1990s, to negotiate arms deal. Confessional statements of surrendered ULFA militants have revealed close military interactions between the outfit and China. The Chittagong arms haul of April 2004, a major arma seizure in Bangladesh, exposed the intricacies of the Chinese, NSCN (IM) and ULFA linkages.

Although observers believe, that over the China’s strategic priorities in South Asia have visibly shifted from a position of blatant hostility towards India to passive hostility, there are indications to suggest that ties between are not dominant. With critical differences between India and China still remained unresolved, India’s apprehensions about Chinese intentions in the region,
continue to be a cause of strategic concern. From time to time, the Indian political establishment has candidly articulated concerns over security issues emanating from China and extremely serious view on Chinese political positions and claims in regard to matters concerning the borders.43

3.7.2 The Role of Pakistan

The political developments in India and Pakistan just after independence generated complexes and controversies which contributed further to the adversarial content of Indo-pak relations. Diverting attention to the real or imagined threat from India and Pakistan’s Islamic existence being endangered by the “Hindu Republic of Bharat” became basic elements of Pakistan’s defence and foreign policies.44 Right from the start, Pakistan followed a policy of confrontation with India through various stages which manifest themselves in various ways.

In the 1962 Sino-India war Pakistan and China supported each other against India which they regarded as their common enemy. From May 1962 to June 1964, China not only gave military and moral support but it also encouraged the minority group in India to express their grievances against the Indian government. With the creation of Bangladesh, the external linkage pattern of Northeast insurgencies underwent a temporary change. Instead of a hostile Pakistan, India now had a friendly regime in Dhaka that would not support or shelter any insurgent movement directed at New Delhi, and the Nagas and the Mizos have to relocate all their bases to Myanmar’s untenanted sagging region. After the Chinese, the kachin independence army stepped45 in by then, many of the insurgents were flooded with arms and ammunition by the China and Pakistan.

45. Nepram, Binalakshmi, “South Asia; Fractured Frontier”, Mittal publication, New Delhi, 2002, pp 151-152
Z. A Bhutto encouraged an Anti-Indian stance in Pakistan’s Indian policy after the 1971 conflict. After his death, Indo-Pak relations acquired a positive ambience during the Janta regime but this disappeared with the return of Indira Gandhi to power. After a full for about two decades, the NSCN succeeded in securing fresh supports of Pakistan inter service intelligence directorate in the early 1990s. According to the confessions of a captured NSCN “finance secretary”, Khayao Huray, the Pakistan’s diplomats in Dhaka handed over more than one million dollars to the NSCN’s Muivah faction between 1993 and 1994. With the funds, the NSCN has been able to purchase from black markets in South–East Asia and Bangladesh large quantities of Chinese rifles, machine guns, mortars and explosives.46

Pakistan renewed its support to the Northeast insurgents to this period. A number of training camps have sprung up in Bangladesh and there is massive influx of arma and ammunition in the region. The numbers of Muslim insurgents outfit have increased in Assam, Manipur and illegal migration from Bangladesh has reached all time high.

After the Kargil failure, Pakistan is now attempting with the help of Muslim fundamentalist of Assam to separate the entire Northeast from the rest of India by cutting off the “Chicken Neck” and between North Bengal and Assam (a narrow alley between Sri Rampur in Assam and Jalpaiguri in North Bengal). It may be recalled that during 1965 Indo-Pak war, this was precisely that China had threatened to do.47

The fierce rivalry between India and Pakistan, as manifested in three full fledged wars and serious escalations (the kargil conflict of 199 and the 2002 mobilisation of forces on the borders), have over the years been waged in different ways and a different theatres. North-East India did not remain

untouched from the fallouts of the animosity between the two South Asian neighbours. As events unfolded, it became clear that India’s sensitive and extensive North-Eastern frontiers figured hugely in Pakistan’s strategic calculations against India.48

The ISI had reportedly built up sophisticated network in Bangladesh. The first comprehensive report was placed Assam Assembly on April 6, 2000 by Prasanta Kumar Mahanata after almost a year long enjoyment with the ISI, according to which the activities of the ISI were mainly in the following areas.

- Promoting indiscriminate violence in the state by providing active support to the local militant outfits.
- Creating new militant outfits along ethnic and communal lines by instigating ethnic and religious groups.
- Supply explosives and sophisticated arms to various terrorist groups.
- Causing sabotage of various pipelines and other installations, communication lines, railways and roads. 49

The covert operations of the ISI in this region increased manifold during the 1980. Reports suggest that the ISI was instrumental in operating training camps in Bangladesh, where separatist’s rebels of the North-East collectively known as the “United Liberation Front of Seven Sisters” were trained in subversive activities. The included groups were the National Socialisation Council of Nagaland, people’s Liberation Army, the National Liberation Front of Tripura, and United Liberation Front of Assam and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland.50

Most of the insurgent groups in the Northeastern India supported by ISI stepped up sabotage activities in the region immediately after the kargil conflict,

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as a result of which a spurt in violent activities such as kidnapping, killing etc, have taken place in Assam, Nagaland, Tripura and Manipur.

If the intelligence is to be believed, ULFA is being encouraged by China, Myanmar, Pakistan and Bangladesh, and trying to create unrest in the Northeastern states by using separatists focus of the region. In 2003, a large number of ULFA militants were flashed out of Bhutan, forcing them to shift their bases to Bangladesh and Myanmar. In Bangladesh, UKFA is said to be trained and helped by Pakistanis ISI and even Al-Qaida.\(^{51}\)

Some ULFA cadres are believed to have been trained directly by Pakistani soldiers and the mujahedeen in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border areas. ISI’s subversive activities are widespread and include, overt and overt financial and material support to the local militia, indiscriminate violence against civilians, creation of new ultra outfits along ethnic and communal lines provide logistical support to ultra groups such as fake passport, visa and other documents, delivery weapons and counterfeit currency, emerge and encourage drug transfer, and trade, sabotage oil and gas pipelines and other key installations, communication lines and Accenture communal cleavages by way of disinformation campaigns. In this endeavour, the role of the resident agents in providing reconnaissance support is particularly crucial. Much of ISI’s terror activities, through skilful coordination have been outsourced to the local groups in the region. Towards this objective, it has not hesitated to tap the resources of Islamic financial and educational institutions, as well as those of other non-governmental bodies. This mushrooming of the Islamic fundamentalist group of the region is believed to be the direct outcome of the ISI’s patronage and support.\(^{52}\)

\(^{51}\) The Times of India, Lucknow, January 15, 2007.
3.7.3 Role of Bangladesh

The creation of Bangladesh in 1971, contrary to Indian expectations only marginally altered the hostile international environment around North-East India. Bangladesh’s strategic location near the high seas and bordering major insurgencies coupled, with poorly manned borders, provided traffickers a golden opportunity to transfer arms to conflict areas one of the major routes had for the years, been the see route, with arms originated in South-Asia, passing through Thailand and landing at Cox’s Bazaar in South-East Bangladesh. Cox’s Bazaar in Bangladesh has emerged as a major part for supply of illegal arms and ammunition worth crores of rupees to the insurgent outfits of the region.53

Bangladesh clearly has emerged as an important patron of the North-East rebel groups, several reports point to the presence of militant camps and hideouts in that country, with over a hundred camps located in the border areas alone. The camps, run by the prominent North-East ultra groups, are more than safe havens. They are known to facilitate arms shipments in transit to India. India shares a 4095 kilometres border with Bangladesh, the longest among all its neighbours. Of this, four North-Eastern States, Tripura, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Assam. Account for 1, 879 kilometres, while the eastern state of west Bengal has a border running 2,216 kilometres along Bangladesh. An area of 6.5 kilometres has not been demarcated yet the two joint boundary working groups have been set up to complete the boundary demarcation.54

India believes that the ISI and Bangladesh security establishment, the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), work in coordination in backing North-East rebels and in propping Jihad groups in the region. The support comes in the form of financial assistance, ideological indoctrination and

53. Gupta, Dipankar Sen and Singh Sudhir Kumar, “Insurgency in North-East India; The Role of Bangladesh”, Authors Press, New Delhi, 2004, p 279
logistic backup. The anti Indian operations of these two intelligence agencies is believed to be largely facilitated by the overwhelming presence of the illegal immigrants Bangladesh population, in and around the porous borders between Bangladesh and the Indian states. It has also been reported to operate training camps near the border of Bangladesh, where number of separatist groups of the Northeastern states, known as the United Liberation Front of Seven Sisters are trained with military equipment and terrorist activities. These groups include the National Security of Nagaland (NSCN), People’s Liberation Army (PLA), United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), and the Northern Student’s Organisation (NESO).55

Bangladesh main militant’s outfits, the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami, was forms in 1992, allegedly with financial support from Osama-Bin-Laden himself. Hujl now has an estimated strength of 15,000 followers and is led by Shawkat-Osman-aka-Maulana or Sheikh Farid in Chittagong. Its members are recruited mainly from Students of Bangladesh’s more than 60,000 Madrasas (seminars), and year 2001, they called themselves the ‘Bangladeshi Talban’. The group has become notorious for masterminding violent attacks on Bangladesh Hindu minority, as well as moderate Bangladeshi Muslims. In June 2001, a 25 member Taliban team from Afghanistan has camped in Bangladesh to train the Mujahedeen in six camps in the hilly areas of the Chittagong districts of Bangladesh since the last few years. Indian intelligence report suggests that the recruits are primarily from the Quomi Madrasas.56

On May 10 and 11, 2002 nine Islamist fundamental groups, including Hujl, met at a camp near South Ukhia and formed the Bangladesh Islamic Manch. The new umbrella organisation includes groups purporting to represent

55. http://www.fas.org/irp/world/Pakistan/isi/  
56. The week 5 January 2003, p 1
the Rohingyas and the Muslim Liberation Tigers (MULTA), a small group operating in North-East India.

3.7.4 The Role of Nepal

Nepal is another country in India’s extended neighbourhood, frequently visited by the North-East militants—the attraction mainly being the thriving underground arms bazaar, located in the three Pagoda pass opposite the Karen state of Burma and the Ranong coast adjoining the Tenasserim division of the country. India shares about 1,750 km, long border with Nepal, which is almost porous. Of the 75 districts of Nepal, 30 touch the international border between India and Nepal. The territory of Nepal is used as the safest entry for intelligence operation by the ISI. Nepal has also been recent years come to occupy an important factor in the militant’s perception. Basically, this is due to the fact that Nepal serves as a good contact point for the purchase of sophisticated armory by various insurgent groups based in the northeastern India. The militant do not face much hurdles sneaking into Nepal.57

Bhutan and Nepal is varying degrees have found themselves sucked into the matrix of north east insurgency. The North-East separatist groups have used the territories of these countries as safe heavens and transit corridors. Bhutan strategically positioned between China and the Brahmaputra.58

The emergence of Bhutan and Nepal as new safe heavens for the insurgents further complicates matters in terms of India’s security concerns. The continued interference of the ISI, and its subversive activities in encouraging secessionism and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism is a serious threat to the

entire country’s Socio-Political stability. The Indian government cannot afford to ignore the rising threats Pakistan poses on its sensitive border areas.\footnote{Sanghiv, Vir, “Patient India Wants Thai operation Theatre closed”, The Hindu Times, 31 July 2004.}