CHAPTER VI

COUNTER-INSURGENCY
The 21st Century Chambers Dictionary defines counter-insurgency as "Military action taken against insurgents or rebels". However, the Collins Dictionary and Thesaurus is silent on this word counter insurgency.

"Counter-insurgency when conceptualised includes all methods and measures adopted to prevent ... which would frustrate insurgency without much overt action. Counter-insurgency measures aim at nullifying the very prerequisites and elements on which insurgency thrives". 1

As per Lt Gen D B Shekatkar, the essentials for successful counter-insurgency/terrorism are "Clear cut aim -political & military, unified command, intelligence set up, training, denial of resources, morale, psychological operations and winning over the people". 2

Actually insurgency and counter-insurgency represent two facets of the same conflict. There can be no retrogression of insurgency without counter-insurgency measures. It starts with political structure, responsive civil administration, judicial set up, Police and Para Military set-up, intelligence organization, material resources, economic infrastructure, finances, industries, agriculture, transport, communication, information & propaganda setup, armed forces and diplomatic recognition to secure support of other countries. All these aspects have to be built gradually in favour of the Government to resolve the problem.

The counter-insurgency also include population and resources control, civic action, psychological operations, military operations, political & administrative measures, a large socio-economic reforms and upliftment programmes based on distributive justice. There is a lack of literature about the retrogression of insurgency. It is primarily because there are very few insurgencies in the world which had been totally eliminated. Except Malaya where the British handled the issue with 'a lion heart' and 'an iron hand' there is hardly anything which comes to ones mind which can really be quoted.
Crux of Counter-Insurgency: The basic problems of combating insurgency are the political interests, politicisation of State machinery, difference in perception and lack of intelligence. The four main participants involved are Government authority, local population, insurgents and external powers. All these machinery, which engineered the insurgency had to be dealt at the optimum level which will initially bring down the insurgency gradually and then eliminate it finally. This is the crux of counter-insurgency.

Problem Areas: In a democracy, fundamental rights, legislature, judiciary and publicity will always pose as problem areas which has to be handled in a matured way at the macro level. It also requires a strong, determined leader with dogmatic will and resilience to handle this crisis. The personal interests of political parties, power hungry politicians should place the National interest above their self interests. H.K. Barpujari, the doyen of Indian historians, well known to the academic world for his scholarly works and articles says, that the endeavours that had been made by the Centre and State Governments to bring militants to the negotiation table bore no fruit. The author strongly feels, "The policy of the Government, should be conciliatory, but firm, if conciliation fails, the divisive and secessionist forces must be brought under control with an 'iron hand' lest the situation be out of control." 3

No insurgency in the world was eliminated by military solution. There has to be concerted effort by all the participants to include the Government, the locals, insurgents, external powers and SFs who are the temporary Law-Keepers of the region. In the light of these, the counter-insurgency operations in Assam has to be analysed. In the phase value it appears that the counter-insurgency measures are more of lip service rather than a real effort of finding a solution to the actual problem. It appears that there is no sincere effort by all the agencies involved to end insurgency in Assam.
Retrogression of Insurgency

It is difficult to say when a particular insurgency has finally been defeated. In many cases, a hardcore of remnants of insurgents keep operating even after decades of their ouster from the country. Insurgency is a challenge to the established Government and calls for effective counter-insurgency measures to defeat the insurgents by bringing about a complete transformation of the existing socio-economic and socio-political order, if the lawfully established order has to survive.

It includes both preventive and remedial measures to control, contain and defeat insurgency rationally and objectively. Restoratory measures cover mainly of the Army, psychological and political operations consisting of destroying the strongholds of insurgents, liquidation of insurgents, protection of local population, denial of outside support to the insurgents such as moral, political, technical, financial, military and projection of better National perspective to the masses. It is not possible to clearly demarcate the various phases and stages of counter-insurgency. Most steps have an overlapping run. However, winning over the local population, strengthening the socio-politico-economic infrastructures, maximum participation of the local people in planning and decision making processes, bringing the unemployed youths to productive labour, and protecting the counter-insurgency forces with adequate legal and constitutional powers and safeguards are important in the retrogression stages of insurgency.

When counter-insurgency starts showing positive gains in favour of the majority people, local support starts coming. When rehabilitation, reconstruction, development projects and alleviating socio-economic programmes/schemes not based on tokenism and paternalism start showing all round good progress to satisfy the legitimate needs/aspirations of the deprived local people, the retrogression of insurgency starts.
"Retrogression" means a "backward movement", decline in quality or merit and degeneration. Retrogression of insurgency implies a backward or reversed movement of insurgency. The prerequisites of successful insurgency are generally favourable homeland, indigenous masses, complex incompatibilities, catalyst agents and a "permissive system". While retrogression of insurgency starts, these prerequisites are transformed against insurgents by imaginative planning and effective execution of counter-insurgency measures. In other words, when counter-insurgency measures are applied with understanding, unflinching will and determination, insurgency gets controlled and starts declining. The insurgents lose their hold on the population. Retrogression of insurgency is a phase where the insurgents operating within a geo-political system, are totally denied the support of the local population and prevented finally to usurp control of geo-political system due to effective counter-insurgency measures by the Government. It signifies the process of complete defeat of the insurgents and restoration of normal law and order situation in the country.

Though Mao, Guevera, Truong, Vo Negunzengiap and several others have propounded various stages of progression of insurgency, retrogression of insurgency has not been analysed and its indicators have not been empirically determined. Some authors on counter-insurgency have given pointers towards setbacks of insurgency. According to David Galula, "The turning point (in the war against insurgency) really comes when leaders have emerged from the population and have committed themselves on the side of counter-insurgent". 4 As per Lt Gen (Retd) S K Sinha, the Governor of Assam, "However, one important aspect is missing. So far insurgency in Assam has not thrown up a charismatic leader. In the case of Nagaland there was Phizo and in the case of Mizoram Laldenga. The insurgents in Assam do not have comparable leader". 5
ULFA TRAINING CAMPS AT BHUTAN
MILITANTS IN ACTION

ARUN BORO - AREA COMMANDER, NDFB, NALBARI DISTRICT SHOT DEAD AT BHAGBARI

05 JANUARY 2000
JOGESH BORO - ACTION GROUP COMMANDER BLT, NALBARI DISTRICT SHOT DEAD AT SAPKATA
Theoretical Framework of Retrogression of Insurgency

In the absence of any theory or empirical study, it is necessary to formulate a theory of retrogression of insurgency on the basis of detailed analysis of measures taken to defeat it and their effect on various elements of conflict. This analysis will also give clues to locate the change and developments in the elements indicating the retrogression of insurgency.

In an insurgency, the battle is for the hearts and minds of the population. The defeat takes place when population is won over and the cause of the insurgents does not appeal to the people any more. The developmental measures introduced by the counter-insurgents are not only accepted but are demanded by the people. It is thus achieved through understanding of their mentality, genuine sympathy for the aspiration of the local people, a search for their identity and the building of a mutual trust between the SFs and officials working in the area and the local population. The most important thing is to mobilise local public opinion against the insurgents. It is more powerful than bullet because it is a battle of hearts and minds of the people for which strong armed measures will not produce concrete results. Whenever this factor has been ignored and Governments have been guided mainly by military calculations, the result had always been disastrous. Only far reaching socio-economic changes in the living conditions of the insurgency affected people will retrogress insurgency to a greater extent.

Temporary Retrogression: Besides, inadequate military training, insufficient understanding of the true nature of guerrilla warfare and inadequate guidance to the insurgents at times cause temporary retrogression of insurgency. Inadequately motivated and inexperienced insurgents are at times unable to withstand the stringent legal measures and therefore surrender to the Government resulting in demoralisation in insurgent ranks. Retrogression of insurgency ultimately affects the morale of the insurgents and they start surrendering with or without arms. As insurgents lose hold over the population, intelligence about their movements and activities start coming to the counter-insurgency forces and
successful arrests and encounters become possible by the SFs. It results in the decrease of the influence of insurgents over the political activity of the area and at times the candidates supported and aided by the insurgents are defeated in the elections to the local elective bodies. With the retrogression of insurgency, population starts actively participating in various political, economic and social activities started by the Government in order to ameliorate the conditions of the neglected people in the area. But it should be kept in view that a superficial socio-economic change brought about by doled charity and paternalistic approach of the exploitative class, will only help a few individuals of the minority. This cannot retrogress insurgency for ever.

**Phases of Retrogression of Insurgency**

Like progression of insurgency, retrogression has its phases. Retrogression of insurgency cannot have fixed doctrinal postulations in water tight compartments conforming to ascertain general pattern but depending on various elements and responses, the following four phases can be broadly demarcated:

(a) Psychological phase.

(b) Political phase.

(c) Military phase.

(d) Mobilisation phase.
Aims to Accelerate the Process of Retrogression of Insurgency to be Achieved

(a) Strong political will, determination, resources and commitment/ability of the Government to defeat insurgents by eliminating their recruiting base and outmanoeuvring them in their territory and rehabilitating surrenders but not accused of specific crimes.

(b) Unified commands at various levels to co-ordinate social, political, economic and military actions taken to defeat insurgents.

(c) To win the hearts and minds of the local people by psychological warfare and other socio-economic and administrative measures enabling the majority of the local people to have minimum of food, clothing and shelter irrespective of discrimination because poverty is greater enemy than external disturbances. Also the protection of local people has to be ensured.

(d) During military phase, Army, Para Military Forces and Police including "intelligence organizations", keeping the overall National perspective and human values in view should act in most co-ordinated manner.

(e) Counter-insurgents must act within the framework of law with humane approach.

(f) Physical and moral fitness and ideological orientation of the counter-insurgency forces are essential.
Task must be finished and all actions must be taken to their logical conclusion. It must be remembered that there are no short cut to counter-insurgency and the action once started, must be taken to its logical conclusion.

**Phase of Stabilisation of Recovery and Development**

Permanent retrogression of insurgency is a very elusive process because unless the insurgent's intangible elements are all incapacitated or reconciled within framework of National perspective, insurgency may recur. Stabilisation of recovery and development can be reinforced by the counter-insurgency ability to re-establish the political authority that can wield power effectively without resorting to deployment of counter-insurgency forces and without resorting to special powers granted under "Special Acts". Once the insurgents are surrendered, arrested, liquidated or ideologically won over, the rehabilitation, reconstruction and development projects for the region with a band of efficient, honest and dedicated officials/public servants have to be started.

Development administration and political settlement are two important aspects in the process of retrogression of insurgency. Since there are social, political and economic contents behind insurgency, sustained efforts for an all-round development of the local people to eliminate the insurgency menace are required to be taken. The economic transition precedes the political change. An effort to develop road network, agriculture, forest resources and industrial potentialities as well as to bring land reform should be urgently taken. Because this gives people a stake in stability. This can be possible through the mobilisation of human resources and people's participation in the development and political activities.

As insurgency retrogresses, the economy of the place improves. This is indicated by increase in per capita income and better standard of living. Trade activities, especially with the rest of the country, increase. There is construction of more buildings of permanent nature.
and communication facilities are improved. Similarly the strengthening of administrative structure is an essential prerequisite without which all counter-insurgency measures would fail. In case of retrogression of insurgency, administrative structure continues to grow and becomes decentralised e.g. more districts, subdivisions and local self institutions etc, are formed as local people need them and ask for them.

The ratio of SFs to those of the insurgents steadily improves as the Police, Armed Forces, Home Guards and Intelligence Agencies are expanded and their strength increased while the strength of the insurgents decline. This improving ratio is an indicator of the progress of counter-insurgency. Nothing less than a complete restructuring of the socio-politico-economic power structure can improve this situation. To remodel the structure requires the presence of active political will at the policy making level resulting in radical reforms and legislation. This, in turn, would stabilise the recovery and development and thereby strengthen the process of retrogression of insurgency.

**Indicators of Retrogression of Insurgency**

The application of correct strategy and techniques with unflinching will and adequate resources may reduce the level of insurgency. In such cases, its retrogression can be traced through change-indices which also show the degree of decline of insurgency. These indicators of retrogression must be watched carefully to judge the effect of the counter-insurgency measures and plans of action amended to suit the changing situation. Experienced persons from all counter-insurgency agencies must be involved so that a comprehensive balanced analysis of the situation is obtained and a co-ordinated plan of action adopted. Thus it is only possible to counter this cancer in the body politic which threatens its very life.

Direct and indirect steps to restore normalcy at the time of retrogression of insurgency should be taken and the indicators can be clearly seen.
**Direct Indicators**

(a) Ratio of SFs strength to number of insurgent improves.

(b) Loss of morale among the insurgents.

(c) Decline in the hold of the cause among the insurgents.

(d) Insurgents lose hold over the population.

(e) Decrease in influence of insurgents over political activity.

**Indirect Indicators**

(a) Increase in constitutional political activities by the local population.

(b) Increased involvement of local people in economic development and long-term planning and change of economic situation towards industrialisation.

(c) Locals start merging with National mainstream of life.

(d) Pattern of agriculture changes to better producing system.

(e) Community and health development.

(f) Improvement in educational facilities and increase in number of students.

(g) Change in social custom, eating habits, marriage and courtship patterns.
(h) Administrative set up is strengthened.

(i) Communication facilities improve.

(j) Economic development changes the lifestyle, standard of living and attitude towards future.

(k) Outside groups lose interest in the insurgency.

(l) Mobilisation of public opinion against insurgency.

In the case of North-East the fact is, the benefits of these retrogressive changes hardly reach the poorest/oppressed sections of the society. Because the role which the State can play in promotion of radical reforms, social development measures and socio-economic justice, would depend upon the class character of State power in India. It would be futile to expect the Indian State to promote land reforms, socio-economic justice and social development measures genuinely which will hit at the very base of power of the ruling elite. Considering the character of the political power structure obtaining in the country, it is seen that the required political will is not forthcoming. Unless and until a political party representing the class interest of the poor and land-less peasants comes to power both at the States and the Centre, no effective implementation of land reform, socio-economic justice and social development measures can be expected.

Besides, centralised socio-economic planning, the process of decision-making and the manner and extent of Central involvement in State subjects have created new tension in Centre-State relationships. The State is perceived more and more as an instrument of coercion. This is inevitable with increasing over centralisation of political, economic, judicial powers and educational and media policies. There is a need and for more effective
use of National Development Council. A meaningful consultation with the State at different levels is essential for framing of detailed plan. There is financial domination of the Centre which operates in various ways.

There is a need for decentralised planning along with a well developed system of information feedback to the Centre so that major deviations from essential priorities or substantial shortfalls in performance can come to the notice promptly and remedial measures can be adopted in time to be effective for future. There is also a need to strengthen Inter State Councils for solving Inter States disputes and to strengthen the co-operation among States. The National solidarity can be achieved by resolving where the separate entities of region having different cultures are accepted and their democratic structure is protected. Steps to introduce official language in our administrative system without reducing the importance and status of regional languages should be carefully taken. The development strategy must not be seen as merely the formulation of a new economic strategy. It has to be concerned with all the different dimensions of social relations. Even the political restructuring of the present system can be considered. The perspective has to be of involving the people in the solution of their own problems.

All that is necessary is to accelerate the process of stabilising recovery and development of all types by adopting egalitarian means/values and democratic socialist arrangement so that the goal-retrogression of insurgency is achieved soon. It is also sure that with planned modernisation based on the principle of distributive justice, the insurgency movement will get weaker and the forces of peace stronger in the long run.

In the backdrop of above we have to analyse the case of Assam.

One of the senior Officer who was involved in insurgency operations in Assam for almost three years had said that the shift of public support started from the insurgents to the
SFs in the later part of 1998. The result was on 07 April 2000, the raising day of ULFA a large number of ULFA militants surrendered. On the same day there were peace marches by the local population against militancy. This is a major achievement both for the Government and the SFs against militancy. When this takes place the survival of the militants is limited. The surrender ceremony and peace marches were stage managed joined by the public. After all, the whole State cannot be stage managed, therefore, there is a clear indication that the people are tired of the insurgents. The insurgency has lasted in the State for twenty one years. The next stage would be that the militants will not get any support of the locals and then the final stage when the people themselves will not hesitate to kill them. The results of the forthcoming elections in 2001 is very unpredictable. Irrespective of whosoever comes to power, they must ensure that the future policy should be based on the present backdrop and eliminate insurgency in this State. But, time will tell us as to how far this can be done. There is also a requirement to educate the public and ensure that at least in the coming future no young men join the various militant outfits. If this can be achieved this would be a milestone in the retrogression of insurgency.

As of now, it is not a concluded story. There is a need for collective approach and half-hearted efforts lead us nowhere. There should be a balance in anti-militant operations and psychological operations. A wrong person should not be killed in anti-militant operations as it would totally tarnish the image of the SFs. Due care should be taken and Commanders at all level should exercise restraint on this issue. There is no need to kill but definitely there a need to break the will of the militants, make him surrender and lay down his arms. To dilute his will, denouncing him of weapon is essential. Dubious methods like purchasing weapons by unfair means, killing innocent people, building up the number by any of the members of the SFs is totally unethical and the Senior Commanders must put a check and monitor these things. Though such type of instances are very rare but as and when it occurs it has to be dealt with a very heavy hand.
Elimination of militancy by SFs alone is not possible. It can bring down militancy to a marginalised level. This will allow the civil administration to function to the adequate effectiveness and make the public populous to lead a tension-free life. Therefore, keeping the above in view, the SFs have to carry out the following :-

(a) Marginalised anti-militant operations.

(b) Build up public confidence by winning hearts and minds of the people.

This would create confidence in the Government with adequate security for him as a citizen and lead a reasonable peaceful life. Quick disposal of the captured militants is a must. Law of the land must punish the actual defaulters. Improper management of the surrendered militants had only diluted the system rather than contributing to it. Any false hopes given to the public will only antagonise them more. Therefore, there should be a genuine top to down approach. Extortion has to be dealt with stringent measures. There is also a necessity to protect psyche of a soldier and soldiering ability in this environment. In the case of ULFA most of the leaders are outside the country but the funds and weapons are forthcoming. This has to be addressed appropriately.

Free movement of population, celebration in public places, participating in election process, expression of their views freely without being tight lipped are indicators of change in the situation. The control of women on family and value system has been diluted. Mother does not have control on children joining militant groups. It will take time, but we have to get back to older values and customs of sociological institutions of family, society etc. even if it is going to be on a harder way. It is better to have an overt policy and expose the militants to the public by parading him and making an example of him rather than following a covert policy.
Irrespective of the basic parameters involved in controlling insurgency, the basic fact remains that it is totally personality oriented. Therefore, selection of right people to handle the situation is of paramount importance. The SFs broad strategy should be to work out a plan which are protective and offensive in nature. As far as the crossing of borders by the militants and the illegal immigrants is concerned it is only the fear of having been shot dead only can stop this issue. At the same time the Government should realise that the artificial lines created cannot separate the people. The State should make the conditions conducive for outside agencies to invest in this part of the country. The society should be motivated to come out of the inward looking nature and look for better future. The Government should give all the assistance for this. The use of madarassas by ISI agents should be handled very carefully, otherwise this will antagonise the minority community and may even spoil our relationship with neighbours and may lead to a civil war with wider international ramifications. A suitable worthwhile lucrative package to settle those who have come over-ground will be a motivation for other militants. The SFs continuous pressure on tactical and psychological operations should be carried out with the aim of destruction of hideouts and isolation of the militants. This has to be coupled with wooing of the masses with genuine improvement measures.

The present feedback of the surrendered militants indicate that the lower cadre are totally demoralised and disillusioned. The old cadres are also disgruntled. Dwindling public support is lacking. The militants no more have the feeling of heroes. The public consider them more of a nuisance. The lectures given to the militants during training and the ground realities do not match. It had also come to limelight that some militants even leave the camp due to medical problem, and they want to get married, domestic problem etc. Good Samaritan work like rehabilitation centres, medical camps etc. are generally appreciated.
Interview with some of the surrendered militants in New Bongaigan area revealed the following:-

(a) They joined the militant group more because of economic reasons. They were misguided by friends.

(b) The family conditions pressed them to join though they wanted to continue education.

(c) They came out because they were not satisfied with the ideology of the group.

(d) They also narrated the case where one of their friend was stabbed and subsequently died and thrown open in a river who was later brought by SFs.

(e) However, the packages assured to them on surrender are not complied with like Rs 2,000/- payment per month, a satisfactory job and so on. The relief camps are more of a sour point. He cannot go back to native place because of threat to his life by the parent militant outfit from which he surrendered.

"Ideologies, concepts, strategies and techniques of response must thus be articulated in a manner consistent with the popular traditions of the country concerned"

Anthony Burton

The concept of own operations by SFs should be based on the following:-

(a) Win confidence of local people.

(b) Establish sound intelligence base.
(c) Full co-operation with local administration and Police.

(d) Protect population against terrorist activities.

(e) Intercept terrorist movement across the border.

(f) Deny freedom of movement to terrorists.

(g) Prevent forcible collection of money and recruitment.

(h) Identify collaborators.

(i) Prevent and detect foreign infiltrators.

(j) Use of minimum force.

(k) Compassion and respect for human dignity.

(l) Indoctrination & motivation of young people 10-15 years age groups.

The golden rules for conduct of SFs in an insurgency environment is as under :-

(a) Respect the village elders, sarpanch and teachers.

(b) Never take liberty with women.

(c) Pay for whatever you take.
(d) Do not make promises which you cannot fulfil.

(e) Never take any item from houses with the pretext of keeping a souvenir.

(f) Respect their religion and customs.

(g) Be polite but firm.

(h) Do not ill treat captured or surrendered terrorists and suspects in the presence of other civilians.

(i) Do not damage crops.

**Views of a Young Officer of SFs on CI**

(a) **By SFs** :- Operational part should be managed by SFs and the rest by State/Central Government machinery.

(b) **Jungle Bashing** :- Routine operations without inputs i.e. in the form of sending patrols, laying ambush, search & destroy missions, observation etc. should not be done. This leads to fatigue of troops, vulnerable to hostile action.

Example :- In J&K in one RR bn on a signal being emanated, the bn was launched in operation. 2 Coys were lifted by helicopter for this operation.

(c) **Chance Encounter** :- Int is not coming. We are operating to dominate the area. We grab the opportunity of encounter to eliminate them.
(d) **No Int at Cov & Bn Level**: There is no organised agency. One has to find it on his own. Intelligence inputs are not coming directly to operating sub units. Generally the intelligence inputs are late.

(e) **Aggressive Patrolling**: Only offensive type of operation being undertaken in a counter-insurgency environment involve aggressive patrolling. The aim is first to dominate the area, then create a sense of security in general public and then act as deterrence to insurgents.

(f) **Over Reactive to Hostile Actions**: We are reactive by nature rather than pro-active. Our operations are based on hostile actions. If there is an IED explosion or killing in a village, our Quick Reaction Team (QRT) moves there. Sometimes mobile check posts are placed when a firm information on escape of militants is made. The main reason for this is lack of intelligence. There had been instances where QRTs were ambushed reacting to militants. In one case militants fired on a post from three directions. When CO moved with QRT only CO & one vehicle (1 ton) escaped and the other two vehicles were ambushed and weapons taken away.

In some cases when one explosion takes place, everybody rushes to that place. It is at this time the actual second explosion takes place. These type of things are well planned to ensure that maximum casualties occur.

(g) **Over Fatigue to Troops Without Achieving Results**: This is basically due to less tps to larger area of responsibility to a sub Unit. Continuous operations without a break, going 30 kms inside deep jungles with 10 days self contained make the tps tired and because of these on a number occasions the results achieved are hardly any.
(h) **More Dependence on Sources** :- Intelligence is not forthcoming and therefore results are not being achieved. SFs are blindly following information given by civil sources. Maximum of it is not correct. The information given by civil sources is generally superfluous.

(i) **Lack of Will to Fight** :- This is due to over fatigue and fighting against our own citizens. Sometimes there had been more number of casualties to own troops when we have failed to achieve the results in an operation. On some occasions there had been continuous operations without achieving results. The SFs sometimes keep going for patrolling for six months and don't achieve results.

(j) **Following Set Patterns ROP, Ambush, Convoy and Patrolling** :- Timing should be staggered, set pattern of route not to be followed. Laying ambush on one particular sight should not be followed.

(k) **Over Ambitious Commanders** :- This is applicable at all levels. Commanders become restless when results are not achieved for a long time. Troops are sent continuously to achieve results. Basic human nature to achieve results and bring laurels should not be exploited.

(l) **Change in People's Attitude** :- "More important than the very substantial successes gained by the SFs in combating insurgency is the marked change in the attitude of the people of Assam towards insurgency. Till last year, when an insurgent was killed in an encounter, SFs were accused of excesses. The insurgent was hailed as a martyr and funeral orations were delivered at well attended meetings. All this has now stopped. Newspapers in Assam were afraid to publish articles or write editorials against the insurgents. This fear has been eradicated and many newspapers have begun writing against the insurgents. There have been processions in cities
demanding the end of violence. Political activity in terms of holding of public meetings, despite boycott calls, has been taking place. All these are very healthy signs indeed, and show a marked change in the attitude of the people." 6

**Psychological Initiatives**

"It is well known that insurgents fight with two weapons, namely fire-arms and propaganda. Both are equally important for them. They malign the SFs through propaganda and highly exaggerated accounts so that the people become hostile to them and sympathetic to the insurgents. It is essential that counter-insurgency operations are directed against the insurgents both on the military and psychological fronts. Counter-insurgency doctrine caters for what can be referred to as psychological initiatives." 7

The State Government has been taking psychological initiatives in a subtle and coordinated manner to win the hearts and minds of the people and to isolate the insurgents from them. This is being done through the medium of documentary films on television with articles and magazines conveying appropriate themes and with civic activity by SFs. Another method adopted is glorifying the past heroes of Assam. It is essential for the Central leadership to identify itself with Assam's rich historical heritage and glorify its past.

**Development Activity**

The other important area on which the Government is focussing upon is development. Despite its rich resources, Assam is a very backward State and heavily dependent on the Centre for funds to carry out various development works. PM H. D. Deve Gowda visited the North-East in 1996 and announced Rupees 6,000 crores development package. Various projects are under execution. All these will take time. The Shukla Commission has recommended Central aid of Rupees 18,000 crores to the North-East during the Ninth Plan.
In view of the country's present financial situation, one does not know how much of this will be forthcoming. Besides mega projects for development, various micro projects, particularly in the agricultural sector, are also being planned. Economic development and eradicating unemployment not only holds the key to prosperity but can be a very potent weapon in the fight against insurgency.

Present Situation

"We crafted a three prong strategy to deal with the situation in Assam. The first prong was intensified and co-ordinated operations under a unified command. The second prong consisted of psychological initiatives to win the hearts and minds of the people draining out their sympathy and support for the militants. The third prong was economic development." 8

The three prongs closely interacted with each other. Success of military operations removed the terror among the people and their attitudinal changes has helped SFs in obtaining high quality intelligence, which is the bedrock of success in counter insurgency operations.

SFs have inflicted heavy attrition on the militants. Despite the sanctuary enjoyed by them in Bhutan SFs have been able to virtually break their back. During the last three years over 700 militants have been killed in encounters, over two thousand weapons have been recovered, Rupees one crore in cash has also been recovered and nearly 2,500 militants have surrendered. These figures speak for themselves.

Psychological initiatives have not been crude propaganda. They have been organised in a subtle and co-ordinated manner. The separatist canard have been effectively countered. Civilisational, cultural and historical links of Assam starting from the epic period to the common struggle for Independence are emphasised. Delved into the history of Assam to make the people of Assam proud of themselves and the rest of India proud of Assam. The
only State which defeated repeated invasions of Delhi Sultans and Mughal Emperors, was Assam. This did not mean that Assam did not remain a part of India. Assam retained its Independence throughout the medieval period. When the rest of India had adopted Persian as its official language, Assam continued to have Sanskrit as its official language. The teachings of Srimant Sankardev, the patron saint of Assam in the 16th Century are highlighted. He referred to Bharat Punnyabhumi in his songs and poems. Documentary films telecast on the lives of heroes of Assam like Srimant Shankardev, Lachit Borphukan and Lokapriya Gopinath Bardoloi are shown. A Lachit Borphukan Gold Medal has been instituted at the National Defence Academy at Pune for the best cadet for Officer like qualities from Army, Navy and Air Force. The CM of Assam and Governor went to Pune to unveil the statue of Lachit Borphukan at the National Defence Academy. Lachit Borphukan has been projected as a National military hero in the mould of Rana Pratap and Shivaji. Government of India was persuaded to award a posthumous Bharat Ratna to Lokapriya Gopinath Bardoloi and his life-size statue has been installed. The very few instances of excesses or molestation of women, were dealt with promptly and the guilty awarded exemplary punishment. This has brought about a sea change in the attitude of the people of Assam towards militancy.

The other important indicators are as under :-

(a) The boycott calls given by militants on occasions like Independence Day and Republic Day are ignored by the public.

(b) Boycott call for last Parliamentary elections were ignored by the public. The turnover of voters was 72% - the highest in India.

(c) In some village the unarmed villagers have caught armed militants.
(d) The call given by the militants to support Kashmir Mujahideen during the Kargil war was ignored by the people.

The study of the current situation gives an indication that there has been a retrogression of insurgency in Assam. It is for the Government, the SFs and the people to decide as to what they want in future? If Assam moves on the right direction in the days to come, there are indicators that the State is likely to come to normalcy.
REFERENCES


6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.