CHAPTER – III

Security Challenges of North-Eastern Region

A. Internal Security Challenges

The domestic dynamics of India’s internal security are reflected in its socio-political milieu, the main feature of which is its diversity. It is reflected in the variety of its communities and castes, races and ethnic groups, languages and dialects, religious beliefs, customs and traditions, with different manifestations of culture, all operating in a dynamic environment. Therefore our internal security scenario will continue to be complex and varied. The problems intrinsically rest on domestic roots but external factors also play a major role in aggravating these. The external forces in conjunction with internal forces of dissent endeavour to exacerbate our security problems. Threats due to terrorism, narcotics, drugs, small arms proliferation, voids in energy requirement and information warfare loom large on the horizon. Maintenance of internal security is thus being one of the biggest challenges facing the country.

The British exploited the diversity in the Indian society to divide it on communal and religious lines. On independence, based on the colonial experience, our political leadership decided on integration as a cornerstone of its policy. This was to be achieved through economic development along with nation building through cultural and social interaction, as these linkages were considered durable and stronger rather than political assimilation. However, in later years since late sixties, our second generation of political leadership lost sight of federalism and political assimilation became the main thrust. In the economic and development field participation was given a shift to central planning and control of resources left the states at the mercy of the Central Govt. Gradually, state became all pervading in the political, economic and even in social and cultural fields.
On independence democratic institutions had to provide the cohesiveness to weld India into a nation state. While we have succeeded largely but there are failures in this regard. In certain areas there is a conflict situation to a point of violence and the contesting groups have become the objectives of security. In simple terms a mutual state of insecurity exists between these groups and the state and terrorism, insurgency and violence are only its physical symbols. Similarly, issues of ethno-nationalism and identity are outcome of our failure to integrate diverse segments of the Indian society.

The state policy of secularism came under threat in 1960’s when the politicians started manipulating emotional sensitivities of communities and words majority and minority were formally introduced and accepted in politics and vote banks of communities on communal and religious denomination were created. Inept handling of Babri Masjid issue and failure of government to prevent its destruction resulted in communalism entering as a key element in the fragmentation of the society and the nation. The digging out of Mandal Commission Report added to the fragmentation. The net result of all these and similar maneuvers for vote catching was a divide and set back to consolidation of the Indian society two decades after independence. The environment of unity and secularism was disturbed.

Ethno-communal strife in our country is a result of uneven economic development and unfulfilled aspirations of people, which creates a sense of deprivation. This may be partially due to modernisation itself, result of socio-economic developments and changes and literacy and awareness, resulting in what is perceived to be uneven economic well being. The root cause is social and economic insecurity. If there is just and equitable distribution of economic and developmental benefits people feel satisfied. It is the absence of this satisfaction that drives affected groups to assert themselves and the main target is the government both local and central. Educated unemployed further add to the economic and social pressures. The sum total of it is the mobilisation of the society in the shape of ethno-nationalism.

Trans-border migration from Bangladesh is a major factor for the problems in Assam and other areas of the North East. The point that Bangladesh immigrants are a
source of communal and ethnic tension was well proved by the Assam agitation and subsequent events. There are estimated to be 15 to 18 million illegal Bangladeshi immigrants in India, who have spread to all the North Eastern States with bulk of them being in Assam. A fair proportion of these estimated to be 3 to 5 million have spread to the other eastern states of Bihar and West Bengal and in the North to Delhi and beyond. The influx is likely to continue unless checked and those already identified are deported but the problem is not only increasing but getting more complex.

1. Negligence by Governments since 1826...

When the British took over the administration of Assam in the year 1826, through "Treaty of Yandaboo" (as discussed in Chapter-I- Introduction) it changed the traditional social culture of Assam. After taking over of Assam, British established tea and oil industry in Assam and brought educated Bengali Hindus to work in important positions in the colonial administration and other important professions like teachers, doctors, lawyers and magistrates. Initially the local people were reluctant to work in tea gardens which results in lack of labour force in colonial Assam. As a result the colonial rulers encouraged migration of tribal people from Jharkhand and Orissa in order to meet the demand of cheap labour in British owned tea gardens. In search of better living the poverty ridden tribal people of those areas migrated to Assam. The situation opened the floodgates of migration of people during British regime. Thus the British owned tea gardens had remarkably grown but failed to accommodate emerging Assamese middle class in jobs. This had eventually led to an anti Bengali feeling amongst Assamese middle class who failed to understand the colonial limitation. The British also ignored the demand for replacement of Assamese as language in schools and courts. The linguistic conflict between migrant Bengalis and native population generated socio cultural conflict between the two groups.

Colonial interests dictated the political and administrative arrangements of the region. The prolonged colonial rule consolidated and accentuated separateness. Administrative convenience and strategic considerations led the British to group and
regroup territories. Assam emerged as a nodal point in the British administration only after going through a long granulating period. The areas around Assam that were brought under colonial rule at different points of time were treated by the British administration on a separate footing. A series of legal and administrative decisions were taken between 1874 and 1935 providing for separate and distinct identities of the different areas in the Northeast.

An Inner Line was drawn marking the extent of revenue administration beyond which the tribal people were left to manage their own affairs. Outsiders were prohibited from crossing the Inner Line without permission. According to Section 52A of the Government of India Act of 1919, the Governor-General in Council may declare any territory to be a backward tract and deny application of any Legislative Act in the areas so declared. Subsequently the Government of India Act of 1935 regrouped the backward tracts into two categories, namely, excluded and partially excluded areas in place of backward tracts.

The Inner Line became a frontier within a frontier adding to the seclusion of the hills, enhancing the political and cultural distance between them and the plains. One of the important negative fallouts of the Inner Line system has been the perpetuation of the isolationist tendencies in the predominantly hill and mountainous areas of the region. The colonial policy aimed at preserving the separateness of the region continued when the region was reorganised in 1956. Even though most excluded areas became separate entities as union territories and subsequently as States, their integration into the rest of India has been partial and problematic. Therefore, despite conferment of autonomy and statehood, separateness nursed during the colonial period has survived and is frequently expressed through insurgency to bolster demands for autonomy, economic concessions, political representation, and even for independence from the Union.

More important than the geographical isolation and seeds of separateness during the colonial rule is the cultural chasm and lack of psychological integration with the rest of the country that makes for the distinctiveness of the region. The

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nationalist struggle for freedom which otherwise unified the diverse Indian population did not touch the Northeast. The region remained immune to the process of 'Indianness.' The tribal Northeast remained aloof to the unifying influence of the freedom struggle. In the words of Jawaharlal Nehru, the essence of the struggle for freedom, which meant raising some kind of liberating force in India, did not reach these (tribal) areas, chiefly the frontier areas that are the most important tribal areas. The result is that those frontier areas were not psychologically prepared. In fact, they were prepared the other way by British officers or sometimes by missionaries who were there.⁹⁰

The profound economic and political changes in the wake of independence created a sense of unease among the tribal population of the region. Feelings grew that the tribal traditions would be submerged into the mainstream and a new sense of identity and political consciousness led the tribal communities to differentiate themselves from the heartland. The attitudes of the heartland namely, the Hindu-Hindi belt, towards the region and its people have not helped the situation. There is complete lack of knowledge and awareness of the Northeast, its history, its diversity and its place in other parts of India, thereby reinforcing the psychological distance.

The immigration of people from erstwhile East Pakistan took a dangerous turn during post independence period but the Government of India did have no definite policy to tackle the problem. On the contrary Nehru-Liaquat Pact facilitated and accelerated infiltration during post independence era by providing for restoration of rights of immigrants over their properties, if they choose to return not later than 31st Dec. 1950.⁹¹ The agreement was against the spirit of Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950 enacted by Parliament that provided for expulsion of certain immigrants from Assam.⁹²

⁹¹ Pact, Nehru-Liaquat 1950, April 8
⁹² “Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950”
In early sixties, the Govt. of Assam armed itself with Prevention of Infiltration from Pakistan (PIP) Plan, 1964 launched an aggressive campaign to flush out immigrants, who settled in Assam since January 1951. Bimala Prasad Chaliha then Chief Minister of Assam even disregarded the then Prime Minister’s plea to go slow on the deportation. Chaliha even went on to say that the problem was so critical that Assam’s demography and culture would be permanently damaged.\(^93\) Chaliha’s campaign pressed a panic button among the Muslim immigrants. Ultimately Chaliha’s Plan was put in cold storage and those who were deported earlier gradually returned and again settled in Assam.

It has to be noted here that the Assamese members of the Constituent Assembly advocated for giving much wider power to the States. The proposals include the right to legislate on immigration; inclusion of citizenship matter in the concurrent list; giving residual powers to the states; limitation of central power over subjects in the central list; not to give power to the Union Government to unilaterally redraw state boundaries; to make state Governorship an elected office and to give a much larger share of the exercise and export duties on tea and petroleum to the producing stats.\(^94\)

During the post Bangladesh era, the All Assam Student’s Union (AASU) started a movement called Bideshi Khedao Movement which is also known as Assam Movement. The movement was actually triggered by the discovery of sudden rise of registered voters in the electoral rolls in 1970s. Taking advantage of the deep rooted sentiments and discontentment of Assamese people, AASU successfully translated the agitation into widespread popular movement. Tens of thousands of Bengalis - both Hindus and Muslims were displaced all over Assam in violence unleashed during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, particularly during six years of anti foreigners’ agitation. However, the agitation leaders when came to power and ruled the state since 1985 to 1996 failed to detect and deport the illegal immigrants.

\(^93\) Hazarika, S., "Rites of Passage:Border Crossing ,Imagined Homelands,India’s East and Bangladesh", 2000, Penguin Books, New Delhi
\(^94\) Baruah, S., "Durable Disorder:Understanding the Politics of Northeast India", 2005, Oxford University Press, New Delhi
According to the former Army Lt. General (Retd.) D. B. Shekhatkar, the efforts made by some political parties to create vote bank of illegal migrants changed the demographic pattern in Assam especially in BTAD areas and in the process, the land belonging to the tribal groups including Bodos, are being occupied by the suspected migrants.95

The media popularly called the fourth estate of a democracy has played an important role to integrate India. However, there seems to be a basic lack of information and news on problems faced and issues concerning the Northeast. The people of northeast feel of neglected by media. Northeast India is ethnically, linguistically and culturally very distinct from the rest of India. However, years of neglect, government apathy from the Indian central government and minimal connectivity to the mainland has left this part of India economically and socially backward.

2. Socio-Ethnic problem of North-East India

Northeast India is known to other parts of India and world as the hotpot of ethnic violence, extremism and insurgency. The region witnessed the emergence of a number of extremist organizations challenging the sovereignty and integrity of the Indian state. These include United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), National Democratic Front of Bodoland, National Socialist Council of Nagalim, Kuki National Army, Garo Liberation Front, Bru National Liberation Front, National Liberation Front of Tripura, Hmar People’s Convention (Democratic), Zomi Revolutionary Army, All Tripura Tigers Force, Liberation Tigers of Arunachal, National Liberation Army of Arunachal, United Liberation Tigers of Arunachal, Revolutionary Army of Arunachal Pradesh, etc. The demands of these extremist groups vary from autonomy to secessionism and sovereignty. Since independence, this region witnessed the emergence of number of movements which mobilized the people on ethnic lines. For instance, the Assam Movement of 1979-84 was against illegal migration and protection of Assamese identity, the Naga movement can be seen in the context of

crisis of Naga identity and the Mizo movement was the outcome of the neglect of Central and state governments during the famine. Though India adopted liberal democracy with inherent institutional safeguards for the protection of the interest of various communities and groups, extremist tendencies based on ethnicity is taking roots in recent past. In this context, it is pertinent to ask the question as to why extremist trends are developing in a liberal democracy.

Northeast India refers to the easternmost region of India comprising of states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Mrghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and new inclusion is Sikkim. The region shares international border with countries like China, Tibet, Bhutan, Burma and Bangladesh and are connected to the rest of India by a narrow passage. Northeast India is the homeland of large number of ethnic groups who came to the region from different directions at different historical times. These groups belong to the different racial stocks, speak different languages, and have varied socio cultural tradition. As a result the region has become the epicenter of numerous ethnic nationalities. Especially the society in the hills of Northeast region reflects high degree of diversity as each community living therein has its distinct characteristics.

According to the ‘People of India’ project sponsored by Anthropological Survey of India out of 5,633 communities living in India 635 are categorized as tribals, of which 231 are residing in India. The project had listed 325 languages of which 175 belonging to the Tibeto-Burman group and Mon-Khmer group are spoken in Northeast India.96

The ethnic mobilization often leads to virulent form of extremism and violence in a society. Extremism is a tactic adopted by a group or individual to achieve their goals which are not reflected or achieved through normal channels of liberal democracy. In the present world, no society is free from extremist challenges of one or the other forms.

Social Exclusion leads to Ethnicity:

Social Exclusion is a multidimensional process covering social, economic, cultural and political domains. Exclusion is linked to the recognition of social identities, resource allocations and power relations. Marshall Wolfe talks about various kinds of social exclusion – exclusion from livelihood, exclusion from social services, welfare and security networks, exclusion from political choice, exclusion from popular organization and solidarity, and exclusion from understanding of what is happening. Social exclusion refers to both individual exclusion and group exclusion from society, other groups or individuals. It results in the denial of access to opportunities, public goods, public offices and institutions and self respect in the public spheres. It is argued that “social exclusion is about the inability of our society to keep all groups and individuals within reach of what we expect as a society … or to release their full potentials”. The socially excluded is deprived of social recognition, self-respect and social values. The basis of exclusion can be race, ethnicity, gender, religion, language, region, or caste. Each form of exclusion has its nature and manifestation.

The issue of social exclusion is usually related to the problem of equal opportunity. Though modern liberal democracies formally recognize full citizenship, very often it create unequal citizenship in actual practice, as the structural accommodation through citizenship and affirmative action policies fail to bring about the desired change. Charles Taylor argues that there is an inbuilt tendency towards exclusion in liberal democratic states “arising from the fact that democracies work well when people know one another, trust one another, and feel a sense of commitment toward one another”. Human history is a history of struggle for equal share in public resources and equal opportunity for occupying public institutions. Social exclusion results in injustice to certain communities as it denies the access to public offices and primary goods. Rawls, for instance, in his celebrated theory of

Justice viewed that opening of institutions and distribution of primary goods as means to ensure social justice. 100

Ethnicity is often identified with the ideas of primordial’s based on descent, race, kinship, territory, language, history, etc. It is also related to the memory of a golden age which is closely linked to a sense of collective destiny. Ethnicity is defined as “the sense of collective belonging to a named community of common myths or origin and shared memories, associated with an historic homeland”. 101 Ethnicity also refers to some form of group identity related to a group of persons who accept and define themselves by a consciousness of common descent or origin, shared historical memories and connections. 102 Ethnicity can be classified into two groups - instrumental ethnicity which emanates from material deprivation – and symbolic ethnicity based on one’s anxiety to preserve one’s cultural identity. 103

Social exclusion, in many cases, leads to identity assertion which in turn causes conflict, sometimes violent. Social exclusion leads to crisis at individual level, societal level, national level and international level. In his study on ethnicity Paul Brass identified that ethnic identity formation involves three processes. Firstly, “within the ethnic group itself for control over its material and symbolic resources”, secondly, “between ethnic groups as a competition for rights, privileges, and available resources”, and thirdly, “between the state and the groups that dominate it, on the one hand, and the populations that inhabit its territory on the other”. 104

Amartya Sen says that sense of one’s identity creates a sense of exclusion from mainstream and in “many cases carry with it the perception of distance and divergence from other groups”. Constructing a national identity and in the process ignoring the specificities of smaller communities further creates exclusionary tendencies. In liberal democracies, governance diffuses tensions between the state and

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101 Smith, Anthony D. (1999), Myths and Memories of the Nation, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
the people. Democratic institutions are not merely the instruments for running the affairs of the government, but are also the agents of mediating the interests between various social classes. Institutions are expected to respond to the democratic needs of the people.\textsuperscript{105}

**The Case of Northeast India:**

The northeastern region of India is often described as the cultural mosaic of India consisting of diverse tribal communities, linguistic, and ethnic identities. Often these identities transcend the territorial and social boundaries drawn by the Indian state and the larger community respectively. The region, connected to the mainland India with the 22 k. m. long “Chicken-Neck Corridor”, consists of eight states and has international border with neighbouring countries, namely Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, China, and Bhutan. In the international scene, it is a strategic location linked to South and South-East Asia. From internal security point of view, the region is known for the ‘problem states’, experiencing law and order problems, inter and intra tribal conflicts and human rights violations by the security forces.

The politics of northeast India is marked by ethnicity and extremism for a long time. The assertion of various ethnic identities and the attitude of the state in containing ethnic extremism make the region distinct from the rest of India. The root cause of ethnic assertion can be found in the identity crisis of various tribal communities who extend over the territorial boundaries drawn by the Indian nation state. Most of the ethnic assertions are due to ethnic groups’ desperate attempts to protect their identity, culture and language. For instance, it is argued that “claims to ethno-nationalism of the Bodos can be interpreted as closely intertwined with issues of institutional and social exclusion based on language politics”.\textsuperscript{106} In other words, the basis of ethnic assertion can be seen in two contexts. Firstly, the tribal communities’ subjective consciousness of being excluded oppressed and marginalized. Secondly, the process of development failed to address the legitimate concerns of the people. Though after independence the Indian state tried to integrate and assimilate various


ethnic communities in the mainstream national identity, the development process generated a feeling of alienation among them. Moreover, development led to the unequal distribution of resources across the communities and regions. Thus, both non-economic (subjective consciousness) and economic (material) factors created a sense of exclusion among the some ethnic communities.

In northeast India, the fear of exclusion started even before Independence. The Nagas foresaw the possibility of exclusion in postcolonial India in the event of their integration with Indian Union, and started mobilizing Nagas for a separate nation free from the clutches of the Indian state. Moreover, they also felt that their community life and values would be threatened with the increasing number of the majority communities from other parts of India. The sense of social exclusion in the northeast was articulated with the emergence of new social forces – educated elite, students and youth groups, etc. The reasons for the emergence of social forces in the northeast include: the impact of Christianity on the socio-cultural life of the people, spread of education, etc. Oommen identified three major agents of change among the tribes of northeast India – the state, the civil society (of which the Church is the major element) and the market forces.\textsuperscript{107} Ethnic identity provided the grouping ground for their mobilization. Like Dalit mobilization started among the educated sections of Mahars in Maharashtra, these social forces articulated the grievances of the communities. It is argues that the Youth who feel alienated from society and excluded from job opportunities and decision making may turn to ethnic mobilization. Karna argued that the process of ethnic identity formation in the northeast region was based on the idea of large group formation.\textsuperscript{108} Moreover, the social exclusion of ethnic communities has a dialectical link with psychological exclusion of the tribal communities of the region. These include exclusion from deliberative institutions due to their lack of cognitive orientation and the epistemological inequality due to lack of access to epistemological resources. The impersonization of their social, cultural, economic and political life by people from other communities or modern state further accelerated this process.


Ethnic Exclusion during Nation-Building Process:

Among the various factors involved in the exclusionary practices, nation-states constitute the major instrument. In other words, the nation-state itself often creates exclusion of certain ethnic communities. This exclusionary strategy is best depicted by Andres Wimmer who argued that “in many cases, minorities are meant to remain permanently outside of the sphere of national imagination but inside the state’s territory”. While endorsing this view in a different context, Stefan Wolf states that neither ethnicity nor nationalism in itself causes ethnic conflict and, however, when state or government ignore the legitimate political, social, and economic grievances of disadvantaged ethnic groups contribute to ethnic conflict.

In India, freedom from the British did not bring any solace to the communities of the region as the dominant nationality suppressed the smaller nationalities. The major factors that contributed to the social exclusion and subsequent emergence of ethnic mobilization are the pitfalls of nation-building process, the faulty modernization process, and the nature of the nation-state. The nation-building process undermined the specificities of ethnic minorities of the region generated fears among them. The modernization, especially the capitalist modernization weaned away the traditional values, norms and practices which are inherent in the tribal communities. Moreover, the modern nation state erected arbitrary territorial boundaries, in place of traditional ethnic boundaries.

After independence, India’s constitutional democracy instead of adopting a confrontationist approach followed a policy of accommodation and assimilation. The Constitution of India provides institutional accommodation for tribal communities of northeast India through various measures like protective discrimination policies. In some states in the region, the interests of tribal communities are protected by invoking Inner Line Permit (for instance, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram) and special provisions. The Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution gives special status

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to the traditional institutions and makes provisions for the creation of autonomous
district councils. In spite of all these accommodations, the tribal communities are
confronting with multiple kinds of exclusion. Moreover, all these institutional
mechanisms proved to be futile when the State and its institutions indulge in human
rights’ violations.

In the process of nation-building some communities were left out either
because of their low numerical strength or due to low bargaining power with the
power structure. Though the postcolonial states initiated a number of policies to
ensure ‘inclusiveness’ for the discontented communities, the efforts did not yield
much result. Initially most of the discontent was manifested in a more peaceful
manner and latter it assumed extremist posture. The Naga movement first began in
1947 as a peaceful movement and when the Indian state undertook counter insurgency
activities, it took a violent turn affecting the life and property of the individual. In the
western context, nation created state, while in India the states is in the process of
constructing the nation and instilling national consciousness among the people. When
the state with its all powerful authority constructs nation and wider national identity it
often meets with a problem. Sometimes in this process the state imposes its will and
authority on the people. In other words, while the state is engaging in nation-building
through the construction of national identity, smaller identities move in the opposite
direction, when they feel that they are about to lose their identity. In this context,
various ethnic groups are seeking larger space in state and are trying to protect their
peculiar identity. The state initiative to integrate all communities and groups proved
to be counter-productive. As Roy argues that the “formation of a rebel consciousness
in the ethnic formation is an obvious corollary of this hegemonic goal of the Indian
state. The ‘rebek consciousness’ has found articulation in the formation of ‘nations
from below’ which, by nature, contests the state-centric Indian nation”.111

The postcolonial development process tried to integrate and assimilate ethnic
communities towards the mainstream development process while ignoring their
cultural and economic specificities. The centralized planning and the capitalist

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modernization further lead to the exclusion of various tribal communities from mainstream. Biswas and Suklabaidya view that “the tribal life-world suffered heavily owing to the introduction of the state sponsored agencies to govern development”.\textsuperscript{112} It is argued that “the governmental machinery created only a top down administration within which the local self-governance and traditional institutions of various tribes could retain a nominal presence. Rather it gave rise to intense conflict between traditional institutions and state government leading to an unaccountable condition of development”.\textsuperscript{113} Though, not in large scale, the capitalist development strains the relationship between culture and nature. The indigenous way of development was disturbed by the penetration of the capitalist development leading to underdevelopment, displacement of communities from their settlement and livelihood and erosion of community life.

The postcolonial modernization initiated by the newly independent India generated some kind of discontent among the communities leading towards violence. As Gurr observes, “if discontented people have or get constructive means to attain their social and material goals, few will resort to violence. Only men who are enraged are likely to prefer violence despite the availability of effective nonviolent means for satisfying their expectations”.\textsuperscript{114} The naxalite theory in the late 1960s identified the Indian state as a ‘prison-home of nationalities’ and encouraged armed revolt among such oppressed tribal groups against the Indian state.

The Indian state and the governmental machinery often treat extremist activities as a mere law and order problem. The state, in this context, became more repressive often invoking the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958. The state government, under the provisions of the Act, can declare any areas as disturbed and give a free hand to the armed forces to arrest a person on the basis of mere suspicion. The state repression in the name of counter insurgency leads to human rights violations. When the state considers extremism a law and order problem, the response


was the invocation of draconian laws on the innocent civilians who mostly belong to tribal communities. Apart from perceiving ethnicity and extremism as mere law and order problem and firmly deal with it through army, police and other paramilitary forces, at times the state also opens up the door for dialogue and negotiation with the extremists groups.

**Insider v/s Outsider Phenomenon:**

In some parts of the northeast, the issue of ethnic identity assertion is related to migration that resulted in a sense of exclusion. This region since Independence witnessed migration of Bangladeshis, Nepalese and migrant workers from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ syndrome crippled the social, political, economic and cultural life of the tribal communities. In Tripura, the indigenous tribal population became landless and land alienation of tribal to Bengali migration. The tribal community was reduced to minority and the migrant Bengalis emerged as the dominant force. The threat to their survival due to illegal migration created further social exclusion. Apart from creating a feeling of ‘us’ and ‘them’, it led to the alienation of natural resources and cultural specificities of ethnic groups leading to identity crisis. As Fernandes argues that “given their symbiotic relationship with the land and the close link between natural resources and culture, the affected ethnic groups view the land shortages also as an attack on their identity”. The material existence of tribal communities was threatened by the influx of migration, occupation of key government jobs by non-tribal leading to their further exclusion. The phenomenon of ethnic extremism is further activated by declining jobs opportunities in the government sector.

Ethnic communities feel in terms of “us” and “them” in the process of generating ethnic consciousness. This feeling emerges out of one group or community realizes its relative deprivation in comparison with others. Ethnicity, in this context, is the “phenomenon of an ethnic group coming to self-awareness that enables it to

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reaffirm its identity and pursue its interests". The frustration of the unemployed youth was utilized by the extremist organizations to serve their interests. The demands of the extremist groups are varying from autonomy to secessionism. They often challenge the sovereignty and integrity of the nation-state. The assertion of ethnic identity and the accompanying extremist tendencies are related to the feeling of losing one's own identity, marginalization and exploitation by others.

**Elite Formation and the Emergence of Middle Class:**

The problem of ethnicity and extremism is further aggregated by the regional consciousness aroused by elites, especially the middle class. Both in the western context and India in general, the middle class is viewed as the champion of liberal democracy promoting democratic values such as toleration, liberty, equality and justice. However, in the northeast, the middle class can be seen as the promoter of ethnic extremist movements. For instance, the Assam movement emerged as Assamese middle class movements whose interest was mostly affected by the migration of outsiders.

Another dimension of the elite formation in the tribal communities is that the dominant communities allied with state power exclude certain groups from accessing resources, institutions and opportunities, generating a feeling of exclusion of other groups. In such situation, smaller ethnic communities assert for resources and opportunities. The assertion of marginalized identities and its extremist posture are giving a new direction to state politics. In this context, democratic politics is overshadowed by ethnic politics. The elite within the ethnic communities mobilize people in ethnic manner to realize its goals. As Brass argues, "the cultural norms, values and practices of ethnic groups become political resources for elite's in competition for political power and economic advantage". The assertion of Hmars

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in Mizoram against the domination of Mizos and the assertion of Garos against Khasis in Meghalaya is a self-evident factor to prove this argument.

**From Ethnicity to Ethnic Politics:**

The ethnic demand for homeland created a number of smaller states in the northeast. For instance, the greater Assam was balkanized into Nagaland (1963), Meghalaya (1972), Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram (1987) to meet the demands of these ethnic groups. However, mere making of territorial boundary did not solve the problem; on the contrary, it further aggregated it. It is argued that the creation of separate state further fanned the fire when “various smaller and bigger communities started to demand establishment of more states; on the other hand, the state showed their inability to deliver the basic goods”.  

The denial of basic goods to various communities can be seen in the larger contest of denial of social justice for the communities. John Rawls, the contemporary American philosopher, in fact, states that the discrimination of primary goods such as basic rights and liberties and self respect, income and wealth, etc. as the precondition for ensuring justice in a society.  

In the context of India, Ambrose Pinto states that “the competition for power among different social and ethnic groups was legitimized on the premise that all social and ethnic groups will have equal space and opportunities. However, with the majoritarian groups or the dominant social group gradually aspiring for power; the attempt was to create a national culture. In the process the ethnic groups have felt marginalized and rejected. The culture of ethnic groups remains restricted to private expression within the group with no attempts to include it, in spite of the constitutional slogan of ‘unity in diversity’”. Moreover, it is viewed that, “when the state fails as the principal agent of socio-economic transformation and cannot ensure distributive justice to its citizens, it tends to become increasingly coercive”.  

Further, the creation of smaller

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territorial units acceding to the demands of the dominant ethnic community in a region often threaten the existence and survival of numerically less ethnic communities as the positions and jobs and resources were monopolized the dominant ethnic group. The Hmar problem in Mizoram and the Garos disadvantageous positions in accessing resources and positions in Meghalaya are such examples forcing them to arouse ethnic feeling and violent mobilization. While the making of territorial boundary satisfied the dominant ethnic community, it created despair for the minority ethnic economic communities. As a result, the level of extremist activities percolated from one level to another.

The ethnic mobilization assumes an extremist posture when various ethnic movement arousing emotive issues to expand its mass base among the society. The Mizo National Famine Front formed under the leadership of Laldenga used the famine situation of 1959 to arouse ethnic consciousness and later turned it into an underground movement. The Assam Language Movement (1960-70) raised the issue of making the Assamiya language as the medium of instruction up to graduation level in addition to existing English language. As Srikanth argues, “by provoking national and ethnic identities, the Assam agitation has prepared the ground for the rise of militancy in Assam”. The emergence of ULFA as a militant extremist organization was a radical offshoot of the Assam movement. When Assam Gana Parishad (AGP) turned to a political party after the Assam Accord of 1985, ULFA continued its extremist path.

Another kind of social exclusion visible is in the area of language. The introduction of alien language over local language also created ethnic mobilization. The early movements in Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland is due to the domination of Assamese. The Assam Official Language Act 1960, had its repercussion on the Mizzos, Khasis, Garos and Bodos, and it further rekindled the regional consciousness among the divergent ethnic groups in the United Assam. For instance, the people of Khasis Hills, Jaintia Hills and the Garo Hills under the leadership of the All Party Hill

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Leaders Conference demanded separate state. There are criticisms against popularizing Hindi in Arunachal Pradesh.

**Ethnicity to Ethnic Conflicts:**

In the debate on social exclusion and ethnicity it is pertinent to examine reasons behind the extremist positions taken by some extremist groups when they are moving away from normal democratic process provided by constitutions and other institutions. The multidimensional manifestation of social exclusion is articulated by the emerging social forces leading to ethnic based conflict in a society. It is argued that: Social exclusion is a leading cause of conflict and insecurity in many parts of the world. Excluded groups that suffer multiple disadvantages may come together when they have unequal rights, are denied a voice in political processes and feel marginalized from the mainstream of their society. Peace may be the first step, such as marches, strikes and demonstrations. But if these has no effect, or if governments react violently to such protests, then groups are more likely to resort to violent conflict if they feel there is no alternative.\(^{124}\)

According to Marshall Wolf, ethnicity is not the ultimate, irreducible source of violent conflict. In other words, violence does not spontaneously erupt between otherwise peacefully coexisting ethnic groups. “The power and material gain can be equally strong motivations, for leaders and followers alike, to choose conflict over cooperation, violence over negotiations”.\(^{125}\) Most ethnic movements emerged initially within the Constitutional framework and peaceful manner. In course of time, they turned violent when the state used its repressive machinery and resorted violence while engaging in peace negotiations. The state viewed that it can suppress the ethnic mobilization by invoking force. The assertion of ethnic identity, in course of time, percolated to the realm of politics. The state often conveniently uses one group against another, at times extending patronage to one ethnic group, as in Naga-Kuki conflict in Manipur.

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3. Identity Crisis in the Region of North-East

Societies are discrete formations of people, enduring entities that take time to emerge within the bounds of specific territory and political organization. Expression of identity by various groups of people based on language, territory, religion, common origin and a host of other cultural elements are all comparatively more ephemeral than societies. While ethnicity and ethnic movements are processes dependent on mobilization of cultural resources, societies are entities that have temporal continuity. In the context of the north-east, it is important to know and understand the societies and the social formations to come to grip with issues of ethnicity and the rising tide of identity movements among tribal as well as non-tribal communities. As it well known that, the consolidations of identities along the lines of tribe and community have become increasingly manifest in the recent years in this region. The social bases which provide the resources of ethno-cultural mobilization among some of the north-eastern populations are examined here.

In order to understand the nature of contemporary social formations, we can divide it into three phases or periods: pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial or post-independence periods. As will be evident, in each of these periods conditions proved to be rather different for emergent social formations.

Assam, unlike most other areas of the Northeast, was better integrated with mainstream India prior to independence. Assam participated in the national independence movement and contributed much to India's intellectual and cultural wealth. Today, however, instead of encouraging its sons and daughters to train themselves in science and technology and entrepreneurship, Assam has engulfed itself in mindless bloodletting.126

The hills and plains of the region have been occupied by different streams of Mongoloid people who came from the north and the east at different periods well before the onset of colonial rule. It is generally agreed that the Mongoloids, mentioned as the Kiratas in ancient Sanskrit literature, once occupied practically the whole of the north-eastern region. The diverse Mongoloid groups which eventually

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126 Ramtanu Maitra and Susan Maitra, "Northeast India: Target of British apartheid"
settled in different habitats and ecological settings crystallized into distinct tribal societies. Even in the case of Assam plains, the early rulers were Indo-Mongoloids of various dynasties spanning a time period from fifth to mid-eleventh century. The local dynasties had contacts with Hindu states of India. While the hills and mountains of north-east India remained outside the orbit of Hindu influence and caste-based social formation, the history of Assam plains (the Brahmaputra Valley) shows that by the twelfth century local kings of Mongoloid origin became Hindus. Then, there is the classic example of social transformation and subsequent contribution in shaping the regional society by the *Ahoms* who ruled over Assam for merely 600 years, from 1228 A.D. till the advent of the British in 1826. The *Ahom* period is of considerable significance. Their rulers established a well-integrated administrative system in Assam and they also patronized the Hindu religious institutions. In pre-*Ahom* period, the social formations in Assam were predominantly tribal in nature. But through the development of a centralised power and state religion, the different ethnic groups were united and the Assamese as a wider social formation crystallized in the Brahmaputra plains. In this, the *neo-Vaishnava* religious movement under the leadership of Shankaradeva in the sixteenth century also played a significant role.

It is important to note that in the long centuries before the advent of British rule in the region, there was a high degree of fluidity in the socio-cultural arena so that inter-mingling of various streams of people, including biological admixture, produced diverse social alignments and group identities. The boundaries of the groups were never very rigid. It is this flexibility, characteristic of a frontier tract experiencing considerable population movement from different directions, which provided scope for shifting alliance and identities. Pre-colonial social setting in the region was more fluid and flexible than in the subsequent colonial and post-colonial periods. Thus, various ‘tribal’ inhabitants of the hills got integrated and often absorbed into the fold of the Hindu peasantry consequent on changing their niche from the hills to the plains. In the plains as Assam, tribal groups such as the *Bodo-Kechari, Rebhs, Nech, Karbi* and the *Deuri-Chutiya* had thus, for centuries, provided the main source of Hindu population through a process of conversion and subsequent Sanskritization.
The 'tribe' had never been a fixed or static category in those early times and there were many instances of change from tribal to non-tribal status. Contrary to popular notion, the numerous culturally and politically discrete communities of later times lived in a situation of contact and communication with their respective neighbouring population.

The conditions radically altered during a rather brief period (1826-1947) of British colonial rule. The annexation of Assam by the British (i.e. the East India Company) brought the people of this region into greater and deeper contact with sociopolitical currents then prevailing in the rest of the country. The channels of contact and the levels of communication were further accentuated in the early part of the 20th century. The British set in motion a series of moves in order to establish a degree of political and administrative dominance over the plains as well as the hill people. The British policies and the activities of Christian missionaries who came into the region contributed significantly in creating a freeze effect on the communities and social formations. Colonial rule and missionary activities also contributed significantly in detailing the character and tenor of identity movements among the tribals and non-tribals in the post-Independence period.

The impact of British administration became manifest through various means and measures such as the introduction of Inner Line Regulation in 1873 and the declaration of most of the hill areas as "Excluded Areas" under the provision of Government of India Act of 1935. Most tribal communities of the hills thus remained cut off from social and political developments taking place elsewhere. Mention must also be made of impressive population movements into the region during the British period unleashed by the imperatives of colonial administration and economy. In the context of an organised colonial economy with fairly strict monitoring of exploitable resources, coupled with immigration of diverse groups in a short period of time, the earlier resilience of the regional social system was lost forever. Each community tended to become a rigid social formation and this was to the utmost advantage of the colonial rulers. The accentuation of tribal-non-tribal differences and the formation of rigid social blocks out of indigenous castes and communities as well as recent migrants were important developments in the colonial period.
Following Independence, the governmental approach to tribals was radically altered. The old policy of maintaining status quo and isolation was replaced by a policy of development and integration. The post-Independence period has been one of acceleration in the pace of social change and modernization of various tribal groups and their effective induction within the framework of the nation-state. However, it is also during the last five and a half decades since independence that the freeze effect in the various social formations became more vivid, functional and effective in turning tribes, castes, communities and language groups into ethnic blocks. Many groups have shown varying degrees of strain in accepting and adjusting to the demands of integration, which often has an assimilation overtone, made on them.

Thus, while the pre-colonial setting was fluid and flexible, the colonial and post-colonial settings have been less so and the societal boundaries became more rigid, doing in the process distinct cultural orientation—the phenomenon we call ethnicity. Societies became ethno-political blocks. In addition, this period is characterised by revivalist trend so that the various social formations looked to their primordial cultural assets to define and consolidate their boundaries.

Ethnic self-consciousness and its consolidation and asserting along the lines of tribe, community or language groups have become increasingly manifest in the recent years in the entire region. In every one of the seven states that make up the north-eastern region, there is a comic perception of who constitute the ‘insiders’ and who are ‘outsiders’ vying for the limited number of jobs and other assets and resources of the respective territories. Regionalism along social and ethnic lines has been a dominant development in the years since Independence.

In the post-colonial north-east, we can recognise five different parameters of identity consolidation. These are tribe, caste, language, territory and religion. These often work in combination with one another. Emergence of tribal social formations, often with demand for specified territories as politico-administrative units are features common enough in north-east India these days. The context of smooth integration of tribals and non-tribals, of various language groups, of locals and immigrants and of various religious communities appear to be fraught with many hurdles.
The consolidation of various social formations and ethnic upsurge based on it may be viewed as strategies of adaptation of the tribesmen and other indigenous inhabitants of the region in the modern context. The commotions that go with demand-making polities, including secessionist movements, have in the meantime, created unsettled conditions. But if we take a long-range view of history, we see that social unrest and mass stirrings have never been permanent attributes of human societies. These are like turning points in the life of a society, which is passing from one kind of articulation to another.

Confused Identity:

Although we do not have the exact number of immigrants either from Bangladesh or Nepal, it is a fact that both Bangladeshi and Nepali migrants have sizeable presences in India. Their concentration is in the north-eastern states, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh, with scattered presences over the rest of the country. Unlike migration elsewhere, say to Europe or the United States, ethnic commonalities of Indians with Bangladeshis and Nepalis imbue migration with an ethnic dimension, both as concerns “push” and “pull” factors. Not surprisingly, the same ethnic dimension impinges on the migrant’s choice of whether to co-opt an Indian identity or retain that of their country of origin; as also on associated issues, such as, social linkages, security, foreign policy and economic development of the adopted homeland.

Bangladeshi migrants to India consist of Muslim migrants and Hindu refugees, both categories having different sets of reasons to migrate. But the overriding consideration in both the cases is ethnic commonalities with Indian Bengalis. It is mostly the Bengali language and cultural heritage that unite Bangladeshis with West Bengal and the Indian Bengali population as a whole.

The former province of Bengal was divided in 1947 into West Bengal, which went to India, and East Bengal, which went to Pakistan; later, East Bengal became the independent nation of Bangladesh in 1971. Although Bangladeshis have their national identity within the nation-state framework, they identify themselves as Bengalis and share a common ethno-cultural ethos and heritage with Bengalis across the border.
However, as Lamia Karim points out, the basis of a separate nation-state for many Bangladeshis is that they are Muslims and their culture, language and religion is different from that of the Bengali Hindus of West Bengal. The unfolding and enforcement of Bangladeshi nationalism, promoted by the Bangladeshi National Party, had its effects on Bangladeshi migrants to India, in the sense that they carried with them their new-found national identity. It has been difficult, particularly for Bangladeshi Muslims, therefore, to merge into the Indian mainstream.

Yet, it is not that Muslim immigrants remain “exclusive” among the indigenous population in India. In Assam, for example, many of them have joined the Assamese mainstream. According to Mishra, over the years, large segments of the immigrant Muslim population of the state have been sending their children to Assamese medium schools and claiming Assamese as their mother tongue. They were accepted first as “Na Asamiya” or neo-Assamese and then simply as Assamese. Even the Asom Sahitya Sabha, which represents the cream of Assamese-speaking literary and cultural figures, emphasised the need to accept the immigrant Muslim population as part and parcel of Assamese society, and has been critical of those who still referred to Muslims as “Mías” or “Na Asamiya”. It may be pointed out here that Muslim immigrants, by claiming Assamese as their mother tongue, ensured the majority status of the Assamese and defeated attempts by Bengali Hindus to convert Assam into a bilingual state, with the Assamese in the Brahmaputra Valley and the Bengalis in the Barak Valley. According to Mishra, neo-Assamese immigrant Muslims did not take long to realise their importance as a balancing force in the state’s socio-political scene and emerged as one of the major pillars of Assamese linguistic nationalism.

The dynamics of Nepali migration to India is different from that of Bengali migration. The socio-cultural continuity between the two countries makes the Nepali

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entity very much a part of the Indian ethos and psyche. According to Baral, India-Nepal migration is a social inter-relationship hardly affected by other factors. Since peoples on both sides of the border share a common language, religion and ethnic identity, their relations transcend political considerations. Of course, the commonalities are more evident between the Tarai people of Nepal and Indians across the border. The similarities between the Tarai people, called Madhesias, and Indians, reflected in linguistic commonality and practice of Hinduism, have given rise to misgivings in the minds of Nepali authorities about the loyalty and leanings of the Tarai people.

In the Indian context, Nepalis are not perceived as “alien”. They have become just like other Indian nationals within the broad framework of the Indian federation. Indian Nepalis have their own institutions, socio-cultural practices and have contributed substantively to the making of modern India and are treated as an important element in the country’s security system. “Gorkha” is an honorific word from British days to denote all martial races of Nepal. However, it came to connote men of Nepali origin serving in the Indian Army. Also included are domiciled descendants of Amar Singh Thapa’s army at the time of the Anglo-Nepal War (1814-16). Starting with the Sugauli Treaty (1816) that ended the Anglo-Nepal War, recruitment into the British Army was the major trigger for Nepali migration to India. After 1947, India made separate arrangements to continue with the Army’s Gorkha recruitment. At present, there are approximately 30,000 Gorkhas in the Indian Army and over 1,00,000 Gorkha pensioners, who are Indian for all practical purposes. Gorkha bravery has been identified with Indian heroism for both domestic and overseas consumption. Currently Gorkhas are settled around the old Gorkha regimental centres such as Dharmsala, Bakloh in Himachal Pradesh, Dehradun, Darjeeling, Shillong, Assam and other north-eastern states.

Besides, a large number of them actively participated in India’s freedom struggle. The statue of Major Durga Malla, hanged by the British, at the Parliament House complex speaks volumes for the contributions made by Indian Gorkhas to the

freedom struggle. The constant effort of Nepali-speaking Indians ensured the inclusion of Nepali in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution as one of India’s national languages. Indian Gorkhas keep a safe distance, politically and culturally from the migrant Nepali population and maintain an Indian identity and demand abrogation of the 1950 Treaty with Nepal. They feel that migrants under this Treaty have tended to dilute their Indian identity. There also exists historical links between the Nepali monarchy and the Indian royalty, especially of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. This is reflected in marital alliances between the Nepalese royal family and the Indian princely states, something which continues even today.

In Assam for instance, Nepalis have been historically treated as being identified with Asamiyas. Earlier generations of immigrant Nepalis have assimilated and integrated with the Asamiya nationality to such an extent that they prefer to identify themselves as “Nepali Asamiya”. With the beginning of the Assam agitation (1979-85), Nepali immigrants were viewed with some suspicion but have faced less hostility from the Assamese compared to Bangladeshi migrants because of their political-cultural assimilation, lower numbers, subordinate role, their identity as “Nepali Asamiya” and, of course, the 1950 Treaty provisions. Perhaps because of these reasons the demographic impact of Nepali immigrants on Assam has not been strongly articulated, and is ignored even in the S.K. Sinha Report of 1998 on Illegal Migration into Assam. It can therefore be argued that the Nepali identity already exists as a sub-stratum of the Indian identity.

As A.C. Sinha points out, from the historical, cultural, religious and even geographical perspective, Nepal is an associate to the Indian core even though the core accords a peripheral rather than associate status to both Indian Nepalis and immigrants from Nepal. Perhaps that is why Nepali migration is not a major concern for India. Nepalis entering India enjoy both natural and other privileges arising from structural arrangements created by the two countries. However, problems arise when Nepalis in India try to assert their Nepali identity in exclusive terms vis-à-vis mainstream India. The Gorkha National Liberation Front [GNLF] in Darjeeling

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illustrates this tendency, even though it claims to protect the interests and rights of Indian Gorkhas only.

Overall, Bengalis and Nepalis are very much part of the Indian ethos and linguistic-cultural traditions. It was only when borders were redrawn following the partition of India that various solidarities were fragmented and the legality or otherwise of the movement of people across borders came into question.

4. Separatist Movement and its Background in north-East

Since India’s independence in 1947, Northeast India has been split up into smaller and smaller states and autonomous regions. The divisions were made to accommodate the wishes of tribes and ethnic groups which want to assert their sub-national identity and obtain an area where the diktat of their little coterie is recognized. New Delhi has yet to comprehend that its policy of accepting and institutionalizing the superficial identities of these ethnic, linguistic, and tribal groups has ensured more irrational demands for even smaller states. It has also virtually eliminated any plan to make these areas economically powerful, and the people scientifically and technologically advanced.

Imbued with the British ideology of encouraging ethnic, sub-ethnic, religious, and linguistic identities - as opposed to the identity of a citizen of a sovereign nation-state - both New Delhi and the residents of Northeast India are marching recklessly along the very path prescribed by the British raj in 1862, when he laid down the law of apartheid to isolate the tribes. While it is not clear how long this fateful road is, there is little doubt what awaits them at the end.

A situation has now arisen in which New Delhi’s promised carrot of economic development evokes little enthusiasm in the Northeast. Money from New Delhi for "development" serves to appease the "greed" of a handful and to maintain the status quo. On the other hand, fresh separatist movements bring the area closer to the precipice.

Assam has been cut up into many states since Britain’s exit. The autonomous regions of Karbi Anglong, Bodo Autonomous Region, and Meghalaya were all part of pre-independence Assam. Citing the influx of Bengali Muslims since the 1947 formation
of East Pakistan, which became Bangladesh in 1971, the locals demand the ouster of these "foreigners" from their soil. Two violent movements in Assam, the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) and the Bodo Security Force (BdSF), are now practically demanding "ethnic cleansing" in their respective areas.

In 1972, Meghalaya was carved out of Assam through a peaceful process. Unfortunately, peace did not last long in this "abode of the clouds." In 1979, the first violent demonstration against "foreigners" resulted in a number of deaths and arson. The "foreigners" in this case were Bengalis, Marwaris, Biharis, and Nepalis, many of whom had settled in Meghalaya decades ago. By 1990, firebrand groups such as the Federation of Khasi, Jaintia, and Garo People (FKJGP) and the Khasi Students' Union (KSU) came to the fore, ostensibly to uphold the rights of the "hill people" from Khasi, Jaintia, and the Garo hills. Violence erupted in 1979, 1987, 1989, and 1990. The last violent terrorist acts were in 1992.

Similar "anti-foreigner" movements have sprouted up across the Northeast, from Arunachal Pradesh in the east and north, to Sikkim in the west, and Mizoram and Tripura in the south. Along the Myanmar border, the states of Nagaland, Manipur, and Mizoram remain unstable and extremely porous.

The root cause of the problem is the conditions set in place by British rule in the Northeast since 1826 and the formation of East Pakistan in 1947. New Delhi's inability to integrate the region stems from its failure to recognize that the British raj had converted Northeast India into a human zoo, where each tribe was allowed to roam free within its "own territory," but was not allowed to cross the boundaries set forth by their British masters and establish contact with the rest of India.

The British came into the area in the 1820s, following the Burmese conquest of Manipur and parts of Assam. The area had become unstable in the later part of the eighteenth century following the over-extension of the Ahom kingdom, a Burmese-based kingdom that reached into Assam. The instability caused by the weakening of the Ahom kingdom prompted the Burmese to move westward to secure their flanks. But the Burmese action also helped to bring in the British. The British East India Company was lying in wait to see the Ahom kingdom disintegrate. The Anglo-Burmese war of 1824-26
ended with the British emerging victorious. By the peace treaty signed at Yandaboo on Feb. 24, 1826, the British annexed the whole of lower Assam and parts of upper Assam (now Arunachal Pradesh).  

The Treaty of Yandaboo was concluded between the king of Ava (present Myanmar and thereabouts) and the British on 24 February 1826. Under the aegis of the Treaty, Assam was handed over by Burma (which was “temporarily” in control of Burma) to the British. It would be of interest to note that the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) has prefaced its demand for the sovereign Assam on the basis of this treaty, stating that Assam was not part of India before the treaty and should, therefore, be reinstated to it independent status after the departure of British. The Treaty of Yandaboo provided the British with the foothold they needed to annex Northeast India, launch further campaigns to capture Burma’s vital coastal areas, and gain complete control of the territory from the Andaman Sea to the mouth of the Irrawaddy River.

The British claimed that their occupation of the northeast region was required to protect the plains of Assam from the “tribal outrages and depredations and to maintain law and order in the sub-mountainous region.” British historians campaigning on behalf of two ex-viceroys, Lord Minto and Lord Curzon, assert that the defense of the British Empire in the northeast frontier was no less important than the northwest frontier, the scene of the so-called Great Game between Britain and Czarist Russia.

But the tribal territories in the northeastern borderland cover 700 miles of the Indian frontier. These tribal belts, from 70 to 100 miles deep, are almost impenetrable by any force from the north, e.g., China. The Indo-Burmese border, though crossed by the conquering Ahoms to capture Upper Kamarupa in upper Assam in 1228, was mountainous and heavily forested. There is little doubt that the British were not concerned about the enemy; crossing such difficult and hostile terrain was simply not possible for either Russia or China.

But for the British East India Company, gaining control in the northeast of India aided in gaining access to southern China’s natural wealth. Significantly, in the Treaty of

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131 Ramtanu Maitra and Susan Maitra, "Northeast India: Target of British apartheid"
Yandabo it was mentioned that the British East India Company would have access through upper Burma to chart out a direct trade route between India and China through Assam. As early as 1826, a member of the Governor General's Council said: "We may expect to open new roads for commerce with Yunan and other southwestern provinces of the celestial empire through Assam and Manipore."

The annexation of Assam was also designed to "fix" the situation in Bhutan, Sikkim (an independent kingdom till 1975 before it merged with India), Nepal, and Tibet. The British role in Tibet, as reflected in Francis Younghusband's armed invasion of Tibet during 1901-04, the subsequent invasion of Tibet by the Manchu dynasty rulers for the first time in 1910, the fleeing of the 13th dalai lama, and the subsequent influence exerted by the British over the Tibetan and Mongolian lamas, will be treated in future EIR reports. But it should be noted that the accession and isolation of Northeast India was designed to infiltrate Tibet, as part of London's greater geopolitical plan to upset China - which remains London's aim today.

The 'apartheid law'

Following annexation of Northeast India, the first strategy of the British East India Company toward the area was to set it up as a separate entity. At the outset, British strategy toward Northeast India was:

- To make sure that the tribes remained separated from the plains people, and the economic interests of the British in the plains were not disturbed;
- To ensure that all tribal aspirations were ruthlessly curbed by keeping the bogey of the plains people dangling in their faces; and,
- To ensure that the tribal feudal order remained intact, with the paraphernalia of tribal chiefs and voodoo doctors kept in place. Part of this plan was carried out through the bribing of tribal chiefs with paltry gifts.

In 1838, the East India Company assumed charge of the government of Assam, in order to enhance trade and commerce, and sacked the Ahom king, who had been its "protected prince" since 1826. In the early years, the company had often run into trouble
with the tribal clashes between them were routinely reported.

The decision to isolate the tribes came about in 1873 through the promulgation of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation. However, the policy of declaring the Northeast Frontier Agency (NEFA) a secluded area had been advocated long before. Section 2 of the regulation empowered the company "to prescribe and from time to time alter by notification, a line to be called the Inner Line and to prohibit any subject living outside the area from living or moving therein." Thus, the British policy of apartheid in Northeast India was implemented in the tribal area of the District of Lakhimpur in September 1875 and in the District of Darrang in March 1876.

Civil officers could extend their administrative jurisdiction no further than the Inner Line, and the governor-general-in-council prohibited all British subjects from crossing the Inner Line without a pass obtainable from the deputy commissioners of districts.

Then, in 1880, the Frontier Tract Regulation was enacted, which stated that it was expedient "to provide for the removal of certain frontier tracts in Assam inhabited or frequented by barbarous or semi-civilized tribes from the operation of enactments in force therein." It was stated that the regulation would extend to such frontier tracts in Assam as the governor general might designate. The regulation was subsequently extended to cover wider areas in the Northeast.

The British plan to cordon off the Northeast tribes was part of their policy of setting up a multicultural human zoo during 1850s under the premiership of Henry Temple, the third Viscount Palmerston. Lord Palmerston, as Henry Temple was called, had three "friends"—the British Foreign Office, the Home Office, and Whitehall. With the help of these offices and such close associates as Giuseppe Mazzini, Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, and David Urquhart, Palmerston began to establish British assets throughout Europe and elsewhere. Young Italy was set up in 1831, attracting Garibaldi and Louis Napoleon. Young Poland and Young Germany followed. And in 1834, Mazzini founded Young Europe, billed as the "Holy Alliance of the Peoples." By 1835, a Young Switzerland and Young France were created. There was also Young Corsica, which was
the mafia.

The underlying motive behind setting up these groups was evident in Mazzini himself, to whom nationality meant race, an ethnic group with a fixed array of behavior. Mazzini's organizations would demand immediate national liberation on the basis of aggressive chauvinism. Each was obsessed with borders and territory, and each found a way to oppose the concept of a sovereign nation-state. This was Mazzini's racist gospel of universal ethnic cleansing, which was implemented in full in Northeast India in 1873.

The apartheid program eliminated the Northeast Frontier Agency from the political map of India and segregated the tribal population from Assam, as the British had done in southern Africa and would do later in Sudan. By 1875, British intentions became clear even to those Englishmen who believed that Mother England's intervention in India, and the Northeast in particular, was to improve the conditions of the heathens. In an 1875 intelligence document, one operative wrote: "At this juncture, we find our local officers frankly declaring that our relations with the Nagas could not possibly be on a worse footing than they were then, and that the non-interference policy, which sounds excellent in theory, had utterly failed in practice."

Apartheid also helped the British to function freely in this closed environment. Soon enough, the British Crown introduced two other features—proselytization of Christianity among the tribal population and recruiting units of the Frontier Constabulary. The Land of the Nagas was identified as "virgin soil" for planting Christianity. "Among a people so thoroughly primitive, and so independent of religious profession, we might reasonably expect missionary zeal would be most successful," according to the 1875 document, as quoted in the Descriptive Account of Assam, by William Robinson and Angus Hamilton. Missionaries were encouraged to open government-aided schools in the Naga Hills.

Between 1891 and 1901, the number of native Christians increased 128%. The chief proselytizers were the Welsh Presbyterians, headquartered in Khasi and the Jaintia Hills. British Baptists were given the franchise of the Mizo (Lushai) and Naga Hills, and the Baptist mission was set up in 1836.
Along with this peaceful religious proselytizing, the strength of the Frontier Constabulary was increased. During Ahom rule, only nine companies of police were used to keep the bordering tribes under control, but under the new regime each company was raised to battalion strength.

By the time the nineteenth century came to an end, the British were deeply involved in the "Great Game." At this point, Northeast India became the theater of a new gambit. The British plan was to set up a buffer state between China-Central Asia-Russia, and British India. The British split Bengal and joined part of it to sparsely populated Assam, in order to form a Muslim-majority state as the western flank of the buffer state.

The ill-effects of the partition of 1905 began to show up in subsequent years. There was a large-scale migration of people from Bengal into Assam. The Census Report of 1931 says: "Probably the most important event in the province during the last 25 years—an event, moreover, which seems likely to alter permanently the whole future of Assam and to destroy more surely than did the Burmese invaders of 1820 the whole structure of Assamese culture and civilization—has been the invasion of hordes of land-hungry Bengali immigrants, mostly Muslims, from the districts of Eastern Bengal and in particular Mymensingh."

Under this British set-up, enormous animosity was fostered between the Bengalis and the Assamese, as the "tribals" now had reason to harden their stance against the "plains people." In the 1911 census, the Muslim population of the Assam Valley was only 355,320. This number had grown to 1,305,902 by 1941, according to the Census Report, the last taken by the British. A large number of violent incidents in Assam and Meghalaya in recent years are directly related to this settlement issue, and tensions have been further exacerbated by a large wave of Muslim migrants fleeing into Assam from instability in neighboring Bangladesh.

The ultimate apartheid in the Northeast came with the partition of India and the formation of East Pakistan, which in 1971 became the independent nation of Bangladesh. With the partition of Bengal, Northeast India became practically isolated, connected to the mainland through a narrow corridor running between Nepal and Bangladesh. The southern Northeastern states have no railroads and are accessible from the mainland by
road, air, and sea. There is no railroad in Tripura, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh. The hilly terrain, and New Delhi's continuing faith in the British policy subsumed under a blanket of security concerns, makes the building of railroads extremely difficult. Broad-gauge railroads exist up to Guwahati in truncated Assam, and a meter-gauge railroad is presently under construction to connect eastern Arunachal Pradesh with the mainland by rail. However, all the other Northeastern states, which are now without railroad, will continue to depend on roads, air, and sea to link up with the mainland.

These British policies provide a clue to why Northeast India has remained a bubbling cauldron and vulnerable to secessionist movements. Why the British continued supporting such a policy can only be understood from their own stated policy, as formulated in 1944 by Prof. Reginald Coupland, a fellow at All Souls College in Oxford, three years prior to the partition of India. In a three-volume study of British Indian history, Coupland, a student of Lords Palmerston and Curzon, said: "India is a geographical unity, it is not divided by such physical barriers as have fostered the growth of separate nations in Europe. Its unification under British rule has not only made all Indians feel themselves as to be Indians; it has saved India from the fate which political and economic nationalism has brought on Europe. The Partitionists threaten to throw India back to the condition it was in after the break-up of the Mughal Empire, to make another Balkans. This would negate the development of democracy in India. Partition would also prevent a free India from taking her due place in the world as a great Asiatic power; for it would probably mean disruption into several States ranking with Egypt or Siam."

5. Lack of Integration with main stream

The Indian government's past and ongoing processes of national integration, state-building and democratic consolidation have further aggravated the conflict scenario in the region. For instance, the eight states comprising the Northeast is populated by nearly 45 million inhabitants who vary in language, race, tribe, caste, religion, and regional heritage. Therefore, most often, the clubbing of all these states under the tag of 'northeast' has tended to have a homogenizing effect with its own set
of implications for policy formulation and implementation; not to mention local aversion to such a construct.

The politico-administrative arrangements made by the Centre have also been lacking. For instance, the introduction of the Sixth Schedule Autonomous Councils (currently there are ten such Councils in the region and many more demanding such status) ended up creating multiple power centers instead of bringing in a genuine process of democratization or autonomy in the region. Moreover, Para 12 (A) of the Sixth Schedule clearly states that, whenever there is a conflict of interest between the District Councils and the state legislature, the latter would prevail. It is even alleged that it is “a mere platform for aspiring politicians who nurture ambitions to contest assembly polls in the future.”

The AFSPA (Armed Forces Special Power Act) for instance, shows the inability and reluctance of the government to solve the conflict with adequate political measures. The AFSPA was passed on 18 August, 1958, as a short-term measure to allow deployment of the army to counter an armed separatist movement in the Naga Hills, has been in place for the last five decades and was extended to all the seven states of the Northeast region in 1972 (with the exception of Mizoram). It was part of a bundle of provisions, passed by the central government, to retain control over the Naga areas, in which the Naga National Council (NNC) demanded further autonomous rights. The AFSPA became a powerful measure for the central and the state government to act against actors challenging the political and territorial integrity of India. As a result, the Indian army for the first time since its independence was deployed to manage an internal conflict. But, instead of resolving the problem, it led to an ongoing escalation of the conflict by bringing it on a military level. The regular violations of human rights has led to a radicalization and militarization of the region and weakened also the supporters of a political solution. According to the Human Rights Watch Report (August 2008), “The Act violates provisions of international human rights law, including the right to life, the right to be protected from arbitrary arrest and detention, and the right to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. It also denies the victims of the abuses the right to a remedy”. A

fact-finding commission, appointed by the government in 2004, complained that the “AFSPA has become a symbol of oppression, an object of hate and an instrument of discrimination and highhandedness”.

Though the conflict in the region is mired with complex political-economic issues, such as, struggle over natural resources, migration related issues, displacement, social exclusion, and so on, according to Dr. Clemens Spiess, “The politics of identity lie at the heart of the bigger part of the current conflict constellations in the Northeast”.

**Foreign Policy imperative:**

India’s ‘look east policy’ which was formulated in 1991 on the heels of India’s economic liberalization, was a foreign economic policy initiative towards South East Asia. The Northeast which is geographically situated between mainland India and Southeast Asia is supposed to have had immense developmental benefits as a result of this initiative and hence, have synergy effects on reducing poverty in the region; as well as on insurgency and armed conflict. The region’s diverse natural resources, rich bio-diversity and enormous hydro-electricity potential, among others, could also help to overcome the widespread feeling of backwardness among the inhabitants of the Northeast. But there is also increasing argument made that the impact of increased introduction of market imperatives in the traditional society of the region would have irreversible impact on the people’s culture and life and it would also lead to increased settlement of mainland people to the northeast. Thereby it is of high importance, that the announced opening will take place in a regulated frame and through cooperation with the local people, otherwise it could aggravate the tensions between the center and the region.

The government has also faced criticism in the way in which it has been looking at the Northeast as an issue of territorial security rather than development per say. The fear of a growing Chinese influence, as well as, increasing cross-border terrorism (Myanmar, Bangladesh) in the region are some of the factors cited as reasons for limiting India in its attempt to open the region.
To conclude, in the words of Clemens Spiess, the various problems and conflict constellations in the Northeast “represents durable challenges to the integrative and accommodative capacity of Indian democracy”. The HBS India programme on ‘Democracy and Conflict’, of which the Northeast is an important component, focuses mainly on the Northeast region of India and aims to support, facilitate and contribute to civil society engagement, participation, and intervention in the region with regard to conflict prevention. Thereby, facilitating intermediation between the various stakeholders involved in the diverse conflict constellations in the region, be it the public, civil society activists, state representatives, journalists, academicians and researchers; and contributing to the promotion of integration and socialisation into a democratic political culture through dialogue and civic education. The overall objective of the HBS programme is to promote the peaceful coexistence of conflict affected ethnic groups through strengthened democratic processes, with gender being a cross-cutting issue.

**Causes of internal displacement in Northeast India:**

Considering the magnitude of the problem of internal displacement in Northeastern region, it is difficult to outline all the causes of internal displacement. However, some of the prominent causes of displacement in the region are listed below:

- Due to natural disasters like earthquake, flood, erosion, draught and climate change;
- Due to violence - ethnic, religion and language conflict, wars and revolutions;
- Due to development driven reasons and governmental policies;
- Due to take over of land by migrating communities

Conflicts have regularly caused considerable internal displacement of population in most of the northeastern states. Displacement of population is caused by violent conflict between security forces and insurgent groups, different dissident armed groups and counter-insurgency operations of security forces. The Northeast India accounts for almost half of India’s conflict induced internally displaced persons.
The region has witnessed a number of major causes of conflict-induced displacement in recent years:

- Displacement of Bengali Hindus and Muslims from and within Assam;
- Displacement of Adivasis and Bodos within and from western Assam;
- Displacement of Bengalis from Meghalaya, particularly from Shilong, the capital city of Meghalaya;
- Displacement of the Bengalis from and within Tripura;
- Displacement of Nagas, Kukis and Paites in Manipur;
- Displacement of Reangs from Mizoram;
- Displacement of Chakmas from Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram.

6. Low Intensity Conflict in North-East

For instance, the Naga insurgence, which started in the 1950s, known as the mother of the Northeast insurgencies, is one of the oldest unresolved armed conflicts in the world. In total, Manipur, Assam, Nagaland and Tripura have witnessed scales of conflict that could, at least between 1990 and 2000, be characterised as low intensity conflicts. However, it must also be mentioned that internal conflicts have been a permanent feature of the Asian political landscape since 1945, of which post-colonial India is no exception. Currently, most of the states in the region are affected by some form of conflict, expect for Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Sikkim in which the situation is at the moment relatively stable. The reasons for the respective conflicts are wide ranging from separatist movements, to inter-community, communal and inter-ethnic conflicts.

Unfortunately, the data and information on the region is not sufficiently analyzed and communicated between the region and the Centre, contributing to

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133 Bhaumik, S., “India's Northeast Nobody's People in No-man's Land in Internal Displacement in South Asia”, 2005, Delhi, Sage Publication
further misinformation, mismanagement and alienation. At another level, conflict in the region has been an all pervasive phenomena, and in its violent form, it has not only affected the territorial and political sovereignty of the Indian state, but also the life of the various people living in the region in incomprehensible and inexplicable terms. In a drastic and dreaded sense, there is a “culture” of conflict and unfortunately, people have submitted to such an existence. However, amidst the widespread sense of helplessness, there is also an overwhelming desire and force to be free from such a situation of conflict which cripples the people from all sides. To gain a holistic understanding of the problem that has historical and contemporary dimensions, it is important to assess and understand the various facets of the problem that interact with each other.

**Historical reasons for the conflict**

The historical connections among the traditional tribes in the Northeast are largely of Tibeto-Burman/Mongoloid stock and closer to Southeast Asia than to South Asia. It is ethnically, linguistically and culturally very distinct from the other states of India. Though cultural and ethnic diversity per say are not causes for conflict, but one of the major problem areas is that the Northeast is territorially organized in such a manner that ethnic and cultural specificities were ignored during the process of delineation of state boundaries in the 1950s, giving rise to discontentment and assertion of one’s identity. Whereas, the colonial rulers took nearly a century to annex the entire region, and administered the hills as a loose ‘frontier area’, with the result, that large parts of the north-eastern hill areas never came in touch with the principle of a central administration before.

Hence, their allegiance to the newly formed Indian nation-state was lacking from the beginning – accentuated by the creation of East Pakistan (today’s Bangladesh) – which meant the loss of a major chunk of the physical connection between mainland India and Northeast India. Interestingly, 99 percent of the Northeast’s boundaries is international and only one percent is domestic boundary.

7. **Lack of Sustainable Development**
Economic development is considered as a symbol of progress and prosperity of any country or society. India since independence, has been consistently striving to attain uniform economic development through rapid industrialization, liberal economic policies and new legislations. A new beginning in the economic history of India was initiated with the introduction of Five Year Plans to facilitate balanced progress and development in the country. However, the efforts of uniform development in the sub-continent suffered a major blow due to widespread regionalism and other institutional factors. As a result even today the states of North East India remain relatively less developed when compared to other parts of the country.

There is constant failure of the state machineries which are compounded with rising insurgency, inabilities of educational system to translate peaceful existence, rising corruption with other social problems such as youth unrest, drug addiction, kidnapping, gun-culture, extortion, crime and violence with huge socio-economic inequalities which are impediment to sustainable development. These inadequacies have potential to produce adverse inter personal conflicts and today the region has become a haven of movements and crises which jeopardize the peaceful existence of multi-ethnic groups. In such a complex situation, the question of development and its implementations become a critical issue to address.

No doubt, the Government of India, as part of many developmental projects, has increased allocation of grants multifold and stationed many hydro-electric projects aiming to convert the region into a power house for the country. However, this has only added to the more crises in the region. Several critical questions reflecting on environmental grounds; feasibility of big/mega dams; issues of displacement of land, history and peoples' identity vis-à-vis indigenous culture especially of the tribals are being raised by civil societies and various organizations.

In this way, the region is grappling as there are many hindrances to economic development in the region. Today, the region suffers from effective implementation of law and order, policies and programmes and high social insecurity. Moreover, the fast changing world has created a huge gap leading people to alienation, frustration and
distress among the youths. Such a scenario in the region deserves better understanding and re-looking of the region and entails more critical assessments and dialogues.\textsuperscript{134}

After independence of India, the plains of Tripura i.e. Chakla Roshanabad which generated surplus revenue, was taken away from Tripura and annexed with Pakistan. As a result a large number of Hindu Bengali entered into Tripura from Chakla Roshanabad. This migrant population put sudden pressure in the state. The influx of large number of people over a long period of time brought about demographic changes in Tripura. The indigenous people in the state, who accounted for 95 per cent of the population of Tripura in the 1931 census, had been reduced to just 31 per cent at the time of the 1991 census. This had resulted serious discontent among tribes, who have become minority in their own land (SATP). The demographic explosion which reduced the tribes to minority created fear psychosis in the minds of the tribal people and paved the way for ethnic conflict.

As a consequence of influx of large number of migrants, a growing number of ethno-centric tribal parties mushroomed. The Debar Commission and Hanumanthiya Commission which looked into the development of the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) suggested a tribal compact area to fulfill the aspirations of development of tribal people. In the mean time the government enacted Tripura land Reforms and Restoration Act in 1960 to restore alienated tribal land. The Act was amended in 1964. But all these had failed to prevent the alienation of tribal land to other non-tribal groups, creating a feeling of mistrust and betrayal amongst the tribal. This led to the formation of Tripura Upajati Juba Samity (TUJS) in 1967. In 1967, when as a direct fall out of large scale alienation the Sengkrak Movement started, the ruling Congress government backed the forcible occupation of tribal in the Deo valley by the Swasti Samity—an organization of Bengali settlers.\textsuperscript{135} The Sengkrak movement was subsequently outlawed by the state. The state witnessed serious ethnic

\textsuperscript{134} International Seminar on “Challenges of Development in North East India” (3rd and 4th November 2011), Department of Sociology, University of Delhi, Delhi

conflicts between tribes and non-tribes since 1980 till March 2002 and during the conflict about 2000 Bengalis displaced in the state.  

Security Challenges due to Migration

Migration and security have a complex relationship and initial research on linkages concentrated mostly on analysing and assessing the range of possible security threats that could emanate from migration. The migration-security nexus was first forcefully emphasised and advocated by Weiner who, in contrast to the international political economy framework, provided a security-stability framework for the role of states in both creating and responding to international migration. For Weiner, “security” is a social construct, having different meanings and connotations in different societies. According to him, there are five broad categories of situations in which immigration comes to be perceived as a threat to the host country: “political threat”, “security risk to the host country”, “cultural threat”, “socio-economic problem for the host country”, and „as hostages against the country of origin”.  

Apart from Weiner, several other scholars like Teitelbaum and Cronin have also linked migration with security issues. This is how migration came to be securitised and gained more prominence after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The idea of securitisation of migrants has added a new dimension to the theoretical discourse on security since the 1990s. This has been mostly propounded by the Copenhagen School of Security Studies of Barry Buzan and his research team. Buzan, Waever and de Wilde define securitisation as the staging of existential issues in politics to lift them above politics. In security discourse, an issue is dramatised and presented as an issue of supreme priority; thus, by labelling it as security an agent claims the need for and a right to treat it by extraordinary means. Successful securitisation occurs when the securitised issue is shifted from the domain of “normal” politics to “emergency

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politics", thus forcing the government to take emergency measures. According to Jash Hammer, the securitisation process occurs when an issue is portrayed as an urgent, fundamental and profound risk to society, thus requiring special, decisive treatment by leaders of the government elite.\textsuperscript{140}

When migration is said to be securitised, it means that migration is identified as an existential threat, which requires emergency measures by the state. This enables the state to pursue policies that supposedly alleviate the ills arising out of migration. In the Indian context, migration from Bangladesh and Nepal is presented as a security threat to the "referent object" – the states of Assam and West Bengal, and the Northeast or to India as a whole.

In migration discourses, the concept of identity also plays an important role. The identity of the host population, which is seen as having been fragmented by the migrant population, is very often invoked as justifying securitisation and hence initiation of extraordinary measures. The security discourse always posits a "national self" facing one or more threatening "others" within a dichotomous framework.

For the Indian state, the security implications of large-scale migration from both Bangladesh and Nepal are varied but inter-related, given the complex nature of migration and the multiple identities that migrants profess. They cover demographic changes, growth of radicalism, particularly Islamic fundamentalism, regionalism, and, more importantly, involvement and even encroachment of foreign powers on the country’s "sovereign space". All these threats to territorial integrity, core values or socio-political practices of the Indian state interact, sometimes reinforcing each other.

**B. External Security Challenges**

1. **Porosity of Border and its Security**

Border areas have their own problems and peculiarities. Such areas are in general less accessible, making provision of basic facilities more difficult and costly. Such areas are often more vulnerable to illegal infiltration of population, which adds

pressure on their economic and environmental resources. Moreover, porous nature of the border enables easy cross border passage for insurgents and criminals including drug traffickers. Thus, governments of the states with international border are required to bear heavier burden for not only providing basic facilities to the people living in such areas but also for the broader national goal of securing the border.

The Northeast region with 99 per cent of its boundary being international border, the problems and peculiarities are even more accentuated. The region consists of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim. The region is located between latitudes 290 and 220 North and longitudes about 89.46 and 97.5/ East. The region is covering an area of 262185 sq. km, which is nearly 8 per cent of the total geographical area of the country. The region has a population of 389.84 lakh that is 3.79 per cent of the total population of India. The region has a vast coverage of forest nearly 55 per cent of the total geographical area. The States of the region are surrounded by China, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Bhutan. In fact, the region has a long international border of (5182 km), which is more than 99 percent of its total geographical boundary. These States have international border with China (1395 km), Bhutan (455 km), Myanmar (1640 km), Bangladesh (1596 km) and Nepal (97 km). On the other hand the region is connected with the mainland India through a very narrow strip of land with the width of about 22 km called 'chicken neck'. The region is best known for its picturesque topography, cultural heritage, ethnic beauty and rich natural resources. The region has rich bio diversity, oil and natural gas, coal, limestone, hydro potential and forest wealth. Given the peculiar geopolitical location, the region can develop cross-border markets, which are likely to be more cost effective for North East India’s surplus production than the distant national markets. The region is famous for its exotic flora and fauna. It is ideally situated to produce spices, fruit & vegetables, flowers and herbs. Therefore, the North East India can emerge as an exporter of orchids, flowers, apple, orange, pineapples, spices, herbs, etc. to the South East Asian Region. The vast array of aromatic plants of the region can be used in aromatic industry for the manufacture of perfumes, incenses, etc. Rich bio-diversity, heritage sites & ethnic beauty can make it a destination for the tourists. Several big & small rivers flowing across this region are suitable to construct
hydro projects to generate electricity. Moreover, owing to climatic advantage the region can also be a major producer and exporter of tea.  

In spite of resourcefulness the entire region is regarded as underdeveloped. The remoteness, difficult terrain, infrastructural bottlenecks and unfriendly neighbors are the serious impediments of the development of the region. Being a border area, the region is suffering from specific problems like illegal cross-border movements, law and order, security, insurgency, smuggling etc.

In this age of globalization and increased international cooperation, however, border areas also signify some new opportunities. Such opportunities are believed to be immense for Northeast India due to its geographical proximity to the prosperous East and Southeast Asian economies. However preparing the region to exploit such opportunities also first requires investment in the necessary infrastructure.

While the need for additional resources for states with international border may be easily understood, the fixation of quantum of such additional resource flows needs further investigation and estimation. Accordingly a comprehensive study of the border areas of the country falling in the Northeast region is made under the sponsorship of the Thirteenth Finance Commission (TFC) of Government of India.

The topography, accessibility, climate, altitude, population density, ethnicity, levels of development, the relationships with the border countries etc. of the entire border region of the North East widely vary. Therefore, the development strategy for different border segments will be different. For example, the development strategy of border areas of Arunachal Pradesh with China will be different from Assam’s border with Bangladesh. Besides the problems of development, different border segments have different social problems such as incursion, infiltration, migration, smuggling, drug trafficking, AIDS etc. Therefore, different segments of border have been studied by different research teams, which have been presented in this report in consolidated form.

141 Prof. J.K. Gogoi, Prof. H. Goswami, Prof. K. C. Borah, "Problems of Border Areas in North East India: Implications for Thirteenth Finance Commission", (research project report), Department of Economics, Dibrugarh University
The ministry of home affairs (MHA) has described the 1643 km long India-Myanmar border, which facilitates cross-border movement of militants, illegal arms and drugs, as 'extremely porous.' "The border (Indo-Myanmar) permits free movement regime up to 16 km across the border. This makes the International Border extremely porous. The border runs along hilly and inhospitable terrain which grossly lacks basic infrastructure and provides cover to the activities of various Indian Insurgent Groups (IIGs). The unfenced India-Myanmar border with free movement regime is thus being exploited by various Indian Insurgent Groups (IIGs)," said an MHA report.

Cannabis herbs, ganja and banned pseudoephedrine tablets are regularly seized by Assam Rifles personnel and Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) officials while they are being smuggled to Myanmar. The entire border length touches Arunachal Pradesh (520 km), Nagaland (215 km), Manipur (398 km) and Mizoram (510 km).

The MHA report added that Assam Rifles has been deployed for counter-insurgency and border guarding role on this stretch of the border. "Out of the sanctioned strength of 46 battalions, 31 are for counter-insurgency operations and 15 for border guarding role. At present, all 15 border guarding battalions are deployed along the Indo-Myanmar border. The companies are deployed on all routes of ingress/egress and are checking infiltration, smuggling of arms, ammunition, drugs and fake Indian currency notes," it said.

To check increased militant activities on the border, the Centre has taken steps to fence the area, approximately 10 km, and has given administrative approval of Rs 30.96 crore for fencing work. Clearance from the Supreme Court and the ministry of environment and forests has been also been obtained and a compensation of Rs 503.68 lakh paid to the Manipur government for acquiring land.\textsuperscript{142}

\textsuperscript{142} http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-10-31/guwahati/43558678_1_indo-myanmar-border-international-border-mha
In a major decision, government has decided to replace the Assam Rifles (AR) with BSF for guarding the porous Indo-Myanmar border notorious for movement of insurgents and smuggling of arms and narcotics. The decision in this regard was recently taken by the Ministry of Home Affairs and a Cabinet note will be soon prepared to be sent for final approval by the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), country's highest decision making body on security related issues.

"An in-principle decision has been taken to hand over the security duties on Myanmar border to us," BSF chief Subhash Joshi told news agencies.

The decision will entail an expenditure of crores of rupees for the BSF which has been approved by the Finance Ministry.

Apart from the new responsibility of guarding the Indo-Myanmar border, the Border Security Force (BSF) is at present deployed on the frontiers with Pakistan and Bangladesh. According to the blueprint prepared in this regard, at least 40,000 BSF personnel will be deployed for the porous border.

The AR, sources said, will be inducted into fresh roles to undertake counter-insurgency operations in other theatres. The BSF will start the process of recruiting new manpower for the task after the approval of the CCS headed by Prime Minister. A decision in this regard has been pending for many years after the GoM on Kargil advocated the theory of 'one border, one force'. The new proposal entails the country's
second largest paramilitary force to create posts right on the border as compared to AR posts which are much inside.

India's border with China is guarded by another force ITBP while the borders with Nepal and Bhutan are guarded by the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB). India shares a 1,640 km-long border with Myanmar manned by Assam Rifles, and dense forests in most parts make the boundary porous and vulnerable.

Most of the posts of Assam Rifles are located well inside Indian territory and only a handful of them are located near the zero line, which makes it easier for insurgents camping in Myanmar to sneak into India easily. Assam Rifles was entrusted with the responsibility of guarding the border with Myanmar in 2002 and at that time, the strength of the force was 30 battalions (1000 personnel in each battalion). Gradually, the strength of the force, which draws its strength from the Army, has been increased to 46 battalions. 20 more battalions are in the process of being raised by the force, which is the country's oldest paramilitary popularly called the 'Cachar Levy'.

2. Problem of Insurgency in North-East

Since India’s independence Northeastern region of India has been witnessing episodes of secessionist and insurgency related violence and conflict. The problem has become more complex, as the region is inhabited by people belonging to different racial stock, speak different languages and have varied socio-cultural tradition. These people are now fighting for the same geographical space to protect and preserve their identity and culture. Illegal immigration from neighbouring countries, especially from Bangladesh has aggravated the problem as it has reduced the number of indigenous people to minority in some parts of the region. Though the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India has become an important tool to provide special protection to indigenous people in Northeastern states, the problem lies in the fact that many of these ethnic groups do not live in distinct areas and their demand for ethnic homeland

often overlap with other groups. As a result their demand for ethnic homelands has led to conflict and in turn internal displacement.

The strategic region of northeast India covers an area of 2,53,000 sq. kilometers, comprising of states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Sikkim. The region share international border with China, Tibet, Bhutan, Burma and Bangladesh and is connected to the rest of India by a 13 to 14 kilometers narrow passage known as ‘Siliguri Neck’. Naxalbari district of this region was the site of an armed uprising in 1967 by ultra-leftist now known as Naxalites. The Chinese ‘People’s Daily’ hailed this uprising as ‘Spring Thunder’ over India.144 So it must not be forgotten that they had the support of China. This uprising might have been an attempt to block the strategic ‘Siliguri Neck’ and thus cut off the rest of the country. Northeast India is the homeland of large number of ethnic groups who came to the region from different directions at different historical times. These groups belong to the different racial stocks, speak different languages, and have varied socio cultural tradition. As a result the region has become the epicenter of numerous ethnic nationalities. Especially the society in the hills of Northeast region reflects high degree of diversity as each community living therein has its distinct characteristics.

According to the ‘People of India’ project sponsored by Anthropological Survey of India out of 5,633 communities living in India 635 are categorized as tribes, of which 231 are residing in India. The project had listed 325 languages of which 175 belonging to the Tibeto-Burman group and Mon-Khmer group are spoken in Northeast India.145

The insurgencies in the North-East are a reflection of its social, cultural, ethnic and politico-economic milieu and changes in the environment of the area. North-East is an extremely heterogeneous region with high level of ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity. This is reflected in the pattern of conflicts, which are varied in their nature and causes and the stance of the insurgent groups which remain divergent

144 ‘Spring Thunder Breaks over India’; Editorial, ‘people’s Daily’, 5 july 1967
and ever changing. These range from secession to autonomy, movements against foreigners and immigrants, ethnic integration and looking back to their roots as a reaction to perceived imposition of Indianness, the common factor is resorting to violence in articulation and mobilization for the same. Similarly, political evolution in the North East is influenced by its divergent historical experience, social and cultural diversity and distinctiveness leading to socio-political tensions and instability, which again results in agitational approach to problems and violence. Of these, the recent phenomenon of ethnic mobilization automatically poses a threat to adversaries resulting in a conflict situation. Influx of immigrants poses economic, cultural and social threats and provides a cause for conflict and violence.

The reactive nature of our policies in the North-East has encouraged the belief that agitation and violence only engage attention as our political responses generally followed agitations and insurgency which germinated in Nagaland, spread to Mizoram, Manipur, Tripura and Assam. In addition there are simmerings in Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya. Similarly, our belief that conflicts run their natural course, therefore, confront insurgencies with armed might alone and when militancy weakens, offer negotiations and constitutional concessions that result in accords, is ill founded. These, with the exception of Mizoram have neither put an end to insurgencies nor improved the environment. Instead insurgencies in the North-East have thrived while retaining their low key posture, a peculiarity of the North East. Retrogression of insurgencies has not resulted in its resolution and consolidation of the situation. The insurgent groups have responded to changing situations internally in the politico-social environment and externally in the geo-strategic field to their advantage, whereas the state’s responses have been tardy and disjointed.

The support base of the insurgents has shifted from the rural to the urban areas as this is where the material and financial resources are and Government money being the main source. This has necessitated that their convert presence in population centres must not only be effective but sophisticated to tap diverse sources, both private and Government; contractors and Government department payments are the major targets. Insurgents have learnt by experience that the control of population and subversion accompanied by planned acts of violence and terrorism are rewarding at
minimum cost. The emphasis is on exploiting ethnic bonds to influence events in all fields - political, economic, social and cultural. The same motivates insurgent links and influence with the politicians, bureaucrats and elite in all fields. Insurgency in the North East will continue to thrive while retaining its low key posture, with limited periods of high intensity violence and remaining under control for prolonged periods. Increasing acts of terrorism and subversion and a greater degree of collusion amongst the insurgent groups will be its distinctive features.

The core of insurgents will remain separatist and anti-establishment, and ethnic for support amongst the people. The politician-bureaucrat-elite-insurgent nexus in the North-East particularly in the Hill states, unless checked, will continue to provide support to insurgency to achieve their diverse aims and further intensify deprivation and alienation of the people.

Due to the growing nexus between Pakistan and ISI, the North East insurgents and the Islamic fundamentalists, the dimensions of internal security threats to the region have increased. This needs to be countered on a long-term basis.

The conflicts in the North-East centre around human frustration born out of deprivations of various types primarily in the socio-economic fields with political articulation, possibly with the exception of Nagas which is deep rooted in their feeling of being separate with no political, cultural and economic links with their neighbouring communities. Even this is undergoing a change, while peoples orientation is towards peace, development and economic well being, the NSCN (IM) still articulates the political stance of independence. Meiteis feel deprived as compared to the hill tribes (due to reservations for the tribals) in the economic and employment fields. Similarly, Assamese feel deprived compared to rest of India, as do Bodos compared to the Assamese - primarily in the economic fields. Mizoram feels constrained due to its geographical location and experience of Mautam (famine) in 1959, again basically the cause is economic deprivation. Tribal insurgency in Tripura is as a result of alienation of Tribal land due to Bengali influx resulting in economic and social deprivation.
The deprivation of the people is further accentuated due to extortions, corruption and mal-administration. This is a direct result of our policy of pumping in money when under pressure and to meet the ends of political expediency. Political leaders and bureaucrats have consistently used their offices to siphon off developmental funds at the cost of real development. Corruption power through money and narrow ethnic loyalties have resulted in most of the politicians and insurgents being motivated and propelled by narrow parochial gains. This is the main reason for ethnic cleansing, partisan killings, extortions and criminal activities of smuggling and drug trafficking. Insurgency in the North East has become an industry in which main motive is profit for the people in power both through the ballet and the bullet. The situation is made worse by total lack of governance and state apparatus being high jacked for parochial gains. The situation in Nagaland, Manipur and Tripura is precarious.

For the past several decades the Northeast has received a continuous flow of economic migrants from neighbouring countries and as a result of that in the states like Tripura and Assam demographic imbalance has been tilting against indigenous population. The waves of refugees and migrants not only causing demographic change but also displace the indigenous population from their ancestral land. In such cases displacement generally takes place quietly without direct conflict but when indigenous people realizes the danger to their existence, they begin to express their grievances through mass protest and social movement and only then the displacement drew public attention. This had happened in the states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura and Meghalaya.\(^{146}\)

The north-east region is hilly and its terrain is most suitable for insurgent activities. The tribal inhabitants of this region have to work hard to earn their daily bread. Large scale immigration from Bangladesh and other states or country created problem for them. The progress and development in the region changed the tribal way of life. All these elements made some of the tribes susceptible to Chinese and Pakistani attempts to invoke separatist tendencies. China and Bangladesh are

\(^{146}\text{Dutta, S. K., "Birth of a Problem in Blisters on their Feet", 2008, Sage Publication, New Delhi}\)
providing shelter, training, arms, ammunition and financial help to various organizations to add fuel in the fire.\textsuperscript{147}

\textbf{Nagaland} is an oldest theatre of insurgent violence and terrorism on the Indo-Burma Border. One of the most ruthless yet versatile insurgent groups that threaten the Indian Armed forces even now is the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN), established in 1980. In 1963, when Nagaland was formed as a separate state within the Indian Union militants were not satisfied and continued their freedom struggle. In 1975, a section of rebel leaders came out and signed Shillong Accord. Under the accord the militants were asked to accept without condition, the Constitution of India. It irritated leaders like Issac Swu and T. Muivah, who openly denounced the accord and decided to continue their struggle. By aligning with S. S. Khaplang a leader of Kanyak Nagas the two radical leaders formed the National Council of Nagaland (NSCN) in 1980. But NSCN suffered a jolt in 1988 when the organization was split into two factions one led by Swu and Muivah and the other by Khaplang. The NSCN militants levy underground taxes on local businesses and politicians and then collect them on a monthly basis. This system has been on ever since the Independence of India in 1947 and the local people seem to be getting used to a parallel government running underground. It killed a Manipur Pradesh Congress (I) leader on 15 August 1983.

In the middle of 1992, conflict between Nagas and Kukis resulted in wanton killing, kidnapping, and burning and destruction of houses. Conflict had forced the common people to flee from their original place settlement. A large number of people affected by ethnic clashes moved to villages and towns where there is some sense of security and more economic opportunities leading to significant change in demography in the hills districts of the state. As a result of that, population in the state’s least populated district of Chandel, that had only 71,014 as per 1991 census jumped to 1,18327, in 2001 census.\textsuperscript{148}

\textsuperscript{147} Kaul, T. N., "North-East: Genesis of Problem Feature", Northern India Patrika, 1 February 1981.

Naga-Kuki clash was followed by Meities and Pangal clash in 1993. The last in the series was the Paite-Kuki clash in Churachandpur district of the state. A number of factors are responsible for the outbreak of the clash. There was an disagreement between Kukis and Paites over the acceptance of the term to be used as the common nomenclature to describe all the Kuki-Chin-Mizo group of tribes in the state. Another important factor which contribute to the Kuki-Paite clash was the fact that the Kukis and Zomis including Paites are at loggerhead over the issue of Kuki homeland taxes and fees. The third reason was that the Paites always wanted to rename Churachandpur as Lamka, which was opposed by Kukis. The Paites killed 210 Kukis in clashes and lost 298 of their own tribesmen. Three thousand houses in 47 villages were destroyed and 22,000 Kukis and Paites displaced.149

In the year 1997, when Government of India concluded a ceasefire agreement with Muivah faction of NSCN to extend ceasefire agreement to all Naga areas in the Northeast, it was met with violent protest in Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. The ceasefire agreement was seen as a step towards the establishment of a greater Naga state, which could infringe on the territory of the neighbouring states. Some 5,000 Nagas, fearing revenge attack fled the Imphal valley in Manipur to Naga dominated districts in Manipur and Nagaland.150 The riot forced the Indian Government to reverse its decision, and limit the ceasefire to Nagaland only.

In Manipur, trouble started in 1968 with the formation of the Revolutionary Government of Manipur (RGM). In 1977 People’s Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) was formed. Many activists of these groups were trained in Lhasa. In 1960 these groups also staged a terror campaign to oust ‘Mayangs’ or outsiders. The army not only brought situation under control but also helped civil authorities in rehabilitation measures.151 Of all the states in the North East that have been affected by insurgency related violence, Manipur is by far the most adversely affected. The population of the state is merely 2 million people out of which at least 10,000 youth are involved with either of the above mentioned insurgent groups. The government

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151 ‘About 1000 Rebels Still in Manipur’, PTI news, NIP, 28 September 1980
buildings and offices have seen the worst of the anger of the people, which have been frequently burned down in protests and strikes. While human rights violation by the Armed Forces personnel remains a major problem in the state, yet another issue here is that the groups themselves have internal rivalry sometimes leading up to small scale internal conflicts.\textsuperscript{152}

\textbf{Mizoram}, tension stared in 1997 between Mizos and Reang community presently known as Bru which is the second largest, because they demanded autonomy within Mizoram. Mizos consider it as an attempt to fragment the Mizo state and became very emotional. To counter such demands of minority tribal groups Mizos branded them as outsiders. All sorts of attempts were made to nullify their claims like deleting their names from the voter’s list, questioning the census report. According to Bru leaders, their cultural practices were obstructed and they are forced to adopt Mizo language. Despite their having native language Kokborok they are forced to accept Mizo language as medium of instruction. Bru leaders also alleged that the names of about 20,000 Reangs were deleted from the electoral rolls.\textsuperscript{153}

In 1997 Mizos had reportedly unleashed a wave of terror against the minority Reangs. As many as 35,000 to 50,000 people belonging to Reang tribe crossed over from Mizoram to Tripura following atrocities committed against them allegedly by Mizo tribes (Ali S. S., The Reang Refugees, 1998). The Reang women were raped and men were beaten up and killed. The Reang militant group, which calls itself the Bru National Front (BNLF) started attacking Mizoram police and that further provoked the Mizos to commit atrocities on Reangs. The Tripura Government says that 30,690 Reangs belonging to 6,859 families have fled into Tripura during the period of three years. But the Mizoram Government refuses to accept them. According to Mizoram government Tripura government has not given details of


residence of 10,435 people belonging to 2,075 families. Therefore, their claim to be residents of Mizoram is untenable.\textsuperscript{154}

In Mizoram there are various causes of growth of insurgency i.e. exploitation by chiefs, poverty, economic imbalance, poor communication, lack of contact between government and people, long history of neglect, corruption, nepotism and non-participation in the process of development alienated the people from the ruling elites. Further differences in culture, language, religion, habit etc. also contributed towards the growth of insurgency.\textsuperscript{155}

Immediately after the outbreak of insurgency in Mizoram, the Government of India launched a counter insurgency operation both by land and air. During the operation houses were burnt and demolished, men were arrested and tortured. As a result, many Mezos had to leave Mizoram and taken shelter in neighbouring states like Manipur and Meghalaya. Magnitude of internal displacement during the period of insurgency was so much that at one time Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram was almost empty. But this was not for a long period. Majority of Mizo families who fled to Manipur and Meghalaya came back to Mizoram after staying there for some years. But some of them did not go back to Mizoram and staying there till today.\textsuperscript{156}

One of the biggest causes of internal displacement in Mizoram during the period of insurgency is the grouping of villages. Nearly 45,000 Mizos from 109 villages were herded into 18 group centre guarded by military in the first phase of grouping. In the second phase another 87,000 Mizos were grouped in 84 regrouping centers. Almost half of the population of Mizo hills was affected by displacement engineered by army. However, the final phase of displacement could not be carried out due to stay order issued by the Gauhati High Court.\textsuperscript{157}

\textsuperscript{154} Bhaumik, S., "India's Northeast Nobody's People in No-man's Land in Internal Displacement in South Asia", 2005, Sage Publication, New Delhi
\textsuperscript{156} Lianzela, "Internally Displaced Persons in Mizoram in C.J. Thomas's Dimensions of Displaced People in North-East India", 2002, Regency Publication, New Delhi
\textsuperscript{157} Bhaumik, S., "India's Northeast Nobody's People in No-man's Land in Internal Displacement in South Asia", 2005, Sage Publication, New Delhi

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Tripura experienced the first spate of violence on 15 October 1949 when it was merged into India, perpetuated by the secret group ‘Sangrak’. This group was revived in 1967 but after the army action it again dispersed. In 1971 ‘Tripursena’ was formed by dissolving ‘Sangrak’ and in 1978 ‘Tribal Volunteer Force’ (TNV) was formed. TNV organized the indiscriminate killing of non-tribes in June 1980. In October 1982, they raided a police station and looted 18 rifles. In December of the same year they attacked a section of panchyats. In 1982 another terrorist group ‘All Tripura People’s Liberation Organization, (ATPLO) was seen. The National Liberation front of Tripura (NLFT) have been the major perpetrators of violence in the remote North east Indian state of Tripura, which shares its borders with Bangladesh in the north, west and south. The state government reported that the Baptist churches in the state were involved in providing financial support as well as providing arms supply for to NLFT. The situation was further complicated as the news agencies around the state discovered that the incentive of such forced conversions was in-fact a constant flow of clean cash.

The continuous influx of Bengali people from Bangladesh intensified the progressive alienation of tribal lands and traditional forest rights. As the Bengali migrants practiced relatively advanced pattern of wet-rice cultivation compared to the age-old jhum cultivation. There were large scale transfers of cultivable land of the tribal people to the Bengali migrants. Almost all writers on Tripura insurgency have identified land alienation amongst the tribal people as the major cause that had fuelled the violent insurgency in the state. In settled agricultural areas like Khowai and Sadar, 20% to 40% of the tribal lands have been alienated by the end of seventies, when tribal insurgency gathered momentum. In some parts of south Tripura district, as much as sixty per cent of the tribal lands were sold in distress conditions as sequel to an unequal economic completion with the Bengali settlers.

158 'Tripura on Fire’; Editorial, Times of India, 13 June 1980.
159 Banerjee, Sivadas, ‘Rebels’ Activities cause concern in Tripura’, Times of India, 31 December 1982
161 Bhauamik, S., “India’s Northeast Nobody’s People in No-man’s Land in Internal Displacement in South Asia”, 2005, Sage Publication, New Delhi
Troubles in Assam started in 1979 with the current phase of agitation over the foreigner's issue. Initially the agitation was peaceful but gradually as the momentum of the agitation transformed into violent incidents. Bombs were being exploded on oil pipe lines, railway lines, railway stations and in public places killing 16 people at Gwahati railway station. In selective and indiscriminate terrorism hundreds of people have been killed including the commissioner of Upper Assam Division on April 6, 1981. For the first time a terrorist group ‘People’s Liberation Army of Assam’ (PLAA) came to notice on 3 March 1983 with the arrest of its commander Abon Bazbaruch. The most notorious of group hailing from Assam is the banned organization called the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA). This group too sprung up during the same time in Assam, when the people were made to wake up to the harsh realities of division and neglect. The government of India banned it in 1990 and declared it to be a terrorist group. They have been known to have been operating training camps and shelters in the Indo-Bhutan border areas where thick tropical rain forests make it difficult for the armed forces to tackle. Way back in 1984, ULFA was reported to have been training its cadres well along side with NSCN cadres at training camps organized by the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) in Myanmar along the Indo-Myanmar border. The MNF, NSCN, PNA, TNV and ATPLO have established links with Burmee insurgent groups – Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and Arkan National Liberation Front (ANLF). The ULFA has claimed responsibility for bombing of economic targets like crude oil pipelines, freight trains and government buildings, also claiming that the motive behind is not to let further exploitation of resources of the region.

One of the unique features of the state of Meghalaya is that majority of tribal population follows matriarchal system where lineage and heritage traced through women. The non-tribal communities in Meghalaya made up of migrants from other parts of India and recent migrants from neighbouring countries particularly Nepal and Bangladesh. The Khasi and Garo hills fall under the Sixth Schedule of the

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162 Assam, ‘Foreigner’s Issue; India Backgrounder’, Vol. VV, No. 2 (201), April 7, 1980, p.p. 2174
163 ‘Commander of PLA Arrested in Tezpur’, UNI news, Times of India, 15 March 1983
164 Nirmal Nibedan, ‘Border Rebel is not a Spent Force’, NIP, 13 December 1980
Constitution of India that provides for establishment of autonomous district council to enforce customary law, use of land as well as reservation in Parliament, educational institutions and government employment. There are mainly two militant organizations operating in the state. Hynniewtreps Achick Liberation Council (HNLC), Achik National Volunteer Council (ANVC) are the two most prominent militant groups in the state. The HNLC aims to transform Meghalaya into a state exclusively for the Khasi tribe, which it claims long been dominated by Garos. On the other hand ANVC founded in 1995 demands ‘Achik Land’ in the areas of Garo hills comprising the present districts of Garo hills in Meghalaya and large chunk of Kamrup and Goalpara districts of Assam. Other political groups such as Hills State People’s Democratic Party (HSPDP) fight for the self-governance of the Khasi Pnar and Garo people. The Garo National Council (GNC) is an independent separatist organization, which demands a Garo state comprising of three districts of Garo hills in the state.  

It has to be noted here that unlike some of the states in the Northeast which have been passing through violent insurgencies, Meghalaya has not yet experienced a full blown insurgency but large scale exodus of Bengali and Nepali people had taken place on several occasions.

Since late eighties numerous cycles of ethnic cleansing rocked the state and people belonging to Nepali, Bengali, Bihari and Marwari communities became the target of the attack. In the 1990s Bengalis remained the prime target of the ethnic violence. The pattern was repeated at regular intervals mostly before or during the main Bengali Hindu festival of ‘Durga Puja’. Unlike Tripura or Assam, only about 50 people had died in these attacks, but that was scary enough to trigger a Bengali exodus. Since the early 1980s, an estimated 25,000-35,000 Bengalis have left Meghalaya to other parts of India especially to West Bengal. In 1981, there were 119,571 Bengalis in Meghalaya—8.13 per cent of the state’s population. Ten years later in 1991 it stood at 5.97 per cent of population (UNHCR).

Ethnic conflict between Rabha and Garo communities in December 2010 and January 2011 displaced tens of thousands of people in Assam’s Goalpara district and adjoining East Garo Hills district of Meghalaya. During the conflict ten people had

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been killed and more than 50,000 persons displaced from both communities. Conflict between the two groups took place because of tension between the two communities over the legislative and executive status of the Rabha dominated Rabha Hajong Autonomous Council.

**The main insurgent groups operating in the North-East are as under:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the outfit and date of origin</th>
<th>Name of the leaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) - 7th April, 1979</td>
<td>Paresh Barua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB) - 3rd October, 1986</td>
<td>Dhiren Boro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDFB (Songbijit)</td>
<td>Songbijit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDFB (RD) Group</td>
<td>Ranjan Daimary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) - 1980</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF) - 1993</td>
<td>Ranjit Debbarma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) - June 1989</td>
<td>Biswa Mohan Debbarma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meitei Extremist Organisation of Manipur (26.10.1979)</td>
<td>R.K. Meghen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s Liberation Army (PLA)/Revolutionary People’s Front (RPF)</td>
<td>Irengbam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United National Liberation Front (UNLF)</td>
<td>Chaoren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK)</td>
<td>N.Oken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factions of Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP)</td>
<td>Ng. Babu Meitei, Pambei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanglei Yaol Kanba Lup (KYKL)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipur People’s Liberation Front (MPLF)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC) - 1992</td>
<td>Bobby Marwein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garo National Army (GNLA) of Meghalaya – October, 2010</td>
<td>Christerfeild Thangkiew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Champion Sangma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sohan D. Shira</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above outfits are secessionists and extortionists who indulge in illegal and unlawful activities like abduction, extortions, killings (of innocent people as well as security personnel), recruitment and training of cadres, keeping camps illegally across the border, prevention of developmental activities, conducting explosions and attacking infrastructural installations.  

3. **Illegal trafficking promotes Economic Imbalance**

Continuing terrorist actions and violent demonstrations over the last five decades have turned India's Northeast into a dangerous place. Large-scale introduction of narcotics and arms from neighboring Myanmar (Burma) and China has made this strategically crucial area a potential theater of violent secessionist movements. To fund their movements, both the ULFA and the BdSF have been trafficking heroin and other narcotics, and indulging in killing sprees against other ethnic groups and against Delhi's law-and-order machinery. Both these groups have also developed close links with other major guerrilla-terrorist groups operating in the area, including the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Muivah) and the People's Liberation Army in Manipur.

Dimensions of **drug trafficking** and **narco-terrorism** extend much beyond trafficking and smuggling. It undermines financial security of India by generating black money, hawala transactions, money laundering and above all existence of large cash economy enables cross border terrorist activities. The Golden triangle produces over 1000 tons of opium which is refined into very high grade heroin. Very little of it is seized in the North East due to ineffective surveillance and enforcement. A clear indicator of the likely illegal narcotic trade in the North East is the high incidence of drug addition and abuse in Manipur, Mizoram, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Similarly, open Indo-Nepal border is the main source of Hashish.

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166 [http://mha.nic.in/northeast_new](http://mha.nic.in/northeast_new)

167 Ramtanu Maitra and Susan Maitra, "Northeast India: Target of British apartheid"
The process of money laundering helps in delinking the tainted money from any association with its criminal origin and long chain of transactions renders it impossible to locate the original source. Money is then pushed through banking channels by way of gifts, donations and trade accounts. This also helps in tax evasion and is well manipulated by professional facilitators like chartered accountants, auditors, lawyers and traders. Since bulk of service sector (almost 50% of GNP) is prone to tax evasion, it facilitates laundering of black money. Hawala with its ease, speed and anonymity has made it attractive even to the migrants due to tedious procedures and delays in our banking system. Money laundering, income tax evasion and hawala are complimentary to each other.

Drug money acquired from shipments abroad by the ISI and its cohorts collected from drug pushing cartels is launched through various placements and made available to its underworld links in Gulf and other countries, from where it moves through banking and other channels to Islamic fundamentalist organisations over the entire country. Unless our Foreign Exchange management, Narcotic Control and money laundering regimes are made more sensitive to the threat, the effect of narco terrorism will not be checked. Similarly, our enforcement of Visa regime applicable to Pakistan visitors needs a fresh appraisal as a larger number of Pakistani visitors do not return and remain untraced, which helps Pakistani designs.