

Survey of Conflicts & Resolution in India's Northeast[?]

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India's Northeast is the location of the earliest and longest lasting insurgency in the country, in Nagaland, where separatist violence commenced in 1952, as well as of a multiplicity of more recent conflicts that have proliferated, especially since the late 1970s. Every State in the region is currently affected by insurgent and terrorist violence,¹ and four of these – Assam, Manipur, Nagaland and Tripura – witness scales of conflict that can be categorised as low intensity wars, defined as conflicts in which fatalities are over 100 but less than 1000 per annum. While there

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¹ Within the context of conflicts in the Northeast, it is not useful to narrowly define 'insurgency' or 'terrorism', as anti-state groups in the region mix in a wide range of patterns of violence that target both the state's agencies as well as civilians. Such violence, moreover, meshes indistinguishably with a wide range of purely criminal actions, including drug-running and abduction on an organised scale. Both the terms – terrorism and insurgency – are, consequently, used in this paper, as neither is sufficient or accurate on its own.

have been several governmental peace initiatives, multi-track diplomacy and Non-governmental Organisations (NGO) peace activities are at an incipient stage. Governmental policies do not encourage international interventions – direct or indirect – in any conflict resolution processes, though mediated developmental interventions are sanctioned.

The Region

Seven States comprise India's Northeast: Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura.² These States cover a combined area of over 255,088 sq. km. (7.7 per cent of the country's territory) and, according to the 2001 Census of India, a population of 38,495,089 persons (3.74 per cent of national population). The region is characterised by extraordinary ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity, with more than 160 Scheduled Tribes³ belonging to five different ethnic groups, and a large and diverse non-tribal population as well. The 'scheduled tribes' only refer to the tribes listed in the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, and do not reflect the actual complexity of the ethnic mosaic of the region, which comprehends over 400 distinct tribal and sub-tribal groupings.

Contrary to widespread perception, however, the tribal population of the region constitutes only about 30 per cent of the total population, though the distribution is skewed. While the 'non-tribals' dominate Assam and Tripura, over 60 per cent of the population of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland is drawn from the Scheduled Tribes.⁴

² The identity of an eighth State, Sikkim, is progressively being subsumed within the region. A bill was introduced in the Rajya Sabha (Upper House of Parliament) on December 8, 1998, to include Sikkim in the North East Council. In the budget speech, 1998-99, the finance minister stated that the government confirmed the proposed restructuring of the NEC (www.expressindia.com/budget98/speech.htm), and the Cabinet subsequently passed the proposal for restructuring. The legislative process to effect the necessary changes is, however, yet to be completed.

³ These are the unique tribes or tribal communities that are recognised under Article 342 of the Indian Constitution. A very large variety of sub-tribal distinctions add to the diversity of the region.

⁴ See North East Development Finance Corporation Ltd., NER Databank, North East India, General Information.
http://databank.nedfi.com/content.php?menu=1003&page_id=356

The dichotomy between the ‘hills people’ and the ‘plains people’ has been a persistent feature of the life of the Northeast and Robbins Burling, in the context of ‘undivided Assam’ – which comprised most of what is India’s Northeast today – comments on the presence of ‘a minority of tribal mountaineers’ who could be distinguished from the ‘lowland majority.’ Nevertheless, as one group of researchers observes, the people of the hills and of the plains or valleys are radically different but have always been interconnected.

Indeed, the Northeast has been an area of great and continuous civilisational intercourse through history, and has been thought of as “a gateway of commerce and culture that linked India overland to east and Southeast Asia”, and a “complex transition zone of linguistic, racial and religious streams.”⁵ The ‘indigenous tribes’ of the Northeast represent successive waves of migrants, both from East and West, with many entering the region as late as the 19th Century. The cultural mosaic was made more complex as a result of the British policy of ‘importing’ large numbers of administrators, plantation workers and cultivators from other parts of India.

However, this historical ‘connectedness’ was systematically undermined by the British policies of progressive segregation of tribal populations into virtual ‘reservations’ called ‘non-regulated’, ‘backward’ or ‘excluded’ areas that were administered under a succession of unique provisions between the years 1874 and 1935. These provisions excluded the tribal areas from the pattern of administration that prevailed in the rest of British India, from the operation of the codes of civil and criminal procedures and a wide range of laws that were thought to be unsuitable to the ‘stage of development’ of the populations of the hill areas of the Northeast, as well as from the gradual ‘democratisation’ that was taking place through the nationalist and eventually the Independence movement. An ‘Inner Line’ system that prohibited access to these areas to all ‘outsiders’, except those who obtained special permission from the government, created “a frontier

⁵ B.G. Verghese, *India’s Northeast Resurgent: Ethnicity, Insurgency, Governance, Development*, New Delhi: Konark Publishers, 1996, p. 1.

within a frontier', accentuating the political and cultural schism between the tribal areas and the plains.

Regrettably, such isolationist policies persisted in the post-Independence period under the mistaken motives of 'protecting' the tribal population against exploitation by 'outsiders'. The cumulative impact of these policies was a deepening of fissures between tribal and non-tribal populations, as well as a contrived and unsustainable exclusion of these regions from the processes of modernisation and democratisation. Inevitably, with the progressive and natural erosion of these artificial barriers, the local populations were brought into increasing friction with migrant populations that were far better adapted to the institutions and processes of the modern world, giving rise to a proliferation of conflicts throughout the region.

The dichotomous administrative system both in the pre-and the post-Independence era, also produced wide variations between the pace of development in the hills and the plains, with the latter dominating the economic profile of the region, and the tribal areas lagging far behind. It is the wide swathe of the Brahmaputra Valley – comprising nearly 22 per cent of the region – that has long been the most economically active, with substantial plantation and industrial estates and reasonable infrastructure.

For much of the British period, undivided Assam was thought of as the "north-east frontier of Bengal", and its economy and politics were largely dictated from and linked to this westerly direction. Partition was, consequently, an extraordinary disaster for the Northeast in particular: the separation of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) resulted in the abrupt severance of inland water, road and railway communications, as well as the loss of access to the Chittagong port, crippling crucial economic linkages and driving up costs of all commodities. Partition also brought with it unceasing waves of unwanted migration that disrupted, and continue to disturb, existing demographic equations. It was shortly followed by the Chinese takeover of Tibet and the increasing 'hardening' of the previously 'soft borders' with Burma/Myanmar, sealing off the region in the Easterly direction as well. B.G. Verghese sums up the cumulative impact of the chain that commenced with the cataclysmic events of 1947:

The physical and psychological severity of the blow was not fully appreciated in the country and the disruption of communications and markets was not repaired soon enough, nor infrastructure developed to match the new needs completed as expeditiously as necessary. Isolated and traumatised, the Northeast turned inward. A succession of insurgencies and movements to seek separation or autonomy, assert identity or exclude foreigners and outsiders aggravated the hiatus, with the rest of the country coming to think of the Northeast with disinterest as a far-away place, perpetually troubled. Beset with its own internal problems and complexes, the Northeast fell behind economically and despite its inherent wealth remains at the bottom of the heap as a conglomeration of seemingly impecunious special category States.

...The political, economic and social consequences of this situation were accentuated by the change of regime in Tibet and the new relationships with China that engendered, and the virtual closure of the hitherto open border with Myanmar (Burma) with insurgencies rampant on both sides...⁶

The Northeast region has critical strategic significance and, as is often remarked, remains tenuously connected with the rest of India through a narrow corridor, the 'chicken's neck' or 'Shiliguri Corridor', in North Bengal, with an approximate width of 33 kilometres on the eastern side and 21 kilometres on the western side.⁷ This constitutes barely one per cent of the boundaries of the region, while the remaining over 99 per cent of its borders are international – with China to the North; Bangladesh to the South West; Bhutan to the North West; and Myanmar to the East.

Widespread conflict marks the region, and Assam, Manipur, Nagaland and Tripura are severely disturbed (See Table 1). In addition, the Tirap and Changlang districts of Arunachal Pradesh

⁶ Ibid, pp. 2, 336-7.

⁷ The corridor comprises Islampur sub-division of Darjeeling district, Jalpaiguri Sadar and Alipurduar sub-divisions of Jalpaiguri district and Toofanganj, Mathabhanga, Coochbehar Sadar, Dinhat and Mekhliganj sub-divisions of Coochbehar district.

witness the spillover effect of insurgencies from the neighbouring States, particularly Nagaland, Assam and Manipur. Meghalaya also grapples with political uncertainties and problems posed by two militant outfits, the Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC)⁸ and the Achik National Volunteer Council (ANVC),⁹ which were banned by the Central government on November 16, 2000. Mizoram has remained largely free from terrorist violence since the political resolution of the insurgency in this State in 1986,¹⁰ but the activities of the Bru National Liberation Front (BNLF) have given cause for concern, and have inflicted some civilian and security force (SF) casualties.

Illegal migration of Bangladeshi nationals into India and the use of Bangladeshi and Bhutanese territory by insurgents operating in India's North East are a grave security concern for the region.

Circumstances in the theatres of conflict in India's Northeast go against the general presumption of a direct and self-evident conflict of interests between the government and its various agencies, on the one hand, and the terrorist groupings, on the other. A complex collusive arrangement between various legitimate power elites and terrorist groupings exists in every single terrorism-affected State, and this arrangement facilitates a continuous transfer of resources into the 'underground economy of terrorism'. In contrast to the common perception of terrorist activity as violent confrontation with the government, there is a more insidious subversion of the established order through a consensual regime against a backdrop of widespread breakdown of law and order, and terrorist groupings have demonstrated their

⁸ For a profile of the HNLC, see South Asia Terrorism Portal; India; Terrorist Groups; Meghalaya; HNLC; www.satp.org.

⁹ For a profile of the ANVC, see South Asia Terrorism Portal; India; Terrorist Groups; Meghalaya; ANVC; www.satp.org.

¹⁰ With the signing of the Mizoram Accord between the Centre and the leader of the Mizo National Front (MNF), Laldenga in June 1986.

Table 1: Fatalities in insurgencies and terrorist conflicts in India's Northeast, 1992-2001

| | | Assam | Manipur | Meghalaya | Mizoram | Nagaland | Tripura | Assam Pradesh | TOTAL | Annual CT |
|------------------|----|-------|---------|-----------|---------|----------|---------|------------------|-------|--------------|
| 1992 | C | 80 | 84 | 0 | 0 | 34 | 59 | 0 | 257 | 492 |
| | SF | 34 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 33 | 18 | 0 | 115 | |
| | M | 19 | 51 | 0 | 0 | 29 | 21 | 0 | 120 | |
| 1993 | C | 74 | 266 | 0 | 0 | 62 | 148 | 1 | 551 | 913 |
| | SF | 24 | 91 | 0 | 0 | 43 | 28 | 2 | 188 | |
| | M | 33 | 66 | 0 | 0 | 68 | 7 | 0 | 174 | |
| 1994 | C | 173 | 189 | 4 | 0 | 110 | 206 | 3 | 685 | 1058 |
| | SF | 35 | 98 | 0 | 0 | 26 | 22 | 0 | 181 | |
| | M | 63 | 63 | 0 | 0 | 56 | 10 | 0 | 192 | |
| 1995 | C | 170 | 183 | 7 | 0 | 80 | 178 | 3 | 621 | 1071 |
| | SF | 73 | 64 | 0 | 0 | 25 | 34 | 0 | 196 | |
| | M | 27 | 74 | 0 | 0 | 108 | 45 | 0 | 254 | |
| 1996 | C | 302 | 117 | 3 | 0 | 144 | 140 | 4 | 710 | 1235 |
| | SF | 87 | 65 | 4 | 4 | 48 | 31 | 1 | 240 | |
| | M | 62 | 93 | 0 | 0 | 112 | 18 | 0 | 285 | |
| 1997 | C | 285 | 233 | 3 | 0 | 104 | 205 | 9 | 839 | 1680 |
| | SF | 85 | 111 | 0 | 0 | 38 | 50 | 1 | 285 | |
| | M | 167 | 151 | 1 | 0 | 218 | 19 | 0 | 556 | |
| 1998 | C | 531 | 87 | 5 | 0 | 26 | 214 | 2 | 865 | 1431 |
| | SF | 72 | 62 | 14 | 0 | 14 | 25 | 2 | 189 | |
| | M | 180 | 95 | 1 | 0 | 72 | 26 | 3 | 377 | |
| 1999 | C | 214 | 89 | 5 | 2 | 26 | 240 | 2 | 578 | 1216 |
| | SF | 77 | 64 | 17 | 5 | 4 | 41 | 0 | 208 | |
| | M | 212 | 78 | 0 | 0 | 118 | 22 | 0 | 430 | |
| 2000 | C | 366 | 93 | 12 | 4 | 13 | 453 | 7 | 907 | 1701 |
| | SF | 65 | 51 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 16 | 3 | 162 | |
| | M | 327 | 102 | 17 | 1 | 84 | 45 | 24 | 585 | |
| 2001 | C | 2512 | 1411 | 62 | 6 | 624 | 1989 | 72 | 6676 | 1380 |
| | SF | 59 | 25 | 8 | 0 | 2 | 31 | 12 | 137 | |
| | M | 283 | 161 | 8 | 0 | 76 | 42 | 11 | 581 | |
| Total | C | 2459 | 1371 | 63 | 6 | 603 | 2082 | 31 | 6245 | 12181 |
| | SF | 611 | 649 | 50 | 13 | 235 | 296 | 9 | 1833 | |
| | M | 1373 | 830 | 27 | 1 | 882 | 255 | 31 | 3174 | |
| CT State Wise | | 4443 | 3006 | 140 | 23 | 1802 | 2633 | 134 | 12137 | |

Cumulative Total (All Categories) M: Militants; SF: Security Force Personnel; C: Civilians.

preference towards 'systemic corruption', rather than the dismantling or destruction of the prevailing political order.¹¹

A substantial proportion of the current proliferation of armed groups representing various tribal and ethnic identities in the Northeast is the result of the demonstration effect of the 'success' of other such groups in the past. Such 'success' is not necessarily measured in terms of any political gains but, increasingly, in terms of the financial gains of widespread criminal operations that are undertaken by all militant groups in the Northeast (as in other theatres of conflict in India). The collusive character of many of the terrorist movements in the region, in terms of their linkages with overground organisations, legitimate businesses, the State bureaucracy and the political leadership enormously reduces the actual risks of militant activity and also provides secondary incentives for the creation and operation of armed gangs.

Internal conflicts in India's Northeast are overwhelmingly conceptualised within the framework of unique ethnic identities that are threatened by, and in confrontation with, the nationalist state, which is often seen as a representative of an inchoate cultural 'mainstream'. While some of the conflicts in the region certainly fit into this general framework of interpretation, few, if any, are completely explained by it; others, moreover, are entirely unrelated to this reductionist scheme of 'freedom struggles' by ethnic minorities against the 'homogenising state'. Indeed, even where militant groups direct their rhetoric and their violence against the symbols of the state, the underlying motives and ideologies are more correctly interpreted in terms of conflicting tribal identities and histories of internecine warfare based entirely on tribal, sub-tribal, or tribal-outsider rivalries and corresponding competition over limited resources, especially land. It is, consequently, appropriate to analyse and assess conflicts in the Northeast in terms of three basic 'faultlines':

1. Tribal groups vs. the state
2. Tribal vs. tribal (Internecine)
3. Tribal vs. non-tribal

¹¹ See Ajai Sahni, "The Terrorist Economy in India's Northeast: Preliminary Explorations," *Faultlines: Writings on Conflict & Resolution*, vol. 8, New Delhi, April 2001, pp. 127-148.

In any single conflict, moreover, more than one of these elements would tend to overlap, giving rise to complications both of analysis and of resolution. The multiplicity of tribal and sub-tribal groupings in each of the States in the region, and continuous re-alignments between some of these, create further difficulties.

Within such a context, mobilisation of populations along issues relating to exclusionary and conflicting tribal identities has become a basic feature, both of electoral politics and of more extreme movements, across the Northeast region.

With the increasing proliferation and easy availability of small arms and training, and the widespread failure and corruption of the political leadership in the region, increasing polarisation of tribal identities and a mushrooming of 'copycat' militant organisations and movements can be expected in the foreseeable future.

ASSAM

The insurgency that commenced in 1979 has been characterised by escalating violence and a simultaneous erosion of popular support over the past years. Large numbers of cadres have surrendered, and no more than four districts in the State are now seriously afflicted by terrorist activities. Nevertheless, acts of terror continue to inflict significant casualties, as the movements, with vast financial empires at stake, acquire an increasingly criminal character, disengaged from any consistent ideological objectives. The year 2001 saw 606 insurgency-related killings, as against 758 in 2000. In year 2002 the figure stood at 98 by April 30. A large number of militant groups have emerged in the State, and a disturbing trend is the constitution of a number of Muslim fundamentalist militia backed by Pakistan's external intelligence agency, the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI).

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| DATA | |
| Population (2001): | 26,638,407 ¹² |
| Area: | 78,610 sq. km. |
| Rural: | 77,438 sq. km. |
| Urban: | 828 sq. km. |
| Literacy Rate: | 64.28 % |
| Life Expectancy at Birth: | 57.31 years |
| SDP per capita (1996-97): | Rs. 7,335 (provisional) (US\$ 156 approx.) ¹³ |
| Number of Conflict Related Deaths: ¹⁴ | |
| 1992-2000 | 3,837 |
| 2000 | 758 (366 civilians, 327 militants, 65 SF) |
| 2001 | 606 (264 civilians, 283 militants, 59 SF) |
| 2002 (till April 30) | 98 (12 civilians, 84 militants, 2 SF) |

Background

Insurgency in Assam primarily emerged out of one main issue, i.e. the deportation of illegal migrants from Bangladesh (previously East Pakistan). Since India's Partition in 1947, a continuous flow of illegal migrants across the borders has disturbed the local demography and popular sentiments against the 'foreigners' led to a mass movement seeking the detection of illegal immigrants, their deletion from the voters' list and their deportation to Bangladesh. The movement commenced in July 1979 under the leadership of the All Assam Students Union (AASU) and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP). Talks between the Indian government and the agitators broke

¹² *Census of India 2001*, Provisional Figures,

<http://www.censusindia.net/results/provdata.xls>.

¹³ Data on area, life expectancy and per capita SDP, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, <http://mha.nic.in/nen111.htm>.

¹⁴ Source: South Asia Terrorism Portal, www.satp.org.

down over the disagreement regarding the cut-off date for the definition of 'foreigners'. Towards the end of 1979, the agitation took a violent turn despite the promulgation of President's rule in December that year.

The United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) was established on April 7, 1979, at Sibsagar, under the leadership of Paresh Baruah (Chief of Staff) along with Arabinda Rajkhowa (Chairman), Anup Chetia (General Secretary) and Pradeep Gogoi (Vice Chairman, under detention since April 8, 1998). While secession from India was its declared goal, and the leadership made some attempts to distance itself from the popular anti-foreigner plank, the ULFA operated, initially, in close co-ordination with the AASU-AAGSP's agitation. The agitation ended in August 1985, with the signing of the Assam Accord with the Centre, and its leaders formed the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and engaged in electoral politics. From this point on, the political distance between the ULFA and the AGP has grown continuously.

The Bodos, a major tribe and among the earliest settlers in the State, initiated a second stream of insurgency on the issues of the dispossession of their tribal lands by Bengali and Assamese settlers, as well as neglect of the Bodo language and culture. Kokrajhar and parts of the Goalpara districts are the focus of Bodo discontent. The All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) had existed since 1967, but emerged as a potent force under the leadership of Upendranath Brahma only in the 1980s. Towards the latter half of the 1980s, the Bodos started demanding a separate State within India. In 1988, the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) was founded and it initiated a 'guerrilla war'.

The Indian government managed to broker a 'Bodo Accord' in February 1993, and the Bodo Volunteer Force (BVF), the armed wing of the ABSU, laid down arms, paving the way for the establishment of the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC). However, one section of the BVF rejected the Accord and formed the Bodo Liberation Tiger Force (BLTF) [now known as Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT)] in 1996. This organisation remained active in the districts of Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Nalbari, Barpeta, Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang and Dhemaji until its cease-fire

agreement with the Indian government on March 29, 2000. Subsequently, the BLT has continued negotiations with the governments, both the State and the Union for the creation of a Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) comprising the Bodo dominated areas of Lower Assam.

The latter half of the 1990s saw the mushrooming of militant organisations along tribal, religious and cultural fissures. The culture of violence propagated by the ULFA and the Bodo outfits seems to have set a pattern for a number of copycat insurgent groups. Currently, there are as many as 34 insurgent groups listed in the State, though the ULFA is the main player. Among other terrorist outfits, the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT), United People's Democratic Solidarity (UPDS), Dima Halim Daoga (DHD), and Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam (MULTA) are prominent. The NDFB operates in the Bodo-areas of the State and the UPDS dominates the Karbi-Anglong and North Cachar districts. Most of the other groups listed are currently dormant.

Violence in the State has resulted in substantial internal migrations, though no firm estimates of the actual numbers exist.

Conflict Dynamics

The ULFA was dormant in the initial years of its existence, but its activities gained momentum in the latter half of the 1980s. By 1986, it had established contacts with the ISI, with militants from the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN) in the neighbouring State of Nagaland, and with the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) in Myanmar. The ULFA created terror in the State, disrupting communications and hitting various economic targets, abducting prominent businessmen for ransom and killing civilians and government officials. As the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP, the political incarnation of the AASU, which came to power after the Assam Accord in 1985) the government progressively lost control of the situation, the State was brought under President's rule on November 28, 1990, and ULFA was proscribed under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. The Army conducted *Operation Bajrang* between September

1990 and April 1991.¹⁵ Elections were held to the State Legislative Assembly in June 1991, after a measure of normalcy was restored. The AGP was defeated by the Congress-I led by Hiteshwar Saikia, and ULFA resumed its violent campaign. The army launched *Operation Rhino* in September 1991, and subsequent to a number of successes over the following four months, the Saikia government suspended Army operations in January 1992 with the announcement of an amnesty for all militants who were willing to surrender. By March 1992, approximately 4,000 ULFA cadres had surrendered to the authorities.¹⁶

The ULFA, however, proved extremely resilient, acquiring new military hardware and establishing a chain of training camps across the border in Myanmar and later in Bangladesh and Bhutan. In April-May 1995, the Indian and Myanmar armed forces jointly conducted *Operation Golden Bird* along their border.¹⁷

The AGP returned to power in Assam after the May 1996 elections to the State Legislative Assembly. Counter-insurgency operations continued and on January 20, 1997, a Unified Command Structure (UCS) was set up to co-ordinate the functioning of the various forces carrying out operations against the terrorists. Since then, continuous military and para-military operations have considerably weakened the ULFA, driving its entire senior leadership into exile. A disturbing trend, however, is the widening network of extortion, criminal and quasi-legal operations that this leadership-in-exile now commands in Assam. These activities not only fuel and finance militancy, but, more significantly, have had an extremely corrosive and corrupting impact on democratic institutions and structures in the State, with the emergence of an increasingly collusive nexus with

¹⁵ An estimated 209 hardcore militants were arrested during this operation and a large quantity of arms, along with Rs. 48 million in cash – the proceeds of extortion – were also recovered.

¹⁶ During the four months of the Operation, 2,578 hardcore militants were nabbed, along with large quantities of arms and Rs. 780,000 in cash. The army also destroyed 15 ULFA camps.

¹⁷ 50 militants were killed during this operation and huge quantities of arms and ammunition were recovered.

government officials and political leaders. There has also been a continuous process of ‘lumpenisation’ among the rank and file of the ULFA cadres, as growing numbers of common criminals join in the activities of the organisation. Despite significant losses and mass surrenders, ULFA has sustained its activities and continues to find willing recruits to its ranks.

The second half of the year 2000 saw a new dimension being added to the conflict dynamics of Assam, with Hindi speaking non-Assamese people being targeted by terrorists. Thus, 16 persons were killed by suspected ULFA terrorists in two separate incidents in Tinsukia and Dibrugarh districts on October 23, 2000.¹⁸ Another nine were massacred and 12 injured on October 27, 2000, in Nalbari district.¹⁹ On November 16, 2000, 10 members of a non-Assamese community were killed in Sibsagar district at a time when a Parliamentary team of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was on tour to monitor the law and order situation in the State.²⁰ 22 non-Assamese were killed in three separate massacres in Bongaigaon district on November 30, 2000.²¹ On December 7, 2000, 28 Hindi-speaking petty traders and farm workers from the State of Bihar were killed by suspected ULFA terrorists near Sadiya.²² Earlier, on November 8, 2000, eight civilians, including seven of a non-Assamese community, were killed by suspected NDFB terrorists in Barpeta district.²³

The ULFA is presently led by its chairman Arabinda Rajkhowa and ‘commander-in-chief’ Paresh Baruah. Mithinga Daimary is the group’s publicity secretary. The general secretary of the political wing, Anup Chetia, has been under arrest in a Dhaka jail in Bangladesh since 1997. Most of its top leadership operate from the outfit’s Headquarters located in neighbouring Bhutan and Bangladesh. Bhutan alone houses as many as 32 ULFA camps. In October 2001, the Bhutanese government asked

¹⁸ “ULFA militants massacre 16 in Upper Assam”, *The Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, October 24, 2000.

¹⁹ See Time Line 2000, www.axom.faiathweb.com/timeline.

²⁰ See South Asia Terrorism Portal; Countries; India; States; Assam; Timeline 2000; www.satp.org.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

the ULFA and the NDFB to vacate all their camps in the country by December 2001. Earlier, the ULFA had decided to relocate four of its base camps out of Bhutanese territory, after what can be termed as a protracted negotiation process. Subsequent to the December 21, 2000, killing²⁴ of 10 Bhutanese traders in separate incidents in lower Assam's Barpeta district, reportedly by BLT terrorists, the Bhutan government pressured all the terrorist groups, including the ULFA and NDFB, to stop operating from its territory. There were several rounds of talks in May-June 2001, between the Royal Bhutan government and the ULFA, after which the agreement to shift bases was reached. Reports indicate that ULFA has closed down at least four of its camps in Bhutan.²⁵

The demand for Bodoland was first raised by the Bodo Security Force (BSF) in 1988. The Bodos, a major tribe of plainsmen and among the earliest settlers in Assam, have a long history of tensions with the Assamese. The militant Bodo Security Force (BSF), later renamed as the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), came into being in 1988 under the leadership of Ranjan Daimari. The NDFB resorted to violence and terrorism in order to secure an 'independent Bodo nation' north of the river Brahmaputra. A very large proportion of violent activities in the State, including killings, explosions, arson and attacks on police stations have been carried out by the NDFB, which has an estimated strength of about 900 trained militants. It has established a 'working arrangement' with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak Muivah (NSCN-IM). A second terrorist group, the Bodo Liberation Tiger Force (BLTF), originally founded by Prem Singh Brahma and currently headed by its 'Chairman' and 'Commander-in Chief', Hagrama Basumatary and 'Vice-Chairman' Kamal Masahary, has been fighting for a separate State of Bodoland within the Indian Union.

An accord was signed on February 20, 1993, between the Government of India, the Government of Assam and Bodo leaders, creating the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) within Assam. However, since Bodo villages are not contiguous, the demarcation of the jurisdiction of the BAC remained a

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ "ULFA vacates four camps in Bhutan", www.satp.org/satporgrp/detailsmall_news.asp?date1=1/4/2002&id=6.

problem. The BAC, in fact, was eventually dissolved on April 20, 2000, and a 'monitoring committee' of Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) installed in its stead. To address the Bodo issue, renewed efforts are being made. The creation of the BTC has been proposed and negotiations are continuing towards this end. However, no final agreement has been reached yet as regards the boundaries of the BTC²⁶ and the possible amendment to the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, under which its creation has been proposed.²⁷ Progress in this regard has also been marred by the controversy regarding the rights of the non-Bodos inhabiting the proposed BTC areas. The Sanmilita Jangoshthiya Sangram Samiti (SJSS), a co-ordinating body of the various non-Bodo organisations has raised the issue repeatedly, and also called for a broader consultation on the issue.²⁸

Since its initiation, however, both the NDFB and the BLTF have condemned the Bodo Accord, and have, since the mid-1990s, been engaged in a campaign of violence directed against other ethnic groups within 'Bodo areas'. Large-scale attacks were carried out against Santhal tribals in May 1996, displacing tens of thousands of people. A second wave of attacks in May 1998 resulted in further distress migration. The Santhals and other non-Bodo communities have also begun to arm themselves and fight back. This has, in turn, resulted in significant displacement of the Bodo population from areas where they are a minority.

The Bodos are not only involved in conflicts with non-Bodos. Fratricidal clashes between terrorist groups, notably the NDFB and the BLT, have occurred in the past. On December 12,

²⁶ Boundary problem persists as regards the BTC also. As a part of the ongoing negotiations, the February 10, 2002 meeting between the BLT representatives and the State sub-Committee on BTC decided that four districts – three new – would be created to constitute the BTC. Besides Kokrajhar, which is already a district, three new proposed districts are: Chirang, Baska and Udalguri. See, "Finally, Assam to recommend Bodo council to the Centre", *The Indian Express*, February 12, 2002.

²⁷ The amendment is required as the Sixth Schedule mentions special provisions for only the hill areas in the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur and Mizoram. The proposed BTC will also include non-hill areas of the lower Assam.

²⁸ SJSS also protested to press for the same by launching a road and rail blockade in March. See, "36-hour rail and road blockade ends in Assam", *Hindustan Times*, March 11, 2002.

2000, 11 BLT terrorists were killed in an internecine clash with NDFB terrorists in the Barpeta district.²⁹ Similarly, on December 21, 2000, five BLT cadres were killed by NDFB militants in Nalbari district. The NDFB was declared an unlawful association under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 by the Central government on December 21, 2000. On January 16, 2001, in a press release, the NDFB announced its plans for 'selective killings' targeting the rival Bodo groups and social and political organisations such as the BLT, All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU), Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS), Bodo People's Action Committee (BPAC) and the All Bodo Women's Welfare Federation (ABWWF).³⁰ Three BLT cadres were subsequently killed by NDFB activists at Bijni in Assam on January 19, 2001.

Besides the Bodos, Muslim migrants in Assam have also shown signs of incipient militancy. The Muslim United Liberation Front of Assam (one among 15 Muslim militant groups in the State) has raised the demand for a separate State comprising the five border districts in Assam, which now have a Muslim majority.

Other tribal groups that have established militant wings around demands for independent tribal homelands include:

The Dima Halim Daoga (DHD), also referred to as Dima Halong Daoga, is an offshoot of the former Dimasa National Security Force (DNSF), which ceased to exist after a mass surrender in 1995. It was set up by Jewel Garlossa, 'commander-in-chief' of the DNSF who had refused to surrender, with the objective of creating a Dimaraji or 'Dimaland' for the Dimasa tribe, comprising the North Cachar Hills district of the State and some adjoining areas outside Assam. Till 1999, the group was headed by its 'commander-in-chief', Bejoy Nandung.³¹ The DHD has a working arrangement with the NSCN-IM for training and supply of arms. However, the abortive decision of the Union government, on June 14, 2001, to extend the cease-fire with the NSCN-IM 'without territorial limits' created substantial conflict

²⁹ "Bodo rebel groups clash: 11 BLT men killed in Barpeta", *The Assam Tribune*, Guwahati, December 13, 2000.

³⁰ "NDFB 'bans' five Bodo groups, threatens to kill their leaders", *Indian Express*, January 18, 2001.

³¹ Nandung was arrested on July 3, 1999.

potential between the DHD and the NSCN-IM. The projected *Nagalim* or 'Greater Nagaland'³² contains substantial parts of the North Cachar hills, which the DHD sees as part of the 'Dimaland' that they are fighting for. Indeed, tensions rose between the groups and, on July 26, 2001, just a day before the Centre decided to revoke the territorial extension of the Naga cease-fire, the Assam government intensified security arrangements in the districts of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills to prevent group clashes between the NSCN-IM and the DHD over the Naga cease-fire agreement.

The Kamatapur Liberation Organisation (KLO) was formed in 1995 by the Koch-Rajbongshi tribes with the objective of carving out a separate Kamatapur State, comprising six north Bengal districts and Goalpara, Dhubri, Bongaigaon and Kokrajhar districts in lower Assam. KLO operates in tandem with the ULFA. Tushar Das alias Jibon Singha, the 'Chairman' of KLO, was arrested in October 1999. However, he subsequently managed to escape and has taken over the charge of the outfit. The current hierarchy within the organisation is not clear, but leaders at the decision-making levels included Hiten Rai, Ravi Rajbongshi, Rahul Rai and Kajal Rai.

Apart from these prominent terrorist outfits operating in different parts of the State, many splinter groups emerge, operate and decline on a continuous basis. They include the Rabha National Security Force³³ (present in the Goalpara, Bongaigaon

³² The purported objective of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak-Muivah (NSCN-IM) is the establishment of a Nagalim ('Greater Nagaland'), consisting of all the Naga-inhabited areas of the neighbouring States of Assam, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and some portions of Myanmar, which it considers to be the rightful homeland of the Nagas. Slated to be an independent State, the Nagalim lies in the Patkai range between the 930 and 970 East longitude and 23.50 and 28.30 North latitude at the tri-junction of China, India and Myanmar. The proposed Nagalim spreads over approximately 1,20,000 sq. km. in contrast to the present State of Nagaland that has an area of 16,527 sq. km..

³³ Rabha National Security Force (RNSF) was formed by a group of youth belonging to the Rabha tribe to carve out a separate Rabha hasong (Rabhaland), comprising Goalpara, Bongaigaon and Dhubri districts, outside Assam through armed struggle. Although the RNSF is still in a nascent stage it has established close ties with the most active militant outfit of Assam--United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA). Reports indicate that the RNSF is also trying to forge links with other insurgent groups operating in India's Northeast. Jabrang Rabha is the self-styled Commander-in-Chief of RNSF.

and Dhubri districts), Tiwa National Revolutionary Force (TNRF),³⁴ Bengali Tiger Force (BTF), Adivasi Security Force (ASF), People's United Liberation Front (PULF) and Gorkha Tiger Force (GTF).

Official Conflict Resolution

Central intelligence agencies first made an attempt to contact the elusive ULFA leadership in 1989. According to disclosures by ULFA leaders who have since surrendered, these agencies backed the wife of a leading People's Liberation Army (PLA, Manipur State) cadre to establish contact with the ULFA leadership. The PLA cadre was, however, killed as he was returning to Manipur from Burma, and subsequent efforts by his wife failed.

In 1991, Reboti Phukan, a veteran footballer and a distant relative of ULFA 'Chief of Staff' Paresh Baruah, attempted to bring the ULFA and the government together for peace talks, reportedly under the patronage of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). Consequently, in January 1992, a five-member ULFA team led by its general secretary Golap Baruah alias Anup Chetia, was flown by the Assam Police and the Intelligence Bureau (IB) to New Delhi. They held talks with the then Home Minister S.B. Chavan and also had a round of discussions with then Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao. Golap Baruah, who had been arrested by the Calcutta Police a month earlier, was in the custody of the security forces when he was flown to Delhi for talks. Narasimha Rao agreed to call a cease-fire, provided the ULFA promised to shun violence and to find a negotiated political solution to the insurgency. The ULFA team returned to Assam after the government released Baruah to 'seek the opinion of their supporters'. Baruah jumped bail and went underground.

The outfit has a cadre strength of about 120, of whom 40 are being imparted arms training by ULFA along the border of Meghalaya.

³⁴ Tiwa National Revolutionary Front (TNRF), was formed in 1996 in the Nagaon district with the objective of setting up an 'independent Tiwa land' by uniting the Tiwa tribes in the State. The outfit aims to fight against the perceived 'systematic exploitation and repression of the Tiwa community by the Indian state machinery'. Bhogeswar Bordoloi heads the outfit's Central Committee.

In 1998, the Assam government made a fresh attempt to break the deadlock. A lawyer and a senior Assam Police official were sent to London for a scheduled meeting with ULFA 'Chief of Staff' Paresh Baruah and others. News of the initiative was leaked to the local media and the meeting did not take place.

The ULFA has, since 2001, declared that it believes in a solution to its problems through talks and originally placed three preconditions for a possible dialogue with New Delhi: talks outside India; talks under the supervision of the UN; and talks to be centred around their core demand of sovereignty. The previous Chief Minister, Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, had gone on record to declare that he would be ready to relinquish office if that helps bring the ULFA over for talks with New Delhi, and also that his government had no objections if the Centre held talks with the rebels anywhere outside India. In January 2001, the stage appeared to have finally been set for talks. However, conflicting public statements at Guwahati and at New Delhi by a representative of the MHA on the sovereignty issue put the ULFA on the defensive and the initiative collapsed. At this stage, there were some earlier indications of dilution in this stance, and a willingness to drop the first two of these requirements, but the ULFA reiterated the three conditionalities in August 2001, after Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi called upon terrorist outfits to enter into a negotiation process with the government.

Early in March 2001, the State Government had urged the Centre to declare a cease-fire against militant groups in the entire region in order to "make way for peace". After an initial assurance from the Union Minister for Home Affairs that the Centre would "actively consider" such a cease-fire, the option was rejected on the grounds that Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar were carrying out operations against the militants, and these would slow down if India announced a cease-fire.

A new State government, led by Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi was sworn in on May 18, 2001, after elections to the Legislative Assembly swept the Congress-I to power. It was widely expected that Gogoi would define a new and conciliatory approach. Counter-terrorism operations have, however, continued at the same intensity and while the option of negotiated settlement has been reiterated, concrete initiatives are yet to materialise. In a new

twist to the story, ULFA Chairman Arabinda Rajkhowa called for a referendum in the State to decide the issue of sovereignty for which the outfit is fighting.³⁵ On July 27, 2001, in *Swadhinata* (also known as *Freedom*), the ULFA mouthpiece, he stated that the ULFA wanted a 'political solution' and accused the Union government of not taking any 'meaningful step' in that direction. ULFA's position has remained unchanged, since then, as far as dialogue is concerned. On April 7, 2002, its 23rd 'raising day', Rajkhowa reiterated that the government should accept the pre-conditions first, if the talks are to be held.³⁶

In its peace initiatives with the Bodo groups in Assam, however, the government has secured some qualified successes, and the BLT has been engaged in a peace process with the Indian government since 1999. A 'cease-fire agreement' is currently in place, and six meetings between the BLTF representatives and the Government, were held in 1999, with another five held in the year 2000. A fresh round of tripartite talks between the BLT, the Government of Assam and the Union Government took place in New Delhi on July 13, 2001, but was inconclusive.³⁷ Mainao Daimary, Publicity Secretary of the BLT, subsequently issued an ultimatum, demanding a solution to the Bodo problem by September 15, 2001, the day on which the existing cease-fire agreement between the BLTF and the Union government was due to end. The same was extended later till January 2002 and the two parties, while continuing talks on contentious issues have not agreed to a formal extension of the treaty, though a de-facto cease-fire continues to operate between them.³⁸ The NDFB has consistently spurned all such initiatives for negotiated settlements.

A number of schemes for training, support and rehabilitation of surrendered militants also exist to encourage members of such groups to abjure violence and return over-ground. Till March 22,

³⁵ He said, "If a referendum is needed to take a decision on the issue of sovereignty, so be it. Urgently and boldly, fill the air with our slogan-we want independence." See "ULFA calls for referendum in Assam", <http://www.nenanews.com/OT%20Aug.%207%20-%20Aug.%2021.01/NewsbriefC.htm>.

³⁶ See, "ULFA refuses to withdraw pre-conditions for talks", *The Deccan Herald*, Bangalore, April 9, 2002.

³⁷ "Centre, BLT talks remain inconclusive", *Assam Tribune*, July 14, 2001.

³⁸ See South Asia Terrorism Portal; Countries; India; Assam; Assessment 2002; www.satp.org

2001, some 2,500 ULFA and 1,200 NDFB militants had surrendered in Assam under a revised surrender scheme. The experience with surrendered militants has, however, been mixed, and has given rise to the activities of strongly organised criminal groups of former militants in the State.³⁹

The idea of using focused developmental initiatives to create the context of peace has been a constant theme in the Centre's policy on conflict resolution in the Northeast. In 1996, the then Prime Minister, H.D. Deve Gowda, announced a Rs. 61 billion economic package for the Northeast. His successors, I K Gujral and Atal Behari Vajpayee, followed up by increasing the quantum of aid even further. However, these packages have been poorly implemented with actual devolution of funds falling far below the amounts announced, and a very limited 'trickle down' to the intended beneficiaries. The ability of State government agencies to actually implement any development package in the disturbed areas is severely limited.

Civil Society Initiatives

NGO initiatives to resolve the conflict in Assam are limited. At one stage, the State government had urged influential groups such as the AASU, the Asom Sahitya Sabha (ASS – the apex Assamese literary association) and the Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS – the Bodo literary association) to take initiatives at their own level to break the deadlock and prepare grounds for possible talks. The AASU and ASS rejected the initiative, declaring that it was the Government's responsibility to make peace. The BSS did initiate some efforts, but these were abruptly terminated when its president, Bineshwar Brahma, was assassinated in Guwahati on August 19, 2000.⁴⁰

While there is little organised NGO effort to resolve the conflict in Assam, the cold-blooded killing of Hindi-speaking

³⁹ See for instance Ajai Sahni and Bibhu Prasad Routray, "SULFA: Terror by Another Name", *Faultlines: Writings on Conflict and Resolution*, New Delhi, vol. 9, July 2001, pp. 1-37.

⁴⁰ "Bodo Sahitya Sabha president shot dead", www.northeastvigil.com/newsarch/01092000f.htm#i02.

people in different parts of the State in the year 2000 brought hundreds of ordinary people and several voluntary organisations into the streets in spontaneous demonstrations against the violence right across the State.

MANIPUR

The insurgency in Manipur entered its 38th year in 2002. According to official sources, a total of 256 persons lost their lives in terrorist-induced violence in Manipur in the year 2001. This included 70 civilians, 161 terrorists and 25 security force personnel. Earlier, 246 persons lost their lives to insurgency related violence in the year 2000 as compared to 231 in 1999. In the year 2002 (till April 30) 84 persons (14 civilians, 51 terrorists and 19 security personnel) have lost their lives in insurgency related violence in the State. Among the 35 insurgent groups in the State, as many as 18 are reported to be currently active. The primary conflict in the State involves various insurgent groups, constituted along tribal affiliations, fighting against the Government for sovereign or separate homelands. A multiplicity of secondary conflicts has arisen out of tensions between various ethnic and tribal subgroups, often as a result of changes in patterns of land tenure and distribution.

DATA

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Population: | 2,388,634 ⁴¹ |
| Area: | 22,327 sq. km. |
| Rural: | 22,182 sq. km. |
| Urban: | 145 sq. km. |
| Literacy Rate: | 68.87 % |
| Life Expectancy at Birth: | NA |
| SDP per capita: | Rs. 8,194 (US\$ 175 approx.) ⁴² |

Number of Conflict Related Deaths:⁴³

⁴¹ *Census of India 2001*, Provisional Figures,

<http://www.censusindia.net/results/provdata.xls>.

⁴² Data on area, life expectancy and per capita SDP, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, <http://mha.nic.in/nen111.htm>.

⁴³ South Asia Terrorism Portal, www.satp.org.

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| 1992-2000 | 2,750 |
| 2000 | 246 (93 civilians, 102 militants, 51 SF) |
| 2001 | 256 (70 civilians, 161militants, 25 SF) |
| 2002 (till April) | 84 (14 civilians, 51 militants and 19 SF) |

Background

Nearly 90 per cent of the landmass of Manipur comprises its hill areas, and the remaining 10 per cent constitutes the Imphal Valley. The Valley is home to the Vaishnavite (Hindu) Meiteis, who comprise more than 50 per cent of the State’s population, and the Muslim Meitei-Pangals. The hills are exclusively reserved for the ‘tribals’ – mainly Nagas and Kukis. The State has a peculiar land tenure system – the Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reform Act – under which the hill tribes are allowed to settle in the Valley, but no Meitei or Meitei-Pangal is allowed to buy land or settle in the hills. The Meiteis are, moreover, classified as non-tribals, and consequently denied benefits under various reverse discrimination provisions that create reservations in jobs and educational institutions for the tribals.

Manipur was merged fully with the Indian Union on October 15, 1949, but it became a separate State only in 1972, after a long and frequently violent agitation. The circumstances of the merger and the delay in granting statehood caused discontent among the Meiteis. The emergence of an insurgency is formally traced to the constitution of the United National Liberation Front (UNLF) on November 24, 1964, under the leadership of Samarendra Singh. In December 1968, a breakaway group of the UNLF, led by Oinam Sudhir Kumar, established a government-in-exile called the Revolutionary Government of Manipur (RGM) with headquarters at Sylhet in then East Pakistan, with the objective of ‘liberating Manipur through armed struggle’. In September 1978, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), with a Leftist ideology and alleged training in guerrilla warfare in China, was founded by N. Bisheswar Singh. Manipur also witnessed the growth of a number of other Meitei underground organisations with similar objectives

in the late nineteen seventies and early nineteen eighties including the People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) led by R.K. Tulachandra in 1977 and the Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) in 1980.

The period between 1979-81 witnessed an escalation in insurgent activities. In order to tackle the situation, the entire Imphal Valley was declared a disturbed area and the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958, was imposed in September 1980. A series of successful operations in the early 1980s resulted in the practical decimation of the major groups – PLA, PREPAK and KCP. The insurgency, however, re-emerged in force towards the end of the Nineteen Eighties. In an important development, the PLA reorganised itself and formed a political wing called the Revolutionary People's Front (RPF) in 1989 and established a government-in-exile in Bangladesh's Sylhet district. The PLA also set up two camps in Myanmar and five in Bangladesh and constituted a united front of Meitei extremists, the Revolutionary Joint Committee (RJC) along with PREPAK and KCP. Such attempts to forge unity among terrorist outfits in the Northeast in their 'common battle' against the "totalising power" of the Indian state saw the formation of a pan-Mongoloid coalition called the Indo-Burma Revolutionary Front (IBRF), on May 22, 1990, incorporating the UNLF, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland – Khaplang (NCSN-K), ULFA and the Kuki National Army (KNA).⁴⁴ However, the exercise was less than successful. Presently, the Manipur People's Liberation Front (MPLF) is a unified platform of the three Meitei terrorist groups, the UNLF, the PLA and PREPAK. The PLA's stated objective is to organise a revolutionary front covering the entire Northeast to unite all ethnic groups, including the Meiteis, Nagas and Kukis to liberate Manipur. The PREPAK activists have been trained by the NSCN-IM.

⁴⁴ The KNA was established under the leadership of Suvitulon Haokip in June 1991. It has a political wing called Kuki National Organisation (KNO). Its major aim is to fight for a 'Kukiland' comprising parts of India and Myanmar through an armed struggle. It is active in the Indo-Myanmar border areas. Its cadre strength is reported to be 600. KNA has links with NSCN-K, United National Liberation Front (UNLF) and the ULFA. It is an affiliate of the Indo-Burma Revolutionary Front (IBRF).

The insurgents also began to raise their voice against Mayangs (outsiders) settled in Manipur, and the People's Republican Army (PRA) was set up in the early 1990s to target this group.⁴⁵ The Pangals or Manipuri Muslims who constitute over seven per cent of the population are considered 'Mayangs'. In May 1993, more than 90 persons, including women and children, were killed in a series of clashes between the Meiteis and Pangals, in Thoubal and Imphal districts. As a reaction, the Pangals set up militant groups such as the PULF, North East Minority Front (NEMF), Islamic National Front, Islamic Revolutionary Front (IRF) and United Islamic Liberation Army (UILA).

Adding another dimension to the conflict, the NSCN-IM is active in the Naga-inhabited areas in four of Manipur's five hill districts – Ukhrul, Senapati, Tamenglong and Chandel. This has exacerbated tensions with other tribal groups. Since the late 1980s, a number of Kuki outfits such as the KNA and the Kuki National Front (KNF)⁴⁶, have been struggling for a separate State within the Indian Union. Their ethnic conflict with the Nagas has compounded the problem, with a bitter struggle to control drug trafficking and smuggling of contraband through the border town of Moreh resulting in a bloodbath between the Kukis and the Nagas when clashes erupted in 1992. Nearly a thousand people were killed and there was enormous loss of property. An uneasy truce was established in 1993, after mass movements of populations between ethnically cleansed Kuki and Naga areas, and the conflict is currently dormant. The separation of populations has also resulted in the crystallisation of vote banks

⁴⁵ The PRA was set up in the early nineteen nineties by a PLA dissenter, Prakash, who had earlier surrendered to the authorities. PRA came into being with the primary objective of countering PLA.

⁴⁶ KNF was formed under the leadership of Ranco Thangboi Kuki on May 18, 1988. Its primary objective is to secure a separate, independent state for the Kuki tribe and the unification of all scattered Kukis in the new homeland. About 300 KNF recruits had undergone training in Kachin Independence Army (KIA) camps in Myanmar. KNF has been engaged in a bloody confrontation with the Tangkhul Nagas backed by the NSCN-IM, in which over 1000 people, mostly belonging to the Kuki tribe, have lost their lives since 1992. It operates in the districts of Chandel, parts of Tamenglong and Senapati.

and a dilution of the vested interest that inspired the clashes, and there have only been sporadic instances of cross-raids by Kukis and Nagas.

In recent years, several other tribes, such as the Paite, Vaiphei and Hmars have also established their own armed groups. There have been frequent internecine conflicts, particularly between the Kukis and the Paites. The worst affected area in this ethnic conflict has been the district of Churachandpur. Violence between the Kukis and the Paites reached its highest intensity in 1997-98, when clashes claimed an estimated 1,000 lives, with 4,600 houses torched and hundreds of thousands of rupees-worth of property destroyed.

Conflict Dynamics

After peaking in 1997, insurgent violence has remained at an unstable plateau over the past three years, though there are indications of increasing SF pressure on the militant groups. As in other conflicts in the Northeast, however, the situation is not a matter of a simple opposition between the government and outlawed revolutionary groups arraigned against it. The various militant groups have been substantially criminalised and there is overwhelming evidence of a complex web of collusion between terrorist outfits and various political parties. A Union Ministry of Home Affairs Report⁴⁷ mentions at least five ministers of the earlier Nipamacha Singh government as having direct links with terrorists of the NSCN-K, PLA, UNLF, Kanglei Yawol Kunna Lup (KYKL)⁴⁸ and Zomi Revolutionary Army (ZRA). After a

⁴⁷ The Parliament was informed on April 25, 2001 that the Army had forwarded to the Union home ministry two receipts from a banned militant outfit acknowledging it had received Rs 300,000 from former Manipur Chief Minister Nipamacha Singh and former Manipur Assembly Speaker Chandramani Singh. "In one of its reports, the Army forwarded two receipts from UNLF acknowledging receipts of Rs 100,00 and Rs 200,000 respectively from one Nipamacha Singh and one Chandramani Singh." See "Ultras funded by Nipamacha, former Speaker", *The Statesman*, New Delhi, April 26, 2001.

⁴⁸ A Meitei underground group, KYKL, meaning "the Organisation to save the revolutionary movement in Manipur" was formed in January 1994 after the merger of the Oken faction of the UNLF, the Meiraba faction of the PREPAK and Ibo Pishak faction of the KCP. However, KYKL suffered a number of setbacks immediately after its inception. Two of its top leaders -

raid by security force personnel on November 28, 2000, at the official residence of the then Transport Minister, Haokholet Kipgen, during which two Kuki National Front terrorists were arrested, the Central government announced an investigation into the clandestine alliance between the politicians and terrorist outfits.⁴⁹ MHA reports also indicated the subversion of the civilian administration in the State, with even senior State officials and politicians openly negotiating the levels at which extortion amounts to be paid to terrorists by various government departments were to be 'fixed'. Terrorists of the PLA and the UNLF reportedly have unhindered access to government files and offices, and commercial contracts are allotted to nominees of various terrorist groups. Terrorist outfits also offload rice, sugar, wheat and other essential commodities from the Public Distribution System (PDS), diverting large proportions to the black market, while some amount is distributed among locals at lower prices in order to gain legitimacy and increase their support base in the State. The Centre is reported to be contemplating suspension of all funds to Manipur-based NGOs, as several of them act in collusion with the terrorists.

The increasing articulation of the demand for a separate Kuki homeland, and efforts to consolidate the identity of the Kuki-aligned tribes has also given rise to new conflicts. The Kuki-kindred tribe, the Paites, who speak virtually the same language and share many customs and traditions, remain unwilling to surrender their individuality to the larger Kuki identity, and dangers of the re-emergence of the Kuki-Paite strife of 1997-1998 persist. Conflicting demands of ethnic identity have also sparked tensions between Kukis, Nagas and Meities, and there is a real danger of open conflict.

The *Nagalim* demand, which seeks the unification of all Naga majority areas in Manipur, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and

Chairman N. Oken and self-styled Commander-in-Chief N. Thouba Singh were arrested by security forces. During 1995-96, a large number of lower-ranking cadres had either deserted the KYKL or surrendered to authorities. At present, KYKL has a strength of about 200 and is expanding its recruitment base to make up the losses it suffered earlier. It has a working "arrangement" with NSCN-IM.

⁴⁹ "Manipur minister-ultra outfit nexus, MHA requested to look into charges : CM", *Assam Tribune*, December 2, 2000.

Myanmar in a sovereign Naga homeland, has complicated the situation further. The NCSN-IM has been demanding that its existing cease-fire agreement with the Centre should be extended to all Naga majority areas in the region. The former Manipur Chief Minister, Nipamacha Singh, had consistently opposed any such extension. A rally of a reported 800,000 people (the number is probably substantially exaggerated, since this would mean that over a third of the total population of the State was on the streets protesting) from all 34 communities in the State was organised on September 28, 2000, demanding protection of the territorial integrity of Manipur.⁵⁰ There were long-standing apprehensions that a cease-fire extension to areas outside Nagaland would lead to large-scale ethnic violence and disintegration of the contiguous States, including Manipur.

These apprehensions were partly realised after the June 14, 2001, decision of the Union government to extend the cease-fire with the NSCN-IM to all Naga-dominated areas in the Northeast, or, as the language of the agreement expressed it, “without territorial limits.”⁵¹ This led to violent protests in Manipur, with the State Assembly building being burnt and 13 protestors being killed on June 18, 2001.⁵² Meitei, Kuki and Muslim civil society organisations in Manipur were united in a mass movement against the decision to extend the Naga cease-fire to the Naga-dominated hill districts of Manipur – Chandel, Ukhrul, Senapati and Tamenglong. The United Committee, Manipur (UCM), was formed as an umbrella of six socio-political organisations in the State to spearhead the protests against the Naga cease-fire extension. Finally, the Union government was forced to reconsider its decision, and on July 27, 2001, it revoked the new cease-fire arrangements, and restored the *status quo ante* of a territorially restricted cease-fire with the NSCN-IM in Nagaland.

⁵⁰ “Rally demands protection of Manipur territorial integrity”, *Assam Tribune*, September 30, 2000. The rally was organised in Imphal by the National Identity Protection Committee and Apunba Manipur Kanba Ima Lup (AMKIL).

⁵¹ For full text of the agreement see South Asia Terrorism Portal, Countries; India; States; Nagaland; Papers; Extension of the cease-fire with the NSCN-IM; www.satp.org.

⁵² “13 Killed, indefinite curfew in Imphal”, www.rediff.com/news/2001/jun/18mani5.htm.

The real threat from this entire sequence of events, however, is the possibility that latent tensions between the Meiteis and the Nagas, who had been co-existing peacefully so far, might be converted into overt conflict.

While the protests against the cease-fire extension had been going on, various Naga organisations had warned that any revocation of the June 14, 2001, agreement in Bangkok would lead to violence. On July 17, more than 15 Naga organisations from Manipur and Nagaland held a consultative meeting under the aegis of the Naga Hoho (the apex Tribal Council of the Nagas) and declared that if the Indian government could be pressurised to renege on the 'signed bilateral agreement' with the NSCN-IM, then it would not only damage the slowly emerging trust of Nagas and adversely affect the search for a final settlement but could also have ramifications far beyond the Naga people and the Naga issue. Many Naga civil society groups, like the United Naga Council (UNC) and the Naga Women's Union, Manipur (NWUM), have accused the Meiteis of being insensitive to the aspirations of the Nagas. The NSCN-IM had also warned that any revocation of the territorial extension, which later occurred, would lead to violence, and tension persists, though no dramatic escalation of violence has been noted in NSCN-IM dominated areas in the months immediately following the revocation of the decision on territorial extension.

Most civil society organisations, both Naga and Manipuri, are known to have links with terrorist groups. Thus, the All Manipur Students' Union (AMSU), which is a part of the UCM, is suspected to have links with the Meitei terrorist organisation, the UNLF. Some of the other Manipuri groups involved in the protests against the cease-fire extension were suspected to be supporters of the RPF and the UNLF. On the other side, the various Naga groups who were demonstrating in favour of the territorial extension of the cease-fire are known to be sympathetic to the NSCN-IM. There is, thus, a continuity of opinion between Meitei and Naga civil society groups, on the one hand, and their terrorist groups, on the other.

Despite its revocation, the aborted extension of cease-fire decision has unleashed a new dynamic in the Northeast, and significant realignments between the insurgent and subversive

groupings are probable. Thus, the Meitei terrorist groups may decide to realign with the ULFA in Assam, which has also criticised the NSCN-IM for its demand for Nagalim.⁵³ In such a scenario, the possibility of a violent conflict between the Meiteis and Thangkhul Nagas in Manipur may become a reality. The first indications of such realignments between the terrorist groups are in evidence, and several terrorist outfits of the Indian Northeast constituted a common platform called the United Liberation Front of Seven Sisters (ULFSS) to oppose the demand for a 'Greater Nagaland'. Significantly, this umbrella organisation was created under the aegis of the Khaplang faction of the NSCN – the NSCN-K, at a 'Naga base' along the Indo-Myanmar border in July 2001, in a meeting attended by the leadership of the ULFA, DHD, UPDS, Arunachal Dragon Force (ADF), PLA and Revolutionary Democratic Front (RDF). While opposing the demand of 'Greater Nagaland', these groups also decided to mobilise other insurgent groups of the region against the NSCN-IM.

Official Conflict Management

The initial response to the insurgency in the State was a straightforward 'law and order' approach. During the Bangladesh liberation war in 1971, many Meitei leaders were arrested, while others were granted an official amnesty. Insurgency appeared to have fizzled out at that stage, but re-emerged with the establishment of the PLA in 1978. Along with other groupings such as the PREPAK and the KCP, the PLA unleashed a violent campaign in the entire Valley. To tackle the situation, the government declared the Valley a disturbed area and imposed the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958, in September 1980.

Successful operations were subsequently launched against the PLA, PREPAK and KCP. On October 26, 1981, these three

⁵³ The ULFA has said that the NSCN-IM's claim of eight Assam districts as part of *Nagalim* has "neither credibility nor any historical basis." Arabinda Rajkhowa, ULFA 'chairman', has called upon the NSCN-IM to remove the eight Assam districts from its Nagalim map. See "If referendum is required for peace in Assam, so be it", http://www.thenewspapertoday.com/india/inside.phtml?NEWS_ID=22399.

outfits were notified as unlawful organisations. Virtually the entire frontline leadership of the PLA was killed during the operations that followed, and its founder Bisheswar was arrested at Tekcham in Thoubal district on July 6, 1981. On April 13, 1982, the new PLA leader, Thoundam Kunjabehari, and eight other activists were killed in Kadampokpi, near Imphal. These military measures successfully contained the insurgency till the latter half of the 1980s. However, the resurgent groups, along with a mushrooming of new outfits and internecine conflicts between tribal groups, drove the entire paradigm of insurgency to a completely different plane in the early 1990s.

Official efforts at restoring a semblance of order achieved a measure of success when, on July 7, 1997, an accord between the Kuki and Paite communities was signed in Churachandpur district. T. Samuel Haukip, President of the Kuki National Front and J.K. Reuben, representative of various Paite organisations, agreed to constitute a team of peace observers to monitor the situation and to ensure that there was no breach of peace in the district. Both communities signed another agreement on October 2, 1998, following prolonged talks with the militant groups of both the communities. No violent incidents have been reported between these two tribes since 1999.

Beyond this, however, efforts to bring a negotiated peace to the region have been minimal. Peace talks in Nagaland with the NSCN-IM, and their conflicting consequences in the neighbouring States, including Manipur, have narrowed down options.

There have been several announcements by the MHA that some sort of an official cease-fire and peace package, preceding talks with various militant groups, would be initiated in the whole of the Northeast region in the near future. However, a policy of drift and overwhelming reliance on the security forces has tended to define the Centre's attitudes towards insurgency in Manipur.

Earlier pronouncements by the Union government regarding the possibility of a cease-fire in the State were met with a circumspection on the part of the militant formations. On November 26, 2000, the UNLF's chairman, R.K. Meghen, put forward three conditions for talks with the Centre:

1. The Centre should include the agenda of sovereignty if it was truly serious about its offer of talks.
2. India must first ‘demilitarise’ the region.
3. A third country should monitor the talks.

Recently, however, there have been some efforts by successive State governments of Manipur to move towards a process of dialogue. The erstwhile People’s Front government headed by Radhabinod Kojiam offered, on February 28, 2001, a unilateral month-long cease-fire, commencing March 1, 2001, to 17 separatist outfits in the State.⁵⁴ Subsequently, on March 19, 2001, Governor Ved Marwah announced the setting up of a contact group to liaison with extremist groups in the State.⁵⁵ However, the militants rejected the cease-fire offer and continued to commit acts of violence. Also the Union government refused to endorse the cease-fire offer by the State government, and the initiatives failed.

Civil Society Initiatives

Traditional institutions of civil society are still very strong in many fields in Manipur, and have often played a significant role in the containment of tensions and of the larger conflict. The Meira Paibis (women activist groups) constitute one such force, though it is fragmented, and is yet to adopt a coherent and larger programme for the restoration of peace. In every village, locality and community, Meitei womenfolk (often referred to as the “mothers of society”) have organised themselves into associations, and undertake a wide range of voluntary tasks to protect their communities against perceived social evils. The Meira Paibis have been equally active in protesting human rights violations and unjustifiable arrests by the police or SFs, and in taking action against social ills such as drug abuse and alcoholism. However, their actions are often governed by deep tribal and communal attachments. There has often been criticism that the Meira Paibis are used as fronts by the various Meitei

⁵⁴ “Manipur offers truce to ultra outfits”, *Assam Tribune*, February 28, 2001.

⁵⁵ “Manipur Governor urges ultras to come for talks during truce”, *Assam Tribune*, March 20, 2001.

terrorist groups such as the UNLF, the KYKL, the PLA and PREPAK. It would, nevertheless, be correct to say that the Meira Paibis have generated huge social capital and have thus successfully fulfilled one function of a civil society organisation. It remains questionable, however, whether they would have been able to generate such capital independent of the political agendas of the extremist groups with whom they have links.

Another women's movement in Manipur, the Nupi (Women's) Movement, has also organised many demonstrations for peace and for the protection of human rights in the State. The Manipur Chanura Leishem Marup (MACHA LEIMA) is another leading women's organisation, which has been organising a series of human rights workshops for women in Manipur since 1997. The activities of the organisation primarily focus on empowering educated young women with the basic knowledge of human rights and the mechanisms for redressal, documenting human rights situations, and of networking with other movements such as the Meira Paibis.

The Kuki Women's Organisation and the Kuki Mother's Association represent the rights of Kuki women in Manipur. The Naga women in Manipur also have a politically powerful movement called the Naga Women's Movement, Manipur (NWUM).

While each of these women's groups have played a significant role in creating the social basis for collective action, it remains the case that all of them respond purely on the basis of tribal identities on issues where conflicting tribal interests are in question.

The Village Councils and traditional tribal leadership have also spoken against violence, both by militants and by the State, from time to time. These voices are, however, fragmented and their action occasional and incident-specific.

There are also several civil rights activists and groups in the State. Their concerns have naturally tended to focus narrowly on civil liberties and the violation of rights, but limited activities to propagate the message of inter-community harmony in the form of seminars and public rallies have also been organised. Unfortunately, as with human rights groups in other theatres of conflict in India, at least some of these groups tend to have

ambivalent relationships with the militants and some function as front organisations for terrorist groupings, co-ordinating actions and protests with militant demands and activities.

As with other NGOs in the region, it is important to understand that many of these organisations closely co-ordinate their activities with extremist groups, and reflect deep ethnic biases in their projection of alleged human rights abuses.

NAGALAND

There has been a relative declining trend in fatalities in Nagaland, with a total of 103 persons killed in the year 2001. The year 2000 saw 101 dead in the conflict while 148 persons were killed in insurgency related killings in 1999. In the year 2002 (till April 30), six persons lost their lives in insurgency related violence. While relatively low casualty figures are a welcome trend, there has been no major breakthrough in the longstanding problem of insurgency. A peace process initiated in the year 1997 has dragged on inconclusively. Apart from the two factions of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland, other terrorist outfits are now largely passive.

DATA

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|--|---|
| Population (2001): | 1,988,636 ⁵⁶ |
| Area: | 16,579 sq. km. |
| Rural: | 16,432 sq. km. |
| Urban: | 147 sq. km. |
| Literacy Rate: | 67.11 % |
| Life Expectancy at Birth: | NA |
| SDP per capita: | Rs. 11,174 (US\$ 238 approx.) ⁵⁷ |
| Number of Conflict Related Deaths: ⁵⁸ | |
| 1992-2000: | 1,699 |

⁵⁶ *Census of India 2001*, Provisional Figures,

<http://www.censusindia.net/results/provdata.xls>.

⁵⁷ Data on area, life expectancy and per capita SDP, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, <http://mha.nic.in/nen111.htm>.

⁵⁸ South Asia Terrorism Portal, <http://www.satp.org>.

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|----------------------|--|
| 2000: | 101 (13 civilians, 84 militants, 4 SF) |
| 2001 | 103 (25 civilians, 76 militants, 2 SF) |
| 2002 (till April 30) | 6 (6 militants) |

Background

The Nagas comprise nearly 17 major tribes and over 20 sub-tribes. The major tribes include Ao, Angami, Sema, Lotha, Thangkhol, Konyak, Rengma, and Mao. Each tribe and sub-tribe speaks a different language, though all these belong to the Tibeto-Burmese group of languages.

Historically, different Naga tribes lived in isolation for centuries, with only marginal contact with the people of the Brahmaputra valley (part of present day Assam) during the rule of the Ahom kings. The British too, in their initial years of rule in Assam, guided by a pragmatism rather than a genuine lack of interest, followed a policy of non-interference towards the Nagas. By keeping them segregated, the British successfully prevented the winds of mainstream India's national movement reaching the hills. This *laissez faire* policy created a wide communication gap between the hill areas and the rest of the country. This seems also to have encouraged the Naga National Council (NNC) to eventually appeal for autonomy before the Cabinet Mission. A resolution seeking autonomy within Assam was adopted at the NNC meeting in Wokha in June 1946. However, the subsequent rift among the Angamis and the Aos within the NNC, led the Angamis to demand independence while the Aos were largely in favour of autonomy within the Indian Union. The gradual consolidation of the Angamis in the NNC led to an uninhibited expression in favour of an independent Nagaland.

The roots of Naga separatism precede Indian Independence, and the 'Naga Club' submitted a memorandum to the British Administration in 1926, demanding that Naga sovereignty be restored when the British withdraw from India.⁵⁹ Although the

⁵⁹ See S C Dev, *Nagaland The Untold Story*, Calcutta: Glory Publications, 1988, p.1.

Naga club claimed to represent as many as 20 tribes, it was essentially an organisation of government officials and few leading headmen (gaonburrah) from the villages neighbouring Kohima.⁶⁰ However, insurgency came to the Naga Hills much later, under the aegis of the NNC led by the legendary Angami Zapu Phizo, who raised the banner of revolt against the Indian government on August 14, 1947. By 1950, Phizo had assumed the Presidency of the NNC and publicly resolved to establish a sovereign Naga state. To this effect, in May 1951, the Council held a 'referendum' in which it claimed that 99 per cent of the Naga people supported independence for Nagaland, though this has never been accepted by the government.⁶¹ The strength of the NNC was largely rooted in the traditional village councils. By 1952, a violent 'independence struggle' had been launched, and on March 22, 1956, Phizo created an underground government called the Naga Federal Government (NFG) and a Naga Federal Army (NFA). Following the induction of the armed forces in the State in April 1956, Phizo withdrew to then East Pakistan in December 1956 and, thereafter, to London in June 1960. The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958, was subsequently invoked in the State.

The 'Delhi Agreement' between a section of the Naga leadership and the Government of India, led to the formation of the State of Nagaland on December 1, 1963.⁶² The NNC strongly condemned these initiatives as measures to divide the Naga people. A Peace Mission was, however, constituted to mollify the insurgents and it resulted in the signing of an Agreement for Suspension of Operations (AGSOP) with the insurgents on September 6, 1964. In the face of unabated violence and the failure of six rounds of talks between the insurgents and the Centre, the Peace Mission was dissolved in 1967. The NNC was, however, progressively marginalised after the first elections to the State Assembly.

⁶⁰ See R Vashum, *Naga's Rights to Self Determination*, New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2000, p. 65.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁶² M Horam *Naga Insurgency*, New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1988, p.84-85.

In 1972, the Centre banned the NNC, the NFG and the NFA as 'unlawful associations' under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act of 1967. Massive counter-insurgency operations brought the situation under relative control, forcing the militants to the negotiating table. Under the consequent Shillong Accord, signed between the Centre and sections of the NNC and NFG on November 11, 1975, the latter accepted the Indian Constitution and agreed to come overground and surrender their weapons.⁶³

However, a group of about 140 activists of the NNC repudiated the Accord and refused to surrender. They formed a new underground organisation called the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN) under the leadership of Thuingaleng Muivah, Isak Chisi Swu and S.S. Khaplang on Myanmarese (Burmese) soil in 1980. With the passage of time, the NSCN emerged as the most radical and powerful insurgent group fighting for the Naga cause.

Clannish divisions among the Nagas (Konyaks and Thangkhuls) resulted in the split of the NSCN in 1988. The Konyaks formed the NSCN-K (Khaplang) under the leadership of Khole Konyak and Khaplang. The Thangkhul faction, the NSCN-IM, was led by Isak Swu and T. Muivah. The two groups are now violently opposed, and there have been a number of clashes, the worst of which occurred in April 1988, when NSCN-K activists attacked the 'General Headquarters' of the I-M faction, and killed over a hundred cadres.

After the death of Phizo in 1990, a faction of the NNC led by Khodao Yanthan joined NSCN-IM in the winter of 1996-97. Currently, the NNC is led by Phizo's daughter, Adino.

Conflict Dynamics

Collusive politics lies at the heart of the insurgency in the State and, as Udayon Misra observes, "Every government in Nagaland since the State was formed, has had some stake in having the insurgency continue. Among other things, the insurgency has always been a convenient lever to secure greater

⁶³ See South Asia Terrorism Portal, Countries; India; States; Nagaland; Papers; Nagaland Accord, The Shillong Agreement of November 11, 1975; www.satp.org

benefits from the Centre.”⁶⁴ The NSCN factions are now the dominant forces in the State, with the Isak-Muivah group in the ascendant. Insurgency related violence in the State has been contained largely as a result of continuous engagement and negotiations by the government with both the factions.

The NSCN-IM's influence in the neighbouring State of Manipur is limited to the four hill districts of Senapati, Ukhrul, Chandel and Tamenglong. It has also been able to extend its influence into the North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong districts of Assam and some parts of Meghalaya.

The NSCN-IM boasts of nearly 3,000 armed cadres and a political and military wing. The military wing – the Naga Army – consists of ‘one brigade and six battalions’. It also has a General Head Quarters (GHQ), ‘Oking’, at Niuland in Dimapur district. There are several town commands and specialised mobile groups. The political wing also has a GHQ and 11 ‘regions’ are organised primarily on tribal considerations. During the period 1992 – 2000, as many as 520 civilians and 209 security force personnel were killed by NSCN-IM, and the group lost 567 cadres in operations.

Drug trafficking from Myanmar is a major source of income for the NSCN-IM, and it also engages in extortion, bank robberies and other criminal pursuits to obtain finance. In addition, the outfit generates funds through international mobilisation. Both the NSCN-IM and the NSCN-K run parallel structures of ‘taxation’ (extortion) throughout the regions that they dominate.

The NSCN-K has a following among the Konyaks, both in India and Myanmar, the Pangmeis of Myanmar, the Aos of Mokokchung district, the Phoms and Yimchungers of Tuensang district, the Angamis, the Semas and the Lothas. It has an estimated strength of about 2,000 activists. It also commands influence in parts of Nagaland; the Tirap and Changlang districts of Arunachal Pradesh; and the Hemei and Pangmei settlements in Myanmar.

The group runs a ‘government-in-exile’ called the Government of the People’s Republic of Nagaland (GPRN) and is organised on similar lines as the NSCN-IM. The General Head

⁶⁴ Udayon Misra, *The Periphery Strikes Back*, Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 2000, p. 55.

Quarters (GHQ) of the GPRN/NSCN-K is located in 'Eastern Nagaland' (Myanmar). For generation of finance, the outfit indulges in abduction, extortion and other terrorist activities. The outfit accounted for 62 civilian and 26 security forces' fatalities during the period 1992 to 2000, and lost 245 of its cadres during this period.

The two factions of the NSCN continue their internecine rivalry. On June 2, 1999, the IM faction announced a 'general amnesty' of 45 days for the activists of the NSCN-K, who ignored the offer. On August 19, 1999, terrorists belonging to the IM faction killed Dally Mungro, General Secretary of the Khaplang faction, and two of his comrades in Kohima district.⁶⁵ At least three others were killed in two separate factional fights in Phek district on August 22 and 24, 1999 and an activist of the IM faction was killed and five injured in a prolonged gun-battle at Mokokchung town on August 26, 1999. These fratricidal killings currently pose the most serious threat to security and stability in Nagaland. According to unconfirmed reports, as many as 70 terrorists of both factions were killed in an internecine clash in the Mon district in the first week of May 2000.⁶⁶ On May 17, 2000, the Khaplang faction claimed to have wrested control of the Zunheboto district from its rival faction. In the first three months of 2000, the Tuensang district witnessed as many as 10 fierce factional fights between the two groups. The NSCN-K accused the NSCN-IM of killing two of its cadres and injuring one near Kohima on May 17, 2000, a few days after the arrival of the NSCN(I-M)'s Isak Chishi Swu and Thuingaleng Muivah in Dimapur. In retaliation, the NSCN-K threatened to eliminate the NSCN-IM cadres in its custody, though the threat was not carried out. On June 8, 2001, in an internecine clash, four terrorists of the NSCN-K were ambushed and killed by terrorists of the Isak-Muivah faction near Tuli town in Mokokchung district. According to police sources, this was the first major insurgency related incident in the State after declaration of cease-fire between the Union government and the NSCN-K on April 28, 2001.

⁶⁵ "Top Khaplang Faction Leader Gunned Down", *The Telegraph*, Kolkata, August 20, 1999.

⁶⁶ "Day-night battle between NSCN factions off Mon, Dozens of militants feared killed", <http://www.axom.faithweb.com/kfield/may-jun.html>.

The ethnic conflict between the two rival factions of the NSCN, remains one of the most intractable problems of the Naga insurgency. However, on October 9, 2001, the NSCN-K gave a call for unity among different Naga insurgent outfits.⁶⁷ It suggested that negotiations with the Union government should be conducted from a common platform for a successful and permanent resolution of the Naga insurgency. In early October 2001, the co-ordination committee of the Naga Hoho, called for a concerted effort to bring unity and understanding among different Naga tribes to facilitate the ongoing political negotiations between the Union government and Naga terrorist groups. In an attempt to further consolidate the Naga peace process, the NSCN-K, on December 18, 2001, while offering a month-long cease-fire to the IM, also announced suspension of military operations during this period.⁶⁸ However, sporadic internecine conflict between the two outfits continues, and the only major incident of violence in the State thus far in year 2002 was the January 18 killing of six NSCN-K militants by the NSCN-IM.⁶⁹

Insurgency in Nagaland also continues to thrive as a result of cross-border contacts. Myanmar and Bangladesh remain the primary safe havens for the NSCN-IM. Relations with the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), a Myanmarese guerrilla group, facilitate the movement of arms into the Indian Northeast through the State of Arunachal Pradesh. Of late, Cox Bazar in Bangladesh has emerged as another important port for circulation of illegal arms. The fact that Muivah visited Pakistan before his arrest in Thailand in January 2000, was also a pointer to Pakistan's increasing involvement in the insurgency in the region.⁷⁰

Contrary to earlier official claims, which held that the NSCN's Chinese contacts had been severed in the 1980s, news reports in October 2000 stated that the NSCN-IM had revived its clandestine connections with China with a visit by an NSCN-IM

⁶⁷ "Deal with NSCN-IM alone won't solve Naga issue: NSCN-K", *The Sentinel*, Guwahati, October 10, 2001.

⁶⁸ "NSCN(K) offers month-long truce to rivals", *Assam Tribune*, December 19, 2001.

⁶⁹ See South Asia Terrorism Portal. www.satp.org/satporstp/detailed_news3.asp?date3=2002%2F1%2F20#1.

⁷⁰ 'Naga talks in jeopardy', <http://www.northeastvigil.com/newsarch/16022000f.htm>.

leader to the Kunming province in China during which a deal for a 'major' arms consignment was struck.⁷¹ The deal reportedly included supply of AK-47 and M16 rifles and G-3 machine guns. On December 13, 2000, I.D. Swami, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, speaking in Parliament, confirmed NSCN-IM's arms procurement links with China.⁷²

Official Conflict Management

The unsuccessful Peace Mission of 1964 arose out of a conference of Naga Baptist Churches in that year, and comprised Bimala Prasad Chaliha, Rev. Michael Scott and Jayaprakash Narayan. The Mission succeeded in securing a cease-fire and 'suspension of operations agreement'. The then Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, also met the NFG 'Prime Minister' at New Delhi twice on February 16 and April 26, 1966, but the process collapsed due to the NNC's demand for complete sovereignty.

Continuing military pressure by the security forces and growing dissidence within the Naga movement renewed the prospects for another round of peace talks in the early 1970s. In 1973, a breakaway faction (the Revolutionary Government of Nagaland) surrendered arms and accepted the Indian Constitution. The Central government made several subsequent peace overtures to dissident elements in the movement, and the Shillong Accord (1975) between the government and dissident groups within the Naga leadership was the result of this sustained process. This Accord, however, could not restore peace to the region as the hard-liners regrouped under the common banner of the NSCN.

For nearly 22 years after the Shillong Accord, Nagaland did not witness any serious peace process. In the meantime, the ground situation had undergone significant transformation, especially after a split in the NSCN. From this point on, the peace process with the insurgents had to be operated at two different planes. The then Premier, Rajiv Gandhi, had made some efforts to

⁷¹ See www.satp.org/news/October/news_10.htm.

⁷² See South Asia Terrorism Portal; Countries; India; States; Nagaland Timeline, Year 2000; www.satp.org.

hold secret talks with the rebel leaders in the late-1980s, but did not succeed in initiating a dialogue.

A serious process of dialogue commenced only in the mid-nineties. On June 15, 1995, then Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao met both Isak and Muivah in Paris, and a continuous dialogue process was instituted. On February 23, 1996, Narasimha Rao offered to hold unconditional talks with the Naga insurgent groups. In its response on July 31, 1996, the NSCN-IM set three preconditions for talks:

1. Negotiations should focus on sovereignty;
2. Talks would be held in a third country; and
3. A third party mediator would be included.⁷³

In November 1996, Rao's successor, the then Prime Minister Deve Gowda, sent former Union Minister Rajesh Pilot on a secret mission to Bangkok for discussions with the NSCN-IM leadership. Deve Gowda himself met these leaders on February 3, 1997, in Zurich. Following these meetings, a cease-fire agreement was signed on July 25, 1997, and came into effect on August 1, 1997. The Agreement was signed during I K Gujral's tenure as Prime Minister. Under the original agreement, subsequently extended in 1998, a clause provided for the possibility of territorial extension, but was never implemented by the Centre. Throughout the cease-fire period, however, the Army and other security forces complained that the NSCN-IM was using the cover of ceasefire to augment its stockpile of arms and was violating truce conditions. The government, nevertheless, continued with negotiations.

After the installation of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government at Delhi in May 1998, Swaraj Kaushal, a former Governor of Mizoram, was appointed as the Centre's chief representative to conduct talks with the NSCN-IM. Kaushal had earlier been the key negotiator in the settlement between New Delhi and the Mizo National Front (MNF), which led to the signing of the Mizo Accord in 1986. Kaushal met NSCN-IM leaders in Zurich on July 27, 1998 and again in September 1998, in Amsterdam, to broker a one-year extension of the cease-fire,

⁷³ See South Asia Terrorism Portal, Countries; India; States; Nagaland, Timelines. www.satp.org

which commenced on August 31, 1998. Following this, Prime Minister Vajpayee met the NSCN-IM leadership in Paris on September 30, 1998. However, differences of principle with the government regarding the modalities of the cease-fire led to Kaushal's resignation on March 22, 1999.

Former Union Home Secretary, K Padmanabhaiah, took over as the Centre's chief negotiator in July 1999. On August 4, 1999, the cease-fire agreement between the Central government and the NSCN-IM was extended for another year, till July 31, 2000. Padmanabhaiah held two rounds of talks with the NSCN-IM leaders in Bangkok in November 1999. At this stage, the rebel leaders expressed unhappiness over the slow pace of negotiations. The rebel leaders stuck to the demand for a sovereign Nagaland, comprising the Nagaland State and many Naga-inhabited areas of neighbouring Assam and Manipur.

The peace process suffered a setback with the arrest of Muivah in Bangkok, on January 19, 2000, on charges of travelling on false documents, shortly before Padmanabhaiah was scheduled to meet him in Bonn for a third round of talks.⁷⁴ With Muivah behind bars, the dialogue process came to a halt.

After Muivah's release on bail on September 18, 2000, the NSCN-IM leadership restored the dialogue with the Indian government.⁷⁵ This resulted in the extension of the cease-fire till July 31, 2001. The cease-fire is monitored by a Cease-fire Monitoring Group (CFMG) based in Kohima, comprising NSCN-IM, government and NGO representatives. In January 2001, a significant advance was made in the form of an agreement on 'Revised Ground Rules'. The Revised Rules sought to curb the NSCN-IM's extortion drive in the State, and also gave the security forces some added advantage in dealing with the insurgency. In return, the NSCN-IM was promised serious consideration to the proposal to extend the area of cease-fire beyond the territory of Nagaland.

Unfortunate consequences of the cease-fire process with the NSCN-IM emerged when the Union government announced, on June 14, 2001, that the cease-fire would be extended "without

⁷⁴ See South Asia Terrorism Portal; Countries; India; States; Nagaland; Timeline 2000; www.satp.org.

⁷⁵ "Muivah released on bail", *Assam Tribune*, September 19, 2000.

territorial limits”, that is, would comprehend all the Naga dominated areas in the North East, for a period of one year ending July 31, 2002. This meant that the cease-fire with the NSCN-IM would be applicable in Assam to the Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills District, as well as parts of the districts of Golaghat, Sivasagar, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, and Jorhat. It would also be applicable to Dibang Valley, Lohit, Tirap and Changlang districts of Arunachal Pradesh and large parts of four of the seven districts of Manipur – Tamenglong, Senapati, Ukhrul and Chandel.

In response to this declaration, there were widespread protests in Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh. Following meetings between the Centre and the Chief Ministers of all the Northeastern states, the Union government, on July 27, 2001, revoked this decision and decided to restrict the cease-fire to Nagaland. This was opposed by different Naga groups, as well as the NSCN-IM. The NSCN-IM claimed that the new decision was an unilateral one by the Centre and warned of violence if its demand for territorial extension was not fulfilled. While overt violence has not escalated, the present unstable equilibrium has become the more tenuous, and the polarisation of communities and the general sense of a wrong on both sides – among the Nagas and among the many communities who felt threatened by the territorial extension of the ceasefire – has significantly increased the conflict potential in the region.

Negotiations were resumed when K. Padmanabhaiah, the chief interlocutor of the Union government, met the NSCN-IM leaders in the first week of August 2001. The latest negotiations were held at Amsterdam, Netherlands, on September 20-21, 2001, in which both sides agreed to continue efforts to find a solution to the Naga insurgency problem within a timeframe of ‘one or two years.’ Another round of talks was held in October 2001. On December 7, 2001, Prime Minister Vajpayee for the second time held discussions with the NSCN-IM leadership, in the Japanese city of Osaka, demonstrating the government’s seriousness towards finding a political settlement. Peace talks were again resumed in Bangkok in May 2002, and these are now being mediated by the Mizoram Chief Minister Zoram Thanga.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ See “Mizo CM to facilitate Naga talks”, *Hindustan Times*, May 4, 2002.

Although the outcome of the ongoing negotiations is still awaited, the State government has announced that it is willing to withdraw arrest warrants against Swu and Muivah, issued for an abortive attempt on the life of the Nagaland Chief Minister on November 29, 1999, to facilitate their visit to India to carry the peace negotiations further.⁷⁷

The government's parallel peace process with the NSCN-K resulted in a two-month cease-fire commencing on November 14, 1998. Subsequently, the NSCN-K offered a unilateral ceasefire for three months commencing January 11, 1999, and the security forces also subsequently suspended operations against the organisation. On March 2, 2000, NSCN-K 'Deputy Minister for Information and Publicity', Kughalu Mulatonu, announced that the outfit was ready to negotiate with the Central government provided the ban on the organisation was lifted, but there are few signs of further progress, largely because the NSCN-K's relative dormancy has kept it on the periphery of the sphere of significance. On April 9, 2000, the NSCN-K announced a formal cease-fire with the Central government, and the SFs responded with a unilateral suspension of operations against the group.⁷⁸

On June 19, 2000, the 'Prime Minister' of the NSCN-K, Kitovi Zhimomi, threatened to call-off the ongoing cease-fire if the Central government did not lift the ban imposed on the group.⁷⁹ The organisation, which is believed to enjoy the political patronage of the State Chief Minister, S.C. Jamir, reiterated its call for formalisation of the cease-fire agreement with the Indian government in October. The cease-fire with the NSCN-K was subsequently extended for a period of six months on October 16, 2000, and again, on April 28, 2001, the Union government declared a further extension for a period of one year.⁸⁰ A 15-point charter of cease fire ground rules was also formulated on April

⁷⁷ See "Warrants against Swu, Muivah withdrawn", *Assam Tribune*, April 8, 2002.

⁷⁸ "NSCN(K) announces ceasefire with Centre", *Assam Tribune*, April 10, 2000.

⁷⁹ See South Asia Terrorism Portal; Countries; India; States; Nagaland; Timeline 2000; www.satp.org.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

30, 2001.⁸¹ In the first meeting after the declaration of this cease-fire, the Union government held negotiations with the NSCN-K in Kohima on September 3, 2001.⁸² In this meeting, both sides reiterated the need to strictly adhere to the agreed ground rules of the cease-fire framed earlier. Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Ramesh V. Kulkarni, who led the Union Government team, termed the atmosphere at the meeting as ‘cordial and encouraging.’

The cease-fire between the Indian Government and NSCN-K was extended by another year starting from April 28, 2002. Making the announcement in the Lok Sabha on April 24, 2002, the Union Home Minister L.K. Advani mentioned that the decision was taken as both sides were satisfied with the progress made in implementing the cease-fire.

Civil Society Initiatives

The Church in Nagaland has been involved in the peace process since the beginning of the conflict. The Baptist Church Council of Nagaland played a prominent part in the formation of the Peace Mission in 1964. In July 1997, the Baptist Church organised the Atlanta Peace meet where the NSCN leadership accepted initiatives to start an unconditional dialogue process.

Instances of excesses by the security forces have been noted at times, and these include allegations of custodial torture, molestation and rape. Even though investigations have been made and the guilty punished in most such cases, the generally slow nature of civil procedures remains a matter of intense discontent among the victims and their communities.

The Naga People’s Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR), a prominent human rights organisation in the State has been leading the movement to highlight human rights abuses by the security forces in the State. Starting from the days of *Operation Bluebird*, during which some cases of human rights violation were reported involving Assam Rifles’ personnel in and around

⁸¹ See South Asia Terrorism Portal; Countries; India; States; Nagaland; Papers; Revised Ground Rules for Cease-fire between Government of India and NSCN-IM; www.satp.org.

⁸² See South Asia Terrorism Portal; Countries; India; States; Nagaland; Timeline 2001; www.satp.org.

Oinam village in Manipur's Senapati district in 1987, the NPMHR has been continuously drawing attention to such incidents. However, its propagation of a viewpoint that is swathed with an appreciation of the insurgents' cause and activities, and a highly partisan ethnic perspective, have done little service to the broader cause of human rights.

Women's groups, of late, have also been involved in peace initiatives. One such organisation, the Naga Mothers Association (NMA),⁸³ claims nearly 35,000 active members. The aims of the NMA are:

- ✍ to eradicate social evils and stop exploitation of women;
- ✍ to promote active participation of people, especially women in socio-political aspects of Naga life;
- ✍ to create an ambience of peaceful co-existence between different groups of the Naga society; and
- ✍ to serve as a mode of communication for Naga women's welfare and several issues concerning them.

The two main issues of rehabilitation of drug and alcohol addicts and the awareness against violence in Naga society have received most of the organisation's attention. The swelling number of unemployed youth, who were vulnerable to recruitment into the insurgency, as well as to alcoholism and drug abuse, led to a campaign by the NMA in 1996-1998, to ban alcohol and enforce prohibition. The NMA also established the first drug de-addiction and rehabilitation centre in the State and an AIDS hospital at Kohima. In recent years, the NMA has been closely associated with political issues, and its representatives met the leadership of the NSCN factions on several occasions in a proposed unity move. On January 30, 1999, a team of NMA representatives had met NSCN-IM leaders to discuss the overwhelming public opinion in Nagaland in favour of unity among various underground organisations, including NSCN-IM and NSCN-K, as the first step towards an elusive peace. After the meeting, the NMA President, Neidanou Angami, said that the NSCN-IM leaders were very receptive and had 'given a patient hearing' to the people's concern.

⁸³ The Naga NMA is a voluntary organisation which was formed in February, 1984, at Kohima. It was modelled on the lines of the Meira Paibis of Manipur.

With its theme 'Shed No More Blood', the NMA has become an important part of the peace movement in the State. The NMA also collaborates with other Naga organisations to work for a reduction in violence, and has organised rallies and appeals to stop the 'bloodbath.' The NMA co-ordinates with different churches in Nagaland to give momentum to the ongoing peace process between the Union government and the NSCN-IM. It has also been participating in meetings and conferences with the Naga Students' Federation (NSF), the Naga Hoho and the NPMHR to strengthen the peace process.

Immediately after the June 14, 2001, decision of the Union government to territorially extend the cease-fire with the NSCN-IM, the NMA, in a press release on June 17 expressed its "deep appreciation to the new turning point", and also appealed to all concerned, especially neighbouring States as well as Myanmar, to understand and appreciate the circumstantial difficulties and plight of the Nagas, and to extend co-operation towards finding a solution to the Indo-Naga problem. However, when the agitation commenced in Manipur and Assam against the territorial extension, the NMA in another press release on August 24, 2001, thanked the people of Assam, including Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi for sharing their views with the association on the extension of cease-fire with the NSCN-IM. Stating that the NMA believes in peaceful coexistence, it also appealed to all concerned to follow its slogan of 'Shed No More Blood.' Earlier, on July 23, 2001, in Guwahati, the NMA President, Neidanou Angami, had urged Gogoi to promote certain peace initiatives.

The Naga Hoho has also sought to engage the militant factions. After the IM group joined the peace process, the Hoho, along with other organisations such as the NPMHR and the NSF, urged the Khaplang faction to join the peace process. In October 1998, representatives of the NPMHR and the NSF met leaders of the Khaplang faction in Northern Myanmar. On January 28, 1999, the Naga Hoho President, M. Vero, met the NSCN-IM leadership in Bangkok to discuss proposals for unity among the NSCN factions. In September 2001, the Naga Hoho undertook a goodwill mission to Assam at the invitation of the Asomiya Sahitya Sabha (ASS). The *raison d'être* behind such journeys of conscience is to increase understanding between the Naga peoples

and the Meiteis of Manipur, as well as the Assamese. These communities had become estranged from each other during the violent ‘civil society movement’ in Imphal and other parts of Manipur, as well as in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh after the Union government’s decision to territorially extend its cease-fire with the NSCN-IM.

Activities of international NGOs and funding agencies have been primarily confined to the realm of monitoring human rights issues and creating awareness abroad regarding the “Naga cause” – campaigns that often amount to little more than an open support to the movement for secession. The Naga Vigil Human Rights Group, a UK-based NGO, founded in 1989, proposes to ‘document the ongoing human rights violations and make available research material to individuals and other NGOs.’ It has offices in UK, Australia, Nepal, India and Japan. It channels some humanitarian aid such as medical dispensaries for various relief projects such as the Rainbow Relief Project in eastern Nagaland. The Naga International Support Centre (NISC), an Amsterdam-based NGO founded in May 2001, supports the peace process and seeks to generate a ‘free flow of information.’ It is headed by its Secretary General Frans Welman. Another such Dutch NGO is the Netherlands Centre for Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) of which Frans Welman is a board member. The NCIP, according to the Indian government, is said to have provided funds to the NSCN-IM.⁸⁴

Another recently formed NGO which has taken up the issue of the Nagas displaced from the Meitei-dominated Imphal valley is the Internally Displaced Naga Welfare Association (IDNWA). On October 18, 2001, the IDNWA, in co-ordination with the Tangkhul Working Committee, staged a mass rally, attended by over 3000 people at Ukhrul district headquarters in Manipur to pressurise the district authorities to provide relief material to the people who had fled the Imphal valley during the anti-ceasefire extension movement in June and July 2001. NGO participation in

⁸⁴ See “Dutch support revealed for rebels”, www.tehelka.com/channels/investigations/2000/oct/9/in100900dutch.htm .

the ongoing May 2002 Bangkok conclave is also seen as an attempt to make the peace process broad-based.⁸⁵

TRIPURA

A deepening nexus between major political parties and terrorist groups is evident in Tripura, and terrorist groups in the State also have strong connections with other insurgent organisations in the region. These groups, often aided by the ISI, exploit the 865 kilometre-long porous border with Bangladesh to establish their hideouts beyond Indian territory, and the State has emerged as a major corridor for pushing arms into the Northeast. Terrorists groups in the State are deeply criminalised and have transformed abduction into an industry. The State, which has barely 8.29 per cent of the Northeast's population, accounts for over 70 per cent of all abductions in the region.⁸⁶

There appears to be a decline in the trend of fatalities in the year 2001, as compared to the previous year. 312 persons lost their lives in insurgency related killings in the year 2001 as compared to 514 persons in 2000.

DATA

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Population: | 3,191,168 ⁸⁷ |
| Area: | 10,486 square kilometres. |
| Rural: | 10,339 square kilometres |
| Urban: | 147 square kilometres |
| Literacy Rate: | 73.66 % |
| Life Expectancy at Birth: | NA |
| SDP per capita (1996-97): | Rs. 6,200 (US\$ 132 approx.) ⁸⁸ |

Number of Conflict Related Deaths:⁸⁹

⁸⁵ See "NSCN(IM)-led Naga meet at Bangkok begins, discusses peace", *Sentinel*, May 8, 2002.

⁸⁶ South Asia Terrorism Portal; Countries; India; States; Tripura; Assessment 2001; www.satp.org

⁸⁷ *Census of India 2001*, Provisional Figures, <http://www.censusindia.net/results/provdata.xls>.

⁸⁸ See Tripura at a glance - Statistics on State Domestic Product. www.tripura.nic.in/kt3.htm.

⁸⁹ See South Asia terrorism Portal. www.satp.org

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| 1992-2000 | 2,321 |
| 2000 | 514 (360 civilians, 38 militants, 17 SF) |
| 2001 | 312 (239 civilians, 42 militants, 31 SF) |
| 2002 (till April 30) | 59 (45 civilians, 14 militants, 0 SF) |

Background

Insurgency in the State of Tripura has its roots in demographics, and this is the only State in India's Northeast that has been transformed, in recent history, from a predominantly tribal to a predominantly non-tribal State. The earliest chronicles available suggest that the State has had a substantial non-tribal Bengali population certainly since the 15th century, and the 1901 Census recorded 52.89 per cent of tribals in the State's population. This equation remained relatively stable till the early 1940s, when communal clashes in British-ruled East Bengal (later East Pakistan and now Bangladesh) provoked a steady migration into princely Tripura. The trickle turned into a flood during and after Partition. By 1951, the tribal population had fallen to 36.85 per cent, and further to 28.44 per cent in 1981. The 1991 Census, however, indicated a marginal reversal of the trend, with the tribal population rising to 30.95 per cent.

The migrants have predominantly been cultivators practising relatively advanced patterns of agriculture, compared to the *jhum* (shifting cultivation) of the indigenous people, and the tribes progressively lost control of their traditional lands and were increasingly marginalised in all walks of life.

The first insurgency in the State was organised by the Communist Party of India (CPI) during 1948-51 as part of a larger movement to 'liberate India from its then ruling classes'. The movement disintegrated and its leader, Dasharath Deb, was co-opted into democratic politics (he became a Member of Parliament in the country's first general elections in 1952, and was Chief Minister of Tripura over the period 1993-98). The CPI and (after its split) the CPI-Marxist (CPI-M) have since launched agitation for tribal rights, but the logic of electoral arithmetic has

forced a dilution of this stance, since no political party can secure power in the State without the non-tribal vote.⁹⁰

The failure of democratic politics to correct the imbalance, and rising tribal discontent, led to the emergence of the Tripura Upajati Juba Samiti (TUJS) in June 1967. TUJS was primarily a political front that raised four demands:

- ✍ autonomous district councils for tribals;
- ✍ extension of inner-line regulations to Tripura;
- ✍ introduction of 'kokborok' in the Roman script as the medium of instruction for tribal students in the State; and
- ✍ restoration of alienated tribal lands.

By 1970, however, the feeling that only armed action could secure relief for the tribals was growing, and the TUJS raised a force of armed volunteers, the Tripur Sena (Tripura Army), under the leadership of the then 'assistant general secretary' of TUJS, Bijay Kumar Hrangkhawal. A brand of virulent ethnic politics increasingly flourished, and a Bengali communal organisation, Amra Bangla (We are Bengalis) came into being to counter the TUJS campaign. In December 1978, Hrangkhawal's ambitions led to the secret formation of the Tripura National Volunteers (TNV) after he had established contact with the militant Mizo National Front in neighbouring Mizoram. After the Tribal Areas Autonomous Districts Act, 1979, was passed, May 1979 and June 1980 saw two waves of vicious ethnic rioting instigated by the TNV, with Amra Bangla activists retaliating. An estimated 1,800 people lost their lives and thousands of dwellings were burnt before the situation was brought under control after the army intervened in June 1980. Hrangkhawal was expelled from the Tripur Sena after the riots and was arrested, but went on to develop a comfortable relationship with the then Chief Minister, Nripen Chakaraborty. In August 1982, he was pressured by some of his earlier followers to cross over into Bangladesh and to launch a full-fledged insurgency. This phase of the insurgency ended on August 10, 1988, when Hrangkhawal signed a tripartite peace accord with the Union Home Ministry and the Tripura

⁹⁰ The CPI-CPI-M combine lost the State Legislative Assembly elections in 1967 because of their demand for autonomous district councils (ADCs) for the tribals, based on the 5th Schedule of the Constitution.

government shortly after the Congress-TUJS coalition was installed in the State.⁹¹

The peace, however, was short-lived. In May 1990, the All Tripura Tribal Force⁹² came into being, allegedly with the support of the Left parties, and in the wake of deep political polarisation and allegations of rigging in the State Assembly elections. The ATTF launched an armed offensive, selectively targeting Congress and TUJS cadres. The organisation ceased operations only after the Left Front returned to power in April 1993. An accord was signed on August 23, 1993, and an amnesty announced in September, after which mass surrenders commenced. Over 1,600 activists had laid down arms by March 1994. However, a splinter group of hard-liners, under the leadership of Ranjit Debbarma, refused to surrender, and resumed activities under the slightly amended banner of the All Tripura Tigers Force (ATTF).⁹³

Earlier, in 1991, the erstwhile vice president of the TNV, Dhananjay Reang, established the National Liberation Front of Tripura, (NLFT)⁹⁴ and began hit-and-run operations primarily targeting the security forces. The NLFT has a strong Christian fundamentalist orientation, and there have been some reports of forced conversion by the organisation. Reang was ousted by Nayanbasi Jamatia in a bloodless coup in 1994, and set up a new group, the Tripura Resurrection Army (TRA). The TRA, however, surrendered *en masse* to the State Government in 1997 after the SFs launched a major counter-terrorism offensive. The NLFT is currently headed by Viswamani Debbarma.

⁹¹ For full text of the accord see South Asia Terrorism Portal; Countries; India; States; Tripura; Papers; Memorandum of Understanding with Tripura National Volunteers (TNV), 1988; www.satp.org.

⁹² All Tripura Tribal Force was formed in 1990 by a group of former Tripura National Volunteers (TNV) terrorists, who dissociated themselves from the TNV when the August 1988 Accord was concluded between the TNV and the Central government, and refused to surrender as required by the Accord.

⁹³ For a profile of the ATTF, see South Asia Terrorism Portal; Countries; India; States; Tripura; Terrorist Outfits; ATTF; www.satp.org.

⁹⁴ The NLFT was formed in December 1989 under the leadership of Dhananjay Reang, former Vice-President of TNV. The main objective of the NLFT is to establish an "independent" Tripura through armed struggle.

A significant Bengali militant group, the United Bengali Liberation Front (UBLF)⁹⁵ came into existence in October 1999 with the proclaimed objective of protection of the Bengali populace from attacks by other terrorist outfits such as the NLFT.⁹⁶ In a certain sense, its formation has demonstrated the clash of interests between the dominant tribal population and the non-tribes. There was a substantial proliferation of terrorist factions in the State in the closing years of the second Millennium. Today, there are over 30 militant organisations operating at various levels, and on a variety of 'ideological' platforms, though just two of these – the NLFT and the ATTF – are responsible for most militant activities, and most of the others are just rag-tag criminal gangs, or are dormant.

Conflict Dynamics

The real obstacle to peace in the State lies in the deep vested interests that are now entrenched both within the political scenario and in the operations of militant groups. The unyielding polarisation between the tribal population and the non-tribals has been exacerbated, at once, by electoral politics and by extremist atrocities. There is now incontrovertible evidence of a deepening nexus between major political parties and terrorist groups. The NLFT is said to have close links with the Congress (I), while the ATTF is aligned with the ruling Left Front.⁹⁷ There are clear indications that terrorism in the State – with its disproportionate emphasis on criminal activities such as abduction and extortion – is substantially supported and sustained by political patronage. Abduction by terrorists in Tripura has evolved into a well-organised criminal operation. A total of 555 incidents of abduction, including 481 by the NLFT and 41 by the ATTF, were reported in the State during the year 2000 alone. Apart from the

⁹⁵ For a profile of the UBLF, see South Asia Terrorism Portal; Countries; India; States; Tripura; Terrorist outfits; UBLF; www.satp.org.

⁹⁶ The NLFT has, reportedly, carried out targeted attacks against the non-tribals. One such instance cited is the May 20, 2000-massacre in which 15 non-Tribals were killed and approximately 13 injured in the West Tripura district.

⁹⁷ South Asia Terrorism Portal; Countries; India; States; Tripura; Assessment 2001; www.satp.org.

dominant groups, lesser-known terrorist groups, including some criminal gangs, abduct civilians in order to 'sell' them to one or the other of the larger terrorist organisations, who then hike the ransom amount.⁹⁸

Tribal terrorists specifically target the non-tribal population, whom they call 'settler refugees'. Attacks on non-tribal people in South and West Tripura became more frequent consequent to the victory of the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT),⁹⁹ in the Tripura Tribal Area Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) elections held in May 2000. The level of violence is also heightened by the emergence and consolidation of militant Bengali organisations such as the UBLF and Amra Bangali.

Terrorist outfits in Tripura also strengthened their existing network with Pakistan's ISI and with other groups in the region. The ATTF headquarters at Tarabon in Bangladesh also serves as the headquarters of ULFA chairman Arabinda Rajkhowa. The terrorists operate a number of other bases and training camps in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). Other than ULFA, the ATTF reportedly maintains a tacit understanding with several insurgent groups in the region, including PREPAK and PLA of Manipur. The political wing of the ATTF, the Tripura People's Democratic Front (TPDF) has set up a parallel government in some remote areas of the State. Reports also indicate that Tripura has emerged as a corridor for pushing arms into other States in the Northeast, with groups such as the NLFT procuring arms and ammunition from South East Asian countries such as Thailand and Singapore, and depositing them at Cox Bazaar in Bangladesh, one of the major illegal arms centres in the region. According to Badal Chowdhury, the Finance Minister of Tripura, the illegal consignments of weapons are offloaded in the districts of Dhalai, South Tripura and North Tripura, to be transported to other parts of the Northeastern region.¹⁰⁰ The State government submitted a report to the Centre in May 2000 documenting terrorist activities, including details of weapons procurement and a list of 21 NLFT and eight ATTF base camps across the border, a majority of

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ IPFT is the political wing of the NLFT.

¹⁰⁰ "Terror in Tripura", *Frontline*, vol. 17, no. 12, June 10 - 23, 2000. www.flonnet.com/fl1712/17120410.htm.

which are situated in the Sylhet and Chittagong districts of Bangladesh.¹⁰¹

The year 2000 also witnessed a violent conflict between the cadres of NLFT and the Bru National Liberation Front (BNLF), a Reang-dominated outfit based in Mizoram. The high point of this violent feud was the July 9, 2000, incident wherein 70 BNLF cadres were killed by the NLFT at the BNLF headquarters in the Jampui hills in Bangladesh.¹⁰²

A critical development within the insurgent movements in the State was the vertical split in the NLFT in September 2000 as a result of tribal rivalries, accentuated by the differences between the Halams (who led a coalition of smaller Tripura tribes in the NLFT) and the Debbarmas (the single largest tribe). The schism resulted after the expulsion of Jogendra Debbarma, chief of the political wing of the group, by the Halam 'Prime Minister' Koloï. Jogendra Debbarma has reportedly formed the Borok National Council of Tripura (BNCT) and is also alleged to have established contacts with certain Meitei insurgent groups in Manipur.

In another development, differences of opinion inside the NLFT between the Christians and the Hindus led to its further break up on February 18, 2001, with Nayanbasi Jamatiya forming a separate faction of the Jamatiya community. According to reports, Nayanbasi and his followers fled from the NLFT camp in CHT, Bangladesh, in the wake of sharp differences among the top hierarchy of the outfit. The first differences of opinion cropped up when the Tripuri leadership of the NLFT attacked the Reang organisation, BNLF, in 2000, and killed many of the Bru cadres. Nayanbasi, a Jamatiya himself, was sympathetic to Reang militants and felt that the attack on Reangs was a part of militant Tripuri leaders' designs for the 'Tripurisation' of the 18 other tribal communities. On April 1, 2001, NLFT 'foreign secretary' Joshua Debbarma alias Jogendra and 'senior commander' Janabir Debbarma quit the mainstream faction of the outfit along with some cadres, and joined the breakaway faction of the NLFT led by Nayanbasi Jamatiya.

¹⁰¹ "Tripura's brutal cul de sac", *Himal South Asia*, Kathmandu, December 2001. www.himalmag.com/december2001/essay.htm.

¹⁰² South Asia Terrorism Portal; Countries; India; States; Tripura; Timeline 2000; www.satp.org

Official Conflict Management

Official measures for conflict management have remained largely confined to administrative action through the SFs and clandestine persuasion to lay down arms. In 1979, the State government passed the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council Act to assuage, to some extent, feelings of alienation and deprivation among the tribals. The impact on insurgency and the polarisation of communities in the State has, however, been negligible.

In 1987, the TNV leader, Bijoy Hrangkhawal had contacted the then Mizoram Chief Minister, Lalthanhawla, to secure an 'honourable settlement' with the government. Lalthanhawla pressed for a mediated solution with the then Union Home Minister, Buta Singh. The Home Minister, however, stated that, unless a Congress-led government was in power in the State, such a solution could not be implemented. Hrangkhawal then intensified his offensive and eventually provoked a severe non-tribal backlash in the weeks preceding elections. This led to the defeat of the Left Front and the installation of a Congress-TUJS coalition government in Tripura. Hrangkhawal sent an appeal to the then Governor, Gen. (Retd) K.V. Krishna Rao, for a peaceful settlement, and in June, the entire militant leadership was brought to Delhi. After two months of negotiations, a tripartite peace accord was signed on August 10, 1988, ending one chapter in the history of militancy in the State.

When the Left Front returned to power in 1993, the now dominant ATTF, widely believed to be encouraged by the CPI-M, negotiated a bipartite settlement with the State government, leading to the surrender of a bulk of its cadres. The re-constituted ATTF and the NLFT have, however, been entirely unresponsive to all pleas to arrive at a negotiated settlement. The ATTF has laid down three preconditions for any negotiations to commence:

1. All 'illegally migrated' people on or after October 15, 1949, and who were not listed in the voters' list of 1951, must be declared 'foreigners';
2. Peace negotiations must be held in any convenient third country and under UN mediation; and

3. The 'sovereignty of Tripura' is not negotiable under any condition.

These conditionalities have not been accepted by the government.

More recently, some attempts have been made to initiate a process of negotiations, but these have been rejected by the militant groups. During a visit to Tripura, on March 28, 2000, Union Home Minister Advani said that the State government would have to tackle the situation on its own and could initiate talks with the rebels. On June 23, 2000, the State Governor, Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Krishna Mohan Seth, had asked terrorists to participate in talks and find a solution within the framework of the Indian Constitution. On December 31, 2000, the Indigenous Peoples' Front of Tripura (IPFT), formerly the political unit of the NLFT, urged the Union government to convene an all-party meeting to resolve the insurgency problem in Tripura. It also asked the government to involve the ATTF and the UBLF in the peace process. Currently, there is strong political pressure in Tripura to start a peace process akin to the Naga peace process, and to this end on March 22, 2001, Tripura Chief Minister Manik Sarkar had stated that the Centre should immediately take the initiative to declare a Nagaland-type cease-fire in Tripura and ensure that proper ground-rules are framed and observed. On July 24, 2001, a four-member delegation of IPFT, headed by chairman Bijoy Hrangkhawal, MLA, had met the Union Home Minister in Delhi and urged him to call all identified insurgent outfits of the State for peace talks. In response, the Home Minister said that a high-power Central delegation would visit Tripura in September, 2001 to study the situation and take necessary steps to contain insurgency.

The increasing numbers of surrenders by militants also suggest that there will be a greater willingness to seek a negotiated solution in the foreseeable future. Out of a total of approximately 206 surrenders in Tripura between January and July, 2001, 97 have been from the newly formed Borok National Council of Tripura (BNCT), nine from the newly formed Nayanbasi Jamatiya faction of the NLFT, 17 from the Tripura National Security Force (TNSF) and 43 from the NLFT.

Meanwhile, counter-insurgency operations in the State continue. In a bid to combat the continuing upsurge of

insurgency, the State was declared a disturbed area and six of its 49 police districts were brought under the Disturbed Areas Act in 1988. By 1999, the number of police districts under the Act had risen to 27.¹⁰³ The Army and Assam Rifles have been inducted into counter-insurgency operations, though the Army was pulled out in the wake of the Kargil War.¹⁰⁴ On January 6, 2000, the government decided to implement the provisions of the National Security Act (NSA) to curb growing insurgency in the State.¹⁰⁵

A substantial exercise has also been initiated to galvanise the State Police for counter-insurgency duties, and a special central grant of Rs. 180 million was sanctioned for the modernisation of the force in 2000. The other major component of the State's conflict management measures is to encourage surrenders through a range of secret negotiations and rehabilitation packages, and, between April 1993 and December 2000, these resulted in the surrender of 5,467 militants. This has had very limited impact on the scale of violence in the State, as the terrorist groups appear to have little difficulty in replenishing their numbers through fresh recruitment. New initiatives to counter insurgency were elucidated by the Tripura Governor in his year 2002 address to the State Legislative Assembly. These included proposals for additional enforcement, raising of new SF battalions, establishing camps in the remote areas and revised rehabilitation packages for surrendered terrorists.¹⁰⁶

Civil Society Initiatives

The most manifest peace movement in the State, in the form of popular opposition to terrorism, has been initiated by the Jamatiya Hoda, the Supreme Council of the Jamatiya tribe, the third largest tribal group in Tripura. At the 410th conference of the Hoda on December 13, 2000, tribal leaders resolved not to pay any kind of 'tax' to the terrorist groups operating in the State. The conflict between NLFT and the Hoda reached a high point in the

¹⁰³ "Terror in Tripura", *Frontline*, vol. 17, no.12, June 10 - 23, 2000. www.flonnet.com/fl1712/17120410.htm.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ See South Asia Terrorism Portal, Nagaland, Timelines. www.satp.org.

¹⁰⁶ The Governor's address at www.tripura.nic.in/gs270202.htm.

latter half of 2000, when the clergy and community leadership of the Jamatias sought the Governor's intervention to defend their faith amidst the NLFT's forced conversion drive and constant threats and intimidation by the militants. The NLFT had issued a 'directive' for the cessation of all non-Christian ways of worship in the State. In a major strike on January 29, 2001, the NLFT abducted 21 Jamatiya tribals. This resulted in the Jamatiya Hoda leaders warning the NLFT that they would have to pay a heavy price, consequent to which the abducted persons were released on February 8, 2001.¹⁰⁷ The Jamatias continue their active resistance drive by organising armed volunteers for village protection. On February 13, 2001, the Jamatiya Hoda pledged support to the government in its fight against insurgency.¹⁰⁸ On February 18, 2001, the Jamatiya Hoda received the backing of Buddhist tribals in the State in its struggle against militancy and forcible conversions to Christianity.¹⁰⁹ In addition to the Jamatias, the Reangs and Uchais are the other communities that have joined the larger anti-terrorism campaign.

The former insurgent outfit, TNV, has also expressed its willingness to be a part of the peace process. The TNV has stated that it was ready to act as an intermediary and broker a peace settlement with the insurgent groups.¹¹⁰ Parents of the insurgents have also been asked by the State government to bring the 'misguided youth' back into the mainstream.

The NGO movement is, at best, at an incipient stage in the State. The most prominent and active NGOs in the State operate essentially within the confines of their welfare and developmental mandate, and have not made any attempt to initiate conflict resolution activities. The Tripura Adimjati Sevak Sangh (TASS) and the Borok Human Rights Group (BHRG) make occasional appearances to organise seminars, workshops and conferences on conflict and resolution. A short-lived 'peace mission' comprising

¹⁰⁷ See South Asia Terrorism Portal, Countries: India: States; Tripura, Timeline 2001. www.satp.org.

¹⁰⁸ "Fight against militancy: Hoda pledges support to Tripura Govt", *Assam Tribune*, February 14, 2001.

¹⁰⁹ See "Jamatiya priests seek governor's help", *The Telegraph*, Kolkata, October 28, 2000.

¹¹⁰ See "Indian envoys know nothing of Northeast: ex-rebel", www.rediff.com/news/2001/aug/06naga.htm.

a group of intellectuals, senior citizens and heads of Hindu religious organisations was floated in the year 2000, and arranged a few meetings at district and sub-divisional headquarters to mobilise public opinion against terrorist activities, but there is no present evidence of its continued existence.

THE ‘PEACEFUL’ NORTHEASTERN STATES

MEGHALAYA

Between 1992 and 2001, a total of 140 persons, including 63 civilians, 50 security force personnel and 27 militants lost their lives in insurgency related violence in Meghalaya. Violence has perceptibly increased over the past few years, with 118 persons killed between 1998 and 2001, as against 22 persons between 1992 and 1997. In year 2001, 40 persons lost their lives in terrorist induced violence, including 24 civilians, eight security force personnel and eight terrorists.

DATA

| | |
|---|---|
| Population: | 2,306,069 ¹¹¹ |
| Area: | 22,429 square kilometres |
| Rural: | 22,275 square kilometres |
| Urban: | 154 square kilometres |
| Literacy Rate: | 63.31% |
| Life Expectancy at Birth: | NA |
| SDP per capita (1997-98): | Rs. 8,474; US \$ 173 approx. ¹¹² |
| Number of Conflict Related Deaths: ¹¹³ | |
| 1992-2000: | 100 |
| 2000 | 36 (12 civilians, 17 militants, 7 SFs) |
| 2001 | 40 (24 civilians, 8 |

¹¹¹ *Census of India 2001*, Provisional Figures,

<http://www.censusindia.net/results/provdata.xls>.

¹¹² Data on area, life expectancy and per capita SDP, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, <http://mha.nic.in/nen111.htm>.

¹¹³ South Asia Terrorism Portal data, www.satp.org.

| | | | | |
|--|----------------------|-------|------------|----|
| | 2002 (till April 30) | 26 | 4 | 11 |
| | | 8 SF) | civilians, | 11 |
| | | | 11 SF) | |

Conflict Dynamics

Meghalaya is home to a number of tribes, including, prominently, the Garos, Khasis, Pnars, Jayantias, etc. Inter-tribal rivalry and common acrimony against the ‘outsiders’ has led to the growth of a number of militant organisations constituted along exclusionary tribal identities. These include both organisations that represent the dominant tribal groupings in the State – such as the Khasis – and the smaller or minority groupings, such as the Nagas. While the violence of these organisations is substantially directed against other ethnic groups, or is related to the increasing criminal and extortion activities that dominate their agenda, most of the militant groups operate under the camouflage of a variety of sectarian ‘political’ demands, including protection of the ‘indigenous people’ against ‘encroachment’ by outsiders and the creation of separate homelands along tribal lines.

The first militant tribal council in the State was the Hynniewtrep Achik Liberation Council. In the Council, the Hynniewtreps (Khasis) represented the combined aspirations of Khasi and Jaintia tribes and the Achiks represented the Garos, in a common fight against the ‘Dkhars’, a generic term for outsiders. In 1992, the Council underwent a split as a result of inter-tribal antagonisms, leading to the formation of the Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC) and Achik Matgrik Liberation Army (AMLA). Since then the Khasis and the Garos have parted ways by forming their own insurgent outfits, which have been responsible for both anti-establishment and internecine violence.

The HNLC aims to transform Meghalaya into a province exclusively for the Khasi tribe, which, it claims, has long been ‘dominated’ by the Garos, and been deprived of the fruits of development by ‘outsiders’.¹¹⁴ The other prominent insurgent

¹¹⁴ For a profile of the HNLC, see South Asia Terrorism Portal, Countries; India; States; Meghalaya; Terrorist Outfits; HNLC; www.satp.org.

outfit in Meghalaya is the Achik National Volunteer Council (ANVC), founded in December 1995.¹¹⁵ It demands the establishment of an 'Achik Land' in the areas of Garo Hills comprising the present districts of Garo Hills in Meghalaya and a large chunk of Kamrup and Goalpara district of Assam. On November 16, 2000, the Central government banned the HNLC and the ANVC.

Other political groups such as the Hill State People's Democratic Party (HSPDP) fight for the right of 'self-governance' of the Khasi-Pnar and Garo people. The Garo National Council (GNC) is an independent Garo separatist organisation, which demands a Garo State comprising the three districts of the Garo hills in the State.

The NSCN, allegedly not only masterminded insurgency in Meghalaya, but also has subsequently maintained close links with the militant outfits in the area. ALMA was said to be the brain child of the NSCN. It has also extended training facilities to the militant outfits from Meghalaya. Moreover, it has actively involved itself in the attacks carried out by the AVNC. Only recently, two BSF personnel were killed in a joint attack by the AVNC and NSCN-IM. This happened despite the NSCN entering into the process of dialogue with the government.

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Arunachal Pradesh suffers primarily from an 'overflow' of violence from neighbouring Nagaland, particularly in the Naga dominated Tirap and Changlang Districts. In 2001, a total of 63 persons were killed in the State, including 12 security force personnel, 40 civilians and 11 terrorists, as against seven civilians three security personnel and 24 terrorists in the year 2000.

¹¹⁵ For a profile of the ANVC, see South Asia Terrorism Portal, Countries; India; States; Meghalaya; Terrorist Outfits; ANVC; www.satp.org.

DATA

| | |
|---|---|
| Population: | 1,091,117 ¹¹⁶ |
| Area: | 83,743 square kilometres |
| Rural: | 83,743 square kilometres |
| Urban: | NA |
| Literacy Rate: | 54.74% |
| Life Expectancy at Birth: | NA |
| SDP per capita (1997-98): | Rs. 13,424; US \$ 274 approx. ¹¹⁷ |
| Number of Conflict Related Deaths: ¹¹⁸ | |
| 1992-2000 | 69 |
| 2000 | 34 (7 Civilians, 24 militants, 3 SF) |
| 2001 | 63 (40 civilians, 11 militants, 12 SF) |
| 2002 (till April 30) | 1 (0 civilians, 1 SF, 0 militants) |

Conflict Dynamics

Arunachal Pradesh was long projected as an ‘island of peace’ in the turbulent Northeast, and this is an impression that still persists, despite trends towards an overflow of the conflicts from its neighbourhood. It has a significant Naga population in its Tirap and Changlang districts, and witnesses sporadic clashes between the various Naga insurgent outfits. Its Tirap district borders Nagaland and is used by insurgent groups as a transit route from Myanmar. Both Tirap and Changlang are almost completely dominated by the NSCN-K, which established its presence there in the 1980s. NSCN-IM activities have also been noticed in some areas. Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Mukut Mithi, on June 19, 2001, had urged the Union government not to recognise the camps of the NSCN-IM under the subsequently aborted extension of the area of cease-fire. Insurgent groups such

¹¹⁶ *Census of India 2001*, Provisional Figures,

<http://www.censusindia.net/results/provdata.xls>.

¹¹⁷ Data on area, life expectancy and per capita SDP, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, <http://mha.nic.in/nen111.htm>.

¹¹⁸ South Asia Terrorism Portal, www.satp.org.

as the ULFA, NSCN-K, NSCN-IM and Bodo militants are reportedly using sparsely populated Arunachal Pradesh territory to locate their hideouts and for other subversive activities. Both factions of the NSCN have also been using their camps in these two districts to train other terrorist groups. After the recent decision by the ULFA to shift its bases from Bhutan, there is significant indication that these camps may be moved into Arunachal Pradesh.¹¹⁹

Of late, however, at least one indigenous insurgent group has begun to surface in the State: the Arunachal Dragon Force (ADF). Formed in the beginning of the year 2001, the ADF is believed to have been propped up by the NSCN-IM and the ULFA in a bid to expand their area of influence. The ADF has now been rechristened as East India Liberation Front (EILF) and is primarily active in the Lohit district of the State, nearly 500 kilometers away from the State capital Itanagar. The ADF was formed by some surrendered terrorists belonging to the United People's Volunteers of Arunachal Pradesh (UPVA) under the leadership of Chownomi Naamchum. The ADF's declared goal is the protection of the ethnic identity of the indigenous Arunachalis from the increasing number of infiltrators and outside settlers entering Arunachal Pradesh, and the struggle for an 'independent homeland' for the Khamti tribe in the State. Its cadres operate in the Lohit, Changlang and Dibang valley districts of Arunachal Pradesh, which share an international border with China. The ADF reportedly draws its cadres from among the 50,000 Khamti tribe and has an estimated strength of about 400 cadres. The ADF/EILF is in an enviable position because it is well acquainted with, and has the support of, local tribals in the Tirap, Changlang and Lohit districts, and this provides it with the leverage to bargain with the NSCN-IM, NSCN-K and the ULFA, all of whom are fighting for supremacy in these districts of Arunachal Pradesh, and can benefit from an understanding with this group.

¹¹⁹ ULFA has its base camps in the Tirap and Changlang districts of the State. See "Terrorist camps now within Army's radar", *Hindustan Times*, July 17, 2000. The presence of the same was also accepted by Chief Minister Mukut Mithi. See "Statewide red alert in Arunachal" NENA, vol. 3 no. 31-32 December 22- January 6, 2001.
www.nenanews.com/OT%20Dec.22-%20Jan.6.%2001/oh4.htm

There is increasing evidence of a growing nexus between politicians and terrorist groups in Arunachal Pradesh. In June 2000, L. Wanglat, a Member of the State Legislative Assembly, had demanded an enquiry by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) or judicial authorities to ascertain the abetting and sponsoring of insurgency in the Tirap and Changlang districts. He had demanded that political leaders found guilty should be arrested and be asked to relinquish their official posts.¹²⁰ On April 6, 2001, former Chief Minister Gegong Apang alleged that some ministers and members of the Legislative Assembly were harbouring and abetting insurgents in the State, and had direct links with the NSCN-K and NSCN-IM in Tirap and Changlang.¹²¹

Extortion, one of the main sources of funding for the NSCN-IM, is widespread in the two districts, and covers various government and public sector organisations in addition to the civilian population. Oil India Limited (OIL), the premier oil-exploring agency in the State, received an extortion notice of Rs. six million from the NSCN-IM in July 2001. Consequent to this, operations at the Khumsai oil well in the Changlang district were suspended after July 31, 2001, on the eve of the expiry of the August 1 deadline to meet the demand.¹²² Virtually the entire population comes under the extortion network of the militant groups operating in these districts, and extortion notices have also begun to make their appearance in the State capital Itanagar.

In response to reports of extortion and activities by insurgents in the two border districts of Tirap and Changlang, the Union Home Ministry extended the Disturbed Areas Act on February 24, 2001, to these districts by another six months.¹²³ Earlier, in the year 2000, Chief Minister Mukut Mithi and Governor Arvind Dave had drawn the attention of the Prime Minister and Union

¹²⁰ See "CBI or judicial probe into Tirap insurgency demanded", *Nenanews*, vol. 2 no. 51-52, June 22-July 6, 2000.

¹²¹ See "Mithi Govt looting public money": Apang", www.nenanews.com/OT%20Apr.7-%20%20Apr.21.01/oh15.htm .

¹²² See "NSCN (I-M) helping rebel groups in Arunachal", www.rediff.com/news/2001/aug/08nscn.htm.

¹²³ See "DA Act to be extended in Tirap, Changlang", *Assam Tribune*, February 26, 2001. On March 23, 2002, the Act was extended facilitating Army operations in these districts. See "Insurgency on the rise in Arunachal Pradesh", *Assam Tribune*, April 3, 2002.

Home Minister to the critical situation in Tirap and Changlang districts in the wake of clashes between the NSCN factions, and had had requested additional deployment of paramilitary forces.¹²⁴ With growing clashes between the two rival NSCN factions in the latter half of year 2000, the Centre rushed two companies of paramilitary forces to the State on September 30, 2000.

In June 2000, the people of Tirap district had requested the Arunachal Pradesh government to immediately initiate a peace process with the NSCN-K. In a press release, the chairman of the Tirap-Changlang Union Territory Demand Committee, Samlang Tangdong, had said that the chiefs and village heads of Tirap district at a meeting held at Khonsa, the headquarters of the district, had unanimously decided to press the State government to begin the process. A memorandum was submitted to State Chief Minister Mukut Mithi for immediate constitution of a peace committee to initiate dialogue with the ultras.¹²⁵

Civil society's role in the movements for peace remains in a nascent stage except for occasional rallies and protest marches against the rising violence in the State. In July 2001, a silent peace rally was taken out at Khonsa. Over 800 people participated in the rally organized by the Tirap Tribal Employees Welfare Association and Women's Organisation.¹²⁶

MIZORAM

During the year 2000, a total of four civilians, one terrorist and seven security force personnel were killed in militancy-related violence in the State. In 1999, two civilians and five security force personnel lost their lives. There were no casualties in the year 2001.

¹²⁴ See "Mithi moves PM to check NSCN-IM attempt", *Assam Tribune*, April 4, 2002.

¹²⁵ See "Arunachal Govt. urged to talk with NSCN(K)", *NENA News Briefs* vol. 2 no. 51-52, June 22-July 6, 2000.

¹²⁶ See "Arunachal organisations hold anti-truce extension stir", *Hindustan Times*, July 21, 2001.

DATA

| | |
|---|--|
| Population (2001): | 891,058 ¹²⁷ |
| Area: | 21,081 square kilometres |
| Rural: | 20,588 square kilometres |
| Urban: | 493 square kilometres |
| Literacy Rate: | 88.49% |
| Life Expectancy at Birth: | NA |
| SDP per capita (1997-98): | Rs. 9,570; US \$ 195 approx. ¹²⁸ |
| Number of Conflict Related Deaths: ¹²⁹ | |
| 1992-2000 | 23 |
| 2000 | 12 (4 civilians, 1 militant, 7 SFs) |
| 2001 | 0 (0 civilians, 0 militants, 0 SF) |
| 2002 (till April 30) | 0 (0 civilians, 0 militants, 0 SF) |

Background

Peace was restored to Mizoram in 1986, after a 20-year long insurgency, when a settlement was reached with Laldenga, leader of the militant Mizo National Front (MNF) in 1986. Mizoram was a part of Assam before its reconstitution as a Union Territory in 1972 and became a full-fledged State in 1987, after the agreement with Laldenga, who became its first Chief Minister.

Conflict Dynamics

The State has remained, by and large, peaceful, though occasional voices demanding concessions for specific tribal groups are heard from time to time, and there is some potential for violence on these grounds. Organisations such as the Zomi Reunification Organisation (ZORO) and Hmar Peoples

¹²⁷ *Census of India 2001*, Provisional Figures,

<http://www.censusindia.net/results/provdata.xls>.

¹²⁸ Data on area, life expectancy and per capita SDP, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, <http://mha.nic.in/nen111.htm>.

¹²⁹ South Asia Terrorism Portal, www.satp.org.

Convention (HPC) contain the seeds of such potential violence. Certain minority tribes, such as the Pavis and Lakhers, also allege neglect and discrimination, even though their problems with the Mizos appear to have been substantially addressed.

Mizoram had its share of violence during the 20-year long insurgency, but had never experienced abduction for ransom throughout that period. There was widespread shock, consequently, when six employees of the North-Eastern Electricity Power Corporation Ltd., (NEEPCO) were abducted by militants belonging to Manipur's Hmar People's Convention – Democrats (HPC-D) in March 2000.¹³⁰ In another disturbing incident, seven members of the anti-terrorist Hunter Force of the Mizoram Police were killed in an ambush by suspected BNLF terrorists along the Indo-Bangladesh border in Mamit district on June 30, 2000.¹³¹

The BNLF has been spearheading much of the violence in the State with its demand for the creation of a separate District Council within Mizoram. The BNLF is an outfit of Reang (Bru) communities settled in Mizoram. The Brus claim that they are 'oppressed' by the majority Mizo community in the State, which is educationally and economically far better off. Unless carefully tackled, the conflict has significant potential for escalation.¹³²

The District Council issue has been a long-standing bone of contention, and sparked off fierce ethnic violence between the Reangs and the Mizos in October 1997, resulting in an exodus of the Reangs to the adjoining North Tripura district. The Mizoram government is overtly against the creation of District Councils and has made the surrender of BNLF militants a pre-condition for refugee repatriation. On October 28, 2000, the BNLF had suggested tri-partite peace talks to end its three-year-old insurgency in Mizoram and had urged the State government to set

¹³⁰ "6 NEEPCO employees abducted in Mizoram", <http://www.northeastvigil.com/newsarch/16042000i.htm#i01>.

¹³¹ "7 cops killed in Mizoram ambush", <http://www.northeastvigil.com/newsarch/01072000i.htm#i24>.

¹³² BNLF has recently agreed to scale down its demand from an autonomous council to that of regional council comprising the Reang dominated areas of the State. See "BNLF scales down autonomous council demand", *Assam Tribune*, May 1, 2002.

the stage by declaring a cease-fire.¹³³ The BNLF had also indicated that it would escalate violence in and around Mizoram if the State government failed to meet its demands. The Mizoram government has declared that unless the BNLF shuns the path of violence there can be no talks with it.

There are 30,000 Reang refugees sheltered in six camps in Kanchanpur sub-division in North Tripura district. There have been talks between the Tripura and Mizoram governments regarding the repatriation of these refugees. But BNLF had submitted a memorandum to Mizoram Chief Minister Zoramthanga on April 18, 2001, demanding a separate Autonomous District Council (ADC) under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, and covering Reang-dominated areas in Mammith district of Southern Mizoram. This memorandum added to the stand-off between the respective governments of Mizoram and Tripura.

In the past, the BNLF and NLFT co-operated closely, but rising tensions in the recent past have seen BNLF cadres fleeing from the NLFT. In January, 2001, Surjo Moni and Hmunsiama, 'President' and 'Deputy Commander', respectively, of the BNLF escaped from the NLFT and surrendered to the Assam Rifles at Kanchanpur in Tripura.¹³⁴ Some BNLF leaders have also taken shelter in Bangladesh.¹³⁵

PROSPECTS FOR THE NORTHEAST

The prospects for peace in India's Northeast remain mixed. There has been a steady erosion of the popular base of all insurgent movements in the region, and there is growing public pressure for a peaceful resolution of grievances. Significant declining trends in violence are also visible in most States. Unfortunately, popular local initiatives against the violence have, at best, been sporadic and passive, though there are now signs of a

¹³³ "BNLF proposes tripartite talks", *The Tribune*, Chandigarh, October 29, 2000.

¹³⁴ See "AR refuses to hand over BNLF chief", *Assam Tribune*, February 26, 2001.

¹³⁵ See "BNLF releases abducted Mizos", *Nenanews*, vol. 2, no. 47-48, May 22-June 6, 2000.

limited consolidation of a 'peace constituency' in some of the States.

Continuous demographic destabilisation as a result of migration, both within the country, and illegal population flows from Bangladesh, have created some of the most significant threats to present and future peace.

A number of 'cease-fire' agreements are already in place between militant groups and the government, and others are being negotiated. Unfortunately, where a multiplicity of terrorist organisations are operating, negotiations with some of these have tended to lead to escalation of violence by others. Negotiations have also not resulted in a decline in extortion and other criminal activities by such groups, though there is a significant diminution in killings, especially of security force and government personnel. As Sanjib Baruah notes, "there are limits to trying to end insurgencies through secretive deal-making between Indian bureaucrats and leaders of one or the other insurgent organisations."¹³⁶

The most significant obstacle to peace in the region is the crisis of governance. Levels of corruption in governments in the States of the Northeast are higher even than the extremely high averages in the rest of India and the quality of governance is abysmal. Consequently, despite substantial investment of public resources in a wide range of developmental programmes, the 'trickle down' to the intended beneficiaries has been negligible. The problem is compounded by the collusive arrangements between political parties and 'legitimate' businesses, on the one hand, and the lucrative criminal economy of terrorism that has now become entrenched in the region, on the other. With the passage of time, this underground economy of terrorism has grown stronger, and its linkages with the overground sector, immensely complex and intractable.

Growing and increasingly indiscriminate external support to all terrorist groupings, irrespective of ideology or objective, particularly by Pakistan's ISI, and the gradual cementing of linkages between terrorist groups across international borders

¹³⁶ See Sanjib Baruah, "Nagaland and the Northeast" (Follow up), *Himal South Asia*, July 2001. www.himalmag.com/july2001/response.html.

create further barriers to peace. The problem is aggravated by the fact that most such terrorist groupings operate out of safe havens in neighbouring countries such as Bangladesh, Bhutan and Myanmar, and the weak regimes in these countries find it impossible to check such activities on their soil.

LESSONS AND OBSERVATIONS

1. Increased developmental expenditure and activities, creation of infrastructure resources and employment generation have often been proposed as a panacea for political violence in the Northeast. Unfortunately, massive subsidies, grants and special allocations which were supposed to propel the region into prosperity, and to contain insurgency, may, indeed, have exacerbated the problem. 'Leakage' of resources – substantially to the insurgent groups themselves – has been endemic, and the ability of the state's agencies to execute developmental projects in areas of conflict is, at present, highly suspect.
2. Containment and regulation of migration: There have been several proposals, including the issue of identity cards and work permits, but their efficacy in stemming the tide of illegal migrants is suspect. In the absence of political will and the pressure of electoral vote banks, there appears to be no coherent initiative to translate any proposals to check or control the movement of populations in the region, beyond the current and entirely ineffective efforts to partially fence off the border with Bangladesh.
3. Liberalised cross-border trade: With nearly 99 per cent of its borders shared with other countries, the Northeast can be "a bridge to a most dynamic neighbourhood beyond... the meeting point of South and Southeast Asia."¹³⁷ Proposals for 'opening up' of trade with neighbouring countries, however, do not factor in the possibility of further destabilisation. Current illegal trade across borders is controlled by, or run under the 'protection' of, terrorist groups. An independent demonstration would be required to show that such groups

¹³⁷ Verghese, *India's Northeast Resurgent*, p. 367.

would not be the primary beneficiaries of such liberalisation. No such studies have yet been undertaken.

4. Improved political representation in India's Parliament: The collective strength of the Northeast States in the Lok Sabha (Lower House) is 24 in a 543 member House, and this has led to a neglect of issues relating to this region. It is not clear how this can be accommodated within the existing Constitutional structure.
5. Restoration of alienated lands to tribal populations: Given the scale of alienation, and the entrenchment of the non-tribal populations, it is not clear how practicable any efforts in this direction can be, and whether they will result in an abatement or escalation of violence.
6. Restoration and strengthening of institutions of local self-governance, including strong village and tribal councils: This is an area of significant potential, but needs to be approached with caution. Traditional structures of such local governance also carry with them the burden of traditional prejudices.
7. Restoration of the integrity of governance, and the various institutions of civil governance, including justice administration: This is, indeed, the primary task, and pathways will have to be developed that take the region from the present state of misgovernance to a restoration of the rule of law and Constitutional politics.
8. Disruption of the underground economy of terrorism: The lucrative regime of collusion between terrorists and various overground entities, including political parties, the bureaucracy and business organisations must be challenged and dismantled.
9. There is a need to define and implement an unambiguous counter-terrorism policy that is seen clearly to punish – and not reward, as is often the present case – acts of extremist violence.
10. There must be active promotion of a 'culture of peace' that rejects and de-legitimises political violence as a means to the resolution of political problems or grievances.