

INSURGENCY CONCERNS AND ISSUES IN NORTHEAST INDIA: CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES AND RECENT DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract:

The ethno-nationalist conflict has shaken the stability of States not only in India but also in many states of Asia, Africa, and Middle- east. The question of ethnic identity in North-East India is a very complex issue which leads to the emergence of many tribal movements. Various ethnic groups in the region have started asserting their identity based on ethnic loyalties- be cultural, linguistic or religious. The limited success or failure of the mass movements for autonomy, land, separate state within or outside Indian Union or demand for ST/SC statuses and their transformation into insurgent groups have not only transformed the whole of the North- eastern part into a potent platform for waging war against the Nation State but also led to an unprecedented and interminable violent conflict between different groups of people in the region. The narration of events leading to insurgency, the issues and the time period involved in respect of each State have to be understand against this perspective. Thus this paper attempts to analyze contemporary insurgency issues and concerns in Northeast India. This paper also analyzes causes, consequences and recent development of insurgency in Northeast India.

Keywords: Insurgency, Conflict, Causes, Consequences, Northeast India, Recent Development

1. Introduction:

Northeast India is the most volatile and insurgency affected place in the country after Kashmir. It is the easternmost part of India. The region is composed of eight states namely- Meghalaya, Manipur, Assam, Mizoram, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Sikkim. India's northeast connects with five countries — Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, China and Nepal-by a 4,500 kilometer (2,796 miles) international border; the region, however, connects to India only through a narrow and tenuous land corridor measuring merely 22 kilometers (14 miles). A fact that further jeopardizes mainland India's links with the region is the thriving militancy in most of the

Northeast states. The demands of the different militant groups range from autonomy within the provisions of the Indian constitution to outright secession. Such militant movements started early with India's independence in 1947. At one point, more than 120 militant groups operated in India's northeast. In recent years, the Indian government has had some success in achieving stability in the region, using tactics from negotiations to military operations to root out militants. Nevertheless, the region remains a potential tinderbox. Militants in India's northeast once enjoyed vast popular support since they, in their formative years, voiced genuine grievances of the

people such as poor governance, alienation, lack of development and an apathetic attitude from the central government in New Delhi; in recent years, however, this influence has been reduced. Nevertheless, in most of the states in the northeast, anti-government militants retain significant nuisance value and often indulge in successful strikes against government interests.¹

2. Historical Perspective:

Present day Assam was ruled by the Ahom kings from 1228 till 1826. Due to incursion by the then Burmese kingdom into Assam, the Ahom kings requested the British East India Company for help. As a result, the British defeated the Burmese and then signed the Treaty of Yandaboo on 24 Feb 1826 thereby ending the reign of Ahom Kings and amalgamating Assam into British India. Thereafter, Assam was a province ruled by the British till Independence. At the time of Independence, Northeast India (NEI) consisted of Assam, North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) i.e. present day ALP, and the princely states of Manipur and Tripura which opted for merger with India in 1949. Present day Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram were then part of Assam and were carved out of it later – Nagaland in 1963, Meghalaya in 1972, and between 1972/1987 Union Territory

(UT)/state of Mizoram. Sikkim was a monarchy which was amalgamated into India after a referendum in 1975. Thus, the present day NEI has been a melting pot of various tribes, languages, cultures, history and ethnicity.²

3. Rise of Insurgency in Northeast India:

The British had generally followed a policy of non-interference in the NEI. However, the newly independent India in 1947 had the formidable task of uniting various princely states not only of NEI but of the country as a whole. The integration of these distinct cultures of NEI into the “mainstream” was generally met with resentment. The insurgencies started with Naga Hills. Under the leadership of Phizo, the Naga National Council (NNC) declared independence from India on 14 Aug 1947. Despite efforts at political settlement by various leaders of that time, the unrest did not die. As a result, Indian Army (IA) was ordered to undertake Counter-Insurgency (CI) operations in Jan 1956, after the Government of India (GoI) declared Naga Hills as a disturbed area. Thereafter, various regions proactively voiced their demands for freedom/independence, and initiating insurgencies in the region.³

Table 1: Rise of Insurgency in Northeast State

State	Year
Nagaland	1947
Manipur	1960
Tripura	1960
Assam	1979
Mizoram	There is no militancy now
Meghalaya	1990
Arunachal Pradesh	1988 (On very small scale)

4. Reasons for Insurgency in Northeast India:

There are various reasons for the insurgencies to be born in NEI. These are as under:-

- a) **Multi-Ethnic Region:** NEI is the most ethnically diverse region in India. It is home to around 40 million people including 213 of the 635 tribal groups listed by the Anthropological Survey of India. Each of these tribes is having its own distinct culture. Thus, each tribal sect resents being integrated into the mainstream India as it means losing their own distinct identity. As the GoI resorts to various methods for “integration” into the “mainstream” based on a myopic understanding of peoples and tribes, it leads to rise in insurgencies to protect their own culture. The situation gets further aggravated due to inter-tribal rivalries, which fuel tribal/ethnic insurgencies.⁴
- b) **Underdeveloped Region:** Due to the difficult terrain configuration of jungles and mountains, infrastructural development in NEI has generally been slow, often at a snail’s pace. This has widened the schism between the NEI and mainstream India, and further increased a sense of disenchantment with the GoI.
- c) **Lack of Economic Development:** GoI’s economic policies have also fuelled resentment and insecurity amongst the people. Due to various factors, the development of NEI has lagged behind thereby resulting in lack of employment opportunities. Thus the youth are easily lured by various

insurgent groups in order to earn easy money.⁵

- d) **Sense of Isolation, Deprivation and Exploitation:** Distance from New Delhi and meagre representation in the Lok Sabha has further reduced the voxpopuli being heard in the corridors of powers, leading to more disillusionment in the dialogue process, thereby making call of the gun more attractive.
- e) **Demographic Changes:** The influx of refugees from former East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) into Assam led to a dramatic change in the demographic landscape of the region. In the Mangaldai by-election in 1979, there were about 45,000 illegal immigrants in the electoral rolls. This led to discontent amongst the people of the region, thereby giving rise to insurgency in Assam with the United National Liberation Front (ULFA), formed on 7 Apr 1979, leading the mass anti-immigrant agitation.
- f) **Internal Displacement:** Internal displacement is also an ongoing problem. From the 1990s to the start of 2011, over 800,000 people were forced to flee their homes in episodes of inter-ethnic violence in western Assam, along the border between Assam and Meghalaya, and in Tripura. According to conservative estimates, some 76,000 people remain in internal displacement in NEI due to the prolonged armed violence.⁶
- g) **External Support:** The insurgencies in the NEI have been supported by erstwhile East Pakistan in the late 1950s; and in early 1960s, in the form of training of personnel of Naga Army and giving them weapons.

Later, China also provided weapons and moral support. The Chinese support for insurgency in India was at a high from 1967-1975 when China’s foreign policy advocated the spread of ‘revolution’ around the world. In a 2007 article, the present National Security Adviser (NSA),AjitDoval stated that the Chinese support for the Indian rebels also experienced a ‘lull’ during the mid-1980s but that there was, of late, ‘increasing evidence’ of China’s revival of its ‘covert offensive’ in the region. Pakistan’s Special Services Group (SSG) also trained the Naga guerillas in the 1960s through their bases in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).⁷

- h) **Impact of Revolutionary Politics:** Members of the NNC, ThuingalengMuivah, ThinoselieMedomKeyho and an

Angami Naga from Kohima, travelled across the Naga Hills of Myanmar reaching Yunan in Jan 1967, seeking support from the Chinese for their cause. This could be marked as the beginning of the Chinese involvement in NEI. The success of people’s revolution in China motivated insurgent leaders and further fuelled insurgency in NEI.

- i) **Perceived Excesses by Indian Army (AI):** The promulgation of Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in most of the NEI has further alienated the local populace. Though imperative for strengthening the hand of IA for CI operations, it is often portrayed as draconian by various Human Rights (HR) organizations and thus has been vilified by various insurgent groups.

5. Insurgent Groups in Northeast States: An Overview

The northeast states of India have faced a series of insurgencies almost since independence. Most insurgent groups have been based on the competing demands of various ethnic groups, with conflicts not only between the insurgents and the government, but also between groups. The combination of anti-government and inter-communal violence shows little sign of ending. Although the Indian government has made progress in dealing with the largest groups, the continued existence of several dozen insurgent movements represents a significant security threat to internal stability in India.

Major Insurgent Groups in Northeast India: State-Wise

Table 2: Assam

Insurgent Groups	Aims and Objectives
United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA)	The United Liberation Front of Assam was formed in April 1979 to establish a sovereign state of Assam for the indigenous people of Assam through an armed struggle. In recent times the organization has lost its middle rung leaders after most of them were arrested.

National Democratic Front of Bodoland(NDFB)	The National Democratic Front of Bodoland was formed in 1989 as the Bodo Security Force, and aims to set up an independent nation of Bodoland.
Kamtapur Liberation Organization (KLO)	The objective of the Kamtapur Liberation Organization (KLO) is to carve out a separate Kamtapur Nation. The proposed state is to comprise six districts in West Bengal and four contiguous districts of Assam which are Cooch Behar, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, North and South Dinajpur and Malda of West Bengal and four contiguous districts of Assam – Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Dhubri and Goalpara.

Table 3: Manipur

Insurgent Groups	Aims and Objectives
United National Liberation Front (UNLF)	The United National Liberation Front (UNLF), also known as the United National Liberation Front of Manipur, is an insurgent group active in the state of Manipur in the Northeast India which aims at establishing a sovereign and socialist Manipur.
People's Liberation Army (PLA)	The People's Liberation Army of Manipur, often shortened to just People's Liberation Army (PLA) was founded by N. Bisheshwar Singh on 25 September 1978, is a separatist armed revolutionary group fighting for a separate independent socialist state of Manipur, a state in northeastern India.
People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK)	The People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) is an armed insurgent group in Manipur demanding a separate and independent homeland. PREPAK was formed under the leadership of R. K. Tulachandra in 1977.
Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP)	Kangleipak Communist Party is a political party in Manipur. Named after

	Kangleipak, the ancient name of Manipur, it was initially led by the communist ideologues — Ibohanbi and Ibopishak. The Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) had been engaged in an armed struggle to achieve sovereignty for Manipur since the 1980s.
The Kuki National Organisation (KNO) and its armed Wing, Kuki National Army (KNA), were formed in 1988	The main objectives of the KNA is to bring together all the Kuki-inhabited areas separated by artificial boundary created in 1935.

Table 4:Nagaland

Insurgent Groups	Aims and Objectives
National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN)	The National Socialist Council of Nagaland was formed in 1980 to establish a Greater Nagaland, encompassing parts of Manipur, Nagaland, and the north Cachar hills (Assam). The NSCN split in 1988 to form two groups, NSCN (IM) and NSCN (K). As of 2015, both groups have observed a ceasefire truce with the Indian government.
National Socialist Council of Nagaland [NSCN(K)]	The National Socialist Council of Nagaland—Khaplang is the second faction with the same aim of a Greater Nagaland and was formed in 1988.

Table 5: Tripura

Insurgent Groups	Aims and Objectives
All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF)	The All Tripura Tiger Force was formed by local aboriginal tribes in 1990, who were gradually outnumbered both directly and indirectly, even at the cost of being threatened for their survival economically and culturally, not to speak of their being reduced to minority population-wise; their sole aim is the expulsion of all Bengali speaking immigrants from the rest of

	India and nearby Bangladesh.
National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT)	The NLFT seeks to secede from India and establish an independent Tripuri state, and is an active participant in the Insurgency in Northeast India.

Table 6: Mizoram

Insurgent Groups	Aims and Objectives
Hmar People's Convention-Democracy (HPC-D)	Hmar People's Convention-Democracy is an armed insurgency group formed in 1995 to create an independent Hmar State in North East India

Table 7: Meghalaya

Insurgent Groups	Aims and Objectives
Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC)	The Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC) is a militant organization operating in Meghalaya, India. It claims to represent the Khasi-Jaintia tribal people, and its aim is to free Meghalaya from the alleged domination of the Garos and the outsiders (the "Dkhars") from the Indian mainland.
Garos National Liberation Army (GNLA)	The Garos National Liberation Army (GNLA) was formed in 2009. The GNLA is fighting for a 'sovereign Garoland' in the Western areas of Meghalaya.

6. Specific Insurgency Conflicts in Northeast India: (State-Wise)

While the region as a whole displays a variety of conflicts, it needs to be noted that in its acute form the problem is endemic in certain well defined areas The ‘variety’ of conflicts besetting the region will be evident from the short ‘conflict profiles of the region’.

6.1. Assam : A wide variety of ethnic conflicts prevail in the State e.g. agitations against ‘influx of foreigners’, perceived inability of the Government to deport them; occasional tensions between religious/linguistic groups and escalating conflicts involving tribal communities who seek local autonomy etc.⁸

6.1.1. National/Extremist Conflicts: undivided Assam had the longest history of insurgency. Naga and Mizo

insurgencies were the earliest to flare up. The affected areas formed two districts of the State. Even in the present truncated Assam, there are a number of extremist outfits led by the united liberation Front of Assam (ULFA). It has also been argued that there have been several contributing factors for the youth to join the cadres of ULFA such as unemployment, corruption in Government machinery, influx of illegal migrants, dominance of non-Assamese in the business sector, perception of exploitation of Assam's natural resources by the Centre and alleged human right violation by the Security Forces. It became active from the 1980s and till the late 1990s, enjoyed considerable public support due to a perception that 'insurgency is causing secessions' from Assam and that if only the Assamese had launched a violent counter-agitation, the situation would have been different. The average Assamese also regarded the six years of largely non-violent agitation for 'expulsion of foreigners' as having achieved very little 'success'. With large scale criminalization of ULFA cadres in the 1990s there was a rapid loss of public support particularly among the urban middle classes. Another factor for its decline was ULFA's known links with the 'agencies' of certain foreign countries with interest in subverting the distinctive culture of the State and in causing unrest in the country. It also appears that repeated volte-face by ULFA during several abortive negotiations with the Government, affected its credibility. After the crackdown by the Bhutanese Army, ULFA has not recovered its past strength though the organization tries to make its presence felt through kidnappings, bomb blasts and selective murder of migrant workers. In addition,

almost all tribal communities have some armed outfits purportedly safeguarding their interests.⁹

6.1.2. Ethnic Conflict: The major ethnic conflict in the State is the grievance against the perceived influx of 'foreigners' i.e. people with a language and culture substantially different from the Assamese from across the border (i.e. Bangladesh). The 'foreigners' agitation' of 1979-85 brought Assam to the centre stage of attention. The problem can be traced to the early years of the last century when the landless from the neighbouring overpopulated districts of East Bengal started arriving in the fertile and then substantially fallow Brahmaputra valley. Following communal rioting in East Pakistan in the 1950s and 1960s there were further waves of migration from the minority community of that country. Still later, growing unemployment, fragmentation of land and the war for the liberation of Bangladesh encouraged a renewed influx even from the majority community. With the fear of being culturally and politically 'swamped', resentment built up among the Assamese and escalated into one of independent India's most prolonged and vigorous agitations. While both the union and State Governments have accorded priority to the process of detection capacity building for conflict Resolution and deportation of illegal migrants (foreigners), the issue continues to simmer with the 'original' inhabitants claiming that for reasons of 'vote bank politics' effective steps are not being taken to deport the 'trespassers' while people sharing the religious-linguistic profile of the 'foreigners' claim that they are harassed and unreasonably forced to "prove" their Indian citizenship.¹⁰

6.2. Manipur: currently, it is the ‘most insurgency ridden’ State with about fifteen violent outfits representing different tribes/communities active in the State and has become a self-financing extortion activity particularly in the Valley. The commission, during its visit to the State, was told of several instances where development funds were siphoned off to finance various unlawful and disruptive activities.

One fourth of Manipur (which is the valley), is home to more than seventy per cent of its population which predominantly consists of the culturally distinct Meitei community. The State was ruled as a monarchy (later princely state) by Meitei rulers. The Meitei influence declined in the socio-economic spheres after Independence with the tribals coming into the forefront largely because of reservations. There was also resentment in a section of the Meitei society about the merger of the State with the Indian union – a resentment which led to the Meitei insurgency from the 1960s. Tribal account for around thirty per cent of the State’s population and broadly belong to Naga, Kuki-chin and Mizo groups. Insurgency in Nagaland and Mizoram also spilled over to the State. The ‘cultural distance’ of tribal from the Meiteis widened with almost all the tribes coming under the Christian fold by the 1930s. There is considerable tension among the tribes over land and boundaries and violence between Nagas and Kukis took a toll of more than 2000 lives during the 1990s.¹¹

The cease-fire between the union Government and the National Socialist council of Nagaland (NSCN) has reduced violence in Naga areas but has given rise to fresh tensions as the NSCN insists on a

greater ‘Nagalim’ which would include four Districts of Manipur. This is stoutly resisted by the Meiteis and had caused a very violent agitation in 2001. The assurance to safeguard the ‘territorial integrity of Manipur’ has resulted in comparative peace on this score. In the southern parts of the state Hmars, Paite and other tribes have been waging violent struggles partly for local hegemony and partly for their own enclave in the form of a union Territory called ‘zomi’. District councils in the Hill areas are nonfunctional since 1985 as most of the tribal communities want these councils to be brought under the Sixth Schedule. This demand is vociferously opposed by those in the Valley. In short, Manipur continues to be an active arena for a multiplicity of violent conflicts.¹²

6.3. Nagaland: Following the cease-fire with the dominant Muivah-Swu of the NSCN, the State is virtually free from overt violent unrest although as already noted, it is the original ‘hot spot’ of insurgency. The minority Khaplang faction which does not approve of the cease-fire has also, on the whole, remained peaceful. certain areas of concern with regard to the future are:

- a. The lingering issue of a final political settlement including the demand for ‘greater Nagaland’ or ‘Nagalim’ which as already noted is causing disquiet in the neighbouring areas, particularly Manipur.
- b. Growing competition over the limited resources of the State and the problem of unemployment of the educated youth.¹³

6.4. Meghalaya: The State is fortunately free from violence of the intensity that prevails in many other parts of the region.

Except violence against 'outsiders' particularly the Bengali speaking linguistic minority, there have been no major problems in the State. The following are some future areas of concern:

- a. Increasing clash of interest between the State Government and the Sixth Schedule District councils – the entire State is under that Schedule.
- b. Increasing inter-tribal rivalry.
- c. Emerging tensions about infiltration from Bangladesh particularly in the Garo Hills.¹⁴

6.5. Mizoram: The State with its history of violent insurgency and its subsequent return to peace is an example to all other violence affected States. Following an 'accord' between the union Government and the Mizo National Front in 1986 and conferment of statehood the next year, complete peace and harmony prevails in Mizoram. The State is recognized as having done a commendable job in the implementation of development programmers and making agriculture remunerative. The only potential areas of conflict are the growing income and assets disparities in a largely egalitarian society and the dissatisfaction of the three small non-Mizo District councils with the State Government, on account of issues pertaining to identity and reservation as STs.¹⁵

6.6. Arunachal Pradesh: The State has remained peaceful after the cease-fire with NSCN which was active in Tirap District. The policies initiated under the guidance of Verrier Elwin (a noted anthropologist) in the 1950s have resulted in considerable cohesion in the area with Hindi emerging as its lingua franca. There was some disquiet with the

settlement of relatively more enterprising chakma refugees from Bangladesh in the State in large numbers which appears to have subsided. Growing income disparities and constriction of employment opportunities could be a potential source of conflicts.

6.7. Sikkim: The State has not only done well in the sphere of development through decentralized planning but the constitutional mandate of striking a balance between the various ethnic groups (mainly the lepchas, bhutiyas and Nepalis) has also prevented emergence of major conflicts.

6.8. Tripura: The State's demographic profile was altered since 1947 when mass migrations from the newly emerged East Pakistan converted it from a largely tribal area to one with a majority of Bengali speaking plainsmen. Tribal were deprived of their agricultural lands at throw-away prices and driven to the forests. The resultant tensions caused major violence and widespread terror with the tribal dominated Tripura National Volunteers (TNV) emerging as one of the most violent extremist outfits in the North East. Proximity to Mizoram exposed the State to the 'side effects' of that insurgency. However, effective decentralization in the 'non-scheduled areas', bringing tribal areas within the purview of an autonomous 'Sixth Schedule' council, successful land reforms and systematic promotion of agriculture have contributed to considerable conflict reduction. The changing religious composition of tribal groups (particularly, the Jamatiyas) is giving rise to newer tensions with apprehension of increased inter-tribal conflicts. While the tribal non-tribal clashes are on the decline, there is

growing resentment among the tribals due to the restrictions on their 'freedom to use' the forests and their nominal participation in district development.¹⁶

7. Consequences of Conflicts:

- a) According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, severe fatalities have been reported from northeast including both civilians and security forces.
- b) In the oil-rich Assam, militants have periodically targeted oil and gas pipelines for sabotage, alleging that India is exploiting the natural resources of the state.
- c) National projects such as the extension of the rail lines have either been stalled or have moved with a tardy pace after militants attacked the construction sites and abducted workers.
- d) Militancy has also stalled the prospect of linking the economy of the northeast with the neighbouring Southeast Asian countries.
- e) Tourism, which could have flourished in the scenic northeast, has suffered a lot due to instability in the region.
- f) The education sector too has been affected by militancy. A number of schools in states like Tripura's interior areas have been shut as teachers avoid the areas due to fear of militant strikes.
- g) Extortion by the militant groups on the national highways that connect the different states with mainland India has shot up the prices of essential commodities.

7.1. Administrative arrangements:¹⁷

a) Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DONER):

It is responsible for the matters relating to the planning, execution and monitoring of development

schemes and projects in the North Eastern Region, to accelerate the pace of socio-economic development of the region.

b) Inner Line Permit (ILP):

Restrictions are imposed on the entry of outsiders to maintain the original identity of indigenous people of Mizoram, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh entry of outsiders are not allowed without ILP.

7.2. Constitutional provision:

- a) Article 244 (1) provides that – Provisions of the 5th schedule shall apply to the administration or control of scheduled areas and scheduled tribes.
- b) Article 244 (2) provides that – Provisions of the 6th schedule shall apply to the administration or control of schedule areas, in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram to create Autonomous Districts Councils in these states.
- c) In pursuance of these provisions, the various autonomous district has been created to contain the demands of various ethnic groups like KarbiAnglong, Khasi hill district, Chakma district etc.
- d) Under Article 371 (A) Nagaland has been accorded special status.

8. Recent developments:

Even though the region has seen an overall decline in insurgency, however, the discontent continues. At present the scenario is less violent than the earlier times. Some of the important recent developments are covered in the succeeding paras.

8.1. New Umbrella Organisation:

Nine insurgent groups of NEI have come together to form a new unified militant outfit known as United National Liberation Front of South West Asia (UNLFSWA). The initial idea was sown in 2011, by leaders of four North East insurgent groups; namely, PareshBaruah of ULFA, Khaplang of National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang), (NSCN (K)) and heads of Meitei outfits; namely, United National Liberation Front (UNLF) and People's Liberation Army (PLA). These insurgent leaders met and decided to form a confederation to, what they call, "liberate the ancestral homes by total struggle unitedly." It has taken four years to finally form this outfit on 17 Apr 2015. The outfits that comprise the UNLFWA are : NSCN (K), ULFA, National Democratic Front of Bodoland (Songbijit faction) (NDFB(S), Kamatapur Liberation Organisation (KLO) and six meitei outfits i.e. Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP), KangleiYawolKannaLup (KYKL), People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK), PREPAK (Progressive), Revolutionary People's Front (RPF) and United National Liberation Front (UNLF).Khaplang has been announced as the Chairman and PareshBaruah, either as Commander-in-Chief or Vice Chairman.¹⁸

8.2. Call for Independence:

The common objectives of UNLFSWA are, as they put it, "to gain complete

independence, to secure sovereign political future from occupation and march ahead together in peace, progress and prosperity of the whole region".¹⁰ Thus, rather than fighting the IA in splinters, the call for struggle for independence is likely to refine their violent operations.

8.3. Increase in Attacks on Security Forces:

There was an upsurge in the violence against IA by various insurgent groups, in the immediate aftermath of the formation of UNLFSWA, specially the killing of IA soldiers in Jun 2015. However, by the end of 2015, the same has not shown any sign of increasing and seems to have been contained by the IA. In this context, CI operations conducted by the IA in the immediate aftermath of Jun 2015 attack are noteworthy.

8.4. Signing of Framework Agreement:

On 03 Aug 2015, the 18-year long negotiations with the NSCN (IM) led to the signing of a 'Framework Agreement' between the GoI and the former. Details of the Agreement were not disclosed during its signing. On 07 Aug 2015, the NSCN (K) announced that the 'Framework Agreement' signed with NSCN (IM) was intended exclusively for that group alone and asserted that it was under no obligation to either agree or disagree with the accord. In Sep 2015, Government declared NSCN (K) a terrorist organization under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. Finally, on 25 Dec 2015, the NSCN (IM) issued a statement in which it said the Agreement looked at a final solution in which the Nagas would have the right to exercise 'sovereign power' over their 'territories.'¹⁹

8.5. Efforts by Civil Society:

In Nagaland, the civil society is trying to bring the NSCN (K) back to the negotiating table. In Aug 2015, a four-member delegation of the Naga Mothers' Association (NMA), a frontline Naga women's group, walked across to Myanmar and held talks with the NSCN (K) leaders. After the meeting, the delegation informed that the NSCN (K) was not averse to reconsidering its decision. In Manipur, Sri Ravi Shankar met RajkumarMeghen alias Sanayaima, the detained leader of Manipur's oldest insurgent group UNLF at the Guwahati Central Jail, on 17 Dec 2015. The response of the jailed leader has been good. This was the first major mediatory effort by anyone with the Meitei insurgent groups in Manipur and therefore, could be termed as a significant move towards achieving peace in the state.

8.6. Spread of Islamic Radicalism:

Islamic radicalism has started spreading its roots in NEI. The arrest of several persons in Assam, many of them directly linked to the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), in the wake of the 02 Oct 2014 blast in West Bengal's Burdwan area, is an indication of the fact that Islamist radicalism of the 'Jihadi' variety is very much a reality in the region.

9. Conclusion: The insurgencies of NEI have continued for the past seven decades despite various efforts by GoI for a permanent solution. However, with the older generation passing away and the new generation having little interest in insurgencies, the time is ripe to hammer out a long term strategy for elimination of residual insurgencies. A wise mix of socio-economic development and political settlement are the pillars of an everlasting peace in the NEI. Winning the hearts and minds should be the cornerstone for achieving conflict resolution in NEI.

As an instrument of state policy in accordance with goals of statecraft, IA has the key role of undertaking CI operations to prevent the insurgent groups from escalating violence. Towards that end, it has performed in an exemplary manner till date and must therefore, continue to do so whenever and wherever mandated. Resolving the ongoing insurgencies in NEI will be the harbinger of peace and consequent economic prosperity for the millions of people in NEI. It is therefore a step in the right direction, for the success of India's AEP, and for India to emerge as one of the global powers in a multipolar world of the 21st century.

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