



India's NORTH EAST

New Vistas for Peace

Editors

Pushpita Das

Namrata Goswami



Institute for Defence Studies & Analyses

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Preface

Strategically important and physically isolated, the North Eastern region, comprising the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura, evokes a spectrum of emotions among the general population of India. Where their Indian compatriots are concerned, the slogan "Incredible North East" beckons tourists to explore and experience the rich biodiversity and scenic beauty and the profusion of customs and traditions of the myriad ethnic communities of this region; the reports of violence and conflict deter them from visiting it and from investing in its rich social, political, and economic capital. Perception about the region is largely based on the information that trickles down either from experiences of people who served there or from media reports. The voices of the local denizens go unheard.

Ethnically and linguistically diverse and an ecological treasure trove with mineral and forest wealth, the region is the least developed in the country. Endemic conflict has significantly contributed to its underdevelopment and the

sufferings of its people. Dispersing the pall of gloom, however, are the peace processes initiated and sustained by the people.

Endowed with a rich variety of tribal customs, folklore and lifestyle, North East India displays an overarching influence of modernity in terms of dress, fashion, habits, and education. Exclusionary tribal identities, however, remain strong. With more than 200 tribes and sub-tribes contending for assertion of identity, there has been a spread of multi-dimensional insurgencies with strong ideological, social, and political linkages as well as an external spillover.

The insurgents founded their movements on societal structures and grievances on account of a desolate existence in a difficult hilly terrain. In dealing with the psychological and social factors of deprivation of the people, the Indian state institutions, both at the Centre and the States, have been unimaginative. Political deprivation is sought to be assuaged by routinely held elections for the local/state/national democratic institutions but the inability to convert political power to social and economic power in these far-flung areas creates a hotbed for militant resistance thriving on the unemployed youth.

Peace and development are interlinked and inseparable. Therefore, the common view that absence of peace on account of the numerous insurgencies makes development difficult in the region requires investigation. The need of the hour is to strive to understand the political processes, reasons for ethnic conflicts, and developmental measures undertaken. Such an examination is essential to arrive at a sustainable solution to the problems that afflict the region. These issues have important policy implications since the North East region can serve as an important base in India's quest for improved relations with countries in the eastern neighbourhood under the "Look East" policy.

An effort in this direction was made by the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi, by holding a two-day seminar on "Peace and Development in the North East"

in Shillong, Meghalaya, on 25 and 26 September, 2006. It was organized in collaboration with the North Eastern Council (NEC) and North Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong. The seminar focused on issues of insurgency, identity, ethnicity, and possible linkages and interface with external forces. It also explored the prospects for peace and development in the region. The objective of holding a seminar in Shillong was to acquire a better understanding of the region and facilitate greater interaction among national, regional, and local voices.

The seminar brought to the fore the varied ideas of scholars, media personalities, military personnel, bureaucrats, and politicians of the region. An interesting mix of political vision, academic analysis, and the experience of journalists and the military and paramilitary personnel was interwoven with some stimulating discussions on issues vital to the region. The seminar attracted strong local interest and media coverage.

IDSA Director N.S. Sisodia identified the North East as one of the most important regions of India, given its strategic location, its rich culture, and abundance of natural resources. Tapping the human and economic potential would be highly beneficial for the region and open the doors for cross-border linkages with an economically vibrant South East Asia. He stressed the importance of peace and development in the North East and indicated that the seminar was the beginning of a process for establishing linkages with academic institutions in the region.

P.R. Kyndiah, Union Minister for Tribal Affairs and Development of North Eastern Region, spoke of the rich diversity of the region, adding that it constituted the greatest strength for peace and development. The minister stated that the government was seriously trying to connect the region with the South East Asian economies under the aegis of India's "Look East" policy. Regarding insurgency he applauded the Union Government's flexibility in engaging

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nine rebel groups in the region either in peace talks or signing of cease-fire agreements. Prominent among them were the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT), the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN (I-M)) and NSCN (Khaplang). He pointed out, however, that insurgency in the region must not be viewed only as a law and order problem, it also reflected deeper ethnic and political aspirations. The minister expressed deep concerns about the foreign nexus in aiding North Eastern insurgent groups. He hoped that the North East would witness higher economic activity with various developmental schemes in place.

Rajiv Aggarwal, Joint Secretary (North East), reiterated that the central government in cooperation with the people is committed to bring peace and development in the region. He highlighted that the core of the government's strategy is to take reason to the hearts and minds of the misguided youth. The central government's willingness to enter into a dialogue with any organization and the cease-fire agreements with various insurgent groups active in the region bear testimony to its desire to bring peace and tranquillity to the region. He also emphasized the importance of socio-economic development of the region for its stability. Infrastructure development, employment opportunities, good governance, conducive atmosphere for investment, etc., are some of the measures which the government has undertaken to accelerate all-round development of the region. Under the "Look East" policy, the government is trying to integrate the North East with the larger regional forums like SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation), BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation), and ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations), which would provide better economic opportunities for the people of the region. He said that the government's efforts are getting increasing support from civil society and media of the region.

The success of the seminar encouraged the Institute to bring out this compilation of the proceedings to project the

diverse yet pertinent viewpoints expressed in the discussions. Corresponding to the sessions of the seminar the book has four sections, viz. Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency, Identity and Conflict, Peace and Development, and the Way Ahead.

Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency

In this section four essays provide insight into the issues of insurgency funding, the causes of insurgency, and alienation in the region.

Dr. Pushpita Das presents a detailed analysis of the work done on the North East in the IDSA. The North East region has always drawn the attention of scholars and the institute has been periodically publishing works on the North East. Most of the writings have dealt with insurgency and terrorism in the region, with Assam gaining the maximum attention. There has been a gradual shift in the writings from historical analysis to pinpointing policy recommendations.

Prof. Sajal Nag deals with the funding of insurgencies. The annual budgets of most of the insurgent groups substantially exceed the budgets of many states where they operate. The means employed for acquiring their wealth include extortion, trafficking in narcotics and human beings, contraband, and large-scale investments in real estate and other business ventures. The non-state parallel economy in the region has severely undermined the political authority of the state and crippled the legitimate economy.

Presenting a perspective from Manipur, Prof. N. Joykumar Singh argues that the perception regarding denial of democratic rights to the people of Manipur by the Centre was the prime reason for the outbreak of insurgency in the state, which he terms a revolution. The 'revolution' resulted in the emergence of two ideas: Manipuri nationalism and self-determination. During the first phase, mid-1960s to the 1980s, insurgency was very active in the state, but after the

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1980s, due to various counter measures, insurgency has been considerably weakened. The author welcomes the shift in the policy of both the Indian Government and insurgents to hold talks to bring peace in the state.

Dr. Archana Upadhyay attempts to locate the notion of 'social capital' within the civil society discourse in the North East region by exploring its role in deepening democracy and fostering peace and development in the region. Even if the region has a reservoir of social capital, it remains largely untapped. Strong but insulated kinship bonds and lack of interpersonal interaction between various ethnic communities in the region have resulted in increasing social distance both within the region and between the region and the country.

Identity and Conflict

The North East region also suffers from identity-based conflicts. Intrinsic to the variable of identity as a motivating factor for violent resistance are the historical narratives invoked by separatist groups to fuel their movements. Also significant are the psychological factors of relative deprivation vis-à-vis other regions of India.

Dr. Zokaitluangi points out that the process of acculturation occurs when individuals shed attitudes, values, and traditions of their heritage culture while adopting the behavioural patterns and characteristics of a mainstream host culture. This process, though inevitable in the context of globalization, is not always easy as certain ethnic groups resist any form of assimilation, holding on to their heritage culture. Drawing inferences from a multiple-stage sampling of 535 Mizo students (270 males and 265 females) and 'ecology' (170 rural, 260 urban, and 105 outstation) she argues that acculturative stress leads to psychological distress and results in violent behaviour. Despite various efforts at persuading local people to accept new technologies and a new lifestyle, the developmental projects in North East India reflect a disjuncture between the development enthusiast and the local population as the former fails to meet the cultural

and emotional needs of the people, steeped in traditional ethos. The fault could lie in the inherent tendency of development projects and the notion of modernity's negative bias towards things "traditional".

Dr. Nani G. Mahanta from Guwahati University highlights the crucial significance of an interface between policy-makers, insurgent leaders, and civil society. He is critical of the focus of current research on the two voices in an ethnic conflict: the state voice and the militant voice. He argues that the people's voice, on whose behalf the militants justify their movements, is being neglected in peacemaking and peace building. He is of the view that the involvement of civil society (people's voice) is the only viable alternative left to mitigate the insurgent violence in the North East. He is sceptical about the State's approach in dealing with the resistance movements as evidence on the ground reflects failures more than successes in peace negotiations. The State has also been unable to grasp the complexity of the ideological/identity conflicts, which plague the region. Dr. Mahanta is also critical of the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) and its claim to be the sole representative of the Assamese people. He is of the opinion that the ULFA's sub-national narratives are not backed by historical facts. His paper provides interesting insights on the limitation of such discourses and the limited support base that the ULFA enjoys in present-day Assam.

Dr. S. Bhattacharya from Tripura University provides a detailed perspective, based on identity complexities in Tripura, where the differences between tribal/non-tribal identities are an everyday reality.

Dr. Namrata Goswami indicates that the Naga crisis draws credence and supposed legitimacy from a historical baseline vis-à-vis the other more contemporary contributing factors. She deconstructs the Naga separatist methodology based on an independent historical existence. The historical texts along with British administrative writings

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and reports on the subject indicate inferences to the contrary; that Nagas were tributary subjects of the Manipur King and were subjugated by the British towards the end of the nineteenth century as was the case with other Indian states. She also points out the limitations of the separatist discourse and explores the resistance to the Naga narratives by other tribes in the North East.

Peace and Development

Dr. Jagdish Patnaik analyses the contribution of the civil society groups in Mizoram in sustaining peace in the state, viz., the Church, the Young Mizo Association (YMA), and the students' group, the Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP). The Church has acquired a pivotal position in Mizo society because of its wide-ranging social work. The YMA works as a pressure group and has contributed substantially to brokering peace in the state. The MZP serves as a platform for debate and discussion. He is of the opinion that peace in Mizoram could be sustained because of its largely homogeneous society.

Prof. Keya Sengupta provides an insight into the threats posed to security by uneven human development in the region as reflected in the Human Development Index (HDI) of various districts and blocks of different states of the region. Even amidst the extremely low level of human development a wide gulf exists between different income groups and societies. The more developed states showed greater regional and societal disparities, which has given rise to a sense of deprivation, misunderstanding, mistrust and, therefore, a wide degree of frustration among the common masses, which manifests itself through a recurring cycle of violence in the region. She argues that policy-makers should take into account the issue of human development and its regional disparity while formulating developmental policies for the North East region.

Dr. K.K. Baruah states that the North Eastern region, although ecologically diverse, faces enormous degradation

due both to natural and anthropogenic factors. The natural factors include floods, landslides, and earthquakes. Human beings, through unplanned development activities, shifting cultivation, large-scale deforestation, industrialization and mining, have aggravated the situation. Increasing population growth would put tremendous pressure on the environment. There is a need, therefore, for an eco-friendly developmental policy for the future, which would involve producing more products from fewer inputs. He advocates the establishment of a balanced harmony between population, environment, and resources for sustainable development of the region.

Dr. Gurudas Das and Dr. C.J. Thomas discuss India's "Look East" policy and its implication for the development of the North East. In the age of globalization countries have benefited mostly from regional associations like ASEAN, NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) and EU (European Union). It is to India's advantage to be part of such regional associations. Since the inception of the "Look East" policy, India's economic relationship with its eastern neighbours has grown substantially but since much of the trade takes place through the sea, the North Eastern region has not benefited from this burgeoning economic relationship. To foster development in the North East, the people there should prioritize their goals, identify the areas of comparative advantage, and use the "Look East" policy to create an environment conducive to regional growth.

The Way Ahead

Lieutenant General S.K. Pillai, PVSM (Retd.), recommends measures sensitive to ethnic identities. To tackle insurgency, besides military measures, policies of meaningful assimilation should be given centre-stage. Counter-insurgency measures must come under a unified institutional structure, based on a methodology of futuristic multiple scenario building. He draws attention to the important areas of ecological and demographic changes and their influence on national security as well as the all-important development of the North East through India's "Look East" policy. But before the "Look East" policy is implemented, infrastructure and skill

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development within the North East must be undertaken so that the opening up towards South East Asia's globalization does not drown North Eastern enterprise.

Prof. Abu Nasar Saied Ahmed and Ms. Ratna Bhuyan draw attention to the need for investment in the youth of the region. The youth have to be given global exposure starting with the country itself. Their self-confidence has to be built up erasing their frustrations, and they need to be trained to become the new leaders of the region. This is all the more necessary so that they firmly believe in more positive channels of expending their energies and not through the barrel of the gun. There is rich social capital in the region but the lack of surface communication is a major obstacle in tapping valuable social energies that are crucial for development. Even though the region is rich in natural resources it is economically backward. They provide interesting insights for formulating policies to achieve higher standards of living in the region.

Sanjoy Hazarika brings home the conditions under which journalists in the region work. The metropolitan media has a lukewarm approach to events in the North East. Despite the highly insecure conditions under which local journalists gather information no meaningful insurance schemes have been devised for them. The journalists are also under tremendous pressure from insurgent groups, which include death threats, to publish viewpoints favourable to them. Journalists in the region must also be provided with fellowships in order to hone their skills in better handling highly volatile security situations on the field.

Jaideep Saikia wrestles with the dilemmas posed by recurring violent uprisings in Assam, especially the growth of smaller insurgent groups in North Cachar and Karbi Anglong hill districts. Lack of a well-thought-out strategy to deal with small insurgent groups in a timely manner would aggravate the situation. The Naga movement started on a small scale but gradually expanded its scope and area of operation due to the lacklustre strategic approach by India to quell the movement. ULFA, in his view is a spent force,

enjoying very little local support but the ego of its leader Paresh Baruah makes the outfit unwilling to engage in any peace negotiations with the Centre. Bangladesh meanwhile is fishing in the troubled waters of Assam.

This book concludes by providing certain policy recommendations for future courses of action, based on inputs drawn from the seminar. Scholars of the region are of the view that peace and development blueprints are not quick fixes but are long-drawn processes requiring time, abundance of patience, and continuous effort. The need of the hour is to conduct further intense interactions at academic, policy and civil society levels for these actionable models to be set on a firm footing that give credible results.

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New Delhi

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development within the North East must be undertaken so that the opening up towards South East Asia's globalization does not drown North Eastern enterprise.

Prof. Abu Nasar Saied Ahmed and Ms. Ratna Bhuyan draw attention to the need for investment in the youth of the region. The youth have to be given global exposure starting with the country itself. Their self-confidence has to be built up erasing their frustrations, and they need to be trained to become the new leaders of the region. This is all the more necessary so that they firmly believe in more positive channels of expending their energies and not through the barrel of the gun. There is rich social capital in the region but the lack of surface communication is a major obstacle in tapping valuable social energies that are crucial for development. Even though the region is rich in natural resources it is economically backward. They provide interesting insights for formulating policies to achieve higher standards of living in the region.

Sanjoy Hazarika brings home the conditions under which journalists in the region work. The metropolitan media has a lukewarm approach to events in the North East. Despite the highly insecure conditions under which local journalists gather information no meaningful insurance schemes have been devised for them. The journalists are also under tremendous pressure from insurgent groups, which include journalists in the region must also be provided with fellowships in order to hone their skills in better handling highly volatile security situations on the field.

Jaideep Saikia wrestles with the dilemmas posed by recurring violent uprisings in Assam, especially the growth of smaller insurgent groups in North Cachar and Karbi Anglong hill districts. Lack of a well-thought-out strategy to deal with small insurgent groups in a timely manner would aggravate the situation. The Naga movement started on a small scale but gradually expanded its scope and area of operation due to the lacklustre strategic approach by India to quell the movement. ULFA, in his view is a spent force,

Contributors

Dr. Pushpita Das is an Associate Fellow at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses working on the project, "Border Area Management (Northeast India)". She is an alumna of Jawaharlal Nehru University. Her doctoral thesis was on India-China Border. Her publications include, "India-China Relations: Agreements Signed (2000-2005)", in Maharajakrishna Rasgotra (ed.), *The New Asian Power Dynamics*, Sage Publications Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, 2007, "Post-cold war South Asia: Geopolitics and crisis", in Dennis Rumley and D. Gopal (eds.), *Globalisation and Regional Security: India and Australia*, Shipra Publications, Delhi, 2007. "Management of India-China Border in Eastern Sector", *World Focus*, Volume 27, No. 8, August 2006.

Prof. Sajal Nag is currently Professor of Modern and Contemporary History of India in Assam Central University, Silchar, Assam. He has earlier worked in North Eastern Hill University, and Centre for Social Studies, Surat. He has been a Commonwealth Fellow during 2004-05 and a Visiting Senior Research Fellow,

Queens University, Belfast, Northern Ireland. His publications include, *Roots of Ethnic Conflict: Nationality Questions in North East India*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1990; *India and North East India: Mind, Politics and the Process of Integration 1946-50*, Regency, New Delhi, 2001; *Nationalism, Separatism, Secessionism*, Rawat, New Delhi, 2002, *Contesting Marginality: Ethnicity, Insurgency and Sub-nationalism in North East India*, Manohar, New Delhi, 2003.

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Dr. Archana Upadhyay teaches International Relations and Foreign Policy in the Department of Political Science, Dibrugarh University. Dr Upadhyay completed her Ph.D. from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She has been awarded the Commonwealth Academic Staff Fellowship and the Fullbright Visiting Lecturer Fellowship. Her current research focuses on South Asian Security Issues, Human Rights, Political Violence, Insurgency and Terrorism.

Dr. Zokaitluangi is Head and Reader, Department of Psychology, Mizoram University. Her research areas include Social Psychology, Clinical Psychology and Research Methodology. She is Chairperson, Board of Post-Graduate Studies in Psychology, Mizoram University. Dr. Zokaitluangi completed her Ph.D. in

Psychology in 1997 from North Eastern Hill University, Shillong, Meghalaya. Her publications include "Personality Values, Sex Attitude and Sex Behaviour among three Ethnic Groups of College Students", *The Mind, Journal of the Medico-Psychological Research Society*, Vol. XX (1&2), 2004, "Attitudinal Patterns in Relation to Development, Employment and Beneficiary: A Study across Mizo Sub Culture", *Disabilities and Impairments: an interdisciplinary Research Journal*, Vol. 18(2), 2004, "Memory for Serial Order in Relation to Field Dependency" *Magadh Journal of Social Research*, Vol. X (2), 2004 and "Intelligence and Academic Achievement in Relation to Parent-Child Relationship", *Indian Journal of Psychometry and Education*, Vol. 36(1), 2005.

Dr. Nani G. Mahanta is an Assistant Professor in Political Science, Guwahati University, Assam. Dr. Mahanta has been a Rotary World Peace Fellow at the University of California, Berkeley, US, from 2002-2004 where he studied issues of peace, conflict, and human rights in the context of South Asia. Dr. Mahanta's Ph.D. thesis from Guwahati University was on "State, Identity and Violence: The Case of ULFA." Dr. Mahanta's research articles have been published in various books and journals including *Economic and Political Weekly* and *Journal of Political Science*. Currently, he is working on a book on the ULFA.

Dr. Suchintya Bhattacharya is currently with Tripura University. He completed his Ph.D. from University of Calcutta. A visiting scholar to the University of Arizona, he is the author of *Genesis of Tribal Extremism in Tripura, From Jhuming to Tapping, Constitutional Crisis and Problems in India*, and *The Halams: From Primitivism to Modernity*. He is currently a Social Development expert with Japan Bank for International Cooperation.

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Dr. Jagdish K. Patnaik is currently Professor and Head of Department of Political Science, Mizoram University Aizawl. Dr Patnaik is a Ph.D. from the Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada. Prof. Patnaik has a number of research publications to his credit.

Prof. Keya Sengupta is Professor, Department of Economics and Dean, School of Social Science, Assam University, Silchar (Assam). Prof. Sengupta is a Post Doctoral Fellow in UGC and ICSSR Research Projects and Associate of Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh. She has authored *Price Formation Process in the Indian Economy*.

Dr. Kushal Kumar Baruah is Professor and Head of the Department of Environmental Science, Tezpur University, Assam. He is also a visiting scientist to INSA and CSIR. He is a Post Doctoral Fellow from K A Timiriazev Institute of Plant Physiology. Dr. Baruah was Professor and Head Department of Crop Physiography, Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat.

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Dr. Gurudas Das is Assistant Professor at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, National Institute of Technology, Silchar, Assam. Dr. Das served in St. Anthony's College, Shillong; Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development, Guwahati; Northeastern Hill University, Shillong. He has authored one book and co-authored over ten volumes.

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Ms. Ratna Bhuyan is a Research Associate at the Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development, Guwahati. She is an M.A. in Economics from Gauhati University. Ms Bhuyan is the co-author of *Election Politics in Assam; Issues, Trends and Peoples' Mandate*.

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Part—I

Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency

1

IDSA's Focus on North East

Dr. Pushpita Das

The North East of India has always been the focus of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), as may be seen from its extensive topical publications on the region. The Institute's mandate being to provide policy options for the government on topics related to defence and strategic issues, most of these publications deal with the security of the region and the country.

The inaugural issue of the Institute's journal *IDSA Journal* itself had carried an article by Prof. B.K. Roy Burman, "Perspectives from Nagaland".¹ Analysing the Naga insurgency the author advocates understanding the problem first in the context of South East Asia and then of India. He argues that in olden times the tribes of North East India and South East Asia functioned as buffer or bridge between two large politically organized societies but with changing times and improvement in the means of communication they

lost this important function. When colonial rule ended in the region these tribal units were included within different nation-states based on colonial boundary demarcation. Insurgency witnessed in the North East is a manifestation of the readjustment that these tribes are undergoing vis-à-vis the nation-state. The author refutes the commonly held view that the Naga insurgency is being fomented by Christian missionaries and the educated Naga middle class. For solution of the problem he suggests a broad-based people's participation in the decision-making process and greater interaction between the people of the North East and the rest of India.

Roy Burman's next paper, "Modernisation Processes in the Hills of North-East",² describes the modernization process in the Autonomous Hill Districts of Assam, North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), Nagaland, and Manipur. Modernization has been brought about by both exogenous and endogenous factors: the exogenous factor is the introduction of advanced technology and complex socio-political organizations; the growth of culture through massive interaction between different tribes is an endogenous factor. The uneven pace of the modernization process in the North East, in his view, is a major cause of social tensions in the region.

The decade of the eighties was sparse in publications on the region, with only three papers that focused on the India-China boundary dispute and the Chinese claim on Arunachal Pradesh. Two of these were by T.S. Murthy. In "The Eastern Himalayas in Sino-Indian Relations" (1982)³ Murthy presents a detailed analysis of the treaties signed between India, Tibet, and China at different points in history. Examining the trans-border religious ties between the people of NEFA and Tibet, the author concludes that the Sino-Indian boundary problem is a territorial dispute. The claim by China that NEFA is a part of its territory does not hold ground as the people residing on this side of the border are different from the Tibetans in terms of language, race, and religion.

In his second paper, "The Chinese Claim of Arunachal" (1983),⁴ Murthy argues that the Chinese were ready to negotiate the boundary with India and did not wish this issue to create any hurdles in developing cordial relations with India. He asserts that if India agrees to the Chinese proposal of swapping of territory, India has to forgo its desire to have access to Central Asia, which would imply a denial of Indian history before 1947. He argues that the Chinese claim on Aksai Chin is generally seen as its desire to have good communication lines to administer western Tibet but in reality the road is just a consequence of its territorial claim and not a cause of it. He refutes the argument that the map used in the Simla Agreement signed between India and Pakistan in 1973 was in any way crude. A competent cartographer, in his view, would have no difficulty in interpreting the line on the ground as shown in the 1914 map. He also indicates that India's acceptance of Tibet as a part of China should not be seen as a strategic blunder because it was the reality.

The third article, by Sahdev Vohra, "The north-eastern frontier of India and China's claim" (1989),⁵ states that China first laid its claim on Arunachal Pradesh in 1960. The author draws heavily on the accounts of knowledgeable travellers and officials to refute the Chinese claim. He also presents an analysis of how the area was administered over different periods of time. He concludes that independent India followed two approaches that were different from that of the British, in that it recognized the sovereignty of China over Tibet, and started an all-round development of Arunachal Pradesh and successfully integrated it into the Indian mainstream.

The North Eastern region came into better focus of the Institute after 2000, with the recruitment of area specialists, though most of the publications dealt with insurgency in the region. In 2000, Sreeradha Dutta in "North East Turmoil: Vital determinants"⁶ attempted to explore and analyse certain factors which contributed to the unrest in the North

lost this important function. When colonial rule ended in the region these tribal units were included within different nation-states based on colonial boundary demarcation. Insurgency witnessed in the North East is a manifestation of the readjustment that these tribes are undergoing vis-à-vis the nation-state. The author refutes the commonly held view that the Naga insurgency is being fomented by Christian missionaries and the educated Naga middle class. For solution of the problem he suggests a broad-based people's participation in the decision-making process and greater interaction between the people of the North East and the rest of India.

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East. She argued that comparative isolation and poor integration of the region with the Indian mainstream are the causative factors of this unrest. The immediate cause, in her view, is illegal migration from Bangladesh. The isolationist attitude of the people of the region is partly to blame for this alienation and underdevelopment, as also their reluctance to change their traditional socio-economic structure. It is her view that the central government's policy of doling out grants has proved counter-productive, filling the coffers of terrorist organizations on account of the nexus between politicians, bureaucrats, and insurgents.

In "Security of India's North East: External Linkages" (2000),⁷ Sreeradha Dutta highlights that factors like trans-border ethnic ties and linkages of insurgent groups operating in the North East with neighbouring countries have jeopardized India's security. Because of their cross-border ethnic, socio-economic and cultural links, there have been demands for redrawing the international border in this region. External agencies interested in destabilizing India, particularly the Directorate of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan, exploit these trans-border ethnic ties.

Dinesh Kotwal in "Assam in Flames" (2001)⁸ draws attention to the spurt of violence by terrorist organizations against non-Assam residents in Assam. In his view, terrorist organizations such as the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) are in league with the ISI. Their acts of violence bear resemblance to the patterns of violence carried out by the militant organizations in Jammu and Kashmir. He concludes that violence against civilians is a sign of desperation of the terrorist organizations. Suggesting a review of the counter-insurgency strategy in the state, he advocates fighting terrorism at village level, with the active cooperation of the local population; at the operational level the troops should be reinforced and intelligence gathering strengthened and fine-tuned. Kotwal also suggests eliciting

the active cooperation of the neighbouring countries to fight the menace of terrorism in the state.

In "The Contours of Assam Insurgency" Dinesh Kotwal (2001)⁹ traces the genesis and growth of insurgency, especially that of the ULFA, in Assam. He ascribes the insurgency mainly to three factors: lack of proper integration of the North Eastern region with the Indian mainstream; the demographic profile of the region, comprising myriad tribes; and the hijacking of the intractable issues by the extremist forces. Both because of the government's counter-insurgency strategies and its own strategic blunders, the ULFA has become debilitated but militancy in the state has taken the form of growing Islamic fundamentalism.

In "Policing the Indo-Bangla Border" (2001),¹⁰ focusing on the clashes between personnel of the Border Security Force (BSF) and Bangladesh Rifles (BR) along the border, Kulbir Kishan argues that incomplete demarcation of the boundary, enclaves, and adverse possessions are challenges to policing of the border. Illegal migrants, insurgent groups, drug traffickers, and smugglers exploit the porosity of the border. For better policing the author recommends double-fencing the border and suggests that each battalion should be responsible for guarding a 40-60 km stretch of the border. He also stresses the need to educate the BSF about the border and the people living along it: to achieve this objective, one company of the BSF should consist of armed local police. Local people should be engaged in guarding the border. If the National Citizenship Register, based on the 2001 Census, is compiled and identity cards issued, illegal migration could be minimized substantially.

Professor Atul Sarma in "Economic Development of the North Eastern Region" (2001)¹¹ flags certain reasons for the region remaining industrially backward. In his view, resources from this resource-rich region are poorly utilized. Where resource-based industries were established, the government failed to set up forward and backward linkage-based industries and the industries could not bring

East. She argued that comparative isolation and poor integration of the region with the Indian mainstream are the causative factors of this unrest. The immediate cause, in her view, is illegal migration from Bangladesh. The isolationist attitude of the people of the region is partly to blame for this alienation and underdevelopment, as also their reluctance to change their traditional socio-economic structure. It is her view that the central government's policy of doling out grants has proved counter-productive, filling the coffers of terrorist organizations on account of the nexus between politicians, bureaucrats, and insurgents.

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substantial prosperity to the region. In addition, partition of the country disrupted the traditional trade links but the government failed to develop alternative trade routes. Lack of infrastructure denied the entry of industrial revolution to the region and the people ended up paying higher prices for procuring goods and services. The other causes of underdevelopment in the region in his view are illegal migration, traders' vested interests which hamper the growth of local entrepreneurs, unemployment, insurgency, and unaccountable governance. Prof Sarma suggests to develop industries that have very high forward and backward linkages and sectors like hydroelectric power, tourism, and encouraging mercantile capital to establish forward and backward linkage-based industries in the neighbouring Bangladesh, Myanmar, and South East Asian countries.

Dr. Gurudas Das in "India's North East Soft Underbelly: Strategic Vulnerability and Security" (2002)¹² argues that India's neighbouring countries, especially China and Pakistan, have been trying to exploit the diversity of the North East, with its myriad ethnic tribes, religions, and languages, to dismember India along the fault lines. He maintains that the geo-strategic vulnerability and security threat were two important factors that impelled India to intervene in the East Pakistan crisis but India's policy of supporting one regime against another in Bangladesh has pushed that country towards the USA-Pakistan-China axis. The author takes note of the "Brahmaputra Project" of the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) to balkanize India and also points out to the increasing presence of Dutch non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the North East region, especially in Tripura. These NGOs, the author maintains, are reported to be supporting the insurgent groups. Since the USA and China are using other countries to destabilize India, Dr. Das recommends that India needs to clear any ambiguity with these countries on this matter.

Manoj Nath in "Bodo insurgency in Assam: New accord and new problems" (2003)¹³ assesses the Bodoland Council

Accord of 2003. He is of the view that to make this accord successful it should to be implemented in letter and in spirit and must have the cooperation of both Bodos and non-Bodos. On account of the Accord, changes had been introduced in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India and had given the Bodos a homeland within Assam even if they comprise only 25 per cent of the population of the state. He is apprehensive that such discrepancies in the Accord may give rise to new ethnic tensions in the state.

N.S. Jamwal in "Border management: Dilemma of guarding the India-Bangladesh border" (2004)¹⁴ focuses on the nature of the border and the problem it poses for effective management, while offering solutions. In his view, domestic politics, especially a government in Bangladesh that is not amicably disposed towards India is, to a large extent, responsible for aggravating the problems along the border. He recommends building roads along the border, modernizing the BSF, and establishing a lead intelligence agency for effective border management.

Praveen Kumar in "Karbi-Kuki clashes in Assam" (2004)¹⁵ studies the clashes between two militant organizations, the Kuki Revolutionary Army and the United People's Democratic Solidarity. He argues that the militant groups clash to take control of the public resources even at the cost of the rights of the local tribal or ethnic community they claim to be defending. For solution of the problem he suggests attempts to redress the socio-economic and political grievances of the people.

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as the first and immediate strategy, followed by addressing socio-economic development of the region. The disruption of linkages should be supplementary to the overall counter-terrorism strategy.

Anil Kamboj in "Manipur and the Armed Forces Special Power Act (AFSPA) of 1958" (2004)¹⁷ states that the AFSPA has been misused by the security forces on many occasions but its repeal may demoralize the security forces involved in counter-insurgency operations and give the militants an upper hand. To minimize the abuse of AFSPA, the security forces should focus on minimizing the use of force and be honest in their dealings with the civilians. Also, the security forces and the state police should be properly trained to handle all types of situations with professional competence.

Sreeradha Dutta in her book, *The North East Complexities and its Determinants* (2004),¹⁸ published by IDSA, examines the root causes of the turmoil in the region and inadequate economic development. In her view, reawakening of ethnic identity and economic backwardness are some of the contributory factors for the unrest. Analysing the regional implications of protracted violence and instability, the author highlights the role of the external forces and their links with the insurgent groups. It is her view that effective administration of autonomous councils could significantly mitigate the identity consciousness of various ethnic groups. Strengthening of police forces and infrastructural development are other policy options to bring peace and prosperity to the region.

It is observed from this listing of publications that most of them deal with terrorism and insurgency in the region, Assam receiving most of the attention. The problem of insurgency in Nagaland and Manipur has also been discussed. Issues related to the nature of the borders, the challenges they pose to the security of the country, and recommendations for their effective management have also been covered. The role of neighbouring countries in fuelling

the insurgency has also been highlighted. Earlier the writings focused on historical analysis of any given topic but there has been a gradual shift towards focusing more on the contemporary facts and providing policy recommendations. An overwhelming number of scholars have recommended encouraging people's participation for solving the various problems of the region.

IDSA has been conscious of the immense importance of the North East for the security of the country. At present, the internal security cluster in the Institute focuses primarily on the key security issues emanating from the region. It has undertaken projects dealing with border management and insurgency in Nagaland and Manipur. The scholars from the Institute have also undertaken field visits to the North East to acquire a better understanding of the region. It is hoped that, through such endeavours, IDSA would be able to bring out relevant issues confronting this sensitive region, generate public debate, and provide alternative policy recommendations to the government. The organization of this seminar, away from New Delhi, may be seen as a modest step towards achieving this objective.

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Until recently the managers of the Indian economy worried about its growth rate and the black money factor, which constituted its subterranean layer. In the North East the Indian economy has another layer, an underbelly—the undergrowth economy. It is an economy run by the insurgent outfits of the region, featuring parallel tax collection, extortion and ransom collection, receiving foreign aid, profit

* The paper has been structured based exclusively on published sources (newspaper articles, journal articles, or websites). The reports have not been denied or contradicted by the undergrowth outfits.

Prof. Sajal Nag

Funding the Struggle: Political Economy of Insurgency*

2