

THE TURBULENT NORTH-EAST INDIA**By: Dr Th. Siamkhum****ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
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The North-East India, made up of eight states; Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim, is strategically located in the extreme north-eastern corner of India; bordering China, Bhutan and Nepal in the north, Bangladesh, in the south, Myanmar, in the east and West Bengal state of India, in the west. It is connected with mainland India by 40km wide narrow strip of land, also referred to as a Chicken's Neck. With the exception of Assam Plain (Brahmaputra valley) and a small Imphal valley in Manipur, the rest of the region is made up of high hills and mountains, covered with thick forests and vegetation. Except Assam plain, the region is inhabited by native tribes of different ethnic groups belonging to Mongoloid racial stock, having close racial, cultural and historical connection with people of South East Asian countries.

During the last 60plus years of Independence, different parts of North-East India have been witnessing insurgency movement for different political demands. The Nagas, under the platform of Naga National Council (NNC), started for the first time in the region, independence movement as early as 1946, one year ahead of India's Independence. The movement turned into a violent armed insurgency movement in the 1950s. This was followed by the Mizos, under the political platform of Mizo National Front(MNF). The MNF declared independence on March 1, 1966 and the army was deployed to crush the movement immediately after the declaration of Independence. In Manipur, the United National Liberation Front was formed in 1964 to demand the pre-merger political status or independence. It was alleged that, the Maharaja of Manipur was forced to sign the merger agreement against his will and against the will of the people of Manipur. In the 1980s a number of insurgents groups emerged to fight for regaining pre-merger political status. In the meantime, in Assam the United Liberation Front of Assam was formed to fight for sovereign independent state of Assam.

Apart from insurgency movements for independence, there are numerous ethnic based insurgent groups operating in different parts of the North-East. Most of these ethnic based insurgent groups concentrated in Manipur and Assam, and were formed to demands political autonomy and constitutional protection within the framework of the Indian Constitution.

1. Mizoram:

The Mautam (famine) and Birth of MNF

In the later part of 1950s, Mizoram witnessed mass-flowering of bamboo leading to multiplication of rodent in large number. It was the belief of the Mizos that when rodent eats bamboo flowers, its fertility increased many folds, leading to the growth of its population in large number. True to their belief, the population of rat multiplied and standing crops in their jhum land were eaten up by rats causing an inevitable famine which the Mizos called 'Mautam'. The famine was devastating so much so that people have to depend for their survivals on wild roots, which too was not available in abundance, but was scarcely available only in deep jungle. The entire length and breadth of the District was affected by the famine and the situation was so desperate that people have to call for help from the government of Assam. The famine affected some 90 % of the district population. Since the entire District was engulfed by the famine, a small quantity of relief supply from the government was far from sufficient and people were dying of hunger and malnutrition each day. The dissatisfaction and frustration of the people on government was growing each day and month. In the meantime, people felt that unless they do something by themselves, no one, even the government was not going to give them sufficient supply of food. The Young Mizos, then organized themselves, and formed, 'the Mizo National Famine Front' under the leadership of Laldenga, to provide relief supply to people who were most severely affected by the famine. The famine finally came to an end in 1961; and the Mizo National Famine Front (MNFF) was changed to the Mizo National Front (MNF) to demand independence from India. The Mizo National Front formally declared independence on March 1, 1966. Following the declaration of independence, the MNF volunteers launched simultaneous attacks on military and para-military installations in the District.

a) Counter Insurgency Operation

The Central Government, soon after receiving the desperate call of the Assam Rifles Brigade Headquarter, Aizawl, sent Air Force Jet to strike Aizawl, Hnahlan, Tlabung, Sangau, Khawzawl, Hmuntlang and Bunglehmun villages causing large scale destructions, deaths and injuries to a number of civilians who had nothing to do with the MNF. The air force attack of Aizawl and other

major towns and villages came in three waves. In the first, the planes used machine guns 'before dropping the bomb on the second day i.e. 5th March, 1966, the bombing lasted for five hours" said Andrew Lalherliana. Lalhmingliana, a retired wing commander of IAF said, "It was the first time the Centre used its air power to quell a movement of any kind among its citizens. Goa was a different story-it was a move to drive away the Portuguese".

The Government of India, in its desperate attempt to deny the use of air power, issued several press statements saying that the air-crafts were used only to drop men and supplies of ration to soldier trapped in their camps. This seems to be far from fact. To substantiate the bombing, DD Nichols Roys and Hoover Hynniewto, members of a team of Assam Legislative Assembly, sent to Aizawl on a fact finding mission, produced a photograph of un-explode bomb and said, "we touched it we measured it and we took photograph of it. We have fragments of bombs. We have the testimony of hundreds of people who have heard the sound of the explosion, the burning of houses etc. the moment the planes flew over Mizo Hills. If you were to suppress the MNF rebellion, ordinary bullets are sufficient from any point of view, military, physical or economic, these weapons should never have been used. In a written report submitted to Assam Legislative Assembly, the two legislators stated that bombardments claimed civilian lives as it was not possible to distinguish from the air who was loyal to the government or who was MNF rebel.

The contention of the Government of India about airdropping of ration was, indeed, a fabricated version of the incident, because fighter jet was never used to airdrop food and ration, anywhere in the history of the world. The question, rather, is "was the use of air power absolutely unavoidable? Had there been absolutely no other option available?" The problem with resorting to airpower in any counter-insurgency operation is identification of target from the air. Same was the case of airstrike in Mizoram. It caused equal destructions to both MNF fighters and loyal citizens, and forced many loyal citizens to join the rank and file of the MNF. Moreover, the use of air power on one's own people produced negative impact on the peoples' feeling about India and Indians. Hatred against everything India and Indians was growing in Mizoram following the airstrikes.

In his book 'Untold Atrocity' C. Zama, a former MNA fighter said the army wielded almost unlimited power during counter insurgency operation in Mizoram. A non-commission Officer (Havildar) had more power than a Deputy Commissioner. If a soldier shot dead someone, he can simply say the person was an MNF supporter, and that was justification enough or if he raped someone, he just say, she is an MNF supporter and nobody could deny. There was no right or wrong in the eyes of the

army. What the army said, right was right and what they said, wrong was wronged. "In those days, being a Mizo itself was a crime, as all Mizos, irrespective of loyalty was a suspect" said VL Hluna. PuZamawia, a Commander of MNF volunteers in March, 1966 says "The bombings were followed by large scale entry of Indian Troops into Lushai Hills. They ordered evacuation of hundreds of villages after which they burnt down and the villagers were resettled in new villages. Thousands were arrested arbitrarily and unspeakable atrocities committed by them. C. Zama in his book on Mizo Insurgency mentioned that he saw the bombing since he was in the MNA and was fighting in Aizawl. He said, no such thing has happened anywhere in the country. Denghnuna, who also fled Aizawl on March 4, also witnessed the bombing. He was further quoted as saying, "The Union Home Minister had said, India wanted to crush the Mizos and hence excessive force was used and civilian population punished; and we don't want the people, what we wanted was the land".

The basic principle followed by many countries is that one cannot resort to airstrike in one's own territory against one's own people. Airstrike against one's own people is belief to have adverse impact on the situation as it naturally further alienated the people on whom it was used, and more and more people were forced to join the rank and file of the insurgents. True was the case with the Mizos on whom IAF conducted relentless bombing. More and more people began to join the MNF as a result of airstrikes. Airstrikes in Mizoram are debatable indeed. While they succeeded in pushing back the guerrillas, it lefts deep scars, and probably further invigorate their will to fight for 20 long years. B. Raman, a former head of India's Research and Analysis Wing writes, "Airstrike on one's own nationals tend to aggravate an insurgency situation by causing casualty of civilians and driving more people to join the ranks of insurgents" It is not that states are restricted from using air power in counter-insurgency operation. Planes could be deployed for surveillance, supply of man and materials, but to use air power for bombing and striking mission is not advisable as it is bound to escalate the situation further. Moreover, to go for air power on those who have no air power is rather a sign of weakness. The wounds inflicted on the Mizos during counter-insurgency operations are yet to be healed. Nothing has yet been done for the emotional rehabilitation of the Mizos. Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh has tendered his apology for operation Blue Star, but no word of apology has yet been offered to the Mizos who suffered much more in the hands of Indian Security Forces, even to the extent of using air power. Soon, the entire length and breadth of the District was swamped by India's best army and para-military forces constituting nearly ¼ of the total population of the District. The MNF, being far outnumbered by better equipped India army, both in terms of weapon system and training, had to withdraw to the jungle to start their hit and run tactic

of guerrilla warfare. Being equipped with the most dreaded legal law of the jungle, "Armed Forces Special Act, 1958," the army took over the administration of remote villages with iron hand.

b) Human Right Violations

The army, armed with this most sophisticated legal weapon conducted ruthless and most inhumane counter-insurgency operation in Mizoram from 1966 till the signing of peace Accord in 1986. Thousands of innocent civilians were killed and thousands more were made physically impaired for no fault of their own. The army, while in operation, would make no distinction between loyal citizens and MNF loyalists. Random human right violations were perpetrated in the name of counter insurgency operation. Not to mention other rights, even right to life itself was denied to the people as even a petty army officers was holding the license to shot and kill anyone who in his opinion, was MNF or MNF loyalist. Whenever there was an ambush, what the army would do was, instead of pursuing those who were responsible for it, would enter the nearest village, and hoard together the entire population in a school or church building or playground. Separate the women folk from the male; then rape the good looking women, on many occasions, in the full view of their husbands. Turning their wrath on the male members, give them third degree tortures, and shoot to death those who look a little bit wild, saying they were killing MNA. Then turned their wrath towards dwelling houses, loot and take whatever they want, and burn them down to ashes. Security forces in those days in Mizoram were virtually acting as Forces of Insecurity. There was an instance in the living memory of the present writer that in a Pamchung village, all male members were confined in a school building at night. They were told that the MNF insurgents would come and fire upon them. By 8:00pm they (army) shoot them indiscriminately from outside killing 9 innocent villagers and injuring the rest. The injured were airlifted to Aizawl for treatment. The army, it was said, reported the incident to their higher authority that they have killed 9 MNF insurgents. This particular incident is one of the many incidents in Mizoram in those days. On 13th January, 1967, the army committed mass killing at Buang Village, and on 9th June, 1967 another mass killing was committed at Chalkhawlhavillage. Mass killing of the same and more magnitude were reported in many other places.

This extreme form of repressive counter-insurgency operation was counter-productive as there was a growing hatred for the Vais (Indians) and more and more young-men started joining the MNF, though many of them did not subscribe to the MNF ideology and principle of political freedom from India. People were further alienated by this ruthless military operations and they started developing

the feeling that, even if they remain loyal citizens, the army would not spare them, anyway, and, therefore, it was better for them to join the insurgent and take revenge on the army at an opportune time and moment. In the absence of media, there was practically no agency to highlight the plight and suffering of the people to the outside world. The only source of information that one could get from was the army who gave fabricated and biased reports they have given to their higher authority to hide the crime they had committed on the people of Mizoram.

The Village Grouping

With the failure of the army to effectively contain the MNF movement even after employing all kinds of suppressive and oppressive measures. Another still more harsh measure adopted by the Army was "Village Grouping" or what the effected Mizos, called "Concentration Camp". The Scheme was introduced in 1967 with the aim to subdue the MNF by denying them of food and shelter. The Scheme was carried out in four phases and the first phase was carried under the scheme of 'Protected and Progressive Villages' under the provision of the Defence of India Rule, 1962. The second phase of grouping was launched in 1969 under the scheme of 'New Grouping Centre's'. It was introduced under the provision of the Assam Maintenance of Public Order Act, 1953. The third phase of village grouping called, 'Voluntary Grouping Centre' under the same provision of the same Act was ordered in 1970. The fourth and the last grouping called, 'Extended Loop Areas' was ordered again in the same year i.e. 1970 under the same provision of the same Act.

The scheme directly affected 80% of the total population of the district or 5200 villages, causing immense human trauma to the villagers. It was enforced not by civil authority as there was literally no civil administration, but by the army with zero sympathy for the affected people. The aim of the scheme was to physically eliminate the MNF volunteers and its supporters. While enforcing the scheme of village grouping, the army would move and surround the notified villages before dawn, issue quick notice to the villagers to take their belongings, and move to the new site. The old abandoned villages with their granaries were burnt down by the army. The conduct of the army involved in the operation was similar to the conduct of today's terrorists who had no mercy for innocent civilians. Dr. Vumson, a Zomi/Mizo scholar describes the situation, thus..... "In many instances villagers were forced to move out of their old dwelling at gun-point because they (villagers) were reluctant to leave where they had been living for generations. In most cases, the villagers had to leave on one day notice. There was no time to pack their belongings and it not possible to carry everything at one time. Animals had to be killed and food grains had to be hidden in the forest". If there was no time to hide their food grains they were "burnt down with the house

“This was done not by the insurgents or terrorists, but by the standing army of the world’s largest democracy who proclaimed democratic principle of individual liberty and freedom as its guiding principles. As soon as the people left, the army personal ransacked the house, keep the valuables for themselves, and then burnt them down to ashes. The period between 1966 and 1970, therefore, was referred to as “the darkness period” in the history of Mizoram as most of atrocities and horrifying tragedies happened during this period.

Following strong pressure from civil societies, NGOs and human right groups, the MNF started negotiation for peaceful resolution of conflicts from the early part of 1970s which finally culminated into the signing of Memorandum of Settlement on June 30, 1986. Since then, Mizoram become the most peaceful state in the North-East.

2. Nagaland

Movement for independence

With the end of World War II in 1945, the process of decolonization of colonized people has progressively been started throughout Asia and Africa; and along with the decolonization of these people and nations, the process of decolonization in Indian Sub-Continent has also been initiated by the British. At this critical and crucial juncture, the Naga Council which was renamed as Naga National Council in 1946, led by AZ Phizo, already decided not to join the Indian Union, maintaining that they were, historically never a part of India as they were racially and culturally distinct people having nothing common with India and Indians. The NNC, conducted a plebiscite on the political future of the Nagas in 1946 in which 99% of the Naga people voted for independence. Consequence upon, emboldened by the support of 99% of the people in the plebiscite, the NNC declared independence on August 14, 1947, one day ahead of India.

Following the declaration of independence, the NNC started campaigning for non-cooperation movement with the Government of India and its initiatives. They refused to cooperate the initiatives taken by the Government for the creation of Autonomous District for Naga Hills; and boycotted election initiated under the Scheme. The NNC, led by AZ Phizo, went underground in 1953 and asked the people to deliberately disobey the orders of the government. People started refusing to pay taxes to the government, teachers were asked to resign and students were asked to give up their studies. Village headmen returned their red blankets to government. This is the first phase of the movement for independence by the Nagas, which is largely seen as a non-violent movement.

However, with the formation of the Naga Federal Government on March 22, 1955, the situations was becoming more and more volatile. Soon, the then Naga Home Guard was converted into Naga Army; and by 1956, it has become a formidable force, having more than 3000 armed men. From the later part of 1956, the NNC intensified its violent campaign against security forces and government officials. With the call of duty from Naga Hills, the Indian Army was inducted and deployed in Naga Hills in 1956, followed by incidents of clashes between the army and the insurgents (Naga Army). In the meantime, it was found that the army was legally handicapped to effectively counter the growing violent activities of the armed Naga insurgents demanding succession from India. The Indian Parliament, to give legal immunity to the armed forces in dealing with the Naga insurgents, passed and enacted Maintenance of Public Order (Autonomous District) Act, 1953, the Assam Disturbed Area Act, 1955 and Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958. Armed with the most sophisticated legal shield of these Acts, the army and para-military forces deployed in Naga Hills, started counter insurgency operations in the most repressive manner. Armed with legal immunity, they committed countless numbers of human right violations. Custodial death, torture, unwarranted arrest, rape, fake encounter and death are reported on daily basis.

Counter Insurgency operation and human right violations

In contravention to Article 3, 5 and 9 of the Universal Declaration of Human Right and Article 3 of Geneva Convention on Law of War, relating to the protection of victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts, the army and para-military forces perpetrated act of killing of insurgents and insurgent suspects in custody, arbitrary arrests, detentions, cruel and inhumane treatments, etc. The following two incidents could be highlighted to substantiate army excesses during operation against insurgents in Nagaland and adjoining Naga inhabited area of Manipur.

a) Operation Blue Bird at Oinam in the Naga hills of Manipur

On July 9, 1987 at 11am, the NSCN raided 21 Assam Rifles Post at Oinam killing 9(nine) Jawans and injuring 3. In the subsequent operation conducted by the Assam Rifle, 15 civilians were tortured to death, six babies were made to die of starvation, 6 men and women died for continuous harassments and forced starvation by forcing them to stand the whole day, two pregnant women were forced to give birth to their babies in the full view of the Jawans, two teenage girls were kidnapped by the Assam Rifles personnel and have not returned till date; more than 300 men and

young boys of Oinam and neighboring villages were given electric shocks and subjected to third degree torture and more than 125 houses were totally destroyed and burnt down.

b) Shameful incident of indiscriminate firing and killing of civilians at Kohima

On 5 March, 1995, a military convoy was passing through Kohima, the capital of Nagaland. While driving along the streets of the town, the tyre of one of the convoy burst; the army mistaking the sound for a bomb explosion opened fire indiscriminately and dragged out occupants of nearby houses from their houses and killed them by firing point blank. In the incident, 7 innocent civilians were killed and 7 passerby including a minor were injured.

These are some of the few cases of human right violations in Nagaland during the last 68 years by state actors. In spite of all these, the Naga insurgency movement continues to persist. The government, on its part, did try its best to accommodate the political demands of the Nagas, except sovereignty and integration of Naga inhabited areas of neighboring states of Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam. Nagaland was given the status of full-fledged statehood with certain special provision to safeguard their tradition, culture, customs, land and its resources, etc. in 1962 by signing the Shillong Accord with moderate leaderships within NNC. But the insurgency continues to haunt Naga inhabited areas of the North-East under NSCN which later split into two factions; NSCN(K)Khaplang and NSCN(IM) Issac-Muivah. The two factions of NSCN continue their demand for sovereignty and integration of Naga People of the region under one administrative umbrella. Factional killing, kidnapping between the two confronting parties has been traumatizing the Naga populace every now and then; and is continuing till date. Since 1997, the two factions are under cease-fire with the government of India; and have several rounds of negotiations for peaceful settlements of Naga political problem. However, till date, solution to the Naga political problem is not in sight, mainly because of the persistent demand for secession and Naga integration.

3. Manipur

Emergence of Ethnic based Armed Insurgence

Manipur is infested by three types of Insurgency related problems; insurgency movement for independence or pre-merger status, insurgency movement for autonomy and insurgent backed inter and intra-ethnic conflict. While movement for independence is largely confined in the valley, the movement for autonomy is witnessed in the hill districts. Insurgency movement for independence could be traced back to the merger of the state with Indian Union on August 15, 1949. It was alleged

that, the Maharaja of Manipur was forced to sign the merger agreement at Shillong against his will and against the will of the people of Manipur. Soon after Manipur was merged with the Indian Union, the people in the valley started developing political aspiration to regain pre-merger political status; and this growing political aspiration of the people ultimately culminated into the formation of UNLF(United National Liberation Front), demanding independence on November 24, 1964. It is, therefore, maintained that the alleged forced merger, together with the delayed in the conferment of statehood are responsible for the emergence of insurgency movement in the valley districts of Manipur. The formation of UNLF was followed by the formation of several insurgent groups, like the People's Liberation Army (PLA), founded in 1978, People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (Prepak), founded in 1987 and the Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP), founded in 1980.

In the hills, almost all communities and tribes started having armed insurgent groups; each having different political agenda of their own. The Kukis, backed by its several underground groups viz. KNO(KNA), UKLF, KNF, etc. are demanding for the creation of Kuki homeland or Kuki State. The Zomis, backed by UPF (a conglomeration of half a dozen insurgent groups) are demanding for the creation of Autonomous State under Article 244A of the Indian Constitution, having a geographical coverage of the entire hill area of Manipur. Both the UPF and KNO are now under Suspension of Operation with the Security Forces since 2007. Political talk on their political demands are yet to start. The suspension of operation is a tripartite agreement entered into by the two armed groups, the Government of Manipur and the Government of India. On the other hand, the Nagas, having a separate political agenda i.e. Alternative Arrangement (AA) outside Manipur, had several rounds of tripartite political talks without much progress.

Another quite disturbing problem in Manipur is, ethnic conflicts backed by ethnic based armed insurgents. As a matter of facts, conflicts in Manipur is essentially ethnic conflicts between the three major ethnic groups; the Meiteis, the Nagas and the Kukis. There are also instances of intra-ethnic conflicts within Kuki-Zomi ethnic family in the 1960s, between the Thadou-Kukis and the Hmars, and in 1967-68, between the Zomis and the Kukis. Also in the plain, there was Meitei-Pangal ethnic conflict in 1993 for a brief period resulting to the death of more than 150 people from both side.

The Meitei-Naga Conflict (Cold War)

The conflict between Meiteis and the Nagas in Manipur is not as yet on open armed conflict, but it is a kind of cold war resulting from conflict of interest and goals due to different interpretation of history. The persistent demand for integration of the Naga dominated districts of Manipur with

Nagaland by NSCN(IM) and the demand for Alternative Arrangement(AA) by the United Naga Council(UNC), the apex decision making body of the Nagas of Manipur, outside Manipur are making the Meiteis apprehensive of the possible territorial fragmentation of Manipur. The Nagas, asserting the uniqueness of their history, maintain that before the British annexation, they were never ruled over by any power, including the Maharaja of Manipur. It was, they maintained, the British who divided their land purely for their administrative convenience. The Nagas, therefore, wanted the integration of Naga dominated districts in Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh with existing state of Nagaland; and create Nagalim, a state with maximum power, if not sovereignty. The NCSN(IM), which entered into a cease-fire agreement with the Government of India in 1997, has been persistently insisting that any solution to Naga problem should include the territorial integration of Naga dominated areas in bordering Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. 17 Years has passed by now, no solution to the vexed Naga issue is insight as yet, basically on territorial integration issue. On more than three occasions, the talk between the two negotiating parties broke down due to persistent demand of NSCN(IM) for the creation of Nagalim by amalgamating all Naga inhabited areas of the region. On June 14, 2001, the Government of India extended the territorial jurisdiction of cease-fire between the two beyond the boundary of Nagaland which sparked widespread violent protest in valley areas of Manipur. Agitations were organized by different organisations, including an influential United Club of Manipur(UCM). The protest in the capital city of Imphal turned violent and the mob started burning a building of Manipur Legislative Assembly. The security personnel, to control the violent mob, opened fire and killed 18 strikers and injured many more. The Government of India, then issued an order limiting the territorial jurisdiction of the cease fire to be operative only within the state of Nagaland. The government of Manipur, to subside the violent protest, declared June 18 as 'State Integrity Day' in honour of 18 persons killed into police firing.

In the meantime, the ANSAM (All Naga Students' Association, Manipur), imposed 52 days-long economic blockade in protest against the declaration of June 18 as 'State Integrity Day'. The two National Highway (NH) 39 and 53, the only two life-line of Manipur connecting the state with the rest of the country were totally cut-off. Soon the state was running out of essential commodities, including life-saving drugs. The Indian Air Force was, then pressed into service to provide the most urgently needed essential items. Within three months, the violent protest and counter protest in the areas dominated by the two communities, somehow, subsided but without a solution to the problem causing the protest. The UNC and other Naga civil societies maintained that the declaration of 18 June, 2001 by the Government of Manipur was a surrender of the Government to those who were involved in the act of violent protest. Relations between the two major communities in Manipur

have been further strained by the extension of cease fire jurisdiction between NSCN(IM) and Government of India and the subsequent violent reaction by the dominant Meitei Community in the valley. The psychological war between the two major community was further intensified when Th.Muivah, the General Secretary of NSCN(IM) made a failed attempt to visit his native village, Somdal in Ukhrul District of Manipur in May, 2010. While the Government of India had given a green signal to the visit, the Government of Manipur was all prepared for blocking Th.Muivah from visiting Manipur and sent State Police commandos and IRB to Mao gate to enforce the restriction on Th.Muivah. In the meantime, different Naga organisations rose up against barring of NSCN(IM) leader from visiting his native village. The protest turned violent on May 6, 2010, the day when Th.Muivah was to pass through Mao gate. Two students were killed and some 90 civilians were wounded when the security forces opened fire on Naga protestors. There was widespread protest and condemnations by civil societies and organisations, both in Nagaland and in Naga dominated districts of Manipur. They maintained that the government of India has miserably failed to deal with the state-government of Manipur in appropriate manner according to its commitment in the eye of the world as a nation. The entire world, they maintained, was surprised over the question of cease-fire coverage or so called territorial limit raised by puppet Manipur government. The Nagas, writer H.Sosu, a social worker from Nagaland, 'feel disappointed to see over all the situation and system prevailing in the country. The people were completely landed into confusion stage and frustration at Mao Gate incident of 6th May, 2010, where the lives of two innocent students were lost."

Following the Mao gate incident and the repeated broke down of peace negotiation between the government of India and the NSCN(IM) on Naga integration issue, the UNC (United Naga Council) started demanding Alternative Arrangement (AA) outside Manipur which could be interpreted as having two implications- a separate state or union territory or to plug off Naga inhabited districts from Manipur and merge with the state of Nagaland. The UNC and ANSAM immediately announced shivering of all ties with the government of Manipur and started a campaign for boycotting the government of Manipur, including Board of Secondary Education, Manipur in all Naga inhabited districts; and asked all the schools to apply for affiliation with Nagaland Board of Secondary Education. The Nagaland Assembly, in reciprocation, passed a bill allowing affiliation of out of state schools with Nagaland Board of Secondary Education in 2007. As a counter measure to this development, government of Manipur issued an ordinance banning any educational institution or school within the state from affiliation with any board of secondary education, outside the state without obtaining prior permission from the government of Manipur.

As seen in the preceding discussions, it could be seen that the core problem between the Nagas of Manipur on the one hand, and the government of Manipur and Meitei civil societies on the other, is the possible disintegration of Manipur. The persistent demand of Manipur Nagas for Alternative Arrangement outside Manipur and the persistent demand of NSCN(IM) for integration of Naga inhabited districts of Manipur with the state of Nagaland, has been strongly opposed by Meiteis, both undergrounds and over grounds. The 18th June, 2001 uprising, the Mao gate killing, etc. are directly or indirectly related to Naga Political issue for Naga integration and Meiteis' uncompromising stand for the territorial integrity of Manipur at all cost. There seems to be no easy solution to the problem until and unless both are ready to accept the principle of give and take.

Naga-Kuki Ethnic Armed Conflict:

The conflict between Nagas and Kukis is basically a conflict over land. The two communities had opened armed conflict in 1992 which somehow subsided in the early 1994. The conflict, nevertheless, affected in one way or the other tribe of the Zomi/Kuki/Mizo group living in different parts of the state. The Kuki-Zomi conflict, in fact, was the resultant effect of the Naga-Kuki conflict in other districts of the state. There are a number of factors responsible for the outbreak of opened armed conflict between the two major tribal communities of Manipur. Though the two were traditional foe, the immediate cause of the conflict between the two was over exclusive claim and counter claim of ownership rights of land. While the Nagas claimed exclusive ownership right of Senapati, Ukhrul, Temenglong and Chandel Districts of the state, the Thadou speaking Kukis, who also live in certain pockets of these districts refused to accept the lordship of Nagas on the lands they inhabited in these districts. The existence of numerous ethnic based armed outfits as protagonists of such claims and counter claims; extortion of home land taxes; of quit notices served by one group to another; fight for control over resources; disagreements on sharing of development funds; inefficient administration; lack of effective law and order machinery; poor governance and so on, are collectively responsible for the outbreak of armed conflict between the two in the 1990s.

The conflict, once started spread like a wildfire causing deaths and destructions to both the community. Thousands of lives were lost, thousands more injured and thousands were made permanently impaired. Tens of thousands were made refugees in their own home land. The economic cost of the conflict was enormous considering the primitive nature of their economy. It has created a deep sense of hatred against one another. It, somehow, could subside from the middle

of 1994, but the two communities are still pointing fingers at one another for violation of human rights and dignity during the conflict.

The political aspiration of the Nagas is clear and need no repetition. It is a demand for the Nagas integration or creation of an administrative arrangement exclusively for the Nagas outside Manipur. The Kukis, on the other hand, have their own political aspiration, a political arrangement for the creation of Kuki homeland, precisely separate Kuki state for all the Kuki/Mizo/Zomi ethnic family of Manipur. Recently, a Kuki State Demand Committee (KSDC) was formed for the purpose of pursuing "Kuki Homeland or Zalengam". It was setup with the support of the Kuki National Organisation (KNO), the most-well organized and well-disciplined armed outfit of all Kuki nomenclature based armed organizations. It has now been under Suspension of Operating with the Government of India (SOO) along with United Peoples' Front (UPF), a conglomeration of different armed groups.

Insurgency related to Human Right Violations

Under the legal protective shield of the Act, security forces, both state and central, committed countless number of human right violations, including violation of right to life. Enforced disappearance, rapes and sexual abuses, fake encounters, extra-judicial killings, indiscriminate firings and killings were a regular feature of daily newspapers. Security Forces, therefore, virtually turned into Forces of Insecurity. The following instances of violations of right to life perpetrated by security forces could be highlighted to substantiate the matters.

- i) ThongkhanlianNgaihte, killed in indiscriminate firing by Rajputan Rifles on 20th August, 2006, while attending Church service at Vengnuam, New Lamka, Churachandpur.
- ii) Longjamjit@Jitendra, who was allegedly killed in the custody of State Police Commando.

On August 25, 1993 some unidentified gunmen shot the CRPF personnel attached to the police out-post at Terakeithel, killing two CRPF personnel. The CRPF, instead of pursuing the insurgents, indiscriminately fired upon innocent people killing five civilians. Another well documented case of indiscriminate firing and killing took place in 1984 at HeirangGoithong in which 13 spectator of volley ball match were killed by Assam Rifles.

These are some of the few instances of violation of right to life by security forces; there are numerous instances of killing, torturing, arbitrary arrest and detention, etc.

4. Assam

Formation of Armed insurgent groups

Assam, the mother state of North-eastern states, inhabited by a number of ethnic and linguistic groups, each having political agenda of their own. The United Liberation Front of Assam is the most powerful and influential insurgent group operating in the state. It was founded on April 7, 1979 by the Assamese nationalist youths which included among others, PareshBaruah, ArabindaRajkhowa, AnupChetia, PradipGogoi and BhudeswarGogoi. It was formed with the aim to fight for independence of Assam. Though, founded in 1979, it started recruitment of its cadres only in 1983 which was completed in 1984. Soon after the recruitment process was completed, it started sending its cadres for training and for arms procurement from National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) and Kachin Independent Army (KIA), a Myanmar based insurgent group.

From 1996, it started fund raising campaign across Assam by resorting to extortion, serving demand letters, abductions for ransom etc. In response to the increasing incidents of violence, the Government of India declared ULFA as a banned organisation under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 from November, 1991, and ordered military operations code named, 'Operation Bajrang', in November 1990, 'Operation Rhino', in September, 1991 and Operation Rhino II. In the ongoing operation against ULFA under Unified Command Structure more than 18,000 people were killed and many more were wounded and arrested.

Human Right Abuses by the Warring Parties

During the last 20 years of counter insurgency operations against ULFA in Assam, there are several cases of human right violations. The army and para-military forces, operating under the protective shield of Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958, committed a number of human right violations in the name of counter-insurgency operation. There are hundreds of cases relating to extra-judicial killings, custodial deaths, arbitrary arrest, torture and inhumane treatment of suspects intimidations, sexual harassment and rape. On May 30, 1997, Cheniram, a human right activist was picked up by the army; and on the following day, on June 1, 1997, his lifeless body was handed over to the police, saying, he was killed in an encounter. On January, 13, 1997, the army personnel raided Rajbarivillage in which Dashrat Singh was killed cold blooded. Again, on July 25, 1997 a jawan of 25 Punjab Regiment raped a twelve year old girl on May 30 and July 25. On the other side of the story, the insurgents themselves are also, on many occasions, involved in perpetrating human right violations like, abduction and extortions, political assassinations, explosion of IED killing civilians, massacring of Hindi speaking labourers' etc.

The ULFA has slowly been losing its popularity and support from the people because of its involvement in acts of human right violation. As a result, more and more cadres are demoralized and started surrendering to the security forces. Moreover, due to strong pressure from the Government of India, Bangladesh and Bhutan launched offensive against ULFA and Bodo insurgents in their respective territories; as a result of which many insurgents surrendered to security forces, thereby, largely weakening the movements. The surrendered cadres of ULFA were allowed to retain their weapons to defend themselves from their former colleagues. This loose group, now called SULFA (Surrendered United Liberation Front of Assam), has become an important element in the armed politics and business of Assam. The total member of ULFA cadres to have laid down arms have gone up to 8718 out of which 4993 cadres surrendered between 1991 and 1998, 3435, between 1998 to 2005. On 24th January, 2012, 676 cadres have surrendered at a time. Following these mass surrender and the arrest and deportation of its top leaders by Bangladesh Government, the ULFA, now become much weakened.

Other minority ethnic groups with a sizeable population in Assam are; the Bodos, the Karbis and the Dimasas. While the Bodos predominantly inhabited western Assam and were classified as plain tribe of Assam. The Karbis and the Dimasas who are classified as hill tribes, are having each of their own district created under the provision of Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India having executive legislative and judicial power. In the 1980s, the Karbis, not satisfied with the constitution protection given under the provision of Sixth Schedule, started agitation for greater autonomous state under Article 244A of the Constitution or state-within a state. In the meantime, the Karbi youths organised themselves and launched series of agitations in the form of calling bandh, strikes etc. This band of Karbi youths, eventually decided to launch armed struggle to achieve their political goal and formed United People Democratic Front (UPDF) in the 1980s which is currently operating in the district.

5. Meghalaya

Until the formation of Hynniewtrep Achik Liberation Council in the early 1990s, Meghalaya was free from insurgency movement and insurgency related incidents. However, with the formation of Hynniewtrep Achik Liberation Council, Meghalaya started witnessing insurgency related incidents of violence like extortion, looting of Bank, intimidation, etc. Initially, the HALC was formed as a movement against the domination of what was called 'dkhars' outsiders (Bangali, Assamese, Nepali, etc.) However, tribal differences between Khasis and Jaintias on the one hand, and the Garos, on the other, led to a split in HALC in 1992 into Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC) representing the Khasis and Jaintias and the Achik Matgrik Liberation Army, representing the Garos (AMLA) which was later on changed to Achik Liberation Volunteers (ALU). While HNLC wanted to

create Meghalayas as the exclusive state of Khasis and Jaintias, and the ALU wanted to create a separate state for the Garos. Both the outfit established a strategic relationship with major armed outfits of the region like the ULFA, NSCN(IM) and National Democratic Front of Bodoland. The activities of HNLC is largely confined to the violence activities in Shillong while that of ALU is confined within Garo Hills. The two insurgent outfit, though still in existence, the law and order situation in Meghalaya is largely peaceful; and with the exception few isolated violent incidence relating to extortion, there is no major insurgency related law and order problem in the state.

Conclusion

Human right violations in insurgency infested areas of North-East are not only perpetrated by Security Forces. None state actors and Armed Opposition Groups (AOG), in most parts of the region are also largely responsible for human right violations. There were numerous cases of killing and abduction for being suspect of army informants by the MNF in Mizoram during insurgency movement, same was the case in Nagaland and elsewhere in the region. In Manipur, cases of abduction, torture, murder, etc. by insurgents are frequent occurrence. However, since they are outside the purview of law (being outlawed) no legal proceeding could be initiated unless they are arrested and booked by security forces.

Security forces are deployed to provide security to citizens and subjects in the in-secured regions and places where people are in perpetual fear for their lives. The North-East, being considered in-secured region because of insurgency related violent incidence, deployment of security forces to provide peace and security to the people is inevitable for the Government of India. Security forces are, therefore, deployed in the region to provide peace and security to the people. However, it has been seen during the last 60 years of insurgency related operations, there were countless account of human right violations by security forces, the insurgents and armed groups. Loyal citizens are at the receiving end of any insurgency related violent incidents. The Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958, enacted by Union Parliament was enforced in the entire region to give legal protection to security forces deployed for maintaining law and order and for providing peace and security to the people. However, under legal protective shield of the Act, numerous human right violations are perpetrated by the security forces in the name of counter insurgency operations in Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Assam, etc. since the 1960s. The Security forces, therefore, virtually become forces of insecurity. It is, therefore, necessary to reconsider the legality of the Act, in the light of Universal Declaration of Human Right, 1948 and Geneva Convention on Law of War and repeal or amend certain provisions which give legal impunity to the army and security forces, particularly

Section 6 which provide that, "No legal prosecution, suit and other legal proceedings shall be instituted, except with the previous sanction of the Central Government; and Section 4 which provides Army Officers (both Commissioned and Non-Commissioned) in a 'disturbed areas' to fire upon or otherwise use force, even to causing of death, not only in cases of self-defence, but against any person contravening law or orders prohibiting the Assembly of five or more persons'

Military intervention alone could not solve insurgency problem. What is, equally important is, to win the hearts and minds of the people. Repressive measure could contain insurgency for sometimes, but it is not a long term solution. Therefore, army personnel involved in the operation, need to have humane consideration to win over the support of the populace. People should be made to understand the futility of armed conflict for achieving the desired goal. Insurgency movement in any part of the world could not sustain for long without the support of the people and, therefore, security forces should use minimum force so as not to hurt innocent and loyal citizens.

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