

# The Insurgency Environment in Northeast India

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

Almost all external attention on insurgent movements in India has been focused on Kashmir. India also however continues to face major security issues in its northeast region. In some ways, in fact, these northeastern insurgent movements may prove to be an even more intractable problem, given the extremely complex political and social environment, the competing political demands, and the sheer number of various insurgent groups each with different agendas.

This article addresses the general insurgency environment in India's northeast. Given the complicated background and large number of groups, only a survey is possible. The focus is on two Indian states in particular: Nagaland and Assam. Nagaland is chosen because it was the earliest significant northeast insurgency and provides a useful template for examining other regional insurgent movements. Being the largest northeast state, Assam's unrest has significant impact on the other Indian northeast states.

## The Physical and Historical Environments

The northeast area for many years consisted of seven states (called the 'Seven Sisters' in India): Arunachal Pradesh; Assam; Manipur;

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Meghalaya; Mizoram; Nagaland and Tripura. All these states were initially part of the Ahom kingdom, but for political reasons, Assam (the rump of the Ahom) was carved up into the newer states. More recently, the previously independent country of Sikkim was annexed by India in 1975. At least thus far, Sikkim has not experienced the unrest of the other states.

Geographically and demographically, this area represents a relatively small portion of India, comprising 8.06 per cent of territory and 3.73 per cent of the population.<sup>1</sup> The states are linked to India by only a narrow strip of territory, and the area is bordered by Nepal, Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Bangladesh. The level of geographical isolation can be noted by the fact that only about 1 per cent of the northeast is connected to the rest of India, with the remaining 99 per cent bordering other countries. Geographically and culturally, the seven states represent almost a separate collection of nations from 'mainland' India.

There are some 200 tribal groups and sub-clans in the area, many of which have had long-standing conflicts with other groups. Prior to Indian independence in 1947, the area was ruled by the British as separate colonial territories. Several of the states retained a fair degree of autonomy, being of only peripheral interest to the British. As long as their inhabitants did not present a security threat to more significant interests and the area could be used as a security buffer, the British generally were content to leave them alone, ruling through native leaders.

When India gained its independence, the new government annexed the area as part of its national territory. Although it faced no immediate armed resistance, some of the local population expressed significant political opposition to this. One of the underlying factors in the rise of opposition movements in these areas has been the lack of socialization of many of their inhabitants as Indian. In many if not most cases, the inhabitants are much more likely to identify themselves first as members of their ethnic community instead of Indians, if they acknowledge 'Indianness' at all.

### **The Overall Pattern of Insurgency**

There has been a virtual kaleidoscope of insurgent movements in the northeast, with some counts of up to 40 to 50 groups. Many have been ephemeral, but there are at least 14 insurgent groups currently operating in the northeast states in India. In Assam, there are the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland. In Meghalaya, the Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council and the Achik National Volunteer Council conduct operations; Nagaland faces various factions of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland; and the

All Tripura Tiger Force and the National Liberation Front of Tripura operate in Tripura. Manipur has a particularly wide array of insurgent groups, including the People's Liberation Army, United National Liberation Front, People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak, Kangleipak Communist Party, Kanglei Yaol Kanba Lup, Manipur People's Liberation Front, and Revolutionary People's Front. The number of insurgent groups has been matched by corresponding violence.<sup>2</sup>

The actual strategic threat of many of these groups is debatable. As one Indian author notes, '... the moment they fired a few shots and were organized into a violent movement, not only the "power centres" responded, but powerful government functionaries came running from the Centre. The funds increased, the allocations increased.'<sup>3</sup> Also, trying to distinguish criminal groups from small insurgent groups frequently can be problematic: 'Insurgency is the biggest business in the North-East. Most of these groups exist only to make money through extortions and kidnappings. Ideology has taken a backseat here.'<sup>4</sup> The criminal activities of these various groups have become extraordinarily lucrative, especially since they have apparently also involved corrupt local governments.<sup>5</sup> Much of the overall environment of the insurgent movements resembles what Mary Kaldor calls 'new wars', with their emphasis on resource and power control for narrow groups, political mobilization, and criminal financing.<sup>6</sup>

Even though most of these movements are based on intra-ethnic alliances, subgroups within the ethnic groups have not always been particularly cooperative with each other. Specific clans within the larger ethnic groups have commonly dominated the leadership of insurgent movements that claim to speak for the entire ethnic group.<sup>7</sup> Clan rivalries have also caused the fracturing of several groups, at times leading to active armed conflicts with re-formed movements.

Most of the insurgent movements are decentralized and loosely controlled. An exception is each of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) movements. They are much more hierarchically organized, with detailed regulations for conducting operations and specified chains of command. How well this formal system works in practice is subject to considerable question, however. Likewise, the ULFA before major Indian army offensives was formally organized into battalions, but these were largely pro forma organizations with wide variations in their size and internal structures.<sup>8</sup> Both the NSCN (both branches) and the ULFA have stressed military style discipline among its guerrillas, while the Meitei reportedly have operated on a more egalitarian leadership basis.<sup>9</sup>

Most of the groups reportedly have done a very poor job of inculcating their rank and file members with any significant level of particular ideology. The only partial exceptions have been the NSCN

in Nagaland and the Meitei movements. Even these movements, however, reportedly 'have failed to convert their leftist ideology into well defined political concepts relevant to the local conditions'.<sup>10</sup> As already suggested, many of the groups – particularly the smaller ones – are virtually indistinguishable from criminal gangs and their members' principal ideology is almost certainly money.

### **Nagaland**

The earliest major insurgency in the Northeast was that of the Nagas. The Nagas, consisting of some 16 major different sub-clans, live in both Northeast India and in Myanmar. Originally Animist, the majority are now Christian, particularly Baptist. Naga unrest began soon after the end of World War II and the formation of independent India. The original leader and inspiration of the movement was Angami Zapu Phizo, who had served with the pro-Japanese Indian National Army during the war. The underlying argument of the Naga independence movement was that the area had been administered as a separate area from India by the British and therefore should be a sovereign state when India achieved independence. In at least one of Phizo's pronouncements, a religious element also was apparent:

We wish to remain within the fold of the Christian nations, and of the Commonwealth. If great Russia and mainland China are proud to feel that they follow the ideology of the German Karl Marx, tiny Nagaland is happy to be a follower of Jesus Christ, whom we have come to believe in as our Saviour.<sup>11</sup>

The Naga National Council (NNC), the pro-independence movement, in fact petitioned the British government for independence before India achieved its own independence, but this memorandum basically was ignored by London. NNC members also met with Gandhi, who – at least according to NNC accounts – was sympathetic to their goals.<sup>12</sup> They also attempted to receive UN mediation for independence or autonomy, with no success. Their efforts also included trying to use foreign religious groups to pressure India to make concessions.

With no agreements from the Indian government and no external intervention, the NNC established a parallel governmental structure in Naga territory in 1954 and began preparing for a guerrilla campaign. The NNC began armed operations in 1956 with a strength of some 15,000 guerrillas.<sup>13</sup> Early operations focused on attacks against Indian police officers and soldiers, with particular emphasis on raids to seize weapons, which initially were in very short supply. The campaign followed the traditional model, with the guerrillas controlling most of the rural territory and the government forces maintaining control of the larger towns and their own garrisons.

Political aspects of the Naga movement became rather complicated early in the insurgency. Phizo left through what at the time was East Pakistan, moved to London, and led the NNC from there. Other Naga political figures, evidently fearing the costs of a protracted armed struggle, began pushing for a political settlement. These leaders, who became known as the overground movement, were rewarded with political offices by the Indian and Assam governments. The self-named 'Federal Government' of the NNC remained underground. It should be noted that the political wing of the insurgent movement in contrast to most such groups retained a very democratic internal structure.<sup>14</sup> A third grouping, known as the middleground, maintained links to both camps.

As the insurgency continued, in addition to the normal guerrilla operations, the NNC began a campaign against civilian passenger trains in the region. Their tactics included both derailing trains and planting bombs on board trains to create maximum casualties. These attacks had significant psychological effect both within the state and in India overall, although they were probably counterproductive politically. The Indian government certainly was able to use the horrific results of these bombings very effectively in its propaganda campaigns.

The NNC guerrillas received significant support from neighboring countries. Some 2,500 were trained in East Pakistan by 1971.<sup>15</sup> Training camps were also established in Pakistan. At least several hundred guerrillas also received training and military supplies from China.<sup>16</sup> The latter training became particularly contentious, with many Nagas, both underground and above ground, adamantly opposing cooperation with the Communists, commonly based on religious grounds. Although the Burmese government cooperated with New Delhi in efforts against the NNC, its control of the area bordering India was minimal and it also was facing multiple insurgencies. As a result, the NNC established cooperative relations with the Eastern Naga Revolutionary Council, a Burmese group, and the Kachin insurgent movements. This permitted the NNC both safe areas and corridors through which they could send guerrillas to other countries for training. The NNC also tried to establish coalitions with other insurgent groups in the northeast, with little apparent success.<sup>17</sup>

The NNC was always subject to fissiparous tendencies, many based on tribal difficulties. In fact, at the start of the guerrilla campaign, there was a rupture over strategy between Phizo and his chief ideologue, resulting in the latter's assassination.<sup>18</sup> Later in the 1960s, Kaito Sema, perhaps the best guerrilla commander in the NNC, broke with the movement and began attacking the camps of other leaders.<sup>19</sup> Since he was a member of the Sema tribe, one of the two most active in the insurgency (the other being the Angami), his defection took most of his

tribesmen with him. He also further complicated the overall political picture by declaring another 'government,' the Army Government.<sup>20</sup> Yet another dissident faction later formed the Revolutionary Government.

In response to the seemingly never ending conflict, the Indian government on 1 December 1963 made what it perceived as a major concession to the Nagas by declaring Nagaland as a state within the Indian Union, with its capital at Kohima. Despite (or perhaps because of) this move, the insurgency intensified. In response, church leaders initiated peace talks. These resulted in a series of off-and-on ceasefire agreements, in which the level of violence was partially dampened for a period, but never completely ended. The political impasse also was unbroken, with the NNC leadership not only continuing to demand complete sovereignty, but also that Naga-inhabited areas in the neighboring state of Manipur be incorporated into Nagaland.

Although the NNC had significant successes early in the campaign, Indian counterinsurgency operations became much more fruitful in the early 1970s, particularly in intercepting Naga guerrilla bands re-infiltrating through Burma. Even within the mainstream NNC, considerable turmoil and purges began to be reported. Surrenders and defections increased. Although the military wing of the NNC retained its operational capability throughout the period, it became increasingly isolated. On 11 November 1975, the political wing of the NNC signed the Shillong Agreement in which they agreed to accept the inclusion of Nagaland within India and to lay down their weapons. Significantly, however, a large NNC guerrilla group operating out of Myanmar rejected the accord and did not agree to its terms.<sup>21</sup>

The NNC element in Burma began branding the mainstream NNC as traitors. After some internal power struggles within the breakaway group, in 1980 it announced the formation of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland, under the leadership of Isak Swu as chairman and Muivah as the general secretary. The NSCN claimed to represent the interests of Nagas both in Nagaland and Myanmar, and launched a series of offensives against Indian government facilities. After incipient peace talks between the NSCN and the Indian government, one faction of the group accused the leadership of betraying the Naga people and there was yet another split among the Naga insurgents, based largely along tribal lines.<sup>22</sup> This resulted in two competing groups, the NSCN-IM led by Isak and Muivah (NSCN-IM) and the NSCN-K led by Khaplang. The split initially weakened both factions, with very few operations from 1987 to 1990, but the scale of their operations quickly intensified. The insurgents have conducted numerous attacks not only in Nagaland, but also operations in neighboring states.

The NSCN-IM has a reported strength of around 3,000 fighters and the NSCN-K about 2,000. Both groups raise funds through

'revolutionary taxation' and by selling weapons and other military equipment to other regional insurgent groups. The NSCN-IM also reportedly is involved in the drug traffic through Myanmar.<sup>23</sup> Each group also has been very active in trying to establish alliances with other movements in the area and both have provided training support to several other groups.<sup>24</sup> In at least some cases, this training evidently has been for fund raising, with fees charged for each guerrilla trained from other groups. Each faction has also tried to establish umbrella organizations for coordinating anti-Indian (and to a lesser extent, anti-Myanmarese) operations: the NSCN-IM with the United Liberation Front of Seven Sisters and the Self Defense United Front of South East Himalayan Region, and the NSCN-K with the Indo-Burmese Revolutionary Front.

At least some of this coalition building almost certainly has more to do with the NSCN factions' competition with each other than with their respective struggle with the government. Each faction has supported other insurgent groups for much the same reason. Beyond the political competition, there have been sporadic armed clashes between the two groups, including some causing over 100 casualties on each side. As at the time of writing, the latest reported clash between the two factions was in March 2005.<sup>25</sup> Their ongoing rivalry has also created immense difficulties in peace talks between the insurgents and the government. As one faction enters into talks, it is accused by the other as being a traitor to the cause, and the second faction has tended to increase its armed activities to prove its commitment.

One contributing factor to the continuing insurgency has been considerable corruption within the Nagaland government.<sup>26</sup> One result has been frequent late payments to government employees and a consistent need for governmental borrowing. In a sense, the central government has served as an enabler, providing a consistent stream of infrastructure projects and other 'pork' to try to gain political support. The political struggle for the funding has led to significant fissures between the political factions. Probably in an effort to distinguish themselves as a 'clean' alternative, the NSCN-IM has emphasized its interest in serving as 'social reformers.'<sup>27</sup>

The other aspect of political corruption in Nagaland involves the electoral system. Vote rigging and electoral thefts are reportedly routine. In one incident, a candidate got zero votes in his district; he was unable to vote for himself because when he arrived at the polling place, he was told that his vote had already been cast for his opponent. In other cases, election workers shut down almost as soon as the polls opened since the completed ballots were delivered to them en masse.<sup>28</sup> The final electoral issue affecting the insurgency environment is the reported almost overt support for the two competing NSCN factions by elected officials.<sup>29</sup>



Despite the complications of dealing with the two factions, the government has managed to conclude ceasefires with both groups. The NSCN-IM group agreed to a ceasefire in 1997 and the NSCN-K in 2000. Each of these agreements was very much unilateral, and neither has been particularly effective. Peace talks seem to have become more serious since late 2004; NSCN-IM leaders visited New Delhi in December 2004. This visit seemed to give fresh impetus to the peace process, with a marked improvement in at least the atmospherics.<sup>30</sup> One potentially promising development is that the NSCN-IM has publicly given up its demand for complete Nagaland sovereignty. This may be more than offset, however, by continued insistence on the incorporation of Naga-inhabited areas in other Indian states into a 'greater' Nagaland.<sup>31</sup>

### **Assam**

The antecedents of the unrest in Assam were rather complex. First, as with other states in the northeast, a significant portion of the local populace held no particular loyalty to the central government after Indian independence. In common with the Naga insurgent movements, the main Assam insurgent group, the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), claims that it 'never is a separatist or secessionist movement' since 'Assam was never a part of India at any point of time in history'.<sup>32</sup> The second significant factor was population pressure within Assam. Large numbers of East Pakistanis illegally entered Assam after Partition. The flow increased significantly after Bangladeshi independence.

The issue of illegal migration began assuming considerable political importance by 1979. The All Assam Students Union (AASU) and the political movement All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) took the lead in demanding the detection and deportation of illegal aliens. The Indian government offered to make some concessions to crack down on the immigrants, but certainly did not satisfy the demands of the AASU and AAGSP. The situation continued to deteriorate, especially after state government employees joined the anti-immigrant movement, resulting in the national government declaring President's Rule over Assam in December 1979.

The ULFA was formed on 7 April 1979 in the midst of this unrest. Early operations consisted of bank robberies to gain funds and a series of assassinations of both government officials and civic leaders. As noted, its basic demand has been the independence of Assam, but it has also included anti-immigrant rhetoric in its propaganda. The thrust of its approach to the issue has been that the illegal immigration is a tool of the Indian 'colonial occupation of Assam' in trying to change the ethnic balance.<sup>33</sup> Overall, however, the ULFA's attention has focused much



more on the independence goal rather than the immigrant issue. It has also pushed various social issues, including campaigning against 'social evils such [as] corruption, prostitution, molestation of women, drunkenness, private-tuitions, the drug-trade and trading in Rhino-horns'.<sup>34</sup> It is likely that the ULFA statements on the immigrant issue have had more to do with forming alliances and increasing support than being a truly core demand. One indication of this is the ULFA statement of 1992 addressed to East Bengal immigrants:

East Bengal migrants are considered Assamese. Without these exploited lot, ULFA cannot be successful. These are people who are educationally, economically backward. They cannot be our enemies. These hardworking people are ULFA's protection shield ... Their contribution to the national income is immense ... They can produce essential things from a small piece of land, sell without any profit, work hard for the betterment of Assam, sacrificing themselves for the future of the State. They are our real well wishers, our friends, better than the Indians earning at the cost of the Assamese people.<sup>35</sup>

Also, the military wing of the ULFA has considerably more power than does the political wing, and the ideological component of ULFA's campaign has become less important as it has continued the struggle.<sup>36</sup>

The ULFA has a strength of some 2,500. It has been very active in extortion, with Indian security forces seizing millions of rupees that the group has gained through its 'taxation,' and reportedly has become increasingly involved in the regional drug trade. The ULFA has maintained a series of camps inside Bhutan and Bangladesh, and also reportedly has had training and support links with the Pakistani Inter Services Intelligence (ISI). The movement has been active in forming coalitions with other groups in the region, especially in dealing with political rhetoric and propaganda.<sup>37</sup> The practical impact of such coalition building appears to have been limited, however.

Despite occasional Indian government claims to be in control of the situation in Assam, 2004 proved to be a very active year for ULFA:

Between January 2004 and August 27, 2004, ULFA has been responsible for at least 12 attacks on vital installations like the gas and oil pipelines and telephone exchanges, five attacks on movie theatres, three explosions on railway tracks, eight explosions in public places, four attacks on police stations and security force vehicles, three explosions inside buses and ten attacks in which terrorists have killed their victims by shooting from close range. A total of 45 civilians and 15 security force personnel have been killed in these attacks. In the month of August alone there have been at least 16 explosions triggered by the ULFA.<sup>38</sup>

These operations were spread throughout Assam, rather than just in limited areas. 2005 was quieter, but ULFA maintained its existence. One measure of its continued influence was a general strike it called in October 2005 that reportedly 'paralyzed' the state.<sup>39</sup>

Electoral politics have had a significant impact on the ULFA's fortunes. After the unrest in the early 1980s, the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) was formed in 1985 with the support of the AASU and the AAGSP. The AGP was swept into power, with some of the ULFA members elected as part of the AGP ticket. In the wake of the successful elections, Assam was granted local rule. Despite the common origin of the AGP and the ULFA, the latter continued its armed operations and the security situation worsened dramatically. This was combined with considerable corruption within the state government, leading to a new declaration of President's Rule in November 1990.

One aspect of the ULFA that has probably kept it in the consciousness of the political class is that the group appears to have reasonably significant support among voters. According to a survey taken in Assam in May 2001, even though 60 per cent of respondents believed that insurgent 'terrorism' would be an issue in upcoming elections, only 6 per cent believed that 'stern measures' should be taken against them.<sup>40</sup> This level of support, albeit expressed indirectly, suggests that the state government feels some constraints over how to deal with the ULFA. Also, as with Nagaland, Assam faces corruption that helps exacerbate the opposition. It also tends to split the response. Beyond the normal corruption issues, there also have been reports of members of the security services and government officials providing covert support to ULFA operations.<sup>41</sup>

Negotiations over opening peace talks between the government and the ULFA have proceeded fitfully for a number of years. Typically, ULFA has rejected any government offers that did not start with an offer to discuss Assamese sovereignty or that demand the end to violence.<sup>42</sup> One possibly positive development that might lead to better chances for serious talks is that the ULFA has shown some signs of recent splintering, with several rather high profile members defecting to the government.<sup>43</sup> There have been other promising developments in the first half of 2005 in regards to peace talks, but the ULFA-India negotiations minuet is likely to continue for quite a while before serious talks begin.

The situation in Assam has been even further complicated by a separate insurgency by the Bodos, one of the larger tribal groups in Assam. The pattern of this campaign has been distressingly familiar for the area. In 1988, the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), with its armed group, the Bodo Volunteer Force, launched a guerrilla campaign. Basic demands included a free Bodoland, the establishment of a 'democratic socialist society', and changing the script of the Bodo language to Roman script to distinguish it from Indian Devangri script. The last demand was probably a result of the Bodos' Christian identity. The group's leadership ended hostilities in 1993 after the Indian

government established the Bodo Autonomous Council to give the Bodos a greater voice in government. One faction of the BVF refused to accept the agreement and maintained the title of NDFB to continue operations. This group had a peak strength of about 3,500, probably since reduced to about 2,000.

Another movement operated under the banner of the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT). This faction reached a very tenuous ceasefire with the government in 2000. A major advance in the counterinsurgency campaign was on 6 December 2003, when over 2,600 BLT members renounced violence and surrendered along with their weapons. This followed a settlement agreement on 10 February 2003 in which the Indian government established a Bodoland Territorial Council to provide at least limited self-rule for the Bodo areas. Despite repeated efforts with the NDFB, peace efforts were still not finalized as at the end of 2004.<sup>44</sup> In general, the Bodo insurgents have conducted as many attacks on other tribal groups – including civilians – as they have against security forces. In some cases, Bodo insurgent operations have resulted in temporarily displacing thousands of members of other tribes. As a result, members of other tribes have armed themselves, further exacerbating the already poor security situation.<sup>45</sup>

The Bodos are the most significant but certainly not the only ethnically-based group that has become active in Assam. There are some 15 Muslim groups, most notably the Muslim United Liberation Front of Assam, representing the Muslim-majority provinces, with demands for forming a Muslim state. The Dima Halong Daoga (also called Dima Halim Daogah) represents the Dimasa tribe and demands a separate state to be formed out of part of Assam and some neighboring areas. Likewise, the Kamtapur Liberation Organization is fighting for a state for the Koch-Rajbongshi tribes. Other smaller insurgent groups include the Tiwa National Revolutionary Force, Bengal Tiger Force, Rabha National Security Force, People's United Liberation Front, Karbi National Volunteers, Karbi Longri North Cachar Hills Liberation Front, United Liberation Front of Barak Valley, Adivasi Security Force/Adivasi Cobra Force, and Gorkha Tiger Force. Many of these groups are ephemeral; forming, fracturing, and spawning new groups in short order. Much of their rationale is connected with continuing tensions between various ethnic groups, occasionally spilling over into massacres and ethnic killings.<sup>46</sup>

## **Manipur**

Manipur continues to have significant unrest. The beginning of 2005, in fact, saw an upsurge in violence. There are somewhere around 30 separate insurgent groups, with a reported 10,000 members among

them.<sup>47</sup> One interesting aspect of insurgent operations in Manipur is that a considerable proportion of attacks have been conducted around the capital rather than in rural areas. Also, the level of extortion by the various groups appears extraordinarily high even in comparison with other northeast states.<sup>48</sup>

The rather peculiar tribal structure in Manipur almost certainly has had a great deal to do with breeding unrest among the various groups living there:

Nearly 90 per cent of the landmass of Manipur comprises its hill areas, and the remaining 10 per cent constitutes the Imphal Valley. The Valley is home to the Vaishnavite (Hindu) Meiteis, who comprise more than 50 per cent of the State's population, and the Muslim Meitei-Pangals. The hills are exclusively reserved for the 'tribals' – mainly Nagas and Kukis. The State has a peculiar land tenure system . . . under which the hill tribes are allowed to settle in the Valley, but no Meitei or Meitei-Pangal is allowed to buy land or settle in the hills. The Meiteis are, moreover, classified as non-tribals, and consequently denied benefits under various reverse discrimination provisions that create reservations in jobs and educational institutions for the tribals.<sup>49</sup>

Goals of the various Meitei movements generally are similar to those of other groups already discussed. They demand a separate Meitei homeland, with a return to traditional cultural practices, including eliminating the Indian script for writing. Some movements have even attempted to restore the traditional Meitei religion, the *Senamahi*. At least one of the groups has also conducted vigilante justice against rapists and drug dealers, together with campaigning against perceived social ills of the society.

The major Meitei insurgent group is the United National Liberation Front (UNLF), founded in 1964 under the leadership of Samarendra Singh. The UNLF faced a major setback in 1971 when most of its leaders were arrested during the Bangladesh war. Even before this setback, the Meitei secessionist movement quickly fractured, with several rump organizations being formed, including the Revolutionary Government of Manipur, People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK), Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP), and the People's Liberation Army. Obviously, many of these groups are very leftist, and there have been reports that some members received training in China. There have been at least two attempts to forge a common front among the insurgent movements, including the Indo-Burma Revolutionary Front (which also included the Nagas), the Revolutionary Joint Committee, and the Manipur People's Liberation Front. Given the factionalism of the various groups, it is unlikely that these coalitions will ever be terribly effective.

Unsurprisingly, the Meitei insurgency movements have spawned a plethora of armed groups from other ethnic groups to protect their own

aspirations. As already noted, the Naga NSCN-IM has operated in the Naga-inhabited areas of Manipur. The Naga operations in fact have been viewed as sufficiently threatening to the other ethnic groups in Manipur that they formed a coalition specifically directed against the NSCN-IM. Actual fighting between the Nagas and the other groups has subsided, but tensions remain significant. Kuki groups, including the KNA and the Kuki National Front, have been fighting for a separate state. Fighting between the Kuki groups and the Nagas has been particularly intense. At least three other tribal groups also have formed armed bands to protect their interests. Many of these tribes have clashed with each other. Muslim residents have also created insurgent movements, including the PULF, North East Minority Front, Islamic National Front, Islamic Revolutionary Front, and United Islamic Liberation Army.

Most of the insurgent groups have refused offers of peace talks. Recently, however, the UNLF has mooted the prospects of negotiations, but its demands to open talks remain extreme.<sup>50</sup> Even if progress is made in talks between the Indian government and some of the insurgent groups, however, this is very unlikely to resolve the enduring inter-tribal conflicts within the state.

### **Mizoram**

One of the few apparent success stories for the Indian government in the northeast has been Mizoram. In 1961, the Mizo National Front (MNF), the main insurgent group was formed in what was then the Territory of Mizoram. As with other groups, it espoused independence and improved social and economic conditions of the Mizos; it also called for protection of the Christian nature of the Mizo people. There was a five-year gap before the MNF actually commenced armed operations, but Mizoram was subject to extensive guerrilla operations from 1966.

Factionalism within the MNF does not appear to have been as severe as that of the other northeast insurgent groups. It has, however, been subject to rather massive defections to the government, with dozens at a time (typically led by senior guerrilla leaders) surrendering. Nevertheless, a hard core of insurgents continued their operations.

Almost as soon as fighting erupted, peace negotiations began. The initial impetus for peace talks was through local religious leaders.<sup>51</sup> These early attempts were abortive, but continued through several different channels. A settlement was reached in 1986 in which the MNF agreed to lay down its arms and to recognize Indian sovereignty. In return, the government established Mizoram as a full-fledged state within the Union and agreed to compensate MNF combatants. The government also ensured that the leaders of the insurgents were brought

into the government, including appointing the insurgent leader Laldenga as the chief minister in the state government. New Delhi also pumped considerable money into the state. There are still some rump insurgent movements, and extortion remains an issue, but since the agreement, the state has remained relatively stable.

### **Tripura**

The major issue in Tripura has been immigration from East Bengal, later Bangladesh. The original population has in fact reached minority status.<sup>52</sup> Not only did the population shift dramatically, but Bengali was adopted as the official state language in replacement of the native language. The first group to take up unrest in response to the changing demographics as a 'protector' of the native population was the Seng Krak (Clenched Fist), formed in 1947. This movement was short lived, but was revived again in the 1960s.

Unrest sharpened in 1967 with the formation of the Tripura Upajati Juba Samiti (Tripura Tribals' Youth League – TUJS). This group also had an underground wing, the Tripura Sena. The leader of the underground wing, Bijoy Kumar Hrangkhawl, later formed the Tribal National Volunteers (also called the Tripura National Volunteers), which became the principal insurgent group. The TNV reportedly was the instrumental group behind an explosion of ethnic violence in May 1979 and June 1980, in which some 1,800 were killed. The TNV, in common with later groups, appeared to base its agenda solely upon anti-immigrant efforts without much further ideology.

After 1988, when Hrangkhawl agreed to a ceasefire, a number of insurgents refused to surrender. A fresh series of smaller movements continued the struggle; the most significant include the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) – since split into two factions with about 1,500 members combined – and the All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF). One author claims that there are up to 30 small insurgent groups in Tripura alone.<sup>53</sup> All the movements have been marked by factionalism extreme even by regional standards. The government has succeeded in convincing insurgents to surrender en masse – at times including entire insurgent groups – but new groups seemingly form almost as fast as the surrenders occur. Most of the various guerrilla groups have focused their attacks overwhelmingly on civilians.<sup>54</sup> All the existing groups also have made a virtual cottage industry of extortion and kidnappings.<sup>55</sup>

As with other groups, the underground movements in Tripura have been informally incorporated in the normal political process:

The nexus between political parties and insurgent groups in Tripura has become stable over the years: 'the NLFT is said to have close linkages with the Congress

(I), while the ATTF is aligned with the ruling left front'. The insurgent organisations have adopted the strategy of election-eve violence specifically targeting the civilian population in an effort to engineer the victory of the political party whom they support.<sup>56</sup>

### **Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh**

Meghalaya has been relatively stable in comparison with other states in the area. There are, however, several militant groups that have maintained low-level insurgent campaigns. The Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC) represents the Khasi tribe and the Achik National Volunteer Council represents the Achik. Both these groups formed in the 1990s after the splintering of the Hynniewtrep Achik Liberation Council that purportedly served the interests of both tribes. Smaller tribes also have their own movements, including the Hill State People's Democratic Party and the Garo National Movement. The Naga NSCN has supported several of these groups' operations.

Arunachal Pradesh primarily has faced 'overflow' insurgent operations by the NSCN-IM and the NSCN-K. Both Naga groups have conducted significant attacks in the state, both against security forces and against each other. The NSCN factions have also reportedly set up training camps inside Arunachal Pradesh, both to train their own members and insurgents from other groups. Reportedly, the ULFA has also expressed interest in setting up camps in the state after being evicted from Bhutan.<sup>57</sup>

More recently, one local group has emerged. In 2001, the Arunachal Dragon Force, later renamed the East India Liberation Front, was formed to 'protect the ethnic identity' of the state and to establish an independent homeland for the Khamti tribe. Most of its operations have been in the periphery of the state. The ADF has reportedly received significant support from both NSCN factions and the ULFA. As one author notes, the ADF is in a relatively strong position in dealing with the other groups, 'all of whom are fighting for supremacy in these districts of Arunachal Pradesh, and can benefit from an understanding with this group'.<sup>58</sup>

### **Foreign Support for Insurgent Groups in the Northeast**

The Indian government is apt to see the hidden hand of Pakistan behind virtually all unrest within India, but there are strong indications that Islamabad has provided some fairly significant support to several insurgent movements in the northeast states. As already noted, before Bangladeshi secession, East Pakistan was the site of several training camps for the NNC. Although Pakistan no longer has geographic



contiguity to the northeast, it has continued some level of assistance to the insurgents. A captured NSCN-IM finance secretary claimed that Pakistani diplomats in Dhaka provided somewhere around one million dollars to the group between 1993 and 1994.<sup>59</sup> Other reports and documents point to ISI training and movement support to a variety of northeast insurgent movements.<sup>60</sup>

India has accused Bangladesh of allowing insurgent groups to operate from its territory. Bangladesh has arrested at least some of the senior ULFA leaders in its territory and sentenced them to prison for crimes such as illegal entry and currency violations. At the same time, however, Bangladesh has shown little desire to extradite insurgents to Indian control.<sup>61</sup> The level of actual Bangladeshi government support for the insurgents is subject to debate. At least one Indian observer has concluded that the support is the result of corruption, with officials simply allowing insurgent activities within the country as a result of bribery.<sup>62</sup> Others have suggested that Bangladesh has been duplicitous in paying lip service to controlling Indian insurgents while providing them covert support.<sup>63</sup> The potential support has been receiving very high level political attention by the Indian government, with increasingly pointed rhetoric directed toward Bangladesh.<sup>64</sup>

Myanmar (Burma) also has served as a safe area for several Indian insurgent groups. This has had less to do with Burmese government support of the Indian insurgents than with the fact that Yangon also has faced significant problems in controlling its periphery. At the end of the 1990s the Indian government in fact offered to provide Myanmar with a variety of military equipment that would be useful in controlling its own insurgency.<sup>65</sup> There have also reportedly been increasingly formal talks between the two governments about conducting large-scale joint military offensives against the insurgent groups operating in Myanmar.<sup>66</sup>

Several groups, particularly the ULFA, have operated camps in Bhutan. As with Myanmar, however, this has been less a matter of Bhutanese government acquiescence than lack of control of rural areas. The Bhutanese government faces a particular imperative to support Indian counterinsurgency efforts because of the 1949 treaty between the two countries that calls for Bhutan's defense and foreign affairs to be 'guided' by India. After a series of fairly tense interchanges between the two governments, the Bhutanese military launched a major operation against the camps in its territory on 15 December 2003. The army claimed to have killed or captured about 650 insurgents and to have destroyed 30 camps and 35 observation posts.<sup>67</sup>

The Bhutanese operations demonstrated the laws of unintended consequences. After Bhutanese troops forced ULFA and Bodo insurgents out of Bhutan in late 2003, reportedly 'hundreds' returned to Assam. Within a few months, the area saw a marked upsurge in insurgent

attacks, including a bombing at Indian Independence Day ceremonies in August 2004, killing 15; a series of bus bombings; and a series of attacks in October that killed some 73 civilians.<sup>68</sup>

### **The Indian Response**

The stress in this article is on an examination of the insurgents' side of the unrest in the northeast. A few notes on the Indian counterinsurgency campaign may be useful, however. The Indian army has been required to conduct extensive operations throughout the area. It generally has relied on relatively large-scale operations, mostly conducted by units of at least company strength.<sup>69</sup> Some particularly large operations have involved elements of up to a dedicated army brigade, 4,500 paramilitaries, and helicopter gunships.<sup>70</sup> Given the problems and frustrations inherent in counterinsurgency, senior army commanders have increasingly stressed the need for political resolution of the various insurgencies.

Indian army doctrine stresses that objectives in low intensity conflict and counterinsurgency 'should be oriented towards achieving a qualitative improvement in the situation which may not necessarily be possible in a short timeframe'.<sup>71</sup> The doctrine also notes that 'any tendency to resort to quick and seemingly efficient military-like actions which may appear to resolve an immediate local issue but, in all probability, may seriously hurt long-term objectives and future stability should be curbed without exception'. Commanders should focus on 'low profile and people-friendly operations rather than high intensity operations related only to body and weapon counts'.<sup>72</sup> Stress is placed on cooperation and coordination with local administrative bodies and law enforcement agencies, which includes having commanders who have a 'high degree of tolerance for operating effectively in an environment of ambiguity'.<sup>73</sup> Although the primacy of civilian operational control is not as formally laid in the Indian army doctrine as in British doctrine, the coordinated approach of Indian doctrine clearly owes much to the doctrinal underpinnings of its erstwhile colonial rulers.

Using the perhaps unfortunate acronym of WHAM (winning hearts and minds), Indian doctrine also emphasizes winning popular support and a strict code of conduct in dealing with civilians. The code of conduct of ten points would seem ideal for maintaining good relations with the populace if actually followed.<sup>74</sup> At least some human rights reports indicate abuses by Indian security forces (particularly in earlier periods of the counterinsurgency campaign), but the army seems to be making very sincere efforts to reduce systemic abuses. At the operational level, the army officially notes the need to plan for both interdicting infiltration efforts and attacking insurgent concentrations in the 'hinterland'. Although as previously noted, the past pattern has been

relatively large-scale operations, the 2004 doctrine emphasizes the necessity of small unit tactics. The army also has had a special counterinsurgency and jungle warfare school since 1970.<sup>75</sup>

In addition to the army, the government has relied on extensive paramilitary and police forces. The oldest and largest of these forces is the Assam Rifles, with a strength of 43 battalions led by Indian army officers on secondment and by some officers appointed through the ranks. Although the Assam Rifles' home territory is Assam, it recruits from throughout India and has served not only in other northeast states, but also Sri Lanka and Kashmir.<sup>76</sup> Similar paramilitary forces have been established in the other states. The Tripura State Rifles consist of at least eight battalions plus two Special Task Forces to serve as quick reaction units.<sup>77</sup> The Arunachal Pradesh police have formed two paramilitary battalions. The state of Manipur also has a multi-battalion paramilitary force called the Manipur Rifles, but this unit apparently has had some significant morale and discipline problems.<sup>78</sup>

Working relations between the Indian army and the paramilitary forces appear to be generally good. There reportedly is a less cooperative attitude between the military and the regular civil police forces. As one Indian army officer noted, 'When the Army sees the Police enriching itself at check points on highways, the suspicion and hostility chokes communication'.<sup>79</sup> Reports suggest that these attitudes have split the government's response in a number of cases.

Beyond security operations and the peace negotiation process, New Delhi has tried a number of political measures. The Indian government has devised several plans for inducing guerrillas to surrender, to include rehabilitation camps where combatants can be trained in new skills and can receive bounties for weapons.<sup>80</sup> Also, as already noted, various economic incentives have been offered. The economic measures may, however, have been limited in effectiveness due to overall corruption within the states.<sup>81</sup> The government has implemented varying degrees of autonomy for particular tribal groups, but this certainly has been a double edged sword politically. As particular groups have been singled out for more autonomy, other groups have increased their demands in response. Any suggestion of the government favoring certain groups has commonly resulted in intercommunal violence. The government's treatment of the various ethnic groups appears to be much less a deliberate policy of 'divide and conquer' than it does as being a short-term reaction to political exigencies.

### **Conclusions and Prospects**

There have been some positive developments in the northeast. Several of the states have in fact seen significant declines in insurgent operations, and

various negotiations and ceasefire agreements have made considerable progress. Indian counterinsurgency operations also have made steady, if unspectacular, progress. Overall, however, there seems to be little reason to be terribly sanguine about the security situation in the northeast states.

The era of the large insurgent groups in northeast India that could present a major strategic threat independently appears to have passed. Although several groups remain that display fairly significant strength, it is virtually inconceivable – barring a radical change in the overall political environment – that they could actually overthrow any of the state governments. Almost all the larger movements have fractured, some to the point of losing their existence.

This fracturing is far from unalloyed good news for Indian counterinsurgency efforts, however. The multiplicity of groups creates a hugely complicated environment in which competing demands must be addressed. This becomes particularly problematic in the cases such as the Nagas in which they want state borders to be even further redrawn to incorporate kinsmen. In many cases, the competing demands are essentially a zero-sum game: acceding to the demands of one group likely will result in increased violence by another. Also, the sheer volume of small-scale operations by multiple groups can (and has) result in a significant corrosive impact on public perceptions of security and the actual security environment.

The second aspect of the security environment is the intercommunal violence. Even if the government manages to establish some form of ceasefire with particular groups, this does not necessarily indicate that these movements will end their violence against ‘others’ that they view as threatening to their groups’ interests. The resulting tit-for-tat violence can occasionally explode into major episodes of ethnic cleansing and massacres. Given the complicated demographics throughout the region, such incidents are very difficult to preclude.

The other problem for the government is that even as the insurgent groups shrink, in many cases the remaining members convert into criminal gangs. Frequently, it is in fact difficult to tell if some groups are insurgents or purely criminal. Patterns of operations – extortion, kidnapping, bank robberies – are virtually indistinguishable. Whether their motives for violence are political or financial, the activities of these bands have similar results in terms of the security threat they represent.

All these factors continue to plague the northeast with little apparent hope for a near-term resolution. The number of groups with competing goals is unlikely to recede quickly, and given past history, new insurgent groups are likely to emerge. Their rather convoluted relations with neighboring countries also create diplomatic problems for New Delhi. As such, the northeast states of India almost certainly will continue to represent a significant security threat to the country.

NOTES

1. Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India at <http://mha.nic.in/neview.htm>
2. In Assam, there were 527 killings and 97 kidnappings in 2002, and 379 killings and 88 kidnappings in 2003. Comparable figures for the neighboring states were: in Tripura, 218 killings in 2002 and 286 in 2003, and 176 kidnappings in 2002 and 213 in 2003; Meghalaya, 66 killed in 2002 and 78 in 2003, with 26 kidnappings in 2002 and 45 in 2003; Nagaland, 90 killed in 2002 and 86 in 2003 and 34 kidnappings in 2002 and 167 in 2003; Manipur, 239 and 201 killed and 67 and 79 kidnapped; Arunachal, 32 and 36 killed and 13 and 21 kidnapped; and with only limited casualties in Mizoram. Ibid.
3. Capt. Ashish Sonal, *Terrorism and Insurgency in India: A Study of the Human Element*, New Delhi: Lancer, 1994 p.16.
4. Unnamed senior Indian army official quoted in A.N. George, 'North East, Not Best', *Mid Day* (India), 10 Oct. 2004 at [www.mid-day.com/news/nation](http://www.mid-day.com/news/nation).
5. For further details, see Mandy Turner and Binalakshmi Nepam, *The Impact of Armed Violence in Northeast India*, Centre for International Cooperation and Security, Nov. 2004 pp.20–22.
6. Mary Kaldor, 'Cosmopolitanism and Organised Violence', 2000, at [www.theglobalsite.a-c.uk/press/01kaldor.htm](http://www.theglobalsite.a-c.uk/press/01kaldor.htm), and 'Beyond Militarism, Arms Races and Arms Control', *Social Science Research Council/After Sept. 11*, at [www.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/kaldor\\_text\\_only.htm](http://www.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/kaldor_text_only.htm).
7. Sonal (note 3) pp.19–20.
8. Ibid. p.49.
9. Ibid. p.64.
10. Ibid. p.27.
11. Nirmal Nibedon, *Nagaland: The Night of the Guerrillas*, New Delhi: Lancer Publishers, 2000 p.28. One author also argues that there was a class element among the proponents of separatism, with traditional chiefs and their close followers pushing independence to preserve their privileges. Sajal Nag, 'North East: A Comparative Analysis of Naga, Mizo, and Meitei Insurgencies', *Faultlines* 14 at [www.satp.org/satporgtp/publications/faultlines/volume14/](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publications/faultlines/volume14/). A similar argument is made for the Mizos.
12. For the NNC version of the discussion, see Nibedon (note 9) pp.31–35.
13. Ibid. p.63.
14. For an interesting detailed account of underground democratic decision making, see Nibedon (note 9) pp.266–77.
15. Ibid. p.99.
16. Ibid. pp.131–205, provides extensive details on the developments in this link. One interesting aspect of the training was that the Chinese apparently minimized the amount of ideological education they offered, and permitted the Nagas to hold church services, read Bibles, and the like. At the same time, however, a number of the NNC members apparently had significant exposure to Marxist ideology. At least one Naga leader also reportedly traveled to North Vietnam courtesy of the Chinese to study their operations against the US.
17. Sajal Nag (note 9). A similar argument is made for the Mizos.
18. For details, see Nibedon (note 9) pp.57–72.
19. For details, see Nibedon (note 9) pp.155–70 *passim*.
20. Kaito later was assassinated by the mainstream NNC.
21. At least in part, this was a result of an incident in which a delegation of the group who had returned to Nagaland to find out more about the terms of the accord was seized by Indian security forces. Details remain murky about the details of why this occurred. Nibedon (note 9) p.370.
22. For details of this split, see Sashinungla, 'Nagaland: Insurgency and Factional Intransigence', *Faultlines*, Volume 16, at <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume16/Article4.htm>
23. Ibid.
24. Sajal Nag (note 9).
25. This battle involved an NSCN-IM attack on an NSCN-K camp, in which at least ten insurgents were killed. 'Weekly Assessments and Briefings', *South Asia Intelligence Review*, 3/37, 28 March 2005.
26. Ashima Jahangir, *States of Violence: Nature of Terrorism and Guerrilla Warfare*, New Delhi: Dominant Publishers, 2000 p.150, claims that of funds authorized for a particular department,

- 20 per cent go to the Finance Minister, 10 per cent to the Congress Party, 20 per cent to the departmental minister, and 20 per cent to the underground governments.
27. For details, see Sashinungla (note 20).
  28. For these and other examples, see Jahangir (note 24) pp.152–53.
  29. Sashinungla (note 20).
  30. Ajai Sahni, 'Naga Peace Overtures', 'Weekly Assessments and Briefing', *South Asia Intelligence Review*, 3/22, 13 Dec. 2004.
  31. Wasbir Hussain, 'Naga Talks: Jeopardizing the Peace', 'Weekly Assessments and Briefings', *South Asia Intelligence Review* 3/30, 7 Feb. 2005.
  32. 'ULFA's Aim and Objects', on the ULFA website at [www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Congress/7434/ulfa.htm](http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Congress/7434/ulfa.htm).
  33. Ibid.
  34. Bibhu Prasad Routray, 'ULFA: The 'Revolution' Comes Full Circle', *Faultlines* 13, [www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume13/Article5.htm](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume13/Article5.htm)
  35. Ibid.
  36. For a rather different perspective on the impact of ideology on ULFA operations, see Samir Kumar Das, 'Assam: Insurgency and the Disintegration of Civil Society', *Faultlines* 14, [www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume14/Article5.htm](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume14/Article5.htm). For an argument that the ULFA has evolved into an essentially criminal group, see Jaideep Saikia, 'Revolutionaries or Warlords: ULFA's Organizational Profile', *Faultlines* 9, [www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume9/Article5.htm](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume9/Article5.htm).
  37. For example, see 'Boycott India's Republic Day Celebrations', 15 Jan. 1999 at [www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Congress/7434/freedom0201?200523](http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Congress/7434/freedom0201?200523). This joint statement was issued by the ULFA, PREPAK, RPE, UNLF, NSCN, and TPDF.
  38. Bibhu Prasad Routray, 'Assam: Resurgent ULFA and the Indolent State', *South Asia Intelligence Review* 3/7, 30 Aug. 2004.
  39. BBC News, 'Assam Paralysed by Rebel Strike', 22 Oct. 2005.
  40. Das (note 34).
  41. Routray (note 32).
  42. For example, see 'Weekly Assessments and Briefing', *South Asia Intelligence Review*, 3/22, 13 Dec. 2004. Besides rejecting the proposal for not offering sovereignty discussions, the ULFA also objected to the fact that the Prime Minister did not sign the proposal and that the offer had a precondition that the ULFA stop violence before beginning talks. Also see 'Assam rebels reject peace talks', BBC, 26 Jan. 2005.
  43. For example, at the end of February 1995, the ULFA media chief and an 'explosives expert' surrendered, charging that 'Ulfa has lost its ideology and the outfit is being exclusively run by [Ulfa leader] Paresh Baruah like a dictator', BBC Online, 28 Feb. 2005.
  44. Wasbir Hussain, 'India's Assam state government offers rebel leaders safe passage for talks', Associated Press, 19 Oct. 2004.
  45. For details, see Ajai Sahni, 'Survey of Conflicts and Resolution in India's Northeast', *Faultlines* 12, [www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume12/article3.htm](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume12/article3.htm)
  46. As at the date of writing, the most recent ethnic clashes in Assam were in September and October 2005, in which some 90 persons reportedly were killed and about 30,000 displaced due to the fighting. Subir Bhaumik, 'Troop Alert After Assam Massacre', BBC News, 27 Sept. 2005, and Subir Bhaumik, 'Thousands Flee Assam Tribal Feud', BBC News, 18 Oct. 2005.
  47. 'Weekly Assessments and Briefing', *South Asia Intelligence Review*, 3/35, 14 March 2005.
  48. Ibid.
  49. Sahni (note 42).
  50. 'Weekly Assessments and Briefing', *South Asia Intelligence Review*, 3/35, 14 March 2005. The group's demands include a UN-supervised plebiscite on independence, deployment of a UN peacekeeping force, and a simultaneous Indian military withdrawal and handover of insurgent weapons to the UN.
  51. R.K. Satapathy, 'Mediating Peace: The Role of Insider-Partials in Conflict Resolution in Mizoram', <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume15/Article3.htm>. presents a detailed examination of the peace process.
  52. Praveen Kumar, 'Tripura: Beyond the Insurgency-Politics Nexus', *Faultlines* 14, at [www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume14/Article6.htm](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume14/Article6.htm) provides detailed demographic data on the immigration.



53. Ibid.
54. Kumar (note 48) provides the figure of 2,278 civilians, 354 security forces personnel, and 306 insurgents killed between 1993 and July 2003.
55. Kumar (note 48) cites official figures of 551 abductions between 1998 and 2003, with 140 killed in captivity and 317 still being held as of May 2003. Many of the ransom demands are relatively modest, but can be considerable for richer or more prominent figures.
56. Ibid.
57. Sahni (note 42).
58. Sahni (note 42).
59. Sashinungla (note 20).
60. For the Assamese government 'white paper' on ISI activities, see Shri Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, Chief Minister, Assam, *ISI Activities in Assam*, 'Statement Laid on the Table of the House of Assam Legislative Assembly Under Item No.12 Dated 6.4.2000', at [www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/assam/documents/papers/isi\\_activities](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/assam/documents/papers/isi_activities).
61. Waliur Rahman, 'Jailed Assam rebel seeks asylum', BBC Online, 25 Feb. 2005.
62. Major General Afsir Karim, *Transnational Terrorism: The Danger in the South*, New Delhi: Lancer Press, 1993 p.15.
63. For example, see Praveen Kumar (note 48). He cites reports that Bangladeshi Directorate General of Forces Intelligence has sponsored meetings of some Tripura insurgent groups, and that there are indications of cooperation between Bangladeshi intelligence and Pakistan's ISI in dealing with the insurgents.
64. For example, see Ramola Talwar Badam, 'Indian prime minister urges Bangladesh to stop alleged training by separatist rebels', Associated Press, 6 Oct. 2004.
65. The offer also included improved intelligence sharing. For details, see Ashima Jahangir (note 24) pp.158–62.
66. Associated Press, 2 Nov. 2004.
67. Associated Press, 3 Jan. 2004.
68. For details, see Dan Morrison, 'After Squeezing Rebels, India's Northeast Erupts', *Christian Science Monitor*, 4 Oct. 2004; Associated Press, 12 Oct. 2004; The Canadian Press, 26 Aug. 2004; Xinhua, 15 Aug. 2004.
69. For a detailed examination of developments in Indian army counterinsurgency doctrine, see Rajesh Rajagopalan, "'Restoring Normalcy": The Evolution of the Indian Army's Counterinsurgency Doctrine', *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 11/1 Spring 2000 pp.44–68.
70. Sudhir Chadda, 'Army Moves Brigades... ', *India Daily*, 7 Oct. 2004.
71. *Indian Army Doctrine*, Oct. 2004 p.54. The official doctrine is available at <http://indianarmy.nic.in/indianarmydoctrine.htm>. Unless otherwise noted, all references in this section are to this document.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid. p.55.
74. Ibid. p.56 for the complete code of conduct.
75. For details on this school, see Indian Ministry of Defense at <http://mod.nic.in/rec&training/body.htm>.
76. For details on the history and organization of the Assam Rifles, see the official site [assamrifles.com](http://assamrifles.com).
77. The numbered battalions extend to the 9th Battalion, but it is unclear if an 8th battalion ever was constituted. <http://tripurapolice.nic.in/atrs1.htm>.
78. In 2000, one of the battalions mutinied over complaints that their pay was being misappropriated. 'Mutiny of Manipur Rifles soldiers to spread to other battalions', Mizzam News Group, 11 Dec. 2000. In 2002, soldiers of another battalion refused to accept a transfer because it would disrupt their families; the state government was forced to rescind the move. 'Manipur Rifles' transfer put on hold', *The Tribune* (Chandigarh, India), 14 May 2002.
79. Sonal (note 3).
80. For the text of the 1998 published Assamese government plan, see 'Scheme for Surrender-Cum-Rehabilitation of Militants in the North-East: Government of Assam', at [www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/assam/documents/papers/Surrender.htm](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/assam/documents/papers/Surrender.htm)
81. For this argument, see Paolienlal Haokip, 'Counter-Insurgency in the North-East: A Counter-Perspective', Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, 25 Oct. and 29 Nov. 2002 at <http://www.ipcs.org>.



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