

# Insurgency in North-East India: A Threat to the Socio-Economic Development

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## ABSTRACT

North East India comprises of eight states namely- Sikkim, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Meghalaya. It is bounded by Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh. The region is rich in bio-diversity and untapped raw materials. Thus it has strategic, political and economic significance for India. Even after seven decades of Indian independence, the regions are still remained under developed. Among other reasons like geographical isolation, insurgency in the northeast India has been a major cause for underdevelopment. The problem of insurgency has been prominent here in this region since 1950s and there is no end in sight. Even though some states in the NEI have remained peaceful after ending insurgencies, overall the situation in the region is not conducive to peaceful living and corresponding prosperity. This article covers the genesis of insurgency vis-à-vis socio-economic development in the region, the present day situation and makes some recommendations for future.

**KEYWORDS:** North East (N.E), insurgency, socio-economic, conflict, violence.

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## INTRODUCTION

The term 'Insurgency' has been in frequent usage in the realm of journalism, government, politics and administration, but it is less understood in its multi dimensional spectrum. Insurgency is not a new one. It has now become a nation-wide phenomenon which its effects are multi-layered not only in the N.E. regions but also across the country. Insurgency is an act of violence which its actions are inhuman, unlawful and anti-democratic. It endangers the lives of innocent people and creates a climate of hate and fear. The objective of insurgence is invariably political and localized in nature as it is a revolt against authority. S.B. Bhattacharya explains insurgency as an action process in which one or more organization pursues strategy of violence to bring change in society in accordance with some ideology. So, insurgency in a sense is a miniature and localized form of terrorism or militancy. Due to insurgency problem and geographical isolation of the region from mainland India, the N.E. regions are still remained under- developed. This paper tries

to identify the motives of various insurgent groups operating in the N.E regions. It also study about its challenges to the social and economic development of the region and find out suggestion as to counter the challenges.

### Insurgent groups operating in North-East India

The North-East which is one of the peripheral regions in India faces a lot of problems in the way of development. The problem of insurgency is also one of the reasons which directly challenges to the social and economic development of the region. Most of the insurgent groups in North-East India are basically political and localized in nature. Major insurgent organizations of the region are—United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB-S) of Assam, National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM) and National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN-K) of Nagaland, People's Liberation Army (PLA) and United National Liberation Front (UNLF) of Manipur, National Liberation Front of Tripura

(NLFT] etc. Besides these, there are also operating many other underground organizations in North-East India which its actions are also to be seriously taken into account.

The major problems confronted by the north-easterners in the N. E regions in general and particularly in Manipur is the ethnic clash among the various ethnic groups and armed conflict between the Govt. of India and the insurgent groups of Manipur since 1950. It was really visualized and recognized by the masses as national liberation war with guerrilla activities from 1980 when PLA and PREPAK were at stake in the guerrilla warfare.

The underground organizations like the National Socialist Council of Nagaland Isaac Muivah (NSCN-IM) and the Mizo National Front (MNF) were demanding greater Nagaland and greater Mizoram in the same condition of North Korea and South Korea i.e. North Nagaland and South Nagaland. But the later was remained silent after the solution of Mizo rebellion in Mizoram. It is fact that the NSCN has the intention for bringing same administrative unit under one government for all Naga inhabited areas of North-East India. It really makes a situation of tense and under-developed economy in most of the NE regions.

The ULFA, the insurgent group of Assam has also been creating a series of destructions and violent acts through bombings and bullets by targeting to the public properties, lives and others basing on the demand to secede Assam from Indian union. In 1987, the Bodos under the NDFB, originally named the Bodo Security Force, demanded the creation of a separate Bodoland state outside Assam. After the statehood of Telengana, the demand of Bodos for a separate statehood has been becoming a more serious. The recent spate of ethnic violence in the Kokrajhar and Baksa districts of the Bodoland Territorial Autonomous District (BTAD) has witnessed many killings and destructions.

Another group is the Maoist insurgency which is recognised as the biggest internal security challenge to the country and N.E regions. The Maoists are not just expanding in to the N.E regions, but trying to forge links with various underground organizations in the region which ultimately paves the way to outbreak many violent incidents. Now, the Assam-Arunachal border has

emerged another theatre of Maoist activity. The outfit is also establishing separate channels in the North-East, particularly in Nagaland for procurement of arms and ammunitions. The central committee of CPI (Maoist) had extended all its support to the newly formed Maoist communist party of Manipur (MCPM). Earlier Maoist had already established its links with the PLA an insurgent group of Manipur. PLA is the oldest insurgency group which had been following Maoist teachings. Besides, the Maoists have the links with the NSCN-IM and ULFA. Some batches of naxals received arms training from the ULFA of Assam. Various insurgent groups operating in the North-East India have also been getting support from terror groups from the neighbouring countries of India. These insurgent groups have been creating a lot of problems in the region which is really a big challenge to the social, economic and political development of the region. Due to insurgency problem, many development strategies in the region cannot be implemented which is urgently needed to throw light on it.

### **Social and Economic impact to the N.E regions**

The problem of insurgency is a matter of serious concern in North-East India. It is a direct and serious challenge to the social and economic development of the N.E regions. As the time passes, violent acts of the various insurgent groups operating in the N.E regions are also increasing day by day which its effects are very serious. It is a never ending battle which directly affects the country in many respects. Insurgency is really a challenge to human security on many levels by creating climate of fear, uncertainty and hate. Human insecurity and brutal acts of insurgents in the society that include raping of women, kidnapping human being, looting and destroying of properties are increasing day by day. It really threatens human security which leads disturbances to the various development issues in the region. Most of the insurgent groups in the N.E regions are being waged to attack to the security forces, public places and commit extortions. They are addicted to arms and explosives, smuggling of narcotics and counterfeit currency. Apart from these acts, the outfits destroy public properties, lives and other valuable things by means of bullets and bombs. They even resort to the illegal collection of funds. This illegal collection money is utilized for purchase of arms, equipment, explosive and to carry

on their activities. They even purchase gold and this gold is properly concealed in the forest. These illegal acts of the insurgent groups create socio-economic alienation and the dissatisfaction with the widening economic and political inequalities in the region. So, it is not only a big challenge to the social and economic development, democracy and human rights but also a curse to human securities. Chemical, biological and radiological weapons used by the insurgents viewed as destroying an individuals' sense of security and causing shock and unhealthy situation in the society which is an impediment to the social and political development. Frequent using of these powerful weapons is also a challenge to democratic regimes in our country. we, the people of India are free and independent from the British colonial rule long back but not from the fear of insurgents. As the time passes, the insecurity on social life also increases day by day. We can not even freely join on the Independence Day and Republic Day of Assam, Manipur, Nagaland and other parts of the region because of terrorizing incidents on the day amidst strict vigilance and security. Mention may be made the incident of the Dhemaji College field in Assam on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 2004 that a powerful bomb blast took the lives of 13 innocent people. Sana Yaima, the Chairman of UNLF was reacted to the Republic Day speech of the Governor, S.S. Sidhu in 2005 for the independence of Manipur is also note worthy. So, people became afraid to move freely on these very days called 'Independence Day' and 'Republic Day' because of the fear of the insurgent activities which is a serious threat to the national security and social development.

The demand for expansion of territory is common in North-East India. The various demands of the underground organizations that include NSCN-IM's greater Nagaland, MNF's greater Mizoram, NDFB's Bodoland State, ULFA's separatist movement from Indian Union is really a burdensome in the N.E regions and always creates a lot of violence acts, tensions and destructions. It really hampers to any kind of development strategies in the region. Conflict culture and bandh custom is very common in Manipur, Assam and other parts of the N.E regions. It directly affects to the social life of the people. The frequent bombings, road blockades, rape and kidnapping cases, illegal collection of funds and other violent activities resorted by the various underground organizations in the N.E regions is a serious

problem which needs to be undertaken several counter-insurgency measures so that the north-easterners can live in an environment of insurgent-free region.

### Counter-insurgency measures

1. Insurgent attacks on civilians should be treated as crimes against humanity.
2. Nations should not encouraged insurgent acts against each other.
3. The use of military action alone is not sufficient enough to combat insurgency. There should be needed to go in to the very roots of the problem and try to find out the best way to ensure an insurgent-free region.
4. The failure to control the insurgent activities can be attributed to the lack of co-ordination between the central and state governments. So, there should be a good relation and co-ordination between the two governments as to find out the best way.
5. There is an immediate requirement for road connectivity so that the authorities can approach the people conveniently and can take any action swiftly.
6. A recruitment drive should be carried out in the insurgent affected areas of the N.E regions to discourage the youth from joining to the underground organisations.
7. Attractive surrender -cum-rehabilitation Policy should be worked out the central and state governments to encourage the insurgent cadres to surrender.
8. Steps should be taken in fixing responsibility on the states which assist insurgency in any fashion.
9. Intelligence agencies and police force should be strengthened. There is a need to introduce sophisticated weapons by the intelligence agencies and the police forces.

### CONCLUSION

In fine, it may be said that insurgency in any sort, however powerful it can not bring about any radical change because there is no any means of its final solution and victory. Insurgency is not only a serious threat to the social and economic development but it affects the region in many respects. Now-a-days, no part of the country is entirely safe because of the terrorist and insurgent activities across the country. It has a great disadvantage as it ultimately alienates the people at large through resorting to kill the innocent masses.

So, insurgency is really a curse to mankind. However, we must have to realise the need for addressing the issues giving birth to the causes of insurgency. The need for military action to combat insurgency cannot be applied in all times which may develop negative consequences. We should keep in our mind the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi that violence cannot be stopped with violence. Violence in response to violence can only lead to further violence. It does not mean that we will not counter insurgency but to find out the best way to counter insurgency. One must go in the roots of the problem and to initiate corrective measures so as to redress the grievances of the people at large. So, in view of the rapid spread of insurgent violence in and around the country today, there definitely arose the need for strengthening all our efforts to ensure an insurgent free region by all means. At the same time, we must also have to keep in mind for going in to the roots of the problem and developing a comprehensive strategy to fight against the enemies of peace in the N.E regions.

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