Chapter 2
Review of Literature

2.1 Introduction

Insurgency emerged in the north-eastern region of India even before Independence, during the early 1940s. Since then, non-violent and violent movements were gradually emerging at different parts of the region at different points of time. The region has been witness to a range of insurgencies at various levels. The immensity of the problem could be understood from the fact that insurgency has been a major determining factor in social, political and economic development life of the region for several decades. Insurgency and violent conflict has impacted deeply on the region as a whole and the lives of the people.

The government's policies and strategies adopted in order to address this problem hold much implication in this context. Despite efforts by the government and other agencies to bring peace to the region, peace has remained elusive. Counterinsurgency and peace processes has been common affair but resolution or transformation of the conflicts faced by the region no doubt demands a clear and effective peace policy on the part of the government.

2.2 Concepts of Peace

Johan Galtung offered three concepts of peace (Galtung, 1967):

i) Peace as a synonym for stability or equilibrium. This conception of peace covers the 'law and order' concept, which connotes the idea of a predictable social order even if this order is brought about by means of force. This concept does not exclude violence.

ii) Peace means the absence of organized collective violence. Violence can be between major human groups; particularly nations, also between classes and between racial and ethnic groups because of the magnitude internal wars can have. This type of peace is referred to as 'negative peace'.

iii) Peace as a synonym for cooperation and integration between human groups, with less emphasis on the absence of violence. This type of peace is referred to as positive peace. This concept excludes major violence, but tolerates occasional

violence. However, peace is something more than just absence of organized group violence; it also contains an element of equality and absence of exploitation.

Since peace is concerned with relations between groups, Galtung pointed out ten values as conditions that facilitate the presence of positive relations. These include: Presence of cooperation, Freedom from fear, Freedom from want, Economic growth and development, Absence of exploitation, Equality, Justice, Freedom of action, Pluralism and Dynamism. According to Galtung, who has offered 35 theories on peace thinking, these values serve to highlight some problems when they are considered in conjunction because of the difficulty in constructing a world that will maximize all ten - and, in addition, minimize the use of violence.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, Abbé de Saint-Pierre (1658-1743), a French clergyman, was the pioneer as a proponent of international peace. His multi-volume *Project for Perpetual Peace in Europe* (1713 and 1717 editions) proposed a plan for the nations of Europe to form a confederation with a view to escaping the violent state of nature in which they found themselves. This could be regarded as the forerunner to the European Union and other such projects of international organization for building peace. Swiss philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) evaluated Saint-Pierre and argued that the only hope for perpetual peace lies in, if not universal monarchy, some form of benevolent hegemony (Rousseau, 2015).

However, it was philosopher Immanuel Kant, who in his essay *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* written in 1795, forwarded the basic principles of the concept of democratic peace theory. Kant argued that true peace is possible only when (a) states are organized internally according to 'republican' principles, (b) states are organized externally into a voluntary league that promotes peace, and (c) when states respect the human rights not only of their own citizens but also of foreigners. Kant claimed that 'republics' are more peaceful than other kinds of states and it was re-established in the 1980s when it was pointed out that the empirical record of the previous two centuries shows that democracies did indeed not wage war against each other during that time (Kleingeld, 2006).

It is true that any attempt at peace making requires understanding of the root causes of the conflict in hand. But, beyond that, there is a wide range of issues and aspects. John Paul Lederach, a key scholar in the field of peace studies, defines peace building as:

> ...a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships. The term thus involves a wide range of activities that both precede and follow formal peace accords. Metaphorically, peace is seen not merely as a stage in time or a condition. It is a dynamic social construct. .....Peace building process must rely on and operate within a framework and a time frame defined by sustainable transformation... a sustainable transformative approach suggests that the key lies in the relationship of the involved parties, with all that the term encompasses at the psychological, spiritual, social, economic, political and military levels (Lederach, 1997).

Democracy and Deep-Rooted Conflict: Options for Negotiators observed that in the mid nineties, every major armed conflict originated at the domestic level within a state, rather than between states (Peter Harris, Ben Reilly, 1998). Such conflicts combine two powerful elements: identity and distribution. While 'identity' here implies mobilization of people in communal identity groups based on race, religion, culture or language, 'distribution' suggests the means of sharing the economic, social and political resources within a society. The striking characteristic of such conflict is pointed out as its sheer persistence which arises due to its origin in deep-seated issues of identity. These identity related issues often combine with distribution of resources – such as territory, economic power, employment prospects, etc. In this context, Assam can be a special case bearing highest potential for conflict where the identity and distributive issues are combined, providing the opportunity for alleged exploitation and manipulation by the federal government at the Centre for several decades. The conflicts in the region are deep rooted, and the situation could be best described under the assumption offered by Peter Harris: "The combination of potent identity-based factors with wider perceptions of economic and social injustice often fuels what we call deep rooted conflict" (Peter Harris, Ben Reilly, 1998).

Few essays in the publication titled *Peace in India's Northeast: Meaning, Metaphor and Method* critiqued the idea of peace as a construct that have been put to pragmatic uses and abuses (Biswas et al, 2006). The book analyses the inefficiency of

the conventional notion of peace as absence of conflict, the beaten track of conflict resolution in terms of accords and ceasefire and the political, economic and cultural instrumentalization of peace as 'instituted'. It explores the emancipatory dimension of peace by following what Foucault called "thinking of the outside" and what Galtung called "transcendence".

2.3 Previous Research on Insurgency in Northeast India

Discussion of the insurgency conflicts in Assam, or for that matter the entire region, generally concentrates on the root causes. The age-old feeling of deprivation and alienation among the people, the issues of identity and aspirations among various tribes and communities have been projected as the major causes. B G Verghese's *India's North East Resurgent: Ethnicity, Insurgency, Governance, Development* is a detailed attempt at assessing the entire issue of insurgency with a holistic perspective, but the two-decades-old publication does not describe the prevailing ground situation (Verghese, 1997).

Similarly, Sanjoy Hazarika has traced the emergence of several insurgencies, separatist movements and militant outfits—the ULFA in Assam, the Mizo National Front in Mizoram, the Tripura National Volunteer Force in Tripura, the Gorkha National Liberation Force in Darjeeling (Hazarika, 1995). He has observed that most of the expressions of discontentment have a common root—the hills people of the area, who share a racial, historical, anthropological and linguistic kinship, have long felt isolated from the non-Mongolian communities that dominate the Indian subcontinent and from the political and bureaucratic mainstream in New Delhi. The discussion on the role of the border nations of Bangladesh and Myanmar in exerting pressure by encouraging migration to the region and harbouring and training militants bears significance. Hazarika has discussed the push factors responsible for influx of migrants from Bangladesh and is critical of lack of political vision and will of governments in both countries. He has proposed for an Indian Migrant Law (Hazarika, 2000).

Samir Kumar Das has discussed the politics of United Liberation Front of Asom in the light of the larger problem of the State's abdication of the responsibility of

building the nation in India (Das S. K., 1994). He has argued that the political, economic and ideological backgrounds and their conjunction led to the emergence and persistence of ULFA.

The quest for identity by different communities has shaped many movements in the region. Udoyan Misra found that the state's excessive insistence to 'integrate' and 'absorb' the Northeast into the Indian 'mainstream' could not bear much fruit and argued that a big hindrance to the process of nation-building in the country has been the clash of cultures. He has pointed out that the presence of the people from the margins in the heartland of India and their demand that they be treated as equal citizens of the country has posed a challenge to all those who have long been accustomed to seeing only the dominant version of Indian culture. He analysed this as the root cause of alienation, social discrimination and the state's failure to implement effectively the constitutional rights of the minorities or the indigenous people at large (Misra, 2000).

Writings on the study of ethno-nationalism in India in its various forms—separatism, secessionism, sub-nationalism and regionalism (Baruah, 2010) focused on issues such as virtues and drawbacks of India's 'demos-enabling' federalism, 'consociationalism' in Indian Politics, and whether India is an ethnic democracy.

Earlier in 1996, one empirical study (Radha Rani, 1996) on how identities emerge, articulate, assert and change has stated that demands for provincial units based on linguistic-ethnic principle in post-Independent India assumed different forms of movements over the passage of time. Fresh demands of the ethnic and sub-regional identities emerged in the newly formed states / provinces. The study has provided a comparative analysis of Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and Assam and found that three democratic aspirations are common in all the states: pluralism, regionalism and decentralisation at the social, economic and political levels.

Another empirical study on the 'Emergence of Ethnic Movement in Assam: Issue of Language' argued that ethnic mobilisation occurs when there is threat to territorial rights and ethnic consciousness is articulated to the significant 'other' (Kimura, 2004). The study focused on the description of the 'other' and the 'self' in the context of the

six-year-long anti-foreigners movement in Assam launched in 1979. The report also discusses the Assamese nationality issue by focussing on the gap between the urban middle class and the rural masses.

By taking insurgency and its impact on women with particular reference to the women of Nalbari district of Assam, an empirical study titled 'Women in Conflict Situations: A Study of Nalbari District of Assam' attempted to understand the conflict dynamics in Assam (Choudhury, 2008). With its objective to analyse the impact of insurgency on women, the study supports the involvement of women in conflict resolution. The study maintains that peace is an ongoing process and that the government should have a transformative approach for sustainable peace. While the study discussed several components such as nature of the conflict persistent in Assam, issues related to identity and ethnicity and the gendered nature of ethnic identity, very little has been discussed regarding the government's approach to solve the insurgency problem in Assam.

A contemporary research on the socio-economic status of the Bodos and their human development indices (Basumatary, 2010) found that poor human development scenario has triggered identity movements among the Bodos. The study was an attempt to understand the Bodo issue by exploring different development indicators. Using this approach, the study found that the issues of identity and a feeling of neglect and exclusion fuelled conflicts in the area. Other causes stated by the study include a miserable state of public service and rampant corruption. This argument, along with the suggestion of an 'inclusive policy' offered by the study agrees with some of the arguments in the present study. On the other hand, though Basumatary recommended a model of development where "all sections of the population" would feel included, the study did not include the response of the majority non-Bodo people residing in the area. This could be pointed as a major gap in the study.

Inclusion of civil society in peace processes and peace negotiations has been a matter of debate in the recent past. According to Habermas, civil society is a "network of associations that institutionalises problem-solving discourses on questions of general interest inside the framework of organised public spheres". A study titled

'State, civil society and security: ascendancy of the new right and its implications for India' argued that the relative failure of the Indian State created feelings of exclusion amongst large segments of the population which ultimately led to demands and actions which seriously undermined the democratic system by the strengthening of exclusivist identities (Joshy, 2010).

M. S. Prabhakara examines questions of identity, ethnicity, sovereignty and insurgency in Northeast India, especially in Assam and its neighbourhood (Prabhakara, 2012). Prabhakara views a complex interlinking between the concepts of nationality, ethnicity and identity in the context of Assam. He states that unlike many other parts of the country where the Sanskrit word *jati* stands for caste, in Assam and in some other parts of eastern India, the word *jati* stands for the community of the people as a whole in the same way what the modern sociological and political term 'nation' would go to mean. Thus *Asomiya jati* stands for a whole community of people who identify themselves as Assamese people. While India can be seen as a nation-state and Indians as a people forming a nation in and of themselves, the self-perception of many people living in the eastern and north-eastern parts of the country, the Assamese, the Bodo, the Karbi and others also constitute a nation, an identifiable *jati*.

N. G. Mahanta has argued that to understand the phenomenon of insurgency, one has to understand the genesis of conflict between the Indian State and the state of Assam right from the very inception of the nation-state. According to him, the ideological and identity issues between India and Assam have remained unresolved, and ULFA is a manifestation of that unresolved crisis. He explains that ULFA represents a mindset, a suppressed voice, which is deeply rooted in Assam's psyche. The declining support base of ULFA is not to be seen in its numerical strength. Instead, it represents the unfulfilled aspirations of the tribal and ethnic groups of Assam (Mahanta, 2013).

2.4 Previous Research on Government of India's Peace Policy

A contemporary qualitative study titled 'State Model of Conflict Transformation: Critique from the Nagas' Perspective' has examined the Indian state's response to conflict resolution in Nagaland under three strategies: a) Constitution and law, b)

Peace processes and political negotiations and c) Counterinsurgency and repression (Ngalung, 2008). The thesis makes use f the conflict transformation theory as a model and found that most theories did not match the Nagas' struggle for self-determination or sovereignty. It offers a 'workable-transformative roadmap' as a stepping stone for solution of the Indo-Naga problem. The study supports the transformation of identity-based conflict or nationality-based conflict. However, this roadmap includes 'sovereignty' among other elements—a subject that comes outside the boundary of the Indian Constitution. While the study suggests full sovereign right of the Naga's over their land, natural and mineral resources, forest, oil, water, air, policing, judiciary, education and banking. It has also suggested a joint management by the Government of India and the Government of Nagaland in the areas of external, defence, monetary policy, communications and transportations. In this suggestion, the study supports the mode provided by the NSCN (National Socialist Council of Nagaland). As the insurgents' idea of 'Greater Nagaland' is already fuelling tension in the neighbouring states that share boundaries with Nagaland, the suggestion in the study to restore a contiguous Naga geographical location has potential to create further conflict.

In *Peace Processes and Peace Accords*, Samir Kumar Das has argued that conflict, peace processes and accords are supposed to follow an evolutionary schema in which one follows the other in a neat and precisely defined sequence. According to him, the very act of signing an accord could mark either the continuation of the same conflict or simply the transformation of the conflict. He defines peace as a process and accord as only a moment in the process, which is not irreversible (Das S. K., 2005). Das has focused on the role of governance in the resolution of socio-economic and political conflict by taking ULFA as a case study (Das S. K., 2012). His article titled 'Ethnic Accords in Northeast India' in this book is a generalized critique of the ethnic accords of the region. However, there is no clause-wise analysis regarding the implementation of the accords signed in Assam.

Sanjib Baruah's *Beyond Counter-insurgency: Breaking the Impasse in Northeast India* finds a tacit association between political organizations and insurgent groups (Bauah, 2009). In this book, Bethany Lacina's paper 'Rethinking Delhi's Northeast

India Policy' has viewed New Delhi's response to Northeast insurgency as a two-pronged strategy of tough counter-insurgency combined with development aid. Lacina argued that both security and development programmes are inefficacious in the face of a system of violent politics, corruption and immunity for the powerful. She believes that rule of law will provide lasting protection against violence from any source.

Peace Tools & Conflict Nuances in India's Northeast looks into the issues of civil liberty, moral economy of counter-insurgency, conceptualizing gender, peace and conflict in Assam, and conflict management approaches (Hussain, 2010). *Northeast India: Sustaining Peace Changing Dimensions* is an attempt at looking into the changing discourses of peace and security in the region. The book looks at the security scenario, the idea of a moratorium on peace talks with new insurgent groups, the changing contours and dynamics of conflict in the Northeast, possibility of the Look East Policy integrating the region by bringing about connectivity in the neighbourhood, and development as a means towards building peace (Das, 2012).

Subir Bhaumik has discussed how land, language and leadership issues have been the seed of contention in the Northeast and how factors like ethnicity, ideology and religion have shaped the conflicts (Bhaumik, 2009). He has examined the 'crisis of development' and the evolution of the polity and has offered a policy framework to combat the crisis. His suggestion of a constitutionally and politically viable structure of extensive autonomy to decentralize governance seems to imply an improvement over the already existing autonomy in certain areas of Assam. Bhaumik has argued that negotiations with rebel groups should be started only when the government is clear about the bottom line and the kind of concessions it can make. He has advocated for transparency in the process of negotiation and warned that violent situations are likely to occur in the absence of transparency in negotiations.

By drawing on the concept of development, Rakhee Bhattacharya has been able to show that a more integrated understanding of development is required and this integrationist perspective prioritizes a panoptic analytic vision of the various problems instead of any single or delinked emphasis on economic underdevelopment, the insurgency threat or the ethnicity issue (Bhattacharya, 2011). She suggested that the

Central Government has to look at the Northeast in a new way, not simply as a single problem unit but as a sensitive, internally differentiated terrain, where intra-regional specificities need to be given attention. She has stated that the government's role and its policies have not been very successful in Northeast India and explained that the issues of conflict, underdevelopment and violence arose from an extremely complex scenario, rooted in the economic, political, social, ethnic, religious and many other ramifications in Northeast India.

In 2008, Swarna Rajagopalan reported that the "success" of a peace accord lies in the ability of an agreement to facilitate a dynamic of peace-building and reconciliation (Rajagopalan, 2008). Rajagopalan argued that the signing of a peace accord may be a stopping point impacting the course of history, but it is not the end-point. The study takes 13 peace accords signed from 1949 to 2005 and examines the efficacy and utility of peace accords in bringing an end to conflict in the region over past six decades. The study offers five main suggestions to peacemakers and policymakers: 1) Promote a peace process rather than expecting a peace-accord to be a cure-all, 2) Invest in Civil Society, 3) Broaden the constituencies and the issues addressed at the peace table, 4) Take a holistic view but disaggregate the solution, 5) Imagine non-territorial solution.

Kuldeep Kumar, who was a leader of the counter-insurgency operations implemented in Tripura, provides an interesting first-hand account and analysis of counter-insurgency success in Tripura (Kumar, 2016). He focused on the increased role of state police mainly at the local level in counter-insurgency operations. Tripura's success has made it the only state after Punjab and Andhra Pradesh where the police took full control of counter-insurgency operations. In his writing Kumar demonstrates a thorough research on general policing and counter-insurgency operations combined with perceptive analysis of multiple militancy movements in India.

A systematic way of analysing different peace accords could be found in the Peace Accord Matrix (PAM)[7] which was established by Kroc Institute for International

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[7] Peace Accords Matrix (Date of retrieval: (12/10/2016), http://peaceaccords.nd.edu/about, Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame.

Studies, University of Notre Dame. This database is a unique source of qualitative and quantitative longitudinal data on the implementation of 34 Peace Agreements negotiated between 1989 and 2012. Here one can find clause by clause analysis of implementation or otherwise of the peace agreements signed.

2.5 Research Gap

It was found that most of the research on insurgency in the region has mainly focused on identifying or evaluating the causes of insurgency in its various dimensions. One can find a considerable literature on ethnic issues, citizenship issue, issue of identity, insurgency politics, different roles played by various stakeholders, the government's counter-insurgency strategy and so on. Taken together, these writings support the notion that a sense of perceived alienation and exploitation by the Central Government has been at the root of many insurgencies in the region. Overall, the studies highlight the need for a holistic approach by the government to address the issue of insurgency. However, it was hard to find enough empirical research on peace processes and policies of the government concerning the Northeast.

There are, of course, number of articles in journals, newspapers and other publications on the government's peace processes and policies regarding the militant groups. A generalized international literature on peace overtures on various other theatres of conflict in states/ regions of different countries also exist. In view of all that has been mentioned so far, one may suppose that there is a relationship between the protracted insurgency problem in the region and the policies practiced by the government to address the problem at different levels.

However, there has been little systematic effort to document or analyse the impact or perceived flaws of the government's peace policy while dealing with the major insurgent outfits of the region. The survey of literature in the concerned area has found that no analytical study has been done so far regarding clause-wise implementation of the peace accords signed in Assam. Peace process is a very complicated area which needs a holistic approach. One sided analysis or partial analysis only complicates the matter further. Besides, some peace accords signed in Assam need certain amendments

in the Constitution[8], but the existing literature is found lacking in even discussion of this major aspect. Existing literature on the proposed topic is dominated by generalized literature that goes into the causes of the origin of these extremist movements linking these to the prevailing sense of alienation among the people, due to the alleged neglect by the Union Government of the region.

Moreover, a review of existing literature has revealed that the literature related to the subject lack in an objective analysis of the peace accords signed in Assam, their implementation status, the possible aftermath of the agreements interweaving it to the peace policies or strategies adopted by the   government. Many of the other publications have left aside a comparative study of the peace policy of the Government of India in dealing with the insurgent outfits of Assam undertaken by this research. Therefore, it is felt that the area undertaken for the current study has relevance with the present context. It is expected that the research would be worth doing in the light of what had already been done.

2.6 Looking for Solutions

The present study makes an effort to extract the constructive lessons of the international experience in analyzing the peace overtures made in the context of the study. It takes into account conflict in the form of armed insurrections and secessionist movements. While dealing with the problem, it concentrates on the government's policy, especially in the state of Assam. The study tries to identify the possible lacunae in the government's prevailing peace strategy with the militant groups and intends to point out the parameters needed to be fulfilled to achieve sustainable peace in the region.

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[8] Clause 6.1 of both the MoS with UPDS and DHD states: Steps for Constitutional amendments necessary to implement the agreed points of the MoS will be taken by the Government of India.