

Chapter 4

Results

This study aims to explore the correlation between the government's peace strategies and prolonged militancy and socio-political unrest in the north-eastern region of India in general and the government's approach in dealing with insurgency and related issues, particularly in the context of Assam. The intention is to bring to light the probability that peace talks with each and every militant group is actually encouraging militancy in the region by making way to formation of splinter groups. This assumption has gained ground on the Government of India's stated policy on peace talks that the "Government is ready to talk with any group/outfit which is willing to abjure violence, lay down arms and agree to abide by the Constitution of India". In its Annual Report 2012-13, the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India maintained that, if there is a splinter group in future, then Government will not consider talking to them. However, in the absence of a comprehensive peace policy for the Northeast, this issue has grown in importance. It is also important in the light of the highly complex peace processes that involve multiple actors making varied and overlapping demands—something that has surfaced recent literature on peace processes. In one study, it was asserted that there is an absence of policy decisions and that the political parties are responsible for fuelling ethnic unrest in the region (Officers, 1994).

Although majority of the publications have focused on the history and the root causes of insurgency and impact of the problem on different areas including socio-economic development, previous work has not specifically addressed the issue of the government's peace policy particularly in the context of Assam by means of an empirical study. Concerns have been expressed about the role of civil society in peace processes, governance issues and different strategies and policies adopted by the government to address insurgency. So far, however, there has not been much discussion about the government's policy to achieve sustainable peace in the region. The attention paid to the issue of peace policy in the region has been insufficient. In

addition, no research has taken into account the implementation of the four peace accords as case studies.

The present study is designed to treat that weakness by exploring the status of the four peace accords taken as subjects of case study and finding the results through use of the primary as well as secondary data. The detailed field interviews of different stakeholders conducted with the help of a semi-structured questionnaire have thrown light on the perceived peace policy of the government accompanied by different views bringing in layers of implications. The main focus will be on this under-researched area of the issue of the governments' peace policy in the north-eastern region of India with special reference to Assam.

This chapter will begin by outlining the causes of insurgency movements before delving into the issue of peace policy and exploring whether peace accords are an end or a means to end conflict. The chapter addresses various dimensions of the issue in the light of the field interviews while critiquing the existing policies adopted by the government. After considering theoretical and overall assessment of the government's policies on peace, it finally provides certain measures drawn from the field experience which may possibly end insurgency in the region.

4.1 Causal Factors

The origin and growth of insurgency movements in the north-eastern region is based on certain genuine grievances. One such reason could be traced back to the arbitrary partition of the nation and the nation building process that began after Independence. The introductory chapter has already discussed about how the Indian nation building process has been facing challenges and the first and biggest challenge being the partition of the country. The post-Independence nation-building process in India has gaps and has been unsuccessful in creating a feeling of oneness primarily among the communities living in the periphery. This has contributed to raise a sense of sub-national identity among the fringe communities who began to imagine a homeland of their own (Baruah, 1999). It is notable that while the theories of the Indian Freedom Movement were inspired by the nationalism of the West, the effort to build nation-states did not fit the reality of the western nation-states that were ethnically and

linguistically homogenous entities. Poor governance emerged as another factor that impacted the development of the region.

A majority of the participants in the field interviews agreed with the statement that a section of agitators in the Northeast resorted to armed insurgency because the democratic and non-violent methods of expression were rarely listened to or addressed seriously by the state. There is an impression that the state only listens to the language of bullets and bombs that cause large scale violence and bloodshed. The sense of alienation from the mainland India was corroborated with a feeling that the Indian state has been actually exploiting the resource rich region and is not interested in the development, rights and justice of the people of the region has led many to doubt whether they have been treated as second class citizens of this country. A major problem added to this was an incessant flow of illegal migrants from East Pakistan to Assam that even continued after the creation of Bangladesh. The six-year-long Assam Movement led by the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) for the expulsion of illegal Bangladeshi migrants that became a threat to the society, culture and economy of the region, was an expression that was supported wholeheartedly by the people of Assam.

The deprivation and alienation aspect applies well leading to the birth of the insurgent groups like the United Liberation Front of Asom and the Mizo National Front. The immediate cause of the MNF movement was an indifferent attitude shown by the Centre as well as the State government (then Mizoram was a province of undivided Assam) in granting the financial support asked by the Mizos to face the impending famine—an affair known as 'Mautam' in Mizoram caused by the flowering of bamboos and excessive reproduction of rats causing famine in the area. Mizoram had to face such a phase that saw many deaths due to the famine. When the Government denied financial help, organisations like the Mizo National Famine Front came forward to help the suffering people in whatever way possible. Later the organisation was renamed Mizo National Front that started an insurgency movement demanding self-determination for Mizoram.

Assam, the biggest and most populous (according to 2011 census, Assam's population is 3,11,69,272)⁷⁹ state of the region, has been experiencing movements and rebellions of varied nature. It is notable that the Karbi Anglong and NC Hills districts of Assam were granted the status of Autonomous Districts with Autonomous Councils of their own, way back in the 1950s, few years after India achieved Independence. The Government of India considered the fact that these areas previously fell in the Excluded Areas and Partially Excluded Areas category during the British rule. But in spite of having some sort of autonomy, these two hill districts are lagging far behind the development process of the State. One interviewee argued that the autonomy granted was limited and the state seemed to forget about the development of these tribal dominated areas with the satisfaction that these people are left to govern themselves with the virtue of autonomy provided to them. The poor human development index combined with near absence of infrastructure caused anger and frustration among the people. This poverty and deprivation was corroborated with a feeling of identity resulted in organized movements that placed the issue of ethnic aspiration at the top of their agenda.

In the Bodo dominated plains of western Assam too, there were moderate as well as violent movements for self-determination. Insurgency or armed rebellion was yet another expression of such demands. However, there were some negative comments from the respondents about some insurgent groups that have deviated from their self-proclaimed goals. Commenting on such groups, one of the interviewee said, "They seem not to care for the development of the people they claim to represent. Militants like NDFB-Songbijit faction and the DHD-Jewel Garlosa faction transformed their extremist struggle to a terror industry in the name of insurgency". Over a period of time, some other outfits also lost their earlier charisma as the flag bearer of sub-nationalism and as saviours of the identity of the population. The heavy toll in terms of loss of human lives and property during the period spanned over three decades of insurgency and counterinsurgency made the public at large raise many fundamental questions.

⁷⁹ Comparative Status of North East , http://mha.nic.in/northeast_new

Such developments, however, cannot rule out the fact that the original factors that lead to the unrest are still very much alive. Some interviewees argued that taming the militants by means of force, dole, divide or dialogue may be able to bring some respite and safeguard the national security and integrity of the country for a limited time period but this cannot be the sole policy for a sustainable peace in the region. One of the interviewee expressed that the provisions of autonomous state in Article 244A and the accountability of the autonomous state in Article 371B of the Constitution makes solid ground for some ethnic communities to demand autonomous state or a state within a state.

Peace process with multiple insurgent groups is an extremely complex affair as the demands of one group very often overlap with the demands of others. For example, the demand raised by NSCN-IM for greater Nagalim is in conflict with the neighbouring states with sizeable Naga population. In the event of greater Nagalim being granted, these states would lose considerable part of their territories. Similarly, ULFA-Independent's demand for a sovereign or *Swadhin* Asom seems to be rather vague as the tribal dominated areas of the State such as Bodoland, Dima Hasao or Karbi Anglong do not agree with this concept and they are already fighting for their own autonomy / statehood. Most of the tribal organisations are unwilling to be referred to as Assamese for the fear of losing their own ethnic identity. Sub-nationalism is very strong in the north-eastern part of the country and people are very sensitive to these issues.

4.2 Is there a Peace Policy?

Over half of those interviewed expressed doubts regarding the government having any peace policy. Two out of the 30 interviewee commented that the government has actually adopted a dual peace policy. Dr Hiren Gohain, who led the second major peace initiative in Assam by the civil society under the banner of Sanmilita Jatiya Abhibarton said, "Government of India has a dual policy. If the insurgent group challenges the sovereignty of the Indian state, it takes strong military measures against it. If the group agrees to find a solution within the Constitution of India, the Government adopts a conciliatory approach and attempts negotiations". U. G. Brahma,

former Rajya Sabha MP and former president of All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) also commented on the nature of the government's policy as having a double faced approach, using both the language of bullet and the language of peace. "Specific policy on peace process, while dealing with insurgent groups, may not be always productive because root and origin of different insurgent groups have different grounds and characteristics. It should only be an ever unbroken and pragmatic process with a direction to reach the real peace. But yes, India's peace policy has still not reached a matured stage, and it lacks consistency in process", he said.

While several elements of the policy can be identified, the core of such a policy consists of measures to bring down violence in the region by either launching military or security force operations against the insurgents or engaging the insurgents in peace negotiations; supporting the initiatives of the state governments; and projecting that the peace option is a win all scenario for all parties concerned.

Another interviewee, who is also a participant in the current peace talks, was ULFA General Secretary Anup Chetia. He said that the government's policy is to solve the insurgency problem within the boundary of the Indian Constitution. He pointed out two important tools used by the government—negotiation and development. Responding to the question whether the government of India has a 'specific peace policy' to deal with the insurgent groups in the Northeast, ULFA leader and another peace talk participant Shashadhar Choudhury commented: "Government's policies are organisation specific. Core of the policy is to get rid of armed movements". Sunil Nath, former ULFA leader who surrendered in 1992 and once used to be ULFA's publicity secretary and think tank, was one of the interviewee in the field. He argued that the Government of India does not appear to have any specific peace policy.

Though, in Independent India, the government's attempts to subdue insurgency through so called 'talks' are as old as insurgency itself, there are no visible signs of any concerted thought, planning and line of action to the talks, quite frequently held between various and diverse insurgent/ rebel groups and the State. The 'core' of whatever policy discernible in these talks is bound by compulsions inside and outside the Government of the day and the situation prevailing on the ground, including the

strength and impact of the particular anti-government forces in play, said former ULFA leader Sunil Nath.

This view was echoed by another informant who said that the government has no specific peace policy for the region. “Whatever is there exists mostly at the undocumented level. Basically the purpose is to manage the conflict by means sometimes adopting the Kautilyan statecraft of sam, dam, danda and bheda—sometimes pacifying and sometimes ratifying them”, he argued.

The other participants in the field research considered that there is no consciously framed ‘peace policy’ of the Government of India except what can be called ‘ad hoc-ism’. This superficial policy does not take into account the fact that a section of the militants – who are basically outlaw – have been taking the opportunity of partial surrender and unending talks to cultivate a gun-culture and make money by way of extortion, gun-running and drug trafficking. For the Government, it could be a way of wearing them out by a long-drawn process in total disregard of the crime culture it generates. One of the participant viewed that the government do not have any long term plan to bring peace to the region. The political economy of conflict plays a major role here.

Though not specific, the Government of India has its policy to tackle insurgency in the Northeast and it largely employs fire-fighting measures to keep the level of the insurrections within manageable limits. A three-pronged approach is found to be applied by New Delhi to contain insurgency—counterinsurgency measures with the use of security forces, using development as a tool and a slew of other politico administrative initiatives, particularly dialogue. These dialogues have resulted in the Government reaching peace agreements with some rebel groups but the problem of insurgency continues. This is because the government has failed so far in addressing the root causes of unrest. Besides, the government has not succeeded in ensuring distributive justice among the people in the region and improving governance. Rather than creating a situation that generates livelihood options, the government has been adopting a policy of giving out doles.

4.3 Peace Accords Not an End to Conflict

It is seen that signing of a peace accord initially creates much euphoria among the signatories and even the public, which normally fades away with the passing of days. This is because of the common assumption that a peace accord puts an end to the conflict. While the reality is that, the accord is the next stage of a peace process, implementation of which is expected to bring peace. The numbers of final accords/agreements signed between the insurgent groups and the government are few. In most cases, however, negotiations with the insurgent groups have not led to final accords and have not been pursued with much enthusiasm. The recalcitrant attitude of the outfits is also a factor in the failure of establishing peace in the region. The question here is have these agreements resulted in real peace dividend?

It was due to non-implementation of the Assam Accord of 1985, that the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) in October 1989 decided to resume 'non-cooperation' with the ruling Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) – the signatories of the Accord. The AGP allegedly failed to implement even such simple clauses of the Assam Accord such as rehabilitation of the families of those killed during the Assam Agitation. The AASU leaders demanded a 'clear policy' from the state government on implementation of the Assam Accord as well as a policy towards the ULFA(Kamarupee, 1989).

It would be pertinent here to mention the accord signed with the Mizos in 1986 which is regarded as the only 'successful' peace accord signed in the region so far as the sustenance of peace is concerned. The MNF Accord succeeded in creating a climate of trust between the insurgents and the Government. The contents of the agreement aside, the document itself has been a testimony of the fact that two diametrically opposite entities could sit across the table and bring about an acceptable solution to the problem. There are accords signed in Tripura and Nagaland which were not successful. However, these accords too set the marks of peace for future in the region. We will discuss in the next chapter how the government in Tripura has been able to bring the state towards normalcy.

In Assam, the accord with the erstwhile militant group Bodo Liberation Tigers resulted in dissolving the outfit and in achieving a 'partial success'. While the BAC

Accord of 1993 became the cause of more violence, the UPDS and DHD Accords have not yet been able to deliver peace dividend except bringing down the violence. But the government would always find itself in a bind with regard to the concerns of the general Assamese and the ethnic groups who feel that their problems have not been adequately addressed. One of the interviewees commented:

The autonomous councils have always had a problematic existence. They have created and serviced the tribal/ ethnic elite rather than the common people. As they are already functioning for decades, it has been the responsibility of the State/Central government to address the ethnic groups with improved governance. Actually it is up to the government to ensure that negotiations with ULFA and any deal offered to the outfit do not infringe into the territories of the autonomous councils” (Routray, 2014).

Again, though the BTC Accord of 2003 was able to satisfy aspirations of the Bodos to some extent, with renewed demands for Bodoland growing, this accord no longer looked attractive, even to its signatories. A clear evidence of this can be found when the leaders of the ruling Bodo Autonomous Council (signatories of the accord) raised voice for statehood demand in tune with the ABSU and other Bodo organisations as reaction to the creation of Telangana state. A memorandum was submitted to the Centre in 2010 by the members of BTC⁸⁰. Another interviewee who was a member of the ULFA chosen People’s Consultative Group to initiate peace in 2005 was Dilip Patgiri. He said that the accords are paying dividend only to those leaders who have signed the accords. Generally the accords have not been successful in solving the problems of the common people. The majority of the participants, including ULFA leader Sashadhar Choudhury agreed with the statement that lack of sincerity of the Government of India was the root cause of resentments that helped to transit all peaceful movements to armed ones. The non-implementation of the Assam Accord and the birth of ULFA is classic example in this regard.

4.4 Separate Dialogues with Factions of Same Group

When the government is in a peace mode with the two NDFB factions, a third NDFB faction has been engaged in violence. Likewise, while the NSCN-IM is talking peace with the government, the Khaplang faction of NSCN is busy waging war against

⁸⁰ Interview with Pramod Boro

the government. Same condition applies to ULFA too as the Independent faction of the group under Paresh Baruah is continuing its armed rebellion. Is it correct for the authorities to engage in a dialogue process with more than one faction of the same insurgent group? ULFA leader Anup Chetia responded to this question:

We may definitely hope for a peaceful solution if all the ULFA leaders are included. Now it may be doubted now that there may not be real peace. But we must agree that in today's political perspectives, continuing with armed struggle is far more difficult than in our time when communication system like telephone and internet was very poor, access and condition of roads was pathetic. Easy access of telephone and other facilities even in the remotest corners of the region today has made it difficult for the insurgents to take shelter. The armed struggle may continue, but it will go on for namesake because success of armed struggle is somewhat impossible in today's world.

Tactically, division in the rebel ranks helps the government only to contain the immediate impact. Sustainable peace needs that all factors are included in any final deal. Commenting on this, one of the interviewee said, "Engaging in talks with more than one faction is more a matter of compulsion than choice. If the government is doing so, it is because of its penchant for measures to achieve instant or temporary peace in a conflict zone". The road to peace is thorny and one of the ways to achieve peace is conversation to have negotiation with the militant groups. The government thus needs to have some sort of a policy regarding the ways in which it wants carry forward the talks.

Another point to be noted is that, split of a group signifies difference in opinion. So if the government talks separately with more than one faction of the same insurgent group, it will mean reaching at different conclusions, where one faction will not accept the outcomes of talks with another faction. Thus, instead of a solution, there will be further differences. Moreover, since the terms of ceasefire and peace negotiations would be different with each of the factions, even the success of the negotiations would not lead to peace. Therefore, effort must be made to bring factions of the same outfit under a common platform and negotiate with all of them.

But when we say that it is incorrect for the government to engage in dialogue with more than one faction of the same insurgent group, it is also true that once the government enters into a truce or ceasefire with any group it becomes a moral

responsibility for the authority to start a process of dialogue to continue the peace process. But when the question of final settlement of any issue comes, that should be inclusive and consultative of all.

4.5 Separate Agreements for Same Ethnic Group?

Can there be two or more peace agreements concerning problems in one single area and to meet aspirations of one single ethnic group? It is observed that two or more insurgent factions cannot expect to represent the interests of the entire ethnic group separately. It has the potential to lead to a turf war with the two factions fighting for political space in the area. Then, what the government can do?

A small number of those interviewed suggested that the government must first distinguish between a genuine group with mass appeal and a group that is merely a criminal formation. While it makes sense to enter into a peace negotiation with the first group with a mass appeal, it is pointless to enter into an agreement with the second. The second group can be offered surrender and rehabilitation benefits if need be, but no further. And the peace accord should be prepared in such a way that a single accord strides the future of several decades.

Some opinions differed in this regard. It was argued that if an organisation or group genuinely represents a section of any ethnic group, then it seems that there may be multiple agreements acceptable to all groups and sections of the people of an area or ethnic group. However, these agreements may have clash of interests and implementation of these would face conflict. This extract is an interesting example in this case: "Peace cannot be restricted within the borders of an agreement. It depends upon the time, situation and location of a particular problem. If anything is suppressed with might, just on the pretext that there is already an agreement, there remains possibility of recurrence of same problems".

Previous agreements become null and void just after the subsequent agreement comes. Therefore, even if there is simultaneous dialogue with two or more factions, one can expect a single accord. But that has its own problems too. The question of as to which of factions would be in charge in matters like overseeing the implementation may create conflict between the factions. We can bring the example of the accord

signed with the DHD and DHD(J) in 2012. In the Council elections that followed the Accord, both the factions fought under different banners instead of fighting united. Continued factional rivalry even after signing an accord together resulted in the poor show by both the factions in the elections.

These findings suggest that it is very important for the government to take the responsibility of guiding and helping the militant groups under peace process / dialogue in formulating a common minimum programme that would prevent such post-accord rivalry activities by militant groups. Here conflict transformation holds more significance rather than conflict management. Conflict transformation is actually a multi-dimensional effort, an effort to address the root causes. In case of the Bodos, the effort should be to bring the conflicting parties to a sustained dialogue. They may have differences, but in spite of that they can live with their differences and they can renegotiate their differences. For example, schools could be a place where Bodos and non Bodos can participate in various cultural and sports activities. This can transform the conflicting psyche. This can take place at the school level, people to people level, or even involving the militant groups at some level. In conflict transformation we need to engage people from the top level to the bottom in a continuous engagement. The purpose is not to reach an accord but to change the psychology enabling to live together.

4.6 Overlapping Interests of Different Groups

Different militant groups operating in the region have different demands, and several times, the demands of one group overlap with the demands of another. For instance, the ULFA claims to be fighting for the interest of the whole of Assam. Can the Government come out with a solution formula to satisfy the ULFA without an overlap with the ethnic autonomous councils already existing?

A view of the Charter of Demands⁸¹ submitted by the ULFA before the Central Government for discussion reveals that most of the demands are for the development of Assam, for rights on the resources of the State and protection of the indigenous population. The solution formula has to satisfy all nationality, groups and subgroups

⁸¹ ULFA's Charter of Demands is attached in the Annexure

without disturbing the existing political institutions. One of the main demands in the Charter is recognition of Scheduled Tribe status to six communities—Moran, Motok, Tai Ahom, Koch Rajbongshi, Sootia and Tea Tribe, “We think that this will increase the number of tribal population in the State and reservation up to 80-90 seats in the Assembly for Scheduled Tribe people will protect the identity and political rights of the ‘indigenous’ people”, said one ULFA leader in peace mode.

However, there are challenges to this demand. First there has to be a definition of indigenous people of Assam which has to be legally established. Otherwise, if reservation is granted in this way only to the ST population, Assam will become a tribal state. “What about the indigenous people like the Kalitas, Brahmins, Assamese Muslims and the other non-tribal communities who are also indigenous communities of Assam?”, reacted another participant to this suggestion.

Claims and ground realities differ very often. In 2014, ULFA leader Sunil Nath told this researcher that ULFA seems not to carry the mandate of all ethnic groups in Assam. “The reality, however, is that, ULFA does reflect the aspirations of the majority of Assamese speaking people. ULFA does enjoy the sympathy, if not any mass support of the Assamese people. A peace agreement with ULFA does not necessarily have to be detrimental to the interest of the ethnic autonomous councils”, he reported.

A similar view was expressed before this researcher by U. G. Brahma in 2016, “ULFA is considered to be representative of the particular community only; the mother tongue of which is Assamese. They have lost that credibility to represent other ethnic groups on the whole. Any agreement that may be arrived at between the government and ULFA will never be accepted as agreement of other ethnic groups”.

The organisation’s demand for economic development will in no way create any such conflict. On social and cultural issues, an overlap of provisions may be acceptable. But on administrative issues the government will have to make sure that there is no overlapping between the rest of Assam and the autonomous councils. This will also depend on the approach of the ULFA towards various ethnicities or ethnic communities in Assam who are dissatisfied with their lot.

4.7 'Open Door' Policy and Legitimacy Factor

The government's policy of holding peace talks with each and every militant group is actually encouraging militancy in the region by giving even splinter groups legitimacy. This approach of the government implies that the government wants to control rebellion by taking up a piecemeal approach.

It seems that insurgents have taken undue advantage of the Government of India's 'open door' policy'. Small bands of armed men who pass off as insurgent groups have actually been indulging in acts of terrorism. Outfits like the Garo National Liberation Army in Meghalaya or the NDFB-S or the erstwhile DHD-J or the Black Widow fall in this category. Whenever the going gets tough, these groups offer to talk peace with the government. And the government too, often seems to be willing to entertain their pleas. This ad hoc approach should be stopped while the government may consider announcing a halt to peace dialogue with newer militant groups or factions of groups engaged in terror activities while taking the ongoing peace talks with the insurgents groups to their logical end.

A factor to be considered by the government while inviting militants for talks is their legitimacy. Legitimacy is the acceptance of unequal political relationships, either stated or not. In this relationship a group of people are given, assume, or inherit authority over others. This is a critical aspect in political order that guarantees stable peace and development. Non-state violent actors like an insurgent group are often considered illegitimate by the state. However, such actors may obtain specific legitimacy as champions of a popular cause, as protectors of the interests and identity of their supporters, or as providers of security and essential services to some local communities (Clements, 2014).

In its early phase, the NDFB was able to acquire some sort of 'legitimacy' through their demands raised for the cause of the Bodo people. The ongoing peace talks between the government and the two factions of the outfit also considered this informal 'legitimacy' of the militants in talk. On the other hand, a lack of ideology has been noticed in some other insurgent outfits or factions of outfits in the region. Groups like the NDFB Songbijit faction suffered huge losses in tactical and public legitimacy

accounts. Since its formation, the outfit was in a killing spree, victimizing innocent civilians.

Holding peace talks with a large number of groups may be encouraging militancy, but certainly the non-conclusion of the peace talks is providing substance for the argument that the Government of India is not serious about bringing stability to the region. This is because the militant formations in the region, either the bigger groups or the splinters, are not serious about negotiations with the government, unless pushed to a point of extreme vulnerability. The attraction of the added benefits pushes the splinter factions to carry on with their armed campaign. One interviewee suggested that the government can come up with a peace policy at three levels—macro, micro and district level. The macro level should involve the Central Government, the micro level should be initiated by the State Government and the district level peace policy should deal with the fragmented militant groups.

4.8 Delay of Settlement

There is a misgiving that the Government encourages ceasefires with insurgent groups to buy time and postpone peace as a matter of strategy. But can this strategy work in the long run? As our interviewee Dr Hiren Gohain put it, “The general suspicion that the Government dangles the carrot of ceasefire before the insurgents with the promise of an eventual settlement is not without foundation. What it seems to be interested in is exhausting the patience of the insurgent group and reducing them to passivity”.

To some extent the ceasefire agreements and their indefinite extension without a purposeful peace negotiation have been used by the government to tire out the outfits. However, the result of this strategy has been largely negative. It has produced factions within the outfit under ceasefire and breakaway factions returned to the path of war. It has further provided a license of sorts to the outfit to indulge in activities like extortion, abduction and fratricidal warfare. More importantly, the strategy has also projected the state in a negative light, as being insincere in its approach towards the region. Buying time through talks can be a tactic but it cannot be a healthy strategy.

Time buying tactics are being applied by both the government as well as the insurgent groups. For instance, during the 2005 peace initiative by the ULFA, the outfit was actually buying time to regroup and strengthen itself. Again if the government does not initiate talks for a too long period following a ceasefire pact, the insurgents become restive and the ultimate purpose of peace will not be achieved. This can be more dangerous and disastrous. When the Government is engaged in procrastinating, buying time, engaging the militant groups in a conflict fatigue, the main issues remained unaddressed. Long drawn out talks without evolving any kind of solution seems to be a strategy of the Government of India and sometimes it seems that this is paying dividend. For instance, the NSCN-IM leaders now cannot possibly think about going to the jungles again. But this is not going to end insurgency. At some point of time the Government must address the structural issues.

4.9 Time frame in peace process / time bound implementation of accords

Peace talks need to have a time frame. As one of the respondents expressed:

Common sense would say that there should be an agreed time frame for conclusion of any peace process as well as for the implementation of an accord that is reached after peace talks. If any peace process fails to achieve the result after a decade or two of dialogue process, it becomes more or less irrelevant for the society. Insurgency dynamics change, new groups emerge, government change, momentum of peace process changes, even leadership of insurgent groups change, e.g. Isac Chishi Swu died in the process of the NSCN-IM talks.

However, given the complications of a process of negotiation, concluding it within a fixed time frame would require commitment both from the government as well as from the insurgent outfits. In the context of NSCN-IM, the talks are bound to be non-productive as long as the outfit holds onto its demand of a reintegration of the Naga-inhabited areas.

When talks drag for too long, many times cadres get restless and they move out of the designated camps and form new factions. Also, it is a waste of human resources, with several youths belonging to the insurgent group, sitting in the designated camps with no meaningful engagement. For instance, when we have seen that talks are continuing with the ULFA (United Liberation Front of Assam), the reality is that there has been a gap of one year seven months between the recent meeting held on 8 June

2017 (Ministry of Home Affairs Resume Peace Talk With ULFA and NDFB, 2017) and the previous one held on 24 November 2015 (Status of Peace Process, 2017). Such long gap in negotiation affects the peace process. The same delay was seen in the appointment of a new interlocutor for peace talks, after P.C. Haldar's term as interlocutor ended on 31 December 2015. It was almost after 18 months, that a new interlocutor Dineshwar Sharma, a former Director of Intelligence Bureau, was appointed interlocutor in June 2017.

Implementation of a peace agreement also depends on the efficiency of the signatories of the accord. This includes both the governments at the Centre and the State, as well as the leaders of the insurgent groups. In this context, one of the respondents stated that bureaucrats of the government keep on changing and are not liable to the implementation of an accord. It is basically the responsibility of the signatories to keep note of how far an accord is being implemented. This brings about the issue of poor performance of the existing Councils in the two hill districts of Assam. One respondent commented that lack of efficiency and effort on the part of the authorities in charge is a prime cause for failure of the experiments. Some other factors too seem to be associated with this, such as, corruption and alleged nexus between government officials and insurgent groups. After all, continuation of insurgency conflict means a continuous fund flow from the Centre for this purpose.

4.10 A Moratorium on Peace Talks

In its Annual Report of 2012-13, the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, stated that the government is ready to talk with any outfit which is ready to abjure violence and show interest in solving their problem within the confines of the Indian Constitution, but will not talk to splinter groups of those outfits, if formed in the future. However, the statement lacked clarity and firmness. Going against its own idea, both the Central and the State governments once expressed willingness to hold talks with the NDFB-Songbijit faction even after its gruesome killings. The Government's resolve not to talk to splinter groups is yet to be seen in the form of a policy. Whilst a majority of the respondents of field interviews agreed that the government should put a halt to peace talks with new outfits that are engaged in

criminal activities, some respondents feel that this will depend on the support base and reach of influence of the concerned outfit.

Surprisingly, a minority of the interviewees responded differently. One such interviewee suggested:

It seems that since the government is asking the groups to give up violence, to say that there won't be peace talks anymore with the groups that are currently engaged in armed violence and willing to give it up sometimes in future would be a contravention of its own declaration. What, however, can be done is to ensure that it distinguishes between groups which represent the communities, have certain ideologies and the groups that are merely criminal and mercenary in nature. The charge of identifying such groups should be a joint responsibility of the state government and the Government of India.

A policy of halting to peace talks with breakaway militant factions or newer groups may work as a deterrent for factionalism and formation of new groups. If the government distinguishes between groups that have some sort of popular backing and an ideology from the criminalised groups and declares a policy of never ever holding peace talks with the latter, the tactic of gaining legitimacy by engaging with the government by the smaller groups will cease to exist. This may not reduce the level of violence in the region, as the breakaway criminalised groups would still go around with their activity. But it would certainly give a right direction to the task of dealing with insurgency movements.

The Israel Government, after declaring the policy of not negotiating with hijackers has steadfastly stuck to it. It has yielded results. If the Government of India can stick to a policy of not negotiating with such insurgents, chances are that frivolous players would disappear. Reflections of genuine and justified grievances, however, tend to snowball into mass upheavals against brute repression. Ultimately, the Government must have some kind of a framework.

4.11 One Accord Irrespective of Factions

Interestingly, almost half of the interviewees agreed that the government should make it mandatory for different factions of one rebel group to first unite, resolve their differences, and then enter into talks with the authorities jointly, with one single charter of demands for a lasting solution. Others said that there would be obstacles in

this case. For example, one faction may be more inclined to a peaceful settlement than the other. Factions emerge on the basis of different world views with very little possibility of reconciliation. The NSCN-IM and the NSCN-K are good examples of this trend. They felt that waiting for the insurgents to unite and then begin peace talks would effectively mean government completely giving up the idea of peace talks with the outfits who may want to talk peace in future. One participant also suggested that it is the government that has to unite the groups, rather than the groups themselves do.

4.12 Participation of Civil Society

Civil society still remains a vague term and it may not be visible on the ground in each situation of insurgency. However, civil society leaders and organisations hold different views of the common people. The participants of the interviews on the whole demonstrated that participation of civil society in any peace process is very important. There is instance of civil societies creating the conditions for a peace process to begin and allow the peace process to continue exclusively between the outfit and the government. For example, the ULFA peace process where the Sanmilita Jatiya Abhibartan took the initiative for a peace process and prepared a charter of demands for the ULFA with which the group is now negotiating with the Centre.

Civil society is expected to raise the voice of the people and their participation attributes transparency to the peace process. Few interviewees felt that since decisions of final settlements are always taken by limited people, opinions of civil society can be an adversary to the opinion of the party to the conflict. But the government has open scope for consultation with civil society and take their opinions into account. In the event of reaching any peace process to the agreement stage, the government and the insurgent groups in talk should invite representatives of the civil society for their support and to become witness signatories to the accord. This will bring more sincerity and concern regarding the implementation of an accord.

4.13 The Gender Perspective

Women are always sucked into the vortex of any conflict and are always among the worst sufferers. Many of them come to lose their bread-winning husbands, sons or brothers to violence apart from others who lose their honour due to rapes and other

crimes during counterinsurgency operations. Usually, one sees that voice of nearly half of the population, i.e., the women, is not heard at all by either the government or the insurgents during a peace process that is supposed to resolve a conflict by stipulating various provisions for welfare of the place and people by way of a peace accord. Women organisations in several states in the Northeast are influential and have a history of significant contribution to peace processes. Some of the interviewees argued that participation of women in peace process is 'not necessary'. It is interesting that all the women respondents supported the idea of women's participation and stated that a peace process cannot be termed 'inclusive' without participation women. A gender sensitive peace agreement cannot be expected without women's participation in the peace process. There is empirical proof that more inclusive peace processes are more likely to last. While without participation of women it will be difficult to address the gendered concerns, and without inclusion of gendered concerns in the peace accords it will be far more difficult to bring the issues and address them in post-conflict situations (Manchanda, 2011). A qualitative study titled 'Women in Conflict Situations: A Study of Nalbari District of Assam' supports the participation of women in the peace processes and argued that the government should work out strategies to involve women in resolution of conflict as well as in post-conflict reconstruction (Choudhury S. , 2008).

In the Northeast, women have been playing an integral role in conflict transformation and fighting for socio-economic or political cause. We can mention about the Meira Paibis (torch bearers) of Manipur and their strong presence in the state's peace building scenario, the Naga Women's Union of Manipur (NWUM) and the Naga Mothers' Association (NMA) in Nagaland. Their role, however, has been limited to creating an enabling environment for talks between the insurgent outfits and the government apart from forwarding suggestions.

4.14 Development Policies to Address Security Issue

A general perception in the region is that the Government gives more importance to the issue of security than development while framing policies for the Northeast. Even many new states in north-eastern region had been created only because of national

security. Development and growth has always assumed a gradual and subsequent process. India is surrounded by neighbours either hostile or friendly. Our interviewee and former IGP S. P. Kar stated that each and every policy in the frontier states start with security issue. Given the geo-strategic position of the Northeast, both security and development should be accorded equal importance.

4.15 Counterinsurgency and India's Neighbourhood Policy

Insurgency in the Northeast has trans-national linkages and therefore, the government cannot formulate its peace policy without taking into account factors like rebels getting sanctuary or support from elements in the neighbouring countries. The success or failure of dealing with a particular insurgent group depends to a great extent on whether that insurgent group enjoys support / shelter across the border. For instance, the government could begin peace talks with the ULFA only after authorities in Bangladesh cooperated and handed over its top leaders to the Indian government. Similarly, the NDFB was weakened and agreed to enter into dialogue after the Royal Government of Bhutan launched Operation All Clear in December 2003 and ousted the rebels from Bhutanese territory. It is therefore clear that diplomacy or good bilateral ties in neighbouring countries are essential to achieve success in counter-terrorism or counterinsurgency, particularly when the insurgency at home has trans-border ramifications.

One cannot deny that external factors do play significant role in the insurgency movements. The ability of the outfits to derive support from external sources considerably influences their posture towards the peace process. So it is important to take note of this force enabler. India's neighbouring countries in its north-eastern border like China, Bangladesh and Myanmar are always blamed for nurturing anti-India forces. But the issue cannot be addressed by an aggressive blame game. It needs cooperation. Here we can mention about the government's shift from the Look East Policy to Act East Policy. The Government of India seems to be realising that the Northeast cannot be kept in the security paradigm only, it needs development. But unless the Indian Government develops good relationship with the neighbouring countries, one cannot have mutual co-operation. The absence of any extradition or

repatriation pact between India and its neighbouring countries is also notable. So a diplomatic initiative to have developed relationship with those countries is expected to change the situation.

4.16 Representative Quotient

In the heterogeneous society of Assam any peace accord meant for a particular community would be heavily tilted and unwelcome to other communities who share the same space and land. If we take the BTC Accord of 2003, we will find that the accord is not categorical regarding the provision for protection of the rights and interests of the other communities like the Rabhas, Tiwas, Koch Rjbongshis, and the Adivasis who have inhabited the area since time immemorial. This is established by protests and reactions by different non-Bodo tribes living there. We find the Koch Rajbongshi community which has a total population of 2,46,137 (7.81 per cent of the total population of 31,51,097 in the Bodo Council area as per the 2011 Census) has more than one organization demanding autonomy or separate state. Almost two third of the participants said that the insurgent groups claim to represent their respective communities but when they enter into a peace process with the government, they never consult the people on a solution formula. This suggests that the government engages in dialogue with groups who actually have no connect with the people.

4.17 Need for Institutionalisation

The Government of India has not yet been able to come up with a set of guidelines for a peace policy. As a result, the dialogue process tends to differ from one insurgent group to another. Most of those interviewed indicated that institutionalisation of the peace process mechanism would help to impart a structure to the peace policy. It may be helpful to have a close look at how Myanmar has been dealing with their conflict that has much similarity with the one faced by India's Northeast.

The Myanmar Model of peace process was initiated in 2011 when President Thein Sein acceded to power. After taking the Presidential office, Mr Sein began the reform process by offering ceasefire talks with insurgent groups. His initiative led to the signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) in October 2015 and this has marked the beginning of the end to a nearly 70 years of civil war in Myanmar since its

independence from the British in 1948. Eight out of 21 recognised Ethnic Armed Organisations signed the NCA and decided to go ahead with the government and the other stakeholders from political parties and civil society groups to find a political settlement for ethnic self-determination. The ratification of the NCA in Parliament gave legal status and backing to the current peace process and has formally institutionalised the multi-stakeholder structure for conflict control and political settlement. The three-phase peace plan of the Myanmar government include: a) State level (Ceasefire, set up liaison offices and travel without holding arms to each other's territory), b) Union level (Confidence building, holding political dialogue, implement regional development tasks in terms of education, health and communication), and c) Sign agreement for eternal peace in the presence of the parliament represented by nationalities, political parties and different walks of life (Government Peace Plan). In the next chapter, we will discuss about the implementation infrastructure of the Myanmar peace process and policies.

4.18 Do the Accords Address the Root Causes?

In response to this question, one participant commented, “The root causes of a lingering insurgency remain unchanged, only the signatories of peace accords change at different point of time”. This suggests that insurgency has been sustaining due to the government’s tendency to calm a revolution/ movement by discussing and negotiating the demands of a particular organisation instead of delving into the various issues causing the unrest. A larger view of the issues concerned with the people of a region and a genuine approach to solve those is hardly reflected in the process of the peace accords under this study.

Some of the interviewees reported that the peace accords signed in Assam are flawed. The 1993 BAC Accord bears the root of the conflicts in western Assam districts. The Accord sought to end years of arson and violence by creating an administrative unit for the Bodos comprising areas where Bodo population is 50 per cent or more. The Accord resulted in ethnic cleansing in areas where the Bodo population was less than 50 per cent. The second Bodo accord signed by the Government of India with the BLT in 2003 led to further conflict. In Section two of

the Accord, it is mentioned that the main objective of the agreement is “to fulfill economic, education and linguistic aspiration and preservation of land rights, socio-cultural and ethnic identity of the Bodos....” This clearly gives the impression that BTC has been formed for the development of the Bodo people only, the framers of the Accord did not think about the majority non-Bodo people living in the area. This disparity of treatment under the Accord led to a feeling of insecurity and discrimination among the non-Bodos, which include Muslims, Adivasis and other communities. This has led to various forms of agitations by the majority non-Bodo people (Das, 2010).

Assam embraces a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic community. It is difficult in a pluralistic society like the one in Assam to create different territorial units in the name of different communities because the areas are not populated by a particular community alone. If a particular community tries to establish a separate identity by creating a separate homeland, it will go against the aspirations of the other communities living in the same area. Even in the past, people had different identities and different dreams, but for that they did not start ethnic cleansing. The practice of co-existence amidst differences is needed and for this the government can create administrative units that are not ethnic in nature in such conflict zones (Mahanta, 2012).

4.19 Revival of Statehood Demand

The demands of statehood by the different ethnic communities in Assam under the Sixth Schedule have been echoing since several decades. The movements for statehood were later accompanied by extremist rebellions, demands of some of the extremist groups being temporarily met by offering of autonomy or greater autonomy. But the Sixth Schedule is still there in the Constitution and statehood demands too seems never going to die. This is clearly evident after the Government announced its decision to grant statehood to Telangana on 30 July 2013 (Telangana cleared as India's 29th state, 2013). Telangana was created as the 29th state of India in February 2014 by dividing Andhra Pradesh. This concession to Telangana rekindled the statehood aspirations of many other ethnic groups across India. In the Northeast, as many as six

statehood demands became louder with agitations, protests and violence in different parts of the region. These include: Bodoland state demanded by the Bodos, Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao state demanded by the Karbis and Dimasas, Kamatapur state demanded by the Koch Rajbongshis, Garo state demanded by the Garos, Khasi-Jaintia state demanded by the Khasi and Jaintia tribes of Meghalaya, and Frontier Nagaland state demanded by the Eastern Nagaland Peoples' Organization representing six Naga tribes.

Solution to the Bodo problem became even more complex as demand of statehood was raised once again by mainstream Bodo groups like the ABSU. The ABSU was joined by the Peoples' Joint Action Committee for Bodoland Movement (PJACBM), a conglomeration of 55 organisations of various ethnic groups in the proposed Bodoland, which announced the revival of the Bodo statehood agitation in July 2013. Even the party ruling the Bodo council—the Bodo People's Front too joined the statehood agitation. They obviously did not want to be left behind and take the risk of being politically irrelevant. This step taken by BPF is significant because the party was already ruling in the autonomous Bodo Council—an arrangement they agreed to in order to bring about an end to the Bodo homeland agitation (Das, *Peace Talks in India's Northeast: New Delhi's Bodo Knot*, 2014).

4.20 Demographic Issues

The BTC area actually includes 70 per cent non-Bodo people, who are against the creation of Bodoland (Das, *Peace Talks in India's Northeast: New Delhi's Bodo Knot*, 2014). The demography of the BTC area is such that to maintain its hegemony, Bodo forces, at least some of them, may continue to resort to tactics aimed at dominating everybody else. We can look at the following statistics⁸²:

⁸² See BTAD Population break up in Appendix

Table: 3**Population in the four districts under BTC (2011 census)**

Communities	Population
Bodo population	8,59,731 (27.28 per cent)
Muslims	6,13,593 (19.47 per cent)
Bengali Hindus	4,09,109 (12.38 per cent)
Tea Tribals	3,70,428 (11.75 per cent)
Koch Rajbongshi	2,46,137 (7.81 per cent)
Other tribal	1,96,000 (6.22 per cent)
Scheduled Caste	1,71,632 (5.44 per cent)
Assamese Hindus	1,60,864 (4.02 per cent)
Nepali	1,15,870 (3.37 per cent)
Hindi speaking people	37,785 (1.19 per cent)
The total population in the four districts under BTC (2011 census)	31,81,149

(source: Centre for Minority Studies, Research and Development, Assam)

4.21 'Tribal Homeland' and Reservations

The Sixth Schedule was included in the Constitution for governance of previously Excluded and Partially Excluded areas where different tribes have been living together since time immemorial. When the Sixth Schedule was on the making, there was no idea of giving territories to individual tribes. But when extremist elements among the population began to wage small wars since the mid-eighties making law and order and governance of the region a challenge for the government, both the state and the Central government began to explore ways to douse the fire. The government resorted to counterinsurgency measures. But this was not successful due to the popular support to the objectives of statehood coupled with the challenge of difficult hilly terrain being the happy den of various militant groups. Nor this could be a solution to bring peace to the area. There was no way out but the option for negotiations. Participants in the field interviews on the whole observed that most of the ethnic rebel groups speak for a particular community they claim to represent. It is a different matter that the territories they claim either for autonomy or statehood are also dwelled by various other tribes and non-tribes.

When dialoguing with the insurgent groups, this factor seems to have faded away in an urgency to reach an immediate solution to somehow calm the situation. This happened also because the government did not seem to think it necessary to include

representatives of the civil society organisations in the peace process and has negotiated only with those who have taken arms in their hands and caused much violence and bloodshed. “This cannot be a far sighted step forward as such steps create divide between various tribal communities”, expressed one respondent.

As the negotiations reached the agreement stage and agreements were prepared for final settlement of the problem, the framers of the Agreements, especially the government, must have considered the fact that there should be adequate representation of all the people living in the said territory. While this aspect appears to be taken care of in the agreements with the UPDS and the DHD, the agreements with the Bodos seem to have missed it. While there is no reservation of seats in the UPDS and the DHD accords, both in the BAC and in the BTC agreements provide much reservation for Scheduled Tribes. While in BAC, 30 seats were reserved out of 40, in BTC there is a reservation of 30 seats for Scheduled Tribe population out of total 46 seats and only 5 seats are open for all communities, apart from other reservations. The objective is clear—BTC is to be ruled only by the Bodos. On the other hand, by keeping no provision for reservation of seats, both the UPDS and DHD agreements are discouraging the concept of a tribal homeland.

4.22 Special Status and Autonomous Councils

In Assam, the Government of India recognised the exclusive identity of some of the tribal groups. Within just five years of Independence, and, without any agitation whatsoever by the concerned tribal groups, the Government created two autonomous hill districts in 1952— North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council and Karbi Anglong Autonomous District. Before Independence, the British administered these areas by classifying them as Backward Tract under the Government of India Act 1919 and as Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas under the Government of India Act 1935. After India attained freedom, the Constitution maintained the special status by setting up the autonomous councils under the provisions of the Constitution’s Sixth Schedule. As argued by most of the interviewees, indifference of the State and failure in effective governance by most of the successive council leadership are main reasons that resulted in continued backwardness of these areas. The consciousness of being deprived of

benefits from the existing system made the people restive leading to organised autonomy agitations for more powers and fulfilment of local aspirations (Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council).

4.23 Agitations and Rebellions Demanding More Power

The Bodos, a major plains tribe in Assam, had to launch agitations beginning 1987 for political power and they were granted Bodoland Autonomous Council in 1993. Ironically, this led to more bloodshed, violent agitations and insurgency movement as the Accord signed had major flaws in treating the problem. Many other autonomous councils have been formed thereafter mainly under the initiative of the State Government. But creation of such autonomous councils is serving little to the development and political representation of those communities. Some interviewees felt that this trend of creating autonomous councils is only widening the gap between different communities by creating a sense of competition and thereby eroding the sense of one national identity. The belief of people that the government in New Delhi listens only to voice of guns is expressed clearly by Bodo leader Upendranath Brahma:

Central Government agrees to negotiate only with those groups that show their force... the signing of Accords with the Mizo National Front, the Tripura National Volunteers and the Gorkha National Liberation Front shows that New Delhi has approved the methods employed for their objectives (Wilkinson, 2004).

Even in the two hill districts, where there were autonomous district councils, ethnic insurgency raised heads. Stakeholders in the Karbi Anglong district have questioned the power of the autonomy given. Dr Jayanta Rongpi, Veteran CPI (ML) leader, who had been Chief Executive Member of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous District Council for nine years, seeks to prove this with a simple example. He said:

Before holding any session of the Council, the Deputy Commissioner of the district has to approve the agenda. The DC is free to strike off any of the agenda proposed for discussion by the elected members at the Council session. This is the real degree of autonomy we have (Hussain, 2013).

4.24 Conclusion: An overall Assessment

The different arguments and views presented by the participants in the interviews suggest that the peace process is not inclusive in character and the framers of the accords display an ad hoc approach that can only be a piecemeal solution to the

problem. The post-accord stage of a peace process is a crucial one and is accountable for ushering sustainable peace in the area concerned. But, if the accord cannot even calm the party with which the government signed it due to its non-implementation or poor implementation or if the Accord creates more conflict in the concerned area, then there must be certain flaws with the accord—its lack of inclusiveness, practicality of the clauses for implementation, vagueness or lack of clarity, lack of time frame which may delay implementation to an uncertain time. Flaws could also be present in different phases of the peace process. The implementation of any peace accord matters a lot for its success. This brings in the significance of the contents of an agreement that should actually contain implementable clauses. Vagueness of language in certain clauses was found to be a common characteristic in several clauses of the accords.

The official policy of the government appears to be mired in confusion and mostly emanates a gross lack of commitment. The sheer lack of success in concluding the ongoing agreements, due to a variety of reasons, explains it all. However, at the same time, it needs to be understood that the attitude of the outfits remain problematic. Solution to the Naga problem could have had a cascading effect on the rest of the groups who have chosen peace negotiations as a mode of conflict resolution. Unfortunately, the intractability of the Naga issue has made other peace processes look equally difficult.

The Government of India's peace policy reflects the character of the Indian State. It has not been an acclaimed success because, in its overall character, it has remained humane. Thousands of misled boys and girls have been allowed to return to normal lives. They have been virtually pardoned. This happens only in democracies like India. Naturally, the flip side is that some rogue elements are taking chance of this situation and rejoining new rebel outfits for a renewed career in insurgency. While there is always scope for betterment, India's policy in the matter of containing insurgency and rebellion is at least more humane than many other countries of the world.

In terms of physical manifestation, the Government has succeeded to a great extent. In Nagaland, violence has come down, in Assam insurgency related deaths have come

down. But it has led to another kind of violence, i.e., ethnic violence. There should be a specific policy for the factions of insurgents.

4.25 Few Suggestions

In the process of the research, the study explored some methods that may help to deal more effectively with the insurgency problem in the region.

1. Formation of an institutionalised set of peace policies by the government of India in dealing with the Northeast, or for that matter, insurgency in Assam would be a step forward in the peace process.
2. Two immediate aspects can be pointed out to end insurgency in the region: first, bringing the ongoing conflicts to a close and secondly, preventing new conflicts from either originating or assuming significance. Towards the first goal, a mix of peace talks and security force operations are the key. However, in each of these measures, a deep sense of commitment is required from both the State and the Central government. Launching security force operations would be meaningless without concerted efforts at police and bureaucratic reforms. And, towards the second goal, governance is the key. It is the cry for governance which mostly results in insurgency movements. The criminalized outfits, on the other hand, can be taken care by an enabled security establishment.
3. Time-bound peace talks and not talking separately with different factions of the same group.
4. Development is required, where at every stage the local population can participate.
5. In order to ensure proper implementation of development schemes, the government needs to ensure that the key official posts in district administrations are not left vacant.
6. Industrialization of the region and developing economic hubs can cause rapid changes of people's mindset.
7. Improving literacy level, especially in the rural areas, from where majority of the insurgent cadres hail from.

8. Creation of more employment avenues and creation of facilities for skill development.
9. The state must uphold the rule of law and should even go to the extent of using force to discipline recalcitrant groups and outlaws.
10. Effort by the government to focus on the north-eastern culture and tradition as part of the mainstream Indian culture and tradition to create proper atmosphere for wider understanding among the people.
11. There is a mindset of not being part with the Indian state. It is most seen in the case of Nagaland. Even today Naga people are not comfortable of being a part of India. The government has to address the identity issue here.
12. In the case of Assam, it is more of structural issues—illegal migration, control over resources, the insecurity of certain ethnic groups of being swamped away—that are to be addressed seriously.
13. People are very sensitive about the idea of self respect and respect to the place they live. For instance, the lack of mention about Assam history in most of the Indian history books hurts the sentiment of the people. The Government must have a Northeast focused policy which give the people the right to control over the resources of their state.