

Chapter 5

Discussions

5.1 Purpose of the Study

Most people would agree that insurgency has been a problem that has determined the politics, economy and human development scenario of the north-eastern region of India for the last few decades. One logical solution to this problem would be to bring the insurgent groups to a peace mode by way of ceasefire and peace talks that would finally pave the path towards signing of peace accords which is expected to establish peace in the concerned territories. However, this may lead to encourage militancy in the region by making way to formation of splinter groups by sections who do not agree with the terms and conditions of the peace processes. Moreover, non-implementation or failure of the peace accords could further create unrest and conflict. Therefore, there is a need for a review of the government's peace policy in the light of the already signed peace accords.

5.2 Methods and Procedures

This qualitative research espoused the case study approach under the constructivist theory. The case study is suitable because the research intends to develop context dependent knowledge. The four documents of the peace accords signed in Assam were selected as case studies. The findings of the research have been interpreted with the help of the already existing knowledge and the newly found knowledge on the topic. People who have some kind of expertise or have been practically associated with the problem were chosen as participants of the interviews. The interviews were unstructured and were conducted with the help of a semi-structured open ended questionnaire to elicit detailed understanding of the respondents. One of the limitations of the study has been a small sample size of 30 individual interviews. Since there was not enough time for a sole researcher, some constraints in the procedures had to be faced by the study. The cases were presented in the form of matrixes, the concept being adopted from the Peace Accords Matrix (PAM) developed by the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies. However, the format of the matrixes has been moulded according to the requirements of the case studies.

5.3 Major Findings

5.3.1 feeling of alienation.

One of the results explored from the field was that for decades, the region has been experiencing a feeling of alienation from the central India due to geographical and political reasons. This emotional alienation continued even after six decades of Independence. While Assam was a far more economically developed state before Independence, a downward development graph began to evolve due to loss of connectivity in terms of land and waterways after Partition of the country. Partition separated the landlocked region from the rest of the country, and the only link was a 22 km long land corridor in Siliguri popularly known as the ‘chicken’s neck’. This has affected trade and commerce, apart from others. A feeling of alienation developed among the people which was accompanied by the alleged ‘exploitation’ of natural resources of the state by the Centre, the problem of illegal migration from Bangladesh, poverty, unemployment and the threat to identity of the people. When years of democratic movements could not draw attention of the Central Government, insurgency and violence seemed to be an option for many youths of the region to cry out their demands and aspirations. It was agreed by many that such issues have not received required attention from the government while addressing insurgency rebellions.

5.3.2 counterinsurgency: the immediate strategy.

Counterinsurgency is defined as the set of political, economic, social, military, law-enforcement, civil and psychological activities with the aim to defeat insurgency and address any core grievances (NATO, 2011). Both insurgents and counter-insurgents adopt methods that can be broadly categorised as political and military—and political considerations play a much more important role than the military. For instance, in Assam, ULFA’s social activities (actions like the targeting of anti-social elements, alcoholics, wine-shop owners, corrupt government officials, eve-teasers, making temporary bridges in rural areas, initiating cooperative cultivation, etc.) and its ideological information (publicising and promoting its ideology among the masses) during the early years of the organization went a long way to establish a Robin Hood-

image of the organization and its acceptability among a large section of the public thereby creating its support base. The Indian Army too adopted several welfare programmes to “win the hearts and minds” of the people. Some of them include, the development programmes for Nagaland and Manipur operationalised in 1995 and Operation Samaritan launched by the Army in Assam on 1 April 2000 where the Army was engaged in tasks like construction and repair of bridges, building of waiting sheds at bus stops, building of computer centres at educational institutions, etc. But apart from the shift in some of its ideological matters, ULFA’s gradual engagement in military activities causing bloodshed of innocent civilians, led to loss of its popularity. Instead, people openly came out to protest against its violence and even came forward to inform the security forces regarding the whereabouts of ULFA members, something which did not happen during the initial counterinsurgency operations.

In India’s Northeast, the history of counterinsurgency is as old as the history of insurgency. The Naga National Council⁸³, under the leadership of Angami Zapu Phizo, demanded Naga independence. Situation in Nagaland turned volatile by the beginning of 1953 as the insurgents initiated a violent secessionist movement. On 22 March 1956, an underground government called the Naga Federal Government (NFG) and a Naga Federal Army (NFA) was created. In the very next month, in April 1956, the Central government launched a massive crackdown on NNC and troops in large numbers were moved into the Naga Hills. In order to deal with the situation, the Armed Forces Special Powers Act 1958 was enacted. Nagaland was declared a Disturbed Area. The government took military and political initiatives concurrently and finally a political settlement was arrived at by carving out the state of Nagaland from the Naga Hills district on 1 December 1963. The Union Government had hoped that granting statehood to the agitating Nagas will soften their attitude and subdue the insurgency movement. However, insurgency continued in Nagaland. The NNC was banned in 1972 and a second massive counterinsurgency operation was launched by the Government. The insurgents had to negotiate for peace resulting in the signing of the Shillong Accord in 1975.

⁸³ NNC was formed in February 1946

It is true that all insurgencies are unique in their social, political, and historical contexts. The strategic goal of counterinsurgency is to promote legitimate governance by controlling violence and establishing the rule of law. A majority of the interview participants of this study agreed that counterinsurgency may be successful only when the government prioritise the political dimension of insurgency where the military force plays a vital but essentially supporting role.

Counterinsurgency operations in Assam began on 27 November 1990, the day the United Liberation Front of Asom was declared a banned outfit by the Government of India. Codenamed Operation Bajrang, the first counterinsurgency operation continued till 20 April 1991 when fresh elections were announced to the Assam Assembly. Counterinsurgency against ULFA resumed on 15 September 1991 with the launching of Operation Rhino. Again, following the prospects of talks between ULFA and the Union Government, Operation Rhino was temporarily suspended on 13 January 1992. Army operations resumed from April 1992.

Counterinsurgency operations in Assam were intensified with a three-tier structure in 1997 with setting up of a Unified Headquarters under chairmanship of GOC IV Corps with operational control over all forces, including the central paramilitary and state police employed in counterinsurgency duties, for coordinating the entire operations (Hussain W. , 2001). According to Hare Krishna Deka, the then Assam Director General of Police, the Unified Command, in which the State police worked in close coordination with the Army and paramilitary forces, achieved immediate success in its operations against the ULFA. Between 1 January 1998, and 31 December 2000, a total of 375 ULFA militants were killed during counterinsurgency operations, 2,948 were arrested while 2,385 of them surrendered to the authorities. Besides, 468 arms, 5,810 rounds of ammunition and Rs. 17,29,315 in cash were recovered from ULFA militants. During the same period, 184 NDFB militants were killed in encounters, 615 arrested and 214 surrendered (Deka H. K., 2001).

The 'coordinated' approach of the Unified Command to tackle insurgency has been under question in terms of how far the coordination took place in its true sense. In many cases, it was found that a sense of competitiveness between the Army and the

State Police affected this coordination. The Army was contended with its advantage of heading operations since it could maintain a safe distance from vested political or other local pressures in the execution of counterinsurgency operations.⁸⁴ One interview participant argued that there are instances of unhealthy competitions in inter-force relations in Assam where the credit for success of a particular counterinsurgency operation was claimed by the army on one hand and the police on the other. What lacked in a coordinated approach to counterinsurgency by multiple actors was the sense of unity in purpose and effort—a spirit that needs to be nurtured and safeguarded.

5.3.2.1 counterinsurgency in Bodo areas.

In the Bodo people dominated areas of western Assam, large-scale insurgency violence began since 1989. The State police and the Army embarked on counterinsurgency drive as and when Bodo militants caused violent incidents and killings. Bodo insurgents taking shelter in Bhutan received a big blow in 2003 by Operation Rhino which was aimed at rooting out the camps of ULFA, NDFB and KLO from Bhutan. It was regarded as a successful counterinsurgency operation, which led to the declaration of unilateral ceasefire on the part of NDFB-Ranjan Daimary faction. However, the most sustained and tough counterinsurgency operations in the recent years has been the ‘Operation All Out’ against the NDFB-Songbijit faction which was launched in December 2014 after the massacres in May and December 2014 killing 120 people, out of which 46 were minors (Deka K. , 2015).

The Government’s approach was quite firm, and the Indian Home Ministry promised a time-bound action against the outfit. In September 2015, the operation was renewed with full force along the Indo-Bhutan border and the forest areas of Kokrajhar. Till March 2017, the sustained counterinsurgency operations against NDFB (S) militants resulted in the arrest of 906 cadres/linkmen of NDFB (S) and killing of 52 militants along with recovery of huge quantity of arms and ammunition (Achievements of NE Division, 2017). Contrary to this, the Assam Police in BTAD has offered a surrender opportunity to some NDFB-S leaders (Assam Police offers

⁸⁴*The Sentinel*, Guwahati, 6 June 2001

opportunity to surrender top NDFB(S) leaders , 2016). Backed by promise of peace talks, if such surrender takes place, it would not be surprising that any militant outfit, even after being engaged in series of terrorist-like violence, can hope for more incentive by surrendering to the government at the end of the show. Offering of peace talks to each and every militant group is only encouraging insurgency.

5.3.2.2 counterinsurgency in Karbi Anglong and NC Hills.

A rough terrain with thick jungles and poor connectivity has been attributed by the security forces as a major hurdle in countering insurgency in the hill districts. The challenges of nature in countering insurgency were multiplied by the near absence of policing facilities in the area. According to the Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D), the police population ratio of Assam in 2015 is 163 police per lakh of population, while the sanctioned police force is 203 per lakh of population. Again, the police strength per 100 sq kilometres is 66 but the sanctioned strength is 82 (Data on Police Organisations, 2015). The Karbi Anglong district, covering over 10,000 square kilometre area, facilitates almost a free run for ultras with the negligible presence of only 20 police stations (District Profile). Series of attacks and killings of non-Karbi population by gun-toting UPDS militants (United People's Democratic Solidarity was formed in 1999) instigated constant fear among the communities.

A review of incidents during 1999 to 2002, and even after that, reveals that the militants had their day since there was no force in Karbi Anglong that could counter their mayhem. Though the incidents of extreme violence caused by UPDS caught the attention of the government, there was hardly any notable counterinsurgency effort to be seen on the part of the Central government. The government, however, attempted to calm the militants with a ceasefire agreement in 2002. The ceasefire resulted in signing of a Memorandum of Settlement with the UPDS in 2011. But even after that, insurgency continued in Karbi Anglong with splitting up of outfits. Indian Army's Operation Wipe Out, launched in February 2015 in Amring forest of Karbi Anglong, claims to have achieved success with the arrest of several top leaders of KPLT (Unnithan, 2015).

Counterinsurgency operations against the insurgent outfit Dima Haram Daogah in the NC Hills (now Dima Hasao) district of Assam gathered pace after mayhem by DHD(J) militants. Sustained counterinsurgency operations forced the outfit to declare a unilateral ceasefire for a period of three months on 24 March 2008. In December 2008, both the Centre and the Assam Government gave the go ahead to the army to neutralise the DHD(J). The Army took the help of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and the Border Security Force (BSF). At the height of this counterinsurgency operation against DHD(J), 67 companies of security forces were operating in NC Hills (Incidents and Statements involving Black Widow: 2013, 2013). On 4 June 2009, Jewel Garlosa was arrested by the Assam Police in Bengaluru as part of a transnational offensive codenamed 'Operation Treasure Hunt'. Insurgency by DHD in the NC Hills was in a way calmed down by counterinsurgency operations by bringing the insurgents to peace mode and the signing of a Memorandum of Settlement.

5.3.2.3 success of counterinsurgency strategy in Tripura.

The police played a crucial role in bringing peace and order to Tripura, another north-eastern state. However, Tripura's case is different from the police-led counterinsurgency success in Punjab and Andhra Pradesh. Counterinsurgency operations in Tripura did not carry massive human rights violations, unlike in Punjab and Andhra Pradesh. While intelligence plays a vital role in Counterinsurgency operations by preventing accesses against innocent civilians, how an efficient and well-trained police force can gather intelligence inputs at the community level is well exhibited by Tripura. On the contrary, in Assam, the ability of the State police forces to match the insurgents with access to sophisticated weapons has been found wanting. As a result, it has been a trend to depend on the deployment of the army and paramilitary forces.⁸⁵

In Tripura, the police stations and the Security Forces were assigned a pivotal role in generating operational intelligence through their own sources. They were held

⁸⁵ Three states, Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh, set up the unified command structure (UCS) mechanism, to coordinate the activities of the police, para-military and army personnel. While Assam set up the UCS in 1997, Manipur replicated the mechanism in 2004 and Arunachal Pradesh in 2008. http://cdpsindia.org/ne_insurgency.asp

squarely responsible for any lapses in this regard—something which is not to be seen in Counterinsurgency operations led by the militia in other states. Vital information such as, i) identification of vulnerable villages, security camps and road stretches, ii) communally sensitive villages, iii) hardcore extremists, iv) over ground collaborators and v) preparation of suitable contingency plans and SOPs to respond to insurgency related incidents were collected by the police and security forces by raising new sources from interior and remote areas through civic action programmes or Village Resistance groups, used force-multipliers like surrendered or arrested extremists or collaborators, and developed contacts in mixed populated areas (Kumar, 2016). This new strategy effectively reversed the downward flow of information from the State or District level to the Police Stations and ensured that all actionable leads are followed up at the local level without any loss of time.

5.3.2.4 analysis.

In India, neither the police nor the Army is trained coherently for counterinsurgency. While the police are normally trained to maintain law and order and investigate criminal offences, the Army is mainly trained for conventional warfare against foreign enemy. It is under emergency circumstances that most of the police and Security Forces are deployed for countering insurgency. While the army is engaged in developing counterinsurgency capabilities, the same can be emphasised among the police forces in all the insurgency affected states. The role of political executives too cannot be ignored in handling the rebels.

The advantage of the counter-insurgent force is that it has enough man power and resources to neutralise the insurgents. While most of the counterinsurgency operations use massive force for a small group of insurgents, this may cause human rights violations by the forces thereby making the public apprehensive. This public apprehension boosts the militants' morale and helps to gain sympathy from the people. It is generally felt that since the police force consists of mostly local people, they can understand the situation and the surroundings better than the Armed forces who are quite alien to the areas in the region. In this situation, empowering the local police to tackle the operations is imperative.

Counterinsurgency has been a continued strategy of the government in the insurgency infested areas of the region. Even after several militant groups and factions coming under the process of ceasefire and peace negotiations, use of force remained the first option for the Indian state to tackle insurgency.

5.3.3 the perceived peace policy.

When many think that the Government of India does not have a considerable peace policy for the region, others believe that the government has adopted a dual peace policy—military measures as well as offer of peace talks. The government’s apparent peace policy adopted in the Northeast has found expression in the MHA Annual Report (2012-13). The reports stated 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”. The main objective of the policy is to bring down violence either through military or security force operations or by offering and engaging the outfits in peace talks and projecting dialogue option as a win-all situation.

5.3.3.1 ceasefire.

A ceasefire calls for halt to or suspension of hostilities. It is an agreement between two or more warring parties to stop fighting for a period of time so that a permanent agreement can be made to end the conflict (ceasefire). However, most of the ceasefire agreements in the region have not been able to achieve the desired process of dialogue and peace agreement. While few ceasefire agreements even discontinued, such as the one with the NSCN-K, several agreements have not been able to begin any dialogue process between the government and the insurgents under ceasefire who are generally kept in designated camps.

One cannot ignore the fact that at present there are 13 insurgent groups under ceasefire in Assam. In any insurgency conflict, there are generally two players—the government and the insurgents. In Assam, the existence of number of militant groups is further complicating the problem. The government normally has two options—use of counterinsurgency operations and dialoguing with the insurgents. If the government choose to attack, the insurgents may or may not collapse (Das R. P., *Politics of Ceasefire and Peace Talks*, 2016).

The prospect of survival of insurgents increases over time as the possibility of defeating or dousing them declines. When the government embarks on a war against the insurgents, it takes chance and risk. The alternative strategy for the government remains negotiations for peace. In this situation, when the government makes a peace overture, the insurgents are bound to come up with a response as the ball is thrown in the court of the insurgents.

At present, three tripartite ceasefire agreements are in queue in Assam waiting for the moment of formation of a peace agreement and signing of it. These are: i) the ceasefire agreement with the United Liberation Front of Asom-Pro Talk faction (ULFA-Pro talk) signed on 3 September 2011, ii) the one with National Democratic Front of Bodoland-Progressive (NDFB-P) signed on 24 May 2005 and iii) another with the NDFB-R (Ranjan Daimary) signed on 29 November 2013. In February 2010, the Karbi Longri NC Hills Liberation Front (KLNLF) signed a Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement with the Government of Assam. On the other side, the ULFA (Independent) led by Paresh Baruah, rejected government's peace offer and is continuing with the armed insurrection.

Besides the groups mentioned above, there are several other insurgent groups under ceasefire mode but the government has not signed any SoO agreements with such groups. As a result, no peace talks have been initiated regarding these groups. It could be understood that the government has not gone for reaching SoO agreements and start peace talks with these groups because it does not consider them as groups having a base or a distinct ideology to begin an insurrection in the first place. But one can never rule out the fact that with the passing of time, the rebels may become restless and frustrated only to take up arms again in their hands to fight the State (Das R. P., *Politics of Ceasefire and Peace Talks*, 2016).

According to statistics from the Ministry of Home, Government of India, during 2007-2016 (April), a total of 7657 militants belonging to different insurgent groups of the Northeast surrendered.

Insurgency in Northeast, State-wise Security Situation from 2007 to 2016
(up to 30.4. 2016)⁸⁶

Table 4: Security Situation in Arunachal Pradesh

Arunachal Pradesh							
Years	Incidents	Extremists arrested	Extremists killed	Extremists surrendered	SFs killed	Civilians killed	Persons kidnapped
2007	35	17	25	11	05	12	05
2008	28	12	06	08	-	03	75
2009	53	32	19	57	-	03	30
2010	32	53	11	52	-	02	15
2011	53	51	21	23	-	06	28
2012	54	66	14	17	-	05	17
2013	21	49	07	02	01	02	09
2014	33	86	09	07	-	02	49
2015	36	55	05	03	03	01	33
2016 (30.04.2016)	13	15	01	-	-	-	03

(source: Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India)

Table 5: Security Situation in Assam

Assam							
Years	Incidents	Extremists arrested	Extremists killed	Extremists surrendered	SFs killed	Civilians killed	Persons kidnapped
2007	474	408	122	229	27	287	89
2008	387	403	110	724	18	245	102
2009	424	359	194	616	22	152	91
2010	251	370	109	547	12	53	72
2011	145	378	46	789	14	18	72
2012	169	412	59	757	05	27	79
2013	211	348	52	92	05	35	125
2014	246	319	102	102	04	168	94
2015	81	645	49	30	-	09	27
2016 (30.04.2016)	29	140	22	13	01	07	10

(source: Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India)

Table 6: Security Situation in Manipur

Manipur							
Years	Incidents	Extremists arrested	Extremists killed	Extremists surrendered	SFs killed	Civilians killed	Persons kidnapped
2007	584	1217	219	07	39	130	39
2008	740	1711	364	37	16	137	80
2009	659	1532	336	28	19	81	52
2010	367	1458	108	60	06	33	43
2011	298	1365	28	284	10	26	34
2012	518	1286	65	350	08	21	57
2013	225	918	25	513	05	28	22
2014	278	1052	23	80	08	16	29
2015	229	805	41	04	24	15	26
2016 (30.04.2016)	81	150	05	-	02	04	09

(source: Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India)

⁸⁶ http://mha.nic.in/sites/upload_files/mha/files/InsurgencyNE_052016.pdf, accessed on 24 July 2017

Table 7: Security Situation in Meghalaya

Meghalaya							
Years	Incidents	Extremists arrested	Extremists killed	Extremists surrendered	SFs killed	Civilians killed	Persons kidnapped
2007	28	31	14	40	01	09	09
2008	16	67	07	14	02	01	05
2009	12	41	06	20	-	03	04
2010	29	78	14	27	-	04	11
2011	56	57	11	39	08	12	23
2012	127	92	16	20	01	36	64
2013	123	75	21	10	07	30	33
2014	179	173	35	733	06	24	110
2015	123	121	25	78	07	12	87
2016 (30.04.2016)	41	33	09	53	-	03	17

(source: Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India)

Table 8: Security Situation in Mizoram

Mizoram							
Years	Incidents	Extremists arrested	Extremists killed	Extremists surrendered	SFs killed	Civilians killed	Persons kidnapped
2007	02	02	06	13	-	02	-
2008	01	13	-	-	04	-	-
2009	01	-	-	-	-	01	-
2010	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2011	01	04	-	02	-	-	02
2012	-	02	-	-	-	-	06
2013	01	03	-	-	-	-	06
2014	03	-	-	03	-	-	14
2015	02	04	-	-	03	-	13
2016 (30.04.2016)	-	02	-	-	-	-	01

(source: Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India)

Table 9: Security Situation in Nagaland

Nagaland							
Years	Incidents	Extremists arrested	Extremists killed	Extremists surrendered	SFs killed	Civilians killed	Persons kidnapped
2007	272	98	109	04	01	44	85
2008	321	316	140	04	03	70	110
2009	129	185	15	06	-	16	35
2010	64	247	05	12	-	-	42
2011	61	267	08	-	-	07	59
2012	151	275	66	04	-	08	93
2013	145	309	33	01	-	11	100
2014	77	296	12	-	-	01	65
2015	102	268	29	13	09	09	78
2016 (30.04.2016)	20	75	03	03	-	-	13

(source: Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India)

Table 10: Security Situation in Tripura

Tripura							
Years	Incidents	Extremists arrested	Extremists killed	Extremists surrendered	SFs killed	Civilians killed	Persons kidnapped
2007	94	64	19	220	06	14	65
2008	68	44	13	325	03	10	44
2009	19	14	01	293	01	08	18
2010	30	07	-	148	02	02	31
2011	13	19	-	25	-	01	32
2012	06	12	02	13	-	-	13
2013	06	10	-	22	-	01	12
2014	08	08	-	40	02	01	08
2015	01	02	-	15	-	-	03
2016 (30.04.2016)	-	-	-	15	-	-	-

(source: Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India)

There is a feeling that the government encourages ceasefires with insurgent groups to buy time and postpone peace as a matter of strategy and according to one interviewee, this misgiving is not without a foundation. However, this strategy will not work in the long run because long drawn peace processes without holding any meaningful talks would land the insurgents on uncertainty and hopelessness and will push them on a rebellious mode. Such thoughts have been made public by many insurgents through the media, threatening the government that they will go back to the jungle if talks are not materialised. As observed by Dr Hiren Gohain, eminent author who led Sanmilita Jatiya Abhibarton—a major peace initiative by the civil society in 2010, what the government seems to be interested in is exhausting the patience of the insurgent groups and reducing them to passivity.

If the purpose of a ceasefire agreement to set the stage for peace dialogues and continue the peace process is not met, it is not surprising that the effort may boomerang. A fine instance is the case of NSCN-K in Nagaland. While the Government of India had held dialogue with the NSCN-IM for 18 years till the time it signed a ‘Framework Agreement’ with the group in August 2015 (which is supposed to lead to a final accord), the government has adopted an extremely tough posture against its rival faction, that is, the Khaplang faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-K). Due to the “ritualistic” renewal of the ceasefire every year with the NSCN-K since the truce in 2001 without holding any formal talks, the outfit became restive and abrogated the ceasefire agreement on 28 March 2015. The

Government too didn't put any effort to continue the ceasefire with NSCN-K or to address the issues that led the group to take such a decision. The immediate reaction to the government's stand was the ambush in Manipur on 4 June 2015 that killed 18 security force personnel. On 16 September 2015, the government announced a ban on NSCN-K for five years under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

5.3.3.2 coercive diplomacy

In *Forceful Persuasion: Coercive Diplomacy as an Alternative to War*, Alexander George defines that coercive diplomacy intends "to back one's demand on an adversary with a threat of punishment for noncompliance that he will consider credible and potent enough to persuade him to comply with the demand" (George, 1991). John Locke, the seventeenth century philosopher whose treatises on government provided inspiration for the U.S. Constitution, defined coercive power as the only appropriate response to the illegitimate use of power. "In all states and conditions, the true remedy of force without authority is to oppose force to it" (Locke, 1952).

Peacemaking includes measures to address conflicts in progress and usually involves diplomatic action to bring hostile parties to a negotiated agreement (Peace and Security). The application of a range of coercive measures including the use of military force can be termed as 'peace enforcement', as stated by the United Nations. In the case of ULFA, the Government responded by way of using military force. The episodes of coercive diplomacy by the state against the ULFA have not been used in isolation. Coercive diplomacy is one of the tools that the state has been employing, while dealing with insurgency.

Diplomatic efforts to govern the conflict took centre stage in 1994 when the neighbouring kingdom of Bhutan admitted the presence of foreign militants, took up the matter with the Indian Government, and began to tackle the threat in close coordination with New Delhi (Hussain, *Bhutan's Response to the Challenge of Terrorism*, 2006). Diplomacy played a major role in Operation All Clear launched in December 2003 to flush out the militants camping in Bhutan. When just about 6,000 Royal Bhutan Army (RBA) (Hussain W. , 2006) and a small contingent of Royal Body Guards (RBG) took on the 3,000 heavily armed insurgents (ULFA, NDFB and KLO)

to flush them out of the Himalayan kingdom, the Indian Army was providing ‘logistic support’, including making available ammunition and medical supplies and services, as well as airlifting RBA casualties during the Operation All Clear (Hussain W. , 2003).

Another military offensive known as ‘Operation Golden Bird’ was a joint operation by the Indian and Myanmarese army in 1995 to intercept several north-eastern rebels including Naga, Manipuri and Assamese, who made their way through the jungles of Mizoram after picking up a consignment of weapons that had landed at Wyakaung beach on the Myanmar-Bangladesh coast. But the operation had to be stopped midway as Rangoon ordered its army to pull out of the operation.

Diplomatic relations between India and Bangladesh regarding the insurgency problem began after the detention of ULFA’s General Secretary Golap Baruah alias Anup Chetia along with two other ULFA leaders in Bangladesh on 21 December 1997. Bangladesh initiated a decisive campaign against radical forces on the domestic front in January 2009, and also acted relentlessly against various militant formations operating in the region, which had long been sheltered on Bangladeshi soil (Eurasia Review, 2013). This move by the Bangladesh government resulted in the arrest of several top ULFA leaders taking shelter in the country.

In Myanmar, several north-eastern militant groups are taking shelter across the 1640 km long border that India shares with the country. While the leader of ULFA (Independent), Paresh Baruah and some of his cadres are camping in the Myanmar-China border, the dreaded NSCN-K has its base in Myanmar. Significantly, the NSCN-K even signed a ceasefire agreement with the Government of Myanmar on 9 April 2012. The outfit’s decision of not to join the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement signed by the Government of Myanmar with eight ethnic militant groups on 15 October 2015 cleared an opportunity for the Government of India to get support from Myanmar in tackling the NSCN-K. Diplomatic relations between the countries have improved and on 29 August 2016, both the countries signed two connectivity pacts to speed up construction of the Asian Trilateral Highway and agreed to cooperate in

efforts to fight insurgency (India, Myanmar sign four pacts, agree to cooperate on insurgency, 2016).

5.3.3.3 policy of surrender and rehabilitation.

Rehabilitation of surrendered militants forms an integral component of the government's policy on peace. Such peace initiatives actually go beyond the limits of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programme (DDR) adopted during a ceasefire period and extends to convince the rebels even during ongoing insurgency movement to abjure violence and commit to a rehabilitation programme. Disarmament means collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives as well as light and heavy weapons from rebels and civilian population. Demobilisation is a phase when active insurgents are discharged from their groups under a formal and controlled way and are provided short-term assistance known as 'reinsertion'. The process by which former militants get civilian status as well as gain sustainable employment and income is called Reintegration. The process is political, social and economic in nature having an open time-frame. It primarily takes place in communities at the local level. DDR supports ex-militants to become active participants in the peace process (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration).

Since 1 January 1998, the MHA has been implementing a Surrender-cum-Rehabilitation Scheme which was revised with effect from 1 April 2005. Main objective of the scheme is that the militants that surrender do not find it attractive to join militancy once again. The scheme offers:

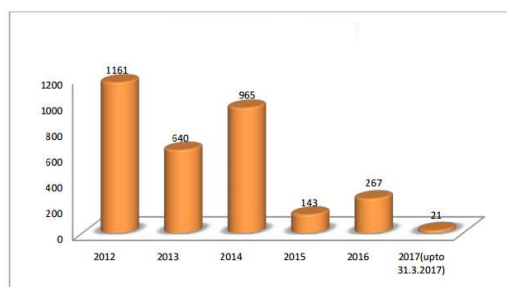
(i) An immediate grant of Rs. 1.5 lakhs to each surrenderee, which is to be kept in the name of the surrenderee as Fixed Deposit in a bank for a period of 3 years. This money can be utilized as collateral security/Margin Money against loan to be availed by the surrenderee from the bank for self-employment;

(ii) Payment of stipend of Rs. 3,500/- per month to each surrenderee for a period of one year. State Governments may consult Ministry of Home Affairs, in case support to beneficiaries is required beyond one year;

(iii) Vocational training to the surrenderees for self-employment. (Scheme for Surrender-cum-Rehabilitation of Militants in North East)

A considerable number of militants have surrendered with arms responding to this policy. Figure 1 shows a declining trend regarding the number of militants surrendered between 2012 and March 2017 in the Northeast.

Figure 1: Number of militants surrendered between 2012 and March 2017 in the Northeast



(Source: MHA website)⁸⁷

Another scheme being implemented by the Central government is called Reimbursement of Security Related Expenditure (SRE) for those states that are seriously affected by insurgency. Under this scheme, expenditures such as raising of IR battalions, logistics for the Army and CRPF, ex-gratia grant and gratuitous relief to the victims of extremist violence, honorarium paid to village guards/village defence committees/home guards deployed for security purposes, maintenance of designated camps of the militants who are under suspension of operation agreement with the government, are being reimbursed (2009-10 Annual Report of MHA). Relief Measures for Victims of Militancy under the package announced by the Prime Minister in April 2008 included provisions such as, one-time cash compensation of Rs. 5 lakh to the next-of-kin of civilians killed in militancy related incidents.

5.3.3.4 analysis.

Government of India's policy for surrender and rehabilitation of the insurgents seems to suffer from a faulty process. Lack of a mechanism for proper verification of surrendered militants has given rise to a large number of persons coming forward to

⁸⁷ Accessed on 24 July 2017

surrender, many of them never being a member of the militant organization (Das D. P., 2013). This happened mainly after Chief Minister Hiteswar Saikia's announcement of reward and rehabilitation for the surrendered ULFA militants. The policy titled '100 per cent Special Money Margin Scheme' was implemented between 1 June 1992 and 31 March 1997. Each surrendered militant was offered a Maruti van or Rupees 2 lakh cash to start a business/livelihood. Many were also allowed to keep small arms in the name of self defence. Although this policy inspired militants to come over-ground and surrender, it had several negative outcomes. Ceasefire and suspension of operation with insurgent groups had opened another door for easy money as these surrendered rebels had access to small arms and threatened common people to acquire forcefully whatever they want.

There are very many instances of surrender ceremonies where the number of surrendered militants becomes much bigger than the number of members of that particular militant group, as announced by the government. Why this happens? It is natural that friends, relatives or associates of the actual militants would like to be a part of the surrender process since the government provides incentives to surrendered militants. Another side of the reality could be that the police or the military can boast of the number of militants surrendered. But, in the process, militancy gets encouraged. The government must have rules such as every militant must deposit arms at the time of surrender, investigating doubtful surrenders, by making the security forces accountable in verification of the militants.

There are numerous reports and allegations regarding the surrender of youths who actually did not belong to any insurgent groups but had got their names enlisted with a particular group to avail of the surrender and rehabilitation benefits. It is notable that a substantial amount of funds have been spent for the upkeep of the surrendered militants.

It was argued by some interviewees that the policy encouraged new sets of youths to take up arms to avail financial and political power. An amnesty for the crimes they committed too could be an incentive for surrender. Suggestion in this context could be the constitution of a high power committee by the government of Assam (this include,

ADGP, SP and the Paramilitaries) to ascertain whether the government can accept the offer of any militant who is willing to surrender. Once accepted, the militant could be offered the package under the surrender scheme.

5.3.4 peace process.

Peace processes between the protagonists of the conflict and the government are accompanied by peace negotiations resulting in formal peace agreements. This became a predominant way of ending conflict since around 1990s. Most of these conflicts are intra-state in nature, i.e., conflict between the state and their armed non-state rebels within the borders of states (Bell, Policy Brief , 2013).

In Northeast India peace processes have been initiated by the government and civil society groups. Sometimes even insurgent groups take initiative, mainly when the heat of counterinsurgency makes them weak. In 1964, the Government of India initiated Peace Mission in Nagaland under the leadership of former Assam Chief Minister Bimala Prasad Chaliha, veteran freedom fighter and social reformer Jai Prakash Narayan and prominent English clergyman Rev. Michael Scott. This pioneering peace effort led to the signing of a ceasefire agreement on 6 September 1964 between the government of India and Naga insurgent leaders. However, six rounds of talks between the Central government and the insurgents failed and the Peace Mission broke in 1967.

In Nagaland, the Church has been playing an important role in peace building. This is possible since most of the insurgents are Christians from the beginning of the conflict. After 22 years of violence since the signing of the failed Shillong Accord, a ceasefire agreement was signed between the Government of India and the NSCN-IM leadership on 1 August 1997. This was made possible by Baptist Church in Nagaland by organising the Atlanta Peace meet where the NSCN-IM leadership accepted the initiative to start an unconditional dialogue process. In April 2001, another ceasefire agreement was signed with the NSCN-K faction. Peace initiatives by civil society has been playing pivotal role in Nagaland. Efforts by the Naga Hoho, the apex tribal council of the Nagas and the Naga Mothers Association towards reconciliation of the warring factions are quite significant.

In Assam, effort to establish peace process was initiated by the government even before the ULFA was declared 'unlawful'. In 1989, the Central intelligence agencies tried to establish contact with the ULFA leadership. Again in 1991, Reboti Phukan, veteran footballer and a distant relative of Paresh Baruah, tried to bring the outfit to talking terms with the government, reportedly at the behest of the MHA. Subsequently, a five-member team of ULFA leaders were flown to New Delhi where talks were held with Home Minister SB Chavan and Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao. The ULFA was offered a ceasefire and peace dialogue in return of their promise to shun violence. On their way home, ULFA's General Secretary Anup Chetia went underground, later to be arrested in Bangladesh.

It was in November 2001 that ULFA showed interest in a peace dialogue but they forwarded three preconditions for the proposed talks: a) talks outside India, b) talks under the supervision of the UN and c) talks to be centred round the sovereignty issue. But the Union Government did not agree in the pretext that at a time when Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar were carrying out operations against the militants, such a move will affect the process in the neighbouring countries. A major initiative for talks was taken by ULFA in September 2005 with the constitution of the 11-member People's Consultative Group comprising authors, journalists, right activists, lawyers and academics. The PCG served as a fine opportunity for ULFA to buy time to reorganise and strengthen itself since the group was hit hard due to Operation All Clear in Bhutan. The PCG held three rounds of talks with the government and was able to convince the Centre to declare a ceasefire arguing that counterinsurgency and peace process cannot go together. The ceasefire was declared on 13 August 2006 for ten days, which was extended by 15 days.

ULFA was weakened significantly in June 2008 when its primary strike force, the Myanmar-based '28th Battalion' declared ceasefire seeking a negotiated solution to the grievances. The last major peace initiative by the civil society to address the ULFA insurgency was taken by Assam Jatiya Mahasabha by holding a National Convention (*Sanmilita Jatiya Abhibartan*) on 24 April 2010. The convention called upon both the Central government and ULFA to hold negotiation without any pre-condition. The

initiative was participated by 109 civil society organizations of Assam under the leadership of noted intellectual Prof Hiren Gohain (Mahanta, 2013). Paresh Barua led ULFA-Independent criticised the Convention for its initiative and asserted that there could be no talks without taking sovereignty as the core issue. This uncompromising attitude of ULFA-I compelled the Assam government to decide (26 May 2010) that talks will be held with ULFA without Paresh Baruah. The government kept the doors open for Baruah to join the peace process. Along with the peace process, counterinsurgency operations continued in the State against those insurgents involved in violence.

P C Haldar, former Director of Intelligence Bureau, India was appointed as interlocutor in July 2010 for the peace process with ULFA. The pro-talk faction of ULFA declared unilateral ceasefire in July 2011 and a 'Framework of Charter for Negotiations to Resolve the Issues between Assam and India' was handed over to Home Minister P Chidambaram by a seven-member delegation of the rebel group led by its Chairman Arabinda Rajkhowa.

The government's peace process with the Bodo militants did not have to go through such a disarrayed development like the one with ULFA. The peace process with the Bodos can be viewed in early 1990s which resulted in signing of a peace accord with the ABSU and BPAC in February 1993, paving way for creation of the Bodoland Autonomous Council. Insurgency continued in Bodoland and since 1999, informal talks with the BLT were carried out by the government that led to a formal ceasefire with the militant group in March 2000. The ceasefire accommodated peace talks with BLT that culminated with the signing of the Bodoland Territorial Council Accord in 2003. The NDFB, which was very much active during that period, was not included in the peace process. Thus the government tried to reach a settlement of the Bodo issue with one section of the Bodo rebels. This lack of inclusiveness while addressing the Bodo cause lies at the root of continued insurgency violence in the Bodo territory even after signing of two peace accords.

Peace process with NDFB began with the signing of a unilateral ceasefire with the government in 2004. A ceasefire seemed to be a better option for NDFB as the group

was weakened by Operation All Clear. The first round of peace talks between NDFB and the government took place in New Delhi on 27 May 2006. Ceasefire was extended to one more year, but the group reportedly carried on its extortion and violent activities. NDFB leader Ranjan Daimari did not oblige the agreement and continued with their violence operating from Bangladesh until he was arrested by security forces along the Indo-Bangladesh border in May 2010. The Ranjan Daimary faction of NDFB declared ceasefire in 2011 after a delegation of Bodo National Conference, an umbrella organisation of the Bodos met Daimary at Nagaon Central Jail. In order to expedite the peace process, the government released Daimary from jail in June 2013 and the peace process 'formally' began on 18 July 2013 when talks were held between Centre's interlocutor P C Halder and NDFB. The government is engaged in parallel talks with the NDFB-Progressive and the RD faction of NDFB.

Government of India's peace process with the United People's Democratic Solidarity (UPDS) started with the signing of a ceasefire agreement on 23 May 2002. This ceasefire led to the split of the UPDS. While the pro-talk faction was engaged in a peace process, the anti-talk faction continued violence and later rechristened itself as Karbi Longri North Cachar Hills Liberation Front (KLNLFF). After six rounds of talks, a tripartite Memorandum of Settlement was signed between the UPDS, Government of India and Government of Assam on 25 November 2011. But even after signing of the peace accord, peace has eluded the area and implementation of the clauses of the agreement is facing a bottleneck.

The government's peace process with KLNLFF started after the outfit declared unilateral ceasefire in January 2009. On 11 February 2010, the group laid down arms to pave way for peace talks. The KLNLFF is demanding for a separate state for the Karbis. While peace negotiations with KLNLFF are still continuing, the Karbi People's Liberation Tigers (KPLT) was formed in January 2011 by the anti-talk faction of KLNLFF. This group now remains a major violent force in Assam's Karbi Anglong district.

In the North Cachar Hills (now Dima Hasao) district of Assam, a peace process was introduced in November 1994 with the en masse surrender of the Dimasas National

Security Force (DNSF). The very next year, on 1 January 1995, another insurgent group called Dima Haram Daogah (DHD) was formed. When DHD signed a ceasefire agreement with the government on 1 January 2003, another breakaway faction was formed under the leadership of Jewel Garlosa. This group caused much violence than before. Following the arrest of Jewel Garlosa on 4 June 2009, the outfit had no other option but to announce a unilateral ceasefire. On 2 October 2009, a total of 382 DHD-J cadres laid down their arms at an official ceremony in Haflong, the Head Quarter of NC Hills district.

The government was willing to hold peace talks with DHD-J and for that purpose, on 16 August 2011, the NIA (National Investigation Agency) chargesheeted leaders of DHD-J were freed from jail by an interim order. Finally, on 8 October 2012, a Memorandum of Settlement was signed in New Delhi by the DHD and DHD-J with the Central Government and the State Government for creation of Dima Hasao Autonomous Territorial Council. The DHD Accord too has seen little implementation as formation of the Territorial Council requires Constitutional amendment which is yet to happen.

The Adivasi groups, namely Adivasi Cobra Military of Assam (ACMA), Adivasi People's Army (APA), Santhali Tiger Force (STF), Birsa Commando Force (BCF) and All Adivasi National Liberation army (AANLA) and other four outfits of Kuki and Hmar in Assam surrendered their arms on 24 January 2012 and joined the peace process (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2013-14). According to an Assam Government report, 13 militant outfits are now talking with the government. Peace talks, however, have not yet gained momentum with any of these rebel groups in Assam.

5.3.4.1 gender perspective in peace process and peace agreements.

Peace processes and peace agreements generally seem to have indicated a gender bias. The UN Security Council Resolution 1325 of 2000 advocates women's participation in peace negotiations and states that a gender perspective must be incorporated in the peace agreements. Peace process and peace agreements hold much significant for women as these are not simply aimed at ending a conflict through a ceasefire but have impact on the political and legal institutions of a country or parts of

it. While the issue of women's inclusion in a peace process comes in, a host of challenges come together. But in order to overcome the challenges, two things should be prioritised: a) Women should be included at all levels of negotiations to formulate and implement peace agreements, b) provisions of peace agreements must be designed in a way that consider the status and situation of women wherever needed and also include special provisions for women (Bell, Policy Brief, 2013).

The relative absence of women from peace processes result in peace agreement provisions that basically leave out women without addressing their concerns. According to a study done in 2012, out of the 31 samples of major peace process that took place between 1992 and 2011, only 4 per cent of signatories, 3.7 per cent of witnesses, 2.4 per cent of chief mediators and 9 per cent of negotiators were women (Pablo Castillo Diaz and Simon Tordjman, 2012).

Peace processes generally aim to end the political violence of a conflict. In its focus on political violence, a peace process generally fails to take into account the gendered forms of violence which women suffer during pre-conflict, conflict and post-conflict period. It is true that the absence of women in peace negotiation table cause lack of attention to the concerns of women in peace agreement (Bell, Policy Brief, 2013). On the other hand, presence of women in peace process makes visible difference in this regard. We can cite the example of Burundi.

The peace process in Burundi saw a range of initiatives aimed at the inclusion of women, including UNIFEM convening the All Party Women's Peace Conference with two representatives from each of the warring factions and the seven women observers to the process, and an "equality-friendly" mediator in the form of Nelson Mandela. The resultant Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi of August 29th 2008 was signed "in the presence of the representatives of Burundian civil society and women's organizations and Burundian religious leaders" (Arusha Agreement, 2008). More than half the recommendations formulated by the All Party Women's Peace Conference were adopted, including measures on sexual violence and provisions for participation. In the 2005 constitution (art. 34) a quota of 30% women as laid down for the (power-sharing) National Assembly (Bell, Policy Brief, 2013).

When the subject of participation of women in the peace process arises, this should not be merely seen in the context of women as victims of war and conflict. Women are to be looked as pro-active role players in the peace process, negotiations and formation of the peace agreements that again lead to peace building and post-conflict activities. The role of women organisations like the Naga Mothers' Association (NMA) in Nagaland, Naga Women's Union and Meira Paibies in Manipur can never be ignored as far as peace building is concerned.

In Assam, nobody can deny the effort of women like Mamoni Raisom Goswami who led the first major civil society initiative for peace process between the ULFA and the government. Various women's organisations like Matri Manch, Sajagota Samities, Mahila Santi Sena (MSS) and Bodo Women Justice Forum, Assam Pradeshik Mahila Samiti, Kasturba Trust have been working for peace building in their own way. At the same time, one cannot forget that the insurgent groups as political organizations have women wings. What is surprising is that the women cadres of the rebel groups too have to face rigid gender bias and division of labour. ULFA's former cultural secretary Pranati Deka and P. Shimray of NSCN (IM) are examples of exclusion of women in public sphere (Phukan, 2008).

Earlier in the 1990s, peace agreements were viewed as 'comprehensive contracts', now viewed as 'roadmaps'. This shift has emphasized the importance of reference to women in the peace agreement. Specific reference to women in a peace agreement is a key indicator of the use of a broader gender perspective. It also reflects how the agreement is constructed in terms of gender equality (Christine Bell and Catherine O'Rourke, 2010). We may sort out certain measures to

a) ensure protection and respect for human rights concerning women. This mainly concentrates on women's rights in formal political and legal institutions—the constitution, electoral system, police and the judiciary.

b) support local women's peace initiative and indigenous processes for conflict resolution. Women should be involved in all the implementation mechanism of the peace agreement.

c) secure representation of women in political institutions.

It is true that issues that are not specifically mentioned in a peace agreement would be difficult to prioritise during the implementation of the accord. Gender references in peace agreement may not do much to promote gender equality, but no mention of it would make things much difficult. A review of peace agreements and their references to women found that out of a total number of 585 peace agreements signed between 1 January 1990 and 1 May 2010 worldwide, only 92 agreements (16 per cent) mentioned women (Christine Bell and Catherine O'Rourke , 2010).

5.3.4.2 dialogue and negotiations.

The ceasefire agreements cannot end insurgency. This is only a stage of the conflict where the violence is stopped. After this phase, the politics of peace negotiations begins. Peace talks with one faction of an insurgent group have always been facing constraints if the other faction continues with the rebellion. In the case of ULFA, the Independent faction may survive indefinitely with its current base in the Myanmar-China border. Since there is no imminent risk factor for them, the group finds no reason to negotiate. The 'Independent' faction of the ULFA survived in several critical and weakest periods in the past, including the one when all the top ULFA leaders had come forward for peace dialogues. Such success has inspired the group to conclude that its surviving power is much greater than it originally believed (Das R. P., *Politics of Ceasefire and Peace Talks*, 2016).

If we look at the other side of the picture, i.e., the capacity of the state machinery, it is evident that the Government of India has a potent military capability. This is why the State could be unlikely to give up taking recourse to measures to smash the insurgency. Sometimes, unable to bear the heat of counterinsurgency operations, when insurgents approach for negotiations, the government may refuse to offer peace. So, it is seen that in the beginning, insurgents are often denounced as criminals and the government uses all of its resources to repress such insurgency. In the context of Assam, the government's approach has been somewhat different in the sense that peace process here was initiated by the government.

The fact that current peace negotiations with the ULFA-Pro Talk has not been able to include Paresh Baruah's ULFA Independent faction still worries many because a

settlement with ULFA would never be an inclusive one without involvement of the outfit as a whole. The group's president Arabinda Rajkhowa had once said, "There will be no political discussion without the ULFA General Secretary Anup Chetia's participation in the talks." He said that the peace process "otherwise would remain inconclusive." Although now Anup Chetia is involved in the peace process, it is difficult to achieve a conclusive peace deal while one faction of the ULFA is preparing to wage fresh war against the state. Again there are other factors such as how to deal with the different ethnic identities in Assam who believe that the Assamese speaking community has been politically and culturally exploiting them and so are fighting for separate identities.

Peace negotiations between the ULFA and the Government of India based on the twelve-point charter of demands prepared by the umbrella group of civil society organisations called Sanmilita Jatiya Abhibartan (SJA) seems to be lacking in enthusiasm. The first round of talks held in New Delhi in 2011 looked for speedier socio-economic development for the people of Assam (Ulfa, government discuss charter of demands , 2011). Though some ULFA leaders expressed certain level of satisfaction regarding the talks so far, the fact is that talks are not progressing in a satisfactory pace. In the field interviews, participants who were ULFA leaders revealed that their final draft of demands is not fully ready yet. The talks that began in 2011, reached a stage of halt in late 2016 on the pretext that a judgement by the Supreme Court is awaited. The judgement will be on a bunch of petitions filed by different individuals and civil society organisations that sought 1951 to be the cut off year for determining citizenship of people living in Assam instead of 1971 as determined by the Assam Accord (Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty and Rajeev Bhattacharyya, 2016).

In the absence of proper rehabilitation measures, the ULFA members staying in designated camps since 2011 are increasingly leaving the camps out of frustration. A delay has already been seen regarding reaching a solution or a peace accord with the ULFA, which is now added with an element of uncertainty over several issues, including the definition of indigenous Assamese and the citizenship issue. ULFA's

demand of granting ST status to six communities and reservation of majority of Assembly seats for STs with the logic that this will prevent ‘outsiders’ from being ruler of the state is something unacceptable for many. If it happens, Assam will become a tribal state and the rights of the indigenous population other than the tribals could be at stake. Again, it is also questionable, how representative and responsible ULFA is of the people of entire Assam. Even the leaders of the organization agree that ULFA no more enjoys the popular support it used to do in the beginning.

It appears that if both the factions do not become parties to the peace process, the end result will not provide a solution to the ULFA problem. At the same time, it seems almost impossible to bring Paresh Baruah to the negotiating table without inclusion of the sovereignty issue in agenda. This, however, is something not possible for the government since that will instigate similar demands of the other insurgent groups making it difficult for the government to contain the situation. Another side of the coin is that Paresh Baruah himself has gone “too far” to return to Assam. As he is regarded a trusted man by many agencies in the countries he is taking shelter, giving away with this role and responsibility would be really tough for him. In such a case, he would continue an insurgency in Assam from his exile only to meet the same fate as Naga leader Angami Zapu Phizo (Banerjee, Assam: Peace is Elusive, 2016).

If the government is using the Charter of Demands and discussion over it as delaying tactic thinking the ULFA will meet a natural death with time, then it would be wrong to expect that. In the case of the NDFB factions that are in talks, the Government seems to delay the talks in order to reach a possible solution (Narzary, 2015). A sincere approach and an inclusive strategy are required to bring about a comprehensive solution to the problems.

The challenge for the government is to carry on multiple peace processes to the next level – an indeed complex process, since in many cases, demands of one insurgent group contradict with the others’. The protests and violent agitations by non-Bodo people in BTC, the protests and fights by the non-Dimasa people in the Dima Hasao, the opposition of several Scheduled Tribe communities in Assam against granting ST status to six more communities, are only few examples in this scenario. A

tendency to reach an immediate settlement instead of long term and sustainable peace effort is reflected in the four peace accords studied under this research. This ad-hoc approach on the part of the government lacks strong political will and hinders the negotiations making it unable to find a solution generally acceptable to all the stakeholders. In peace negotiations, the negotiating parties must possess patience and flexibility to achieve the objectives. Prolonged peace negotiations with negligible engagement of the civil society or the people the insurgents claim to represent, absence of women in the peace negotiations in spite of the fact that women constitute half of the population, are some of the crucial indicators of the peace negotiations in the region.

The idea of a moratorium on peace talks with new militant groups may also be considered. Of course, this will depend on the support base and reach of influence of the group concerned. The ceasefire rules too do not include different stages of peace negotiations nor do they include any time frame. The government definitely appears to be lacking in a clear policy on these issues.

Another aspect to be considered by the government while negotiating with an insurgent group or faction of an insurgent group is that negotiations should be started only when the government is clear about the basic concessions it can offer. The process of negotiation has to be transparent. In the absence of this, violent situations are likely to occur, as happened after the extension of Naga ceasefire to Manipur. When the central government in June 2001 agreed in a statement that the ceasefire would have “no territorial limits in terms of its implementation”, the decision was protested in all the north-eastern states bordering Nagaland. Large-scale violence was triggered by this act of the Centre (Choudhuri, 2001).

A peace negotiation without any time frame may lead to mere uncertainty. This can create negative impact on the insurgency and peace process. The initial delay of the government in arriving at an acceptable solution can prevent any peaceful resolution of the problem. It is therefore pertinent that the government should try to talk peace with the insurgent outfits right in the beginning instead of spending time trying to

assess the potential of an insurgent group to create trouble. This will help to nip the rebellion in the bud (Das R. P., 2016).

When the government invites a rebel group for peace talks in order to douse the prevailing violence, an important aspect to be considered is that whether peace talk with any particular rebel group is indirectly providing a status of legitimacy to that group. For example, we can take the case of NSCN-IM. We have noticed that the government has been engaged in a peace dialogue with the group since the past 20 years. The talks have only succeeded to control the ‘violence’ to an extent. However, the group was openly engaged in extortions, smuggling of narcotics and arms to smaller outfits to expand their area of control.⁸⁸ The insurgent groups or factions of groups achieve legitimacy through certain gestures by the government as well as publicity by the media. Once a group attains legitimacy, the government invariably starts peace talks with such groups.

Thus, legitimacy of the demands of a group is being recognised by the government. At the same time, the government also seems to remain clueless as what could be offered to separate groups in their respective peace deals. In fact, a particular insurgent group cannot be said to represent an entire ethnic group. In this case, it seems that for the sake of establishing peace, the government might have to sign more than one peace agreement. A territorial council has already been formed for the Bodos after talks with the insurgent group known as BLT. But now the question stands as what the government can offer to the other groups like the two factions of the NDFB who have been still fighting for their demands in Bodoland (Das R. P., 2012).

It seems that even after the ban on the NSCN-K, announced on 17 September 2015, the Government was uncertain about its own peace policy. So when a four-member delegation of the Naga mothers Association (NMA) wanted to visit the NSCN-K leaders in Myanmar to talk to them, the Government allowed them to go. On 16 September, the NMA delegation met Home Minister Rajnath Singh in New Delhi to submit a memorandum and informed him that the NSCN-K was willing to reconsider

⁸⁸ Bhattacharjee, Kishalay, ‘Peace Talks’ in Assam’s Post Election Scenario’, http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/PeaceTalksinAssamsPostElectionScenario_kbhattacharjee_160511

its decision. However, on the very next day, the Government announced a ban on the NSCN-K! On the whole, it appears that the Government of India has no clear strategy and policy to deal with Naga rebel groups other than the NSCN-IM, something that may prevent the dawn of peace in Nagaland.

A lack of transparency in the peace processes between the Government of India and the NSCN-IM or between the government and the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) has been quite visible. People have no clue regarding the content of the 'Framework Agreement' signed with the NSCN-IM. This gives birth to doubts and confusion among the stakeholders. In contrast to this, in the peace process in Myanmar, we find an institutionalised peace office with participation of the government as the key player.

5.3.5 Need for Institutionalisation of the Peace Policy

A laid down procedure, a well laid out structure, a set of non-negotiable values and a basic framework have always been found missing in the peace processes that took place. "Negotiations must be there. But we need to have some kind of formal policy, some kind of framework for the purpose", said one of the participants in the interviews. It was agreed that there is need for a sustained dialogue for co-existence of conflicting parties.

Some government officials during the field interviews for this study argued that laid down rules cannot be followed because each group is different in character, size or influence, and has different sets of demands. But, there may be no justification in the Union Government agreeing to hold talks with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) and the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) while refusing to initiate the talks with the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), instead putting the onus of initiative to the state government. The Union Government, of course, relented after the NDFB protested and gave an ultimatum that the talks will materialise only if their leaders are invited by the Central Government representatives. The government obliged because the insurgent leaders cited the precedence of such talks with the NSCN. While most of the interview participants were suggesting

institutionalisation of the government's peace policy, reference could be made to the structure of Myanmar peace process which has been ratified in the parliament.

The Myanmar government opened the Myanmar Peace Centre on 3 November 2012, headed and run by the President's Office Minister. It was established to assist the two government peacemaking committees for the peace process—the Union Peace-making Central Committee and the Union Peace-making Work Committee. It served as a platform for government officials, members of ethnic militia groups, civil society organizations, international donors and international NGOs to meet and negotiate. A three-phased peace plan could be found:

State level: Ceasefire, set up liaison offices and travel without holding arms to each other's territory

Union level: Confidence building, holding political dialogue, implement regional development tasks in terms of education, health and communication

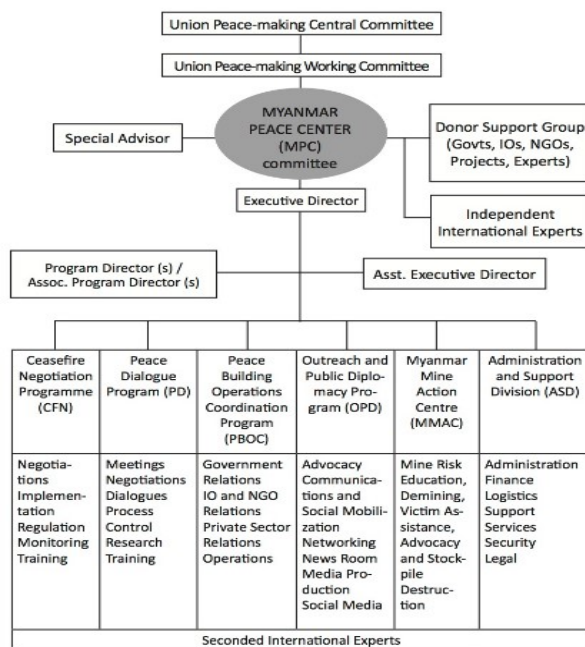
Sign agreement for eternal peace in the presence of the parliament represented by nationalities, political parties and different walks of life (Government Peace Plan, 2012).

We find a structured peace office in Myanmar. People (who are the stakeholders) know in which stage a particular militant group is in the peace process. For instance, in Myanmar, the NSCN-K is in peace process stage 1, which means it is in the state level peace negotiation.

Reformations were also made in the Myanmar government's peace process, such as, need for ceasefire and surrender of weapons no longer needed prior to peace talks, talks are not insisted to be held within Myanmar. After signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) in October 2015 between the Government of Myanmar and eight ethnic insurgent groups, the NCA was ratified into law which has formally institutionalised the multi-stakeholder structure for conflict control and political settlement mentioned in the document (BNA, 2017).

5.3.5.1 structure of Myanmar Peace Centre

Figure 2: Structure of Myanmar Peace Centre



(source: Myanmar Peace Monitor⁸⁹)

In July 2016, the Myanmar Government formed the ‘National Reconciliation and Peace Centre’ to further the peace process and the Myanmar Peace Centre was replaced with this new formation. The functions of the Centre are to set policies and guidelines for national reconciliation process and for internal peace process, apart from others (National Reconciliation and Peace Centre, 2016).

5.3.6 peace agreements as strategy.

Peace agreements play a crucial role in an approach to resolve conflict and create peace. Agreements can help to establish peace through implementation of the mechanisms and provisions that increase the costs of defection, develop monitoring capabilities and provide incentives for cooperative behaviour. Kantian philosophy that offers variables such as democracy, economic independence and membership in intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) has the capacity to produce peace. It can be

⁸⁹ <http://www.mmpeacemonitor.org/stakeholders/myanmar-peace-center>

said that peace leads to democracy or democracy is easier to implement in a peaceful environment (John R. Oneal and Bruce Russett, 1999).

A major problem with the peace accords signed in Assam is associated with drafting of the accords. Most of the accords are drafted in a rather hasty manner without taking sincere opinion from the people, either by the government or by the signatory militants who claim to represent the people. Participation of the stakeholders, including civil society leaders, women's organizations, opinion makers, community leaders, etc. are actually very much crucial in any peace process. In the Northeast, civil society, whether at individual or organizational level, has been playing a major role in initiating peace between the insurgents and the State. However, when the peace process reaches the stage of dialoguing, all the stakeholders other than the insurgents are generally sidelined—the negotiating parties have rarely showed interest in knowing the people's feedback or opinion during the process of drafting an accord. In any democratic participation, people's opinion holds great significance for sustainable peace. A peace accord is only the medium, the successful implementation of which has the potential to bring peace to a region.

Accords often produce negative results if the framing and signing of peace accords is done only to address the immediate issue without visualising and taking care of the far reaching effect in the future. Thus, the 1993 BAC accord brought division among the Bodo insurgent groups in Assam. The Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) was formed only to carry on insurgency along with its counterpart the National Liberation Front of Bodoland. The second Bodo Accord was signed with BLT in 2003. Government did not hold any dialogue with the already existing insurgent groups like NDFB in the Bodo area. This reflects a gap in the Government's policy that lacks inclusivity.

It was because the Government did not discuss the issue or tried to address it taking all the stakeholders on board. This has resulted in splintering of militant groups. Several splinter groups emerged after 2003, and the major one being the NDFB-Songbijit faction, against which counterinsurgency operations are still on.

5.3.6.1 Elections

Elections are a general outcome of most of the peace agreements signed in the recent past. Thus peace-building is integrated with democratisation. But elections may prove to be dangerous in a democratic society where those who oppose the electoral results may cause violence for their easy access to weapons and troops. This normally does not happen in societies that have no recent experience of war or little war. The concept of power sharing has been increasingly adopted in different conflict resolution models to establish post-war governance. Elections are a free and open process where the results can be totally uncertain. On the other hand, power sharing helps to reduce this uncertainty to a large extent by reserving political power for particular groups or communities. However, power sharing often means a blockade, monopoly of an elite class of the concerned community and inefficient governance in a post-conflict society that crawls towards peace. While in some peace processes power sharing provides for a transitional government which is ended by elections that pave way to majoritarian democracy, in others the provision of power sharing continues. Many peace agreements could not end conflict even after including the power sharing provision (Jarstad, 2009).

5.3.7 development as a strategy.

Development is a strategy in which the local population can participate at every stage. After counterinsurgency and peace process, development came up as an important tool for the government to address insurgency in the region. The government's attempt to focus on the Northeast through development measures was visible with the establishment of the North Eastern Council (NEC) in 1971 for a balanced socio-economic development of the region. The Department of North Eastern Region (DONER) was set up in September 2001. The department was later upgraded to a Ministry in May 2004. The DONER Ministry was set up to coordinate and give impetus to the Centre's development efforts pertaining to socio-economic development of the region. The Non-lapsable Central Pool of Resources (NLCPR), which was initially handled by the Planning Commission, was transferred to DONER.

DONER is responsible for coordination, planning, execution and monitoring of the development schemes and projects in the region.

The Government of India appeared to develop the economically backward, landlocked Northeast by introducing the Look East Policy which was renamed as Act East Policy in November 2014. However, this too has been aimed from the point of view of the Government of India's overall economic and geo-political ambitions. The Look East Policy had been a part of India's foreign policy since 1990. But its Northeast perspective came as late as in October 2007. The Policy upholds the region's potential to emerge as a strategic base for foreign and domestic investors to tap into the South Asian region (MDONER, 2011).

The north-eastern region, mainly Arunachal Pradesh and the border areas confront unique problems which cannot be handled by normal schemes or usual course of action. With this view, finance minister P Chidambaram announced during his budget speech of 2008-2009, a Rs 500 crore package from Social and Infrastructure Development Fund (SIDF) (FM's Rs.500 Crore Package For NER, 2008). Another scheme, named North East Road Sector Development Scheme (NERSDS) prioritises roads required from security and strategic viewpoint, apart from other needs (MDONER, Guidelines for Administration of North East Road Sector).

The Look East Policy promoted immediate priorities like building required infrastructure connecting the border areas. The focus was on establishing connectivity and communication links to the cross-border points and beyond so that trade and economy exchanges can take place with the neighbouring countries. This is based on the fact that 96 per cent of the north-eastern region constitutes international boundaries and the region is geo-politically isolated. The Policy emphasised on three requirements for economic well being of the region: 1. law and order / internal security, 2. Good governance including local-self government at the grassroots, and 3. Diplomatic initiatives with neighbouring countries (NER vision 2010, The vision Statement, 2008).

Development is adopted as a strategy by the government, because one of the root causes of insurgency is economic backwardness and lack of development. The special

economic problems of the north-eastern region were well stated in the *Approach to the 11th Five Year Plan* by the Planning Commission of India:

The per capita income of the North-Eastern (NE) States, which was slightly above the National average in 1947, has fallen to almost 40 per cent below (the) National average today. These states have some unique economic problems arising out of remoteness, poor connectivity, hilly and often inhospitable terrain, a weak resource base, poor infrastructure, sparse population, density, inadequate administrative capacity, low skill development and finally a law and order situation often threatened by insurgency. These factors have resulted in low economic and consequent financial vulnerability (Bezbaruah, 2008).

When talking about the 'Northeast', any generalisation of the region within this bracket does not do justice. The physical homogeneity of the region cannot be a factor to overlook the vast areas of differences in culture and tradition, language and ethnicity. Any development agenda without taking into account the distinctness of the states could be flawed from the beginning. If we look at the performance of Assam, which is the biggest economy of the region, we will find that the State's performance graph, since Independence, is quite alarming. The position of Assam was much better at the time of Independence. During the beginning of Planned Development in the country, the per capita income of Assam was 4 per cent higher than the national income at constant prices. This came down to 45 per cent below the national average at constant prices by 1980-81 and 41 per cent below by 1998-99 prices (Planning Commission, 2002). The "more alarming" factor as stated by the Assam Development Report (ADR) is that the gap has been growing. The per capita income in Assam at 1980-81 prices grew by 20 per cent between 1980 and 1990. This is quite low against the 40 per cent growth for all India. The per capita income in Assam grew by 10 per cent between 1980 and 1998 against the 39 per cent growth for all India. The deceleration of the economy is reflected in the human development indicators. Except Mizoram, all the north-eastern states have substantially higher percentage of population below the poverty line than the national average. The ADR also states that

Assam is the only major state of India which showed increasing rural poverty over a long period from 1957 to 1994.

Assam's unemployment figures too, have been quite alarming. The unemployed youth in the 15-29 age-groups in Assam increased from 3.01 in 1983-84 to 19.25 in 1993-94 against the all India figure of 6.46 per cent that year. During the 1990s, growth of agriculture in Assam slowed down from an already low figure of 2.1 per cent of the earlier decade to 1.6 per cent (Planning Commission, 2002). Lack of industrial growth, low productivity of industry and agriculture sector and a disproportionate growth of the service sector due to find employment in the public sector created a vicious cycle. Low productivity of investment and low income generation resulted in low capital expenditure on development (Bezbaruah, 2008).

Table 11: Percentages of Unemployed Youth in NE States

NE States	1983-84	1993-94
Assam	3.01	19.25
Manipur	0.32	8.01
Tripura	4.4	13.03
Nagaland	0.56	6.46
Mizoram	0.36	2.42
National Average		6.46

(source: Planning Commission Report, 2002)

The government's development strategy adopted in the region can be viewed in two parameters: a) Connectivity in a broader sense including transport (Road, Rail, Air and Water), communication, information and broadcasting and b) Administrative and political focus on the area. The present development schemes of the government are made in conformity with the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals. The government has advocated development of the region as its prime agenda to address unemployment and insurgency in the region.

However, most of the policies the Government initiated with the Northeast are associated with the aspect of security angle. The developmental policies of the Government are merged with how to contain insurgency, rather than trying to

empower the people to sustain for themselves (Maier, 2009). Insurgency in the region has been mostly treated as a security problem by the Central Government taking less interest in the socio-economic and political factors behind the secessionist movements. Often the government has been engaged in ‘carrot and stick approach’ – by using military intervention and trying to buy peace through incentives. This approach of the government matches the earlier conception of peace policy as being a relatively insignificant part of security policy and emphasises that peace policy encompasses security policy. However, the recent definition of peace policy is different. The Kroc Institute for International Studies has defined Peace Policy as a set of decisions that shape society and that can either increase the likelihood of armed conflict or contribute to peace and justice (Peace Policy, 2015). In fact, the concept of Peace Policy is quite modern that came to prominence in Switzerland with the Federal Council’s report on Swiss Foreign Policy in 1993. Released by the Federal Council in November 2000, the Swiss Foreign Policy defines Peace Policy as:

... a comprehensive concept which not only refers to direct peace promoting measures as such but also entails contributions to peace and security rendered by development assistance, security policy, or promotion of sustainable development (Krummenacher, 2011).

5.3.8 structural changes in administration.

An important strategy being experimented by the Government of India while dealing with Northeast insurgency has been the grant of political autonomy and statehood by making structural changes in the administration. The Sixteen Point Agreement signed with the Nagas and the North Eastern Reorganisation Act, 1971, pushed a gradual administrative reorganization of the region. In 1963, the state of Nagaland was created by the government as a response to the Naga insurgency. The Mizo armed conflict was resolved by granting statehood to Mizoram through the signing of the Mizo Peace Accord in 1986. Meghalaya was first conferred the status of Union Territory in 1972 and then statehood in 1987. Manipur and Tripura were upgraded from Union Territory to the status of statehood in 1972. In the beginning, Arunachal Pradesh was known as the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA). It was upgraded to Union Territory in 1972 and was renamed as Arunachal Pradesh. It was reorganised as a full-fledged state in 1987. These new states covered all the areas

mentioned in the Sixth Schedule with the exception of North Cachar Hills (now Dima Hasao district in Assam) and Mikir Hills (now Karbi Anglong district in Assam). Even after reorganisation, border disputes among these states remained.

The clue to the formation of autonomous councils has a historical relevance. Towards the end of the British era, the Interim Government of India constituted a sub-committee to the Constituent Assembly known as North East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Committee which recommended setting up of autonomous district councils for representation of the tribal people at the local level. This recommendation was later integrated to the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. Thus the Sixth Schedule made special provision for the administration of the tribal areas. The provision is intended to grant autonomous administration in these areas to help the tribal population follow their traditional way of life (Bhattacharya, 2011).

In order to calm the Bodo insurgency, Bodoland Autonomous Council was granted under the Sixth Schedule in 1993. The Bodo peace agreement adopted the power sharing model. However, its failure led to further militancy violence and in 2003, Bodoland Territorial Council was formed after signing of another peace accord. But the Bodo heartland is still under the grip of insurgency. One reason for this could be that the BTC Accord was not an inclusive accord and is not based on the theory of Lijphart's segmental autonomy. The theory suggests that decisions on matters of common interest should be made by all the segments of the society that have roughly proportional degree of influence. The Bodo accord is a clear instance proving the idea that the modes of conflict management adopted by the government gave rise to further conflict. This is because, while the territories that are granted autonomy are inhabited by different ethnic groups, the peace agreements covering a territory were signed with insurgent groups that represent a particular ethnic tribe.

5.3.9 ethnic autonomy

Three decades ago, Myron Weiner argued that preferential policies encourage conflict rather than moderating it (Weiner, 2015). In the case of the ever increasing ethnic insurgency and violence during the past three decades in Assam, consociational policies can be held responsible. Such policies have encouraged violent backlash by

those groups which are excluded from ethnic quotas. Again, those groups who have to part with some of their share with others come up with violent resistance. On the other hand, the supporters of the demand for rights of the backward fragment who agree that they constitute a separate ethnic group and deserve their rights and benefits create violence to achieve their goal.

The policy of trying to fulfil the aspirations of tribal communities on ethnic lines has certain problems. The battle for space or turf war between different ethnic communities can be a never-ending process. However, this fight for preservation of identity or attain political power is further encouraged by the grant of autonomy by the Government to various tribal groups on ethnic lines. Formation of ethnic autonomous councils often inspires smaller groups to fight for their rights and bigger groups to resist them in form of ethnic cleansing.

The spurt of insurgency and ethnic violence in Assam during the last three decades can well be examined on the basis of Weiner's theory. The Central Government's ongoing negotiation regarding the recognition of Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to six communities of Assam, which also forms one of the demands raised by the pro-talks ULFA group in its Charter of Demands, has been opposed by other minority ethnic communities in Assam (ST-plains tag for 6 groups opposed, 2015).

Signing peace deals on ethnic lines rather than granting autonomy or packages for under-developed regions within states has been encouraging deprived communities to take up arms and launch militant movements. Criticising the government's strategy of granting ethnic autonomy, another interviewee argued, "Granting autonomy or setting up autonomous councils has not addressed the governance deficit issues. It has merely created a legal mechanism for rampant corruption."

The idea of signing a peace accord on ethnic line was rejected by more than half of the respondents. The accord signed in 2003 with the BLT is popularly known as the Bodo Accord. This has made many belonging to other communities unhappy. The Koch Rajbongshis who have a sizeable presence in the Bodo heartland have also been agitating for autonomy. Forming an autonomous council in the name of a community (e.g., Bodoland Territorial Council, Dima Hasao Autonomous Territorial Council) has

the potential to give rise to newer conflicts. A regional autonomy, therefore, could be a solution which is aimed at uplifting the socio-economic condition of all those people who live in the particular area.

5.3.10 concept of non-territorial autonomy

Karl Renner (1870–1950, Austrian socialist politician) is of the opinion that territorial autonomy can be problematic since it involves creation of homogenous units—something which cannot be achieved in true sense since this always leaves out some minorities in the concerned territory (McGarry, John and Margerat Moore, 2005). This is because ethnicity is multidimensional and oppositional. It is multidimensional in the sense that it includes race, origin or ancestry, identity, language and religion. Thus an individual can be a member of several different ethnic groups at a time. It is oppositional because some groups may reject the domination of another ethnic group (Barth, 1968). It generally happens that within each group several sub-groups may be doing less well which make them gradually feel more conscious of their ethnic separateness.

In this context, the concept of non-territorial autonomy could be a preferable idea as it applies only to people who have accepted that they are members of the group in question. Non-territorial autonomy arrangements involve control over matters like culture (education), family law (marriage and divorce) etc. It is a state created institution. Consociational systems like Belgium and Netherlands are implementing non-traditional autonomy in different degrees.

Territorial autonomy is actually destabilizing. This is why even after the creation of the Bodoland Territorial Council peace has not prevailed in the region. Other ethnic groups living in the same space are feeling insecure and have started demanding their own rights. Ethnic clashes have become a recurring incident in this area. In 1996, the Russian Parliament adopted the National Cultural Autonomy Act. The Act allows individuals to form national cultural associations with rights over culture, language, education and media as well as the right to represent the interests of minorities to state institutions (Federal or local). Non-territorial autonomy could be way to manage the concerns of different ethnic groups co-existing in Assam.

5.4 Suggestions

Peace talks could be held between groups that are not dependent on each other, holding talks may not necessarily mean surrender. There must be a thorough background checking of all the insurgent groups before the government decides to enter any ceasefire or suspension of operations agreement with any insurgent group. This would discourage those militants who lack people's support.

The peace accords should be inclusive in nature.

Measures must be taken for empowerment of the autonomous councils in a democratic way by devolution of power to the grassroots. Accountability of all the government workers should be a priority for development.

Act East Policy to develop the land-locked north-eastern region has been guided mainly from the point of view of the Government of India's overall economic and geopolitical ambitions. Foreign investment is attracted to the region with the concept of liberating the region economically under the premise that the region is lagging behind—one of the root causes of insurgency. For a better strategic planning and cooperation for developmental projects in the region, the North East Council (NEC) and the DONER Ministry could be merged together.

A framework of peace policy should be developed and ratified. It is important to institutionalise the government's peace policy. Procedures such as the government's offer of peace talks or a mechanism of how to proceed in the peace process require a formal policy.

5.5 Conclusion

The present study raises the possibility that a sincere approach on the part of the government would go a long way to solve the problem of insurgency in the region. One of the issues that emerged from the findings is that splintering of insurgent groups has added more complexity to the problem and measures must be taken to tackle this phenomenon. The findings raise intriguing questions regarding the nature and extent of the strategies adopted by the government to address the insurgency and related issues. Arrangement of the findings provides support for the conceptual argument that

there is a relationship between the government's peace strategy and prolonged militancy and socio-political unrest in the region.