

Abstract

Insurgency in India's Northeast remains a determining factor in the political set up, the state of regional economy and human development scenario of the area. Since Independence in 1947, movements and rebellions for self-determination and quest for identity assumed tremendous heights at different points of time which claimed, maimed and ruined thousands of lives. The question that this dissertation explores is, whether there is a relationship between the government's peace strategy and prolonged militancy and socio-political unrest in the region. Whether the government lacks a holistic approach in dealing with insurgency and related issues in the state of Assam? Is it true that peace talks with each and every militant group are actually encouraging militancy in the region by making way to formation of splinter groups? In order to explore these questions, the research travelled around a broad canvas including the rise of insurgency in Assam, the root causes and the strategies adopted by the government to address the problem. The objectives of the research include: a. Identify the lacunae, if any, in the government's prevailing peace strategy with the militant groups, b. Explore the validity of the popular perception that the intense feeling of alienation fuels insurgency in the region and, c. Identify the pre-requisites and point out the parameters which need to be fulfilled to ensure that the peace initiative of the government leads to lasting and overall peace in the region. Delimitation of the study is that it covers the period from 1990 up to 2015, though the seeds of insurgency were sown in the period not mentioned in the study. The study has its limitations too. Some sensitive data and documents could not be accessed due to strict veil of secrecy maintained by government. Secondly, the researcher failed to come up with accurate data regarding many important parameters as the definitions of some sensitive concepts were found lacking and not available in public domain.

The research concentrates on the government's peace strategy in signing four peace agreements with different insurgent groups in Assam to achieve an effective policy framework. The study has been pursued with the application of qualitative research method by taking the status of the four peace accords as case studies. It analyses implementation and other aspects of the clauses of the accords with the help of a tool of analysis in the form of a matrix. In its quest to find solutions to the problem at hand, the study critically analyses the strategies adopted by the government to tackle the problem of insurgency. While doing this, the research brings forth the experience, views and opinions of different stakeholders from the field. The study also explores the dynamics of two major insurgencies in Assam—the ULFA and the Bodo insurgency—and outlines how peace process, accords and development of the region have been used as strategies to achieve peace. The research discovered that neither the government nor the people with whom they signed the accords substantiated the documents. Several important and necessary provisions like human rights, inter-ethnic relations council, detailed implementation timeline were found missing in the accords. Government appeasement has been noticed during the process of the implementation as well as in the drafting of the accords. The Government of India's strategy of granting autonomous councils for specific ethnic tribes to address ethnic insurgency in the region has been falsified by the status of the accords under the case study. The study found that there is no institutionalisation of the peace process mechanism. The dissertation concludes by offering certain pre-requisites and parameters for a lasting peace.