



CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION – A REVIEW OF THE CHANGING TRENDS IN CONFLICT IN NORTHEAST INDIA

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Abstract: The study of conflicts in the post World War II era has focused more on intra-state conflicts as there has been a significant decrease in terms of inter-state wars in the world. It is in this context that concepts of conflict transformation have been used to examine conflicts. The emergence of civil wars, insurgency, and other forms of inter-state conflicts has gathered interest in terms of solving these problems. North east India has been a region that has been beset with conflict since its integration with the Indian union and ever since the region has witnessed conflict that have been categorized as low intensity conflicts by scholars and researchers who have examined conflict in the region. In this article, an examination of the conflict in north east India is made to provide a clear understanding on the current trends in the region. It also argues that the conflict in the region is waning weak and thereby there is a possibility that conflict in the region might soon be solved. The article clearly puts forward that the conflict which had secessionism and separatism in its early day now seem to be moving towards establishing peace as there is a lack of leadership that is growing within various insurgent groups in the region. Thus the articles posits that conflict in the region is waning weak.

Index Terms - Conflict transformation; north east India; Insurgency; secessionism.

Concepts of conflict transformation have been used to address conflicts during the post Cold-War era (Ropers 2008: 2). In general terms, conflict transformation refers to the processes of transition from destructive to non-destructive conduct or how conflicts in a region have witnessed change over time (Kreisberg 2011: 50). In order to understand how conflicts transform, it is important to consider three basic characteristics of conflicts itself. Firstly, conflicts are generally fluid and pass through a series of stages- the emergence, escalation, de-escalation and its settling down. These stages of conflict may also form the basis for peace or the grounds upon which new conflicts arise. Thus, it incorporates many smaller conflicts, involving various stages and frequent backward steps. Conflict transformation includes multiple stages where the conflicting parties experience change within themselves. This opens opportunities for mutually exploratory moves between them which are then followed by actions which indicate that mutual accommodation has begun. This subsequently results in increased mutual understanding and trust. A traditional view of explaining the transformation from destructive to constructive conflict is that one of the conflicting parties is responsible for the existence of such conflict. The view suggests that defeating that group will transform the relationship between the adversaries, and constructive measures will follow (ibid: 52-53). Northeast India which experiences a number of conflicts is an interesting case where conflicts have witnessed varying stages of escalation, de-escalation, peace efforts undertaken to prevent violence etc.

Comprehending conflicts in northeast India has never been easy. Conflicts in the region have lingered for over five decades since the independence of India and they have only become more complex (Phanjoubam 2015: 11). Over the years, the dynamics of conflict in the region have witnessed significant changes amidst shifts in the Indian government's policy orientation towards the northeast. This chapter seeks to examine how conflict in northeast India has transformed itself over the years, more particularly in the last decade. Questions which are pertinent in this regard are (i) Have counter-insurgency operations in the region been effective? (ii) Are people in the region conflict-weary and opting for a peaceful solution? (iii) Have insurgent groups lost their support base or has there been a loss of ideology among them? Further, I posit that armed insurgencies are weakening in the region and are moving towards working out a peaceful solution to the problems. In this context, it is important to understand how the Indian state has gained legitimacy to impose its authority over the region. A brief description of how the region

became part of the Indian Union is necessary to fully understand the dynamics of conflict in northeast India. It is also important to understand how the conflict has sustained and transformed itself over five decades.

Historically, the north-eastern region of India has never been part of the Indian Union. It was forcefully annexed by the British (Bhaumik 1998: 311). Ever since India's independence in 1947, the multi ethnic region has been vociferously demanding secession (Innoue 2005; Vadlamannati 2011: 606). In the context of the colonial background, a cursory examination demonstrates the ubiquity and effects of such demands, echoing loud even five decades after the dismantling of the colonial empire. The colonial legacy can be identified in two lights: (i) collective historical trauma and (ii) a causal variable that continues to have an impact on the the outlook of states, post decolonisation (Miller 2013: 8). Between the years 1874 and 1934, colonial policies segregated the region where tribal populations were administered under the category of non-regulated, backward or excluded areas. Such categorisation prevented the entry of all outsiders in these areas unless they obtained special permission from the government under the Inner Line Regulation of 1873. An extension of this regulation to almost all hill areas created a frontier within a frontier which highlighted the political and cultural rift between the people of the plains and the tribals in the hills. These factors created a situation where the tribal areas were excluded from the administrative patterns which existed in other regions of the country. The Government of India Act of 1935 also continued with this policy of exclusion due to which the overriding effects were twofold – (i) The integration of the many tribes and communities which could have been facilitated by the British was lost and (ii) tribal communities continued to be excluded from the socio-political developments taking place elsewhere in the country. Such exclusionary policies which existed during the colonial rule and continued to exist in post independent India created conditions for ethnic conflicts due to unequal and unbalanced development of the region. The Indian state responded to these problems by creating autonomous districts and regions which were often identified with tribal affiliations through constitutional measures such as the Sixth Schedule. Many of these regions subsequently became full states which resulted in the demands by several tribes in the region for similar arrangements for homelands (Upadhyay 2006: 4993).

In the words of Ashild Kolas, the pervasiveness of conflict in northeast India is often attributed to the region's underdevelopment and its natural tendency to engage in violence among its indigenous population. Employing a standard frame, researchers and local analysts on northeast India often describe the region as a site of ethnic conflict (Kolas 2015). Challenging such perspectives, scholars like Sajjad Hassan argue that conflicts in the region are fuelled by malgovernance. It is exacerbated by the failure to provide security to the people, ensure transparency and accountability and address economic disparities. Although ethnicity is often a mobilising factor, conflicts in the northeast is not a consequence of inherent differences between groups but the absence of an effective medium to regulate these relationships (Hassan 2007; Hassan 2008).

Evidently, among the eight states of northeast, Assam, Manipur, Nagaland and Tripura have shown the greatest propensity towards violent conflicts relating to secessionist movements and ethnic conflicts. Although violence seems to be dwindling, states like Manipur witness high levels of violence even today. The state still sees bloody clashes among ethnic groups and often experiences the breakdown of governmental authority. On the contrary, violence in Mizoram has been virtually absent for over three decades and inter-group contestations seem to have been better managed. The restoration of peace in Mizoram can be attributed to the readiness of the central government of India to accommodate the demands of the Mizo National Front (MNF) and its economic largesse towards the socio-economic development of the state (Baruah 2005: 71). Notably, such arrangements have failed to achieve desired goals in other states which witnessed armed conflicts.

While the Khalistan movement in Punjab abated by the end of 1992, the northeastern region still witnessed a significant increase in violent incidents amidst the creation of autonomous districts councils, redrawing the boundaries to form new states, and also demands for autonomy. These conflicts included the clash between various ethnic groups – Kuki-Naga Conflict (1993-98), tensions between the Bodos and Adivasis (1996), Dimasa-Hmar (2003), Kuki-Karbi (2003), Dimasa-Karbi (2004), Rabha-Garo (2011) and the Bodo Muslims (2010-2011) were active (Haokip 2013: 78). The formation of militant groups with secessionist demands such as the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-IM (NSCN-IM) and the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) in 1980 and 1979 respectively marked a shift in the manner the demands were being pursued. Despite many differences, militant groups in northeast India have all been formed towards achieving sovereign nationhood, independence or autonomous homelands. While demands of territorial claims overlap, inter-group violence is often related to disputes regarding economic stakes related to taxation difficulties in maintaining alliances, rivalry between armed groups and factional fighting (Ashild 2015).

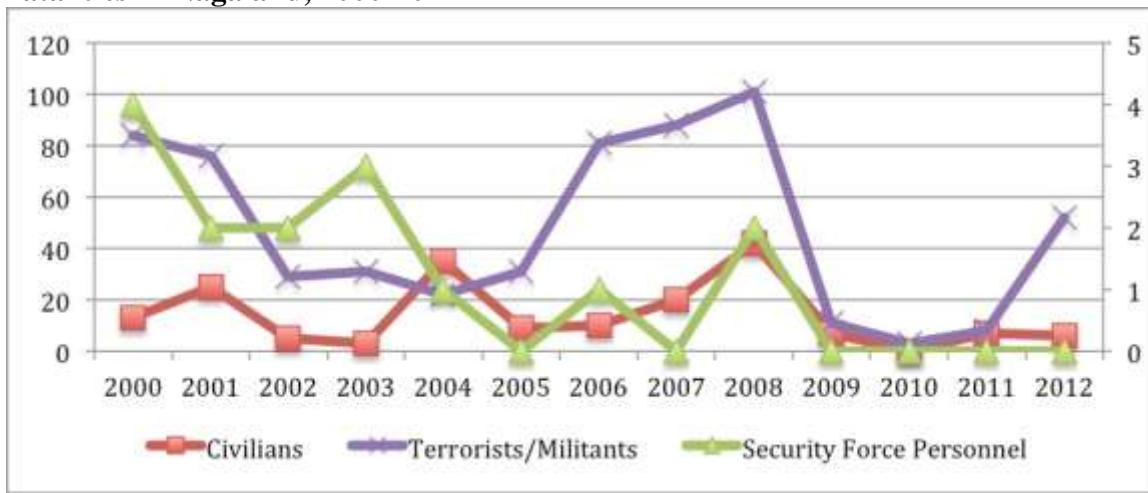
One of the primary objectives of counterinsurgency operations is to restore peace in the region in which it is conducted. It is also important to recognize the fact that every conflict which is internal requires a different notion of victory than conventional victory (which is rather rare) by the government. In some cases, conflicts just abate and rebels just revert to the usual normal life in society while in some other cases negotiations between conflicting parties reach a political solution accommodating interests which are mutually fulfilled. Importantly, success will

imply that conflict has been reduced to a manageable level of threat where the government looks at qualified success which is meant as the end of political threat.

In democracies such as that of India, it is imperative that to restore peace, the state ought to achieve some sort of reconciliation with those rebels and successfully integrate them back into the society. In the context of northeast India, the government often viewed the rebels as being misled and often confused rather than enemies to the state. However, this is not to refute the underlying grievances by which the rebels received motivation to engage in armed violence against the state and the occasional failures of the state forces to exercise restraint in using force, but it however underlines the fact that the government of India wanted to see the rebels reconciled with the state. This showcases the attitude of the Indian government which has been attempting to minimize the use of force and maximize the use of political compromise (Ladwig 2009).

The years 2004-05 seemed to signal both hopes for a reduction in conflict in northeast as well as its escalation between various ethnic groups in the region. This is often attributed to the regions underdevelopment and its peripheral positioning with the Indian geography. The inauguration of the Indo-ASEAN car rally in 2004 and the tentative peace initiatives which were initiated seemed to again signal major changes in the region's conflict situation (Barbora 2006: 3805). In the northeast where two dominant groups which grab the attention of any casual observer or those interested in the conflict in the region, are the NSCN-IM and the ULFA. However, it is also important to note that the NSCN-K (Kaphlang) in recent years has become a force which cannot be ignored in the context of the conflict in Nagaland. Despite the complications in terms of dealing with two factions, the government of Indian has still managed to sign ceasefire agreements. The NSCN-IM agreed to ceasefire in the year 1997 and the NSCN-K in 2000 which have been unilateral and neither has been particularly effective. However, peace talks between these groups have been taking place seriously since then. One of the most potentially promising developments through these measures is that the NSCN-IM has overtly declared withdrawing the demand for a sovereign nation for the Nagas, although the demand for greater Nagaland continues to be one of its objectives (Cline 2006: 133). However, it should also be noted that the NSCN-IM's leader Muivah has stated that the outfit has not given up its demand for sovereignty (The Hindu 2016). He also claimed that the concept of shared sovereignty has been achieved as the unique history of the Nagas is recognized. He however, maintained that when this would be implemented is to take time and it has not been exactly determined (ibid).

The resolution to the long Naga problem was seen to be nearing with the recent signing of the Framework Agreement between the Indian government and the NSCN-IM on 3 August 2015. Although the contents of the framework still are not known, it is expected that this initiative will bring change in the region. In this regard the NSCN-IM has been capable of galvanizing support among other political and social entities such as the Naga Hoho, The Naga Students Federation, The Naga Mothers Association, The Naga Peoples Movements for Human Rights and the United Naga Council, for a negotiated settlement with the government of India (Chhonkar 2016). The NSCN-IM has also been trying to re-establish its dominance in the Naga inhabited areas in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Manipur. In this context, the proposition to develop a supra-state or non-territorial unification of the naga inhabited areas in the states of Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh seems to be a meaningful way of overcoming the ethnic tensions. However, in contrast this has been a highly emotive issue where the territorial unification of the Naga inhabited areas has been rejected by these states (Goswami 2011). It has also been upping its efforts to reshape the existing the loyalties in eastern Nagaland following the defection of General Khole Konyak from the NSCN-Khole Kivitovi (NSCN-KK) (ibid). Tracing the splits in the NSCN-IM, it is interesting to note that with every round of negotiations with the government of India, atleast one faction has emerged resulting in the limiting of the sphere of dominance by the NSCN-IM. This has also resulted in faction fighting between the three groups (IM, Kaphlang and Khole-Kivitovi) which has again resulted in smaller faction being formed. The NNC has also been divided into smaller factions. These splits in the Naga Resistance movements point at two directions where the NSCN-IM has been able to dominate negotiations with the Indian state in terms of the Manipur state's hill districts and on the other hand the Government of India has not been able to decide with whom it has to negotiate to establish sustainable peace as all Naga factions have their own support base and agenda which differ with each other – hence a complex puzzle which cannot be easily comprehended. In this scenario the Indian government has to take into consideration each faction's demands and make a proposal which would be inclusive of all the groups' demands - which is clearly an impossible task. This absence of clarity has in some sort enable the state of sign ceasefire agreements with the NSCN-IM and it has also been encouraging other dominant groups to enter such agreements (Sirinate 2015).

Fatalities in Nagaland, 2000-2012

Source: Vasundhara Sirinate.

The figure above clearly indicates that there has only been a reduction of casualties in among the security forces due to the signing of the ceasefire agreements. Civilian casualties were at the highest during the year 2008 after the ceasefire agreement was extended. Looking at the casualties among the insurgent groups it is clear that these fatalities were not due to the operations conducted by security forces as it indicates that there was cessation of hostilities and the ceasefire was in place. These fatalities can be explained by looking at the fighting which existed during this period between the various factions of the NSCN. Reports also indicated that the NSCN-IM in order to establish its dominance had often engaged in killing member of the NSCN-K. Frequent fighting between the NSCN-K and NSCN-KK also contributed to the deaths of members of these insurgent groups. The year 2009 and 2010 witnessed a drop in the deaths of insurgents due to the Covenant of Reconciliation signed between the NSCN-K, NSCN-IM and the NNC in June 2009. However, the year 2011 again saw the rise in killings as rivalries over leadership, which were internecine in nature arose. An important development at this juncture is that the ceasefire agreements put the NSCN-IM at the forefront of negotiations and also put the burden on the group to convince other groups to the negotiations (Sirinate 2015). The events following are evidence to the fact that the Government of India and the NSCN-IM seem to have agreed upon a framework for peace in order to resolve the conflict amicably.

The state of Assam seems to be experiencing relative peace following decades of armed conflicts and violence. Since 2010, there has been a consistent decline in terms of insurgent violence. The state has also witnessed a sudden reduction in terms of fatalities which were recorded at 437, 370 and 391 in the years 2007, 2008 and 2009. By the year 2010 civilian casualties had also reduced considerably with 664 over the years 2007, 2008 and 2009 with an average of 221 per year to just 48 killings during the year 2010. The transformation of conflict in Assam to what it is now is reflective of the fact that peace can be established rather quickly with the cooperation of neighboring countries who have provided safe havens within their country. This is a point which has come to reassert itself in the case of Assam where the Bhutan Royal Army almost decimated the National Democratic Front of Assam (NDFB) in 2003. With the decision of the Bangladeshi Awami League Government to turn over several top leaders of the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) has forced the outfit to engage in negotiations. However, until the handing over of the ULFA's Chairman, Arabinda Rajkhowa, in December 2009, the prospects of negotiations for peace remained bleak (Routray 2011). Another significant development in this regard was the handing over of the anti-talks faction (NDFB) leader, Ranjan Daimary to the Border Security Force by Bangladesh in 2010 (TOI 2010). Ranjan Daimary was the prime accused in the serial blasts which occurred in Assam in 2008 (ibid).

The year 2009 proved to be of significance for the state of Assam in term of the conflict. Amongst the armed groups in Assam, the Dima Halim Daogo (DHD) remained the most elusive and violent groups which was operating in the north Cachar hills and Karbi Anglong Districts. The DHD which was formed following the surrender of the Dimasa National Security Force (DNSA) with the exception of its commander Jewel Garlosa who did not surrender - formed the DHD. The DHD demanded the formation of the Dimaraji which comprised of the Dimasas who inhabited the North Cachar Hills, Karbi Anglong Districts parts of Nagaon in Assam and Dimapur and those areas occupied by the Dimasas in Dhansiripar in Nagaland. It was Jewel Garlosa who formed the Black Widow of the DHD (G) whereas the DHD was led by Dilip Nunsia who remains a rational actor and has signed a ceasefire agreement with the Indian government since 2003 which is still in force. The leader of the DHD (G) Jewel Garlosa was arrested in Bangalore in the year 2009, following which the 386 heavily armed youth of the faction surrendered where the Commander-in-Chief declared in the surrender ceremony on October 2, 2009 that

the North Cachar Hills will remain peaceful from this day forward and the east west railway corridor will be completed with its cooperation. This is a significant factor in terms of the development of the remote areas of Assam. The DHD had until its surrender had been disrupting construction work and killed workers and kidnapped those engineers who were engaged in these projects (Goswami 2009). The one most significant caveat in terms of peace in Assam seems to be the arrest of Paresh Barua who is allegedly hiding along the Myanmar China border and operating the ULFA. However, the ULFA which has lost its popular support and political propaganda machine, it is difficult to imagine if Paresh Barua can single handedly manage and revive the ULFA. Perhaps this marks the end of the ULFA (ibid).

Among all the states of northeast India, Manipur continues to have significant unrest. During the year 2005 Manipur witnessed an upsurge in violence. The state is host to approximately 30 separate insurgent groups which has about 10000 members within them. It is interesting to note that insurgent activity in Manipur has at most times targeted the Capital rather than the rural areas. The level of extortion by various insurgent groups is extraordinarily high vis-à-vis other northeastern states (Cline 2006: 136-37). In 2009 estimates suggest that deaths related to insurgent violence had reduced to 369 in 2009 from 468 in 2008. Significantly 19 organizations of which 11 under the Kuki National Organization and 8 under the United Peoples Front agreed to the Mutual Suspension of Operations (SoO) after a review of the peace process under the Agreed Ground Rules. However, this did not set the stage for dialogues with the government of India and these groups as they had their own differences lingering within them. Conflicts in Manipur have remained predominantly among those insurgent groups which claim to represent their ethnic communities. The United National Liberation Front (UNLF) the groups which is Meitei centered has engaged in attacking the Thangkhus in Ukhrul district of Manipur. These attacks were carried out from their camps in Mintha near the Ukhrul-Chandel border in Manipur (Goswami 2009).

In Manipur three dominant groups seem to be conflicting with each other. On the one hand the NSCN-IM's demand for the integration of Naga inhabited areas remains a point of contention which is opposed both by the Meiteis and the Kukis, while on the other the Kukis also demand the creation of Kuki land carving out areas from the hill of Churhandpur, Chandel, Senapati, Tamenglong and Ukhrul. Thus, the bone of contention between the Kuki's and the Naga's remains the land dispute. The demand for Kukiland remains a direct challenge to the demand for the integration of the Naga inhabited areas into Nagaland where the NSCN-IM has also claimed those districts which are demanded by the Kukis (Tungpo 2016; Piang 2015). While the Meiteis have opposed the creation of Kukiland or greater Nagaland, the Kukis or the Nagas have however not been able to coordinate with each other. Many explain the inability of to coordinate as a result of the tensions which have remained in the aftermath of the clashes between 1992-1997. While these tensions linger between the two groups the government of India engages with the NSCN-IM in political dialogue whilst ignoring calls by the Kukis for political dialogue (Kipgen 2013). In this context it might be well to reiterate the five resolutions passed unanimously by the Manipur Legislative Assembly in a span of five years (1997-2002) where the territorial integrity would not be compromised at any cost. This was brought out as a government document entitled Manipur Culture Policy 2020 which reiterated its stand on the unity and integrity of the state. This legislation triggered one of the worst bouts of violence in Manipur's recent history where 18 people were reportedly killed and many governmental establishments were set on fire. The government of India as a result of the severity of agitations withdrew the declaration and the protests subsided (Das 2010: 124).

In 2015, the government of Manipur passed three bills (i) Protection of Manipur People's Bill 2015, (ii) Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms (Seventh Amendment) Bill, 2015 and (iii) Manipur Shop and Establishment (Second Amendment) Bill, 2015. These bills were vociferously opposed by three major tribal student groups namely the All Naga Students Association of Manipur, Kuki Students Association and the All Tribal Students Union Manipur. The Land Reforms Bill as perceived by the Kukis and Nagas is a covert attempt by the Meiteis to gain access to the scheduled hill districts. They argue that outsiders were never a threat since they can neither own or buy or pose any form of threat to government jobs in the valley. According to section 158 of the Land Reforms Bill and Manipur Land Revenue Act of 1960, those lands which belong to tribals in the valley cannot be sold to non-tribals in the valley areas unless prior consent is granted by the concerned deputy commissioner. However, with the present Protection of Manipur Peoples Bill, Clause 2(b) defines Manipur People as persons of Manipur whose names are registered in the National Register of Citizens 1951, Census Report 1951 and the Village Directory of 1951, which has raised serious apprehensions among the tribal people in Manipur. If the bill is made law, a person needs to possess documents of registration in all three registers failing which they would be considered as outsiders – thus meaning that many of the hill people in the state would be excluded. This bill is interestingly similar to the Ceylon Citizenship Act of 1948 which placed many of the Hill Tamils in Sri Lanka as stateless people. The three Bills which were enacted in the Legislative Assembly of Manipur in 2015 seems to be much similar with a slightly different tinge where the tribal people living in the hills would suffer structural violence perpetrated against them henceforth. Hence the Sixth Schedule, at this juncture seems to offer an amicable solution where the suggested political arrangement would facilitate the autonomy for the Kukis and the

Nagas without territorial division of the state of Manipur (Kipgen 2015). Thus until recently the state of Manipur has remained with active conflicts which have been highly destructive where peace and security for the civilian has been disturbed to a large extent.

Bounded by more international borders, Tripura shares its border in the north western, south western, western and northern boundaries with Bangladesh. Unlike other states in northeast, the state of Tripura was integrated with the Indian Union peacefully when it accede to India on 13 August 1947 and subsequently chose to integrate with India fully in the year 1949. However, Tripura is another state which illustrates the stark realities of ethnic colonization with the Indian Union. Revolts in Tripura have been due to the fear of the loss of identity because of such encroachments. Tripura did not experience insurgency during the time of independence. It much like Mizoram began its Journey with the Indian state on the strong foundation of legal and moral accession. However, grievances which arose after years of neglect and misrule and an attitude of partisan governance by the ruling elite caused dramatic changes in the demographic composition of the state where the tribal population reduced to one-third from two-thirds of the total population. The seeds of insurgency were thus sown and the first act of frustration and dissatisfaction arose from the Tripura Upajati Juba Samatiya (TUJS) in June 1967. Their demand was the creation of autonomous district councils under the provision of the sixth schedule of the Constitution, recognition of Kok Borok as the official language and restoration of tribal lands that had been alienated followed by the development of the region. Subsequent years witnessed the rise of Bijoy Harangkhawl who headed the TUJS. After the TUJS failed to achieve any of its stated objectives the Tripura National Volunteers (TNV) was formed with the aim to fight for Tripura's freedom on 10 November 1978. The TNV operated from its bases in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, whilst the TUJS continued to fight for their demands since they were not satisfied with the recognition given under the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution. However, a compromise was arrived at after the formation of autonomous district councils which were specified in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution in July 1985. More than a decade of violence, Harangkhawl did not accept peace even after the Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of India was signed on 12 August 1988. Following these developments the state also witnessed the emergence of two more insurgent groups (i) National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) and (ii) All Tripura Tigers Front (ATTF), in 1989 and 1990. These two groups were involved in bloody and protracted conflicts with the government and occasionally there were also surrenders from the two groups. Despite these episodes of violence in Tripura, there has been a reduction of armed conflict in the state and it has witnessed peace to a certain extent although there were sporadic events of violence which still continue to exist (Chadda 2005: 354-56). Between the years 1990 and 1995, insurgency in Tripura remained low however, the years 1996 to 2004, it grew in magnitude after which it slowly thawed out. It is important to examine what made these movements to slowly wane away. The sagacious and visionary leadership of Chief Minister Manik Sarkar formulated a multi-dimensional strategy to constructively respond to the insurgent situation in Tripura. In contrast to other states in northeast India, counter insurgency operations did not involve the Indian army but the para-military from the center and the state police force were forged to form a synergetic, coordinated and cohesive mode to derive maximum gain. This helped in very minimal violation of human rights which fighting insurgents and which helped in reducing animosity cropping up in the minds of the local people against the operations or the security forces. The political initiatives undertaken by the Chief Minister Manik Sarkar through peace marches enabled the state to instill confidence in the minds of the people that the state was sincerely committed to developing all segments of the state. Further, these initiatives included strengthening, revitalizing and legitimizing micro-development organizations such as autonomous development councils, gram-panchayats and village councils. Such initiatives brought significant empowerment particularly among the tribals in the state. Thus the state has been able to script its victory and proved that insurgency is not an insurmountable phenomenon (Sahaya 2011; Garg 2016). One of the most significant moments in the history of Tripura is the repeal of the Armed Forces Special Forces Act. The repeal is evidence to prove that insurgency and armed violence is waning weak in the state (Ali 2015). However, it may be too simplistic to draw such conclusions as every insurgency has its own complexities which may not accept such initiatives as solutions to their demands.

Conclusion

I posit that conflicts in the region is weakening by arguing that insurgent groups are fast losing its support base and seem to be moving towards a peaceful solution to conflicts in the region. More particularly the recent Naga Peace Framework which was signed between the NSCN-IM and the Government of India seem to be pointing towards this direction. It should also be noted that scholars in recent years are looking at conflicts in northeast India with an alternative approach where youth participation and their motivations to engage in conflicts are taken into consideration (Freddy 2016). Weakening of conflicts in the region is also due to the fragmentation or breakup of the dominant groups into smaller factions. This also is indicative that existing disagreements within these groups lead to the creation of smaller factions which at most times fail to make a significant impact towards their stated objectives. Furthermore, the recent death of Isak Swu of the NSCN-IM is also a fact pointing towards the slowly diminishing dominance of the group in the region. This factor in the history of the NSCN-IM seems to

be pointing at the future leadership of the group. At present the NSCN-IM is headed by Muivah and there seems to be no indication that a probable successor to the group has been looked into. This again leads to the conclusion that there may be more breakaway factions from the NSAN-IM thus eventually leading to the conflict abating.

In the context of Manipur, the conflict situation seems to be similar to that of Sir Lanka where Sinhala Chauvinistic tendencies may be compared to the Meiteis. Meitei Chauvinistic tendencies may be found in the recent Bills on (i) Protection of Manipur People's Bill 2015, (ii) Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms (Seventh Amendment) Bill, 2015 and (iii) Manipur Shop and Establishment (Second Amendment) Bill, 2015 which seem to favor Meitei dominance in the state which also sidelines the tribals living in the hill of Manipur resulting in structural violence being perpetrated against minorities. Thus Manipur seems to be continuing with various forms of violence and conflicts during the past decade. The nature of newer conflicts also seem to be signaling a combination of structural and direct violence in the region while a reduction of secessionist movements may be observed.

Tripura presents a classic example that insurgencies can be managed through inclusive development initiatives which would result in conflicts being overcome and a return to peace. The withdrawal of AFSPA can also be seen as a significant development in the politics of the state which might also be the first step towards the repealing of the Act in other state of northeast where conflict and armed violence is slowly but substantially reduce. Thus in conclusion, conflicts in northeast India are waning weak and there may be a return to peace in the near future paving way for substantial development of the region.

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