

**NORTHEAST AS A SECURITY FACTOR IN INDIA-MYANMAR  
RELATIONS (1994- 2014)**

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for award of the degree of*

**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

**C. V. LALMALSAWMI**



**CENTRE FOR INDO-PACIFIC STUDIES  
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES  
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY  
NEW DELHI 110067**

**2015**



**CENTRE FOR INDO-PACIFIC STUDIES**  
**SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**  
**JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY**  
**NEW DELHI - 110 067**

Phone : 2670 4350  
Fax : +91-11-2674 25

Date: 26.07.2015

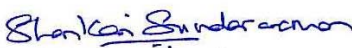
**DECLARATION**

I declare that the dissertation entitled, "NORTHEAST AS A SECURITY FACTOR IN INDIA-MYANMAR RELATIONS (1994 - 2014)" submitted by me in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.


  
C.V.LALMALSAWMI

**CERTIFICATE**

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

  
Prof. Shankari Sundararaman

**CHAIRPERSON, CIPS**

  
Dr. Shubhamitra Das

**SUPERVISOR**

  
Chairperson  
Centre for Indo-Pacific Studies  
School of International Studies  
Jawaharlal Nehru University  
New Delhi-110067

  
Centre for Indo-Pacific Studies  
School of International Studies  
Jawaharlal Nehru University  
New Delhi-110067

*To my grandfather*

*Who believed in me*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*I give my humblest gratitude to the Almighty God who have seen me through it all and guided me in every step of my life.*

*I wish to express my sincerest thanks to my supervisor Dr. Shubhamitra Das for her active support, encouragement, and understanding as well as valuable advice and suggestions in the pursuit of this research. Without her guidance and motivation, this research endeavour would not have come into a fruitful completion. I am truly blessed to have someone like her, a kind and good human being to supervise a naïve beginner like myself. The flaws and limitations of this modest work remain my own.*

*It is with great appreciation that I thank the entire faculty of Centre for Indo-Pacific Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University; Prof Ganganath Jha, Prof. Manmohini Kaul, Prof G.V.C Naidu and Prof. Shankari Sundararaman for giving me the great opportunity to be a part of this centre and having introduced the subject of Area Studies and imparted to me valuable knowledge and information about its significance and importance in today's fast-changing world. I have greatly benefitted from the course work studies and seminars that helped me in the entire course of writing this dissertation. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the centre's office staff for being ever ready to attend to our queries and academic requirements.*

*My special thanks go to friends, seniors and acquaintances who have inspired me and contributed to my research work either directly or indirectly through their intellectual advice and technical help. Special mention should be made of Athang, Ananta, Nomita, Zonuna and Zohmingmawia for giving me their valuable time, materials and technical assistance.*

*I also thank the Central Library and CPS Library Jawaharlal Nehru University and their staffs for providing me access to all necessary resources to complete my work in due time.*

*Lastly though not the least, I am deeply indebted to my family and friends at home for their constant support and prayer.*

*Dated: New Delhi, 26<sup>th</sup> July 2015*

*C.V.Lalmalsawmi*

# Contents

<b>Preface.....</b>	<b>i-ii</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations.....</b>	<b>iii-iv</b>
<b>Maps and Tables.....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction.....</b>	<b>1-17</b>
1. Background	
2. Literature Review	
a) Strategic Perceptions in India-Myanmar Relations	
b) Border and the Security-Development Interface	
c) Critical Perspectives on India's Northeast Policy vis-à-vis Myanmar	
3. Scope and Rationale of the Study	
4. Research Problems	
5. Hypotheses	
6. Research Methodology	
7. Structure of the Research	
<b>Chapter 2: Insurgency and State Response.....</b>	<b>18-43</b>
1. Emergence of Northeast as 'Northeast'	
2. Integration and Movements Against "Continued Colonization"	
3. Continuity in Change: Mindless Mapping or Sheer Indifference?	
4. The Sixth Schedule Approach: Boon or Bane?	
5. Reorganization and Peace Accords	
6. Militarization of Northeast and Its Impacts	
a) Village regrouping and Implications	
b) Aerial Bombing of Mizoram	
c) Rule of AFSPA	
7. Insecurity, Insurgency and Beyond	
<b>Chapter 3: Transnational Issues and Linkages.....</b>	<b>44-78</b>
1. Background of Cross-Border Insurgency	
2. Role for Myanmar and the Changing Contours	
3. ASEAN and the Invisible Chinese Hand	
4. Counter-Insurgency and Indo-Myanmar Security Cooperation	
a) Operation Golden Bird and Beyond	
b) Operation All Clear 2003	
c) Operation Search and Destroy June 9	
5. Drugs, Small Arms Trafficking and the Militancy Nexus	

6. Ethnic Linkages and Problems of Migration
  - a) Foreigner or Ethnic Outsider
  - b) Xenophobia Over Immigrants
7. Towards Cross-Border Understanding: Need for a Roadmap
8. Redefining Security

**Chapter 4: Border Trade and Infrastructure Development..... 79-110**

1. Vision 2020 and the Northeast
2. Indo-Myanmar Border Trade: What It Entails
3. Examining the Dynamics of Border Trade: What It Does Not Entail
  - a) Restriction on Tradable Items
  - b) Capturing the Cultural Component
  - c) Transitional Economy
  - d) Third Country Issue
  - e) Towards Expansion of Border Trade
4. Infrastructure Development and Land Connectivity in the Northeast Region
  - a) Connectivity and the Gateway Paradigm
  - b) The Stillwell Road
  - c) The Tri-Lateral Highway
  - d) Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project: A Case Study
5. Role of Northeast in Act East Policy: Is Change Forthcoming?
  - a) The Inner Line Permit Paradox
  - b) Northeast as an Engine of Growth
6. The Road to Myanmar and the Challenges Ahead

**Chapter 5: Conclusion..... 111-118**

1. Implications of Northeast as a Security Factor in India-Myanmar Relations
2. Charting a New Course: The Way Out

**Bibliography..... 119-148**

## PREFACE

The Northeast region already looked east before India started to look east. As their actual place of origin, the people of this region looked upon Southeast Asia with no strange eye and they feel free to refer to the Chinese, Korean or Thai as more like ‘cultural surrogates’ rather than far-off aliens and without much awe or effect attached to it. In fact, the cultural influence of these East Asian nations are felt strongly when it comes to food, lifestyle, music, cinema and others. While mainland Indians need a great adjustment to reconnect with the Southeast Asian region, such links come naturally for northeasterners living at the edge of India. With only one percent of its entire boundaries converging with the rest of India at the choke point of Siliguri, Northeast’ connection with India is literally hanging by the thread. In the mind of an average northeasterner, Bangkok or Singapore today not only present more goodly prospects than could possibly by New Delhi or Mumbai but are also relatively in easy reach at least by flight which has become a trend.

The challenge before India’s policymakers was- how to translate such bonds, proximity and familiarity into mutually beneficial policy gains to ensure India’s strategic viability in the region. It is in this context that Myanmar, the only land-bridge between India and Southeast Asia, becomes a country of paramount importance for New Delhi and its eastward programme. Nevertheless India’s “pragmatic engagement” with Myanmar only came about in the early 1990s as a strategic shift, made essential by the post-cold war regional conditions as well as domestic compulsions of insurgency and armed militancy along the Indo-Myanmar border. Thus security concerns occupied centre stage during the initial period of re-engagement with the military regime.

Northeast, as a matter of fact, is not as simple as it seems. It is a region where bullets have ruled longer and more frequent than ballots and the civilian-security personnel ratio is one of the highest in modern times. The region is home to one of the largest concentration of ethnic tribes at various stages of socio-economic development. In spite of the “gateway” theory that accord much significance to India’s northeast, the real and genuine issues of the region are often submerged under the loud rhetoric of Look/Act East Policy and other regional engagements that are being carried out with much fanfare. Northeast people today are much worse-off than their Southeast Asian

counterparts in terms of economic development and life time opportunities and continued to face political, economic and cultural marginalization from their fellow Indians under the rule of New Delhi. This study is an attempt to re-conceptualize northeast in a geo-political matrix and as a security driver of India's foreign policy with a focus on Myanmar. The study aims to project northeast in a new positive light while revisiting its troubled insurgency-ridden past and relations with New Delhi.

As such, the first chapter provides the background for understanding the security dimension in India's Myanmar engagement from the Northeast angle. The Second chapter is an analytical discussion on Northeast insurgency and its metamorphosis, tracing it back to the colonial times and the post-independence era when armed movements incessantly rocked the region. The third chapter posits a larger scenario of insurgency that defies national borders prompting security cooperation between the militaries of the not-so-friendly neighbours India and Myanmar. But diplomacy defeats differences with the passage of time, and the changing international circumstances have pulled the two countries much closer than they were before in different phases of the past. Thus chapter 4 delineates the formalization of border trade between India and Myanmar and highlights its significance as well as issues. The importance of infrastructure development and some key connectivity projects like the Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project have also been discussed. The fifth and last chapter concludes and summarizes the findings and suggests a "way out" of the current imbroglio.



## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ADC	Autonomous District Council
AFSPA	Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act
ASSU	All Assam Students Union
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ATTF	All Tripura Tribal Force
BAC	Bodoland Autonomous Council
BCIM	Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (Forum)
BIMSTEC	Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation
BLO	Border Liaison Office
BLT	Bodoland Liberation Tigers
BRO	Border Roads Organization
BTC	Bodoland Territorial Council
BRTF	Border Roads Task Force
CRPF	Central Reserve Police Force
DPR	Detailed Project Report
GAIL	Gas Authority of India
GOI	Government of India
GSP	Ganga Sangram Parishad
HPC-D	Hmar Peoples Convention-Democratic
IDUs	Injection Drug Users
ILP	Inner Line Permit
IWT	Inland Water Transport
KMMTTP	Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project
KPLT	Karbi People's Liberation Tigers
KYKL	Kanglei Yawol Kana Lup

LAC	Line of Actual Control
MDoNER	Ministry of Development of Northeastern Region
MGC	Mekong Ganga Cooperation
MNF	Mizo National Front
NDFB-IKS	National Democratic Front of Bodoland-IK Songbijit
NEC	Northeastern Council
NNC	Naga National Council
NSCN (IM)	National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah)
NSCN (K)	National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang)
NSCN (KK)	National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khole-Kitovi)
NSCN (U)	National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Unification)
ONGC	Oil and Natural Gas Authority of India
PLA	People's Liberation Army
RBA	Royal Bhutan Army
RITES	Rail and Technical Economic Services
RIS	Research and Information System for Developing Countries
SARDP	Special Accelerated Road Development Programme
SATP	South Asia Terrorism Portal
SEATO	South Atlantic Treaty Organization
SLORC	State Law and Order Restoration Council
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council
TNV	Tripura Nationalist Volunteers
ULF	United Liberation Front
ULFA	United Liberation Front of Assam
ULFA-I	United Liberation Front of Assam-Independent
UMFO	United Mizo Freedom Organization

## **LIST OF MAPS AND TABLES:**

### **LIST OF MAPS AND TABLES**

**Map 1.1:** Map of Northeastern Region

**Map 2.1:** Northeast Map

**Map 3.1:** Taking the Battle to the Enemy (Operation June 9)

**Map 3.2:** Northeast and Adjacent Countries

**Map 4.1 :** Major Road Development Programs in the Northeast Region

**Map 4.2:** Bay of Bengal (Sea Route from Sittwe to Kolkata)

**Table 1.1:** Some Important Particulars of the Northeast States

**Table 2.1:** Land Custom Stations in NER Dealing Trade with Myanmar

**Table 2.2:** Total Export Import in the Northeastern Region for Five Years (2008-2013)

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

The current discourse on India's Look East Policy (LEP) has incorporated Northeast in an extensive, if not inclusive, manner. This is a result of the growing realization of Northeast importance in India's integration with the nearby Southeast Asian countries, in pursuance of its "Look East" mission. In fact, the bulk of literature on Northeast is based on the national security imperative which facilitated India's 'velvet policy' towards Myanmar<sup>1</sup> since the early 1990s. Although security issues were not a priority for India and ASEAN, and that security dimensions came to the fore only by the beginning of the second phase of LEP (Mohan 2008), New Delhi's policy shift towards Myanmar was largely determined by its internal security concerns, viz., territorial integrity in its northeast borderlands. Northeast, for historical, political and economic reasons, has long been a security challenge for India. The prolonged insurgency and armed resistance movements in the region led policymakers in New Delhi to constantly label it, and hence consciously sideline it, as a 'troubled periphery' (Bhaumik 2009) or a 'dependent periphery' (George 2012) distanced from the mainstream national consciousness. But few would realize that the landlocked nature of the region is an outcome of the enduring legacy of Partition of the Indian subcontinent that reduced the entire region with the narrow Siliguri Corridor as the only physical connecting point with mainland India. This had the debilitating effect of geographically and institutionally excluding the people of the Northeast from participating in the development process of the country.

The 1962 Sino-Indian war reveals the stark vulnerability of Northeast which began to capture the centre's imagination. Yet more than fifty years later, little has been done to rescue the region from its peripheral status and its dependency. The Northeast security crisis is nowhere near to be solved due to the absence of a coherent security policy, and Indian government's preferred traditional military approach to address the whole range of security issues only serve to perpetuate the Northeast people's acute

---

<sup>1</sup> The Military Junta in 1989 changed the country's name from the English 'Burma' to vernacular 'Myanmar'. The latter will be used to refer to the country in the present study without an endorsement whatsoever of the military policy.

sense of alienation. The region is yet to actually benefit from the ongoing Look East Policy which is received with much skepticism especially after the much hyped 2004 India-ASEAN car rally<sup>2</sup> that failed to deliver a follow-up of concrete results. The Northeastern Region (NER) Vision 2020<sup>3</sup> announced by the Ministry of Development of Northeastern Region (MDoNER)<sup>4</sup> in 2008 for accelerated and inclusive growth by boosting the Northeast economy through expansion of border trade and bringing it on par with the rest of the country has not been properly implemented. Besides, there is a general lack of understanding among leaders and policymakers about the complex nature of security and development imbued in the region's political process. The misconstrued notion of security which is seen to mean only territorial integrity in the Northeast context has misguided policy decisions for years. As a matter of fact, India's security processes were so obsessed with securing the boundaries of its Northeastern states at the detriment of facilitation of the cross-border 'flows'. According to Prof. Amar Yumnam (2014), there is no fixity of border in terms of boundary in case of the Northeast. Border is no longer defined only by boundaries but by flows, and any kind of diplomatic intervention should be able to maintain these flows. The traditional flow of ideas, knowledge, people, culture, and commodity had been disrupted by the Partition, and needed to be replaced with a new kind of flows<sup>5</sup>.

Nevertheless, the flows are still continuing and thriving due to weak monitoring and easy access to the porous borders from both sides. This has to be seen in the context of proliferation of informal border trade, illegal migration, narcotics and small arms smuggling which constitute a serious threat to the region's peace and stability. Coupled with this is the gross inadequacy of physical infrastructure due to which the immense opportunities of Northeast proximity to the prosperous economies of

---

<sup>2</sup> The 2004 India-ASEAN car rally was started in Guwahati and traversed through Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia, Singapore and ended in Indonesia's Batam Island. The initiative sparked hopes that it heralded the end of northeast's isolation, but very little was done in its aftermath. See Strachan, Anna Louise et al "India's Look East Policy: A Critical Assessment" IPCS Special Report October 2009.

<sup>3</sup> The NER Vision 2020 document, including the Vision 2020 statement was adopted at the Northeastern Council (NEC)'s 56<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session held at Agartala (capital of Tripura) on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2008 and unveiled by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on 2 July 2008 in New Delhi. For details see Northeastern Region Vision 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Development of Northeastern Region (DoNER) was first created as a Department of the Central Government by former Prime Minister A.B Vajpayee in September 2001 and later transformed into a full-fledged Ministry to cater to all socio-economic development projects and schemes of the Northeastern region. It is currently headed by Minister of State (MoS) Jitendra Singh.

<sup>5</sup> Lecture delivered by Prof. Amar Yumnam "Political Economy of Developmental Challenges in the Northeast" on 17 October 2014 organized by Northeast India Studies Programme at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

ASEAN States have not been exploited. To remedy this lacunae, Indian government has embarked upon the construction and up-gradation of several infrastructural projects such as the Kaladan Multimodal Transport and Transit Project (linking Mizoram to Sittwe), the Tri-lateral Highway (connecting Thailand), the Tamanthi Hydroelectric Project (on the Chindwin river), the 160 km long Tamu-Kalemyo-Kalewa road (from the border of Manipur), the Rih-Tiddim and Rih-Falam road along with others in order to promote trade, transport and investment in the border region. Nevertheless, slow implementation due to procedural hurdles and lack of political commitment remains an obstacle in the realization of these projects. Besides, the opening up of the historical Stilwell road linking Northeast and Myanmar with China's Yunnan for promoting trade and commerce at a grass root level is also under way but India has shown much reluctance in helping its materialization. In this context, it has become imperative to examine the efficacy as well as the feasibility of these projects in addressing the security needs of the local civilian population languishing in the isolated, impoverished, hilly terrains 'with no hope for a better future'.

Political marginalization, coupled with economic underdevelopment, led the Northeast States not only to lag behind the rest of the nation, but induced a sense of alienation firmly entrenched in the region's psyche. Besides, there is a general lack of understanding among leaders and policymakers about the complex nature of security and development imbued in the region's political process. The tradition of neglect of Northeast by successive governments at the centre not only in domestic policies but in foreign policy calculations has huge costs for India. The changing political climate in Myanmar and recent democratic transformations, as well as the regional economic and security environment offers tremendous opportunity for India to prioritize its Myanmar's policy to encompass the Northeast in all sectors of cooperation, and harness the region's enormous potential to enhance its partnership with Myanmar. In fact, India's Look East Policy was an outcome of a pragmatic thinking that felt the need of a policy engagement with Myanmar on account of its strategic location (Saikia 2009). India sees Myanmar as a natural partner and the key to success of its Look East Policy which is aimed at strengthening India's relations with all ASEAN member States (Bhatia et al 2014). As India was elevated to a summit-level partner of ASEAN and had become a member of East Asia Summit, improved relations with

Myanmar can be highly beneficial as both countries are already involved in sub-regional initiatives like BIMSTEC, Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) and the BCIM forum (earlier Kunming Initiative) which can be utilized by India in the furtherance of its LEP.

With regard to China, there is a growing bilateral understanding forged by economic synergies and India needs a clear course of action to leverage on it. As emerging great powers with fast-developing economies, India and China share a complicated relationship that oscillates between cooperation and competition. In the strategic sphere of regional arena, there is a cold perception of each other's motives and underlying tensions remain active. Apart from the unresolved boundary dispute, China's unyielding claim over Arunachal Pradesh in India's northeast and frequent incursions by Chinese troops along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) needed to be taken seriously by New Delhi. Along with security loopholes at the border, shortage of infrastructure and development has made the border area uninhabitable for locals making it highly vulnerable for intrusion<sup>6</sup>. It also shows that India needs to "Act East" and act fast not to commit the mistake of a strategic blunder similar to 1962.

The strategic potential of the continental linkage between its Northeast and Southeast Asia via Myanmar can no longer be downplayed by New Delhi with the ongoing land connectivity projects. Engaging Myanmar through Northeast and making the latter a major stakeholder in its domestic and foreign policymaking will go a long way in achieving the much desired integration with ASEAN while generating an inclusive economic growth essential to tackle longstanding security challenges. India's aspirations to become a major player in a rapidly globalizing world will remain unrealistic unless a clear roadmap for achieving peace, stability and prosperity, necessary for building national consensus, is laid out. Northeast in this context demands special focus and attention.

---

<sup>6</sup> For details about the recent standoff between India and China, see article "Grand plan to double Arunachal Pradesh forces on hold despite being cleared in April" by Abhisek Bhalla September 23 2014 available at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-2767259/Grand-plan-double-Arunachal-Pradesh-border-force-hold-despite-cleared-April.html>; Also see Sudha Ramachandran's "India's Worrying Border Infrastructure Deficit" June 19, 2014 available at <http://thediplomat.com/2014/06/indias-worrying-border-infrastructure-deficit/> to have an insight on the "stark gap" between Indian and Chinese efforts to build critical infrastructure in their respective sides of the LAC.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

There can be no fixity of time in a comprehensive study of any bilateral relations. In case of India and Myanmar, scholars are inclined to be guided by both the past and present narratives in explaining the dynamics of relations between the two countries. Scholars from both sides have, in the words of Rajiv K. Bhatia (2011), attempted to review the past, evaluate the present, and re-imagine the future. The literature on India-Myanmar relations with reference to the Northeast region can be broadly divided into three areas or themes:

### **Strategic Perceptions in India-Myanmar Relations**

There is no doubt that India's interests in Myanmar has been strategically driven since the launching of Look East Policy. Many scholars tend to emphasize on the historical dimension of India-Myanmar relations knitted by common colonial rule and common struggle for Independence as the starting point of analysis. **Khosla (2003)** maintains that India's relations with Myanmar and the best way to promote India's undoubted interests have been conditioned by history. He however admits that while the common sources of tradition such as religion and culture served as the foundation for constructing good relations in the initial post-independence period, they are not sufficient to foster a long-lasting bilateral understanding. For **YHome (2009)**, while the Border Trade Agreement in 1994 was to be seen in the backdrop of India's renewed engagement with Southeast and East Asian countries along the line of its Look East Policy, it was also a move of caution on the part of both governments. This is because at the time, India grew wary of Chinese overtures to gain access to the Indian Ocean and in establishing a military base in the Bay of Bengal, and Myanmar's Junta too was growing increasingly uncomfortable for its heavy dependence on China. To collaborate this view further, much of the discussions on the emergence of Look East Policy strike consonance on the changing strategic environment in the aftermath of cold war which made it imperative for India to embrace a 'realist stance' in its policy towards Southeast Asia.

**Egreteau (2008)** argues that the regional strategic order that began to change in the early 1990s, especially with regard to China's increasing presence in the region and particularly in Burma left India no choice but to reassess and redefine its Burma policy in order to protect and enhance its emerging geopolitical interests on its eastern



flank. According to him India's strategic interests in Myanmar is three-fold: first, restoring stability in its troubled Northeast region; second, counterbalancing the Chinese growing regional influence and the third pertains to economic interests. Nonetheless, he opines that New Delhi's confidence in dealing with the perceived Chinese threat contrasts with India's diplomatic failure, and resultant "frustration" in engaging with the military junta to effectively counter ethnic rebels in its Northeastern border front. To this effect, **Boquerat (2001)** in his article observes that Myanmar's progressive ties with China in the late 1980s and early 1990s had a strong military aspect in a sense that Beijing's selling of large amount of weapons to Myanmar contributed to the escalation of military operations against the ethnic minorities. He argues that this impacted on the movements of rebels such as the Chins resulting in their search for sanctuaries, crossing over the border into north-east India, to evade Myanmar's counter-insurgency operations.

While outlining policy convergences between India and Myanmar on account of shared developmental interests, **Bhatia (2011)** reiterates the transnational character of their interactions while transcending the bilateral framework in forging the regional and sub-regional cooperation on a wide range of issues. At the same time, the common problems of longstanding insurgencies in both countries necessitate security cooperation to bring about stability in the border regions which is a prerequisite for developing their respective border areas. Since such cooperation is not always successful- due to logistical constraints, difficult terrain, stalled negotiations with ethnic insurgents by respective governments- Bhatia argues that India should opt for sustained political dialogue and economic development to address the situation decisively.

**Gupta (2013)** while echoing the strategic drivers that push India's engagement with Myanmar emphasizes the huge stakes that India has on its Northeastern States for three reasons: protection of its territorial integrity, the need to re-establish the natural economic zone once traditionally constituted by Northeast and Myanmar, and to obtain Myanmar's pro-active cooperation essential for containing the longstanding insurgencies of the region. The first acquires great significance especially when the state of Arunachal Pradesh which has 1125 km long border with China is claimed by the latter as its own territory. He argues that a strategically controlled Myanmar will virtually make it impossible for India to keep its Northeastern region intact. Northeast,

he asserts, should be seen as the beginning of Southeast Asia and that Myanmar has a pivotal role in India's Look East Policy. The overarching imperative for India is to prevent Myanmar from becoming a pawn of China's strategic ambitions vis-à-vis India. Interestingly, **Nath and Nath (2004)** observes that the strategic 'mapping' of Northeast in India's policy deliberations begun as a consequence of the 1962 war in which Indian security forces suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Chinese troops.

**Saikia (2009)** also accords the strategic concerns emanating from the 1962 India-China war to the main reason behind India's re-thinking of its policy towards Myanmar. He claims that India in its retrospection had to re-evaluate its policy towards Myanmar in order to counter-balance the Chinese increasing influence and the associated threat to the Northeast considering the past history of the 1962 war and to address the deteriorating security conditions in the region. Thus, India's diplomatic interest in Myanmar is driven by its desire to safeguard its own national interest including its resolve to keep its territory in order.

In her poignant account on India's pipeline diplomacy, **Lall (2006)** points out that the reasons behind the shift in India's Myanmar policy fall within three broad categories which are- India's realization of Myanmar's crucial support in bringing order and stability in its Northeast region, the Indo-Myanmar trade to revive the Northeast as well as to boost economic prosperity in both countries. India's extensive engagement with Myanmar to promote infrastructure projects for trade expansion through regional forums like BIMSTEC and Mekong-Ganga Cooperation acquires significance in this context. With regard to the China factor in Myanmar's strategic and military affairs, she notes that Beijing and the BJP had similar understanding that more trade will bring prosperity to poorer regions reducing the investment burdens of governments. Apart from India's military fear of China since 1962, the economic competition between them urged India to make a 'counter-move' of rapprochement with Myanmar.

### **Border and the Security-Development Interface**

Scholars while analyzing the dynamics of security in the Northeast are confronted with the complex interlaces of geo-strategy, colonial legacy and ethnic diversity along with issues of territory and economic exclusivity that mould the social and political

history of the region. According to **Subir Bhaumik (2009)**, India's Northeast region is a British imperial construct and subsequently accepted by the post-colonial Indian State. In her book, 'India's Fragile Borderlands', **Upadhyay (2009)** reaffirms the Northeast region as a 'colonial construct' and notes that until the British advent and the drawing of the Mac Mahon Line in 1914, the notion of territorial or political authority was unheard of in the tribal hills. She argues that the historical connectedness of the region was systematically eroded by the progressive segregation through extraordinary administrative policies in the period between 1873 and 1934, resulting in the categorization of the tribal areas into the non-regulated, backward or excluded areas by the Government of India Act 1935. According to her, this resulted in a glaring disconnect between the pattern of administration prevailing in the tribal areas and the rest of the country. The nation building strategies of independent India could do little to alter the emergent reality, which were perceived as reinforcing the dominant notion of state-centric Indianness and subsequently challenged by the 'rebel consciousness' rooted in the cultural distinctness that developed in the Northeast.

**Kathekeyan (2009)** argues that the steps taken by the British to protect their strategic frontiers in the Indian Ocean region along with the introduction of the Inner Line Regulation of 1873 restricting the entry of outsiders to these areas strengthened the exclusion of the region from the mainstream. **Khongreiw (2009)** sees the structural cause of Northeast India's problems (with regard to the insurgencies and counter-insurgencies) as arising from a colonial legacy and a post-colonial indifference. This indifference is explained by the pumping of enormous developmental assistance into the region by New Delhi instead of addressing the core problem which lies in the mindless colonial creation of artificial boundaries through "cartographic surgery" and the postcolonial "reorganization of states" and political engineering in present Northeast India and Northwest Burma since the 1950s, especially the 1960s and the 1980s. **Khizi (2009)** states that injecting huge funds in the form of special economic packages to the Northeast economy without due accountability creates a regime of corruption that works in favor of a nexus between politicians and bureaucrats on one hand and underground militants on the other. Further, major developmental projects in the Northeast were more in response to frequent public agitation and there is dearth of an integrated developmental approach by the centre. The development initiatives are seen as mainly catering to the security interests of the region.

**Bhattacharya (2010)** while outlining the security-developmental nexus asserts that economic prosperity and security perception can no longer be discussed in mutually exclusive paradigms as the interconnectivity between the two has deepened in the present globalized world, and both need to be coined together to counter the threats of modern world. She points out that India-Myanmar economic cooperation is not poised to be successful without addressing the age-old security threats in the border region. Apart from trans-border insurgency, illegal activities like money-laundering, small arms trade and narco-trafficking continue to haunt the region as it borders the world's second largest producer of illicit opium which is also a major source of harmful narcotic drugs like metamphetamine and heroin with poor state control and regulation. She suggests that India and Myanmar can go a long way in developing trade connectivity so as to address the security and economic deficiencies of their respective border areas.

While pointing out a close connection between the concept of security and economic backwardness, Dutta (2001) explains that the traditional concept of security which is understood as physical protection of the common people from external military threats is no longer relevant in the present age of globalization. Rather he argues that in the present context, weak political system leading to perpetual domestic unrest that includes ethnic strife and economic underdevelopment may feel insecure. Thus the deep rooted sense of economic deprivation and alienation along with other factors motivate insurgents located in the 'economic periphery' of a nation to seek help from across the border and even strive for secessionism.

### **Critical Perspectives on India's Northeast Policy vis-a-vis Myanmar**

An assessment of Indian government's policy towards the Northeast often shows an asymmetry between India's support for democratic values in neighboring Myanmar and systematic violation of the same when it comes to suppression of dissent and violence in the Northeast for the sake of protecting "national security" interests. This paradox holds especially true in the context of counter-insurgency operations which have been military-driven and involving draconian laws like the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA) specially designed for the Northeast to empower the armed forces for controlling the 'disturbed areas'. **Barbora (2006)** laments that the recurring theme in this saga of controlling post-colonial frontiers has

been one of militarization where political space for negotiation has been determined by security concerns. Thus the aerial bombings in the Naga and Mizo Hills in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s had been a part of this ‘counter-insurgency’ saga and one that exemplified the State’s military response to what basically started as ‘articulation of grievances’ by various indigenous groups and instead opting for coercion, corruption and the politics of exclusion and retribution. According to **Goswami (2010)**, the AFSPA forms the core of the Indian government’s relationship with the Northeast region, setting in motion “a vicious cycle of violence giving birth to more violence, brutalization eroding ideologies, and a state sanctioned terror engendering a disregard for peaceful alternatives”. While making a link between Indian state’s flawed security strategy in the Northeast and the sense of alienation firmly embedded in the region’s post-colonial ‘frontier’ character itself, he argues that even after the Northeast is made a part of the country, that sense of ‘otherness’ and ‘distance’ associated with the ‘Northeast myth’ and the popular fear of the violent, untamed, and the unknown, vestiges that remained in the Indian administrative and policymaking approaches towards the region is alarming.

Calling for a critical engagement with India’s Northeast policy, **Baruah (2005)** in his book ‘Durable Disorder’ more emphatically criticizes the Indian government’s militarist approach in its anti-insurgency campaigns in dealing with the ethnic militias ‘who serve as effective security providers in a context where institutions of the state cannot guarantee security’ as well as its ‘developmentalist mindset’ that turns a blind eye to the real sufferings of the people in pursuit of such vague goals as nation-building and development. **Baruah (2002)** also argues that the Indian state’s incapacity is laid bare by the continued existence of a plethora of militants as a result of delinking of societies in the Northeast from the functions and policy agendas of State and calls for a radical rethinking of policies as the challenges confronting the north-east are more serious than what the counter-insurgency mindset can grasp and remedy. Also highlighting the gap between the development aspirations of the Northeast people and the infrastructure plans of the Indian government, he cautions that reviving the natural links with Myanmar would not automatically benefit the northeast people as improved infrastructure would lead to more resource outflows and competition unless decisions for such projects are clearly based on their social rates of return.

**Nardi (2008)** in his article throws light on how the Indian top leadership in its pursuance for a genuine security policy with Myanmar to crack down on insurgents focuses too much on the traditional security factors to the exclusion of other factors, such as economic, political and cultural influences, resulting in (the flow of) drugs, lawlessness and (manipulation of cross-border) ethnic kinship. Hence, in order to effectively resolve the northeast security issues, India's Myanmar policy needs to incorporate all these concerns. While analyzing the impact of New Delhi's policy on the Northeast, **Lacina (2009)** in her article posits how the Indian State's military strategy in the region has created and sustained localized autocracies in Northeast India as a result of not only little political will in finding enduring solutions to violence, but the tolerance by the centre of such repressive militant activities (often targeting civilians and not security forces). Thus peace treaties or ceasefire agreements are preferred to achieve short-term goals of preventing violence against government institutions and winning a few parliamentary seats from the Northeast.

**Subir Bhaumik (2009)** also states that the co-option process so preferred by the Indian government to contain recalcitrant groups in the form of resource transfer and power-sharing may as well appear as a genuine 'democratic exercise' to win over insurgents. He argues that the ultimate objective of such exercise makes it questionable and 'malafide' since in actuality the act of buying loyalties by use of force rather than voluntary means and through monetary inducements and promise of high offices only breeds ground for emergence of more such groups only to revive the familiar allegations of "betrayal, neglect and alienation".

## **SCOPE AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

The crux of the study lies in the fact that India needs a stable and robust Northeast to engage with its geo-politically significant Southeast Asian neighbour Myanmar. Northeast as we know it today is far from the "gateway to Southeast Asia" as predicted by the political leadership in New Delhi but continues to reel under ethnic conflict, poverty and economic stagnation. The ground realities notwithstanding, the people of the region continue to struggle against the clichéd terms and notions with which they have been assessed and evaluated. This has been cited by several authors the underlying factor among others responsible for widening the fissure between the so-called 'Mainland India' and 'Northeast India'. As is evident from available

literature, the Northeast region has continued to remain a mere footnote in the discourse of India's Look East Policy despite its strategic importance and role. The recent surge in sub-regional cooperation like the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation, Bangladesh China India Myanmar (BCIM) Initiative and Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC) while outlining Northeast importance tend to overshadow the more intrinsic problems of the region.

This study would thus attempt to postulate a coherent narrative that has been underemphasized in the security literature of Northeast- its potential to be a catalyzing factor in India-Myanmar relations. In doing so, it becomes inevitable to re-look at Indian government's security policy towards the Northeast in solving the issue of insurgency as well as its recent developmental approach to transform the borderlands from 'land-locked' to 'land-linked'. As India's integration processes with ASEAN received a new momentum with the ongoing efforts to establish connectivity with and via Myanmar, the stakes and therefore the implications for Northeast need to be examined in a new light. This is crucial given the fact that ethnic militancy along with other cross-border security issues like drug trafficking, arms smuggling as well as illegal migration continue to thrive in the region. The present study will thus analyze the persistent transnational challenges that confront Indian government in fostering a deeper relationship with Myanmar. Also, it would suggest that India needs a new roadmap to facilitate a time-bound blueprint for integrating Northeast with Myanmar on one hand, and to enable Northeast to play a key role in its foreign policy initiatives on the other. Hence the study will try to bring forth the special significance and indispensability of Northeast region in the continental dimension of India's Look East Policy which is interesting given India's strategic and diplomatic ambitions in the region.

Thus the three main objectives of the dissertation are as outlined below:

- To examine India's strategic interests in Myanmar vis-à-vis Northeast
- To critically assess Indian government's developmental intervention in the Northeast and how it has impacted on the region's security problems.
- To establish the centrality of Northeast in India's policy engagement with Myanmar.

## **RESEARCH PROBLEMS**

The present study will try to explore and attempt to address the following problems from a new critical perspective.

- What are the strategic gains for India in engaging more closely with Myanmar?
- How far has the counter-insurgency approach of the Indian government succeeded in solving ethnic security problems in the Northeast?
- What alternative policies are available for India and Myanmar to deal with cross-border issues?
- Can border trade contribute towards sustainable development in the Northeast?
- Is there a link between border security and the land connectivity initiatives in India's Myanmar policy?
- Does the Look East Policy in its current phase need a re-orientation?

## **HYPOTHESES**

- India's changed policy towards Myanmar since the 1990s has been guided by its national security interests.
- Lack of political will in evolving a comprehensive policy for the Northeast results in the region's further political and economic alienation.
- Improved security in the Northeast would help deepen India's strategic ties with Myanmar.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The present study is based on available sources- both primary and secondary- by using mainly qualitative methods. Primary sources would be drawn from press statements, various governmental and non-governmental reports and project studies. Secondary sources to be employed include books, articles, journals, policy documents, published and unpublished research works. Internet-based sources will also be used extensively.



## **STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH**

The key to integrating the northeast region lies in understanding its complex social, cultural and political history. Although this has been a subject of immense interests among scholars and academicians, to place northeast in the realm of international relations as occupying a central position is a relatively new or less explored area of research. The present study is thus an attempt to introduce northeast India to the larger dynamics of regional politics by making it the central focus, hence the title “Northeast as a security factor” in India-Myanmar relations. Here the term ‘northeast’ is used as though it implies a separate regional entity, one that is detached and removed from continental India. But this is only a matter of emphasizing the acuteness of the region’s problem not so much as an affirmation of its isolated status in the geopolitical matrix of South Asia. In fact, the present work is designed so as to assert the significance of Northeast’s integrality with India.

A detailed analysis on India-Myanmar relations cannot be made while overlooking Northeast region (NER). As a matter of fact India-Northeast-Myanmar comes under one continuum and cannot be studied in isolation mainly for two reasons. One, NER is strategically located at the crossroads of South Asia and Southeast Asia, linking India and Myanmar along a 1643 km long border which is critical in India’s economic and geopolitical considerations. Second, among ASEAN states, Myanmar is the only country that has both land and maritime border with India. This gives India the double advantage of pursuing a trade policy through a continental linkage while enhancing its strategic engagement with Myanmar. The reason for choosing the security aspect of bilateral relations is motivated by the enduring legacy of ethnic insurgency and low-intensity conflicts with their spill-over effects that necessitate bilateral cooperation. Keeping in mind the challenge of conducting such an investigation within a short span of time, the present study has been divided into five chapters;

The first chapter has therefore concerned itself with introducing and outlining the topic and structure of the research. The preliminary part of the chapter has been devoted to contextualizing the research theme and highlighting the issues that will be eventually covered in subsequent chapters. In the second chapter titled “Insurgency and State Response”, the root cause of insurgency and conflict in the northeast will be discussed with emphasis on the post-colonial Indian State’s nature of response

towards the Northeast. The main focus will be on the Northeast region's peculiar emergence which is a result of its problematic integration to mainland India and how this has cast a long shadow on the past, present and future status of Northeast. The chapter will try to highlight certain matters of interest vis-à-vis Northeast such as 'centre-periphery', 'militarization', 'colonization' and 'autonomy' in dealing with a vast scope of ethnic unrest that manifest itself into several movements. In an effort to limit itself the chapter will not dwell deep into the concept and meaning of insurgency but rather focus on bringing out the issues related to it. The third main chapter is basically an extension of the second one in a sense that Northeast will be contextualized as a transborder region vulnerable to transnational issues and problems. This chapter will try to bring forth the role of Myanmar in the insurgency scenario of India's northeast and how the change in India's outlook and policy engagement came about. Thus the primary focus will be on cooperation between India and Myanmar on the security front especially in conducting counter-insurgency operations. The regional, domestic and border dynamics of security as well as northeast strategic, cultural and ethnic linkages with Myanmar will be examined.

The fourth main chapter will deal with 'border trade and infrastructure development' in the context of India-Myanmar cooperation with particular attention to the local dynamics of trade and related problems. It will be a slight departure from the previous chapters as northeast economic issues will be highlighted in order to emphasize on the importance of border trade and its role. To make the chapter more relevant and in tune with recent developments in India's foreign policy outreach, viz., 'Act East Policy', land connectivity has been included within the framework of infrastructure development as is only critical for rescuing northeast from its geopolitical entrapment and for trade expansion as well. The last chapter, i.e., conclusion will test the hypotheses and summarize the findings and also suggest a way out of the current imbroglio that has entangled India's northeast approach for decades.

**Table 1.1: Some Important Particulars of the Northeast States**

State	Population (as per Census 2011)	Area (In sq. km)	Capital	Date of Attaining Statehood	No. of seats in Lok Sabha	No. of seats in Rajya Sabha
Assam	<b>31,169,272</b>	<b>78,438</b>	<b>Dispur</b>	<b>15 Aug 1947</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>
Arunachal Pradesh	<b>13,82,611</b>	<b>83,743</b>	<b>Itanagar</b>	<b>20 Feb 1987</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
Manipur	<b>27,21,756</b>	<b>22,327</b>	<b>Imphal</b>	<b>21 Jan 1972</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
Meghalaya	<b>29,64,001</b>	<b>22,429</b>	<b>Shillong</b>	<b>21 Jan 1972</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
Mizoram	<b>10,91,014</b>	<b>21,081</b>	<b>Aizawl</b>	<b>20 Feb 1987</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
Nagaland	<b>19,80,602</b>	<b>16,579</b>	<b>Kohima</b>	<b>1 Dec 1963</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
Tripura	<b>36,71,032</b>	<b>10,486</b>	<b>Agartala</b>	<b>21 Jan 1972</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>

*Source: Based on States of the Northeast at a glance prepared by MDoNER as per 2011 census available at [www.mdoner.gov.in](http://www.mdoner.gov.in)*

Map 1.1: Map of Northeastern Region.



Source: De and Majumdar (2014), "Developing Cross-Border Production Networks between North Eastern Region of India, Bangladesh and Myanmar: A Preliminary Assessment", RIS at <http://www.ris.org.in>>RIS\_images>pdf>Fin...

## Chapter 2

### INSURGENCY AND STATE RESPONSE

*Don't get me wrong. There's a certain beauty in your resistance. Your defiance of categorization. But it's a beauty we can't afford.*

[Jeanine to Triss in "Divergent"]

The history of northeast India is often equated with the history of insurgency. This has much to do with the Indian State's diagnosis of the problems- political and economic- that plague the northeast region since independence. It is a matter of interest to find out whether those diagnostics on which the Indian government's policy has been based can be termed as wrongful as much as it is important to reassess the Indian state's treatment of the region's longstanding political problem. Also it is important to analyze the complex security framework within which both function as 'centre' and 'periphery' especially since northeast is a region peripheral to the national imaginary (Baruah ed 2009). According to Sudhir J. George, Northeast is a region peripheral in the national consciousness of the racially dominant mainland India and has never formed a part of the mainstream awareness as evident in the blank history of the region except for a minuscule reference in the syllabi of school textbooks (George 2012: 178).

In fact, the centre-periphery or mainland-frontier model serves best to explain the logic behind insurgency and Counter-insurgency that has defined much of the relationships between India and the northeast<sup>7</sup>. Dinesh Kotwal (2008) argues that the peripheral location, geographical isolation and the landlocked character of northeast India, facing not so friendly countries like Bangladesh, Myanmar and China has great geo-political significance in the domain of insurgency. Although the term 'North East' belies the complex diversities and ethnicities of the frontier region that it

---

<sup>7</sup>The concept of 'centre and periphery' or 'mainland and frontier' has been extensively used by several scholars and authors writing on the subject. Although in the subsequent chapters the trans-border nature of Northeast will be emphasized upon, this model of explanation will be employed in the context of insurgency in the present chapter.

appears to characterize, the nature of conflict and tension across the states found a great degree of consonance both in terms of intent and purpose (Upadhyay 2006). Since the Northeast states are contiguous, there is uniformity and linkages between insurgent outfits and the spill-over effects of each insurgency are felt by neighbouring states (Bhattacharjee and Nayak 2013). This makes it feasible to address the region in its entirety as a compact whole.

However, this is not to undermine the varied, and at times overlapping, conceptions and manifestations of discontent among insurgent groups of different states who each claim to be articulating the interests and goals of their own (Baruah 2002). Besides, the ethnic rebel outfits still active in the region like the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM) no longer enjoy the same level of legitimacy and support among the communities they seek to represent. Their constant adoption of violent means has significantly decreased their popularity. Internal factions and turf wars arising from diversity of interests have led the latter to further split into three more units, viz., NSCN-(K) or Khaplang, NSCN-(U) or Unification and NSCN-KK or Khole-Kitovi, thereby considerably weakening their bargaining power.

There is also prevalence of inter-ethnic issues and rivalries that are not necessarily directed at the centre but at the state authorities that are seen as promoting the interests of dominant ethnic groups. The fierce movement for Bodoland challenges the process of nationality formation in Assam (Gupta 2005), while the conflict between Karbis and Dimasas in the state's Karbi Anglong District emanated from competition over land and forest resources. The Tangkhul Nagas, Hmars and Kukis in Manipur have been at logger heads with one other as well as against the dominance of ethnic Meiteis and other tribes. As a consequence, the demand for greater autonomy or self-governance within the existing political structures forms a part of the insurgency discourse. Nevertheless, these intra-regional and intra-ethnic conflicts will not be extensively dealt with as the focus of the chapter will be on the relation between India and its northeast as understood in the insurgency context.

In the process of explaining insurgency and its cause, scholars often fail to bring out the intensity of sentiments involved in the claims for 'ethnic homeland' or 'distinct identity' that binds members of a community together. In fact, these enduring

sentiments continue to motivate and rekindle the lingering hope for a possible ‘greater autonomy’ even when unrealistic under the particular political circumstances. Ironically, even the so-called “success story” of Mizoram may not be quiet so if the nuances of common people’s sentiments and perceptions toward the granting of statehood is closely examined (Gupta 2005). The daily struggles and frustration with State’s political functioning frequently lead many to question the ‘unholy union’ with India, and the misgivings toward the 1987 Peace Accord persist<sup>8</sup>. The idea of an independent State still appeals to a significant portion of public thinking and verbally invoked whenever a befitting occasion arises. Contrary to the tale of peace that has been widely propagated, the state of Mizoram is still inflicted with ethnic issues involving minority Hmars<sup>9</sup> and Brus that have been launching armed movements against the state since 1987 (Lalthakima 2008). With the debates and deliberations on these issues far from over, signing off Mizoram as a done deal would almost amount to a policy *faux pas*.

As per the SATP database, there are at least 28 militant formations that remained active throughout 2014 in Manipur including the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), United Liberation Front (ULF) and Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL) as well as the Isak-Muivah faction of NSCN (Bhattacharjee 2015). In Assam, prominent militant organizations like the Independent faction of United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA-I), the National Democratic Front of Bodoland-IK Songbijit faction (NDFB-IKS), the Karbi People’s Liberation Tigers (KPLT) and other small militant groups remained active. In case of Nagaland, a time-bound negotiation of peace talks has been initiated by the Union government with the NSCN (IM) while observing ceasefire agreements with the other factions (Bhattacharjee 2015.). Although the security scenario has seen a marked improvement in the current context, there is a

---

<sup>8</sup> Here it should be mentioned that the peace negotiations and the resultant Memorandum of Settlement between the Mizo National Front and the Indian government was popularly backed by the Mizo people as they had high expectations from the outcome which was also the reason attributed to its relative success. But resentment towards it grew as the post-1987 State governance failed to evolve an inclusive development strategy and more than two decades of peace did not result in economic well-being and prosperity. See R. Zamawia “Peace and Development in Mizoram: A Political Dimension” in Patnaik, Jagadish K ed (2007) “Peace and Development in Mizoram: Role of the State and Civil Society”.

<sup>9</sup> The ethnic Hmars are widely accepted as a sub tribe under the Chin-Kuki-Mizo ethnic group yet some sections among them have been demanding an autonomous district council to differentiate themselves from the supposedly Lushai-dominated Mizo society and culture.

rather explicit admission within the political circle that the Northeast issue is an “unfinished agenda”<sup>10</sup> that needs to be tackled with utmost sensitivity.

### **Emergence of Northeast as ‘Northeast’**

The peculiar emergence of northeast either as a ‘geographical accident’ (Bhaumik 2009:26) or its subsequent political creation as a region partly explains the troubled history behind what is commonly known in mainstream literature as insurgency<sup>11</sup>. The region covers an area of 25, 5083 sq km, a mere 8 % of the total geographical area of India. It comprises of seven contiguous units commonly referred to as ‘the seven sister states’<sup>12</sup> viz., Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Tripura. These states have a combined population of around 40 million which represents 3.1% of the country’s total population, and is roughly equal to the demographic size of Odisha, the 11<sup>th</sup> most populous state of India (as per 2011 census). Northeast lies at an international junction sharing 98 % of its borders with countries like China, Myanmar, Bhutan and Bangladesh and is linked with the rest of India through the narrow ‘chicken-neck’ corridor of Siliguri in the state of West Bengal. The term ‘Northeast’ had often been meant to indicate the province of Assam and the princely states of Manipur and Tripura (Haokip 2012). Interestingly, the term was an administrative category first coined by the British and persisted through the colonial period (Baruah, 1999 in Dutta, 2014:3). The British referred to it as the “Eastern Frontier of Bengal” or the “Northeast Frontier of Bengal” (Pemberton 1835; Mackenzie 1871 as cited in Goswami 2010). After independence, it became official when the Northeastern Council (NEC) was set up in 1971 and new states were formed in the region.

The present-day states like Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya were once incorporated into Assam after the latter’s separation from Bengal<sup>13</sup> for administrative

---

<sup>10</sup> Subir Bhaumik used this term in a lecture on ‘Bangladesh-Northeast-Myanmar- A Roadmap for India’ delivered on November 3 2014 in School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

<sup>11</sup> The term insurgency in this chapter is meant to imply armed insurrection against the State authority either for separatism or autonomy as the professed objective and is used interchangeably with terms such as militancy, ethnic uprising, armed movement, armed rebellion etc without conforming to any strict definition and categorization of these concepts.

<sup>12</sup> Although Sikkim was added to the Northeast in 2003, it will not be included in the discussion of this chapter due to the different process of its integration with India and absence of links with insurgency.

<sup>13</sup> Assam was made a separate province in 1874 until which it was a part of the Bengal province.



convenience during the British rule. As a matter of fact, it was during the colonial expansion era that the erstwhile 'free and independent' tribal countries came under British administrative control and their territories begun to be charted out as against their claims and wishes. The Naga Hills District was created in 1866 and annexed to Assam while the other Naga-inhabited areas that formed parts of the enchanted space *Nagalim*<sup>14</sup> remained as frontiers. In 1898, the South Lushai Hills (under the jurisdiction of Bengal province) and the North Lushai Hills (under the jurisdiction of Assam) were merged to form the Lushai Hills District and placed under the administrative purview of Assam province. The Tuensang division (inhabited by Nagas) was annexed to the Northeast Frontier Agency (NEFA) which later became the state of Arunachal Pradesh. Interestingly, NEFA was placed under direct central rule and came under the Ministry of External Affairs in Delhi (Chandola 2013). The princely states of Manipur and Tripura did not come directly under the British and maintained their separate existence as native kingdoms.

The Anglo-Burmese Wars<sup>15</sup> concluded with the Treaty of Peace signed at Yandabo on February 24, 1826 which marked the entry of Assam into British India as well as the ouster of the Burmese from Assam, Cachar, Jaintia and Manipur. By defeating the Burmese at the behest of the Ahom King who sought the British help, Assam was made a non-regulatory province of the British Indian Empire in October 1838 (Haokip 2012). The boundary between Manipur and Myanmar called the 'Pemberton Line' was delimited in 1833. The British henceforth consolidated and expanded their presence in the Northeast, by means of friendly alliances or establishment of suzerainty over the 'wild tribes' along the eastern and northern borders (Verghese 1996). The process of consolidation led to subsequent enactment of rules and regulations that were suited to the specific requirements of the northeast, and distinct from the laws applicable to mainland India. For instance, the drawing up of Inner Line Regulations in 1873<sup>16</sup>, known as the 'Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations' was done in order to protect the native inhabitants of the hill districts from both the influence

---

<sup>14</sup> The concept of Greater Nagaland or Nagalim covers all Naga inhabited areas of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Manipur, apart from the present day state of Nagaland. It also includes Myanmar's Sagaing Division and Kachin State.

<sup>15</sup> A series of three Anglo-Burmese wars were fought in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the years of (1824- 26), (1852- 53) and (1885- 86) resulting in integration of Myanmar into the British Empire.

<sup>16</sup> The Inner Line Regulations of 1873 was extended to all the hill territories except the Garo, Khasi and Jaintia Hills. Today the ILP applies to the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland and parts of Manipur.

and infiltration of plains people in what the British perceived as the sacrosanct socio-cultural sphere of the hill tribes. It was later in defence of these 'areas' that many groups in the northeast took up arms against the Indian State.

Although scholars differ in their view towards the ultimate motive behind the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system, most of them subscribe to the notion that it not only served as an effective barrier between two diametrically opposed geographical spaces, but it also severed what little connection had been in place. Thus the ILP system and similar such regulations paved the way for the independent and isolated existence of Northeast as a region. It also accentuated the notion of the plains and the hills as two binary opposites in the colonial spatial understanding that classified people as belonging to either to the hills or to the plains (Rich 2006 as cited in Baruah 2008). Whether or not the ILP was a part of the British political strategy of 'divide and rule' as claimed by many mainland scholars, it certainly created a deep-rooted schism between the plains and the hills.

Moreover, the pattern of administration exercised by the British in the region differed from what was followed in the rest of the country (Gopalakrishnan 1995). Most of the hill areas including the Mizo and the Naga Hills Districts were only loosely administered and given much freedom in governing themselves according to their customary laws and practices. The Government of India Act 1935 declared the areas to be excluded and partially excluded, thereby effectively prohibiting free interaction and movement between the plains and the hills. These rules also blocked nationalist India campaigns, such as the independence struggles, from places like the Naga Hills (Chasie and Hazarika 2009). The British policy resulted in the tribals never feeling at home with the rest of the country and their inability to bring themselves into the national mainstream even after independence (Khangte 1991:12).

When the hill districts were brought under the scope of the Sixth Schedule after independence, the Nagas protested with armed struggles leading to the subsequent territorial transformation that saw the emergence of the present state of Nagaland in 1963, an amalgamation of the Naga Hills District and the Tuensang Frontier Division of the erstwhile Northeast Frontier Agency (NEFA) now known as Arunachal Pradesh (Khizi 2009). The state of Meghalaya came into existence as the three hill districts of the ethnic Khasis, Garos and Jaintia were merged in 1971 while Manipur and Tripura

also experienced transition to statehood in the same year. Mizoram, after two decades of insurgency acquired statehood in 1986 followed by Arunachal in 1987. Assam was left with the valleys of Brahmaputra and Barak along with the lower hills inhabited by the Dimasas and Karbis (Khizi 2009). Thus, the geographical assemblage of Northeast as understood today came into existence.

### **Integration and Movements against “Continued Colonization”**

If northeast was physically aloof from mainland India before and during the colonial period, its isolation in the aftermath of independence was somehow complete (Bhaumik 2009). The post-colonial political changes further shaped northeast into a peripheral borderland, cut off from mainland India yet disjoined with neighbouring Myanmar, Bangladesh and Bhutan<sup>17</sup>. The partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan rendered northeast practically landlocked and inaccessible (Hussain 2009). The region’s geographical advantage through its communication network with East Pakistan including rail, road and river links was severely limited. The nationalist leaders’ attempt to integrate the myriad communities and territories of British India coincided with the rise of political consciousness exclusively based on cultural and ethnic identity in the Northeast. Two outstanding issues in this context came to the fore; viz., *ethnic political mobilization* and *the national security question*. While the former soon assumed separatist overtones and violent assertion of autonomy, the latter became the rallying point, as well as justification of the Indian political leadership in its forceful suppression of ethnic uprisings. The juxtaposition of these two forms the core of analysis of insurgency and counter-insurgency in the present study.

The idea of India that emerged post-1947 did not endorse alternative visions and notions about what democratic India was supposed to be. It was this denial of democratic options that prompted major insurgencies in Northeast India. The Naga movement for instance adopted various methods of peaceful non-cooperation in the initial stages including boycotting Indian politics, elections, and taxes. It was only when the Delhi government sent army to put down their resistance that the Nagas resorted to arms (Chandola 2013:70). For many of the tribes and communities in the Northeast, end of British rule merely signaled change in regime, and to accept the

---

<sup>17</sup> Here I mean to imply that the Northeast States along with the Hill Districts were never really given the option to integrate with the newly independent neighbouring states and remained like buffer zones during the period of dilemma in their political destiny.

Indians, whom they considered weaker and inferior than the British, as their 'new rulers' was plainly unacceptable (Haokip 2012). According to Roy (2005), freedom of India in 1947 means *continued colonization* for them. He argues that the ambitious nation building project of India after independence failed to take into account the unique aspirations and self-conception of smaller nationalities that exist in the fringes of the State, largely disconnected physically and emotionally from the rest of India. He goes on to state that these 'nations from below' were well-poised to reject the Indian state's ambitious goal of national integration which they felt was being imposed on them. As such, integration with the Indian Union went against their own sense of freedom and sovereignty, and never reconciled with the manner in which they were made a part of India.

The integration process faced staunch opposition from all quarters in the Northeast except Tripura whose merger was consensual. Their fear and anxiety of coming under the Indian administrative rule contrasted with the strong desire to maintain sovereignty in their traditional domains. Ironically, the merger of Manipur was done in a persuasive, coercive manner whereby the Maharajah of Manipur was first consulted on the matter of integration and later forced to sign the merger agreement with India on September 21, 1949. The manner of merger created bitterness and resentment among many Manipuris and was termed as illegal and unconstitutional by many insurgent groups (Haokip 2012). In case of the Nagas as well as the Mizos, a special agreement was struck with the Indian government that provided for a 'conditional merger' with the Indian Union with the right to opt out after a certain period, i.e., ten years, if they became dissatisfied with the terms of accommodation<sup>18</sup>.

As per the Hydari agreement, Nagaland was granted a protected status for ten years after which the Nagas would decide whether they wanted to stay in the Union or not. But this understanding was not honoured by independent India which proclaimed the Naga territory to be a de facto part of the country. The Naga National Council (founded in February 1946) under the extremist leadership of A.Z Phizo took up the cause of the Nagas' aspirations for independence. The plan to secede from India was announced in 14 August 1947, just a day before India gained freedom. In 1950, the NNC conducted a plebiscite among the Nagas to decide on the question of

---

<sup>18</sup> The deal was struck between the Naga National Council (NNC) and the British administration under the Hydari Agreement.

“integration with or secession from India” and the outcome vote was ninety-nine per cent in favour of independence (Hazarika 1994). The Nagas went on to wage one of the longest and most fervent struggles for independence. Here it is crucial to add that the Nagas have always maintained their “independent status” vis-à-vis India. They submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission in 1929 whereby they pleaded to the British government ‘to leave them alone and determine for themselves as in ancient times’ (Iralu 1993 as cited in Das 2014). Thus their unabated desire to disassociate themselves with India converted into a full-blown movement in the subsequent years.

As the British withdrawal appeared imminent, there was a great uncertainty about the political future and apprehensions grew even in the Mizo Hills. The Mizo Union<sup>19</sup> mainly comprised of moderates agreed to join the Indian Union within the constitutional framework while the extremist groups were strongly against it. In a memorandum submitted to the Bordoloi Committee, the leaders of the Mizo Union expressed their willingness to stay within the Union of India for duration of ten years provided that their demands for creation of Greater Mizoram<sup>20</sup>, autonomy on matters of internal administration and granting of sufficient annual grants to Mizoram for developmental needs are guaranteed (Prasad 1987).

With regard to the future status of the Mizo district, they maintained in a consensus that they should be given the option to secede from India once the interim period of association was over (Prasad 1987). The option of joining Burma once India gained independence was proposed by the United Mizo Freedom Organization (UMFO) citing cultural proximity and prospects for better representation. However, the desire to secede gained momentum in the wake of Mautam<sup>21</sup>, a severe rat famine crisis, as the much anticipated help did not come on time from the government despite repeated requests, leaving thousands of Mizo to suffer grave consequences (Khangte 1991).

---

<sup>19</sup> The Mizo Union, earlier the Mizo Commoners Union, came into being as a political movement against the century long tradition of hereditary chieftainship in the Mizo Hills and was formed in 1946 to advocate for abolition of the same. It became a political party representing the Mizo District Council within the State of Assam.

<sup>20</sup> Greater Mizoram symbolizes an inclusive territorial homeland for various Mizo tribes inhabiting areas lying in Tripura, Cachar, Manipur, Chittagong Hill Tracts and Burma to be amalgamated with the erstwhile Lushai Hills.

<sup>21</sup> Mautam means “bamboo death” caused by flowering of the bamboos which in turn give rise to phenomenal increase of rodents and resulting wide scale destruction of crops. It is a cyclical ecological phenomenon that occurs in Mizoram every 50 years.

Thus, a Mizo National Famine Front was conceived in 1960 to undertake relief measures for the famine victims. It later transformed into a political party under the name Mizo National Front (MNF) with Laldenga as its President and ultimately spearheaded the independence movement for the Mizos.

The ULFA's call for 'independent Assam' in the 1980s mainly stems from the growing disenchantment over the huge influx of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, following the latter's liberation from Pakistan in 1971 (Mazumdar 2005). Assamese nationalism felt threatened in the context of large population inflow including Bangladeshis and Nepalese as well as mainlanders from different States and with no adequate political arrangements in place. Besides, the Indian government did little to tackle the situation. This set the stage for the All Assam Students Union (ASSU) and Gana Sangram Parishad (GSP) to launch a wide-scale agitation in 1979 that transformed into a strong movement directed at "protecting Assamese identity against foreign infiltrators and outsiders". The problems of immigration and refugees have been a longstanding issue not only in Assam, but in Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh as well. In Tripura, a tribal movement against Bengali migration broke out as early as 1967 and there occurred intense communal clashes between tribal and Bengali militants in 1979 and 1980 (Lacina 2009:7). The formation of the Tripura Nationalist Volunteers (TNV), a rebel force consisting of Tripura nationalist parties, was mainly in response to the government-sponsored in-migration of Bengalis (Lacina 2009). The violent movement against Bengali settlers continued for a decade until 1988 when a settlement was made with the Indian government. In the light of this context, it is imperative to look at the interplay of geo-politics and security that came into place in the region through the colonial/post-colonial perspective.

### **Continuity in Change: Mindless Mapping or Sheer indifference?**

Sanjib Baruah (2005) assigns the "durable disorder" in the Northeast to both colonial and post-colonial political failure. The flawed geo-political arrangement in the colonial era and the subsequent re-organization of northeast post-1947 bear testimony as to how discontent rooted in culture, history and geography can be exacerbated by prolonged neglect of these factors. The present ethnic tensions and unresolved identity problems are in part direct consequences of the 'mindless geographical mapping' of the region by the British colonizers in their attempt to bring the various tribes under

their control. The forcible penetration into the hills after the conquest of Assam and the patronizing encounters with the so-called “savages” who otherwise were never under domination caused huge resentment against the British (Hazarika 1994). The imperial policy of the British faced bold resistance not only from the nationalist Indians but also from the tribes inhabiting the hilly terrains lying in the borders between India and Burma. The Nagas and the Mizos caused enough disturbances for the British with their frequent raids and practice of ‘headhunting’ till they became subdued in subsequent punitive expeditions by the superior forces. The British acknowledged that it was almost impossible to prevent such recurrence of raids by the savage tribes inhabiting the most intricate hill ranges and impenetrable tracts covered on the edges with dense forests and jungles and advocated for a certain show of force to induce in them a fear of punishment as the only safeguard available (Reid 1983).

But Reid also pointed out that such punishments did not really deter the more powerful tribes among them inhabiting the central high hills as “they believed in the inaccessibility of their country and their safety from danger of punishment, calling for cooperation between the governments of Assam, Bengal and Burma to deal with the hill men” (Reid 1983:4). As a result of these encounters, the British seemed to have realized the patriotic and independentist spirit of these tribes early on as they decided to govern their territories with minimum State interference. The post-colonial State devised a constitutional plan to accommodate the tribal populations and their aspirations through the introduction of sixth schedule<sup>22</sup> along with various other safeguards. Since these provisions cover the erstwhile excluded and partially excluded areas, a semblance can be drawn between the frontier in colonial times with special laws and security concerns that were different from the mainland (Barbora 2006).

There is an implicit continuity between the colonial practice of ‘divide and rule’ and the post-colonial State’s policy in categorizing the diverse tribes of the Northeast based on their ethnicity and level of backwardness or primitiveness, albeit within a legal judicial framework. The Northeast people’s allegiance to their traditional identity and ‘myths of origin’ was immensely underestimated by the Centre from the beginning. Rather, they have long since been treated as primitive tribes or savages and

---

<sup>22</sup> The sixth schedule (Article 244 (2) and Article 75 (1)) provides for autonomous district councils as per the recommendations of a sub-committee of the Constituent Assembly called ‘North-East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Committee’ appointed by the Interim Government of India and headed by Gopinath Bordoloi, the first Assam Chief Minister, discussed in later section.

not as equal partners or fellow citizens in the negotiations for political spaces. Goswami (2010) asserts that the common perception about northeast in mainland thinking that subscribes to popular myths such as ‘the violent, the untamed and the unknown’ continued to shape the Indian administrative and policy making approaches toward the region after northeast was made a part of the country. The mainland attitude towards the region, in popular perception, is believed to be coloured by ‘ignorance’, ‘arrogance’, ‘discrimination’, ‘coercion’ and ‘co-optation’ (Upadhyay 2009).

The use of the term ‘scheduled’ in defining the tribal identities in the Indian Constitution implies the protected status of these communities and their vulnerable situation<sup>23</sup>. On the other hand, the non-tribals believe that the principle of protective discrimination precludes a level playing field in political and economic spheres as their chances of equal participation are severely limited, enhancing divisions among the varied inhabitants of the region (Upadhyay 2009:93). The continuation of Inner Line system is also a recognition of the strategic location of these areas along the international border as well as their cultural and physical distance from the plains and the restricted connections between the two. An Indian citizen from the mainland considered an outsider and therefore requiring an official permit to enter these areas<sup>24</sup> is somewhat an intriguing aspect of the outcome of post-colonial Indian engagement with Northeast. This way, post-colonial spaces of the diverse ethnic groups were re-configured in the name of protection of their territories from “land-hungry” outsiders and preservation of their cultural integrity from the plains people as well as from each other.

Insurgencies often signify contestation of national boundaries that clash with ethnic borders that have long enjoyed acceptance and legitimacy. Often ethnic communities live across territories that are claimed by two or more nations and do not necessarily confine themselves with the rigid singular citizenship imposed on them. In the

---

<sup>23</sup> Article 366 (25) of the Constitution of India refers to the Scheduled Tribes as those communities who are scheduled in accordance with the specifications provided in Article 342. According to the Lokur Committee, a tribe to be listed as “scheduled” should have specific features like primitive traits, distinctive culture, shyness of contact with the community at large, geographical isolation and backwardness.

<sup>24</sup> The ILP system is still in vogue in the States of Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland (excluding Dimapur) and the Hill areas of Manipur. There are ongoing demands to introduce similar restriction in the States of Meghalaya, Assam and in the plains of Manipur.



northeast, ethnic Nagas and Mizos are both spread across territories lying within India and Myanmar as well as the Chittagong Hill tracts of Bangladesh in the case of the Mizos. Following Burmese independence from British India the border areas were demarcated into that of India and Myanmar<sup>25</sup> causing territorial disintegration of the frontier tribes who found themselves cut off and separated from each other. The Government of India Act 1935 separated Myanmar from India by defining the former as “.....all territories which were immediately before the commencement of Part II of this Act comprised in India, being territories lying to the East of Bengal, the State of Manipur, Assam and Tribal areas connected with Assam...” and declared that Burma ceased to be a part of British dominion (The Geographer, International Boundary Study, 1968). In the case of the Nagas, Chandola (2013:91) offers an insight on the impracticability of dividing the frontier people as outlined below:

Nagas of both Burma and India are neither acquainted with the international border nor recognize it. This boundary is on paper only; on maps, not on the ground. If in Mon or Tuensang districts of India this boundary was placed on the ground, it would divide homes. In a house, a room would lie in India while other rooms would be in Myanmar.

The notions of shared origin and belonging have always been firmly invoked by these tribes in their fight for freedom and sovereignty within an imagined territory. This is exemplified by the movements of Nagas and Mizos which were less about supplanting the Indian government with alternative politics, as against alternative cartographies by running parallel governments and armies with more or less similar command structures (Sundar 2011:4). Thus it can be argued that ethnic conflicts in Northeast are mainly concerned with deep discontent with the political arrangements that came into place vis-à-vis their own issues and expectations. At the same time, the problems of Northeast are so varied that no “fit for all” solutions are available that can wholly address all the problems once and for all (Das 2014). To this regard, the most elaborate institutional approach in the form of Sixth Schedule<sup>26</sup> to address the Northeast issue merits attention.

---

<sup>25</sup> The first official Land Boundary agreement between the two governments of India and Burma was signed much later at Rangoon on March 10, 1967.

<sup>26</sup> As per the Sixth Schedule, autonomous regions under the District Council and Regional Council have been created in the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura. Wide-ranging administrative powers have been locally devolved to these councils and the powers of State government and Governors are subjected to great limitations in these areas.

## **The Sixth Schedule Approach: Boon or Bane?**

Tribal communities in the hills seek autonomy because they fear assimilation. Also fear of exploitation and alienation from one's ancestral land has continuously been the chief motivation behind tribal assertion of autonomous existence (Prasad 1987). The Sixth Schedule initially offered the much needed answer to the "autonomy question" by recognizing the rights of tribal self-rule as against the "policy of assimilation"<sup>27</sup> and give them the necessary safeguards to preserve their way of life, language and occupational system<sup>28</sup>. Since these tribes reside in the colonial construct of excluded and partially excluded territories, they already enjoyed certain freedom and also developed a sense of political consciousness as a corollary.

The Bordoloi Committee in its report submitted to the Advisory Committee of the Draft Constitution stated that such consciousness has even instilled ideas of independent status, "...the external relations under which would be governed by treaty or agreement only" (Shiva 1967 in Lalfakzuala 2014). But the lackadaisical operationalization of the schema estranged disparate tribal groups within the very state of Assam (Khan Suan 2007). The District Councils of Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Tribes did not make them immune from the introduction of Assamese as the State's lingua franca through imposition of the Assam Language Bill owing to the Assamese rulers' indifference towards tribal problems (Patricia Mukhim 2015). Besides, autonomy demands in the northeast are complicated by the sheer number of tribal and indigenous communities agitating around separate tribal identities. Among the 645 tribal communities present in India, around 145 tribal groups live in the northeast, of which 78 are large and the rest small constituting 28.81 per cent of the region's population (Tiba 2010). Though tribals spread throughout the region, they are in a majority in the hill states of Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Nagaland (Kumar 2011: 267). The application of a standard method with uniform characteristic to diverse tribes begun to be questioned as dissatisfaction with the working of the Sixth Schedule transpired soon after it was conceived (Lalfakzuala 2014).

---

<sup>27</sup> The policy of assimilation was advocated by some members of the Constituent Assembly and became a central theme in the debates and deliberations on the Sixth Schedule.

<sup>28</sup> The hill tribes mainly pursued the jhum method of cultivation requiring extensive use of land and forests over which they were given authority via the schedule.

The statute as policy tool has a “double-edge” quality to it in a sense that the isolated enclaves of the vulnerable “aboriginal” peoples have been turned into ethnic homelands giving them political privileges that come with majority status (Baruah 2007:27). The Sixth Schedule model in such context can be seen as perpetuating differences and community-based hostilities, concentration of particular tribes at particular places, inhibiting social progress on a holistic scale, deterring equity in development, promoting elite corruption and help sustain isolation and backwardness. Bethany Lacina (2009) argues that the persistent demands for local autonomy, boundary changes and new states amid inter-communal clashes had been a result of New Delhi’s strategy of investing in localized autocracy that promotes corruption and localized political violence.

The weak and corrupted political institutions and ceaseless local rivalries in the northeast feed on the greed and need of insurgents who freely take advantages of such situation to influence both civilians and politicians through extortion, bribery, intimidation and coercion. In some cases like the Bodos, concocting an autonomous council clearly did not assuage their aspirations as the Bodoland Liberation Tigers (BLT) (formed in 1995) continued to fight for statehood till a compromise in the form of Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) was reached in 2003. Since land and territoriality rather than economic interests constitute the central claims of tribal autonomy, contentions over the same have become a major issue among tribes in the northeast (Oinam 2008:8). If the Sixth Schedule was designed to pre-empt the potential rise in separatist demands by granting of autonomy beforehand, it can be credited to have fulfilled at least part of the political aspirations of the hill people. However, there is general disenchantment in the overall effectiveness of the Sixth Schedule in bringing about the desired developmental and political changes in the Hill areas where it is implemented (Chaube 2012).

The changing politics and demographics in Northeast also require a more sophisticated understanding of how autonomous powers can be used and misused by traditional elites and politicians. The showering of ‘economic largesse’, for instance, has been a staple approach of India in facing violent autonomy demands in the region (Hassan 2007:5). But Khizi (2009) rightly points out that the manner in which huge funds in the form of special economic packages that were injected as part of the five year plans has created a regime of corruption and a nexus between politicians and

bureaucrats on one hand and the militants on the other. Amit Kumar (2011) argues that insurgency has flourished because of the close nexus of politicians and bureaucrats with various militant groups, a fact recognized by various reports of the Union Home Ministry. One such report acknowledged that budgetary funds including DRDA funds of the central government are being diverted by the militants with the complicity of the administration that also has a vested interest in it (Kumar 2011:265). The community leadership (mainly drawn from the educated neo-middle class) is also responsible to a great extent in cooperating with the Indian State's strategy of "co-optation" and giving in to the luscious political rewards in exchange for accession to statehood or Union Territory (Goswami 2010). Thus, the so-called "noble savages" among members of the tribes are tamed and absorbed into the dominant political culture while the "naked brutes" continued to fight against the Indian State's security regime.

### **Re-organization and Peace Accords**

In essence, the re-organization of northeast practically meant the reconfiguration of post-colonial Assam and adjacent areas. It was done out of a grave necessity arising from the political development in the 1960s with increased violence and more vociferous demands for separation (Karlsson 2005). Unlike the linguistic reorganization of Indian States in the 1950s, the Northeast States reorganization was done on the basis of ethnic identity and corresponding aspirations. Therefore, it will be treated as Indian State's response towards the Northeast conflict. The drastic process was carried out in accordance with the North-Eastern Areas Reorganization Act drawn up in 1971 and the "task" was completed within a span of two decades. Triggered by the formation of Nagaland in 1963, the northeastern states that came into existence were created primarily in pursuit of an agenda driven by national security unlike other parts of India (Baruah 2007).

Although reorganization brought to an end some of the long-drawn ethnic movements like the Mizo insurgency, in case of others like the Bodos in Assam, partial fulfillment of autonomy demands only exacerbated hostility towards the government. On the other hand numerous peace accords have been signed between the Indian government and separatist groups as an attempt at reconciliation efforts. While the Mizo Accord of 1986 is deemed unique and fairly fruitful (it led to the formation of Mizoram as the

23<sup>rd</sup> State on February 20 1987 and became relatively peaceful ever since), the partial and exclusive nature of several peace accords proved to be either counter-productive or made no differences whatsoever. Rajagopalan, argues that such occasions arise in the context of-

- a) Important stakeholders being left out either deliberately or accidentally (implying an unwarranted mistake on the part of the government).
- b) An internal split in the signatory organization/outfit with breakaway factions forming separate armed groups.
- c) Overlapping claims of two or more groups over land resources etc at each other's expense.
- d) And lastly, the demonstration effect of accords leading others to demand the same privileges (Rajagopalan 2008: 3, 4).

Thus, the Shillong Accord signed in 1975<sup>29</sup> between the Government of India on one hand and a section of the Naga national Council (NNC) and the underground Naga federal government (NFG), the 1988 agreement with the Tripura National Volunteers (TNV) in Tripura, the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) agreement of 1993 with the Bodo hardliners in Assam proved futile and even resulted in the upsurge of new hostile groups dissatisfied with the conditions of the agreements<sup>30</sup>. The Assam Accord of 1985<sup>31</sup> made a serious effort to distinguish between legal and illegal immigrants by strict registration, border control and enforcement of laws against encroachment into tribal areas. However, failure to implement the central provisions of the accord by the newly formed Assam Gana Parishad (AGP) resulted in the growing influence of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) (Rajagopalan 2008). In 1988, the TNV insurgents laid down their arms and entered into peace negotiations with the government of Tripura and for two years peace ensued. But the formation of All Tripura Tribal Force (ATTF) in May 1990 and the emergence of the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) in September 1991 disrupted the brief calm

---

<sup>29</sup> According to the terms of the Shillong Accord, the NNC-NFG accepted the supremacy of the Constitution and also agreed to surrender their arms and weapons. The accord was denounced by some members of the NNC who refused to accept the terms and went on to form NSCN under the leadership of Thuengaleng Muivah, Isak Chisi Swu and S S Khaplang who is based in Myanmar.

<sup>30</sup> Peace Process Overview (January 26 2014) cdpsindia.org

<sup>31</sup> The Assam Accord was signed by the Union Home Secretary, the Assam Chief Secretary and representatives of the All-Assam Students Union (AASU) and All-Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP).

(Gajrani 2004). It is noteworthy that the ATTF alliance was believed to have been formed under the patronage of political elements aligned with the then opposition, while the rehabilitated ex-TNV commanders enrolled themselves in the NLFT outfit that targeted both unarmed civilians and security forces in its violent operations (Gajrani 2004). The post-agreement era in Mizoram has also experienced an “unsettled peace” due to ethnic polarization as the aggrieved HPC-D and Bru militant outfits have been frequently engaging in hostile activities with the state government (Athul 2015).

To this regard, it can be pointed out that the peace agreements did not bring about the long anticipated stability and harmony among communities of the Northeast at a comprehensive level. In the words of Subir Bhaumik (2009), “insurgencies never peter out in the northeast, even though insurgents do”. The integrationist policy of the Indian State was flawed in several ways. The preferred instrument of co-option and co-habitation of certain sections of the population at the cost of alienating others has a “boomerang effect” in the region. Thus unfulfilled aspirations vis-à-vis the government and internal differences within the ethnic communities led to the growth of militancy, and gave rise to a plethora of organizations staking claims in the political tug of war. Baruah (2002) argues that the sheer number of militant groups is only symptomatic of failure of the Indian State in the Northeast. Moreover the complex ethnic configurations in politically volatile conditions provide an extremely conducive ground for hostile activities that often take the form of separatism. In such a situation, violence often becomes the preferred or resorted method instead of dialogue in order to realize one’s separatist goals. The vicious cycle of violence and counter-violence that informs the northeast political discourse can best be understood by examining the militarization process of the region.

### **Militarization of Northeast and its Impacts**

The glaring asymmetrical power equation within a complex federal set up defines the troubled ties between India and northeast throughout the political unrest. This has resulted in militarization of civilian space in the northeast states with grievous implications. The counter-insurgency methods employed in the region often suggest the centre’s attitude of indifference towards the region’s problems. The absence of foresight and sheer lack of empathy in countering the insurgents at times allowed for

the execution of repressive tactics that hinges on State's brutality. The most significant example of such brutal tactics is the regrouping of villages in Mizoram and Nagaland in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

### **Village regrouping and implications**

At the height of armed conflict between the Indian army and MNF rebels in the late 1960s, the army proposed to carry out resettlement of the Mizo villages as a counter-insurgency tactic to isolate the guerillas from the civilians. Inspired by the British system of concentration camps in Malaya after the Second World War, this tactic was applied in the Naga Hills in 1957-58 wherein thousands of Nagas were driven out of their homes to live in barbed-wired concentration camps (Chandola 2013). In the Mizo context, according to Vijendra Singh Jafa, former Chief secretary of Assam, the Indian security forces suffered high casualties due to lack of hard intelligence and unfamiliarity with the terrains and came under pressure to provide evidence of a higher level of competence than they had shown in the past. He accounted the manner in which the scheme was allowed to be executed as follows-

The Army called it 'Operation Accomplishment'. In its 6 p.m. news broadcast on January 3, 1967, the All India radio announced the decision of the Government of India to group villages in Mizo Hills for security reasons. Lt. Gen. S.H.F.J Manekshaw and A.N. Kidwai, Chief Secretary of Assam, announced the decision in press conferences held in Calcutta and Shillong simultaneously on that day. The Indian press generally appreciated the gesture of the government to have taken them into confidence in this matter. Former orders were issued by B.C Carriapa, Commissioner of Division for Cachar and Mizo Hills, under Rule 59 of the India Defence Rules, 1964, which directed habitants of 100 villages within a 20-mile belt astride Vairengte-Aizawl-Lunglei road to remove them, if necessary, by use of "minimum force" (Jafa 1999).

In a series of four phases, from January 1967 towards the end of 1970, as many as 466 villages with 236,162 persons or 82 per cent of the total population of Mizoram had been herded into grouped villages under military security (Vergheze 1996). Hundreds of villages and crop fields were burnt in order to force the inhabitants to migrate to the designated centre. Chandola (2013:100) also mentioned that many detained Naga villagers died of starvation and disease after which the camps were closed and survivors were allowed to return home. Similarly, the regrouped civilians in the Mizo Hills had to live under inhumane conditions and the struggle for survival amid shortage of ration supplies, fear of gunshots, and denial of other basic amenities

rendered them extremely vulnerable. They became easy targets at the hands of both the MNF volunteers to whom they felt certain obligations and the Indian army who kept them under constant surveillance and vigil in order to deter them from assisting the rebels (Sundar 2011).

Although the rationale behind the regrouping was to cut off underground militants from civilian population, the whole process turned out to be much more complex and rigorous. As compared to Nagaland where village grouping took place in a span of two to three years, the grouping in Mizoram was far more extensive and lasted for almost 15 years (Sundar 2014). The whole premise of the counter-insurgency doctrine that grouping would serve to separate the general population from the insurgents was sociologically mindless as the ‘national workers’ (as insurgents are known in Nagaland) or underground army were the husbands, brothers and sons of those in the camps who would have definitely helped them, and there is little doubt that a war on the ‘hostiles’ was in effect a war against the whole population (Sundar 2014:41). The experience of being uprooted from one’s ancestral village and having had to relocate to another under threat and coercion created deep wounds, mistrust and hatred of the Indian army and by extension, the central government. Allegations of human rights excesses further widened the gulf between the local populace and the nation and also tended to create a degree of empathy for the militants (Verghese 1996).

Numerous accounts of brutal acts on the part of the army were reported during the time including rapes, forced labour, routine beatings and arbitrary detentions that have become the most recounted part of the insurgency folklore. The issuing and carrying of identity cards at check posts, night curfew, the dismantling of “thlawhbawk” huts at jhum sites and constant surveillance was irksome and alienating (Gopalakrishnan, R., 1995 in Verghese 1996). The ‘winning of hearts and minds’ tactic applied by the British in their colonies<sup>32</sup> far contrasted with the Indian army’s repressive zeal to accomplish their village grouping programme in the name of ‘Operation Security’ that only served to alienate the recipient population (Vanchiau 2014). The regrouped villages were called Protected and Progressive Villages (PPVs) and became semi-urbanized centres each placed under an Administrative Officer (AO). To give stature to this set up and to inculcate the national spirit and integration, the offices of the AOs

---

<sup>32</sup> The British had executed the grouping policy in Malaya (1948-60), Kenya (1952-55), Aden (1963-68), Oman (1957-59), Cyprus (1954-58), and Malaysia (1963-66).



were allowed to fly the national flag as a rare and special case and the people including the students were made to sing the national anthem “Jana Gana Mana” on important occasions like high official visits, village meetings, sports events etc (Ray 1982:171).

### ***Aerial Bombing of Mizoram***

In a rare case of extreme counter-insurgency measure, the Indian Air Force (IAF) conducted a series of aerial raids on the Mizo Hills to suppress the rebels during March 1966 soon after the MNF declared independence. At the order of the central government, Indian fighter aircrafts bombarded Aizawl town and several other villages in a routine manner leaving behind large casualties and damages. As described by Zama (2014), the bombardment destroyed most of Aizawl market area, houses and residential areas were burnt to ashes, and the whole town looked like a hell of fire overshadowed by a canopy of a hell-like damned dark smoke. The government was in denial of using any excessive force on the Hills with the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi herself maintaining that the Indian Air Force was deployed only for reinforcements of ration supplies (Hluna and Tochwawng 2012). This prompted two members of the Assam Legislative Assembly, Stanley Nichols Roy and Hoover Hynniewta (both representing the Khasi Hills) to gather eyewitness accounts and material evidence and came up with the following observation:

Some of the loyal people of India had wondered after they had seen and heard some of the newspaper reports, they wondered if supplies had been dropped by the Air Force perhaps these bombs that they had seen, some of the unexploded, perhaps they should send them to Delhi and ask, “how do you cook this ration?” (Hluna, Dr J.V and Rini Tochwawng 2012:100).

The bombing campaign, apart from creating an environment of fear and uncertainty, also highlights the physical distance between the perpetrator and the people against whom it was directed and the anonymity and impersonality of the former (Barbora 2006). The government’s military approach to counter violence with another form of violence, sanctioned and legitimized by the state through draconian laws like Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) is nothing but an extension of the colonial mindset that persisted in the policy discourse of India towards Northeast (Khongreiwu, 2009). For all purposes, the enforcement of AFSPA in the Northeast

states since 1958 has the intended effect of militarizing civilian spaces and exacerbating the spirit of armed revolution among the warring groups.

### **Rule of AFSPA**

The most controversial issue pertaining to the Indian State's approach to the Northeast conflict is perhaps the implementation of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 in the States of Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura as well as Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram. It was enacted for the military to aid civilian powers in "exceptional circumstances"<sup>33</sup> and continued to be enforced even after 57 years despite the initial objective for it to be temporary. Initially designed to combat the Naga rebellion, AFSPA at present provides the legal framework for counter-insurgency operations against numerous armed rebellions in the region (Baruah 2007). Since the inception of AFSPA, northeast has virtually plunged into a constant state of emergency<sup>34</sup>. By virtue of this special law, the Indian security forces have been given extraordinary authority in handling conflict situation in 'disturbed areas' and with zero accountability on their part in the 'necessary conducts' so permitted by the law<sup>35</sup>.

AFSPA has been contentious precisely because it has created a 'regime of impunity' for the army men posted in the northeast, and a suspension of sorts of basic human rights of citizens where it is operative<sup>36</sup>. Goswami (2010) argues that while AFSPA does represent the skewed security regime of the Indian State in the northeast region, it is not a sole instance of the case but only a symptom of a larger malaise

---

<sup>33</sup> When the Bill for AFSPA was introduced in the Lok Sabha on August 11, 1958, the then Home Minister G.B.Pant made an assurance to the House members that the act would be applied only in exceptional circumstances (See A. G. Noorani, April 17, 2015 'AFSPA- Licence to Kill').

<sup>34</sup> An emergency rule in the Indian context is characterized by suspension of certain rights and privileges of the citizens which holds true in the case of the people of the Northeast as mentioned.

<sup>35</sup> Section 45 of the CrPC provides protection for all members of the Indian armed forces from any kind of arrest in relation to any conduct carried out in the line of duty; Section 6 of the AFSPA provides them with absolute immunity from prosecution for all atrocities committed in the exercise of powers conferred by the AFSPA.

<sup>36</sup> Under Section 4(a) of AFSPA, an army officer is given the permission for shooting to kill 'if he is of the opinion that it is necessary to do so for the maintenance of public order', thereby effectively abrogating the right to life as laid down in Article 21 of the Constitution. This was contested in the Indrajit Barua case but the Delhi High Court ruled in favour of the need to protect 'the greater good' stating, "If to save hundred lives one life is put in peril or if a law ensures and protects the greater social interest then such law will be a wholesome and beneficial law although it may infringe the liberty of some individuals". But this ruling clearly contradicts the right to 'equality before law' as guaranteed by Article 14 of the Constitution as the people of northeast are then obliged to sacrifice their constitutional rights for the sake of the vaguely defined "greater good".

characterized by alienation, militarization and a dangerous counter-insurgency strategy. There had been intense public debates and discussions about the law especially in the recent context due to rising allegations as to its misuse against civilians. While protagonists of the Act argue in favour of using extraordinary measures to deal with extraordinary situation, it also shows that the State as a security provider has failed in its job (Kundra 2015).

Interestingly, the Indian State has extensively used special laws and legislations to deal with what it perceived as threats to national unity and integrity. AFSPA was preceded by the promulgation of the Assam Maintenance of Public Order (Autonomous Districts) Act, 1953 and the Assam Disturbed Areas Act passed in December 1955 that became operational on January 1956. In fact, AFSPA retained the second and third clauses in the Assam Disturbed Areas Act which empowered the army personnel to shoot and kill and provided them with legal immunity against prosecution except by that of the central government (Chasie and Hazarika 2009). The Disturbed Areas Act, 1976 the National Security Act, 1980, Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, 1985 are some of the other laws that have been used to counter insurgency activities in the Northeast region. The Indian army executed these laws with the help of other central paramilitary forces such as the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the Border Security Force (BSF), the Assam Rifles and the various intelligence bureaus and the police forces of the concerned states (Upadhyay 2009:85).

The excesses of the Indian military in the form of human rights violations constitute a paradox in Indian democracy<sup>37</sup>. It has been pointed out that sustained deployment of the Indian army and federal paramilitary forces on “internal security duties” has militarized, rather than democratized, the social and political spaces in the northeast (Bhumik 2009:16). The constitutionality of AFSPA has been a major point of debates and discussion by various committees and human rights groups including the United Nations Commission for Human Rights (UNCHR). A 1997 report by a fact finding team of Indian lawyers, journalists and human rights activists observed that the security forces have “blatantly violated all norms of decency and the democratic right

---

<sup>37</sup> Concerns over abuse of human rights under AFSPA and Indian government’s have been raised time and again by the United Nations Human Rights Committee in its reports as India is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

of the people of the region and that militarization had become “a way of life” in Northeast India (Baruah 2007).

### **Insurgency, Insecurity and Beyond**

In conclusion, it can be said that the problem of northeast is rooted in the creation of the region itself. As such, the underlying cause of insurgency can be explained only by analyzing the geo-political formation and transformation of the region before and after independence. Indian government had little success in both its institutional and military approaches to address the questions of “territoriality” and “sovereignty” which remain unsolved in the northeast context. With the sixth decade of counter-insurgency unfolding, peace and stability as the desired goal remains elusive. In a situation where the policy of ‘winning the hearts and minds’ is given a backseat in favour of short-term solutions and sporadic containment of insurgencies, outcomes are more often negative than constructive. The northeast people are sandwiched between two forces- the army and the militants. In states like Manipur, Assam and Nagaland, civilian spaces have shrunk and democratic values eroded. Despite increasing participation by civil society- NGOs, student organizations, community groups, Churches etc in peace negotiations<sup>38</sup>, failure of peace processes only points to the complex and multi-faceted nature of northeast conflict. The key problem lies in the misguided notion that conflict resolution lies in an agreement struck between insurgents and the state. The real stakeholders are the people of the northeast cutting across identity and ethnicity. Peace cannot be sustained so long as militancy thrives at their cost.

Besides, the establishment of a coercive security regime is pathological of the trust deficit between the centre and the region. The Indian State’s continued use of military tactics and counter-violence to respond to the region’s insurgency suggests that India feels extremely insecure in its northeast borders. This has the debilitating effect of enhancing the region’s volatility. With the region’s vast ethnic diversity and cross-border linkages, the transnational character of northeast insurgency has also assumed great significance. Apart from the China factor (that has been troubling policymakers

---

<sup>38</sup> For instance, the Naga Hoho convened a series of meetings of Church leaders and NGOs from all Naga areas culminating in a call for ‘journey of conscience’ to seek reconciliation and to rebuild the Naga society. See Das, N.K (2011), “Identity politics and Social Exclusion in India’s North-East: The Case for Re-Distributive Justice” at [manipuronline.com](http://manipuronline.com) > Papers. Also see Kumar Das, Samir (2007), “Conflict and Peace in India’s Northeast: The Role of Civil Society”.

in New Delhi especially since the 1962 war), India's security anxieties with regard to northeast led to a new foreign policy orientation toward neighbouring Myanmar. India could no longer distance itself from the military establishment in Myanmar as the security stakes of neglecting its border regions became too high. The realization of northeast's unique geographical positioning vis-à-vis Myanmar came at a time when India started to embark upon a whole new phase in its foreign policy outreach in the early 1990s. The first concrete Indo-Myanmar cooperation came in the form of joint military campaign named "Operation Golden Bird" which is remarkable for three reasons. First, it shows that India needed a way forward in dealing with insurgents in the northeast. Second, it confirmed that Myanmar like other nearby countries has been used as a sanctuary or a circuit by insurgent groups operating in the border region. Lastly, the use of counter-insurgency operations led by army as the preferred method implied lack of alternatives at hand. None the less, it became clear that while Look East Policy was largely designed to reap the economic boom of Southeast Asia, India looked towards Myanmar due to its internal security imperatives. For a nation preoccupied with its national unity and territorial integrity, it was a policy option long held overdue.

**Map 1.2: Northeast Map**



Source: “On the Frontline of Northeast India: Evaluating a Decade of Harm Reduction in Manipur and Nagaland”, *Drug Policy Briefing*, 35, March 2011, Transnational Institute available at URL: <http://www.tni.org/files/download>.

## Chapter 3

### TRANSNATIONAL ISSUES AND LINKAGES

The crisis in India's northeast is made complex by its precarious strategic setting that transcends political boundaries. As the region shares intricate boundaries with Myanmar, Bhutan, Bangladesh (earlier East Pakistan) and China's Tibet Autonomous Region, ethnic unrest in the northeast has far-reaching geo-political consequences. This seriously impinges upon the territorial and political sovereignty of the Indian State. Like India's other neighbours, Myanmar has also served as "safe haven" for insurgents waging low intensity war with the Indian government. Safe havens are often located on the border between nation states and porous borders allow terrorist groups to move with relative ease from one nation to another (Medina and Hepner 2013:127). The physical, cultural and ethnic proximity between the border communities of both India and Myanmar have also been exploited by recalcitrant elements engaged in illegal activities over the years. The problems of migration, both legal and illegal, smuggling of narcotics, small arms and illicit goods have been a source of immense anxieties and troubles for both state and society in the northeast. These issues have been compounded by political instability in the ethnic minority areas of Myanmar that lie adjacent to India's northeastern states.

If India's recent history is mired by insurgency and separatist movements Myanmar too is a country with complex ethnic past (Smith 1999). Some of the large ethnic groups in Myanmar including Chin, Kachin, Karen (Kayin), Mon, Shan and Rakhine (of Arakan) have been engaging in full scale armed conflict with the Tatmadaw and the path to national reconciliation has been rough and difficult. The minorities' antipathy towards the ruling army greatly enhanced the existing problems of the central state's legitimacy and plunged the country into further political crisis (Steinberg 2010). The Tatmadaw on its part claimed that there are "135 races"<sup>39</sup> in Myanmar which in its view is a justification enough for a strong military to cater to each of them (Win 2013). As a result of the recent peace process, the Tatmadaw has signed local-level ceasefire agreements with all major ethnic armed groups except for the Kachins. Thus the prospect of signing a nationwide ceasefire agreement necessary

---

<sup>39</sup>Here, "races" imply ethnic groups speaking different dialects and languages. In fact, most of these belong to the same Mongoloid stock and around 65 of the 135 so-called races live in the Chin State.

for holding a national political dialogue remains bleak (Seshadri 2014). Myanmar's difficulty also lies in being placed between two big Asian powers- China and India- which explains the central government's adherence to an independent foreign policy, at least in principle (Udai Bhanu Singh 2014). On the other hand, having an unstable neighbour in its eastern flank is not in sync with India's emerging interests in the regional sphere. The rising non-traditional security threats in the border areas are inimical to peace and development processes in India's northeastern region. To better comprehend the complexity of northeast predicament in the context of India's changing security dynamics, an understanding of the trans-border nature of insurgency and related issues is required.

### **Background of Cross-Border Insurgency**

In the words of William van Schendel, "If insurgencies had an impact on sections of the borderland, the borderland also had an impact on insurgencies" (Schendel 2005:270). It has been established that insurgent groups including the Chin-Kuki rebels, the NSCN factions, ULFA, PLA and MNF have utilized their cross-border linkages to obtain assistance in intelligence and training, financial aids, arms supplies as well as moral and ideological support<sup>40</sup>. The onset of ethno-nationalist violence like that found in the northeast is made possible by significant factors including availability of weapons and availability of military and political support from friendly states and external factors (Upadhyay 2006:3). Upadhyay (2006) notes the geo-political linkages have provided northeast rebels valuable assistance including financial and organizational support, weapons, training and operational cooperation. She further notes that insurgent groups have been receiving arms primarily from Bangladesh, Myanmar and Thailand while money was flowing in from various non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In the 1960s the Nagas and the MNF insurgents obtained most of their weapons from Pakistan and China (Bhaumik 2009:212). The insurgents also received covert backing from Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) while operating from Bangladesh soil as the latter consistently stepped up its

---

<sup>40</sup> Insurgent movements in the Northeast are not necessarily ideologically-driven. But some rebels found inspiration in, and were inclined towards, the Chinese communist ideology as practiced under Mao Zedong in the aftermath of Cultural Revolution in the 1960s. Leftist ideology thus played an important role in the formation of insurgent groups like the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) and People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) based in Manipur. See Renaud (2006) *Instability at the Gate: India's Troubled Northeast*.



cross-border activities in instigating, supporting and directing the northeast rebels (Sreeradha Datta 2000).

C. Lalawmpuia Vanchiau in a detailed account of MNF activities in Bangladesh before and after its liberation highlights that the Mizo underground army had extensively collaborated with the Special Service Group (SSG), a specially-trained commando unit of the Pakistan Army (Vanchiau 2014). According to Indian military Intelligence estimates the Mizo insurgents and the Naga underground army received no less than 3000- 4000 assault rifles, automatic carbines, light machine guns, rocket launchers and an assortment of other weapons from the Pakistanis and “other external sources” of which 80 per cent were either recovered or seized or lost in action in India or Myanmar (Bhaumik 2009:209).

The counter-insurgency measures of the Indian government also drove the militants to seek sanctuaries in the neighbouring countries including Myanmar, Bhutan and Bangladesh where they set up clandestine networks of operations. Major insurgent groups in the northeast including ULFA, NSCN (IM) and NSCN (K) and the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) have established clandestine networks of jungle training camps in the Sagaing division and Kachin State and used Myanmar as routes to procure arms from the Chinese (Egreteau 2008). With limited resources and inferior fighting capacity, the ability of these insurgent groups to establish relations with foreign powers was crucial in sustaining their battle against the Indian army. Interestingly, the ‘shadow government’ of the MNF had a ‘department of foreign affairs’ to explore possible relations with external powers (Khangte 1991). The significance of Arakan province in Myanmar and Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh for the MNF movement has been well recorded (Vanchiau 2014: 289, 291). Apart from MNF, five other guerilla groups viz., the Arakanese Independence Army, the Mujahids, the Arakan National Liberation Front, the Burmese Communists Party (all from Myanmar) and the Chakma rebel group Shanti Bahini (from Bangladesh) were operating near the tri-junction point where India, Myanmar and Bangladesh meet (Schendel 2005).

Arakan, with an estimated population of 2.5 million, had always been one of the most politically active regions in Myanmar with a number of insurgent forces including the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) Red Flags, the Marxist ANLP, the CPA and other

nationalist radicals like the Arakan Independence Organization (AIO) and the Arakan Liberation Party (ALP) operating within Arakan and the adjoining Hill Tracts (Smith 1999:239). Interestingly, when in 1977 a second detachment troop of the Arakan Independence Organization (AIO) set out for a perilous march from the Kachin border towards Arakan, the Tatmadaw and the Indian army intercepted them on the way since both mistook them to be Mizo guerillas (Smith 1999: 239). There are also several accounts detailing the journeys undertaken by Mizos, Nagas and Manipuri rebels starting since the 1960s to China through Myanmar seeking assistance and arms (Routray 2011:16). India shares a long porous border area with Myanmar covered with thick forests and no fair weather roads. This has offered an ideal setting for the insurgents operating from this area and a serious operational challenge for the security forces (Joseph A. n.d.). Having set up guerilla camps and headquarters in these places, the insurgent leaders and volunteers frequently trekked through the thick jungles which also served as their hideouts from the army troops (Nibedon 1980). These borderlines not only provided strategic hideouts for the rebel groups but also become their meeting points for exchanging ideas about strategy and organization and develop cross-border networks of mutual support (Schendel 2005).

Apart from Cox Bazar in the Myanmar-Bangladesh-India border and Chittagong area within Bangladesh, the NSCN also had their base camps in the Indo-Myanmar border from where they moved “freely” back and forth to Nagaland and Manipur through the thickets along the border lines. According to Shreeradha Datta, the Naga National Council (NNC) first came into contact with the KIA in the Kachin Hill Tracts of Myanmar during the mid-1960s. The Mizo and Tripuri rebels also established contacts with the Myanmarese rebels and were given safe sanctuaries by the latter (Datta 2000) Nirmal Nibedon (1980) accounted for how the Mizo National Army (MNA) carried out offensives in the Myanmar side of the border named “Operation Chin Hills” during which four Burmese towns and border posts were successfully raided. The Operation was monitored by the Kachins and took Rangoon by surprise, causing the latter to rush its Special Forces 101, 102 and 103 battalions to counter the ‘unidentified invaders’ and to send replenishments to the people living in the otherwise relatively peaceful Chin Hills (Nibedon 1980: 132-137). The MNF also coordinated with the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) in carrying out armed

insurrections as the latter was operating in the north and central Arakan and along the Kaladan River into the Chin Hills. Martin Smith wrote:

In 1971, in one of the most spectacular raids of all the insurrections, the CPB joined forces with 800 heavily armed troops from the ethnic Mizo National Front (MNF), led by Laldenga from north-east India; they occupied Rathedaung town and seized a vast quantity of goods, gold and cash from the treasury. Like the Nagas further east, these battle-tested ethnic Mizos enjoyed the support of China; they had originally taken sanctuary in East Pakistan in the late 1960s after a push by the Indian Army on their own homes across the Mizoram border. In June 1966, the MNF had already launched one offensive into the Chin Hills in an attempt to stir up their restive Chin relatives when they attacked Falam and captured over 150 rifles and weapons. Displaced once again by the Bangladesh liberation war, they at first proved a formidable ally for the CPB, which helped MNF forces disperse among local villages in hidden valleys throughout north Arakan. During 1972 and 1973 local CPB units, often with Mizo support, claimed to have seized 100 weapons in guerilla attacks on government positions and to have inflicted heavy casualties in the process (Smith 1999: 242).

Such incidences clearly point to the strong linkages between insurgents in the northeast and Myanmar. The 1970s saw the increase in such activities by insurgents in the Indo-Myanmar border which became an issue of mutual concern for both countries (Konsam Ibo Singh 2002). Sanjoy Hazarika, in a fluid account of rebel activities in the northeast, narrates how the ULFA had links with both the Khaplang and Isak-Muivah factions of NSCN on both sides of the border. He said that the ULFA, like the Nagas, established relations with the Kachin rebels of Myanmar and received extensive training in combat from the latter in exchange of large sums of money. The Kachins as well as the Chins, Shans and Karens have fought for freedom from the majority Burmans by forming guerilla armies of which the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) is one of the most formidable among them (Hazarika 1994). The People's Revolutionary Army (PLA), the armed wing of the Revolutionary People's Front (RPF) has been running joint training centres with the Kachins<sup>41</sup>. The PREPAK and KYKL camps are also located in Myanmar. The NSCN (IM) camps are variously located at Nukpa, Wangdrok, Hangshen, Tamu, Talon,

---

<sup>41</sup>This is based on an intelligence analysis report of Manipur State government as cited by Thingbaijam Dhamen (2015) in "90% of drugs in India trafficked from Myanmar Manipur Indo-Myanmar sectoral level meeting to focus on mushrooming UGs hideouts in Myanmar" at <http://e-pao.net/GP.asp?src=14..010309.mar09>

Nokio, Kabo Valley (near Ningthi river) while the NSCN (K) bases are confined to Chamu, Chumsa and Hangshen<sup>42</sup>. The Kuki National Army (KNA) is operating from its camps at Homalin, Khampat, Tamu, Lichingsi, Menal, Kachin, Joyeng, Dingpi etc<sup>43</sup>.

The Chins have also crossed over the border into northeast India in search for sanctuary in the wake of Myanmar's military operations against ethnic minority insurgents (Boquerat 2001). In case of the Nagas, the nature of their relations with Myanmar is more complex and problematic especially when it comes to negotiations with India. Since the NSCN split into factional rivals in April 1988, there has been considerable gap in their territorial and operational functioning. As the Khaplang division is firmly based in Myanmar, the Indian government treated them as "Myanmarese rebels", pushed into the margins of the jungles and excluded from the talks with other "Indian Naga rebels" with whom India has promptly signed or negotiated a ceasefire<sup>44</sup> (Bhaumik 2015). But despite being isolated in the Naga political process, the Myanmarese rebel chieftain has used his 'Sagaing Card'<sup>45</sup> brilliantly to gain allies from other northeast insurgent groups (including the Padesh Baruah faction of ULFA-Independent and the Songbijit faction of NDFB) and Khaplang bases in Myanmar's Sagaing division remain "the only safe trans-border base for northeastern insurgents" (Bhaumik 2015).

On the other hand, the safety of NSCN-K's bases are also ensured by a deal signed with the Myanmar's government from attacks by the Tatmadaw as the former is "not interested" in chasing Indian rebels out (Karmakar 2015). Not only that the NSCN (K) has been granted autonomy and allowed to be fully armed within the Myanmar's Naga self-administered zone which is geographically adjacent to Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh (Goswami 2015). This 'laid-back' attitude of the military Junta towards the Myanmarese Naga rebels is somewhat reminiscent of the mutual mistrust and 'blame game' between the two countries during the late 1980s to the early 1990s when diplomatic relations were restored.

---

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Note that The NSCN's Isak Muivah faction had declared truce with the Indian government in July 1997.

<sup>45</sup> Note that the NSCN (K) has established its sway in areas like Lahe, Leshi and Nanyun in Sagaing administrative region of Myanmar. See Namrata Goswami "Peace Again at stake in Nagaland" The Hindu April 11 2015.

Thus despite active insurgencies in the Indo-Myanmar border for decades, New Delhi's hands were tied due to its stepbrother relations with Myanmar's military regime. After New Delhi and Rangoon signed a second border agreement on March 10, 1967 (the first being signed in 1960), minor military operations were jointly undertaken by the Tatmadaw and the Indian Army against the NNC and MNF. But these turned out to be a disappointment mainly because the Myanmar army had no control over the remote Naga Hill Tracts and the Kachin state (Egreteau 2006:132). Although the two countries felt the need for consultations towards solving the cross-border insurgency issue, no such formal agreements were signed despite attempts made by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi during the last years of her rule in the 1980s (Konsam Ibo Singh 2001). The unexpected shift in policy towards Myanmar to wipe out militants came about in the backdrop of the changing realities in the post-cold war era and the political imperatives that followed.

### **Role for Myanmar and the Changing Contours**

Myanmar and India are countries linked and intertwined by colonial history, culture and geography. During colonial rule, Myanmar served as a strategic frontier of the British and acted as a buffer zone between India and the French Indochina regions as well as the Chinese empire (Egreteau 2003). Despite being ruled by the same colonial master, Burma and India followed different, almost opposite, political trajectories in the aftermath of their independence. While one became a federal republic, the other mostly functions as an authoritarian centralized nation currently ruled by a nominal (civilian) government. However, both share a common issue of long-drawn bloody insurgencies and ethnic conflicts within their respective territories. Both had been engrossed in fighting civil wars in their home ground and maintained minimal diplomatic relations despite being strategic neighbours<sup>46</sup>. Although India and Myanmar have signed the Treaty of Friendship in 1951 and issued a Joint Communiqué in 1964, there was no tangible bilateral partnership and the nature of relations was characterized by mutual goodwill and understanding (Khosla 2003).

Relations between the two soured after Ne Win seized power in 1962 heralding decades of military dictatorship, nationalization and self-imposed isolation. It plunged

---

<sup>46</sup> Note that Myanmar is the only Southeast Asian country that has both land and maritime boundaries with India.

into a new low in the wake of the 1988 military crackdown of pro-democracy civilian protesters in what came to be known as the “Four-Eight” movement of August 8 1988. India was the first neighbouring country to criticize the brutal onslaught of the demonstrations and the Indian Embassy in Rangoon (Yangon) openly supported and financed many student activists to cross over India. Thus refugee camps were set up by the Indian government in the northeast States of Manipur and Mizoram with strict orders from the External Affairs Ministry to allow them to take shelter and not be deported (Aung and Mint 2001). The movement set in motion several changes in Myanmar’s political scenario. It marked the emergence of new popular leaders like Aung San Suu Kyi and a new democratic party under the banner of National League for Democracy (NLD). As Ne Win resigned under pressure, the autocratic rule of Burmese Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) came to an end. A new military government called State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) was installed following a coup in September 1988 crushing the Burmese people’s hopes for democratic reforms (Kipgen 2013).

For New Delhi, engagement with the military rulers in Myanmar had been tricky and problematic. Since the establishment of authoritarian regime in 1962, India’s approach towards Myanmar has been oscillating between the two spectrums of idealism and realism (Yogendra Singh 2008). For decades, the military authorities have turned a blind eye towards the northeast insurgents operating in their territories and refused to act on India’s requests to deny them sanctuaries (Egreteau 2008). The presence of anti-Indian elements in its soil provides Yangon a bargaining power vis-à-vis the Indian government that has always been seen as anti-junta and pro-Suu Kyi (Egreteau 2008). India’s denunciation of the military regime and its oppositional stances did not fare well with the latter. In a counter-act to the Junta’s “support” to Northeast insurgents, New Delhi has secretly established direct links with Myanmar’s ethnic rebel groups and even offered to help train the Kachin rebels (Egreteau 2008). India supplied the Kachins with arms and ammunitions from its military base in Vijaynagar and allowed the KIO to open an office in Delhi (Konsam Ibo Singh 2001). This was mainly to channelize the KIA’s expertise for training India’s counter-insurgent groups such as the Kuki National Front (KNF) that are loyal to the Indian Intelligence Research and Analysis Wing (RAW). The KNF and other Kuki outfits

were thus provided funds and training to fight against other Indian insurgent groups like the NSCN (IM) factions in the early 1990s (Egreteau 2006:137).

India's close association with Myanmar's ethnic rebels is not only a recent one. According to Martin Smith, ethnic minorities like the Kachin, Karen and Karenni volunteers who made their way out to India during the Second World War received intensive training in conventional and guerilla warfare before returning to Myanmar in regular allied divisions or parachuting behind the Japanese lines in such legendary undercover units as Force 136, Wingate's 'Chindits', or Merrill's 'Marauders' (Smith 1999:92). These ethnic communities were at the forefront of democratic protests in the 1988 uprising. The truce between the Kachin Independence Army (KIO) and Rangoon also implicated India as the former sheltered many pro-democracy politicians and their followers after the student movement was crushed in 1989 (Hazarika 1994:321). To add to the Junta's displeasure, India's RAW established covert ties with the Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB) formed by 23 insurgent groups plus students and Buddhist monks on 19 November 1988 at the initiative of General Bo Mya, leader of the Karen national Union (Konsam Ibo Singh 2001). Apart from aiding the pro-democracy activists in all possible manner, India endorsed the United Nation's resolution condemning Myanmar's Junta for its violation of human rights in 1992 (Aung and Myint 2001).

The mutual doubts and suspicions between the two countries worsened when Burma moved closer towards China for reasons diplomatic and strategic<sup>47</sup>. China increasingly gained foothold in Myanmar as a result of its "Burmese strategy" by closely engaging with the military junta. The close Sino-Burmese cooperation was also enabled by their common estrangement with the global community<sup>48</sup> and Burmese standalone policy in its international relations. In contrast, India's continued

---

<sup>47</sup> Myanmar's SLORC received Chinese active assistance in military technology, arms and equipment supplies in the post-1988 uprising. China's growing clout in the region, especially its involvement in the upgradation of naval facilities in the Myanmarese Coco Islands, which is situated only 20 kilometres away from Andaman and Nicobar Islands, worried the Indian circle as it provided the former an access to the Indian Ocean. Chinese assistance in developing Myanmar's naval bases in Sittwe, Hyanggi, Khaukphyu, Mergui by building intelligence facilities to help operate Chinese submarines in the Bay of Bengal also posed considerable threat to India's maritime interests in its eastern flank.

<sup>48</sup> While Myanmar's SLORC faced ostracization from global community following the harsh repression of pro-democracy movement, the Chinese government faced similar fate after the infamous Tianamen Square Massacre.

advocacy of the democratic cause in Myanmar was considered by the military government as interference in Myanmar's internal affairs. Writing in 1993, M G G Pillai argues-

The SLORC established closer links with China largely because no major country would back it. The traditional Indian hostility of Chinese intentions on a country New Delhi regards as being within her sphere of influence is intensified by the United States' opposition to SLORC and pressure to release Aung San Suu Kyi, daughter of General Aung San, who is now under arrest....India's view on Burma is clouded by Yangon's closeness to China and its own lack of clout with SLORC (Pillai 1993:213).

India's concerns over Sino-Burmese ties dated back in 1960 when the latter two signed a Border Agreement and a treaty of friendship and mutual non-aggression. The changing attitude of China to Burma also figured prominently in the Indian Parliament. On 22 August 1961, Pandit H. N. Hunzru said that, "Since the conclusion of the Sino-Burmese Agreement, China has been making efforts to woo Burma", and "offers of help are being made to Burma in order that Indian influence there might be lessened" (Aung and Mint 2001:5). New Delhi was disappointed with Burma's neutral stance in the wake of Sino-India conflict in 1962 which it perceived as a pro-Chinese inclination (Routray 2011). The armed confrontation was preceded by Indian military construction of forward posts in strategic locations beyond the MacMahon Line<sup>49</sup> which angered China as the latter saw it as a challenge to its territorial sovereignty in Tibet (Abitbol 2009). China never accepted the boundary line and considered it "a result of British imperialist policy" (Nath and Nath 2004). India's decisive defeat at the hands of the Chinese military in the war over border disputes was largely considered to be a strategic mistake on the part of Nehru yet widely reported to be "an act of aggression and betrayal by the Chinese" in order to cover up the ruling government's failures and to create a sense of martyrdom (Pillalamarri 2014). On looking back, Pankaj Mishra, author of *From the Ruins of the Empire*, in an interview to *The Hindu* commented that,

The 1962 Sino-Indian War fundamentally shaped and distorted Indian attitudes towards China. We have this slightly hostile view of China as an adversary, this enemy that stabbed us in the back.....One of the

---

<sup>49</sup> The MacMahon Line is the official boundary between British India and China drawn and agreed to by Britain and Tibet in the Simla Convention of 1914.



casualties of that era is that we possess very little knowledge and information and analysis of our own about China. We have been largely dependent on foreign, largely American, sources. (Basharat Peer 2015).

Although the Chinese aggression served as a “clarion call” to the security establishment of New Delhi, a closer look at history suggested that such act of aggression in the Indo-Myanmar borderlands of northeast have almost resulted in the whole of India being subjugated. The imperialist Japanese army during the Second World War entered the Naga Hills in 1944 after conquering the British in Myanmar and advanced towards India. Unlike the British who entered Myanmar and captured its (erstwhile) capital Rangoon through the sea, the Japanese forces were able to reach northeast India after crossing the difficult terrains via southern China and Myanmar and lay siege round the cities of Imphal and Kohima in March 1944 (Chandola 2012: 287). The Naga villagers came face-to-face with the exhausted Japanese troops who were searching for provisions while Imphal was flooded with thousands of refugees including Indians, Anglo-Burmese and English fleeing from Myanmar (Chandola 2012:292). It was in the frontier districts of Nagaland and Manipur that the Japanese ambition of building a “giant Asian Empire” was crushed and the “tide of history” was turned (Hazarika 1994:56). Interestingly, the withdrawing allies and Japanese army left behind a huge amount of weaponry in the frontier jungles which became the weapons with which the Naga separatists first fought the Indian security forces (Bhaumik 2009:208).

Northeast derives its strategic linkages from its unique location stranded as it is between the Himalayas (China, Bhutan, Nepal), the Indian Ocean (Bangladesh) and wide fluvial corridors (Brahmaputra, Chindwin and Irrawaddy Rivers) making it a strategic area capable of becoming a dangerous cross-roads of instability (Egreteau 2006:5). The strategic importance as well as vulnerability of northeast India was laid bare in the wake of the Sino-Indian conflict in 1962. It also showed the skewed mentality of the erstwhile political leadership with regard to territorial defence vis-à-vis northeast. Sudhir J. George aptly recalls:

When the Chinese forces reached the foothills of Kameng (Arunachal) close to the plains of Assam, the (Indian) government left the people of the region to their own destiny by withdrawing the army to the west of the Siliguri corridor to defend the mainland. Nehru then pour out his

feeling to the All India radio thus, ‘my heart bleeds for the people of Assam’ (George 2012: 179).

According to Monoj Kumar Nath and Manoj Kumar Nath, the Chinese troops came down to the plains of Assam as far as Tezpur in middle Assam causing great worry for policymakers. They argue that as a consequence of the war, the political establishment in New Delhi for the first time realized that northeast India is strategically vital “and must be given prime importance in policymaking and implementation for unity and integrity of the nation” (Nath and Nath 2004:4). As of the present, India’s border dispute with China is an unsettled one. China’s unyielding claims over the northeast State of Arunachal Pradesh as “South Tibet” only affirms the region’s position as a strategic frontier or a buffer zone for India against external aggression (Haynes 2012).

Given that India considers Myanmar as a natural bridge to Southeast and East Asia, it cannot afford to overlook the strategic costs of a beleaguered frontier that serves as “the gateway”. As Ranjit Gupta puts it, “if Myanmar is inimical towards India and under the strategic control of China, it would be virtually impossible to keep some of the northeastern states as part of India” (Gupta 2013:2). Hence the perceived threats in its maritime backyard and having to deal with insurgents in its peripheral northeast borders left New Delhi no choice but to eventually soften its hard stance towards the Myanmar regime. In this context, it is vital to note that at the initial stage the policy to “Look East” conceived in 1991 by Prime Minister Narasimha Rao played little role in turning the tide in bilateral relations<sup>50</sup>. India’s re-orientation of its foreign policy towards Southeast Asian countries immediately after the end of cold war was basically economic-driven, steered clear of any military security objectives (Shridharan 1997).

On the other hand, India’s cautious willingness to constructively engage with Myanmar’s Junta was underlined by the realization of Myanmar’s geo-political importance in the changing realist dynamics post-1991. While the fear about Chinese encirclement in the Indian Ocean and its military involvement with SLORC turned

---

<sup>50</sup>“Look East” encompassed a new external policy initially formulated to boost India’s economic cooperation with the then ASEAN members including Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Singapore in sync with the market reforms initiated by the new government under Narasimha Rao. Myanmar became a member of ASEAN only in 1997.

out to be overemphasized (Egreteau 2008), the real security threats posed by militancy in the northeast-Myanmar borders continued to remain. Baruah (2005) maintains that the political uncertainty in Northeast India has been a major factor in shaping India's Myanmar policy. He argues that the motive behind the U-turn in India's attitude towards the military regime was more of its security anxieties and the need to get Myanmar to act against northeast insurgents hiding in Myanmar and less of a desire to give the Look East Policy a continental outlook. As underlined by *The Hindu*:

One reason why India did business with the military regime was to prevent it from nurturing rebel groups. Prospects for stability in that region have increased with the Myanmar government's decision to seriously pursue reconciliation with various armed ethnic rebel groups on its own side. The development of the border areas could help both sides stable and peaceful, give an economic leg-up to the Northeast, plus help connect India to the ASEAN countries ('On Burma Road' 2012).

But any major shift in foreign policy cannot be determined by one factor alone. The larger dynamics and turn of events at the regional level definitely influenced and even hastened India's decision to shed its old policy in favour of a new one. It is in this context that ASEAN comes to the scene while the role played by China is eminent.

### **ASEAN and the "Invisible" Chinese Hand**

While tensions in border areas motivated India's renewed approach towards Myanmar, the need to "balance" China in the region was also a crucial aspect of the changed policy. This has to be seen from the post-Cold War perspective of international dynamics. As a result of fall of the Soviet Union and gradual reduction of the US troops in the region, there was growing concern about a possible 'power vacuum' which China could easily fill as an emerging political and economic power (Grare and Mattoo 2001). The loss of its strong traditional ally along with the military and financial assistance that came with its pro-Soviet orientation was a huge setback for India's status and prestige in the international arena (Zhao Hong 2007:8). India felt intimidated by China's growing influence in South Asia especially its supply of military arms and its assistance to Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme which it considered as threat to its national security (Mahanty 1996:13).

In that scenario, India was under pressure to enhance its political and diplomatic influence to effectively bargain the emerging regional space. As far as ASEAN<sup>51</sup> was concerned, India was deemed to be both economically and strategically weaker than the other two major Asian powers- China and Japan- despite growing fears about a Sino-Indian and Sino-Japan rivalry (Sridharan 1997:4). Oddly enough India was looked upon by ASEAN as a “pushy regional power” due to its naval modernization programme and its actions in Sri Lanka and Maldives (Sridharan 1997:5). India on its part had been uncomfortable with the “great power presence” in the region and considered ASEAN as an extension of the western security umbrella<sup>52</sup>. Nevertheless India experienced positive warming of relationships with the United States in the 1980s as Soviet Union, its close ally and friend, subtly distanced itself from India in favour of forging strategic and economic ties with China (Muni 1991: 5).

The immediate challenge before India as an aspiring regional player was *two-fold*: First, India needed to come out of its non-aligned framework of international relations that had been shaping its foreign policy throughout the cold-war period. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of Cold-war compelled India to follow a more *national interest based approach* in dealing with different countries and regions especially Southeast and East Asia and the Indian Ocean region which India began to re-postulate as its “extended neighbourhood” (Mohan 2008). Second, the strategic challenge posed by China’s presence in Myanmar and the “quest for access to the Indian ocean” dragged India into what Renaud Egreteau (2008) termed as a “quiet rivalry” for influence in Myanmar. As a matter of fact, the power vacuum in Myanmar created by the exit of international donors and regional powers was increasingly filled by China which was worrisome not only for India but also for ASEAN states. The looming Chinese threats in the strategic eastern fronts of Myanmar, Tibet or Northeast triggered urgent concerns among India’s security analysts who emphasized for a pragmatic shift in engagement.

---

<sup>51</sup> The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) came into existence as a result of the Bangkok Declaration in 1967 with Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand as its original members. ASEAN replaced the pre-existing forum of ASA- Association of Southeast Asia- formed by Malaya, the Philippines and Thailand but was dismantled due to the formation of the Federation of Malaysia in 1963.

<sup>52</sup> Read with South East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO), a relic of the cold-war military bloc initiated by the United States in which Thailand and Singapore, both pro-west countries were members. SEATO was largely regarded to be the “Asian version” of NATO- North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Meanwhile change in regimes in India offered certain possibilities of normalizing ties between India and Southeast Asia. Incidentally, Rajiv Gandhi in 1987 visited Myanmar at a time when the ASEAN countries were reeling under economic recession and as the latter was looking forward to opportunities opened up by Indian market. ASEAN countries were also eyeing Myanmar's richly endowed natural wealth that have been rendered inaccessible by international market forces due to the latter's isolationist policy since the 1960s. In a remarkable policy twist, Myanmar's next door ASEAN neighbour Thailand (under the Chatchai government) in 1988 downplayed security threats posed by Vietnam and prioritized Myanmar as the new threat to its national security (Ganesan 2006:9). But instead of isolating Myanmar, ASEAN led by Singapore and Thailand opted for a policy of constructive engagement with Myanmar's military government in the early 1990s (Ganesan 2006). The policy of constructive engagement was also extended to China as uncertainty mounted about its future intentions and its cooperation was essential for the success of the regional security process that was taking shape in the form of ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)<sup>53</sup> (Antolik 1994:7). Thus it can be said that the regional security scenario and the pressing need to maintain political stability amid shared apprehensions of rising China prompted both India and ASEAN to re-orient their foreign policy direction.

Myanmar on its part is also cognizant of the growing Indian naval capabilities and the military infrastructure being developed in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and is cautious about developing close strategic friendship with China (Sakhuja 2012:7). For India, Myanmar is at the centre of regional concerns about Chinese ambitions (Grare 2001:135). The possibility of Myanmar being used as Chinese military outlet to the Indian Ocean was too great a risk to be ignored. Thus New Delhi chose the path of closer engagement with Myanmar's regime in line with ASEAN in order to ensure peace and tranquility in the Indo-Myanmar border (Zhao Hong 2007:21). In the words of Sridharan, "India's changed stance towards Myanmar is in keeping with the foreign policy modifications that have been in evidence in its overall approach to Southeast Asia" (Sridharan 1997:16).

---

<sup>53</sup> The ARF dialogue was the first pan-East Asian institutional framework initiated to ensure regional security and stability. China's inclusion was vital especially in the context of the Spratly Island issues in the South China Sea that involve Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia, Vietnam and Taiwan along with China. India became a member of ARF in 1996.

## **Counter-Insurgency and Indo-Myanmar Security cooperation**

India decided to break the deadlock in its relations with the Military regime at a time when insurgents operating in the Northeastern region took maximum advantage of the porous Indo-Myanmar border to set up and operate camps within Myanmar (Routray 2011). The Myanmar army personnel had also crossed Indian territory in pursuit of Kachin rebels while conducting operations along the border. This has led to authorities of both governments to come to an understanding that troops from either side could cross the border to a certain limit in pursuit of the insurgents (Aung and Mint 2001:8). In a watershed moment, India's former foreign secretary J.N Dixit visited Rangoon from 29 March to 1 April 1993 leading to positive steps such as an agreement to control drug trafficking, talks in cooperation for building roads and increase in communications and trade between the two countries. The Myanmar authorities also assuaged India's fears and doubts about Chinese naval bases and Myanmar's import of Chinese arms by explaining that these are not allowed to be established permanently while the latter is for internal security purposes (Agnihotri and Datta-Ray 2002).

India in return assured the junta that it will henceforth abstain from interfering in Myanmar's internal issues such as the democratic movements and the role of Aung San Suu Kyi (Renaud 2003). India even ceased its anti-Junta AIR broadcasts in Burmese and chose not to oppose Myanmar's re-admission to NAM at the Jakarta Summit of September 1992 (Bouquerat 2001). The real breakthrough in bilateral relations, however, was the signing of Indo-Myanmar Border Agreement to regularize and promote border trade in January 21, 1994<sup>54</sup>. In the same year, India and Myanmar signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the 'maintenance of peace and tranquility in border areas'. This had paved the way for the first significant military cooperation in the following year to jointly counter insurgents (Sakhuja 2012).

### **Operation Golden Bird and beyond**

The operation "Golden Bird" was conducted to track down and attack a number of northeastern insurgents bringing in weapons from the Arakan coast (Bhaumik 2015). It was carried out by the 57<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division of the Indian Army during April-

---

<sup>54</sup> This will be dealt with in the next chapter.

May 1995 and was successful in intercepting a column of guerillas with their smuggled weapons on their way back from Thailand, leaving 38 rebels killed, 118 captured and more than 100 weapons seized with large quantities of ammunitions (Bhaumik 2009:210). Eric Randolph (2011) described it as an unprecedented moment of cooperation between the armies of Myanmar and India yet turned out to be futile. In his words-

The 57 Indian Mountain Division had tracked a column of 200 insurgents from various groups- the NSCN, ULFA and Manipuri rebels- who had picked up a huge shipment of arms south of Cox Bazar in Bangladesh coast and was moving along the Myanmar border towards Manipur. Between them, the troops from India and Myanmar soon had the rebels trapped. It was just at that moment that the government in New Delhi, which was then a vocal supporter of the opposition in Myanmar, gave Aung San Suu Kyi the Nehru Award for International Understanding. The Military Junta in Myanmar were not impressed, and pulled out of the operation, allowing the rebels to escape.

India's sympathetic attitude towards the pro-democracy cause in general and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in particular has surfaced from time to time in the subsequent years creating an obstacle in the security sphere of bilateral cooperation. However it did not deter India from pursuing a pro-active Myanmar policy that is both flexible and pragmatic. This is evidenced by the frequent high-level visits of the military and political officials between the two countries. The real transformation in bilateral relations took place during the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance government in 1998. In July 1999 Home Ministers of both the countries met in New Delhi to chalk out means for strengthening cooperation on issues like cross-border terrorism and setting up of communication links (Routray 2011:8). But the trajectory of cooperation on the security front has not been a smooth one. The Tatmadaw had carried out military operations against ethnic insurgents hiding in the border but has only been moderately successful in abating them. After May 2001 when NSCN and ULFA militants killed 50 Myanmarese soldiers in the Sagaing division the Junta realized that it needed Indian army's assistance to effectively root out cross-border insurgents (Yogendra Singh 2008:61). Since then the two armies have been cooperating with each other for mutual benefit. In November 2001, the Myanmar military had raided a number of Manipuri rebel bases, rounded up almost 200 rebels and recovered 1500

guns<sup>55</sup> In November 2003, Indian Vice President Bhairon Singh Shekhawat paid a visit to Yangon and Mandalay and was received with exceptional warmth by Myanmar's leaders and people alike (Bhatia 2011).

The 2004 visit of General Than Shwe, Chairman of State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) to India from 25 to 29 October was milestone setting in bilateral relations for two reasons: a) it was the first visit by head of Myanmar in 25 years; b) it resulted in an agreement on cooperation in non-traditional areas of security that outlined the need for close coordination and cooperation in dealing with insurgency, drug trafficking and organized crime (Devare 2006:194). Myanmar's increasing heed to India's call for security coordination has also to be viewed in the backdrop of the 2003 Bhutan government's crackdown on Indian insurgents within its territory.

**Operation All Clear, 2003:** Since the late 1990s the ULFA, NDFB and other insurgents had begun to set up camps in Bhutan due to crackdown by Indian military and the pro-India Bangladesh government. Despite constant pressure from India, Bhutan's royal government refused to act against them citing sovereignty issues<sup>56</sup>. However serious diplomatic stakes were raised by India's national security advisor and the army chief during their Bhutan's visit in 2003 and a joint counter-insurgency operation was proposed. Besides talks and persuasions with the Indian insurgents to leave Bhutan led to no avail. The Royal Bhutanese Army (RBA) finally resorted to strong military action named "Operation All Clear", successfully eliminating all traces of insurgent bases from Bhutan during subsequent raids while the Indian army provided logistical support and medical evacuation assistance to RBA personnel throughout the operation (Mazumdar 2005). Following the Bhutan example, Indian government was quiet optimistic about similar cooperation with Myanmar as well. Soon after the 2004 visit the Tatmadaw started a series of attacks on the camps of Indian insurgents based on information provided by India which was a remarkable feat (Devare 2006).

---

<sup>55</sup> See "Why India needs Myanmar on its side?" July 26 2010 at URL: <http://news.rediff.com/column/2010/jul/26/why-india-needs-myanmar-on-its-side.htm>

<sup>56</sup> The independence and sovereignty of the small Kingdom of Bhutan is ensured by the Treaty of Friendship signed between Bhutan and India in 1949 with the condition that the former will be guided by India in its foreign affairs. Although Bhutan have a fairly good relationship with India based on mutual respect, allowing Indian troops in its territory goes against its internal sovereignty.



On 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2007 an 18-member Myanmar Army delegation led by Brigadier-General Tin Maung Ohn visited Kolkata for the 30<sup>th</sup> bi-annual Liaison Meeting of officials from both countries wherein issues relating to cross-border insurgency, arms smuggling and border management were discussed (Routray 2011:8). Although no concrete actions came forward, Indian leaders have continued to raise the issue of transnational insurgency time and again to Myanmar's authorities. During her visit to Myanmar to attend ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting in August 2014 India's External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj commented that:

Though political leadership of Myanmar has been maintaining that Myanmar does not and will never allow groups whose interests pose a threat to India to operate, the ground reality is very different. I have told the foreign minister that these groups pose a threat not only to India but to Myanmar as well and that they need to be handled sternly (Roy 2014).

In response to India's concerns, Myanmar expressed its willingness to fully cooperate in destroying all militant camps if the Indian side provides intelligent inputs including exact location and other information about the training camps<sup>57</sup>. Myanmar's government also asserted its resolve not to allow any anti-India terror outfit to use its soil. Almost 20 years after the first joint operation against insurgents, India's northeast security approach has not changed much. Insurgency instead of dwindling appears to be on the rise with more and more factions emerging on the scene. Although most of the major outfits have entered into ceasefire agreement with India, the disgruntled parties of such outfits continue to make themselves relevant and more factions may lead to more insurgent groups with access to more sophisticated weapons (Hussain 2015). This will compel Indian government to respond more strongly to display its strike potential so as to deter the proliferation of such groups. It will logically follow that such display of might requires the pro-active assistance of adjacent nations like Myanmar. The recent case of "Surgical Strike" conducted by Indian army in the vicinity of Myanmar presents a significant shift in India's Counter Insurgency (CI) strategy as it involves "hot pursuit" inside Myanmar's border and diplomatic stakes were being raised (Hussain 2015). Since it was a one-of-a kind operation by the Indian security forces, a brief analysis of the manoeuvre and what it

---

<sup>57</sup> See "Myanmar to act against NE militant groups if provided inputs: Information Minister U Ye Htut" at URL: [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-08-24/news/53166676\\_1\\_india-and-myanmar-nay-pyi-taw-myanmar-territory](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-08-24/news/53166676_1_india-and-myanmar-nay-pyi-taw-myanmar-territory)

entails is called for especially in the context of Narendra Modi-led government's "zero-tolerance policy" on terror.

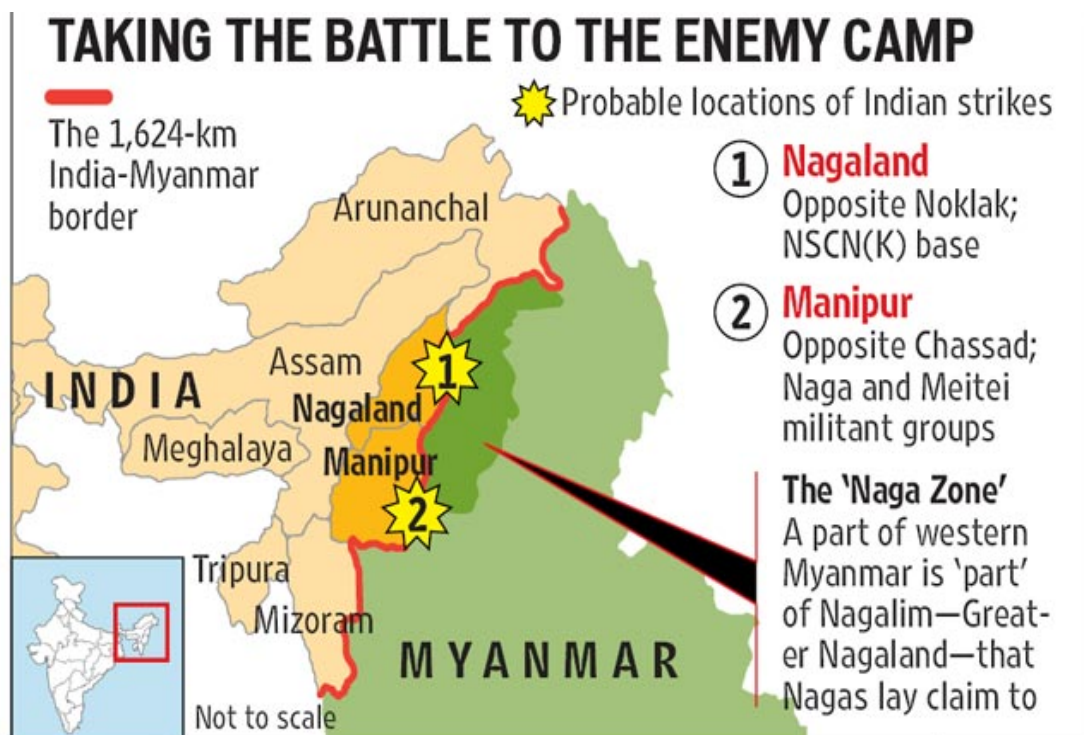
**Operation Search and Destroy, June 9:** It was carried out in retaliation of a militant ambush in Manipur on June 4, 2015 when 18 convoy-borne soldiers of the 6 Dogra Regiment were waylaid and killed by a combined force of insurgent groups led by NSCN-Khaplang operating from Myanmar's bases across the border (Hussain 2015). In a rare show of aggressive intent, Indian army's commandos crossed the border into Myanmar using helicopters on the morning of June 9, 2015 to strike at least one insurgent camp, barely five days after the deadly encounter (Bhaumik 2015). Subsequently two operations took place during which 50 insurgents<sup>58</sup> were killed and "significant casualties inflicted" along Nagaland and Manipur borders while according to top government sources most of the killings took place in encounters in Ukhrul and Chandel districts of Manipur (Pandey and Peri 2015). The operation was swift and precise lasting only 30 minutes<sup>59</sup> from "insertion" to "kill" to "out" as it was conducted by "40 of India's toughest fighting men, commandos from the elite 21 (Para) special force in two teams" deploying Russian made Mi-35 attack helicopters to strike two rebel camps about 4 kilometres deep inside Myanmar (Baruah and Singh 2015). It was also deemed highly successful as no personnel of the Indian army suffered casualties and returned safely.

---

<sup>58</sup> The exact numbers of insurgents killed are not known due to claims and counter-claims and sources also differ with some stating 15 to 20 or less insurgent casualties.

<sup>59</sup> According to other sources the operation lasted 45 minutes.

**Map 3.1**



Source: From 'Insertion' to 'Kill' and 'Out': How India's elite troopers avenged militant strikes in Manipur at URL: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/several-terrorists-killed-on-india-myanmar-border-army/article1-1356716.aspx>

The cross-border strike was supervised at the highest levels and closely monitored by National Security Advisor A.K Doval and Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar as well as Army chief General Dalbir Singh. The Indian Army in co-ordination with the Indian Air Force relied on specific and precise intelligence inputs in carrying out the operation (India Today June 10 2015). In doing so, the Indian army claimed to have communicated with Myanmar authorities with Major General Ranbir Singh stating that “there is a history of close cooperation between our two militaries. We look forward to working with them to combat such terrorism”<sup>60</sup>. Although the operation was said to have been carried out on Myanmar’s soil, the authorities in Myanmar denied in an official statement that Indian forces crossed over into their territory and maintained that the strike against the militants occurred along the bilateral border on

<sup>60</sup> See 'India attacks rebels in Myanmar' at URL: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-33074773>

the Indian side<sup>61</sup>. Nevertheless as per a Wall Street Journal report, Myanmar's government admitted that the operation was performed with 'cooperation and coordination' of Myanmar's armed forces but without any direct involvement (Sujatha 2015). Here it is imperative to point out that the June 9 Operation differed from Operation Golden Bird and Operation All Clear. During the Operation All Clear in Bhutan in 2003, the Indian army at any rate did not claim to have entered the Himalayan Kingdom as the offensive was carried out by Royal Bhutan Army and Royal Bhutan Police and during Operation Golden Bird, the Indian army at any point did not go inside Myanmar's territory (Hussain 2015).

The decision to conduct "Search and Destroy" operation was personally made by the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the stage was set by Indian Ministry of External Affairs whose diplomats succeeded in securing the approval of Nay Pyi Daw (Hussain 2015). In fact, the cross-border operation has been termed as the "Modi-Doval Doctrine" in reference to the strong national security outlook adopted by both leaders since the BJP government came to power on May 2014 (Sujatha 2015). The use of the term "hot pursuit" and "the message that it sought to convey" stands on shaky ground and has the potential to create unnecessary tensions between countries<sup>62</sup>. Myanmar's mild rebuff of India's claim of cross-border pursuit while reiterating its intention to keep anti-Indian rebels at bay had been interpreted as the former's concerns about its self-image and sovereignty. The overarching imperative in the whole conduct was the strong compulsion to strike back and subdue the militants in the "spirit of revenge". The Indian Prime Minister has been quoted to say "You hit us, we will hit you badly"<sup>63</sup> while Minister of State for Information & Broadcasting Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore in a Twitter message chose to use the term

---

<sup>61</sup> See 'Myanmar says operation on militants was on Indian side of border' at URL: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/myanmar-denies-indias-claim-of-killing-rebels-inside-its-territory-afp/>

<sup>62</sup>This has to be seen in the context of Pakistan government's strong response to Indian Junior Information Minister Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore's statement that the Army's Myanmar Operation was a "message" to other countries inimical to India with the former sharply retorting that "Pakistan is not Myanmar", See "Pakistan Warns India against 'misadventure'" The Hindu Front page June 11 2015

<sup>63</sup>See 'Days After Army's hot pursuit Ajit Doval to embark on Myanmar's visit today' at URL: <http://www.ibnlive.com/news/india/days-after-armys-hot-pursuit-ajit-doval-to-embark-on-myanmar-visit-today-1007399.html>

'Manipur Revenge' with a hashtag<sup>64</sup> and wide publicity had been made causing hype and controversies.

The self-congratulatory manner with which the Indian State conducted the offensive is symptomatic of New Delhi's rhetorical policy towards the Northeast conflict based on misconstrued and simplified notions of security. Due to India's active counter-insurgency policy, security has become a conundrum in Northeast as to the questions—security for whom and security from what. In its efforts to wipe out “anti-Indian forces” at work, the central government often fails to make a distinction between the ‘enemy’ and the ‘friend’. It does not desist from clubbing them into one category as implicit in the above twitter message that *Manipur is equal to militants* and submerged in the process is the issue of *who India tries to protect*.

On the bilateral front, the long term effects of such a strategy can be determined from the policy gains that accrue as India continue to step up its cooperation with Myanmar. The need to exercise caution and restraint while handling matters of national security interest has also been highlighted by the reservations of Myanmar over the cross-border incident. With regard to the “history of close cooperation”, military cooperation and joint conducts can go a long way in enhancing relationships if diplomatic sensitivities are taken care of. But much have not been achieved in that area since Operation Golden Bird in 1995 (Bhaumik 2015). Nevertheless, the scope for bilateral cooperation is endless as the northeast crisis is multifaceted especially with the growing security threats across the border that needs to be understood as well.

### **Small Arms, Drug Trafficking and the Militancy Nexus**

The trajectory of northeast turmoil has taken a new turn since the mid 1990s as it came to encompass a much more complicated range of issues. The change in the nature of insurgency in northeast has been the main reason behind the proliferation of militant groups who are no longer committed to the fundamental objective of their movement. Instead of upholding their lofty ideals and ‘noble identity’ cause, these groups preferred to adopt a more pragmatic and unscrupulous means of sustaining themselves to gain power and control, making them appear to the general public as a

---

<sup>64</sup> See Editorial, The Hindu June 13 2015.

'bunch of outlaws' as against their earlier 'Robin Hood image' (Egreteau 2006). The resulting criminalization of insurgency have come to pose serious threats to northeast, as the erstwhile 'freedom fighters' are being replaced by 'warlords' dealing with drugs and weapons taking advantage of the region's proximity with Myanmar (Bhaumik 2009:23). Simultaneously, the Myanmar regime's failure to check the drug menace due to its inability to bring about ethnic reconciliation encouraged an increasing armed insurgency financed by drug trade (Saikia 2009:6). Myanmar is the world's second largest producer of illicit opium (after Afghanistan) and over 90 per cent of opium in Southeast Asia is grown in its Shan State (Meehan 2011:2). The porous Indo-Myanmar border between Moreh in Manipur and Tamu in Myanmar has been the preferred route for smuggling of drugs, small arms and other illicit goods by both insurgents and criminals.

Northeast proximity to the notorious "Golden Triangle" area has greatly added to the region's existing burden of problems. The northeast states of Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland have been used as drug trafficking routes for transshipment of opium and heroin coming from the poppy fields of northeast Myanmar via Mandalay (Chouvy 2013:15). The National Highway 39 (also known as Asian Highway No 2) that runs from Imphal to Guwahati via Dimapur has become an important trafficking route (Haynes 2012). In its annual report of 2000, the International Narcotics Control Board confirmed that the border areas of Champhai in Mizoram, Moreh in Manipur and Mokokchung in Nagaland are the most vulnerable routes of drug trafficking from Myanmar (Sinha 2007). Along with heroin and opium, the constant flow of methamphetamine drugs is a major worry for the northeast (Bhaumik 2009:216). According to Asthabharati, production and drug trafficking in Northeast India assumed four dimensions<sup>65</sup>:

- The illicit cultivation of opium and cannabis,
- The Smuggling of heroin and amphetamines from Myanmar in moderate quantities,
- The trafficking of pharmaceuticals such as dextropropoxyphene and codeine containing cough syrups from other parts of the country and

---

<sup>65</sup> Dialogue July-September 2007, 9(1) at URL: [www.asthabharati.org](http://www.asthabharati.org)

- The trafficking of ephedrine and pseudo-ephedrine precursors for the manufacture of amphetamines from India to Myanmar.

The social implications of drug trafficking in northeast have been far reaching with the extremely high level of drug abuse among the youth accompanied by the spread of HIV/AIDS<sup>66</sup> since the 1990s. In fact northeast has become India's most affected region by drug addiction and HIV virus infection (Bouquerat 2001). As poppy cultivation in the Golden Triangle declined in the early 1990s, heroine became scarce and expensive causing users first to switch from smoking to injection and ultimately to Proxyvon<sup>67</sup>, a cheap alternative drug that entered market in the 2000s (Transnational Institute 2011). The degree and magnitude of its impact was such that civil society groups like the Young Mizo Association (YMA) in Mizoram have for years been compelled to take up the cause of large-scale anti-drugs campaign through its annual declarations known as *Kumpuan*. The local newspaper *Vanglaini* has reported that in the year between 2000 and 2014, 890 persons have died due to drug abuse in Mizoram.

Since October 1990 to October 2014, among the 9637 recorded HIV positive people, 2394 or 24.84 per cent were infected through IDUs<sup>68</sup>. In Manipur and Nagaland too NGOs have extensively intervened to prevent and control drug abuse and the spread of HIV/AIDS. The contributions of leading organizations such as All Manipur Anti-Drug Association (AMADA), Coalition Against Alcohol and Drugs (CAAD) and Social Awareness Service Organization (SASO) in the reduction of drug use are noteworthy (Drugs Policy Briefing March 2011). In Manipur, the prevalence of IDUs registered a remarkable decline from 55.7 per cent in 1994 to 12.89 per cent in 2010<sup>69</sup>. The prevalence of drug use in northeast is also linked with widespread unemployment, poverty and lack of education which are often the fallouts of political instability and militancy-borne lawlessness.

---

<sup>66</sup> Unsafe practices especially needle sharing and lack of awareness among injecting drug users (IDUs) have been the main reasons behind the unprecedented spread of the disease in the northeast states. See Drug Policy Briefing Nr 35. March 2011 Transnational Institute.

<sup>67</sup> Proxyvon or Dextropropoxyphene is also locally known as "Spasmo".

<sup>68</sup> [http://mizoramsacs.nic.in/newsite/hiv\\_status/latest\\_status.html](http://mizoramsacs.nic.in/newsite/hiv_status/latest_status.html)

<sup>69</sup> HIV Sentinel Surveillance Report (Prevalence) of Manipur at <http://manipursacs.nic.in/download.html>

According to Lal Thanhawla, Chief Minister of Mizoram, “Smuggling of Narcotics and other drugs have been increasing along the unfenced India-Myanmar border” and that “to tackle the menace of drug trafficking, smuggling of other goods and infiltration the central government must fence the entire India-Myanmar border and tighten security”<sup>70</sup>. The illegal narcotics trade is in fact one of the major reasons for the continuance of insurgencies in the northeast since it has become a major source of funding to buy sophisticated weapons in their fight against the government (Sinha 2007)<sup>71</sup>. Earlier, insurgents from Manipur, Nagaland and Assam mainly relied on systematic taxation and extortion involving every household, government officials and employees, businessmen and politicians. In Manipur, the Chin-Kuki rebels are engaged in inter-ethnic clashes for control of South Manipur around Moreh and the lucrative trans-border drugs and other smuggled goods trade to fund their activities (Mukherjee 2005:42).

The NSCN and ULFA, in nexus with the Myanmarese rebels are also reportedly involved in drug trafficking and has been using the sale proceeds to purchase arms and ammunitions (Datta 2000). The recent Indian army’s counter-insurgency operation against the National Democratic Front of Bodoland- Songbijit (NDFB-S) cadres resulted in the seizure of sophisticated foreign made weapons including AK-46 rifles, HK-33 rifles, M-20 pistols, M-16 ammunition along with others that clearly indicated the existence of deep-rooted clandestine arms market in the northeast and that these outfits can procure such weapons with little or no difficulty (Hussain 2015:7). Another great source of anxiety for northeast emanates from cross-border migration from Bangladesh and Myanmar. However this issue has to be seen from the context of northeast unique linkages with the people of western Myanmar forged through the millennia and that continue to pose serious questions about “identity and belonging” among the northeast tribes.

### **Ethnic Linkages and Problems of Migration**

The people of northeast most notably differ from the rest of India by race, culture and ethnicity. The region’s geographical and cultural distance from New Delhi is sharply

---

<sup>70</sup> See ‘Drug Smuggling rising along Indo-Myanmar border’ May 19 2012 at URL: [http://zeenews.india.com/news/north-east/drug-smuggling-rising-along-india-myanmar-border\\_776353.html](http://zeenews.india.com/news/north-east/drug-smuggling-rising-along-india-myanmar-border_776353.html)

<sup>71</sup> See Book Excerpt: “Lost Opportunities...” at [indiandefencereview.com](http://indiandefencereview.com) May 10 2014.



contrasted by the physical closeness with Myanmar and other neighbouring countries that often defies legal boundary. Many indigenous tribes in the Northeast are believed to have migrated from the surrounding East and Southeast Asian regions into the areas that have become their permanent settlements (Das 2015). Such tribes include the Tai-Ahoms, the Nagas, the Kukis, Bodos and Mizos during various periods of history. In fact, majority of the northeast population belong to various linguistic strains of the mongoloid race as opposed to the Indo-Aryan and Dravidian races to which “mainstream” Indians mainly belong. The Nagas and the Mizos are among those listed under the Tibeto-Burman linguistic family and the insurgency movements launched by them incidentally involved an “inclusive territorial homeland” spanning across the borders eastward to Myanmar. In fact, the Mizos trace their origin to the legendary “Chhinlung”<sup>72</sup> (or Sinlung) which is believed to be located in the southwest or central part of China although there are different versions and notions about its exact meaning and site (Das 2015). While some scholars suggested that it is located in the Szechwan province of China on the bank of the Yalung River, others argued that ‘Sinlung’ is in fact the name of a Chinese prince ‘Chinlung’, son of Hwang Ti of Chin Dynasty who built the Great Wall of China (Changsan 2007).

According to Mizo Historian B. Lalthangliana, various sub-tribes of the Mizos settled in the Chindwin and Kabaw valleys for a combined period of around 600 years before they scattered into different places which are presently known as Chin state, Mizoram, Manipur, Tripura and Chittagong in Bangladesh (Lalthangliana 2009). He argues that in all likelihood the mongoloid Mizos were forced to leave the fertile valley due to the advent of the Shans from east of Yunnan to Burma and westward to Assam where they established the Ahom Kingdom around 1200 ADE. B.G. Verghese has supplemented this view by maintaining that growth of population and pressure from newly-incoming tribes from further afield caused the Lushais to move west from the Shan areas of Burma into India in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Verghese 1996:14). The Nagas, on the other hand, emerged from the Southeast Asian Borneo and entered the hills of Assam in successive waves, one tribe after the other while some like the Konyak, the Khimnugan, Chang, Fom, Sangtam, and Imchungad tribes live on both sides of the

---

<sup>72</sup> Historians may not agree with such mythical notion of origin yet the concept of Chhinlung remains central to the Mizos’ self-identification and existence. Legend has it that various clans of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo tribes including the Hmars, Paihtes, Raltes and Lushais came out of a giant rock cave called ‘Chhinlung’ which is their home and birthplace.

Indo- Burma border (Chandola 2013). Similarly, the Mishmi and Tangsa tribes in Arunachal Pradesh are also found across the international border in China and Myanmar and maintain close interactions with their ethnic counterparts (Gogoi et al 2009:8). When juxtaposed with India's revered yet ambiguous civilizational links with Myanmar that are often emphasized on a bilateral level discussion, the existing links between the ethnic communities between India and Myanmar can provide greater leverages for enhancing political and strategic partnership if informed policy decisions are made that capitalize on such affinities.

Due to the extensive socio-cultural and even economic affinities, peoples in the Indo-Myanmar region continue to draw their imaginaries as well as social and political practices from historically existing cultural connections and continuities (Das 2007:18). Such affinity is most vividly indicated by the presence of important cultural sites that have either symbolic or historical value and are often revered and held in high esteem. The spiritual lake of Rih Dil in the Zokhawthar district of Myanmar, for example, continues to be regarded as the *most significant lake of the Mizos* while the actual largest lake in the state of Mizoram is Palak. The Myanmar town of Tahan (also known as Kalaymyo) in Kalay district of Sagaing division is practically referred to as 'Mizo City' since 55 per cent of its inhabitants belong to the Chin community, ethnic kins of Mizos. As Laldinkima Sailo observes-

Walking around the Bagyoke Aung San Market in Yangon gives one a personal sense of the cultural affinity between Myanmar and northeast India. Goods are stacked in a way peculiar to the northeast region and the similarity in the products on display is unmistakable. Every now and then one can hear people speaking in Mizo or some other common language. The traditional Burmese dress is worn just the way it is in the northeast and the street food and traditional food items of both the regions bear close resemblance too. The saying that Southeast Asia begins in northeast India takes credence (Sailo 2014).

However relations between the Chins and the Mizos deteriorated dramatically over the years. Mizoram has been hosting Myanmar population of around 70,000 to 10,000 mainly from the Chin State who had fled political oppression and economic adversity (Levesque and Rahman 2007). The waves of refugee exodus also brought hundreds of Myanmar Nagas to Nagaland in the early 1990s but were later repatriated after India and Myanmar chalked out a plan to do so (Aung and Mint 2001). Due to the great sense of insecurity among minority ethnic groups in

Myanmar, Chins continued to seek refuge in the relatively peaceful State of Mizoram even decades after the 1988 crackdown (Karin Kaasik 2004). Although great tensions have existed over illegal migration from Bangladesh adversely affecting the socio-political stability in the Northeast, the case of Myanmarese refugees presented a ‘special challenge’ for the Mizo people who are divided on the issue- between those who advocated brotherly treatment on account of ethnic kinship and those who resented them altogether as the illegal foreigners or label them as *Burma mi* (meaning Burmese folks) which is considered degradable<sup>73</sup>. The migration flow is to some extent a two-way traffic since Mizos also migrated to Myanmar in large numbers during the heydays of insurgency to escape violence and repression (Karin Kaasik 2004). Refugees from Myanmar particularly the undocumented ones are often subjected to harsh scrutiny, interrogation and even torture at the borders to determine if they are complicit with the NSCN militants making them feel unwelcome in India<sup>74</sup>. In the recent context, infiltration of migrant labourers, traders and marauders due to porosity of the border has also become a serious issue.

**Foreigner or Ethnic Outsider?:** The continuous inflow of migrants from neighbouring Myanmar, Nepal and Bhutan as well as Bangladesh have created many untoward incidents in the northeast mainly in the form of strong “anti-foreigner movements” such as seen in Assam in 1978 (Datta 2001). Peculiarly, the term “foreigner” in the northeast context can mean three things: a) an immigrant or a refugee from across the border. b) a non-tribal resident and c) a foreigner *per se*. Thus a non-tribal resident in the Garo Hills, despite being a full-fledged Indian citizen is considered to be the *ethnic outsider* as a result of the hegemony of identity politics and hence is placed in the same category as any other foreigner (Dutta 2014). On the other hand, Chakma refugees from Bangladesh who have “settled down” in the northeast states of Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Tripura are much resented by the dominant ethnic tribes in these states and their rapid increase in number has been a major cause of worry in Mizoram (Datta 2000:8). The level of anxiety over the growing influx of refugees and illegal immigrants has often turned xenophobic especially in the case of Bangladeshis. Since identity is an important social marker to

---

<sup>73</sup> A similar observation has also been made by Julien Levesque and Mirza Zulfikur Rahman (2007) in their article “Tension in the Rolling Hills: Burmese Population and Border Trade in Mizoram”.

<sup>74</sup> See unpo.org/article/634 “Nagalim: Unbearable Life in Myanmar and unwelcome in India”, May 18 2004.

distinguish between “us” and “them” within the tribal communities (Dutta 2014), the sense of hatred and intolerance towards an individual marked as an “outsider” in the northeast can easily escalate into hostility and violence (Levesque and Rahman 2007).

**Xenophobia Over Immigrants:** An extreme example can be drawn from the Dimapur Lynching case of 5<sup>th</sup> March 2015 in Nagaland where an alleged rapist was dragged out of Jail and killed by an angry mob of Naga men alleging that he was an “illegal Bangladeshi” when he was in fact a citizen of India<sup>75</sup>. The incident also brings out another aspect of “racial matter” that has been implicit in India’s northeast policy. It serves as a reflection of the way in which people from all northeastern states are all lumped together and referred to as “Chinki” throughout India which is a derogatory term also suggesting that these are literally from China and their ethnic, racial and cultural identity is distinct from, other to and “foreign” for those in India’s heartland (Vajpeyi 2015). With ethnic tensions already brewing among the local tribes and other inhabitants, an act of crime or violence proved or otherwise committed by a refugee or an infiltrator is ‘purely unacceptable’ to the host communities.

Thus a *Burma mi* in Mizoram is looked at with suspicion and distrust by the local Mizos. This is mainly due to their widespread involvement in illegal activities such as alcohol brewing<sup>76</sup> and drug trafficking and trading which has led to rapid decline in moral standards among Mizos (Levesque and Rahman 2007). There had been numerous drives by both the State government and NGOs to deport the Myanmarese Chins but to no avail and the absence of proper registration also makes it difficult to identify them from the ethnically similar ethnic Mizos. While these are the ground realities in some of the northeastern states, the vast inter-linkages of ethnicity, traditions and livelihood also provide a favourable environment in which India’s Look/Act East Policy can be extensively pursued. For that the government has to find ways and means to channelize these cross-border similarities by engaging local and indigenous stakeholders from both sides of the boundary.

---

<sup>75</sup> Roy, Sandip (2015) ‘Don’t touch our women: Dimapur Lynching was never about Justice’ at URL: <http://m.firstpost.com/india/dont-touch-our-women-the-dimapur-lynching-was-never-about-justice-2143305.html>

<sup>76</sup>See The Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition (MLTP) Act 1995 <http://police.mizoram.gov.in/uploads/files/mltp-act-wine-rules.pdf>. The total ban has been lifted by modifying the law into ‘The Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act 2014’ and has been implemented in 2015.

## **Towards Cross-Border Understanding: Need for a Roadmap**

To tackle the innumerable issues along the international border is a mammoth task for both India and Myanmar. The central government has acknowledged the illegal migration issue that plagues the northeast region and the issues of undemarcated boundary<sup>77</sup>. In a significant step towards security cooperation, India and Myanmar signed a Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters in July 2010 during the high-level visit of Senior General Than Shwe, Chairman of SPDC to India<sup>78</sup>. The treaty acknowledged that close security cooperation was immediately called-for in order to tackle the “pernicious problem of terrorism” and reiterated that “the territory of either country would not be allowed for activities inimical to the other and resolved not to allow their respective territory to be used for training, sanctuary and other operations by terrorist and insurgent organizations and their operatives”<sup>79</sup>.

India and Myanmar reiterated their commitment to strengthen cooperation for eliminating the nexus between drug trade, arms smuggling and extremism on the occasion of the 18<sup>th</sup> national level meeting between the two countries held in New Delhi from 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> December 2012. In the meeting, both sides expressed satisfaction over opening of a third Border Liaison Office (BLO) between Changlang, India and Pangsau, Myanmar and decided to open a fourth BLO between Ukhrul, Manipur and Somra Myanmar (Press Information Bureau January 3 2013). In a boost to bilateral relations, India and Myanmar have also signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in 2014 that entails intelligence exchange between security agencies, conduct of coordinated patrols along the international border and maritime boundary mainly aimed at checking militant movements, illegal arms, drugs and fake currency notes<sup>80</sup>. This has indicated a significant improvement in the existing security framework of bilateral cooperation.

---

<sup>77</sup> See ‘Steps to check illegal migration in Mizoram’ at URL: <http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/Steps-to-check-illegal-migration-to-Mizoram-Sonia-Gandhi/2013/11/18/article1898050.ece>

<sup>78</sup> See Joint Statement during the visit of Chairman, State Peace and development Council of Myanmar’ at URL: <http://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/930/Joint+Statement+during+the+visit+of+Chairman+State+Peace+and+Development+Council+of+Myanmar>

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> See ‘To exchange information in the fight against insurgency, arms and drug smuggling India-Myanmar sign MoU cross border co-operation gets a major filip’ at URL: <http://www.e-pao.net/GP.asp?src=1..030614.jun14>

In the same year, the Border Liaison officers from India and Myanmar held a meeting at Nanyon in Myanmar over numerous cross-border issues during which the Indian team shared specific information about the reinforcement of insurgent groups like NSCN (K) and NSCN (IM) and their coordination with ULFA and other groups while the Myanmar team agreed to put in place a mechanism to curb infiltration from Myanmar's side and to cooperate in the arrest of such culprits (National News The Hindu November 14 2014). Of the sanctioned strength of 46 Battalions of Assam Rifles in the northeast, 31 are allocated the task of counter-insurgency operations while 16 are assigned for securing the border<sup>81</sup>.

The Assam Rifles personnel and Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) have regularly seized cannabis herbs, Ganza and pseudoephedrine tablets while being smuggled to Myanmar<sup>82</sup>. This is best indicated by the seizures of 205 grams of heroin and 65 grams of heroin on 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> November 2014 respectively in Imphal by the 24<sup>th</sup> Assam Rifles both involving Myanmar nationals<sup>83</sup>. Likewise, most of the seizures of opium and heroin in Aizawl by Mizoram Excise and Narcotics are from Myanmar sources<sup>84</sup>. In fact, the widespread involvement of immigrant Chins, both perceived and real, in local and cross-border crimes have been the main reason why "they are no longer welcome in Mizoram". Here it should be remembered that the in-migration of these people have been motivated by political and economic hardships in their home country and since the pace of democratic transition is excruciatingly slow, it can be well assumed that the influx of Chins will continue. The only question is: how would the State government in tandem with the Centre channelize the skills and entrepreneurship of these migrants who have now constituted a large chunk of the population? Thus problems of migration can be converted into a huge potential if right measures are adopted in the true spirit of a democratic and accommodative country, by engaging stakeholders at all levels and through a variety of forums (Hazarika 2008).

---

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> See 'Drugs Situation Report/Significant Event Report for India for the month of November 2014', Narcotics Control Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, GOI, New Delhi, URL: [http://narcoticsindia.nic.in/upload/download/document\\_id3fb451ca2e89b3a13095b059d8705b15.pdf](http://narcoticsindia.nic.in/upload/download/document_id3fb451ca2e89b3a13095b059d8705b15.pdf)

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

To tackle all these issues in a holistic manner, India and Myanmar need to chart out a proper roadmap for security cooperation in the border and beyond based on mutual trust and understanding. As far as the current installation of Look East Policy is concerned, economic considerations will remain the top priority. The policy of “Acting East” pushed forward by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government under Prime Minister Modi is also about injecting new vigour in India’s economic diplomacy towards Asian countries (Mohan 2015). But the goal of accelerating economic growth is not achievable unless there is a clear strategy of engagement in the security sphere and as long as India and Myanmar continue to follow different policies guided by their own separate interests. As cross-border understanding has been forged with political dialogues and mutual assistance treaty, both governments are obliged to commit themselves in bringing positive impacts on the security environment of the shared border region. For its part, India cannot afford to underestimate the perseverance of insurgent groups like the NSCN (K) in thwarting the centre’s efforts to resolve the Naga issue. A sensitive and inclusive approach is required before the centre flexes its muscle to “wipe out” unwanted elements every time they cause disturbance across the international border. An inclusive consultation process inspired by the democratic ethos of justice and fairness with adequate civil society’s representation will strengthen any peace agreement between New Delhi and the insurgent groups.

### **Conclusion: Redefining Security**

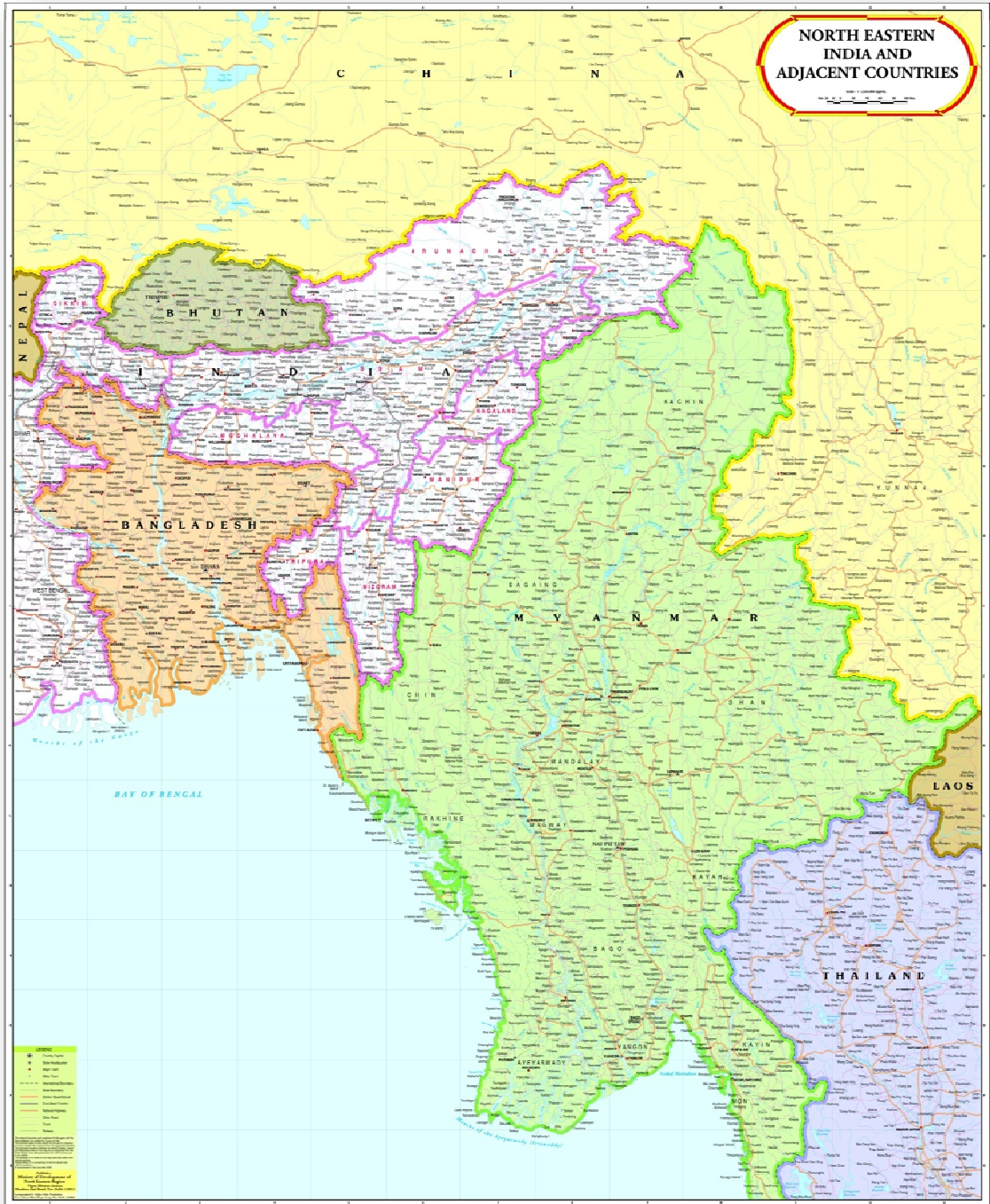
In conclusion, India’s evolution of its foreign policy towards Myanmar has been informed by its security interests concerning the Northeast region. Northeast India’s geo-political, ethnic and strategic linkages are of great importance in India’s foreign policy calculations. Yet New Delhi’s northeast approach has been myopic in a sense that the focus is laid too much on securing the Northeast territory and failed to see beyond its physical boundaries. There is a need to move away from the “counter-insurgency framework” of border security and reassess Northeast as a “trans-border region” capable of linking India with Southeast Asia for which deep cooperation-mutual, political, economic and strategic- is critical. This also points to the pressing need to restructure India’s security policy in the context of the changing conditions of Northeast.

National Security Advisor Ajit Doval on November 22 2014 said “*The most critical factor of national security is the will of the nation. This depends on our values of fairness, justice and equality*”. Thus to achieve any semblance of peace and reconciliation in the northeast, the will of the northeast people has to be given prime importance. In fact national security is not merely about enhancing a country’s strategic capabilities and military strength. It is also about instilling a sense of security among all sections of populations based on shared perceptions of interests and wellbeing. Securing the northeast from all kinds of ills and threats largely depends on the resolve and resilience of the people.

On that note, security needs to be re-defined and re-conceptualized so as to incorporate citizens’ genuine grievances, societal concerns and developmental requirements. Thus the policy framework of Indian government should encompass sustainable and durable development schemes to ensure economic self-determination to the NE states and make them stand on their own so as to reduce their excessive reliance on central assistance. The most effective counter-insurgency strategy does not lie in counter-violence or military offensives but in empowering the 40 or so million people, restoring to them their dignity and self-respect. This can be achieved through capitalizing on the means and resources available to them so that they are in a position to tackle the vicious cycle of violence and poverty. The initiation of Indo-Myanmar border trade was the right step in this direction. Northeast has been lagging behind the rest of India in almost all economic indicators which has fueled the region’s sense of alienation over the years. To remedy this should be the top priority of Indian government in all possible manners. Besides, there is no sustainable peace without sustainable means of economic development.



**Map 3.2: Northeastern India & Adjacent Countries**



Source: [mdoner.gov.in](http://mdoner.gov.in)

## Chapter 4

### Border Trade and Infrastructure Development

*Violence shall no more be heard in your land, devastation or destruction within your borders; you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise.*

- Isaiah 60:18 (ESV)

In the current framework of centre-periphery relations, northeast is a rural hinterland. The region's exterior location has been attributed to be the underlying factor responsible for its relative underdevelopment and lack of progress over the years. In essence, northeast after partition of the subcontinent was transformed into a landlocked borderland distant from the national economy. Sanjib Baruah argues that the "logic of the border effect" works against the border regions "when national borders define economic space decisions" about where to locate public enterprises (Baruah 2005:220). Hence the northeast region was continuously bypassed by the state-sponsored industrial, agricultural and infrastructural improvement initiatives (Schendel 2005:148). The region's geographical seclusion, coupled with insurgencies and decades-long neglect from successive governments at the centre has prevented the same from reaping the benefits of India's economic growth.

State governments in the northeast have to bear the additional burden of maintaining peace and order often at the cost of development works (Jyoti Goswami 2001:134). States in the northeast have little revenue sources or production base and are hence compelled to wholly depend on central government's assistance. The contribution of Northeast region to the national economy has been marginal and decelerated in the post-liberalization era with a mere -0.69 per cent (Chakraborty 2011). At present, roughly 80 per cent of the northeast population lives in rural areas and majority of these are engaged in agriculture and allied activities. The process of globalization in the post-economic reforms era did impact northeast in the form of wider range of market goods but failed to give the much needed boost to production and income generating activities (Bezbaruah 2007). The reason behind this is simple. Northeast

economy is primary-sector driven and the presence of industrial sector is negligible, largely made up of small and medium-scale enterprises (except for Assam)<sup>85</sup> with minimum infrastructural and institutional foundations (Gopalakrishnan 1996). The inherent lack of infrastructure, remote terrains and “bad publicity” due to recurrent ethnic strife are unfavourable for private capital investments (Bezbaruah 2007). Under such condition the private sector cannot emerge on the industrial scene in any significant scale and northeast remains a “backward agrarian economy” (Border Trade in Manipur Ground Level Survey and Status Report n.d:11). The region’s agricultural sector has also been declining and expansion of services and manufacturing sectors has been grossly insufficient (Northeast Strategy report June 2007). The fall in the shares of agriculture and manufacturing has been accompanied by an increasing share of services (RIS Border Trade Report October 2011). As a result, States like Mizoram has a fairly high percentage of service sector making up 60 per cent of the State’s GDP which is indeed the highest among Northeast States in 2012-13 (De and Majumdar 2014:40). Consequently the state government is the biggest economic engine in the state and a major contributor of the people’s income.

The region’s inhospitable terrain makes it highly inaccessible evidenced by the scarcity of roadways and railways beyond the Brahmaputra valley. The total length of rail networks in the whole region is only 2,592 km with 95 per cent of the broad gauge track confined to Assam and 2 per cent to Tripura (Panchali Saikia 2011). States like Manipur, Mizoram and Sikkim are yet to be penetrated (RIS Border Trade Report October 2011). Siliguri, the only connecting point between India and Northeast region, stands as a stark symbol of the region’s isolated existence. It has often been suggested that northeast problem will be solved if robust development takes place and that the issues of insurgency and militancy are none but symptoms of poverty and backwardness. This view lends credence in the light of northeast performance in key development indicators in relation to other parts of India (Rana and Uberoi 2012). At the same time, poverty and lack of development lead to civil conflict, lack of faith in political leadership and government which in turn creates unstable political conditions inimical to poverty reduction and growth (Northeast Strategy Report June 2007:49). The vicious cycle thus continues in the northeast.

---

<sup>85</sup> Assam is the most industrialized state in the northeast and accounts for almost 90 per cent of the industrial units and outputs in the whole region. See RIS Border Trade Report October 2011, p. 27.

The North East Industrial and Investment Promotion Policy (NEIIPP) approved on 29 March 2007 by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs declared substantial investment subsidies and incentives for the entire NER (including Sikkim) in line with special economic zones (SEZs)<sup>86</sup>. During his visit to northeast, Prime Minister Modi declared the region a “natural economic zone” as different from a “man-made (special) economic zone” emphasizing on the region’s natural wealth<sup>87</sup> which remains largely untapped<sup>88</sup>. In fact, a plethora of agencies, schemes and assistance programmes have been initiated by the Indian government at various points of time to initiate development process in the region. Some of these measures include the special category status and the non-lapsable central pool of resources (operationalized during the 1998-99); the formation of North Eastern Council (NEC) in 1972 and Department of Development of Northeastern Region (DoNER) in 2001 (Chakraborty 2011).

Debasis Neogi argues that the benefits of these initiatives do not reach all sections of society and resulted in asymmetric concentration of economic wealth and power. In his view, this has resulted in the “dependency syndrome”, a chronic reliance on centre’s grants that have swamped the region under various schemes but development in the actual sense has never occurred (Neogi 2010). Perhaps the upgradation of DoNER into a full-fledged Ministry in 2004 represented the Centre’s ‘special resolve’ to make up for lost time and to bridge the huge developmental gap between India and its peripheral northeast.

### **Vision 2020 and the Northeast**

Notably, the first attempt at evolving a ‘comprehensive policy agenda’ for achieving ‘peace and prosperity’ in the northeast came in the form of Northeastern Region Vision 2020 drafted by the DoNER Ministry and released by the Indian government in July 2008 (McDuie-Ra 2009). The DoNER ministry along with the Northeastern Council prepared the Northeastern Region Vision 2020 (NER2020) document aimed

---

<sup>86</sup> See ‘Northeast Industrial and Investment Promotion Policy, 2007’ March 29 2007, Press Information Bureau, GOI at URL: <http://www.pib.nic/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=26480>

<sup>87</sup> Northeast region has rich bio-diversity, oil and natural gas, coal, limestone, hydro potential, mineral and forest wealth. Extensive oil exploration has led to a recent discovery of vast deposits of natural gas and oil in the states of Manipur and Mizoram and Geologists have even stated that Mizoram is virtually floating on oil and gas deposits. Read Roluahpuia “Countering Development: New Struggles in Northeast India”, March 3, 2013 at URL: <http://www.jneis.com/?p=512>

<sup>88</sup> See ‘India’s Northeast is ‘Natural Economic Zone’ Says PM Modi’ December 2 2014 at URL: <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/indias-northeast-is-natural-economic-zone-says-pm-modi-706884>

at addressing the structural shortcomings of northeast in areas of governance, internal security, rural and infrastructure development, connectivity, agriculture, investment in natural, human and financial resources etc by placing northeast at the forefront of India's diplomatic initiatives with its neighbours, particularly Myanmar. The document also specifically endorsed international trade across the borders in an effort to reverse northeast territorial boundedness and to improve the livelihood prospects of northeast people in general and agricultural workers in particular.

The vision statement contained in the document delineates three objectives of the document: first, to structure a grassroots-led development process; second, to enhance the role of Northeast in the national economy; and thirdly, to recognize the strategic importance of the region in India's foreign policy especially the Look East Policy (LEP) (Rahman 2008)<sup>89</sup>. However in terms of investment the intra-regional economic disparities become conspicuous as the rural and more remote areas continued to be far lagging behind irrespective of financial allocation (Gopalakrishnan 1996:74).

A comprehensive study of the border areas in the northeast sponsored by the Thirteenth Finance Commission has shown that people living in the border districts have poorer access to health care, education, power supply, banking, public transport, sanitation and even drinking water facilities (in the case of Mizoram) and a good portion of them are heavily dependent on jhum or shifting cultivation as the primary occupation while there are great potential areas to be explored in horticulture, sericulture, floriculture, animal husbandry etc for generating employment opportunities (Gogoi et al 2009). After two decades of opening the border trade, the local economy of northeast states have failed to take off as visualized and there are real concerns that northeast will remain a transit route rather than a regional trade hub under the ongoing Look East Policy<sup>90</sup>. The present study will try to capture and examine such issues that confront the border trade process. Nevertheless the Indo-Myanmar Border Trade Agreement was one of the most substantial outcomes of India's policy re-formulation towards Myanmar. It can be said that the joint military

---

<sup>89</sup>Note that since the visit to Myanmar by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on November 2014, Look East Policy has been translated into Act East Policy in an attempt to "hasten implementation of projects and proposals" that have been pursued "in principle" rather than with action. See Shankari Sundararaman "Modi in Myanmar: From 'Look East' to 'Act East'", 17 November 2014 at URL: [www.ipcs.org/article/india-in-the-world/modi-in-myanmar-from-look-east-to-act-east-4742.html](http://www.ipcs.org/article/india-in-the-world/modi-in-myanmar-from-look-east-to-act-east-4742.html).

<sup>90</sup>Priyoranjan, Ch (n.d.), 'Draft Report, Border Trade in Manipur: Ground Level Survey and Status Report', Department of Commerce and Industries Project, Government of Manipur.

cooperation in fighting militancy led to greater cooperation in trade by opening up the borders that would go a long way in regenerating the stagnant border economies (Lall 2006).

### **Indo-Myanmar Border Trade- What it Entails**

The first official 'Border Trade Agreement' between India and Myanmar was inked on 21<sup>st</sup> January 1994 in New Delhi and inaugurated on 12 April 1995 by the then Union Minister of Commerce<sup>91</sup>. The 1994 agreement envisaged that border trade will take place through custom posts at two designated places viz., Moreh in Manipur and Zokhawthar at Champhai District in Mizoram corresponding to Tamu and Rih on the Myanmar side respectively. New trade posts in other places will be notified as mutually agreed upon by the two countries. It was initially agreed that 22 items of locally produced commodities consisting of agricultural and minor forest products will be traded between India and Myanmar based on two mechanisms: a) barter exchange and b) traditional/free exchange per customary rules with a 5 per cent duty which is a concessional rate<sup>92</sup>. Barter system has been the preferred mode of business transactions among people living in the border areas. Article III of the Agreement states that border trade may be conducted in freely convertible currencies or in currencies mutually agreed upon by the two countries, including through counter trade agreements. Traders are hence required to invoice their goods in US dollars with each transaction limited to US\$ 20, 000 only (Pushpita Das 2014:16).

As per the Agreement, the original list of items included for Indo-Myanmar border trade consists of: 1) Mustard/Rape Seed, 2) Pulses and Beans, 3) Fresh Vegetables, 4) Fruits, 5) Garlic, 6) Onion, 7) Chillies, 8) Spices, 9) Bamboo, 10) Minor Forest Products excluding Teak, 11) Betel Nuts and Leaves, 12) Food Items for local consumption, 13) Tobacco, 14) Tomato, 15) Reed Broom, 16) Sesame, 17) Resin, 18) Coriander Seeds, 19) Soya bean, 20) Roaster Sunflower Seeds, 21) Katha, 22) Ginger. Among these, bamboo has a great export and investment potential as the region is rich in bamboo products. According to the Indian Chamber of Commerce, the combined production of bamboo in the Northeast States accounts for 65 per cent of India's

---

<sup>91</sup>See 'Indo-Myanmar Border Trade, Introduction', Department of Commerce and Industries, Government of Manipur at URL: [http://dcimanipur.gov.in/border\\_trade.html](http://dcimanipur.gov.in/border_trade.html)

<sup>92</sup>See 'Border Trade', Ministry of Development of Northeastern Region (MDoNER) at URL: [www.mdoner.gov.in/content/border-trade](http://www.mdoner.gov.in/content/border-trade)



production value and 20 per cent of the global production value. The state of Mizoram alone contributes to around 40 per cent of India's bamboo production. The region also produces a large amount of spices such as chillies, ginger, mustard seeds, fruits and vegetables which can be processed and marketed locally (Indian Chamber of Commerce 2013).

Border Trade is different from trade through air or sea ports especially since the latter involves clearance through customs and has large volume. Border trade, in effect, is an "over-land trade" by way of exchange of commodities from a bi-laterally agreed list by people living along both sides of the international border<sup>93</sup>. According to Pushpita Das, the rationale for border trade arises from two main factors. The first pertains to the remoteness of the border areas which does not allow access for the local people to national commercial centres to sell their products and buy items of daily necessity; and the second factor is the shared socio-cultural ties and economic complementarities by people across the border for whom border trade offers a natural milieu for greater economic interactions (Pushpita Das 2014:5). Thus local requirements and preferences largely influence the nature and dynamics of border trade. Unlike contraband items, border trade is governed by strict modalities and protocols that are worked out in advance and the volume of trade is not allowed to exceed a given limit beyond which it might pose a threat to national security (Pushpita Das 2014). In case of Indo-Myanmar border trade, goods and items worth US\$ 2000 are allowed for exchange at a time.

As per the agreement, the barter trade is restricted only to land route and transactions can take place only by way of head-load or non-motorized transport system (A.P. (DIR Series) Circular 17 2000). Some facilities have also been provided by both governments to facilitate free movement of hill tribes residing along the Indo-Myanmar border albeit confined within 16 km of the international border upon acquiring official permits with certain terms and conditions while visa is ruled out<sup>94</sup>. Among the items permitted, India's exports to Myanmar from across the border mainly consisted of agricultural food products like edible buffalo offal, soyabari, skimmed milk powder, soya grit and wheat flour while imported items from

---

<sup>93</sup> See Border Trade MDoNER at URL: [www.mdoner.gov.in/content/border-trade#b](http://www.mdoner.gov.in/content/border-trade#b)

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

Myanmar include forest products like betel nuts, dry ginger, kooth root, serpentine root, timber and numeric finger (Thiyam Bharat Singh n.d.).

It was agreed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> India-Myanmar Joint Trade Committee Meeting in October 2008 that the Custom Land Stations in Moreh (Manipur) and Zokhawthar (Mizoram) would be upgraded to normal trade centres while the list of commodities to be traded were exponentially increased to 40 items (YHome 2009). Thus 18 additional items were added to the existing list that included the following:

1) Agarbatti, 2) Bicycle's spare parts, 3) Blades, 4) Bulbs, 5) Cosmetics, 6) Cotton Fabrics, 7) Fertilizers, 8) Imitation jewellery, 9) Insecticides, 10) Leather footwear, 11) Life saving drugs, 12) Menthol, 13) Mosquito Coils, 14) Paints and Varnishes, 15) Spices, 16) Stainless steel utensils, 17) Sugar and Salt, 18) X Ray paper and photo paper. In 2012, 22 more items/commodities were approved for border trade in 2012 as follows-

1) Agricultural machinery/equipments/tools, 2) Bicycle, 3) Bleaching Powder, 4) Coal, 5) Edible Oil, 6) Electrical and Electrical Appliances, 7) Fabricated Steel Products, 8) Garments/Readymade garments/cloths, 9) Handlooms and handicraft items, 10) Hardware/minor construction materials and electrical fittings, 11) Lime, 12) Medicines, 13) Milk Powder, tea, edible oil, beverages, 14) Motorcycle and Motorcycle Spare Parts, 15) Electronic/musical instruments, stationery item, torch light, 16) Plastic items such as water tank, buckets, chairs, plastic pipes and briefcase, 17) Staple food items like Rice, Wheat, Maize, Millets and Oats, 18) Scented Tobacco, 19) Semi Precious Stone, 20) Sewing Machines, 21) Textile fabrics, 22) Three wheelers/cars below 100 CC. However these items are not yet notified by the customs (Agrawal NEFIT. n.d.).

Alongside border trade, normal/Most Favoured Nation (MFN) trade in all other commodities between the two countries through the LCS is permitted subject to payment of custom duty at applicable rates<sup>95</sup>. During former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Nay Pyi Taw in 2012, two memoranda of understandings (MoUs) related to border development were signed viz., MoU on India-Myanmar Border Area Development and the MoU on establishing of Border Haats

---

<sup>95</sup>Ibid.



encompassing a wide range of projects including health, agriculture and basic infrastructure like roads and bridges (YHome 2014:139).

**Table 2.1: Land Custom Stations in NER Dealing Trade with Myanmar**

NER States	LCS in India	LCS in Neighbouring country	Neighbouring country
Arunachal Pradesh	Nampong* (Pangsau Pass)	Pangsau	Myanmar
Manipur	Moreh	Tamu/Namphalong	Myanmar
Mizoram	Zokhawthar (Champhai)	Rih/Tiddim	Myanmar
Nagaland	Avankhung**	Somara	Myanmar

\* Notified yet non-functional, \*\* Not yet notified but agreed for setting up LCS

*Source: RIS Border Trade Report October 2011 and Ministry of Development of Northeastern Region, Government of India.*

While border trade through Moreh was immediately operationalized on 12 April 1995, the Mizoram sector has been neglected for a long time and maximum volume of trade takes place through the Moreh-Tamu segment. Here it is imperative to mention that border trade has been provided by one of the clauses enshrined in the Mizoram Peace Accord of 1986 signed between the Mizo National Front (MNF) and the Indian government (Songate 2008). The construction of a composite Land Custom Station (LCS)<sup>96</sup> on the extreme border with Myanmar at Zokhawthar was entrusted to the Border Roads Task Forces (BRTF) of Border Roads Organization (BRO) of India. After an inordinate delay, the trade point between Zokhawthar and Rih was opened on 31 January 2004<sup>97</sup>. The BRTF started to build the LCS from June 2005 and completed work in August 2007. But the LCS was only recently inaugurated after a passage of

<sup>96</sup> A composite Land Custom Station consists of Telecom, Bank, Immigration, Postal and Security Offices.

<sup>97</sup> Administrator, 'Trade with Myanmar' May 5 2008 at URL: <http://tradeandcommerce.mizoram.gov.in>

10 years by Commerce and Industry Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on 25 March 2015<sup>98</sup>.

The internal environment in Mizoram with its relatively better security situation and faster growth of state economy (based on per capita income) is conducive for enhancing border trade. Evidently, there has been rapid growth in the volume of border trade along the Mizoram route with rising demands for imports while trade flow in the Moreh sector has declined in absolute term (Bezbaruah 2007). Apart from unfavourable security environment, the low level of trade in Moreh has also been attributed to lack of essential infrastructure and other facilities.

### **Examining the Dynamics of Border Trade - What it does not Entail**

The major feature with regard to border trade with Myanmar is the huge gap between *formal* and *informal* trade. With regard to Moreh, E. Bijoykumar Singh has commented that “the biggest threat to border trade comes from informal trade” because “informal trade has grown by leaps and bounds while formal trade has remained a dwarf” (E. Bijoykumar Singh 2015). In the initial period following the signing of border trade agreement, volume of formal trade speedily picked up from Rs 15 crores in 1995 to Rs 46.49 crores in 1996-97 and reached Rs 62.39 crores in 1997-98 but then started to decline sharply in the subsequent year (Bezbaruah 2007). The inclusion of 18 additional items in 2008 failed to provide the necessary impetus for trade as indicated by the fact that the quantum of trade had fallen from Rs. 8.82 crore in 2006-07 to Rs. 3.37 crore in 2011-12 (Pushpita Das 2014). Besides, India has largely maintained a negative or deficit trade balance with Myanmar and the share of the latter in India’s total trade remains very low at about 0.2 per cent in 2010-2011 (RIS Border Trade Report October 2011). The trade deficit rose from a minuscule US\$ 2.5 million in 1980 to as high as US\$ 1 billion in 2012 (De and Majumdar 2014:57). But the low level of trade does not take into account the informal trade that takes place through the local trade points due to absence of systematic records (RIS Border Trade Report 2011).

---

<sup>98</sup> See ‘Nirmala Sitharaman inaugurates Land Customs Station at Indo-Myanmar border’ March 25 2015 at URL: [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-03-25/news/60474926\\_1\\_indo-myanmar-border-border-trade-centre-industry-minister-nirmala-sitharaman](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-03-25/news/60474926_1_indo-myanmar-border-border-trade-centre-industry-minister-nirmala-sitharaman)

According to some estimates the volume of illegal trade has far exceeded the volume of formal/legal trade indicating the huge potential for expansion of border trade (Thiyam Bharat Singh n.d.). In fact, the periodic expansion of the trading list was done for two reasons: to curb smuggling of goods not included in the list and to address the plummeting level of legal trade (Pushpita Das 2014:17). The demarcation between the formal and informal trade is also blurred by the widespread involvement of people from different walks of life such as politicians, bureaucrats, security personnel, enforcement agencies as well as other people from civil society groups (Chakraborty 2011).

Here it is imperative to mention that formalization of border trade is a huge task in a transnational zone like northeast India where traditional linkages allowed for cross-border flows for centuries. There had been traditional exchange of goods between the people living along both sides of the border and inhabitants of the border areas have long enjoyed the facility of free movement up to 40 kms on either side until 1968 when the government of India introduced a permit system to unilaterally check entry of undesirable elements (Manipur Online October 17 2010). The proliferation of illegal or unauthorized trade is accompanied by the growth in smuggling activities across the border. Willem van Schendel argues that “it is only when states forbid or fail to sanction certain transnational trade flows that these come to be defined as illegal, illicit, black, underground, contraband, clandestine, smuggling, and so on” (Schendel 2005:156).

Often people indulge in illicit trade due to ignorance and lack of awareness about the significance of normal trade in international borders. Since the rules and regulations imposed by normal trade are too complex small traders are inclined to turn towards the simpler option of illegal trade (E. Bijoykumar Singh 2015). While some illicit trade can be “morally justified” due to their efficacy, there are those that belong to the ‘harmful category’ with security implications. Seizures by customs at Moreh and at the Zokhawthar trade point often include narcotic drugs, precious stones and black currencies along with other consumer goods. Long unfenced borders, custom restrictions, low transaction costs and low transportation costs provide incentives for smuggling of illegal goods (Thiyam Bharat Singh n.d:7). There are two forces at work at the Moreh station- the security personnel and the insurgent groups, the latter

engaged in regular extortion of money that undermined trading activities. This led to tightening of security at the checkpoints which in turn causes considerable delays and cash losses for traders (RIS Border Trade Report 2011:75).

***Restriction on Tradable Items:*** Formal regulation of trade has also considerably decreased the amount of goods that can be traded. The common refrain in border trade has been that the list of permissible items as per the agreement does not match the desired list (E. Bijoykumar Singh 2015). For instance rice is not included in the initial list of 22 tradable items despite the fact that Nagas, Mizos and many other community groups in the northeast sustained on “Myanmarese (Burmese) rice” for decades (Sharma 2011). Another commonly traded item not included in the list is *pig* along with other livestock. Trade in pigs has been a lucrative business for people in the Chin and Mizo Hills. In an average 1500 pigs arrive per week across the Tiau River out of which 300 are to be sold as both saleable meat and piglings all over Mizoram (Songate 2008: 132). In case of Mizoram, livestock (mostly pigs) constitute more than a quarter of informal imports especially after the March 2006 ban of livestock import due to report of an avian flu case in Mandalay (Levesque and Rahman 2007). It has been pointed out that the rules of custom framed by the Union Commerce Ministry do not encourage the free flow of goods and that the Customs department came up with a negative list of items<sup>99</sup>.

According to M.P. Bezbaruah, the rigidities in the existing trading agreement have contributed to the decline in volume of formal trade. He pointed out that since the agreement adopted barter mode of trading, the value of export by each trader has to be matched by the value of the trader’s import. Also the official exchange rate of currencies (Kyat and Rupee) allows for gross-over valuation of Kyat and does not reflect the true market-determined unofficial value of currency exchange (which is much in favour of rupee) leaving little incentive to Indian traders (Bezbaruah 2007). Apart from overvaluation of Kyat, rampant inflation in Myanmar’s economy also necessitates the existence of a “dual currency-system” in which Kyat and Dollars co-exist. This in turn promotes the circuitous exchange in the black market that offers as much as 31 times more Kyat than what the official exchange market offers and the

---

<sup>99</sup> See “Infrastructure development key to success of border trade” at URL: [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2005-06-19/news/27474042\\_1\\_border-trade-road-connectivity-myanmar](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2005-06-19/news/27474042_1_border-trade-road-connectivity-myanmar)

same applies to exchange of rupees with dollars (say \$240-250 against Rs 10,000 approx), and these dollars can again be converted into Kyats at a rate fluctuating around 1200-1400 Kyat per dollar (Levesque and Rahman 2007: 17).

Moreover, India's trade with Myanmar and the Southeast Asian states is mostly confined to manufacturing products and is restrictive towards agricultural products. Therefore northeast states do not have comparative advantage in India's export to ASEAN (Panchali Saikia 2011). Northeast's major exports to its neighbours via the land route mainly consist of tea, coal, limestone, boulder, ginger, fruits, vegetables, perfumery, soyabari, cumin, flour and others with marginal changes from year to year. Of these, tea and coal constitute 94 per cent of all exported items while manufactured goods have a negligible presence in the export basket (Chakraborty 2011:16). In fact, most of the imports to the northeast region consist of manufactured products and processed food items such as fish, dry ginger, yellow peas, cement, multi-wall paper sacks, laminated poly bags, machinery equipment and parts, mustard, soya and others (Chakraborty 2011:17).

**Table 2.2: Total Export Import In The Northeastern Region For Five Years (2008-2013)**

YEAR	EXPORT (Figure in crores)	IMPORT (Figure in crores)
2008-2009	777.00	170.00
2009-2010	985.41	236.95
2010-2011	861.42	300.93
2011-2012	1242.37	399.11
2012-2013	1540.14	399.07

*Source: Present Scenario on Border Trade and Look East Policy available at [www.planningcommission.gov.in>conf1](http://www.planningcommission.gov.in/conf1)*

***Capturing the Cultural Component:*** Border trade has wide cultural underpinnings beyond the legal customs and systematization. As pointed out by Chakraborty, what is perceived as “international trade” by New Delhi is nothing but “traditional trade” for the border tribes (Chakraborty 2011:19). People living across the border often

prefer the traditional way of dealing with each other without much hassle about custom checking and export/import rules. Local tribes hardly bother to obtain entry permission as stipulated by the bilateral agreement for movement across the border. For instance, Moreh is a mere 5 kilometre distance from Tamu and people living on both sides of the townships can easily exchange goods and items simply by crossing the border by foot or otherwise. Similarly, the dividing line of Tiau River between Champhai and Rih (Myanmar) is simply crossed over by inhabitants of both sides to carry out trading and other activities (Sharma 2011). It is in this manner that a large chunk of trade has been conducted ‘illegally’ along the Indo-Myanmar border. Samir Kumar Das observes that this unregulated trade provides an important means of livelihood for the border people who engage in small trade involving small amounts of capital and deal in low-value products for sale in the border zone markets (Das 2014:6).

***Transitional Economy:*** The big picture that is missing in India’s trade agreement with Myanmar is the peculiar nature of tribal economy in the northeast. Northeast remains by and large a traditional-based economy although a subsequent portion of the population has made inroads into the tertiary sector<sup>100</sup>. According to Thingnam Kishan Singh, the region’s historical development and progress of its mode of production have not yet had the necessary material base nor the time required to transform itself successfully into a capitalist system. He bases this on the colonial exploitation and destruction of the fragile tribal economy as well as on the post-colonial state’s “top-down” interference that showered economic packages on the region without building a firm production base (Kishan Singh 2015).

This lop-sided strategy of development has been practiced for decades and plunged northeast further into economic crisis. As a consequence while Northeast continues to be the virtual ‘dumping ground’ for both Indian goods and cheap foreign commodities, very little has been exported from the region. More recently, introduction of a highly formalized border trade system has the inadvertent potential

---

<sup>100</sup> In a study based on a three-tier classification to ascertain structural changes in the NER economy, Chakraborty (2011) observes that in the time period between 2002-03, there has been a fall in the sectoral contribution of the primary sector by -10.42 per cent, an increase in the tertiary sector by 7.88 per cent followed by a marginal increase in secondary sector by 2.53 per cent. He argues that this trend exhibits a trend of transformation of the region’s economy. See his article “North East Vision 2020: A Reality Check” at URL: <http://www.idsk.edu.in/common/file/oc-33.pdf>

to disrupt the existing modes of trading and bargaining. For the local tribes, border trade is based not so much on profit as it is on the principle of subsistence to cater to the immediate needs of the bordering people (Pushpita Das 2014). Thus, harmonization of both the traditional (barter exchange) and modern systems of exchange (monetized currency-based exchange) for promoting surplus-oriented trade is essential. The concept of border trade has to incorporate all these features with promotion of local entrepreneurship as the main objective.

***Third-country issue:*** Another issue is the ‘unintended’ involvement of a third country in Indo-Myanmar border trade as northeast markets are flooded by Southeast Asian and Chinese goods. Chakraborty has pointed out that trade with Myanmar is more often a transit trade of goods and commodities produced in other countries which creates conditions for informal trade. Thus among the varied items coming from Myanmar, agricultural and forest products including agar woods, pulses, groundnuts, betelnuts as well as gems, precious stones originate in Myanmar but other goods ranging from electrical and electronics, textiles and footwear, cosmetics, toiletries and other high value metals and stationeries are from other Southeast Asian countries (Chakraborty 2011:19). In fact, most of the commodities imported through informal channels are third country products, mostly consumer goods coming from China and as far as from Korea and Japan (Bezbaruah 2007). The influx of large number of cheap goods lower the comparative advantages of Indian goods. All these point to the need to liberalize trade in these items and to explore means and methods for exploiting the full market potential of northeast and its relative advantages. On the other hand as Baruah has pointed out, the removal of trade barriers and harmonization of tariffs on third country products could make the northeast region an attractive site for marketing and investment (Baruah 2005).

***Towards Expansion of Border Trade:*** With increase in India’s economic engagement with its neighbours there is much scope for expanding border trade. In 2013-14, India’s total trade with its immediate neighbours viz., Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar stood at Rs 80,303 crore out of which the share of the northeast region was barely 1 to 2 per cent (Mazumdar 2014). India has immensely gained from its changed economic policy towards Myanmar as bilateral trade grew from US\$ 12 million in 1980 to about US\$ 1.5 billion in 2009, which is a considerable increase by

46 per cent (RIS Border Trade Report 2011:54). In 2012-13 the bilateral trade increased to a phenomenal US \$ 1.92 billion as export-import volume between the countries increased and diversified. The total border trade between India and Myanmar, however, remains marginal and averages around US \$ 1 million per year and 99 per cent of the accounted formal border trade takes place through Moreh. India is currently the second largest export destination for Myanmar after Thailand. In 2014, Myanmar's overall exports to India exceeded US\$ 1.4 billion, constituting a fifth of Myanmar's global exports (De and Majumdar 2014:58). Border trade has also had positive impacts on the bilateral relations as well as local population, observes Pushpita Das. She notes that as a result of border trade there have been greater interactions between the customs and immigration officials and between the security personnel of both countries which in turn led to better understanding of each other (Pushpita Das 2014:21)

The objective to regularize Indo-Myanmar border trade was to improve relations with Myanmar by channelizing opportunities across the boundary. It was in sync with the economic reforms taking place in both the countries and at the regional and international level<sup>101</sup>. Even though the present border trade is minuscule in volume, its significance in normalizing India-Myanmar relations cannot be overlooked (Pushpita Das 2014). But cross-border trade is not the panacea to northeast economic issues nor does it provide the one-for-all solution to the region's longstanding problems. Rather, border-trade merely constitutes one of the important avenues for growth<sup>102</sup> that needed to be promoted for two crucial reasons: *first*, to ensure that northeast is no longer excluded from India's economic growth and that the region gets due attention in India's economic engagement with Myanmar and Southeast Asia. *Second*, and more importantly, the realization of a border trade with Myanmar is an expansion of India's territorial conception of the Northeast region, an acknowledgement of its "transnational character" as well as potential in catalyzing India's "eastward diplomacy" under its Act East mission.

---

<sup>101</sup> Note that even as India announced its economic reform policies in the early 1990s, Myanmar also launched a series of open-door policies that allowed private firms to engage in external trade and legitimized border trade with its neighbouring countries. For this, see Kudo et al "Five Growth Strategies for Myanmar: Re-engagement with the Global Economy" p. 9.

<sup>102</sup> See "India's North-East: Diversifying Growth Opportunities", Indian Chamber of Commerce, p.3



In this context, Sanjib Baruah's premise that "border regions will no longer be border regions..." holds eminence as northeast economy begun to be integrated with surrounding areas in the region (Baruah 2005). The 5<sup>th</sup> India-Myanmar Joint Trade Committee Meeting was held in Nay Pyi Taw on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2015 wherein both sides agreed to work together to remove the bottlenecks hampering the bilateral trade and investment such as lack of good connectivity, lack of banking arrangement both for regular and border trade and strengthen mutually beneficial relationship in the field of promoting two-ways investment, infrastructure development particularly to promote border trade, connectivity, agriculture, energy and others<sup>103</sup>.

The pertinent security challenges also raise several questions regarding the feasibility of building linkages across the border that can be 'easily' held hostage by hostile elements. The efforts of both central governments can be thwarted or sabotaged by insurgent groups operating along the international border who waste no time in exploiting the loopholes in development programmes. The activities of insurgents through their regular collection of levies, control of drugs and arms trade have created "an economy of its own" that helps run their "parallel governments" (Sailo 2014:4). But this only shows the urgency on the part of the state and central governments to develop the border area and display concrete policy action to instill a sense of security and confidence among the local people so that they can desist from complying with the 'negative forces' at work. The most visible development in such a situation is building of physical infrastructure particularly trade and transport connectivity.

### **Infrastructure Development and Land Connectivity in the Northeast Region**

The importance of physical infrastructure for enhancing trade activities have been highlighted by various studies and reports on the matter. While proposing a growth strategy for the northeastern region, the Eleventh Five Year Plan emphasized the creation and development of critical infrastructure including power and connectivity, social infrastructure, encouragement of private investment along with others (E. Bijoykumar Singh 2009). The regional consultative meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan also stressed on pushing forward the objectives set forth by the eleventh plan (Panchali Saikia 2011). In the case of northeast, development of land and water

---

<sup>103</sup> See 'India-Myanmar 5<sup>th</sup> Joint Trade Committee Meeting' February 17 2015 New Delhi at URL: [http://commerce.nic.in/MOC/press\\_release.asp?id=3148](http://commerce.nic.in/MOC/press_release.asp?id=3148)

connectivity is vital for improved trade links with Myanmar. In fact, lack of adequate physical infrastructure and poor connectivity has been the major hurdle for economic progress in the region. Ironically, this was not the case prior to the Independence period.

The region before 1947 was connected through a sea-route, a network of inland-waterways and land transportation through road and railways<sup>104</sup>. Due to the flourishing tea industry in Assam, the region was at the forefront of development during the colonial period<sup>105</sup>. The 1947 Partition and creation of East Pakistan (Bangladesh) in 1971 denied northeast its natural sea outlet through the port city of Chittagong<sup>106</sup> and hence was cut off from its traditional market route. This has resulted in tremendous raise in transportation and economic costs. For example, the distance between Kolkata and Agartala (capital of Tripura) which was slightly more than 300 kms in the pre-partition period had become 1700 kms in the post-partition period. Thus in the present scenario, a 9-ton truck from Guwahati to Kolkata covering a distance of 1,100 kms costs around Rs 20,000 while a truck going from Chennai to Kolkata, a distance of 16,00 kms costs only Rs 16,000 (Choudhury 2006:7). On the other hand, the time taken to transport goods from Kolkata to northeast (Mizoram) will be drastically reduced by more than 950 km once the construction of the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project (KMMTTP)<sup>107</sup> is done (Halliday 2014).

In an attempt to expand their security cooperation, India and Myanmar have embarked upon a more comprehensive partnership for development cooperation in the border regions (Mohan 2013:8). During the 2012 visit of Manmohan Singh to Nay Pyi Taw at the invitation of President U Thein Sein, the two sides emphasized on the importance of enhancing connectivity between the two countries as a means of commercial, cultural and other exchanges and identified the need for special focus on the development and prosperity of the people in the bordering areas<sup>108</sup>. To encourage people-to-people contacts the two sides decided to launch a trans-border bus service between Imphal (Manipur) and Mandalay and India agreed to undertake the

---

<sup>104</sup> Northeast India, 'Economy Overview' at URL: [http://www.cdpsindia.org/ne\\_economy.asp](http://www.cdpsindia.org/ne_economy.asp)

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> The Kaladan Project is discussed in later section.

<sup>108</sup> Joint Statement on the occasion of the visit of Prime Minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh to Myanmar, May 28 2012 at URL: <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=84517>

upgradation task of 71 bridges on the Tamu-Kalewa friendship road<sup>109</sup>. The Rih-Tiddim and Rih-Falam segments in the India-Myanmar border trade point of Zokhawthar (Champhai) has also been upgraded by India (Chatterjee 2014:4).

***Connectivity and the “Gateway” Paradigm:*** In the Look East Policy era, the significance of northeast can best be explained by the much-hyped ‘gateway paradigm’. It means locating NER at the beginning of India’s geo-strategic landscape with the former acting as the vital entry point to and from Southeast Asia. For this, Myanmar is the “natural land-bridge” providing India access to the more affluent ASEAN economies. This is the most common explanation so far by scholars and diplomats alike while arguing for India’s case in its eastward engagement. Thus it will logically follow that good connectivity to Myanmar passing through Northeast is a pre-condition for any serious attempt to link India with Myanmar and beyond.

The 2004 ASEAN Car rally showed that such integration plan can be realized given that there is political will and commitment. But India has barely leveraged on northeast’s proximity with countries of Southeast Asia. As of now, most of India’s trade with Southeast Asia takes place mainly through sea routes which are several hundred times longer and time consuming (Nath and Nath 2004). Therefore, building a ‘continental link’ with Myanmar is the way forward for Northeast border trade and its overall economic development. Laldinpuia Sailo (2014) argues that Yunnan, a landlocked province in China similar to NER has benefitted from the opening through Myanmar in terms of economic development; hence the same can only be suggested for NER. In pursuance of its LEP, India has undertaken numerous bilateral and multilateral initiatives for establishing viable connectivity between its northeast and Southeast Asia through Myanmar. Few of these have been completed (like the Rih-Tiddim Road) while most of them are still pending and under construction. Some of the most crucial projects include the following:

- Tri-lateral highway- which is a component of the Asian Highways
- Stillwell (Ledo) Road

---

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

- A 160-km long Moreh-Tamu-Kalemyo-Kalewa road in Myanmar's Sagaing Region also known as the 'India-Myanmar Friendship Road' which was constructed by the BRO and inaugurated in 2001.
- Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project

The historic Stillwell Road is a remnant of the colonial era since it was built during the Second World War. The 1700 km long road connects Ledo in Assam through parts of Arunachal Pradesh, linking Myanmar's Myitkyina and China's Yunnan province till the capital Kunming. The upgrading and reopening of the road was the main theme of the Kunming Initiative (later known as the BCIM corridor) in 1999 and has since been on the local political agenda of the state governments in the northeast (Duie-Ra 2009:10). Its importance derives from the fact that developing the entire road can further establish a connecting link between India's northeast and Hongkong via Kunming and from Lashio in Myanmar to other Southeast Asian countries like Laos, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore (Gogoi et al 2009). The road stretch between Pangshu Pass in Arunachal Pradesh and Myitkyina running a distance of 200 km is currently in a bad condition. If repaired, it can give momentum to Indo-Myanmar border trade and generate income and employment opportunities to the people living in the area (Gogoi et al 2009:11). The prospect of northeast becoming a trade corridor is largely pinned on the renovation and re-opening of the Road which is now covered under the Kunming Initiative.

***The Tri-lateral Highway:*** As the name suggests the Tri-lateral highway (also known as the Asian Highway No 1) is a three-country cooperation that includes India, Myanmar and Thailand. On the occasion of the India-Myanmar-Thailand Ministerial Meeting on Transport Linkages held in Yangon (Myanmar) on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> April 2002, the Ministers discussed the possibility of constructing a new highway linking the three countries with the goal to enhance trade and investment, tourism and contact among their respective populace which will contribute to economic development of the three countries and the two regions of South and Southeast Asia. The meeting hence agreed to cooperate in the construction of a 1360 km long highway in Moreh (the major

border trading point) in India linking Mae Sot in Thailand via Bagan in Myanmar apart from others<sup>110</sup>.

In a similar meeting held on December 23, 2003 the three countries re-affirmed their commitment for the project and reviewed the work done by the Technical Task Force set up for the matter. Also certain logistics and technicalities regarding route alignment and financing of various segments were worked out<sup>111</sup>. Although the project was given a time-frame of two years when it was first conceived, it is yet to be completed as of the present. The project was stalled since 2006 due to Myanmar's political conditions and work continued to be dragged down by lack of essential institutional support and government commitments (YHome 2014:145). A Joint Task Force meeting between the three countries on September 11, 2012 reviewed the project's status and "agreed to make all efforts to establish trilateral connectivity by 2016". The issues discussed in the meeting mainly pertained to harmonization of customs and immigration procedures at border checkposts<sup>112</sup>. As Thailand already has a well-developed road infrastructure, India and Myanmar has to do their part in upgrading the sections between their borders for a complete realization of the project (Kimura et al 2011:5).

In the northeast states, road connectivity is still underdeveloped and the quality and standard of existing roads and highways need to be improved. The total length of National Highways in the region is 8,480 km which are being developed and maintained by three agencies- the state Public Work Departments (PWDs), Border Road Organization (BRO) and National Highway Authority of India (NHAI). In most of the northeast states, villages and district roads are dominant as these facilitate intra-state movement of people and supplies (Indian Chamber and Commerce 2013:8). Apart from frequent strikes, agitations and blockages, geography and natural disasters

---

<sup>110</sup> Press Release Issued on the occasion of the India-Myanmar-Thailand Ministerial Meeting on Transport Linkages (Yangon, Myanmar, 5-6 April, 2002) as cited in Annexure III, Agnihotri, S.K and Datta-Ray, B. 2002, p. 305.

<sup>111</sup> Joint Press Statement on India-Myanmar-Thailand Ministerial Meeting on Transport Linkages, December 23 2003 at URL: [www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/7689/Joint+Press+Statement+on+IndiaMyanmarThailand+Ministerial+Meeting+on+Transport+Linkages](http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/7689/Joint+Press+Statement+on+IndiaMyanmarThailand+Ministerial+Meeting+on+Transport+Linkages)

<sup>112</sup> See 'India-Myanmar-Thailand Joint Task Force Meeting on the Tri-lateral Highway Project', September 11 2011 at URL: [www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/20541/India/MyanmarThailand+Joint+Task+Force+Meeting+on+the+Trilateral+Highway+Project](http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/20541/India/MyanmarThailand+Joint+Task+Force+Meeting+on+the+Trilateral+Highway+Project)

also play spoilsports on several occasions. For instance, if the Aizawl- Silchar National Highway- the only land link between Mizoram and the rest of the country- gets disrupted, the state will be deprived of all essential supplies until the road is opened again. In most northeast States the roads are steep and precarious with numerous curves, and untenable for use of strategic supplies. Also it should be noted that corruption and inefficiency creeps into infrastructure building initiatives in the northeast, which is yet another major bottleneck for swift development. Take the case of Mizoram. The total length of road network in the State is 7,548 km as on 2014 out of which 986.530 km (both black top and un-surfaced) constitutes the National Highway (Economic Survey of Mizoram 2014-15:77).

Road projects in the state are mainly funded in three ways: There are some like the road connecting Champhai and the border town of Zokhawthar being funded by multilateral agencies viz., the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank. The Kaladan Project is funded by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways and DoNER both of which are central government ministries. Lastly, the state provides funds for smaller projects like the state highways and village roads<sup>113</sup>. The road construction business has often been captured and monopolized by politicians affiliated to the government<sup>114</sup>. Road conditions in the isolated state gravely suffer as a result. Besides local contractors are disadvantaged over a few winning companies due to the soaring costs and high qualifying norms for central and multilateral projects<sup>115</sup>. These factors not only hamper the chances of qualified local contractors familiar with the topography to rein in on their expertise but are constantly deprived of construction jobs as well. In a developing State without large industries to advance the general economic wellbeing, Road sector serves as the main source of employment, job creation, capital formation and enhancement of State GDP. With minimal contribution from the private sector, Road Construction and Maintenance by public funding through the State Public Works Department (PWD) continues to be the biggest industry in the State (Economic Survey of Mizoram 2014-2015).

---

<sup>113</sup> See Rajshekhar M, 'Scroll Investigation: Mizoram CM gave road contracts to firms in which his brother held shares', Ear To The Ground, June 29 2015 at URL: [www.scroll.in/article/736549/scroll-investigation-mizoram-cm-gave-road-contracts-to-firm-in-which-his-brother-held-shares](http://www.scroll.in/article/736549/scroll-investigation-mizoram-cm-gave-road-contracts-to-firm-in-which-his-brother-held-shares)

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

The central government has made substantial investments to improve transport networking in the northeast and earmarked Rs 68 crore for the Northeast States Road Project (NSRP). The Central Highways Authority of India under the Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways has introduced the North-South East-West Corridor (NS-EW) highway project for better connectivity within the country. Under the East-West Corridor scheme, northeast will be connected to mainland India through a 3,300 km long four-lane highway between Porbandar (Gujarat) and Silchar (Assam). The centre has also planned to connect all northeast state capitals to the EW highway through the Seven Sister's Corridor Project (Panchali Saikia). In the period between 2006 and 2012, under the Special Accelerated Road Development Programme in the Northeast (SARP-NE), an 892 km road was constructed by various agencies with the original target as 1283 km. But it could not be completed due to hindrances like delays in land acquisition, shifting of utilities and forest clearances (Routray 2013).

Due to the difficulty in accessing northeast terrains, commodities transported by land tend to be fairly high in cost and extremely time-consuming. Therefore, the river network can be effectively used for transporting bulky goods and items like coal, petro-chemicals, fertilizers, cement, tea, forest products etc (NER2020 2008: 237). The mode of inland water transportation is advantageous in many ways. It facilitates movements of passengers and cargo in remote locations and supply of basic commodities like foodgrains during flood season. It also enables transport of industrial and commercial products to and from regional markets and growth centres. But most importantly, it will provide tremendous gains in terms of reduced transportation, time and cost as well as for alternative link for the Northeast region with the rest of the country as well as other destinations in Southeast Asia (NER2020 2008: 237). Viewed from this perspective, the Kaladan Multi Modal Transit plan initiated by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs is by far the most viable connectivity project to link Northeast with Myanmar and mainland India.

### **Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project: A Case Study**

The Kaladan Project is a major landmark conceived by the Indian government as a means to develop a trade route between its mainland and the northeast as a key

element of the LEP<sup>116</sup> (Chatterjee 2014). The main aim behind the project is to connect Northeast region with the eastern Indian seaport of Kolkata on one hand and to link India's Kolkata with Myanmar's Sittwe port in Arakan State via a sea route on the other thus making it a two-way venture. It will then link Sittwe port to the landlocked region of Mizoram by means of river and road transport. After almost a decade of negotiation and essential feasibility studies, India and Myanmar agreed to go ahead with the ambitious plan on 2 April 2008 by entering into a framework agreement based on a Detailed Project Report (DPR) prepared by Indian Consultant M/s Rail India and Technical Economic Services (RITES) during 2003<sup>117</sup>. As per the framework agreement, the Indian government will bear the full cost of the project initially estimated at US\$ 120 million (later revised estimate amounts to US\$ 134 million) while Myanmar's government will provide the required land and security for the project and for all personnel involved free of cost<sup>118</sup>. As outlined by Adam Halliday, the project entails four stages of implementation-

- 1) First, A 90-km long road called National Highway (NH) 502A will be built from Lawngtlai in South Mizoram to Zochachhuah village at the Indo-Myanmar Border running parallel to the Kaladan River also known as 'Chhimtuipui' (literally *South Sea*) to the Mizos.
- 2) Second, a 140 km highway will be constructed from the Indo-Myanmar border to the town of Paletwa in Chin State of Myanmar.
- 3) Third, a river port at Paletwa on the Kaladan River will be developed linking it to the Sittwe port via a 160 km waterway.
- 4) Fourth, a deep water port will be constructed at Sittwe to facilitate a sea route to Kolkata's Haldia port which is approximately 540 km away<sup>119</sup> (Halliday 2014).

---

<sup>116</sup>Here it should be noted that the Kaladan Project was sanctioned and launched during the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government's Look East Policy, and is now carried forward under the National Democratic Alliance (NDA)'s version of Act East Policy.

<sup>117</sup>Status Note, Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project, April 25 2014, MDoNER, GOI at URL: <http://www.mdoner.gov.in/content/introduction-1>

<sup>118</sup>See Kaladan Project, 'Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project' at URL: [http://www.arakanrivers.net/?page\\_id=135](http://www.arakanrivers.net/?page_id=135); Also available at 'Kaladan Project' September 27 2011 at URL: <http://www.skyscrapercity.com/showthread.php?t=1445937>

<sup>119</sup>The distance from Kolkata Port to Sittwe Port by voyage in open sea is 539 km or 291 nautical miles.



The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) being the nodal agency appointed the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) as the Project Development Consultant (PDC) and the latter submitted a revised DPR for the port and other components of the Kaladan Project in September the same year (YHome 2014:142). The MEA also signed a Rs 342 crore contract with Mumbai-based Essar Projects (India) Ltd on May 2010 to deal with the port and IWT works the construction of which started during December the same year<sup>120</sup>. It was due to limited navigability of the Kaladan River beyond Kaletwa towards the Indo-Myanmar border that the road stretch (read NH 502A) linking Lawngtlai along NH 54 was proposed. After completion the highway will be 12 metres wide with banking curves to enable its use for large container trucks making it better than most roads in Mizoram<sup>121</sup>. This will form a part of development of trade route along the *Chhimtuipui* River between Mizoram and Chin state in Myanmar<sup>122</sup>. The Sittwe port will be redeveloped to accommodate larger vessels and an increased shipping volume by dredging the port areas and building two jetties. An Inland Water Transport (IWT) terminal will be built at Paletwa for transferring cargo from river to transport network<sup>123</sup>.

The Kaladan Project hence envisages multi-modes of transportation by road/highway, river boat (waterway) and IWT ships as well as open sea vessels along the entire transit course of Lawngtlai-Sittwe-Kolkata. But as mentioned earlier, this route will shorten the length and duration of transshipment of freight and cargos from the current 1,880 km distance to 930 km and by three to four days respectively. It will also shift part of the strategic burden on Silliguri corridor to the Sittwe port. As a matter of fact, it was Bangladesh's repeated refusal to allow India a transit route facility through its Chittagong Port that compelled New Delhi to factor in Myanmar by exploring and developing the Sittwe port (Rochamlia 2008).

During Manmohan Singh's State visit to Myanmar in 2012, the two leaders specifically noted that the Kaladan project has the capability to enhance bilateral

---

<sup>120</sup> See <http://www.mdoner.gov.in/content/introduction-1>

<sup>121</sup> See article by M Rajshekhar "A new gateway to the North East runs into- and jumps over- a corruption roadblock" May 26 2015 at <http://scroll.in/article/729210/a-new-gateway-to-the-north-east-runs-into-and-jumps-over-a-corruption-roadblock>

<sup>122</sup> See Executive Summary of DPR for Highway for Kaletwa to India

<http://iwai.gov.in/misc/highway.pdf>

<sup>123</sup> [http://www.arakanrivers.net/?page\\_id=135](http://www.arakanrivers.net/?page_id=135)

trade, people to people contact and thereby contribute to the development and prosperity of the Northeast people<sup>124</sup>. To this effect, it can be argued that the Kaladan project is the most critical project precisely because it has the real potential to transform the region from 'landlocked' to 'landlinked', if the gateway concept has to be proved true. Since the construction is "speedily" underway and is poised to be completed by 2016<sup>125</sup>, it merits special attention from both governments owing to the enormous opportunities and challenges it will bring to the region. For India and Myanmar, the Kaladan project upon completion will create a "win-win" situation as it will increase economic activities and generate jobs in the northeast region on the one hand and on another help Myanmar to develop its infrastructure and port facilities which will accelerate development in the country (YHome 2014: 143).

Once the Sittwe port is fully navigable Myanmar will also benefit from additional revenue collected through the goods going to India (Rochamliana 2008:250). Mizoram being the host state is banking heavily on the new upcoming NH502A. The proposed highway will connect with NH54 to Silchar in Assam and Manipur as the quantum of trade and flow of imports are likely to pick up along the highway injecting new life to the state's stagnant economy<sup>126</sup>. Among the local level issues is included land acquisition and compensation since the construction work falls in an area under the Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC) under whose mismanagement dubious and overlapping claims for the same surfaced.

In what Adam Halliday (2014) described as "challenges posed by nature, people and bureaucracy" the intervention of heavy monsoon rains, uneven topography and compensation issue pose endless hurdles to construct the otherwise short 90 km highway. Moreover, construction of the Myanmar segment has been slow with little progress. The impact of the Kaladan Project on the ecosystem and livelihood of the local people has also to be taken into consideration. There are around a million civilian residing in several townships and villages along the Kaladan coast and the

---

<sup>124</sup> See Joint Statement on the occasion of.....Dr Manmohan Singh to Myanmar at URL: <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=84517>

<sup>125</sup> See 'Kaladan Corridor Project likely to be completed by 2016: Singh', Business Standard, August 14 2014 at URL: [http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/kaladan-corridor-likely-to-be-completed-by-2016-singh-114081400756\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/kaladan-corridor-likely-to-be-completed-by-2016-singh-114081400756_1.html)

<sup>126</sup> See Rajshekhar, M (2015), 'A new gateway to the northeast runs into and jumps over a corruption roadblock', Ear To The Ground, at URL: <http://scroll.in/article/729210/a-new-gateway-to-the-northeast-runs-into-and-jumps-over-a-corruption-roadblock>

Sittwe port areas and access to the river is vital to them for travel, trade and livelihood<sup>127</sup>. In the absence of adequate compensation and alternative means of livelihood, these people are facing possible food shortages and other related problems. Myanmar's military in an effort to provide security as stipulated by the framework agreement has augmented its presence in the Arakan State where the port is located. As a result, there has been reported increase in incidents of unofficial "taxation" and extortion, rape and other forms of violence at the military checkpoints<sup>128</sup>.

But all things considered, the Kaladan Project's significance as the "future gateway" cannot be compromised nor retracted. The project's multi-modal transit scheme only reflects the multi-purpose that it serves for both India and Myanmar- linking the unlinked, developing the undeveloped, enhancing bilateral trade, creating a transnational region etc. Like any other multi-million-dollar development project, the implications are huge and the concerns are wide. To address these, the implementation of the project needs to be transparent and that the interests of local community and concerns about corollary environmental damage should to be taken into full account. Both governments can ensure that the adverse consequences are limited through close consultation and regular meetings at different levels. The Myanmar regime also needs to be open about its human rights records in the context of rising accusations about forced labour, land confiscation, increased militarization and civilian abuse<sup>129</sup> to guarantee that the project will be finished undisturbed. It should be remembered that with improvement in the bilateral relations is also the common man's survival at stake.

### **Role of Northeast in Act East Policy: Is change Forthcoming?**

It is imperative to place all these developments in the context of regional dynamics of economic and strategic interplay- BIMSTEC, Kunming project etc. In a shift from the dialogue partner status acquired in 1995, India has signed FTA with ASEAN in 2009 that in Rajiv Sikri's words "gave credibility to India's keenness to engage ASEAN meaningfully (IPCS Special Report 2009:7). The total trade between India and ASEAN in 2012-13 was \$80 billion and is expected to rise to \$100 billion by 2015

---

<sup>127</sup> See Kaladan Project at URL: [http://arakanrivers.net/?page\\_id=135](http://arakanrivers.net/?page_id=135)

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> See Kaladan Movement, 'Support the Kaladan Movement' at URL: [http://www.arakanrivers.net/?page\\_id=747](http://www.arakanrivers.net/?page_id=747)

and \$200 billion by 2020 (IDSA Roundtable 2013). Northeast should be given a direct role in India's foreign policy if policymakers are serious about making it the gateway to Southeast Asia. As a matter of fact, India and ASEAN have a strong interest in maximizing economic cooperation due to their own respective reasons. For India economic engagement with ASEAN is the key to develop its northeastern region while ASEAN sees India's trade with the CLMV countries viz., Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam as an opportunity to help these newer less-developed members of the organization catch up and enhance intra-ASEAN trade and unity (Parameswaran 2010).

India's bilateral engagement with Myanmar should be seen as strategically beneficial as Myanmar is integrally linked with ASEAN states and China. As a result of LEP and other regional initiatives, Southeast Asian countries like Thailand and even South Korea have eyed upon the northeast for possible investment sources in profitable sectors and sent delegations to these states from time to time. This has prompted the state governments to compete in attracting foreign private investors while carrying out their own structural adjustment policies to prepare the ground for such investments (Roluahpuia 2013). But lack of proper information about the Northeast and limited participation of the states in India's ASEAN engagement (such as the India-ASEAN summits) continue to impede such positive trends in the recent context. Besides ASEAN countries are wary of security conditions in the northeast which they perceive as fast deteriorating (IDSA Roundtable 2013).

**The Inner Line Permit (ILP) Paradox:** Opening up the northeast borders is both essential and risky. There are several issues concerning the "Gateway" paradigm that have not been sufficiently addressed. Among these, it is pertinent to point out that the concept of connectivity by virtue of its proposed linkages is contradictory vis-à-vis the ILP tradition of Northeast region. There is a paradox between promoting northeast as the main gateway to ASEAN and the persistent security anxieties. This brings us to the questions- will the ILP system will be scrapped or relaxed once borders are opened up? Or more specifically, will increased mobility along the international border disrupt the existing social order in the form of increased illegal movements and in-migration? Already there are protests against the former. Besides, there have been ongoing demands for introduction of the ILP safeguard in states like Manipur and

Meghalaya where it is still not in force. The strong desire to curb influx of outsiders (both plain Indians and foreigners) and preserving indigenous land has been the chief motive behind their agitations (Prasanta Mazumdar 2014). The concerns over illegal goods, drugs and arms compounded this issue. It only shows that the northeast region is still not adept to view its borders as a “gateway” instead of a boundary (ISAS Workshop Report p. 7). The “fear of connectivity is not confined” to the northeast people’s consciousness as can be seen in India’s reluctance to open the Stillwell road. Opening up the borders require balanced and sensitive approach in border management- between ‘free flow’ and ‘monitored flow’. The state has to be careful not to ‘trespass’ on the unofficial/non-state spaces maintained by border communities while regulating border trade (Duie-Ra 2009:9).

**Northeast as an “Engine of Growth”:** The big question remaining is that- Will northeast become an engine of growth stipulated by the government? To transform northeast into a regional hub of trade and commercial ventures, development projects have to take place in a time-bound manner. As such the constraints and challenges should be clearly identified and tackled as per their specific requirements. Different states have their own shortcomings and strengths that can be addressed and maximized. Also there should be clear direction as to the trajectory of development- where does it start and where does it go- from the political leadership at the centre. Infrastructure development or increased trade alone will not suffice to make northeast an engine of growth. Notwithstanding the recurrence of low-intensity conflicts, northeast’s strength lies in its robust social capital as most of the states rank fairly high in human development indices.

Any sincere “nation building” policy has to make the best efforts in tapping individual and institutional capabilities that can be highly productive in the long term (E. Bijoykumar Singh 2009). While there are talks about outsourcing India’s IT’s software, medical, education and other services, Northeast with an increasing number of educated unemployed has a lot to contribute in these areas. There is also a need to move beyond the “gateway theory” espoused by the Look/Act East Policy and re-visualize northeast to make it a regional hub of trade and commerce. Policymakers need to tilt their lens through which they view the northeast- backward, conflict-ridden, insecure, separatist- and allow the people of the northeast to find their

potential and steer themselves towards development. This will also mean drastic reduction of militarization and a more equivalent power-sharing, since economic policies are shaped by political conditions, and depend largely on political will and commitment.

Also to achieve an integrated development in the northeast, promotion and facilitation of border trade has to go hand in hand with promotion of local industries and entrepreneurs, infrastructure development on a priority basis, capacity building, growth in tourism, people-to-people contact etc. State governments in the region should be made effective partners in India's regional economic initiatives under the aegis of Act East Policy. There should be close coordination between nodal agencies concerned with the northeast like MDoNER, Northeastern Council (NEC), Northeastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd (NDFi) and so forth. But greater role by government bodies by no means should diminish the stakes and roles played by local and non-governmental actors. India's interests will be served well if grassroots interests and responses are duly incorporated in the projects under Act East Policy and make them people-centric (Chatterjee 2014). The Northeast people have an ambitious vision for their own progress and well-being as incorporated in the NER Vision 2020. Their voices and participation in governance, allocation of public resources and public services provided to them should be given due weightage.

A comprehensive development strategy should aim to restore their sense of dignity and self-respect by giving them social, economic and political empowerment (NER2020 2008:23). The northeast people should be given the driver's seat in India's engagement with Myanmar as well. The familiarity among the ethnic tribes and similarities of culture, language and religion make them 'natural ambassadors' for furthering bilateral relations. The recent participation of Mizoram former Chief Minister and MNF leader Zoramthanga in facilitating peace talks between Myanmar's ethnic groups and the military government is a case in point<sup>130</sup>. At times differences that cannot be sorted out at the governmental echelon can be settled by common men at the local level by virtue of mutual trust and goodwill existing among the people.

---

<sup>130</sup> For details read "Former Mizoram CM Zoramthanga heads for Myanmar as interlocutor for peace talks" The Indian Express January 12 2015 at URL: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/former-mizoram-cm-zoramthanga-heads-for-myanmar-as-interlocutor-for-peace-talks/>

## **The Road to Myanmar and the Challenges Ahead**

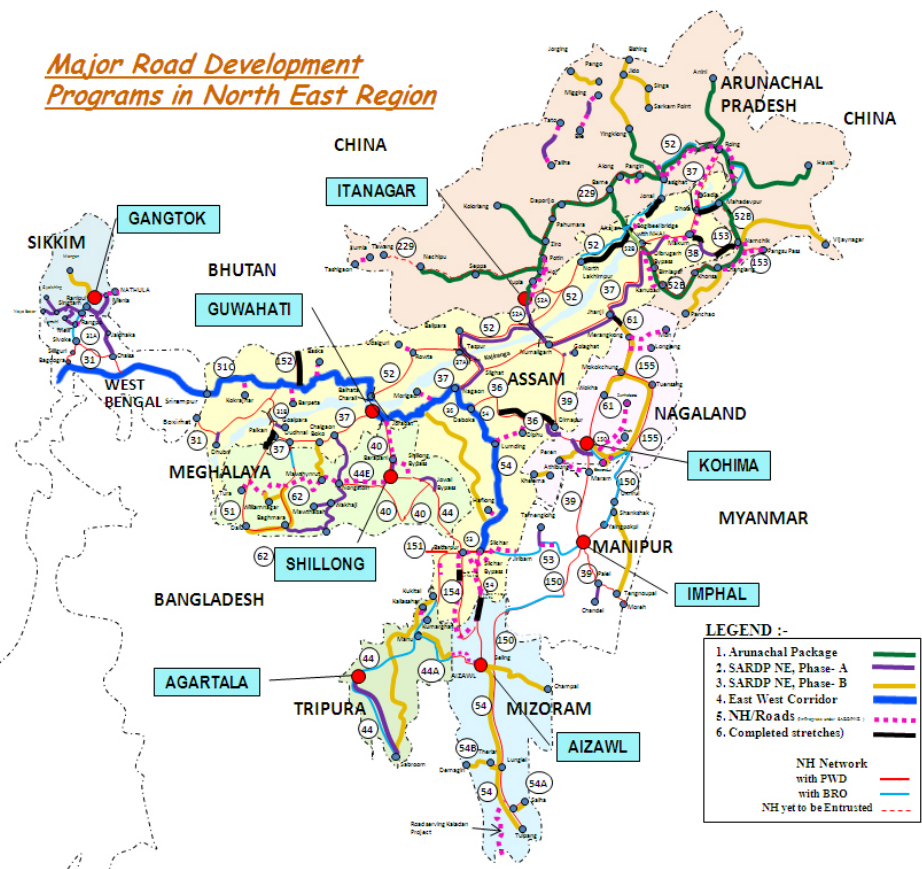
India's engagement with the military government in Myanmar has paid dividends in various areas. At present, India is engaged in several infrastructural development works in Myanmar apart from the ones discussed earlier. The Export Import Bank (EXIM) of India has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Myanmar's Foreign Trade Bank (MFTB) for a line of credit worth \$ 500 million- the largest compared to at least seven such lines of credit extended earlier- to tap the country's irrigation, rail transportation, electric power and other potential sectors and help in its development (EEPC 2013:16). Myanmar's strategic significance can also be seen from its capability to quench India's energy needs as demands for the same have increased manifold. As a result of increasing energy cooperation, Oil and Natural Gas Authority of India (ONGC) and Gas Authority of India (GAIL) have engaged themselves in A1 and A3 blocks off the Rakhine Coast of Myanmar (Bhattacharya 2010:9). There have been plans to construct a network of gas pipeline connecting Myanmar to West Bengal via Mizoram and Assam which will intensify the ongoing cooperation on connectivity (Lall 2006).

However, India's lethargic efforts and dilly-dallying have prevented it from catching up with China. In comparison, China's cross-border infrastructural initiatives in Myanmar have resulted in deepening its presence in Myanmar. China has virtually taken over the entire nation's construction of infrastructure and transport links including development of airfields and naval bases, oil/gas pipelines and hydroelectric projects in the Kachin area (Bhattacharya and Chakraborty 2011:10). In a setback to what Marie Lall (2006) describes as India's "pipeline diplomacy", India lost its bid for building an energy pipeline to Petro-China that signed an agreement with Myanmar for a 30-year duration of oil supply (Trivedi 2014:90). In an interview, Rajiv Sikri argues that India needs to invest more in a strategic neighbour like Myanmar in projects that are 'seen' as bringing primarily local benefits in both countries (IPCS Special Report 2009). As of July 2012, India's investment in Myanmar reached US\$ 273.5 million, ranking only 13<sup>th</sup> among the country's prominent foreign investors (Trivedi 2014:83).

The uncertainties of a military regime in Myanmar and the fragile prospects of democracy is a cause for worry as Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has been constitutionally

barred from becoming the President. India cannot forfeit its role in Myanmar’s peace process and democratic transformation. There is no denying that the success of India’s Act East Policy greatly depends on the dynamics of Myanmar’s internal security. But India has a lot of homework to do on its domestic soil starting with finding a lasting solution to the problem of insurgency and counter-insurgency. Peace and development will remain costly in the northeast until and unless there is a major policy departure from the Indian State’s conventional security-centric approach. It remains to be seen if northeast will be given a central role befitting its geo-strategic location vis-à-vis Myanmar and Southeast Asia. As such investment and development in cross-border trade and infrastructure should be seen as only complimenting India’s strategic engagement with Myanmar. India needs to set its priorities right and pursue them without delay. Until then the road to Myanmar will not be a smooth one.

**Map4.1**



Source: SARDP-NE in Ministry of Development of Northeastern Region at [http://mdoner.gov.in/sites/default/files/silo3\\_content/roads/mrdp.jpg](http://mdoner.gov.in/sites/default/files/silo3_content/roads/mrdp.jpg)



Map4.2



Source: [http://www.arakanrivers.net/?page\\_id=135](http://www.arakanrivers.net/?page_id=135)

## Chapter 5

### CONCLUSION

Security, political, social or economic, is the fundamental pre-requisite for any meaningful existence and it is incumbent upon the modern nation state to make its citizens feel secure, protected from all kinds of harm both internal and external. Security in this sense becomes an intrinsic quality of any healthy society and an indispensable asset of a strong state. In the context of India's Northeast, security can be perceived as serving a four-fold purpose, viz., i) counter-insurgency through militarization, ii) territorial and border defence, iii) social and ethnic security iv) economic welfare. It is the interplay of these four factors that inform and determine Indian government's approach towards the Northeast region. However, there is no real distinction between these factors as all are intertwined and supplement each other with the exception of economic welfare which is a relatively less emphasized element in the whole saga of northeast security. Also economic development in the context of India's northeast has always been viewed as an antidote to insurgency and ethnic conflict that pervades the socio-economic existence of the people in that region. The irony is that despite the multi-faceted nature of security problem in the northeast region, New Delhi has a strong inclination towards a one-sided approach in solving the same, i.e., counter-insurgency. This is because Indian government is faced with an acute dilemma as to how indigenous issues, ethnic sensitivities and secessionist tendencies can be diverted to the 'right path' in order to prevent them from obstructing the nation-building efforts. Arguably, the use of force and coercive laws have become the norm and not exception even before other means are exhausted and proved to be futile.

Northeast for India is a rare and baffling experience that it still cannot come into terms with even after more than 60 years of independence. After an extensive analysis in the concluded chapters, it has become amply clear that decades of discontent fueled by an equal mix of deliberate neglect and mistrust has transformed the region into a "problem child" unable to grow up on its own. The lack of intimate knowledge about northeast and the lethargic efforts to do so have resulted in proliferation of policies one after another that are incongruent with local needs and aspirations. The Centre's lack of legitimacy and absence of faith in the States' governance only pave the way

for insurgent forces to fill the vacuum and emerge as what Baruah (2002) would call as the 'more reliable providers of security' vis-à-vis the State. At the same time, the Indian government's 'co-option' strategy of secessionist forces of the region and their subsequent induction into mainstream political sphere has bred a new class of 'autocratic elites' under whose rule the people of northeast continue to suffer. It is only by taking stock of all these that the basis of ethnic discontent and its perpetuation can be properly examined. Although national security has often been described as a country's preparedness against any threat being directed to it by external agents, the perception of the 'threat from within' was prominent in defining India's foreign policy turnaround in the 1990s. That India's insecurity about its northeast was the main driver behind its wooing of Myanmar's Junta is remarkable.

Further, the fear mongering among security analysts of China's ambitions in Myanmar- a critical neighbour- shook India out of its policy slumber and decided to engage with Myanmar's government. Either way, the strategic stakes were raised by India's desire to protect what it considered as 'its own' whether in terms of territorial space or diplomatic influence. This desire can be interpreted as India's aspiration to project itself as a regional power capable enough to reckon with vis-à-vis the rising China and other major powers. Here it should be noted that geo-political considerations dominated India's security outlook towards Southeast Asia as the second phase of its Look East (or Look ASEAN) Policy began to take shape in the late 1990s (Mohan 2011). Therefore the need to control internal rebellion along the borders came to be strongly felt within the political circle and apparently more so among the 'nationalist' Indian security personnel that have since been operating in full force by virtue of AFSPA in the region. Myanmar's regime on its part also increasingly felt the pressure to diversify its foreign policy options as Vikash Ranjan (2014) puts it, in order to break out of its 'Chinese satellite tag' and to gear itself for the impending transition to democracy as reform processes are already underway.

### **Implications of Northeast as a Security Factor in India-Myanmar Relations**

The discussion on chapter 2 has shown us that the issue of northeast is deeply embedded in the formation process of an entity called 'Northeast' with its 'seven sister' constituents. From an ethnic-cultural point of view, the configuration of each of these states is unique and deserves its own merit but the prevailing political conditions

(read mainstream-periphery relations) do not favour such painstaking analysis and nuanced approach. Quiet often scholars and political leaders are under the delusion that northeast is a monolithic unit that can be appraised or governed by using standard norms or criteria (as devised by rulers at the centre). In the process of mapping the geographical landscape of northeast region, policymakers tend to ignore the complex cultural and racial landscape that provides the backdrop for understanding nationalist movements emanating from the region. Thus it is no wonder that the Indian army becomes the most prominent state apparatus in the whole conduct of counter-insurgency leading to the protracted and indiscriminate use of unconstitutional laws like AFSPA. On the other hand, the question of autonomy has been sought to be addressed by more constitutional methods like the Sixth Schedule and Inner Line permit systems based on distinctions of colonial era between 'native and outsider' or 'tribal and non-tribal'. As pointed out by Urmitapa Dutta (2014), these are in fact broad categorizations that really do not reflect the complicate issues involved in it. What is inevitable here is that, the ethnic security issues of the northeast states continue to thrive under state patronage and are continuously manipulated by political and ethnic leaders for advancing their own short-term interests with the least regard for long-term community welfare.

The criminalization of insurgency as highlighted in chapter 3 is also prove that insurgency or ethnic militancy can assume many forms in the northeast and the traditional military approach of counter-insurgency is grossly inadequate in countering the emerging trends of insecurity at the border. It has only been successful in alienating the very concept and meaning of insurgency as a forceful expression of anger and anguish at the state's incapacity to alter the *status quo*. But if insurgency is to be substituted by 'more acceptable' forms of resistance, and if the 'culture of violence' is to be replaced with a 'culture of dialogue and deliberations', there has to be a democratic atmosphere where free will and freedom of thoughts and expression can be exercised by individual citizens without fear of persecution by the state machinery.

But till date, people of the northeast have been denied this privilege and the demoralizing effect of militarization continues to haunt both public and private spaces in the region. In chapter 3, it has been argued that the issues of the northeast are

transnational and exacerbated by their cross-border connections. As stated by Idean Salehyan (2010), the establishment of rebels in foreign soil has made it immensely difficult to confront them and ultimately require regional governments to pool in efforts and necessary resources. The Indian government has negotiated with the military junta the possibilities of eliminating insurgent bases that operate in Myanmar on the lines of its successful cooperation with the Bhutanese royal army. India's normalization of relations with Myanmar indeed presented such opportunities of cooperation culminating in Operation Golden Bird and the like in which the Tatmadaw extended its hand to the Indian army. The bonhomie between leaders of both countries through frequent visits also provided platforms to discuss issues of mutual concern. But apart from dialogues and discussions, these meetings have not borne concrete results that can bring substantial benefits to the poor and marginalized populations in the Indo-Myanmar border region. Besides, Indian government is still unable to transcend the rigid framework of security within which it has placed northeast since independence and continues to pursue a military-led counter-insurgency motivated by the spirit of revenge.

The so-called paradigm shift in transnational counter-insurgency that took place on June 9 2015 against the NSCN (K) exemplifies the callous and 'chest-thumping' manner in which the centre conducts such operations without hindsight about its possible consequences. The national media also played a role in exaggerating the 'hot pursuit' across the Indo-Myanmar border, treating it as the 'big breaking news' about India's retribution against 'northeast terrorists' that announced the inauguration of a new bold chapter in India's counter-insurgency history. These insensitive over-the-top portrayals have done much harm in damaging the self-image of northeast and causing sentiments of defiance, embarrassment and uneasiness among the people living there. While New Delhi celebrated the victory over the Khaplang-led insurgents, the governments of Nagaland and Manipur were reportedly left in the dark which only shows the lack of mutual trust and cooperation between the centre and the northeast states. Nonetheless if the Indian intelligence reports as mentioned in chapter 3 were to be believed, the June 9 operation was groundbreaking in Indo-Myanmar security relations that began in 1994 when the MoU for security cooperation and border trade pact was first signed.

This brings us to chapter 4 wherein the bilateral cooperation between India and Myanmar has been taken to the next level by opening up border trade and developing border infrastructure. The long decades of insurgency and conflict has torn apart northeast economy and developments have splintered on ethnic lines and welfare schemes have failed to reach the poorest and powerless of the region. The lopsided central policy has created a regime of corruption which mainly benefits local politicians, bureaucrats and militants who take the most advantage out of the security situation. To revive the region's stagnant economy, drastic investment in physical infrastructure such as roads, highways, rail and trade links etc is required which will in turn boost formal border trade and other forms of entrepreneurship.

The region needs to enhance its production base to sustain itself and to cope with its food security problems. As of the present, subsistent agriculture remains the major livelihood for a large proportion of the northeast population and the region's great potential in hydrocarbons, oil, gas and timber etc has been under-exploited. It is only a matter of time and political commitment to harness the region's abundant natural wealth which will go a long way in reducing ethnic discontent and the so-called 'anti-Indian' attitude among the northeast people. Thus careful and insightful investment policies can bolster development in the Indo-Myanmar border region. Enhancing bilateral trade cooperation with special focus on border trade promotion can serve as a crucial alternative for dealing with cross-border security problems such as illegal trade and smuggling.

It has been discussed in chapter 4 that land connectivity initiatives like the Kaladan Project has the practical potential to transform the region from 'landlocked' to 'landlinked' and that full implementation of the project should be the priority of both governments. But building connectivity can also be a source of tension and anxiety as well unless the right security measures are put in place. Opening up the 1643 km long boundary and tightening up security at the same time begs a balanced and sensitive approach in border management. But given the huge opportunities at hand, sealing the border only to contain insurgent movements does not seem like the logical option particularly when the connectivity projects are on the verge of completion (i.e., 2016). Besides, land connectivity is the first step in India's integration with Myanmar and further with ASEAN as soon as the tri-lateral highway comes to completion. Renaud

(2008) has argued that if India does not devise a clear strategy to open up its eastern frontier to its neighbours, Myanmar will be conceptualized only as a maritime and not as a continental (overland) gateway for India to Southeast Asia. This means that northeast will be continually bypassed by India's Look/Act East Policy and the massive opportunities provided by its natural links with Myanmar will never be realized.

In terms of strategic gains, it can only be said that India has reaped what it sowed. As found in chapters 3 and 4, India and Myanmar have come much closer than they were in the 1980s and early 1990s from a strategic point of view. The 1962 war has taught India a lesson not to ignore the strategic significance of its northeast, a mongoloid-inhabited region that has strived for independence from post-colonial India. India has issues with almost all its South Asian neighbours as well as China with whom the MacMahon Line is a bone of contention. Myanmar shares long borders with China and provides the latter a shorter access route to Indian Ocean. As long as India's strategic interests lie in securing the Bay of Bengal, it needs an amicable and friendly neighbour in Myanmar which is also eager to 'look west' and away from the omnipresent involvement of the Chinese government in its domestic affairs. Sustained bilateral engagement, active participation in sub-regional initiatives, greater and meaningful interactions among people living on both sides of the border through special mechanisms can go a long way in serving India's strategic gains vis-à-vis Myanmar.

What U Thant Myint, author of *Where China meets India: Burma and the New Crossroads of Asia* had empathetically said in interview best sums up the situation:

“In the short term, the importance of Myanmar for India and for the policymakers depends on the importance of North-East India for Indians. If North-East India is important, then Myanmar is very important. If it is not, then Myanmar is not a gateway to anywhere else. In the future, if Myanmar has to be a gateway for anywhere, an imaginative focus on North-East is going to be critical” (Utpal Bhaskar Livemint June 6 2013).

Patricia Mukhim (2013) rightly argues that just as Yunnan plays a strategic role in the Chinese pursuit of a closer engagement with its neighbours in South and Southeast Asia, India can do the same with its northeast. Otherwise, the northeast issue (with an

emphasis on issue) is here to stay though it need not remain an issue in India's domestic and foreign policy calculations. In the absence of a comprehensive northeast policy, the region will remain a barrier and not a bridge, a closed door and not a gateway, and will remain the lesser known, isolated and difficult frontier it had always been in the post-colonial era.

### **Charting a New Course: The Way Out**

Because northeast is a region entrapped in a post-colonial security disorder, there is an urgent need for 'the way out' in order to go forward. In the context of northeast as a security factor in India-Myanmar bilateral relations, the charting of a new course can mean not many but few things: the overhaul of Look East Policy so as to locate the border regions at the centre of engagement, revocation of the much-dreaded AFSPA which is the main source of civil antagonism in order to achieve the real 'winning of heart and minds', going beyond the ceasefire agreement framework of peace negotiations with ethnic militants so as to enhance civil society's involvement, building and consolidating democratic institutions, decentralization of power and authority, good and effective governance are some of the essential counter-measures to quell the northeast conflict.

For northeast to cease to be India's geo-political nightmare, New Delhi needs to engage closely with insurgents, political leaders and civil society groups of the regional states and bring them together in a network of dialogue to discuss ground-level issues and challenges. The existing platforms like the Northeastern Council (NEC) under the Ministry of Development of Northeastern Region (MDoNER) can serve as an effective summit for the centre and northeast states to discuss all matters concerning security and development. The NER 2020 should not be featured merely as a vision document but as a strategic blueprint to engineer a series of development plans with emphasis on building road, rail and inland water transportation as these are the backbones of development. If India wants to manage its borders, it can let the state governments deal with it instead of deploying numerous military and para-military forces at taxpayers' expense with the latter having no proper knowledge about the cultural intricacies of the border communities that they stand to guard.



The state governments should in turn take maximum responsibilities in ensuring effective governance and rule of law in dealing with local and cross-border issues including illegal migration, drug trafficking and other illicit activities. For peace to endure, it is important to let the common people participate in decision-making processes concerning their welfare instead of suppressing their voices. The Indian leadership should realize that the young modern and educated generation of the northeast has nurtured aspirations different from that of the previous generation and they imagine themselves as living in a post-insurgency era. The rising issues of unemployment, sense of backwardness and racial discrimination can only alienate them further and leave them little choice but to go *underground*. It is in India's interest to empower and channelize the vigour and talent of this youth who are the future leaders of their own states and communities so that they do not become "disgruntled citizens" like their predecessors.

For more than a century, the northeast communities have been subjected to one form of colonization or the other having no political strength of their own as indicated by the deficiency of representation in both national parliamentary houses (see chapter 1). But they have the strategic advantage of being ethnically, geographically and organically (read subsistence economy) linked with tribes living across the national border. With regard to re-orientation of LEP, the answer already came in the form of "Act East Policy", translated as an action oriented policy, or rather an action-driven strategy of engagement with ASEAN at its core. The democratizing tendencies of Myanmar will positively impact upon India's northeast and the border security environment will improve in the near future enabling greater cross-border cooperation. In anticipation of Myanmar's transition to democracy with the general elections impending, northeast states need to prepare themselves in the fields of tourism, trade, education and health services, people-to-people contacts, investments in small and medium scale industries etc so as to take the most advantage out of the emerging situation. New Delhi also needs to embrace the fact that only a secure Myanmar can stabilize its northeast region which is critical in India's larger scheme of things, so to say.

## Bibliography

(\* indicates a primary source)

### Books

Agnihotri, S.K and Datta-Ray, B ed. (2002), *Perspective of Security and Development in North East India*, New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company.

Alexis, Rieffel (2010), *Myanmar/Burma: Inside Challenges, Outside Interests*, Washington, The Brookings Institute.

Baruah, Sanjib (2005), *Durable Disorder: Understanding the Politics of Northeast India*, Oxford University Press.

Bhatia, Rajiv K. et al. ed (2014), *Change in Myanmar*, New Delhi, ICWA, Shipra Publications.

\_\_\_\_\_. et al. ed (2014), *Delhi Dialogue V- India-ASEAN: Vision for Partnership and Prosperity*, New Delhi, ICWA, Shipra Publications.

Bhaumik, Subir (2009), *Troubled Periphery: Crisis of India's North East*, India: Sage Publications.

Biswas, Pransanjit and Thomas Joshua C (2006), *Peace in India's North-East: Meaning, Metaphor and Method*.

Buzan, Barry (1987), *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations*, New Delhi: Transasia Publishers.

Chaube, S.K (2012), *Hill Politics in Northeast India*, New Delhi: Orient Blackswan.

Devare, Sudhir (2005), *India and Southeast Asia: Towards Security Convergence*, Singapore: ISEAS Publication.

Devi, Nirmala T (2012), *India and Southeast Asia: Strategic Convergence in the Twenty-first Century*, India, Manohar Publishers.

Egreteau, Renaud (2006), *Instability at the Gate: India's Troubled Northeast and its External Connections*, New Delhi: Publication of the French Research Institutes in India.

Gopalakrishnan, R (1996), *Socio-Political Framework in North-East India*, Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.

Goswami, B.B (1979), *The Mizo Unrest: A study of politicization of culture*, Alekh.

Grare, Frederic and Mattoo, Amitabh ed (2001), *India and ASEAN: The Politics of India's Look East Policy*, New Delhi, Manohar.

Hazarika, Sanjoy (1994), *Strangers of the Mist: Tales of War and Peace from India's Northeast*, New Delhi: Penguin Books.

Hluna, Dr. J.V and Tochwawng, Rini (2012), *The Mizo Uprising: Assam Assembly Debates on the Mizo Movement, 1966-1971*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Joakim, Ojendal et al. (2012), *The Security-Development Nexus: Peace, Conflict and Development*, UK: Anthem Press.

Kumar, Amit (2011), *Meghalaya: A Victim of Insolent Insurgencies*, New Delhi: Centrum Press.

Lalthangliana, B. (2009), *Mizo Chanchin: A Short Account & Easy Reference of Mizo History*, Aizawl: R.T.M Press.

Mallory, Stephen L (2012), *Understanding Organized Crime*, Burlington: Jones & Bartlett Learning.

Medina, Richard M. and Hepner, George F. (2013), *The Geography of International Terrorism*, Boca Raton: CRC Press, Taylor and Francis Group.

Mukherjee, J R, Lt General (2007), *An Insider's Experience of Insurgency in India's North-East*, Anthem Press.

Myint U, Thant (2012), *Where China Meets India: Burma and the New Crossroads of Asia*, London: Faber and Faber Limited.

Nibedon, Nirmal (1980), *The Dagger Brigade*, New Delhi: Lancers Publications

Pemberton, R.B (1935), *The Eastern Frontier of India*, New Delhi: Mittal Publications, reprinted 2000.

Prakash, Ved (2008), *Terrorism in India's North-East: A Gathering Storm*, Delhi, Kalpaz Publications.

Prasad, R.N (1987), *Government and Politics in Mizoram*, New Delhi: Northern Book Centre.

Rana, Kishan S. and Uberoi, Patricia (2012), "India's North East States, the BCIM Forum and Regional Integration", Delhi: Institute of Chinese Studies.

Rao, Sreedhar K. (2013), *Governance, Security and Development: Hope for Tomorrow*, New Delhi: South Asia Foundation and Concept Publishing.

Ray, Animesh (1982), *Mizoram: Dynamics of Change*, New Delhi: South Asia Books.

Reddy, P. L Sanjeeva and P.C Shekhar Reddy (2007), *Peace and Development in India's Northeast: A Virtuous Spiral*, New Delhi, Mittal Publications.

Reid, Sir Robert (1983), *History of The Frontier Areas of Bordering Assam (From 1883-1941)*, Delhi: Eastern Publishing House.

Saikia, Jaideep (2007), *Frontier in Flames: North east India in Turmoil*, India: Penguin.

Schendel, Willem van (2005), *The Bengal Borderland: Beyond State and Nation in South Asia*, London: Anthem Press.

Smith, Martin (1999), *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity*, London: Zed Books Ltd.

Steinberg, David I (2010), *Burma/Myanmar: What Everyone Needs To Know*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Sundar, Nandini (2014), *Buried Histories of Indian Democracy: Interning Insurgent Population*, New Delhi: Critical Quest.

Tiba, Th. R (2010), *Scheduled Tribes of Northeast India and Development*, New Delhi: B.R Publishing Corporation.

Upadhyay, Archana (2009), *India's Fragile Borderlands: The Dynamics of Terrorism in North East India*, London, I.B. Tauris.

Vanchiau, Lalawmpuia C (2014), *Rambuai Literature*, Aizawl: Lengchhawn Press.

Verghese, B.G. (1996), *India's North-East Resurgent: Ethnicity, Insurgency, Governance, Development*, Delhi: Konark Publishers.

Vumson (1986), *Zo History: With An introduction to Zo culture, economy, religion and their status as an ethnic minority in India, Burma, and Bangladesh*, Self-Publication, Aizawl.

Zama, C (2014), *Untold Atrocity: The Struggle for Freedom in Mizoram 1966-1986*, Aizawl.

#### **Article or other work in a journal**

Abitbol, Aldo D (2009), *Causes of the 1962 Sino-Indian War A Systems Level Approach*, Josef Korbel Journal of International Studies 1(1): 74-88.

Amrita, Jash (2014), "China in India's 'Look East' – Myanmar: Strategic Interests and Security Concerns", *International Research Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(6): 54-57.

Antolik, Michael (1994), "The ASEAN Regional Forum: The Spirit of Constructive Engagement", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 16 (2): 117- 136.

Athul, M. A. (2015), "Mizoram: Unsettled Peace", *South Asia Intelligence Review, Weekly Assessments & Briefings*, 13 (32), (February 9 2015).

B.M. Jain (2006), "Dynamics of Political Transition in Myanmar", *Indian Journal of Asian Affairs*, 19(2):1-14, (December 2006).

Barbora, Sanjay (2006), "Rethinking India's Counter-Insurgency Campaign in North-East", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 41(35): 3805-3812.

Baruah, Sanjib (2002), "State and Militants in North- East India", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 37(41): 4178- 4182.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2008), "Territoriality, Indigeneity and Rights in the North-East India", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 43(12/13): 15-19.

Bhatia, Rajiv Kumar (2011), "Myanmar-India Relations- The Way Forward", *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal*, 6(11): 315-326.

Bhattacharjee, Giriraj (2015), "Northeast: The Troubles Endure", *South Asia Intelligence Review, Weekly Assessments and Briefings*, 13(38), [Online: web] Accessed on 3 July 2015, URL:

Bhattacharya, Anushree and Debashis Chakraborty (2011), "India's Cross Border Infrastructure Initiatives in South and South East Asia", *Italian Journal of International Studies*, 46 (2):109-125.

Bhattacharya, Rakhee (2010), "Does Economic Cooperation Improve Security Situation: The Case of India-Myanmar Relations", *Asia Pacific Journal of Social Sciences*, Special Issue (1): 2229-5801.

Bibhu Prasad Routray (2011), "India-Myanmar Relations: Triumph of Pragmatism" , *Jindal Journal of International Affairs*, 1(1).

Bijukumar, V (2013), "Social Exclusion and Ethnicity in Northeast India", *The NEHU Journal*, XI (2): 19-35.

Chakrabarti, Shantanu (2012), "India's Regional Policy Making in Post-Cold War Setting", *Societal Studies*, 4(2): 407-425.

Chambers, Paul (2014), *Constitutional Change and Security Forces in Southeast Asia: Lessons from Thailand and Myanmar*, *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 36 (1): 101-27.

Chaturvedi, Medha (2011), "India's Strategic Interests in Myanmar: An Interview with Shyam Sharan", *IPCS Special Report*, 98.

Das, H.N (2014), "Implications of Ethnic Reorganization", *Peace Audit Northeast*, *IPCS Special Report*, 159, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies.

Das, N.K (2009), "Identity Politics and Social Exclusion in India's North-East: The Case for Re-distributive Justice", *Bangladesh e-Journal of Sociology*, 6(1)

Das, Sailen D (2015), *Ethnic and Cultural Ties between Northeast India and China: Insights from the Past*, *International Research Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 4(1), 44-47, January 2015

Das, Samir Kumar (2014), "Border Economy and the Production of Collective Subjects in India's East and the North East", *India Quarterly*, 70 (4): pp. 299-311.

Dasgupta, Jyotirindra (1997), "Authenticity, and Autonomy: Insurgency and Institutional Development in India's Northeast", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 46(2): 345-370.

Datta, Sreeradha (2000), "Security of India's Northeast: External Linkages", *Taylor and Francis*, (25 April 2008), 24 (8): 1495- 1516.

Dutta, Urmitapa (2015), "The Long Way Home: The Vicissitudes of Belonging and Otherness in Northeast India", *Qualitative Inquiry*, 21 (2): 161- 172.

Egreteau, Renaud (2008), "India's Ambitions in Burma: More Frustration than Success?", *Asian Survey*, 48(6): 936-957.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2008), “India and China Vying for Influence in Burma” – *A New Assessment, India Review*, vol. 7, no. 1, January–March, 2008, pp. 38–72.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2011), “A Passage to Burma? India, Development and Democratization in Myanmar”, *Contemporary Politics*, 17(4): 467- 486.

Ganesan, N (2000), “ASEAN relations with major External Powers”, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 22 (2), 258: 278.

Gootenberg, Paul (2009), “Talking about the Flow; Drugs, Borders and the Discourse of Drug Control”, *Cultural Critique*, 71: 13-46.

Goswami, Uddipana (2010), “Armed in Northeast India: Special Powers, Act or No Act”, *Peace and Conflict Review*, 4(2): 1695-3995.

Gupta, Ranjit (2013), *China, Myanmar and India: A Strategic Perspective*, *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal*, 8 (1): 80-92

Haokip, Thongkhohal (2011), “Essays on the Look East Policy and North-East India”, *Man and Society- A Journal of North East Studies*, VII: 161-172.

Hong, Zhao (2007), “India and China: Rivals or Partners in Southeast Asia”, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 29 (1): 121- 142.

“India-Myanmar Relations”, *FPRC Journal*, 2013(3), Foreign Policy Research Centre New Delhi, India.

Jain, B.M (2006), “Dynamics of Political Transition in Myanmar”, *Indian Journal of Asian Affairs*, 19(2): 1-4.

James, Helen (2004), “Myanmar’s International Relations Strategy- The Search for Security”, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 3: 530-53.

Jellisen, Susan M and Fred M Gottheil (2013), “On the utility of security fences along international borders”, *Defence and Security Analysis*, 29(4): 266-279.



Khongreiwo, Rammathot (2009), "Understanding Histories of the Peoples on the Margins: A Critique of Northeast India's Durable Disorder", *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 34(4): 437-454.

Khosla, I.P (2003), "India and Myanmar: friends or just neighbours?", *India International Centre Quarterly*, 30 (2):64-80.

Kikhi, Kedilezo (2009), "What ails the North-East: Challenges and Responses?" *Sociological Bulletin*, 58(3): 346-366.

Koppuzha, Ann (2009), "India's Myanmar Policy: An Alternative Roadmap", *IPCS*, 77: 1-5.

Kotwal Dinesh (2008), "Instability Parameters in Northeastern India", *Strategic Analysis*, 24(1): 137-149.

Lacina, Bethany (2009), "The Problem of Political Stability in Northeast India: Local Ethnic Autocracy and the Rule of Law", *Asian Survey*, 49(6): 998-1020.

Lall, Marie (2006), "Indo-Myanmar Relations in the era of Pipeline Diplomacy", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 28(3): 424-446.

Lee, Lavina (2014), "Myanmar's Transition to Democracy: New Opportunities or Obstacles for India?" *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 36, No.2, pp. 290- 316.

Levesque, Julien and Mirza Zulfiqur Rahman (2008), "Tension in the Rolling Hills: Burmese Population and Border Trade in Mizoram", *Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies*, 14: 1-20.

Looking East (2000), *Economic and Political Weekly*, 35 (47): 4069-4070

Mahanty, J.N. (1996), 'Sino- Indian Relations in the Post-Cold War Era', *Indian Journal of Political Science*, 57 (1/4): 88- 102.

Martin Smith (2010), "Ethnic Politics in Myanmar: A Year of Tension and Anticipation", *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 214-234.

Mathur, Akshay (2011), “A Winning Strategy for India’s North-East”, *Jindal Journal of International Affairs*, 1 (1): 269-298.

Mazumdar, Arjit (2006), “Bhutan's Military Action against Indian Insurgents”, 45(4): 566-580

McCarthy, Stephen (2008), “Burma and Asean: Estranged Bedfellows”, *Asian Survey*, 48(6): 911-935.

McDuie-Ra, Duncan (2009), “Vision 2020 or re-vision 1958: the contradictory politics of counter-insurgency in India’s regional engagement”, *Contemporary South Asia* 17(3): 313–330

Meehan, Patrick (2011), “Drugs, insurgency and state-building in Burma: Why the Drugs trade is central to Burma’s changing political order”, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 43(2): 376-404.

Mohan, Raja C (2008), “India’s Geopolitics and Southeast Asian Security”, *Southeast Asian Affairs*.

Muni, S. D (1991), ‘India and the Post-Cold War World: Opportunities and Challenges’, *Asian Survey*, 31 (9): 862- 864.

Naidu, G.V.C (2008), “Wither the look east policy: India and Southeast Asia” , *Strategic Analysis*, 28(2): 331-346.

Nardi, Dominic J. (2008), “Cross-Border Chaos: A Critique of India’s Attempts to Secure its Northeast Tribal Areas Through Cooperation with Myanmar”, *SAIS Review of International Affairs*, 28(1): 168-171.

Nath, Monoj Kumar and Nath, Manoj Kumar (2004), *Mapping North East on India’s Foreign Policy: Looking Past, Present and Beyond*, *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 65 (4): 636-652

Neog, Ruhee (2014), “Linking With Southeast Asia: Developing Northeast India’s Tourism Potential”, *IPCS*, 176: 1-4.

- Neogi, Debasis (2010), "Disparity in Socio-Economic Development and Its Implications on Communal Conflicts: A Study on India's Northeast Region", *World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology*, 4 (2010-3-23).
- Phanjoubam, Pradip (2015), "India's War Against Itself: A View from Manipur", *Economic and Political Weekly*, L(24).
- Pillai M G. G (1993), "India and Myanmar: Tangled Ties", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 28 (6): 213.
- Roy, Sanjay K. (2005), "Conflicting Nations in Northeast India", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 40(21): 2176-2182.
- Saikia, Panchali, "Linking India's Northeast with Southeast Asia: Significance of Internal Connectivity and Backward Integration", Issue Brief, *IPCS*, 175: 1-4.
- Saikia, Pradip (2009), "North-East India as a Factor in India's Diplomatic Engagement with Myanmar: Issues and Challenges", *Strategic Analysis*, 33 (6): 877-889.
- Sailo, Laldinkima (2014), "Northeast India-Myanmar: Search for Cooperation and New Approaches", *Institute of Southeast Asian Studies ISAS Brief*, 321, (27 February 2014).
- Sharma, Sukanya (2005), "Building Roads to Myanmar: A Historical Overview", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 40(48): 5120+5125-5128.
- Sharma, Sukanya (2005), "Building Roads to Myanmar: A Historical Overview", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 40 (48): pp. 5120-5125.
- Sharma, Sukanya (2011), "Negotiating Transnational Identities on Indo-Myanmar Border: The Trade Factor", *India Quarterly*, 67 (1): pp. 53-64.
- Sikri, Rajiv (2009), "India's 'Look East' Policy", *Asia-Pacific Review*, 16 (1).

Singh, Koiremba Ningthoujam et.al (2013), “Drug Trafficking and Narco-Terrorism as Security Threats: A Study of India’s North-east”, *India Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs*, 69(1): 65-82.

Singh, Udhai Bhanu (2013), “Two Decades of India’s Look East Policy: Partnership for Peace, Progress and Prosperity”, in Amar Nath Ram (ed.), *Strategic Analysis*, 37(1): 145-147.

Singh, Yogendra (2007), “India’s Myanmar Policy: A Dilemma Between Realism and Idealism”, *IPCS*, 37: 1-5.

Smith, Martin (2010), “Ethnic Politics in Myanmar: A Year of Tension and Anticipation”, *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 214-234.

Sridharan, Kripa (1997), “India and the Southeast Asia in the 1990s”, *Southeast Asian Affairs*,(1997): 46-63.

Upadhyay, Archana (2006), “Terrorism in the North-East: Linkages and Implications”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 41(48): 4993-4999.

Verghese, B.G, (2003), “The Northeast and its Neighborhood”, *India International Centre Quarterly*, 30 (1).

YHome, K, (2009), “India-Myanmar Relations (1998-2008) - A Decade of Redefining Bilateral Ties”, *Observer Research Foundation*, ORF Occasional Paper 10: 1-30.

**Article, chapter or work in an edited volume**

Aung, Thin Thin and Soe, Myint (2001), “India-Burma Relations” in *Challenges to Democratization in Burma: Perspective on multilateral and bilateral responses*, Stockholm: IDEA.

Bouquerat, Giles (2001), “India’s Confrontation with Chinese Interests in Myanmar”, in Frederick Grare and Amitabh Mattoo (eds), *India and ASEAN: The Politics of India’s Look East Policy*, New Delhi: Manohar.

George, Sudhir J. (2012), “The Look East Policy and India’s North-East: Projections”, Constraints/Consequences, in Nirmala T. Devi and Adluri Subramanyam Raju (eds), *India and Southeast Asia: Strategic Convergence in the Twenty-first Century*, New Delhi: Manohar.

Hazarika, Sanjoy (2008), “Keynote Address” in Jagadish K. Patnaik (eds), *Peace and Development in Mizoram: Role of the State and Civil Society*, Aizawl: Mizoram University.

Mishra, Binoda Kumar (2012), India’s Engagement with Southeast Asia: Security and Strategic Compulsions , in Binoda Kumar Mishra (eds), *India and Southeast Asia: Exploring Possibilities of Cooperation*, New Delhi: Bookwell Publications.

Myint, Kyee U. (2014), “Reform Process: Achievements and the Way Forward”, in Rajiv K. Bhatia et al (eds), *Change in Myanmar*, Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi: Shipra Publications.

Naidu, G.V.C. (2012), “India’s Strategic and Defence Interaction with Southeast Asia”, in Nirmala T. Devi, Nirmala T. and Adluri Subramanyam Raju (eds), *India and Southeast Asia: Strategic Convergence in the Twenty-first Century*, New Delhi: Manohar.

Rochamliana (2008), “Port Sittwe: Port of Hope for Mizoram”, in Jagadish K. Patnaik (eds), *Peace and Development in Mizoram: Role of the State and Civil Society*, Aizawl: Mizoram University.

Sakhuja, Vijay (2014), “India-Myanmar Defence Cooperation”, in Rajiv K. Bhatia et al (eds), *Change in Myanmar*, Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi: Shipra Publications.

Singh, Konsam Ibo (2002), “Insurgency in Northeast India and the Myanmar Connection”, in S.K Agnihotri and B. Datta-Ray, *Perspective of Security and Development in North East India*, New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company.

Songate, Paul (2008), “Indo-Myanmar Border Trade: Socio-Economic and Political Dynamics in Mizoram”, in Jagadish K. Patnaik (eds), *Peace and Development in Mizoram: Role of the State and Civil Society*, Aizawl: Mizoram University.

Sonu, Trivedi (2014), “India-Myanmar: Rebuilding Synergies and Strengthening Partnership”, in Rajiv K. Bhatia et al (eds), *Change in Myanmar*, Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi: Shipra Publications.

Weinberg, Leonard and Eubank, William L (2007), “Twenty-First Century Insurgencies: Understanding The Use of Terrorism As A Strategy”, in James J.F Forest (eds), *Countering Terrorism And Insurgency the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: International Perspectives*”, Volume 1: Strategic and Tactical Considerations.

YHome, K (2014), “Recent Trends and Developments on Connectivity between India and Myanmar: A Borderland Perspective”, in Rajiv K. Bhatia et al (eds), *Change in Myanmar*, Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi: Shipra Publications.

Zamawia, R (2008), “Peace and Development in Mizoram: A Political Dimension”, Jagadish K. Patnaik (eds), *Peace and Development in Mizoram: Role of the State and Civil Society*, Aizawl: Mizoram University.

#### **Article in a newspaper or magazine**

Ananya Vajpeyi (2015), “The Prison House of Identity”, *The Hindu*, New Delhi, (14 March 2015).

Goswami, Namrata (2015), “Peace again at stake in Nagaland”, *The Hindu*, New Delhi, (11 April 2015).

Editorial, “On Burma Road”, *The Hindu*, (June 1 2012).

“Four Big Firsts About Army’s Myanmar Operation”, India Today, (June 10 2015), available at URL: <http://m.indiatoday.in/story/manipur-attack-myanmar-indian-army/1/443336.html>

Seshadri, V.S (2014), “Time to demonstrate an ‘Act East’ Policy”, *The Hindu*, New Delhi (13 November 2014).

Peer, Bhasarat (2015), “Modi should learn from the Chinese their deliberate rejection of self-promotion”, *The Hindu*, (May 24 2015).

Noorani, A. G (2015), “AFSPA: Licence to Kill”, (April 17 2015), *The Nation, Frontline*.

Halliday, Adam “Slicing off 10000 km to bring Mizoram closer to the rest of India, and the World”, *The Indian Express*, (16<sup>th</sup> November 2014), [Online: web] available at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/slicing-off-1000-km/#comments>.

### **Unpublished dissertation or paper**

Gupta, Sanjay K (2005), *Ethnic Conflict and Need For Constitutional Reform: A Study of Mizo and Bodo Accords*, Ph.D. Thesis, New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Khiangte, Mary Zirhmingthangi (1991), *International Dimension of Mizo Insurgency (1965-1986)*, M.Phil. Dissertation, New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Kimaru, F., T Kudo and S. Umezaki (2011), “ASEAN-India Connectivity: A Regional Framework and Key Infrastructural Projects”, in F. Kimaru and S. Umezaki, *ASEAN-India Connectivity: The Comprehensive Development Plan, Phase II*, ERIA: Jakarta.

Lalfakzuala, Joseph K (2014), *Tribal Autonomy and the State: The Working of Sixth Schedule and Article 371G in Mizoram*, Ph.D. Thesis, New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Lalthakima (2008), *Insurgency in Mizoram: A Study of Its Origin, Growth and Dimension*, Ph.D. Thesis, New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Lokho, Kaini (2008), *Ethnosymbolism and Nationalism: A Comparative Study of Naga and Mizo nationalist Movement*, M.Phil Dissertation, New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Nepam, Binalakshmi (1999), *Small Arms and Narcotics: A Case Study of North east India and Myanmar*, M.Phil. Dissertation, New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Singh, Yogendra Constructive Engagement (2008), *Constructive Engagement: A study of India-Myanmar relations*, M.Phil Dissertation, New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru University.

### **Translated book**

Chandola, Harish (2013), *The Naga Story: First Armed Struggle in India*, Translated by Raji Narasimhan and Harish Chandola, New Delhi.

### **Government, International Organizations and NGO Publications**

“India’s Northeast: Diversifying Growth Opportunities”, Indian Chamber of Commerce, available at <https://www.pwc.in/pdfs/publications>

\*“North Eastern Region Vision 2020”, Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region & Northeastern Council, Vision Document available at [www.mdoner.gov.in](http://www.mdoner.gov.in)

\*Gogoi, J.K et al. (2009), “Problems of Border Areas in North East India: Implications for the Thirteenth Finance Commission”, Project Report, The Thirteenth Finance Commission, Govt. Of India, New Delhi, available at [http://fincomindia.nic.in/writereaddata%5Chtml\\_en\\_files%5Coldcommission\\_html/fincom13/discussion/report14.pdf](http://fincomindia.nic.in/writereaddata%5Chtml_en_files%5Coldcommission_html/fincom13/discussion/report14.pdf)

\*Northeast Strategy Report, “Development and Growth in Northeast India: The Natural Resources, Water and Environment Nexus”, 36397- IN, (June 2007), South Asia Region, World Bank, available at <http://www.google.co.in/search?site=&oq+northeast+strategy+report+world+bank++&aqs=mobile-gws-lite..&q=northeast+strategy+report+world+bank>.

\*Priyoranjan, Ch (n.d.), ‘Draft Report, Border Trade in Manipur: Ground Level Survey and Status Report’, Department of Commerce and Industries Project, Government of Manipur, [Web: Online] Accessed 20 May 2015, URL: <http://economics.manipuruniv.ac.in/SAP/Reports/Indo-Myanmar%20Order%20Trade%20Report.pdf>



Sailo, Laldinkima (2013), “Opportunities and Challenges in India’s Northeast”, Workshop Report, ISAS, March 2013.

### **Internet Sources**

\*‘18<sup>th</sup> National Level Meeting between Myanmar and India’, Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India 3 January 2013, [Online: web] Accessed 23 February 2014, URL: <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=91320>

“A Trip to Zokhawthar –I”, December 8 2012), [Online: web] Accessed 7 May 2014 URL: <http://www.hueiyenlanpao.com/articles/item/6146-a-trip-to-zokhawthar-i>,

“Burma- India Boundary”, International Boundary Study, 80, (May 15 1968), The Geographer, Office of the Geographer, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, URL: <http://www.google.co.in/search?site=&dq=the+geographer+burma+india+boundary&aq=mobile-gws-lite..&q=the+geographer+burma+india+boundary>

“Days After Army’s hot pursuit Ajit Doval to embark on Myanmar’s visit today”, [Online: web] Accessed 14 May 2014 URL: <http://www.ibnlive.com/news/india/days-after-armys-hot-pursuit-ajit-doval-to-embark-on-myanmar-visit-today-1007399.html>

“Eye On China: India To Step Up Engagement With Myanmar”, [Online: web] Accessed June 2014 URL: <http://www.firstpost.com/world/eye-china-india-step-engagement-myanmar-1637007.html>

“India attacks rebels in Myanmar”, [Online: web] Accessed 1 August 2014 URL: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-33074773>

“India’s Engagement with Bangladesh and Myanmar”, Concept Note, (March 6-7 2014), Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, Kolkata, [Online: web] Accessed 20 June 2014, URL: [http://www.google.co.in/url?q=http://makaias.gov.in/Concept\\_Note-India-Bangladesh-Myanmar-1.pdf&sa=U&ved+0CA8QFjAAahUKEwiAxtTZ5PPGAhWk5aYKHckdCc8&usg=AFQjCNE\\_uB51Oh4KHoQnrgRKdQcruWSYg](http://www.google.co.in/url?q=http://makaias.gov.in/Concept_Note-India-Bangladesh-Myanmar-1.pdf&sa=U&ved+0CA8QFjAAahUKEwiAxtTZ5PPGAhWk5aYKHckdCc8&usg=AFQjCNE_uB51Oh4KHoQnrgRKdQcruWSYg)

“India’s Engagement with Bangladesh and Myanmar”, March 6-7, 2014, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, Azad Bhavan, Salt lake, Kolkata, [Online: web] 6 November 2014, URL:[http://makaias.gov.in/Concept\\_Note-India-Bangladesh-Myanmar-1.pdf](http://makaias.gov.in/Concept_Note-India-Bangladesh-Myanmar-1.pdf)

“India’s Engagement with Myanmar”, [Online: web] Accessed 18 June 2014 URL: <http://burmacentredelhi.org/news/burma-related/3023-india%E2%80%99s-engagement-with-myanmar.html>.

“India’s Northeast is ‘Natural Economic Zone’ Says PM Modi’ December 2 2014, [Online: web] Accessed 6 Sept 2015 URL: <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/indias-northeast-is-natural-economic-zone-says-pm-modi-706884>

India-ASEAN Trade Relations, Focus Country: Myanmar, Committee on Trade with ASEAN Countries, EEPC INDIA, 1: (December 2013), available at URL: [www.google.co.in/search?site=&oq=export+import+bank+of+india+has+signed+MoU+with+myanmar+EEPC&aqs=mobile-gws-lite..&q=export+import+bank+of+india+has+signed+MoU+with+myanmar+EEPC](http://www.google.co.in/search?site=&oq=export+import+bank+of+india+has+signed+MoU+with+myanmar+EEPC&aqs=mobile-gws-lite..&q=export+import+bank+of+india+has+signed+MoU+with+myanmar+EEPC)

\*“Indo-Myanmar Border Trade”, Introduction, Department of Commerce and Industries, Government of Manipur, [Online: web] Accessed February 19 2015, URL: [http://dcimanipur.gov.in/border\\_trade.html](http://dcimanipur.gov.in/border_trade.html)

“Infrastructure development key to success of border trade”, [Online: web] Accessed 9 May 2014 URL: [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2005-06-19/news/27474042\\_1\\_border-trade-road-connectivity-myanmar](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2005-06-19/news/27474042_1_border-trade-road-connectivity-myanmar)

\*“Joint Press Statement on India-Myanmar-Thailand Ministerial Meeting on Transport Linkages”, December 23 2003, [Online: web] Accessed 5 August 2013 URL:[www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/7689/Joint+Press+Statement+on+IndiaMyanmarThailand+Ministerial+Meeting+on+Transport+Linkages](http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/7689/Joint+Press+Statement+on+IndiaMyanmarThailand+Ministerial+Meeting+on+Transport+Linkages)

\*“Joint Statement during the visit of Chairman, State Peace and development Council of Myanmar”, [Online: web] Accessed 8 May 2014 URL: <http://mea.gov.in/press->

[releases.htm?dtl/930/Joint+Statement+during+the+visit+of+Chairman+State+Peace+and+Development+Council+of+Myanmar](http://releases.htm?dtl/930/Joint+Statement+during+the+visit+of+Chairman+State+Peace+and+Development+Council+of+Myanmar)

\*“Joint Statement on the occasion of the visit of Prime Minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh to Myanmar”, (May 28 2012), [Online: web] Accessed 3 May 2015 URL: <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=84517>

“Kaladan Corridor Project likely to be completed by 2016: Singh”, Business Standard, August 14 2014, [Online: web] Accessed 8 Feb 2015 URL: [http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/kaladan-corridor-likely-to-be-completed-by-2016-singh-114081400756\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/kaladan-corridor-likely-to-be-completed-by-2016-singh-114081400756_1.html)

“Kaladan Movement, ‘Support the Kaladan Movement’”, [Online: web] Accessed June 2014 URL: [http://www.arakanrivers.net/?page\\_id=747](http://www.arakanrivers.net/?page_id=747)

“Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project”, [Online: web] Accessed 14 September 2014 URL: [http://www.arakanrivers.net/?page\\_id=135](http://www.arakanrivers.net/?page_id=135)

“Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project”, April 25 2014, MDoNER, Government of India, [Online: web] Accessed July 2015 URL: <http://www.mdoner.gov.in/content/introduction-1>

“MoS Nirmala Sitharaman opens Zokhawthar Land Customs Station near Indo-Myanmar border”, (2015), [Online: web] Accessed 26 June 2015, URL: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/mos-nirmala-sitharaman-opens-zokhawthar-land-customs-station-near-indo-myanmar-border/>

“Myanmar and Stillwell Road: Indispensable Ingredients for India’s Look East Policy”, Press Release, Southeast Asia Research Program, IPCS, available at URL: [http://www.ipcs.org.pdf\\_file>press\\_release](http://www.ipcs.org.pdf_file>press_release).

“Myanmar says operation on militants was on Indian side of border”, [Online: web] Accessed 16 Jan 2015 URL: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/myanmar-denies-indias-claim-of-killing-rebels-inside-its-territory-afp/>

“Myanmar to act against NE militant groups if provided inputs: Information Minister U Ye Htut”, [Online: web] Accessed 10 December 2014 URL: [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-08-24/news/53166676\\_1\\_india-and-myanmar-nay-pyi-taw-myanmar-territory](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-08-24/news/53166676_1_india-and-myanmar-nay-pyi-taw-myanmar-territory)

“Myanmar to get special attention from Modi government”, [Online: web] Accessed 30 April 2015 URL: <http://burmacentredelhi.org/news/burma-related/3019-myanmar-to-get-special-attention-from-modi-government.html>.

“Nirmala Sitharaman inaugurates Land Customs Station at Indo-Myanmar border, March 25 2015”, [Online: web] Accessed 6 April 2015 URL: [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-03-25/news/60474926\\_1\\_indo-myanmar-border-border-trade-centre-industry-minister-nirmala-sitharaman](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-03-25/news/60474926_1_indo-myanmar-border-border-trade-centre-industry-minister-nirmala-sitharaman)

“North East Industrial and Investment promotion Policy”, 2007, (29<sup>th</sup> March 2007), available at URL: <http://www.pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=26480>,

“North East Vision 2020: A Reality Check”, [Online: web] Accessed 7 April 2015 URL: <http://www.idsk.edu.in/common/file/oc-33.pdf>

“NSCN IM Terms PM’s Statement Shocking”, (12<sup>th</sup> June 2015), The Shillong Times, [Online: web] Accessed 20 June 2015, URL: <http://www.theshillongtimes.com/2011/12/08/nscn-im-terms-pm%E2%80%99s-statement-%E2%80%98shocking%E2%80%99/>

“On the Frontline of Northeast India: Evaluating a Decade of Harm Reduction in Manipur and Nagaland”, Drug Policy Briefing 35, (March 2011), Transnational Institute, [Online: web] Accessed 12 May 2015, URL: <https://www.tni.org/en/briefing/frontline-northeast-india>

“Steps to check illegal migration in Mizoram”, [Online: web] Accessed 7 July 2014 URL: <http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/Steps-to-check-illegal-migration-to-Mizoram-Sonia-Gandhi/2013/11/18/article1898050.ece>

“To exchange information in the fight against insurgency, arms and drug smuggling India-Myanmar sign MoU cross border co-operation gets a major filip”, [Online: web] Accessed 9 Jan 2014 URL: <http://www.e-pao.net/GP.asp?src=1..030614.jun14>

\*“Trade with Myanmar”, [Online: web] Accessed 21 June 2015, URL: <http://tradeandcommerce.mizoram.gov.in>

Bhalla, Abhisek (2014), “Grand plan to double Arunachal Pradesh forces on hold despite being cleared in April”, September 23 2014, [Online: web] Accessed 21 April 2015 URL: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-2767259/Grand-plan-double-Arunachal-Pradesh-border-force-hold-despite-cleared-April.html>.

Administrator, ‘Trade with Myanmar’ May 5 2008, [Online: web] Accessed 13 July 2013 URL: <http://tradeandcommerce.mizoram.gov.in>.

\*“Barter Trade With Myanmar Under the Indo-Myanmar Border Trade Agreement”, Reserve Bank of India, Circular (16-10-2000)- FEMA, available at URL: [https://www.taxmanagementindia.com/visitor/detail\\_circular.asp?ID=1826](https://www.taxmanagementindia.com/visitor/detail_circular.asp?ID=1826)

Baruah, Sanjib (2007), “*Postfrontier Blues: Toward a New Policy Framework for Northeast India*”, *Policy Studies*, 33: 1-84, East West Center Washington, [Online: web] Accessed 3 July 2014, URL: <http://www.eastwestcenter.org/fileadmin/stored/pdfs/PS033.pdf>

Basu, Nayanima, “Myanmar Unhappy with India’s ‘India’s Window Shopping’ attitude”, (27<sup>th</sup> August 2014), [Online: web] Accessed 24 January 2015, URL: [http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/myanmar-unhappy-with-india-s-window-shopping-attitude-114082700022\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/myanmar-unhappy-with-india-s-window-shopping-attitude-114082700022_1.html).

Basumatry, Jaikhleng (2013), Implications of Trans-Asian Highway in North East India, [Online: web] Accessed 7 May 2014, URL: <http://www.claws.in/1052/implications-of-trans-asian-highway-in-north-east-india-jaikhleng-basumatry.html>

Bezbaruah, M.P (2007), “The Indo-Myanmar Border Trade: The Stakes for Northeast India”, *Dialogue*, 9(1), Accessed 28 October 2014, URL: [http://www.asthabharati.org/Dia\\_July07/m.p.%20bez%20.htm](http://www.asthabharati.org/Dia_July07/m.p.%20bez%20.htm).

Bhagowati, Surajit Kumar and Rishi Bhargav Das (n.d), “Opportunities of Border Trade in North East India: With Special Reference to Indo-Myanmar Border Trade”, [http://www.academia.edu/10829239/OPPORTUNITIES\\_OF\\_BORDER\\_TRADE\\_IN\\_NORTH\\_EAST\\_INDIA\\_WITH\\_SPECIAL\\_REFERENCE\\_TO\\_INDO-MYANMAR\\_BORDER\\_TRADE](http://www.academia.edu/10829239/OPPORTUNITIES_OF_BORDER_TRADE_IN_NORTH_EAST_INDIA_WITH_SPECIAL_REFERENCE_TO_INDO-MYANMAR_BORDER_TRADE).

Bhaskar, Utpal (2013) “Myanmar scraps two hydroelectric projects planned with India’, [Online: web] Accessed 4 April 2014, URL: <http://www.livemint.com/Politics/tDFDnAVpqiWv8osH8RePhL/Myanmar-scraps-two-hydroelectric-projects-planned-with-India.html>

Bhattacharjee, P.R and Nayak, Purusottam (2013), “Vicious Circle of Insurgency and Underdevelopment in North East”, *Social Science Research Network*, [Online: web] Accessed on 20 May 2015, URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2342682>.

Bhaumik, Subir (2013), “Look East Policy: India underperforming its role in Myanmar”, *The Economic Times*, (2 October 2013), [Online: web] Accessed: 2 June 2015, URL:

Bhaumik, Subir (2014), ‘Arms and the men’, *The Telegraph*, July 19 2014, [Online: web] Accessed 24 September 2014, URL: <http://www.telegraphindia.com/1140719/jsp/opinion/story-18628341.jsp#VWB8uDrYm8>.

Biswas, Aparajita (2003), *Small Arms and Drug Trafficking In the Indian Ocean Region*, Centre for African Studies, University of Mumbai

Border Trade MDoNER, [Online: web] Accessed 24 July 2013 URL: [www.mdoner.gov.in/content/border-trade#b](http://www.mdoner.gov.in/content/border-trade#b)

\*Border Trade, Ministry of Development of Northeastern Region (MDoNER), [Online: web] Accessed 3 Sept 2014 URL: [www.mdoner.gov.in/content/border-trade](http://www.mdoner.gov.in/content/border-trade)

Chandra, Suba, “Myanmar and Stilwell Road: Indispensable Ingredients for India’s Look East Policy”, Press Release, Southeast Asia Research Program (SEARP), *IPCS*, [http://www.ipcs.org/pdf\\_file/press\\_release/PR\\_Myanmar\\_Stillwell\\_IBs.pdf](http://www.ipcs.org/pdf_file/press_release/PR_Myanmar_Stillwell_IBs.pdf)

Chasie, Charles and Hazarika, Sanjoy (2009), *The State Strikes Back: India and the Naga Insurgency*, Policy Studies 52, East-West Center, Washington.

Chatterjee, Shibashis (2014), “The Look East Policy and Northeastern States”, Policy Report, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, [Online: web] Accessed 23 January 2015, URL: [www.rsis.edu.sg/.../PR140301\\_The\\_Look\\_East\\_Policy\\_and\\_India\\_Northeasternstates](http://www.rsis.edu.sg/.../PR140301_The_Look_East_Policy_and_India_Northeasternstates).

Chaturvedi, Medha (2011), “India’s Strategic Interests in Myanmar- An interview with Shyam Saran”, *IPCS Special Report 98*.

Choudhury, Saswati (2006), *Sub-regional Integration: North East India South Asia, Readings from the Development Discourse in the Region*, [Online: web] Accessed 20 December 2014, URL: [www.academia.edu/1052807/North-East\\_India\\_and\\_the\\_Look\\_East\\_Policy\\_A\\_Contextual\\_Analysis](http://www.academia.edu/1052807/North-East_India_and_the_Look_East_Policy_A_Contextual_Analysis)

Choudhury, Saswati and Bhuyan, Ratna (2005), “Development Disparity and Northeast Region”, *Dialogue* (October to November 2005), URL: [www.asthabharati.org/Dia\\_Oct%2005/Sas%20&%20Rat.htm](http://www.asthabharati.org/Dia_Oct%2005/Sas%20&%20Rat.htm)

Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud (2014), *Drug trafficking in and out of the Golden Triangle*, [Online: web] 10 December 2014 URL: <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01050968/document>.

Connectivity between ASEAN, India can transform region, 31 July 2013, [Online: web] Accessed 17 February 2014, URL: <http://www.newindianexpress.com/business/news/Connectivity-between-ASEAN-India-can-transform-region/2013/07/31/article1710874.ece>,

De, Prabir and Majumdar, Pranab (2014), “Developing Cross-Border Production Networks Between North Eastern Region of India, Bangladesh and Myanmar: A Preliminary Assessment”, *Research and Information System for Developing*

Countries, [Online: web] Accessed 20 March 2015 URL: <http://www.eldis.org/go/home&id=69457&type=Document#.VaaHivmqgko>.

Dholabhai, Nishit (2014), “India wants Myanmar to hand over rebels”, *The Telegraph*, [Online: web] Accessed 30 April 2015 URL: [http://www.telegraphindia.com/1140302/jsp/northeast/story\\_18034690.jsp#.VFSSDjTF-Ww](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1140302/jsp/northeast/story_18034690.jsp#.VFSSDjTF-Ww).

“Drug Use, HIV/AIDS and Human Trafficking in the North-East”, Dialogue July-September 2007, 9(1), [Online: web] Accessed 4 Sept 2014 URL: [www.asthabharati.org](http://www.asthabharati.org)

“Drug Smuggling rising along Indo-Myanmar border”, May 19 2012, [Online: web] Accessed 9 Feb 2015 URL: [http://zeenews.india.com/news/north-east/drug-smuggling-rising-along-india-myanmar-border\\_776353.html](http://zeenews.india.com/news/north-east/drug-smuggling-rising-along-india-myanmar-border_776353.html)

“Drugs Situation Report/Significant Event Report for India for the month of November 2014”, Narcotics Control Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, GOI, New Delhi, available at [narcoticsindia.nic.in](http://narcoticsindia.nic.in)>upload>download

Emilie, Roell (2014), “Crossing the Indo-Burmese Border on Motorcycle”, *The Irrawaddy*, (February 1, 2014), [Online: web] Accessed May 2015 URL: <http://www.irrawaddy.org/multimedia-burma/crossing-indo-burmese-border-motorcycle.html>

Executive Summary of DPR for Highway for Kaletwa to India, [Online: web] Accessed Nov 7 2014 URL: <http://iwai.gov.in/misc/highway.pdf>

“Former Mizoram CM Zoramthanga heads for Myanmar as interlocutor for peace talks”, *The Indian Express* (January 12 2015), [Online: web] Accessed 30 May 2015 URL: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/former-mizoram-cm-zoramthanga-heads-for-myanmar-as-interlocutor-for-peace-talks/>

Goswami, Namrata (2009), *Identifying Policy “Challenges” and Outlining the “Responses”*, Occasional Paper No. 2 Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi, [Online: web] 23 June 2015, URL:



[http://www.idsa.in/occasionalpapers/LookingEastThroughIndiasNorthEast\\_ngoswami\\_2009.html](http://www.idsa.in/occasionalpapers/LookingEastThroughIndiasNorthEast_ngoswami_2009.html)

\_\_\_\_\_ (2010), “India’s Northeast 2020: Four Alternative Futures”, *IDSA*, 13, available at [file:///C:/Users/somtey/Desktop/OP\\_IndiasNortheast2020.pdf](file:///C:/Users/somtey/Desktop/OP_IndiasNortheast2020.pdf)

Haacke, Jurgen (2006), *Myanmar’s Foreign Policy towards China and India*, The Adelphi Papers, 46(381).

Harris, A.W, *Population Transfer and Insurgent Conflict*, No. 11 in the Discussion Series: *Patterns of Conflict Resolution*, Institute for British—Irish Studies University College Dublin

Hassan M Sajjad (2007), *Understanding the breakdown of Northeast India : Explorations in state society relations*, DESTIN, London School of Economics and Political Science

Haynes, Ben (2012), *The Other Burma? Conflict, counter-insurgency and human rights in Northeast India*, Transnational Institutes

Hussain, Wasbir (2001), “Insurgency in India’s Northeast: Cross-border Links and Strategic Alliances”, *SATP*, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume17/wasbir.htm>.

Hussain, Wasbir (2009), “India’s Northeast: The Super Highway to Southeast Asia?” *IPCS*, 104: 1-4.

India – Myanmar Relations, July 2012, [Online: web] Accessed 14 September 2014, URL: <http://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/myanmar-july-2012.pdf>

India-Myanmar 5<sup>th</sup> Joint Trade Committee Meeting’ February 17 2015 New Delhi, [Online: web] Accessed 9 March 2015 URL: [http://commerce.nic.in/MOC/press\\_release.asp?id=3148](http://commerce.nic.in/MOC/press_release.asp?id=3148)

India-Myanmar Relations, (2013), *FPRC Journal*, [Online: web] Accessed 24 July 2014, URL: [www.fprc.in/pdf/J-15.pdf](http://www.fprc.in/pdf/J-15.pdf).

\*India-Myanmar-Thailand Joint Task Force Meeting on the Tri-lateral Highway Project, September 11 2011, [Online: web] Accessed 8 May 2015 URL: [www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/20541/India/MyanmarThailand+Joint+Task+Force+Meeting+on+the+Trilateral+Highway+Project](http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/20541/India/MyanmarThailand+Joint+Task+Force+Meeting+on+the+Trilateral+Highway+Project)

\*Mizoram Economic Survey 2014- 2015, Planning & Programme Implementation Department (Research & Development Branch), Government of Mizoram, URL: <http://www.mizofin.nic.in>file>Mizoram>

\_\_\_\_\_ (2015), “Scroll Investigation: A new gateway to the northeast runs into and jumps over a corruption roadblock”, Ear To The Ground, [Online: web] Accessed 6 June 2015 URL: <http://scroll.in/article/729210/a-new-gateway-to-the-north-east-runs-into-and-jumps-over-a-corruption-roadblock>

“Why India needs Myanmar on its side?” July 26 2010, [Online: web] Accessed 19 July 2014 URL: <http://news.rediff.com/column/2010/jul/26/why-india-needs-myanmar-on-its-side.htm>

Das, Pushpita (2014), “Status of India’s Border Trade: Strategic and Economic Significance”, IDSA Occasional Paper, 37, URL: [www.idsa.in/occasionalpapers/OP\\_StatusofIndiasBorderTrade\\_pdas\\_101214.html](http://www.idsa.in/occasionalpapers/OP_StatusofIndiasBorderTrade_pdas_101214.html)

Das, Samir Kumar (2010), *Conflict and peace in India’s Northeast: The role of civil society*, Policy Studies 42, East-West Center Washington.

Jafa, Virender Singh (1999), “Counter-Insurgency Warfare: The use and Abuse of Military Force”, *Faultlines*, South Asia Terrorism Portal, [Online: web] Accessed 20 May 2015, URL:

Karthykeyan, Deepa (2009), *Northeast India as a Gateway to South-East Asia*, Journal of International Studies and Analyses, 3 (2), [Online: web] 16 September 2014 URL: <http://asiastudies.org/file/publication/deepa/NortheastIndia.pdf>

Kasik, Karin (2004), *The Chin and Mizo: Ex-brothers?*, The Irrawady, (April 2004), 12(4), [Online: web] Accessed 3 September 2014, URL: <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:eDPj->

[VdibSoJ:www2.irrawaddy.org/article.php%3Fart\\_id%3D3507+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=in](http://www2.irrawaddy.org/article.php%3Fart_id%3D3507+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=in)

Khan Suan, Kham H (2007), “Salvaging Autonomy in India’s Northeast: Beyond the Sixth Schedule Way”, *Eastern Quarterly*, 4(1): 5-6, [Online: web] Accessed on 15 May 2015, URL: [http://www.manipurresearchforum.org/salvaging\\_autonomy\\_arch5.htm](http://www.manipurresearchforum.org/salvaging_autonomy_arch5.htm)

Kipgen, Nehginpao (2013), A New Route Four Eight for Myanmar, *The Hindu*, August 8 2013, [Online: web] Accessed October 20 2014, URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/a-new-route-four-eight-for-myanmar/article5000201.ece>.

Langer, Avalok (2013), “Look East, But Through The North East”, *Tehelka.com*, 4(10), [Online: web] Accessed 5 Aug 2014 URL: <http://www.tehelka.com/look-east-but-through-the-northeast/>.

Mazumdar, Rakhi (2014), “North East has trade potential of upto Rs 1.8 lakh crore: Ficci-PwC report”, (27 November 2014), [Online: web] Accessed 23 February 2015 URL: [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-11-27/news/56515242\\_1\\_border-trade-trade-potential-ne-region](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-11-27/news/56515242_1_border-trade-trade-potential-ne-region)

Mohan, C Raja (2013), “India’s Security Cooperation with Myanmar: Prospect and Retrospect”, *Institute of South Asian Studies*, No.166, [www.isas.nus.edu.org](http://www.isas.nus.edu.org).

Mukesh Rawat (2015), *Will Nagaland Ever Have Peace? After six decades, a resolution to India’s insurgency remains elusive*, June 04, 2015

Northeast as an Engine of Growth: Exploring and Expanding Linkages with Southeast Asia, *IPCS*, [Online: web] Accessed 19 March 2015 URL: <http://www.ipcs.org/110510-Guwahati-Concept.pdf>.

Northeast India, ‘Economy Overview’, [Online: web] Accessed 23 Jan 2013 URL: [http://www.cdpsindia.org/ne\\_economy.asp](http://www.cdpsindia.org/ne_economy.asp)

Northeast Industrial and Investment Promotion Policy, 2007, March 29 2007, Press Information Bureau, GOI, [Online: web] Accessed 8 Jan 2014 URL: <http://www.pib.nic/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=26480>

Oinam, Bhagat (2008), “State of the States: Mapping India’s Northeast”, East-West Center Washington Working Papers, 12, (November 2008), available at [http://www.google.co.in/url?q=http://www.eastwestcenter.org/fileadmin/stored/pdfs/ewcwwp012\\_1.pdf&sa=U&ved=0CA8QFjAAahUKEwiXhO\\_n0\\_XGAHXQBY4KHXseC10&usg=AFQjCNHBADBQPrAjcNWsvcgqy7o772Jag](http://www.google.co.in/url?q=http://www.eastwestcenter.org/fileadmin/stored/pdfs/ewcwwp012_1.pdf&sa=U&ved=0CA8QFjAAahUKEwiXhO_n0_XGAHXQBY4KHXseC10&usg=AFQjCNHBADBQPrAjcNWsvcgqy7o772Jag)

Parameswaran, Prashanth (2010), “Strengthening ASEAN- India Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, [www.project2049.net](http://www.project2049.net).

Pukhrem, Shristi (2012), “The Significance of Connectivity in India-Myanmar Relations”, (6<sup>th</sup> July 2012), [Online: web] Accessed 12 September 2014, URL: [http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/TheSignificanceofConnectivityinIndiaMyanmarRelations\\_spukhrem\\_230512](http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/TheSignificanceofConnectivityinIndiaMyanmarRelations_spukhrem_230512),

Rajagopalan, Swarna (2008), “Peace Accords in Northeast India: Journey over Milestones”, *East-West Center*, [Online: web] Accessed on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2015, URL:

Rajshekhar M (2015), “Scroll Investigation: Mizoram CM gave road contracts to firms in which his brother held shares”, *Ear To The Ground*, June 29 2015, [Online: web] Accessed 5 June 2015 URL: [www.scroll.in/article/736549/scroll-investigation-mizoram-cm-gave-road-contracts-to-firm-in-which-his-brother-held-shares](http://www.scroll.in/article/736549/scroll-investigation-mizoram-cm-gave-road-contracts-to-firm-in-which-his-brother-held-shares)

Ramachandran, Sudha, “India’s Worrying Border Infrastructure Deficit” (June 19 2014) available at <http://thediplomat.com/2014/06/indias-worrying-border-infrastructure-deficit/>

Randolph, Eric (2014), ‘Operation Golden Bird and India’s Neurotic Relationship with Myanmar’, [Online: web] Accessed 15 March 2015, URL: [www.currentintelligence.net/subcontinental/2011/10/14/operation-golden-bird-indias-neurotic-relationship-with-myan.html](http://www.currentintelligence.net/subcontinental/2011/10/14/operation-golden-bird-indias-neurotic-relationship-with-myan.html)

Roche, Elizabeth (2010), “Myanmar pact to help India contain North-East Militancy”, [Online: web] Accessed 26 May 2015 URL: <http://www.livemint.com/Politics/tb7oPgjwDhRx6qmNuUaCrJ/Myanmar-pact-to-help-India-contain-NorthEast-militancy.html>

Roluahpuia (2013), “Countering Development: New Struggles in Northeast India”, March 3, 2013, [Online: web] Accessed 6 Dec 2014 URL: <http://www.jneis.com/?p=512>

Roundtable on Northeast’s Role in India’s Look East Policy, (18 September 2013), [Online: web] Accessed 24 September 2014, URL: <http://www.idsa.in/~idsa/event/NortheastRoleinIndiasLookEastPolicy.html>.

Routray, Bibhu Prasad (2011), “India-Myanmar Relations: Triumph of Pragmatism”, 1(1), [Online: web] 3 January 2014, URL: <http://www.jsia.edu.in/JJIA/PDF/Bibhu%20Prasad%20Routray.pdf>

Routray, Bibhu Prasad (2013), “Myanmar and India’s Northeast: Border Competition, Better Connectivity and Economic available at <http://www.ipcs.org/article/india/myanmar-and-indias-northeast-border-cooperation-better-connectivity-and-economic-3788.html>.

Roy, Sandip (2015) “Don’t touch our women: Dimapur Lynching was never about Justice”, [Online: web] Accessed 29 June 2015 URL: <http://m.firstpost.com/india/dont-touch-our-women-the-dimapur-lynching-was-never-about-justice-2143305.html>

Sailo, Laldinkima (2013), “Connecting INDIA to ASEAN: Opportunities and Challenges in India’s Northeast”, *Institute of South Asian Studies*, available at [www.isas.nus.edu.sg](http://www.isas.nus.edu.sg).

Sakhuja, Vijay (2012), “India and Myanmar: Choices for Military Cooperation”, ICWA Issue Brief, Indian Council of World Affairs, (11 September 2012), available at [www.icwa.in/pdfs/IBindiamyanmar](http://www.icwa.in/pdfs/IBindiamyanmar)

Salehyan, Idean (2010), “Transnational Insurgencies and the Escalation of Regional Conflict”, Lessons for Iraq and Afghanistan”, *Strategic Studies Institute*, [Online: web] Accessed 18 Nov 2014 URL: <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdf/files/pub971.pdf>.

Shankari Sundararaman (2014), “Modi in Myanmar: From ‘Look East’ to ‘Act East’”, *IPCS*, (17 November 2014), [Online: web] Accessed 30 Jan 2014 URL: [www.ipcs.org/article/india-in-the-world/modi-in-myanmar-from-look-east-to-act-east-4742.html](http://www.ipcs.org/article/india-in-the-world/modi-in-myanmar-from-look-east-to-act-east-4742.html)

Singh, E Bijoykumar “Border Trade at Moreh: Looking back” (26 June 2015), [Online: web] Accessed 17 July 2015, URL: [http://e-pao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=education.Jobs\\_Career.Border\\_trade\\_at\\_Moreh\\_Looking\\_back\\_By\\_E\\_Bijoykumar](http://e-pao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=education.Jobs_Career.Border_trade_at_Moreh_Looking_back_By_E_Bijoykumar),

Singh, Thingnam Kishan (2015), “Reading the Northeast”, (24 June 2015), [Online: web] Accessed: 13 July 2015, URL: [http://e-pao.net/epPageExtractor.asp?src=features.Economics\\_of\\_Underdevelopment.html](http://e-pao.net/epPageExtractor.asp?src=features.Economics_of_Underdevelopment.html)

Singh, Thiyam Bharat (n.d) “A Study on Indo-Myanmar Border Trade”, available at [www.dgciskol.nic.in>vaanijaya0907](http://www.dgciskol.nic.in>vaanijaya0907)

SP Sinha (2014), *Northeast: the Role of Narcotics and Arms Trafficking*, Book Excerpt: Lost Opportunities (10 May, 2014).

Srinivasan, Krishnan (2012), ‘India’s Security Policy: Shifting Paradigms and Emerging Frontiers’, [Online: web] Accessed 3 June 2015 URL: <http://voiceof.india.com/lectures/indias-security-policy-shifting-paradigms-and-emerging-frontiers/910>

Strachan, Anna Louise, et al (2009), “India’s Look East Policy: A Critical Assessment”, *IPCS Special Report*, [Online: web] Accessed 21 February 2014, URL: [www.ipcs.org](http://www.ipcs.org).

Sudha Ramachandran (2014), “India’s Worrying Border Infrastructure Deficit”, (June 19, 2014), [Online: web] Accessed at 5 March 2015 URL: <http://thediplomat.com/2014/06/indias-worrying-border-infrastructure-deficit/>

Sujatha (2015), “India’s Military Operation in Myanmar: An Analysis”, URL: <http://www.mapsofindia.com/my-india/india/indias-military-operation-in-myanmar-an-overview>

**Class Lecture, conference paper, speech or presentation**

Prof. Yumnam, Amar (2014) “Political Economy of Developmental Challenges in the Northeast”, Lecture Delivered on 17 October 2014 at the Northeast India Studies Programme, Jawaharlal Nehru University: New Delhi.

Bhaumik, Subir (2014), “Bangladesh-Northeast-Myanmar- A Roadmap for India”, Lecture delivered on November 3 2014 at the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University: New Delhi.

Agrawal, R.C, “Present Scenario on Border Trade and Look East Policy”, Presentation, North East Federation on International Trade, available at [www.planningcommission.gov.in/conf1](http://www.planningcommission.gov.in/conf1)

Mukhim, Patricia (2013),” India-Myanmar Economic Partnership and the Development of India’s North-East”, Presentation at Brainstorming Session on *India-Myanmar Strategic Partnership*, on February 4 2013.