

Insurgencies of the Northeast and Management of Indo-Myanmar Border*

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Introduction

The Northeastern region of India is of immense geo-political importance to the sub-continent due to its terrain, location and peculiar demographic dynamics; and is one of the most challenging regions to govern. The region constitutes about eight per cent of India's landmass. The 40 million population accounts for only 3.1 per cent of the total Indian population. Post-Independence, the history of this region has been dismal – marred with bloodshed, tribal feuds and under-development. Due to insurgency/ widespread violence, several parts of the region were brought under the ambit of Disturbed Area Act (DAA) and the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA).

Protracted deployment and counter-insurgency operations by the Security Forces have been instrumental in abatement of the level of violence and restoring a security situation suitable for civil governance elements to function. At present, a delicate peace prevails in the region. Having realised the futility of violence, several insurgent groups have resorted to Suspension of Operations (SoO)/ Cease Fire (CF), thus, paving the way for negotiations/ resolution of problems.

The aim of the talk is to define the existing myriad insurgencies in the Northeast (NE) and highlight their cultural, linguistic and tribal cross connections; reasons for insurgencies and define a way forward to prevent their resurgence; issues of Indo-Myanmar Border management, as also highlight existing cultural, linguistic and tribal connections with Myanmar and what the future holds.

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The Cross Connects: Genesis/ Historical Perspective, Terrain and Insurgencies in NE Region

NE India is home to more than 200 separate tribes speaking a wide range of languages. Some groups have migrated over the centuries from places as far as South East Asia. They retain their cultural traditions and values. Its jungles are dense, its rivers powerful and rain and thunderstorms sweep across the hills, valleys and plains during the annual monsoons. The lushness of its landscape, the range of communities and geographical and ecological diversity makes the NE quite different from other parts of the sub-continent. The region has borders with China, Myanmar, Bhutan and Bangladesh which has a major influence on the socio-economic fabric of the region.

British Influence

British began establishing themselves from 1818 onwards. In the ensuing First Anglo-Burmese War of 1824, Burmese were defeated and 'Treaty of Yandaboo' was signed. Consequently the Burmese withdrew to Myanmar and Ahom King ceded part of its territory to the British East India Company. The advent of British rendered the Ahom Kingdom extinct by 1838. From 1839 to 1873, the region was administered by the British as part of the Bengal Province. The plan to use NE India as a cushion from Myanmar/China was mooted under the 'Coupland Plan' by earmarking the region as 'Crown Colony'. The British could not exercise direct colonial control over several parts of the region. Thus, the Christian Missionaries were penetrated deep into the remote areas.

Parts of the NE region were classified as 'Excluded Area' or 'Partially Excluded Area' and brought under the ambit of 'Inner Line Regulation', thus serving ulterior British interests of preventing access to outsiders.

Isolation and separation denied the national mainstream to the tribals and inhibited their exposure to modernity. The people in plains considered hill tribes uncivilized/nomadic, while the hill tribes considered them outsiders and looked upon with distrust thus laying the foundation for hostility in the region.

Assam

In 1947, large parts of Bengal Province were merged into Assam which started slow immigration into Assam, initially of Bengali

Hindus. However, there was a major influx of Bengali Hindus after massacre in East Pakistan. Assam and Tripura bore the brunt of this influx. By 1970s, Bangladeshi Muslims started emigrating as well. Consequently, agitations commenced in 1979 over illegal immigration. Massive strain of additional population could not be borne by Assam and things began to crack. Anti-Foreigner agitation of 1980 and Assamese-Bodo tensions further aggravated the situation.

Arunachal Pradesh

The Arunachali tribes of Tibeto-Burman origin point towards a northern connection in Tibet. Recorded history of this area is available only in the Ahom and Sutiya chronicles. This region then came under the loose control of Tibet and Bhutan, especially in the northern areas. Thus, a Buddhist connect with Lhasa, also the sixth Dalai Lama is believed to be from Tawang. Ahoms held the areas until the annexation of India by the British in 1858. In 1938, the Survey of India published a detailed map showing Tawang as part of North East Frontier Agency (NEFA). Finally, NEFA was created in 1954 and renamed as Arunachal Pradesh on 20 January 1972 and it became a Union Territory, with statehood on 20 Feb 1987.

Nagaland

It is inhabited by 16 major tribes as well as various sub-tribes. The Naga tribes always had socio-economic and political links with tribes in Assam and Myanmar. Following an invasion in 1816, the area along with Assam came under rule of Myanmar. The British East India Company took control of Assam in 1826. By 1892, all of Nagaland except Tuensang area was governed by the British. It was politically amalgamated into Assam, which in turn was for long periods a part of the province of Bengal. In 1957, the Naga Hills became a district of Assam. Statehood was officially granted in 1963 and the first state-level democratic elections were held in 1964.

Manipur

In 1824, King of Manipur, Gambhir Singh asked the British for help and Manipur became a British protectorate. In 1826, peace was concluded with Burma. Manipur became a princely state under British rule in 1891. In 1949, Maharaja Budhachandra was

summoned to Shillong, where he signed a Treaty of Accession merging the kingdom into India. Thereafter, the legislative assembly was dissolved and Manipur became part of the Republic of India in October, 1949 and a full-fledged state in 1972.

Mizoram

The word 'Mizo' means highlander. Maximum population of the state is tribal belonging to seven major tribes. The British military officers in 1850s encountered series of raids in their official jurisdiction in Chittagong Hill Tracts from the neighbouring natives. Punitive British military expeditions in 1871 and 1889 forced the annexation of the entire Lushai Hills. After 1947, the land became Lushai Hills district under the Government of Assam. Inadequate action by the Assam Government, during Mautum Famine of 1959, led to emergence of Mizo National Front (MNF). The district was declared Union Territory in 1972 and a federal state of Indian Union in 1986.

Tripura

It is the third-smallest state in the country, and is bordered by Bangladesh, Assam and Mizoram. The Bengali Hindus form the ethno-linguistic majority in Tripura with indigenous communities (scheduled tribes). In 1970, Tripura suffered major influx of Bangladeshi's leading to population inversion. The princely state of Tripura was merged with the Union of India in 1949. Tripura became a Union Territory on 01 Jul 1963, and attained the status of a full-fledged state on 21 Jan 1972.

Indo-Myanmar Linkages

India-Myanmar relations are rooted in shared historical, ethnic, cultural and religious ties. India shares a 1643 km long border with Myanmar in four Northeastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram with Myanmar's Sagaing Region and Chin State. The Singrouphos and the Tai groups such as the Ahoms, Khamtis, Phakes, Aitons, Turungs and the Khamyangs moved to NE India from Shan state of Yunnan and Myanmar. In the same way, Nagas, Kukis, Mizos and the Lushais entered NE India from Burma. The people collectively known as Chins by the Burmese live along the border of NE India and Myanmar. Similarly, there are still a good number of Naga tribes inhabiting western

Myanmar adjacent to the Indian state of Nagaland. All these people still maintain their language, traditions, arts, crafts, life style as well as traditional religious practices. The interests are protected by Indo-Burma Treaty of 1951 on Border Affairs which allows free movement of the local ethnic tribals on both sides for the purpose of carrying on local trade and social visits.

Genesis and Evolution of Insurgency in Northeast India

The reasons for insurgency differ from state to state. Several factors like common ethnic stock, similar historical background and comparable geo-politics are responsible for abetting insurgency in the region. In addition, certain other factors specific to states, regions or tribes also acted as abetting factors for insurgency in the NE.

(a) **Assam.** The roots of insurgency in Assam began with the protests/agitations by the All Assam Students Union (AASU) against illegal influx of Bangladeshi immigrants. A break-away faction of the AASU formed the ULFA in 1979 with an objective of creating a 'sovereign socialist Assam'. With signing of the Assam Accord in 1985, the AASU ended its agitation and constituted the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP). This regional political party participated in elections and subsequently formed the government. However, ULFA continued with its struggle, with sovereignty as the prime motive. Apart from ULFA and Bodo insurgents, the Dimasa groups of North Cachar Hills (now Dima Hasao District) had been claiming 'Dimaraji', a Dimasa state based on historical records and presence of Dimasas in majority. These demands were in direct clash with the interests of Nagas who claimed the overlapping areas as parts of 'Greater Nagaland/ Nagalim'. Dimasa insurgency was brought under control with the signing of Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) in 2012 with consequent formation of North Cachar Hill Autonomous Council (NCHAC). However, splinter Dimasa groups continue to venture out and carry out kidnapping and extortion.

(b) **Manipur.** The roots of insurgency in the State date back to 1964 with the creation of United National Liberation Front (UNLF). The discontentment was for the alleged forced merger of Manipur and delay in conferring statehood. Subsequently, groups like People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak

(PREPAK) in 1977, People's Liberation Army (PLA) in 1978, Kangleipak Communist Party in 1980 and Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL) in 1994 emerged in Manipur. All insurgent groups propagated the idea of an independent Manipur with minor variation in ideologies. In the Hill districts, contiguity with Nagaland and inhabitation by Naga Tribes enabled spillover of Naga insurgent into the State. Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) (NSCN (IM)) has laid claim over these hill districts in the scheme of 'Nagalim' or Greater Nagaland. Kuki-Naga clashes in the Hill districts of Manipur in early nineties instigated creation of several Kuki groups in the State. The groups which were initially formed to resist oppression by Nagas subsequently started demanding a separate 'Kukiland' state encompassing the Kuki inhabited areas of Manipur, Assam, Mizoram and even parts of Myanmar. However, most of these groups are now under SoO with GoI. Islamist groups like the People's United Liberation Front (PULF) have also been founded to protect the interests of the 'Pangal Muslims'. The insurgents have been broadly divided into Valley Based Insurgent Groups (VBIGs) and others comprising the Nagas, Kukis, Muslims and those representing minor tribes.

(c) Nagaland.

(i) The Naga struggle for sovereignty commenced with the formation of Naga National Congress (NNC) in 1946. The alleged forced annexation by India and entry of massive Indian Forces in 1953 resulted in the party forming its armed wing called the Naga Federal Army (NFA). An underground government called Naga Federal Government (NFG) was also formed. The first major effort towards peace was the signing of the Shillong Accord in 1975. However, the peace accord led to rebellion within the NNC which led to the creation of the NSCN in 1980. Difference of ideologies between the top leaders of the NSCN led to the split in the group in 1988 resulting in the formation of NSCN (IM) and Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang) (NSCN (K)). NSCN (K) further split in 2011 to form a splinter group called NSCN (Khole- Khitovi (KK)) which further split into NSCN (Khitovi Neokpao) (NSCN (KN)).

(ii) Prolonged violence gave way to hope of peace when NSCN (IM) entered into a CF with Gol in 1997 followed by NSCN (K) in 2001. NSCN (KK), on formation, got into a CF with the Government. In 2012, NSCN (K) also entered into a CF Agreement with Government of Myanmar. Several attempts for peace in the past have not borne the expected results. The progress of talks between UG groups and Gol suffered a setback in 2015 with NSCN (K) unilaterally abrogating the CF Agreement. This decision of the group led to another split and resulted in the formation of NSCN (Reformation). NSCN (K) further went on to join hands with ULFA (I), NDFB (S) and KYKL to form the United National Liberation Front of Western South East Asia (UNLFW). NSCN (IM) meanwhile went on to sign a 'peace accord' with Gol, which apparently lays down the 'framework' for future talks/resolution. Peripheral issues associated with the Naga insurgents include the demand by the Eastern Naga People's Organisation (ENPO) for a separate 'Frontier Nagaland' state and the involvement of the Naga Rengma Hill Protection Force (NRHPF) in ethnic clashes with the Karbis in 2013.

(d) **Tripura.**

(i) Major demographic change in the state is due to unhindered migration from East Pakistan/ Bangladesh. The tribals have been pushed to the hills while the Bengali speaking people took over the plains. Gradually, the political and administrative space was also dominated by the Bengalis. Years of deprivation, lack of opportunities for the ethnic people and government inaction to prevent immigration are the main causes of insurgency in the State.

(ii) Insurgency commenced with formation of National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT), the first armed insurgent group in Tripura founded in 1989 by Dhananjoy Reang. All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF) was formed in 1990 by Ranjit Debbarman due to difference of ideologies with the NLTF; though both groups perpetuated the objectives of an 'independent' Tripura State and expulsion

of Bengali speaking people. Borok National Council of Tripura (BNCT) was formed in 1997 as a result of split in NLTF.

(iii) Protracted operations by Security Forces, stable governments and reforms in social system have brought the situation in Tripura under control. Most of the insurgent leaders had taken shelter in Bangladesh to evade apprehension. Since 2009, insurgent activities in the State have considerably reduced. This has manifested into development and improvement in living/ economic standards of locals. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) report of 2009 placed Tripura as third lowest in insurgent activities in NE after Mizoram and Meghalaya. Recently, the Government of Tripura has revoked AFSPA in the State.

(e) **Mizoram.**

(i) The genesis of insurgency in the State dates back to the infamous Mautam Famine in the 1960. Inadequate action by the central/state governments was the cause of discontent among the locals, which thereafter graduated to other issues concerning employment opportunities, economy and social reforms. The Mizo National Front (MNF) led the insurgency in Mizoram till the Mizo Peace Accord was signed in 1986. This also resulted in the territory attaining statehood in 1987.

(ii) Insurgency in Mizoram, at present, is peripheral in nature, and comprises agitations by the Brus or Reangs and the Hmars. Brus were forced out of Mizoram in 1997 following atrocities on them. Approximately, 35,000 Bru refugees are presently lodged in temporary camps in Kanchanpur sub-division of North Tripura. Due to delay in settlement of their issues by the Mizoram Government, militant outfits like the Bru Liberation Front of Mizoram (BLFM) and Bru National Liberation Front (BNLF) emerged.

(iii) Repatriation of the refugees is presently in progress in a phased manner. Efforts are underway to make the insurgents surrender for peaceful resolution of the issue.

The insurgent movement of Hmars was aimed to defend the rights of their community, having bases in the border areas of Mizoram, Manipur and Assam. Two insurgent outfits were formed in 2007, namely the Hmar People's Convention - Democratic (HPC (D)) and the Singlung People's Liberation Army (SPLA). In 2009, most of the cadres of the SPLA surrendered and the group, thereafter, became dormant.

(f) **Arunachal Pradesh.** The South Western districts of Tirap and Changlang, sharing boundary with Nagaland, have been subjected to Naga insurgency since early nineties. Tribal similarities have favoured sustenance of insurgency by both the factions of NSCN in these two districts. Post abrogation of CF by NSCN (K) in Nagaland, and formation of the UNLFW to jointly fight the Indian state has led to a spurt in insurgent violence in the region. ULFA has been traditionally using these areas for transit to its Saigang Division in Myanmar. Alliances between the NSCN (K) and ULFA (I) have also come to light in this area in the recent past.

Current Situation to Include the Rohingya Infiltration

Protracted efforts by the Security Forces, involvement of interlocutors, participation of social groups and reconciliation by various insurgent groups has ensured the emergence of near normalcy in most parts of the region, in the past two decades. With most groups under CF or SoO and being engaged in negotiations with GoI, the spatial spread of insurgency in the NE is now reduced to few districts/areas. The spectrum of insurgency also varies from intense in certain areas to mild/ dormant in most areas of the NE. The state-wise spread of insurgency is given in the succeeding paras.

Assam

(a) **Dimasa Groups.** Dimasa groups have been decimated, however, minor cases of extortion and kidnapping continue. The ex-cadres resort to such activities to sustain themselves in absence of any rehabilitation programme.

(b) **Transient Presence of NSCN (IM) and NSCN (K).** Cadres from both groups frequent the districts of Dima Hasao and Cachar to carry out extortion/rest and recoup or escape

action by Security Forces in Manipur. However, with reducing support of locals, regular apprehensions are made.

(c) **Islamic Groups.** The radical Islamist groups are demanding security for the Muslims in Assam. Influence of these groups is yet to fructify in districts of Karimganj, Hailakandi and Cachar. However, initial traces of the same are visible. Infiltration of Rohingyas is a matter of concern.

Manipur

(a) **Valley Based Insurgent Groups (VBIG).** PLA is believed to have formed a 'government in-exile' in Bangladesh. The group enjoys popular support and has established linkages with the NSCN (K) in Myanmar. The group has been named in the ghastly attack on 6 DOGRA on 03 Jun 2015. The group, apart from insurgent activities, is involved in moral policing for weeding out social evils. Other groups like the UPPK, UNPC and KCP are generally dormant. Most of the VBIGs are not under SoO/negotiations with the State Government/Gol and have stuck to their un-constitutional demands, thus continuing unrest in the region. These groups possess immense potential to spread wide-scale violence.

(b) **People's United Liberation Front (PULF).** The only Muslim group of Pangal Muslims is active in Manipur Valley and Thoubal district. The group is active and shares solidarity with Islamic radical groups in Assam. Linkages with the ISI are also suspected. The group possesses potential to flare communal clashes with support from other Islamic groups in the NE.

(c) **Kuki Insurgent Groups.** All 18 Kuki insurgent groups in Manipur are under SoO with the Government and are in negotiations for a separate state encompassing areas inhabited by their tribe. The groups have their influence in parts of Senapati, Tamenglong, Chandel and Churachandpur districts. The dialogue process of these groups is under the banners of United People's Front (UPF) and Kuki National Organisation (KNO).

(d) **Hill Districts.** The region has witnessed sporadic violence in the recent past. With signing of the 'Framework Agreement' by NSCN (IM) with Gol, the region has witnessed

an increase in the influence of the group in the Hill districts. Several defections from other groups to NSCN (IM) have come to light. The same may be in hope for a brighter future and better chances of a resolution. After abrogation of CF by NSCN (K), a reduction in presence of their cadres in the Hill districts has been observed. Most of the cadres are believed to have shifted base to Myanmar.

Nagaland

The current situation is complex and uncertain with each of the major groups tangentially pursuing their agendas. The present day dynamics can be explained as under:-

(a) **NSCN (K).** NSCN (K) unilaterally abrogated the CF in March 2015. This was followed by a series of violence in Kohima, Tuengsang and Manipur. Security Forces retaliated with daring cross-border raids on two camps simultaneously in Myanmar in June 2015. Actions by Security Forces led to neutralisation of several NSCN (K) cadres in Nagaland with a consequent decrease in the combat potential of the groups. The group has shifted base to Myanmar and joined NDFB (S)/ ULFA (I) to form the UNLFW. After the cross-border raids in June 2015, the camps of NSCN (K) have been pushed further in depth, thus creating a geographical buffer and reducing their potential to execute violent actions. Mr SS Khaplang, Chairman of the group is not keeping good health. The viability of NSCN (K) after death of Khaplang is questionable. The group is presently under CF with Myanmar Government and is engaged in a peace process.

(b) **NSCN (IM).** The NSCN (IM) is under CF with the GoI and still remains the most dominant group in Nagaland. The group has signed a 'Framework Agreement' with GoI on 03 Aug 2015 and has emerged as the harbingers of a renewed peace process in Nagaland. Since the signing of this historic agreement, the group has been actively involved in organising meetings with various stakeholders and garnering their consensus for the peace process. Consequently, mass defections from other groups to NSCN (IM) have been witnessed. Although contents of the Agreement have not been de-classified, the same holds a new hope for a permanent solution to the Naga issue which has been lingering on for almost 68 years.

(c) **Other Groups.** With the NSCN (IM) having taken lead in the peace process, the other UG groups like the NSCN (KN), FGN and NNC have criticised the Gol for engaging with only one group. After being fence-sitters for almost one month (since signing of the Framework Agreement), these groups had broken their silence on 09 Sep 2015 through a joint statement, vide which they expressed opposition to the peace initiative by the Gol. The newly created group called NSCN (R) is in the process of establishing itself and has signed CF agreement with Gol.

Arunachal Pradesh

Abrogation of CF by NSCN (K) on 26 Mar 2015 has increased the threat dynamics in these districts. The region has witnessed several violent incidents in the recent past. Most of these incidents are attributable to the UNLFW group. A porous border and unmonitored movement across the IB have been the main hurdles in preventing movement of cadres in the area.

Other States of NE India.

(a) **Tripura.** A stable government with effective governance, civil administration, law and order system, have contributed immensely towards peace in the region. Although, the three major groups of the State i.e. NLFT, ATTF and BNCT still exist, their combat potential has been substantially reduced due to protracted operations by Security Forces, apprehension of top leaders in Bangladesh and mass surrender of its cadres. The subdued limited spatial influence of these groups is confined to Dhalai, West Tripura and North Tripura districts. Situation is in absolute control and threat levels under acceptable limits.

(b) **Mizoram.** The official document entitled Mizoram Accord, 1986: Memorandum of Settlement was the landmark that restored peace and harmony in the State. The Bru insurgent groups are in tripartite talks with the state governments of Mizoram/ Tripura. However, little headway has been made towards return/settlement of Bru families. The Mizo Government has, however, managed to keep the insurgent factions engaged in negotiations and has prevented escalation of the situation. Similarly, the Hmar insurgent groups though

dormant, resort to sporadic acts of violence to voice their concerns about the government inaction towards their demands. Illegal transit of arms through the state is another issue that merits concern.

Indo-Myanmar Border

The Indo-Myanmar Border (IMB) is characterised by the following peculiarities:-

- (a) Hilly terrain with thick forest cover.
- (b) Lack of infrastructure development and poor communication network.
- (c) Porous border with ambiguous demarcation.
- (d) Cross border ethnic, cultural and economic linkages
- (e) Free movement regime.
- (f) Vast gaps in deployment.
- (g) Indian Insurgent Groups camps in Myanmar.

The prevalent issues along the Indo-Myanmar Border are:-

- (a) Presently, approximately 1460.34 km of the border has been demarcated. The un-demarcated portions are in Arunachal Pradesh – 136 Km (BP 186 to Tri Junction) and in Manipur – 35 km of stretch in Kabaw Valley.
- (b) The un-demarcated portion of the border relates to the area of the nine Border Pillars (BP). BP 66 is missing on ground and location of BP 76 and 78 is unresolved. Six new BPs (BPs 89 to 94) are to replace five old BPs numbered 6 to 10. As of now, the old BPs are still intact and have not been renumbered pending joint survey. Other minor issues pertain to village Hoalenphai near BP 76, Govajang land dispute between BP 79 & 80 because of upcoming border fence and Choro Khunao near BP 93 due to establishment of Trade Centre.

Assam Rifles (AR) has been deployed for counter-insurgency and border guarding role along the Indo-Myanmar Border. Out of sanctioned strength of 46 battalions, 31 battalions are mandated for counter-insurgency and 15 are for border guarding role. Presently, all 13 border guarding battalions are deployed along Indo-Myanmar border on Company Operating Base (COB) basis,

and not as per the BOP system. The companies are deployed on all routes of ingress/egress and are checking infiltration, smuggling of arms, ammunition, drugs, fake currency notes etc. AR undertakes contraband resource control, narcotics and trafficking control and also engages with the Myanmar Army

Construction of Border Fence

India commenced work on erecting of border security fence in 2003 but the same stalled, especially in Manipur, due to protests raised by the local Tangkhul, Kuki, and Naga communities. According to them, a huge stretch of land would come under Myanmar territory and foment unrest among people living on both sides of the border as the fence would divide many ethnic communities, including the Lushai, Nagas, Chins, and Kukis whose lands straddle the regions of both the countries. Unlike other borders between countries, Indo-Myanmar Border, due to ethnic linkages and historical factors, is peaceful and devoid of hostilities amongst people of both countries. Erecting a border fence is a costly exercise as it would entail earmarking troops for manning and surveillance, creation of infrastructure including road network and towers etc. which both countries can ill afford at this juncture.

Fencing the border will not only create a physical barrier but will be symbolic to a psychological barrier which is a retrograde step to India's strategic interests and engagement with Myanmar as it assumes importance in our 'Look/Act East Policy'. Most of the local State Governments are not in favour of a fence for fear of alienation of the local population and also an obstacle not manned loses its efficacy.

Rohingyas

Rohingyas are a Muslim minority group settled in Rakhine State of Myanmar. 1.3 million Rohingyas reside in Myanmar. International attention was drawn to the Rohingyas in wake of 2012 Rakhine State riots. Likelihood of the Rohingyas trying to illegally cross over the Indo-Myanmar Border remains a faint possibility due to the geographic and demographic spread in Myanmar. Plight of Rohingyas in Myanmar continues to be bad due to denial of citizenship, forced displacement, forced labour, religious persecution, marriage restrictions and population control. The Rohingyas are a likely security threat as they are turning out to be

easy targets for Muslim Fundamental Organisations (MFOs). ISIS is also known to be reaching out to Rohingyas for recruitment. With countries unwilling to house the Rohingyas, joining ISIS may be an attractive option.

Indigenous Approach to Border Guarding

The nature of border and the prevalent security situation requires an ingenious approach. The conventional methods of population control and military methods of border domination may have to be re-castigated. The design of domination of IMB and means to be followed to achieve the aim could be as under:-

(a) **Population Control by Technologically Advanced Methods.** Use of technologically advanced Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tagged permit, coupled with embedded GPS tracking can go a long way in tracking movement of people on crossing the border.

(b) **Electronic Fence.** The experience of Anti-Infiltration Obstacle System (AIOS) along the LC and the IB fence along Western Border has brought out the challenges in both construction and regular maintenance of the obstacle system. The strain on manpower and resources in erecting and manning such an obstacle system is exponential. The experience of AIOS over the years showcases the importance of surveillance over physical domination. Thus, electronic domination of the border assumes importance. The area of responsibility along the IB should have a number of IR/ thermal sensor cameras and detectors placed at dominating places along the IB, where movement of men and material can be observed. The COBs should be equipped with day-night camera embedded with quadcopter to carry out surveillance of desired locations by remotely operated/software fed from a distant location. A dedicated UAV node equipped with latest technological UAV needs to be created at the Division/IGAR level. Further, compatible secure communication equipment should be procured centrally for all Security Forces including CRPF, BSF, State Police and intelligence agencies for seamless, real time information sharing with counter-insurgency/counter-terrorist grid in depth or neighbouring locations for carrying out joint operations.

Recommendations

Good neighbourly relations with Myanmar and prosperity amongst people living in border areas on both sides augurs well for the security of India and is in its national interest. India should assist Myanmar in effective border management of Indo-Myanmar Border. Various infrastructure development projects being undertaken in Myanmar should be executed and made functional in the laid down time frame by tackling various security and politico-bureaucratic hurdles. The GoI should also make provisions to provide economic aid for specific projects to governments of bordering Sagaing Region and Chin State to foster close links and gain cooperation on various border issues. Simultaneously, within NE Region, work must continue to develop infrastructure including connectivity (road, rail, air, inland waterways) for an overall development of the region as an economic hub to further India's 'Look East Policy' objectives.

Crystal Ball Gazing

The Central Government is focussing efforts towards the NE Region and is hoping to address all major issues. The NE Region is likely to fare out as under in the next 10-15 years:-

- (a) **Assam.** The insurgency in Dima Hasao and neighbouring districts is generally under control and subdued, however, resurgence cannot be ruled due to the inter-tribal dynamics. Districts of Karimganj, Hailakandi and Cachar are likely to suffer mainly on communal lines with noticeable increase in Muslim population, seeping in of fundamental ideas and support for Islamic Fundamental Organisations. The sub region will continue to be a transit between Bangladesh and Manipur/Myanmar.
- (b) **Arunachal Pradesh.** The proximity to China, Myanmar and Nagaland is likely to continue to fuel the insurgency due to deep rooted linkages. The three districts of South Arunachal will continue to act as safe havens for transit between Myanmar and China to plains of Assam.
- (c) **Nagaland.** Though a Framework Agreement has been signed, issues will continue to crop up with disagreement amongst various groups, factions and tribal leaders. GoI is unlikely to cede to demands of Nagalim, even within the ambit

of Constitution of India and thus the struggle duly backed by inter-tribal rivalries, religious, political and foreign forces will continue. Leaders of NSCN (IM) may opt to be absorbed into the governmental framework, however, armed struggle may not completely be diminished.

(d) **Manipur.** With large number of tribes and clash of demands between Nagas and Kukis, the issue seems far from any resolution. Influence of Myanmar, a porous border and cultural linkages will keep issues alive. Also, rapid increase in Muslim population, presence of Pangals and proximity to South Assam will bring in fresh variables in the entire equation.

(e) **Mizoram.** The Indo-Myanmar Border is unlikely to form a contentious issue between the two countries, however, efforts towards illegal trade will continue from both sides. Mizoram is likely to develop into a major transit route/alternate transit route for move of men and material from Eastern side to Bangladesh and vice versa. Hmars are likely to continue to back their claims for a Hmar State which might not see the light of the day, thus keeping the paltry activities live. Settlement of Brus is likely to be fully settled soon, however focused efforts must continue.

(f) **Tripura.** The geographical location of the State makes it susceptible to influence from the neighbours to the extent at causing population inversion, if not checked. The hill tracts, unless provided impetus, will continue to house insurgent groups from tribes which feel dejected and ignored. Resurgence of insurgency cannot be ruled out unless the local Security Forces and police are empowered.