

INDIA'S INTERNAL SECURITY CONCERNS IN NORTH EAST DIMENSION: A STUDY OF MANIPUR

NEELAM GUPTA¹

¹Professor, Department of Political Science, Bareilly College, Bareilly, U.P. INDIA

ABSTRACT

The prolonged tribal conflict and violence in Manipur has given a message to the Nation that the North-East and its related problems have to be given priority . Eight States comprise India's northeast- Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura and Sikkim. It is linked with Indian heartland through the 21 km. wide Siliguri Corridor, which is commonly known as the chicken neck, created by the Radcliff line, the boundary drawn by the British colonial administration. North East India having border with five countries holds great strategic importance to the country. North-eastern part of India has the landscape with potential racial, lingual and ethnic diversity which creates also ethnic tension and conflict. . Manipur is a multi-ethnic state located in Northeast India witnessing a divisive politics of identity and acute ethnic conflict. The complexity of ethno-demographic relationships and subsequent conflicts in Manipur can however provide a wider theoretical framework explaining a particular pattern of conflict. conflicts have been waged not merely on questions of land, immigration and settlement, but also on the overweening fear of loss of identity itself. Due to these conflicts there are so many problems of extremism, Internal unrest, Narco- terrorism, Conversion, Naxalism etc -and due to these problems anti nation forces rapidly grown here. It is a big challenge for Internal security of India. Following a socio-historical, cultural perspective, this paper attempts to describe about India's Internal security concerns in North East dimensions ,with special reference to Manipur Ethnic conflict.

KEYWORDS: North-East, Chicken-Neck, Radcliff line, Ethnic diversity, Internal Security, Extremism, Narco- Terrorism,

The prolonged tribal conflict and violence in Manipur has given a message to the Nation that the North-East and its related problems have to be given priority.

Northeast India, comprising of eight states, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura (commonly known as the "Seven Sisters"), and the "brother" state Sikkim. has been grappling with internal security challenges for several decades. The region has been a melting pot of various tribes, kingdoms, and empires over the centuries. The complex interplay of historical factors, such as colonization, border disputes, and demographic changes, has contributed to internal security challenges in the region. The region has witnessed a range of issues, including insurgency, ethnic conflicts, economic marginalization, and cross-border infiltration, Narco Terrorism, Extremism. Recent events of ethnic violence in Manipur between Kukis, Nagas and Meities have once again brought the issue in light.

In this context, Following a socio-historical, cultural perspective, this paper attempts to describe about India's Internal security concerns in North East dimensions, with special reference to Manipur Ethnic conflict.

Northeast India (officially the North Eastern Region (NER) is the easternmost region of India, fondly called the land of seven sisters, represents both a geographic and political administrative division of the country. Northeastern Indian States are blessed with a wide range of physiographic and ecoclimatic conditions and the geographical 'gateway' for much of India's endemic flora and fauna. (The Hindu, 16 August 2022)

North-East is home to 3.8% of the national population and occupies about 8% of India's total geographical area. It is linked with Indian heartland through the 21 km. wide Siliguri Corridor, a narrow strip of land in West Bengal which is commonly known as the chicken neck, created by the Radcliff line, the boundary drawn by the British colonial administration.

The states of North Eastern Region are officially recognised under the North Eastern Council (NEC), constituted in 1971 as the acting agency for the development of the north eastern states. Long after induction of NEC, Sikkim formed part of the North Eastern Region as the eighth state in 2002. (The Original 8 September 2017). The table given below, shows about statehood, Historic names of North east state.

State	Historic Name	Statehood
Arunachal Pradesh	North-East Frontier Agency	1987 (earlier a Territory of India, constituted in 1971)
Assam	Kamarupa	1947
Manipur	Kangleipak ⁸	1971 (earlier a Territory of India, constituted in 1956)
Meghalaya	Khasi hills, Jaintia hills and Garo hills	1971 ⁷
Tripura	Tipperah ⁹	1971 (earlier a Territory of India, constituted in 1956)
Mizoram	Lushai hills	1987 (earlier a Territory of India, constituted in 1971)
Nagaland	Naga Hills District	1963
Sikkim	Sukhim	1975

Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution deals with the provisions for the administration of tribal areas in the states of North-Eastern states: Assam Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram, in accordance with Article 244 of the Indian Constitution .4 Article 371 provides a special status that aims to preserve their cultural heritage .Article 371(A) related to the Nagaland,371(B) for Assam,371(c) for State of Manipur,371(f)State of Sikkim, 371(H) state of Arunachal Pradesh, and 371(G) for State of Mizoram.

North East India is one of the most culturally diverse areas of the world. It also houses over 200 tribes making it one of the most culturally vast areas of the world. Popular festivals include the Hornbill Festival of Nagaland, Pang Lhabsol of Sikkim, etc. North-east India is a Dowry-Free Zone. The rich tapestry of cultures of Northeast is reflected in its highly developed Folk dance forms like Bihu (Assam). Manipur has a tradition of worshipping nature in sacred groves, called Umang Lai. (The Hindu, 16 August 2022)

The area is also rich in natural resources like tea, oil and timber(TOT). It also has a potential to generate 50000 MW of hydroelectric power and has an abundance of fossil fuels. Ecologically, north east also is a part of Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot. It represents one of the highest avian and plant biodiversity of the Indian subcontinent. The Indo-Pacific region is also gaining importance in terms of future international policies with ASEAN countries. It provides a geographical and strategic stretch with the two oceans linked together with ASEAN countries. With sustainable connectivity initiatives that provide mutual benefits, a stable trade environment can be fostered in the Indo-Pacific region.

As it is a multipolar region, it contributes more than half of the world's GDP and population. India's strategic partnership with other countries like the USA can benefit from a secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific region. The Indo-Pacific region also has many of the world's important choke points for global commerce. It stands at the intersection of international trade with around 40% of global exports coming from this region. For India, Pacific Islands are significant as they constitute the important sea lines of communication for maritime trade.

Vital resources like fish stocks, minerals, offshore oil and gas constitute an important part of the Indo-Pacific region. Various maritime territories hold depositories for these resources. According to Asian Development Bank (ADB), countries in the Indo-Pacific region produce over 60% of global GDP, making it the largest contributor to global growth.(www.indiatimes.com, Dec 7,2022)

North east is the gateway of India to South east Asia and beyond. It also proves as a land-bridge to Myanmar. Guwahati city in Assam is called the Gateway to the North East and is the largest metropolis in North East India. India's Look-East connectivity projects connect Northeast India to East Asia and ASEAN .India's Act East Policy puts northeastern states on the territorial frontier of India's Eastward Engagement.

North East India, sharing boundaries with five countries, some of them not friendly with India, has tremendous strategic significance for the nation. The region shares an international border of 5,182 kilometres (3,220 mi) (about 99 percent of its total geographical boundary) with several neighbouring countries – 1,395 kilometres (867 mi) with Chinain the north, 1,640 kilometres (1,020 mi) with Myanmar in the east, 1,596 kilometres (992 mi) with Bangladesh in the south-west, 97 kilometres (60 mi) with Nepal in the west, and 455 kilometres (283 mi) with Bhutan in the north-west. It comprises an area of 262,184 square kilometres (101,230 sq mi), almost 8 percent of that of India. This coupled with prevailing insurgency, terrorism as well as ethnic conflicts in some areas of the region as well as being the fulcrum for India's "Look East" Policy (or "Act East" Policy as enunciated by Prime Minister Modi) deserves special attention from the Centre as well as from civil society.

Within India, the north eastern part is the richest in floristic diversity and thus has immense valuable genetic resources which are now threatened to extinction unless urgent and proper actions are taken to conserve these valuable forest genetic resources at local, national and international level.

The Seven Sisters unfortunately do not have the best of relations due to mutually conflicting interests .There are

some Current Challenges discussing regarding internal security Pertaining to North-East India.

THE NORTH EAST FLORISTIC ETHNIC DIVERSITY

The Northeast It is home to around 40 million people including 213 of the 635 tribal groups listed by the Anthropological Survey of India. These tribes have distinct culture and languages. The ethnic diversity has led to the formation of numerous insurgent groups representing the interests of their respective communities. These groups have been involved in armed struggle against the state, leading to violence, displacement, and human rights violations. For instance, ULFA in Assam, NSCN in Nagaland are few of the insurgent groups active in Northeast region.

Insurgency and Political Issues: Insurgency or terrorism is a political weapon and is often the result of accumulated anger due to political, economic and social causes. The North-Eastern states have witnessed a rise of insurgent activities and regional movements with a feeling of exploitation and alienation from other Indian states. Some of the insurgent groups are United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), People's Liberation Army, National Socialist Council of Nagaland, All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF).

The imposition of the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system by the British has also led to ethnic tensions and conflicts

Insurgency and Political Issues: Insurgency or terrorism is a political weapon and is often the result of accumulated anger due to political, economic and social causes.

Lack of Efficient Infrastructure: Infrastructure i.e. physical (like roadways, waterways, energy and so on) as well as social infrastructure (for instance educational institutions, health facilities) plays an important role in human development and economic growth of any region. One of the reasons for the economic backwardness of the North-Eastern states is the poor state of basic infrastructural facilities. The prominent indicators of shortfalls in infrastructure in this region are: increasingly congested roads, power failures, shortage of drinking water etc.

Due to this lack, North-East India has remained historically underdeveloped in terms of industrial growth.

Post Independence, due to the partition of India, the industrial sector in the Northeast received a serious setback as its trade routes were cut-off with the rest of the country. This in turn hindered economic integration with other parts of India and also reduced the attractiveness of the region as a destination of investment.

ECONOMIC MARGINALIZATION

Northeast India is considered as one of the economically backward regions in India. The region has a low per capita income, inadequate infrastructure, and limited job opportunities. The economic marginalization has led to youth unemployment and poverty, making them vulnerable to recruitment by insurgent groups. Isolation From the Rest of India: The region's accessibility has always remained weak due to geographical reasons and underdeveloped transport links with the rest of India. The physical location of northeastern states makes it imperative that they develop in consonance with their neighbours. Also, as the region witnesses floods and landslides in the Brahmaputra and Barak Valleys of Assam, considerable strain is exerted on the economy of not only Assam but other North-Eastern states too.

The Northeast region's distance from New Delhi and limited representation in the Lok Sabha have resulted in a reduced voice of the people being heard in the corridors of power.

NATURAL RESOURCES EXPLOITATION

Northeast India is endowed with rich natural resources, including oil, gas, coal, and minerals. The exploitation of these resources has led to environmental degradation and displacement of local communities. The displacement has led to resentment among the local communities and has provided a fertile ground for the growth of insurgent groups.

TERRITORIAL CONFLICTS

There are existing inter-state and international territorial conflicts within the Northeast that are often based on historical border disputes and differing ethnic, tribal or cultural affinities. Example: Assam-Mizoram Border Dispute.

With its proactive plans to increase its influence in the region, China remains a major source of concern. The vulnerability of the Siliguri Corridor is a case in point.

BORDER ISSUES

Northeast India shares borders with several countries, including China, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Myanmar. The porous borders have made it vulnerable to cross-border infiltration and smuggling of arms, drugs, and contraband. NE region is geographically located adjacent to opium producing region of Golden triangle (Myanmar, Thailand, Laos)

The border disputes with neighbouring countries have also led to tensions and conflicts, particularly with China and Bangladesh.

External State and Non-state Actors: The insurgencies in the NEI have been supported by erstwhile East Pakistan in the late 1950s; and in early 1960s, in the form of training of personnel of Naga Army and giving them weapons. Later, China also provided weapons and support to insurgents and Maoists.(The Hindu, 16 August, 2022)

Recent NDA Government Initiates great efforts for the Development of the North-East in the respect of Infrastructure, connectivity, Tourism, etc. Bharatmala Pariyojana, Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS)-UDAN, Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Project ,India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, Swadesh Darshan Scheme ,Digital North East Vision 2022, National Bamboo Mission and so many schemes have been started by this government .India's finance minister announced a huge budget for the execution of several rail, road, and air and waterways connectivity projects. These projects will help in bringing the rest of India closer to the North East and vice versa. In spite of all these efforts for the development of infrastructure by the Government, recent Manipur violence gave a message that north east region should be in priority for internal security of the Nation.

.Since May 3, the northeastern Indian state of Manipur has witnessed repeated inter-ethnic clashes primarily between two local ethnic communities, the Meitei and Kuki.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi this week faces a no-confidence motion in parliament over the violence, with the opposition accusing him of inaction. The recent violence began after the Manipur High Court asked the state government to consider Scheduled Tribe status for the Meitei community, which is the majority population in Manipur. This status would ensure protection within the Indian Constitution and allow the Meitei expanded access to benefits, including reserved seats in government.

The Meitei community in Manipur had long requested this status. However, there were strong concerns that such a move would deepen ethnic divisions, particularly with the Kuki and Naga Indigenous communities. Indeed, soon after the court announcement, a rally was held in protest by the All-Tribal Students Union of Manipur on May 3.

Manipur (Kangleipak) is a state in northeast India, with the city of Imphal as its capita (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manipur>) It is bounded by the Indian states of Nagaland to the north, Mizoram to the south and Assam to the west. It also borders two regions of Myanmar, Sagaing Region to the east and Chin State to the south .. Manipur is one of the seven northeast Indian states – sandwiched between Bangladesh, China and Myanmar – that

has long been a hotbed of separatism and a tinderbox of tensions between different ethnic groups.

On 11 August 1947, Maharaja Budhachandra signed an Instrument of Accession, joining the new Indian Union.(Singh, 2011) Later, on 21 September 1949, he signed a Merger Agreement, merging the kingdom into India, which led to its becoming a Part C State (Singh, 2003). This merger was later disputed by groups in Manipur, as having been completed without consensus and under duress²³. The dispute and differing visions for the future has resulted in a 50-year insurgency in the state for independence from India, as well as in repeated episodes of violence among ethnic groups in the state.

The Meitei people represent around 53% of the population of Manipur state, followed by various Naga ethnic groups at 24% and various Kuki/Zo tribes (also known as Chin-Kuki-Mizo people) at 16%. Manipur's ethnic groups practice a variety of religions.[28] According to 2011 census, Hinduism and Christianity are the major religions of the state. Between the 1961 and 2011 censuses of India, the share of Hindus in the state declined from 62% to %, while the share of Christians rose from 19% to %.(Hindustan Times, 8 March 2017)

Two Sanskrit words compose the name "Manipur": "Mani", which means jewel, and "pura", which means land, place, or abode. Thus, "Manipur" may be translated as "Jewelled land"

Manipur, which means "Land of Jewels," consists of a valley surrounded by mountain ranges. The state is home to 39 ethnic communities following different faiths, including Hinduism, Christianity and Islam, as well as Indigenous religious traditions such as Sanamahi.

Opposition to the manner of Manipur's merger with India in 1949 laid the groundwork for the nascent stages of resistance and separatist movements and remains at the heart of the dispute between New Delhi and many restive portions of the Northeast.

To quell this resistance, the Indian government imposed the controversial Armed Forces Special Powers Act in 1958. The act provides broad-based powers for the military and paramilitary groups to "[maintain] public order," in "disturbed areas," which have been primarily applied to regions of the Northeast and Jammu and Kashmir.

Today, the region features multiple conflicting claims to ethnic and communal homelands - and armed insurgent groups to defend those claims. In Manipur, there are at least four valley-based armed groups, several Naga groups and nearly 30 Kuki armed insurgent organizations. The proliferation of armed

groups - at one point estimated to stand at around 60 - contributed to the sense of a "war within a war" in the state.

The situation in Manipur is extremely complex. The Meities, who constitute 56 per cent of the state's population of almost thirty lakh, occupy only ten per cent of the geographical area particularly the valley region. The Nagas, with a population of approximately seven lakh, reside in the hilly areas of the State and are deeply suspicious of the Meities. The Kukis who are sandwiched between the Nagas and the Meities constitute 7.5 per cent of the population and are demanding a separate Kuki State (Ibid). Meanwhile, another point of contention is the current land imbalance between Indigenous communities: Meiteis cannot buy lands in the previously mentioned hill regions, but Kukis and other tribal communities can buy lands in the valley.

Additionally, the influx of refugees following the 2021 military coup in neighboring Myanmar - particularly those from Sagaing region, who have strong ties with the Kukis - has also created a greater sense of insecurity for the Meitei Indigenous community. Though the real decision-making in the conflict lies with those who control the guns, drugs and politics, the ones most affected in both the communities are women and children. The identities of different ethnic communities were weaponized in the current conflict to suit the agenda of a few.

Across all communities, the people in Manipur have suffered immensely for years as they saw their rice fields turned into battlefields and peace be taken away by a few power-hungry people who have engineered division and sown violence. Citizen-centric dialogues and engaging civil society will be key to addressing decades of deep distrust and historical hurt that have polarized Indigenous communities across the region. Indigenous peacemaking initiatives, truth-telling and forgiveness ceremonies could be a way to start to soothe the fractured hearts and minds of communities who have lived through violence for decades. Women in peace building is also needed, to begin what will be a long process of building responsive governance and transparency in the region.

Manipur is a multi-ethnic state located in Northeast India witnessing a divisive politics of identity and acute ethnic conflict. The complexity of ethno-demographic relationships and subsequent conflicts in Manipur can however provide a wider theoretical framework explaining a particular pattern of conflict. Conflicts have been waged not merely on questions of land, immigration and settlement, but also on the overweening fear of loss of identity itself. Along with Extremism and Separatism, anti National forces are working here only to a limited extent. Anti National activities like conversion are also going on fast. Conversion can also be considered a reason

behind the long running tribal conflict in Manipur. Mizoram's Christian leader dreams of greater Mizoram through Manipur division. This will include Christian dominated Mizo, Kuki, Chin area. That is why the Chin tribe from Myanmar is being infiltrated in Manipur so that the demography can be changed (Dainik Jagran, 2 June 2023). The central government is finding it difficult to control the violence in Manipur as anti-national forces operating among the tribes are conspiring. Infact, armed separatist groups operating in the north eastern states are already planning another partition of India. (Dainik Jagran, 7 July 2023) China with its active plans to increase its influence in the region remains a major source of concern. Shipping of Siliguri corridor is a major concern. Due to leaving China's long international border with Arunachal Pradesh open, Vigilance is always necessary. (The Hindu, 16 August, 2022) Opium cultivation is increasing here by separatist organizations with the help of Myanmar. Looking at the drug business and growing opium cultivation in Manipur, there is a fear that Manipur may become a hub of drugs. Violence in Manipur is a big threat to the Internal and External security of the country. Its seriousness needs to be understood.

Due to these conflicts there are so many problems of extremism, Internal unrest, Narco- terrorism, Conversion, Naxalism etc -and due to these problems anti nation forces rapidly grown here. It is a big challenge for Internal security of India. Although the central government is doing much for the development of infrastructure services in north east India, yet from the level of National security North east India has to be given more priority. So that the unity and integrity of the nation of India be firmly established.

REFERENCES

[https://en.wikipedia.org,Northeast_India\(\"North Eastern Council\". Archived from the original on 15 April 2012. Retrieved 25 March 2012.\)](https://en.wikipedia.org,Northeast_India(\)

<http://www.indiandefencereview.com/news/internal-security-scenario-of-north-east-india, By Brig R Borthakur>

Issue Vol. 30.1 Jan-Mar 2015 | Date : 12 Jun , 2015

<https://mdoner.gov.in>

The Hindu'- Article 'India at 75-the fragility of the North East integration' 16 August 2022 (<https://www.drishtiiias.com>)

"Integration of Sikkim in North Eastern Council". *The Times of India*. 10 December 2002. Archived from the original on 30 April 2013. Retrieved 25 March 2012.

- "Evaluation of NEC funded projects in Sikkim" (PDF). NEC. Archived from the original (PDF) on 8 September 2017. Retrieved 4 June 2017
- "The North Eastern Areas (Re-organisation Act) 1971" (PDF). meglaw.gov.in. Archived (PDF) from the original on 6 December 2017. Retrieved 5 December 2017.
- "Ancient name of Manipur". Archived from the original on 18 November 2017. Retrieved 5 June 2017.
- "Historical evolution of Mizoram" (PDF). Archived (PDF) from the original on 7 July 2017. Retrieved 5 June 2017.
- "History of Mizoram". Archived from the original on 29 August 2017. Retrieved 5 June 2017.
- M. Laxmikant – ' Bharat ki rajvyavastha 'Mcgraw hill Education(India) private limited,page no.,6th edition
- The Hindu'- Article 'India at 75-the fragility of the North East integration' 16 August 2022 , <https://www.drishtiiias.com>
- <https://www.indiatimes.com>Apoorva Patil, Significance of Northeast Region of India, Indo-Pacific Region Updated on Dec 07, 2022, 21:02 IST-
- "Problems of border areas in Northeast India" (PDF). Archived (PDF)from the original on 23 January 2022. Retrieved 30 April 2018
- Understanding India's Manipur Conflict and Its Geopolitical Implications
- Friday, June 2, 2023 /by : Binalakshmi Nepram; Brigitta W. Schuchert, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/06>
- Manipur: Treatise & Documents, Volume 1, ISBN 978-8170993995, Introduction, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manipur>
- Why Pre-Merger Political Status for Manipur: Under the Framework of the Instrument of Accession, 1947, Research and Media Cell, CIRCA, 2018, p. 26, GGKEY:8XLWSW77KUZ, archived from the original on 10 January 2022, retrieved 19 August 2018
- Singh, Socio-religious and Political Movements in Modern Manipur 2011, Chapter 6, p. 139
- U. B. Singh, *India Fiscal Federalism in Indian Union* (2003), p. 135
- K.R. Dikshit; Jutta K Dikshit (2013). *North-East India: Land, People and Economy*. Springer Science. p. 56. ISBN 978-94-007-7055-3.
- Kalpna Kannabiran; Ranbir Singh (2008). *Challenging The Rules(s) of Law*. SAGE Publications. p. 264. ISBN 978-81-321-0027-0.
- Jump up to:^{a b c d e} "Background: Conflict in Manipur" Archived 24 September 2015 at the Wayback Machine Human Rights watch 2008
- "Christian population on the rise in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur". *Hindustan Times*. 8 March 2017. Archived from the original on 1 June 2023. Retrieved 1 June 2023
- Based on article Editorial 'kyon sulag raha hai Manipur'by Divya kumar soti ,Dainik Jagran,2 june 2023
- Based on article Editorial 'Purvottar ke ishaikaran ke dushparinam' by Harendra Pratap, *Dainik Jagran*,7 july 2023