

Insurgency in the State of North-East

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ABSTRACT

The North East is one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse regions in India. The numerous fairs and festivals celebrated by these communities and their friendly nature are irresistible attractions for the visitors. However, the maximum concentration of the Tibeto-Burman speakers is found in the North East: in comparison to any part of the Country.

The problem of insurgency in the Northeast has reached all-time high. Almost all Northeast is under Armed forces under special powers Act. Their presence is due to unrest or ethnic uprising, which is due to unemployment, intolerance, frustration and alienation among the people in general, and youths in particular.

There are many reasons behind the problem of insurgency/ terrorism. Some of which is lack of political will and determination to make the people of this region to have feelings of oneness and sense of belongingness to the country. Due to not having any industrial growth, the States have lack of employment opportunity, lack of proper facilities, planning etc. The other reason is the geographical isolation/location of the states of Northeast from rest of the country. Due to this, there is lack of communication, poor transportation, no opportunity for sending agriculture and other produces outside the state etc. All these adversely affect the economic development.

A number of studies showed that deprivation, unemployment, racial discrimination, ethnicity, minority status, and so on show altogether different impact on identity development. Ethnic minorities who form sub-segment in the society have low self-esteem and find themselves in a complex situation (Taifel, 1978, and Morris).

Keywords: *Insurgency/Terrorism, Racial discrimination, Identity.*

The Northeast India comprises of the seven sister states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. They form part of the East Himalayan region which, extended from Sikkim eastwards and embraces of the Darjeeling Hills of the West Bengal. The location of the region is strategically important as it has international borders with Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Tibet. The area is characterized by

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rich bio-diversity, heavy precipitation and high seismicity. It is endowed with forest wealth and is ideally suited to produce a whole range of plantation crops, spices, fruits and vegetables and flowers and herbs as well. The rich natural beauty, serenity and exotic flora and fauna of the area are invaluable resources for the development of eco-tourism. Total area of the region is about 2,55,168 sq. km. All the seven states are members of the North East Council, organized on 1st August 1972 and within the jurisdiction of Guwahati High Court.

The region has a high concentration of tribal population. The states of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland are mostly inhabited by a number of native tribes. Each tribe has its own distinct tradition of art, culture, dance, music and life styles.

The North East is one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse regions in India. The numerous fairs and festivals celebrated by these communities and their friendly nature are irresistible attractions for the visitors. Each of the seven part of India has its own culture and tradition. According to the 1971 census there are about 220 languages belonging mainly to three language families, namely Indo-Aryan, Sino-Tibetan and Austric. The Indo –Arya by Asamiya and Bangle, Austro-Asiatic represented mainly by Khasi and the Sino-Tibetan family of language the Tibeto-Burman and Siamese—Chinese sub families also there are languages of the Tea-Tribes. Ho language spoken here belongs to the former and the latter is represented by a few Thai languages like Aiton, Phakyal and Turung.

However, the maximum concentration of the Tibeto-Burman speakers is found in the North East: in comparison to any part of the Country. The Northeastern part of India is bounded by Bhutan, Bangladesh and Burma. It consists of seven states of Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura.

Insurgency in the Northeast

Today, the northeast of India is in a state of flux. The problem of insurgency in the Northeast has reached all-time high. Almost all Northeast is under Armed forces under special powers Act. Their presence is due to unrest or ethnic uprising, which is due to unemployment, intolerance, frustration and alienation among the people in general, and youths in particular. What strikes an outsider at the very outset of Northeast are insurgency, ethnic clashes, inter-religious conflicts and so on and so forth. Anyone who has to live with terrorism and to protect himself against it also needs to understand the motive and character of the terrorists. Needless to say, that terrorists are intelligent, fit, usually well trained and highly motivated individuals. The geographical location of the northeast being very strategic due to India's international boundary, this region ought to receive utmost attention from the much-needed infrastructure for a peaceful and tranquil society.

The entire Northeast region of the country has a very common problem. That is insurgency, underdevelopment, in communication, education, health care, negligence and so on and so forth.

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There are many reasons behind the problem of insurgency/ terrorism. Some of which is lack of political will and determination to make the people of this region to have feelings of oneness and sense of belongingness to the country. Due to not having any industrial growth, the States have lack of employment opportunity, lack of proper facilities, planning etc.

The other reason is the geographical isolation/location of the states of Northeast from rest of the country. Due to this, there is lack of communication, poor transportation, no opportunity for sending agriculture and other produces outside the state etc. All these adversely affect the economic development.

Moreover, the area has been brought under control to some extent by providing opportunities to youths, giving political autonomy and granting special economic packages and deploying reconciliatory measure with insurgent and separatist groups. Still the states of Assam, Tripura, Manipur and Nagaland face different kind of uprising, insurgency and terrorism of complex nature. These are both intra-group (among tribes) and inter group fighting. In other words, fight is between different ethnic groups and against the Government or for the separate homeland and anti- national activity.

Terrorism

Terrorism is an act of frustration, revenge, despair; inability to achieve desired (both realistic and unrealistic) goals and a motivated behavior of committed ideology. Terrorists follow certain ideologies and strategies to achieve their objectives in the society. In fact, a true believer is often more than willing to sacrifice his life for the cause. Terrorism is a destruction of property by people not acting on behalf of an established government for redressing a government and aimed directly or indirectly at an established government. Most official definitions of terrorism also contain the word 'unlawful' or 'criminal'—as part of the definition. This is because the purpose of such definitions is to make the activity defined as 'terrorism' a crime in the country where it is being defined. 'Lawfulness or Criminality' however, are not part of the activity itself, but depend on whether such activity is considered lawful or unlawful in a particular society state or country.

Unable to achieve, the unrealistic goals by conventional means, national terrorists attempt to send an ideological or religious message by terrorizing the public. Through the choice of their targets, which are often symbolic or representative of the targeted nation, terrorists attempt to create a high-profile impact on the public of their targeted enemy or enemies with their act of violence, despite the limited material resources that are usually at their disposal. Thus they might send message to the people or Government against whom they act.

Definitions of terrorism vary widely and are usually inadequate. Even terrorism researchers State (1998) often neglect to define the term other than by citing the basic U.S. Department of definition of terrorism as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience." Although an act of violence that is generally regarded in the United States, as an act of terrorism may not be viewed so in another country, the type of violence

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that distinguishes terrorism from other types of violence, such as ordinary crime or a wartime military action can still be defined in terms that might qualify as reasonably objective. Moreover, those who suffer at the hands of aggressors, exploiters and are victims of injustice and prejudice perceive terrorism differently. For them it might be an act of achieving justice and goal.

The social sciences researcher defines a terrorist action as the calculated use of unexpected, shocking, and unlawful violence against noncombatants (including, in addition to civilians, off-duty military and security personnel in peaceful situations) and other symbolic targets perpetrated by a clandestine member(s) of a sub-national group or a clandestine agent(s) for the psychological purpose of publicizing a political or religious cause and/or intimidating or coercing a government(s) or civilian population into accepting demands on behalf of the cause.

Paul Wilkinson (1977) mentions the causes of revolution and political violence in general are also the causes of terrorism. These include ethnic conflicts, religious and ideological differences, poverty, modernization stresses, political inequities, lack of peaceful communication channels, traditions of violence, the existence of a revolutionary group, governmental weakness and ineptness, erosion of confidence in a regime, and deep divisions within governing elites and leadership groups.

Terrorism is an important issue before the contemporary world. It is interpreted differently and there are several approaches for the explanation of Terrorism. According to Husain (2000) terrorism is a relative term perceived and interpreted differently by different groups and persons. Some of them are given below.

Crenshaw (1990), in her view, feels that an individual does not commit terrorism. Rather, she contended that *"Acts of terrorism are committed by groups who reach collective decisions based on commonly held beliefs, although the level of individual commitment to the group and its beliefs varies."*

Crenshaw has not actually substantiated her contention with case studies that show how decisions are supposedly reached collectively in terrorist groups. That kind of inside information, to be sure, would be quite difficult to obtain without a former decision-maker within a terrorist group providing it in the form of a published autobiography or an interview, or even as a paid police informer. Crenshaw may be partly right, but her organizational approach would seem to be more relevant to guerrilla organizations that are organized along traditional Marxist-Leninist lines, with a general secretariat headed by a secretary general, than to terrorist groups per se.

Ted Robert Gurr (1970, 1996), an expert on violent behaviors and movements; and reformulated by J.C. Davies (1973) include a gap between rising expectations and need satisfaction. Another proponent of this hypothesis, **Joseph Margolin (1977)**, argues, "much

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terrorist behavior is a response to the frustration of various political, economic, and personal needs or objectives." Other scholar, however have dismissed the frustration-aggression hypothesis as simplistic, based as it is on the erroneous assumption that aggression is always a consequence of frustration.

Pearlstein (1991) held narcissistic personality responsible for terrorism. Such Terrorist act for collective goals with political motivation, which deliberately sacrificed them in the act, had a narcissistic personality.

Terrorists' Motivation

Wilkinson pointed out that the psychology and beliefs of terrorists have been inadequately explored. Most psychological analyses of terrorists and terrorism, according to Taylor (1988), have attempted to address what motivates terrorists or to describe personal characteristics of terrorists, on the assumption that these can identify terrorists attributes. However, it is important to know the psychology of terrorism and psychological characteristics of terrorists.

Human behavior, more or less is influenced by his needs, motivations, and other desires for achieving a goals, leads to frustration if not attained. However, magnitude of individual's frustration determines his future course of action for attainment of these goals. According to frustration--Aggression paradigm inability to tolerate the effects of frustration becomes the potential cause of violent behavior. Human goals are multifaceted including political motives, regional aspirations, religious superiority; cultural dominance etc. Violence, terrorism, militancy and insurgency are the real expression of non-containment of human aggressive behavior (Husain, 2000, Ghosh, 1994). These are relative terms perceived differently by different people. One may consider an act as 'terrorism' where as other perceived the same act as 'freedom fighting/ struggle for survival/demand for justice and so on. The possible reason which leads to terrorism lies in different psycho-social factors such as frustration in life, suppression by others, deprivation, poverty, lack of equal opportunities, religion, culture, prejudice, discrimination, feelings of insecurity, alienation, ethnic identity etc. In fact these are the real root causes of such behavior (Terrorism).

To reduce the impetus for terrorism and separatism, there have to be real safety and guarantee of life and property for minority groups and deprived sections. They should also have political freedom and economic participation in the national scenes. The safety nets could be to improve inter-ethnic co-existence, protection of the effective rights of minority groups, and promotion of intra-regional and economic cooperation and inter-dependence. The objective is to ensure that the various social groups who live in the territory develop a sense of belongingness to the political system and they in turn agree to have their public lives regulated by the political systems. Indian society is largely attempting to assimilate these groups in the mainstream and is to a great extent successful. This is why people in various regions/states be it Northeast, Punjab or Kashmir do not support terrorism. However, the disgruntled and misguided elements resort to different form of Terrorism and/or insurgency.

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The problem of terrorism, which is a major issue before the world in general and nation must in particular be dealt with rationally and all proper care should be taken because kick-in-back approach can never resolves the problems rather it may pose danger to the nation's integration. In fact unrealistic and harsh military action in dealing with insurgency may lead to alienation, weak identity and strong feelings of prejudice. As a matter of fact such actions cause frustration and humiliating feelings, which in turn lead to violent reactions such as terrorism in the states of Northeast.

Ethnicity

The problem of ethnic strife and uprising is a global issue of the contemporary World, which needs serious attention. As a matter of fact, the real root causes of casteism; regionalism and ethnic uprising are needed to be dealt with effectively. The social psychologists have the opinion that ethnicity and ethnic identity, prejudice, ethnocentrism, social tension, terrorism, and communalism as obstacles in the way of development of national integration. To the social processes of ethnic uprising have posed varied challenges to different states in the variety of ways. Ethnicity in true sense is a social problem, a social product primarily used in a broader context with cultural, racial, regional and social pattern leading to social consciousness or ethnic identity. Both ethnicity and ethnic identity are synonyms in literature. Ethnic identity begins to emerge very early in childhood and is crystallized by early adolescence in every culture and society (Singh, A.K., 1992, Husain, 1996).

Ethnicity is a sense of ethnic identity, which has been derived from latine word 'Ethnikos' consisting of the subjective, symbolic use by a group of people in order to differentiate themselves from other groups. In order words, ethnic group is any social category of people who have a common culture that sets them apart from others in society. Ethnicity gives birth to ethnic identity based on religion, culture, race, caste, etc. Ethnic groups are inherently ethnocentric regarding their own cultural traits as natural, correct and superior to those of other ethnic groups who are perceived as odd, amusing inferior and immoral. Once the ethnic groups who are perceived, the ethnic groups begin to compete against each other. Hence, the most important variable is the differential power of one group in comparison to other. These basic differences appear in terms of perception of people belonging to different regions, cultures, linguistic groups and castes.

Closely related to the structural dimensions of identity formation, compression and persistence of the ethnic group is the ethnicity. Providing the group a quality and a character, ethnicity is the summation of its impulse and motivation for power and recognition. It is determined by a complex interaction of social force. Thus, ethnicity may be viewed as a device as much as a focus for group mobilization by its leadership through the select use of ethnic symbol for socio- cultural and political economic purposes. In the process, it has been the deriving force in the emergence of ethnic movements.

Harding et. al. (1968) define an ethnic group as a collection of people considered both by themselves and by other people to have in common one or more of the characteristic as

religion, racial origin, national origin, language and cultural tradition. Thus, ethnic group is any social category of people who have a common culture that sets them apart from others in society. As a matter of fact, it is a human group bound together by ties of cultural homogeneity, (Berry and Trischler, 1948).

Identity

Identity development is a natural process. Every individual has a tendency to possess or be possessed (Husain, 1997). This tendency provides him not only some sort of satisfaction but also a sense of belongingness and feeling of being important. These feelings of being a part of some organization or faith are his identity. By identifying with someone, an individual feels part of a larger group of which he is a component. Thus, collective or individual success or failure, important or unimportant, achievement or non-achievement, are considered as that of his own (Husain, 1992).

The term identity originates from a clinical context where a patient was described as having an identity disturbance also called identity crisis. This gave realization to the fact that it was because of a break in his sense of affiliation with some groups, organizations, institutions etc. and identification with another group is his identity. Erikson (1959), the pioneer in the field of identity, gave large understandings of various dimensions of identity through his clinical and theoretical contributions as well as through biological illustrations. In his view, identity carries many meanings including sense of sameness and continuity with time and space. However, collective sense of identity characterizes individuals' social groups such as religion, caste, culture and ethnicity. Tajfel (1972) introduced the concept of social identity and defined it as the 'individual knowledge' that he belongs to certain groups together with some emotional values and significance to him or his group.

Any threat or challenge to identity brings changes in the individual's identification or changes in identity. Social psychological factors such as security of life and property, challenges, threat, ego, become one of the causes of strong or weak identity (Husain, 1997). Deprivation, socio-economic status and caste system too are the dimensions of one's identity development.

Identity formation passes through the processes of socialization, interaction and meeting day-to-day challenges in life. Phinney and Rosenthal (1992) observed that the establishment of ethnic identity progresses through a sequence of stages parallel to those proposed by Marcia for general identity development. One of the most important aspects of an individual's identity is his ethnic identity formed due to his group, environment, culture and race. Besides ethnic identity, he also develops sub-identities because of his various commitments, relationships, affiliations etc. Among these are cultural, linguistic, religious and national identities. Today the World is witnessing the greatest ever challenges of ethnic uprising, disorganization/reorganization, economic disparity and political dominance, leadership crises (in some countries only), religious and regional polarization, social and communal tension and so on. The Indian scenario is not different from the rest of the World. All the factors alone greatly mentioned influence ethnic identity. Among all these religio-cultural and ethnic

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factors concern us much. Socio-cultural conditions, ethnicity, deprivation, caste, religion, etc. influence identity development. A number of studies showed that deprivation, unemployment, racial discrimination, ethnicity, minority status, and so on show altogether different impact on identity development. Ethnic minorities who form sub-segment in the society have low self-esteem and find themselves in a complex situation (Taifel, 1978, and Morris, 1968).

CONCLUSION

There are many reasons behind the problem of insurgency/ terrorism. Some of which is lack of political will and determination to make the people of this region to have feelings of oneness and sense of belongingness to the country. Due to not having any industrial growth, the States have lack of employment opportunity, lack of proper facilities, planning etc.

The other reason is the geographical isolation/location of the states of Northeast from rest of the country. Due to this, there is lack of communication, poor transportation, no opportunity for sending agriculture and other produces outside the state etc. All these adversely affect the economic development.

Due to these reasons the entire northeastern people felt isolated, negligence, economic disparity, feel deprived of opportunities, and perceive denial of right and racial discrimination. And at the same time they feel alienated from the rest of the other states of India. The main reason behind is that these States had been neglected or never been under the control of Government. For example, conflict between two groups i.e. Kuki and Naga in Manipur, the Government has never taken a serious step. They should look into this matter why and for what purpose the bloodshed is of one another. If the Government do not look into the matter seriously then this would a be never ending conflict. This situation is enough for any group or community to strive for a separate and distinct identity.

In fact unrealistic and harsh military action in northeastern region, which lead to alienation, weak identity and strong feelings of prejudice. In fact such actions cause frustration and humiliating, which in turn lead to violence reactions such as terrorism and insurgency in the states of Northeast.

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