

Exploring Sustainable Peace in Meghalaya

*Ajay Kumar Yadav**

Abstract

This paper emphasizes on issues relating to ethnic disaffection and cultures of governance employed in conflict resolution in Meghalaya. The local political culture offers a range of norms for dialogue and negotiation towards building peace in the region applied especially during rehabilitation process of the surrendered insurgents, their success in procuring a workable and positive peace has been rather inadequate. As a result, minority groups in the state of Meghalaya continue to nurture security anxieties in their own hometowns amidst sporadic episodes of insurgency. The research team observed a strong local need to move away from short term pacification efforts, achieved through monetary compensations, in favour of a comprehensive approach towards rehabilitation schemes and the implementation of development schemes applied as part of the peacebuilding strategy.

Key Words: Sustainable peace, governance, political culture, insurgency, violence

Introduction: Governance in Meghalaya

Meghalaya (meaning "Abode of Clouds") is one of the smallest states within the union of India, which gained statehood in the aftermath of a series of political assertions by the tribal inhabitants of the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo hills. Following India's independence, some sections of the tribal populations in Meghalaya protested against their inclusion in Greater Assam (a neighbouring state) and considered the accession instrument to be an act of force (Karlsson, 2011). This, in turn, paved the way for a wave of ethnic mobilization that resulted quite often in fierce power struggles instead of integration (Baruah, 2004). Politics became an instrument of assertion for the newly educated tribal elites that used an ethnicity-oriented discourse to assert their demand for autonomy and to resist the sway of hegemonic administration by Assam's non-tribal elite. This was followed by an intense agitation campaign against the Union Government motivated to limit the power of "other" Assamese ethnic elite.

* Dr Ajay Kumar Yadav is Assistant Professor at the Malaviya Centre for Peace Research, Banaras Hindu University. He could be contacted at ajayrajtn@gmail.com

The Eastern Indian Tribal Union formed in 1955, renamed as the All-Party Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC), routed the Congress party in the 1967 elections clearing the way for a new province. The Centre, fearing the onset of insurgency on the Naga and Mizo pattern, subsequently conceded to the creation of a new province (Chaube, 1973). Amidst this tug-of-war, came the North-East Reorganization Act calling for the creation of the Meghalaya State in December 1971. Many locals (Khasi, Garo and Jaintia) saw this as a "Christmas gift", hoping to take on higher positions, previously occupied by the non-tribal (especially Bengali and Assamese) in the government. The Sixth schedule of the Constitution, that provides a range of schemes while legally constraining the influence of the central government over the affairs of the Hill States of the northeast, is perhaps the most noteworthy governance feature in Meghalaya. These provisions largely draw on the age-old rationale of frontier administration predicated on the syndrome of nationalization-securitization and the development modernization continuum that traditionally served as the key for the prevention and resolution of conflicts in the northeast.² These interrelated elements embedded in the colonial history of the region have provided a context to state policies and conditioned the way state agencies relate to each other and with stakeholders operating on different governance levels.

The British colonial legacy in Khasi, Garo and Jaintia Hills endowed this region with a range of socio-economic and political features distinguishing it *vis-a-vis* other northeastern states. The vast natural resources in this hilly region encouraged the British to set up their administrative capital in Shillong- then a part of East Bengal. In order to consolidate their institutional sway over the local inhabitants and the migrant population, the British supplemented the traditional governance system in this backward region with the trappings of a modern bureaucratic colonial state. This system of governance continued even after the formation of the state of Meghalaya. One of the

²Sixth Schedule, a policy of the Colonial British, was an effort to create a protective layer for 'aborigines', practicing their customary traditions. This slowly transformed into the protection of ethnic identity of the modern state of Meghalaya. This transformation is reflected in the Constitution of India where provision for the ethnic population has been accorded through Sixth Schedule. The sixth schedule functions through ADCs who are in charge of protecting and empowering these ethnically vulnerable races.

striking features of Meghalaya, the multi layered governance system, can be termed as a blend of modern democratic structure and traditional structure. This unique feature consists of the three-layered governing bodies -the State along with the Central government, the Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) and, the traditional institutions. Among these, the traditional institutions existed long before the advent of the British. However, it was the British who modified and codified the traditional institutions and brought in Christianity and education in the hills. On the other hand, Autonomous District Council or the ADCs under the jurisdiction of the sixth schedule came into being in the year 1952. The ADCs were formed as a response to the demand of the tribal people for autonomy that would preserve the very essence of tribal identity (Gassah, 1998)). Since its inception, ADCs were vested with immense powers that entitled them to 'make laws in respect of allotment, occupation and use of land, management of unreserved forests, the use of water course of irrigation, the regulation of shifting cultivation, establishment of town and village committee, civil administration in villages, town police, the appointment and succession of Chiefs and Headmen, inheritance of property, social customs and some areas of judicial administration' (Ray, 1998). However, the wide powers entitled to the ADCs somehow undermined the powers of the traditional institutions. With the 1959 Act regarding the appointment and succession of chiefs and headmen, the confrontation between the ADCs and the traditional institutions have aggravated from time to time. In the Khasi Hills, to be more specified in Shillong, the inherent conflict between the Khasi Hill Autonomous District Council (KHADC) and The Traditional Institutions (better known as the Durbars) has prominently reflected in the succession of Syiemship, the highest post in the durbar. The overlapping jurisdiction of powers that allows the KHADC to intervene in the succession of the syiemship has been opposed vehemently by the Durbar who feels subdued under it. Other than this, the lack of financial assistance provided to the traditional institutions has been seen as a contentious issue between the two opposing parties which eventually led to the traditional institutions demanding for financial autonomy from the Central government. Looking critically into the workings of the ADCs in Meghalaya, till date the ADCs have not fulfilled its responsibilities giving space for more lapses. This led to the traditional institutions taking advantage of these

lapses as seen in the issuing of trading licenses to the non-tribals (Baruah, 2004). The traditional institutions are not entitled to issue licenses as it comes under the jurisdiction of the ADCs. According to Prof. A.K. Baruah, the semi democratic status of the Traditional institutions along with the inability of the ADCs in carrying out its responsibilities properly, had led to the overlapping loyalties causing underlying conflict between the two governing systems. The reluctance of the traditional institutions to mold itself to the democratic mindset especially with the kinship bond being the essence of Khasi tribal society has led to a range of differences in governance matters causing a deficit in the governance system.³This overlapping loyalty has further accentuated the lack of coordination between the KHADC and the Durbars especially at the time of conflict.

Along with these two governance layers, the conflict between the State government and the ADC has also been viewed as a contentious issue in the governance system. As said before, the ADCs were created to carve a separate autonomy for the hill states. However, with the emergence of the new state of Meghalaya, the continuation of the ADCs seemed meaningless. Yet the ADCs continued to function as a separate entity. Though basically the state does not have any provision to interfere in the matters of the ADCs, but at time of financial allocation or getting approval for any bill, the ADCs are completely subdued under the authority of the State government. This often led to inherent conflict between the ADCs and the State government especially if both the entities are occupied by different political parties. And therefore, the lack of coordination and sense of mistrust defined the relation between the ADCs and the State government. The lack of cordialness started to emerge especially after the transfer of most of subjects under ADCs (such as the primary school education) to the state government as the anomalies perpetuated by the ADCs were reported (Jyrwa, 1998).

With 70.3% of the population practicing Christianity, Meghalaya is one of three Indian

³ With the kinship bond being stronger in the traditional Khasi society, the simmering conflict between the tribals and the non-tribals had escalated during the ethnic riots as the Durbars supported the atrocities perpetuated against the non-tribals.

states which have a Christian majority. The Christian Church, branded as the second pacification column of the British, had nurtured a significant number of western educated tribal people who filled in the emerging government jobs and consolidated the edifice of state and its political economy. The missionary education created a new elite stakeholder group, especially among Khasis that had distinct aspirations and world views, and in many ways, different, in content and form, from indigenous elites (Nepram, 2006).

The inclusion of disparate and traditionally differentiated tribal groups in the single unified state of Meghalaya posed manifold challenges. In order to adjust diverse local cultures to a uniform system of administration, the new state had to deal with the challenge of historic disparities nurtured by the British Raj. For instance, the Khasis, traditionally having greater privilege over the Garos readily found space and importance in the nascent government circuits and moved rapidly up the socio- economic ladder to establish their presence in the Meghalayan society. During the British era, Shillong (a Khasi inhabited area) was the capital of the North East. Due to the British influence, the Khasis was quick to gain expertise in all fields of governance. Since they had access to education, the Khasis fast learnt the ropes of the politics of governance that helped them occupy British administrative posts. For the Garos, the picture was completely different. Due to poor inaccessibility to the Garo Hills, development in the Garo regions was slow in comparison to the Khasi hills. This discrepancy that led to the Khasis occupying major chunk of power in Meghalayan governance system, leaving the Garos with minimal power and facilities resulted in a strong feeling of relations discrimination among the Garos.

Actors, layers and networks

The current governance system in the state of Meghalaya can be broadly divided into four inter-connected layers, clustered around two major categories (Fig. 1). The official category comprises of the formal Union-State apparatus, and the Autonomous District Councils (one each for the major tribes in the State) that have judicial and legislative powers over the common tribal law and the traditional authorities. The "unofficial" layer

includes the influence and the de-facto power exercised by specific civil society organizations for bridging the gap between the State and the local population, especially in terms of opinion mobilization on security related issues, resources and tax distribution etc. It also includes the grey, yet institutionalized, layer of insurgency politics (to be described later in details).

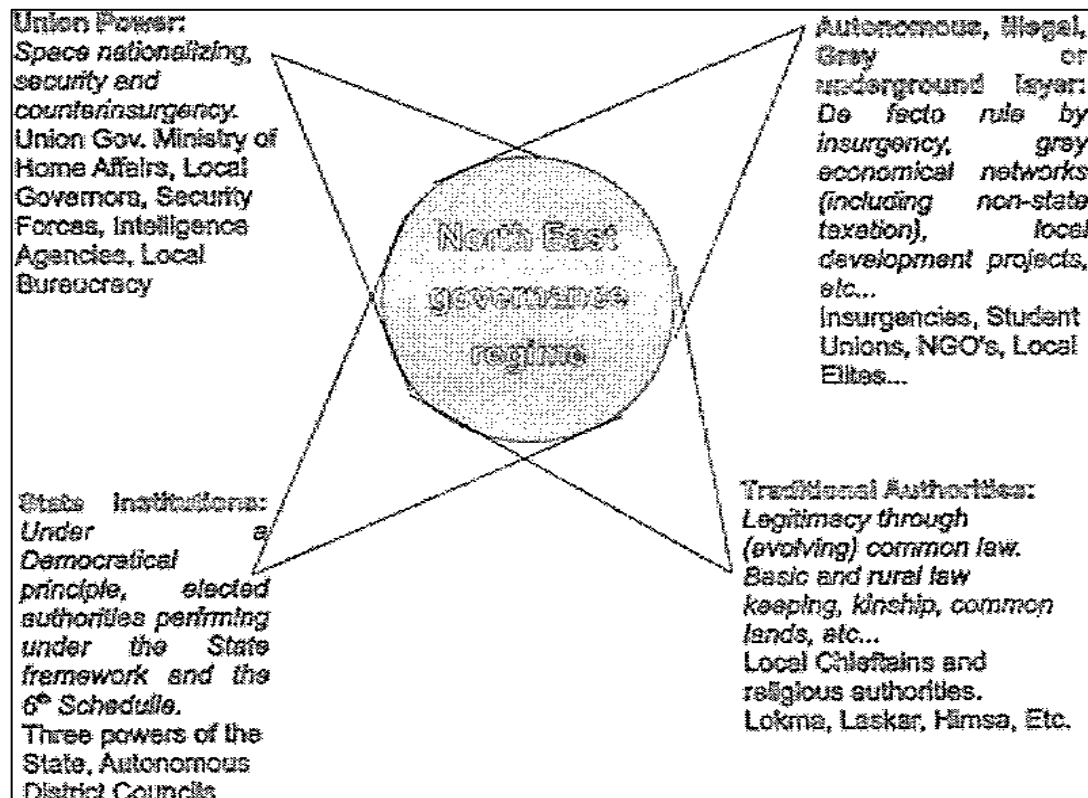


Figure 1: North-East Governance Regime

The above-illustrated complex web of governance having significant overlaps of jurisdiction and power among formal and informal layers are ostensibly a part of the "check and balance" system. However, in practical terms, the practical distribution of power is largely molded by the changing political importance of stakeholders. For instance regarding issues relating to the local rules or the exploitation of natural resources, it is the State agencies, the ADC and the traditional authorities that generally assumed a greater share of responsibility than the Union government.⁴ However, the Union government does enjoy the prerogative of managing and

⁴ There have been cases, however, in which the Union Government has been pushed through the Judiciary to intervene in these areas (i.e. Falling Trees Resolution 1996).

negotiating insurgency issues (through the office of the Governor, "DONER" or Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region, the Home Ministry and its subsidiary agencies). In fact, both the central government and the armed outfits tend to prevent the state government from intervening in peace negotiations that are related to state boundaries or autonomies. However, in the case of counter-insurgency, state government agencies are the first port of call for tactical operations.

The ADC serves as the key actor in inter-se conflicts between tribal and non-tribal groups and provides the much-needed civic space in Meghalaya. Legislations, drafted by the ADCs, have shaped the current distribution scheme and thus limiting the access of non-tribal actors into both political and social spheres.⁵ The drafting of legislations to reform and 'modernize' tribal laws leading to the progressive reduction of decision making powers among ground-level traditional authorities (for e.g. "Nokmas" among Garo communities) and in the "definition of a new criteria for ethnic membership in the 21st century" are instructive instances in this regard. However, some groups believe that the re-allocation of central government funds to the Meghalaya State Government, in the BO's, restricted the scope of the ADC influence.⁶

Maintaining traditional peacebuilding roles within current socio-economic contexts pose a challenge for the traditional authorities whose sphere of influence on the local population is directly determined by the extent of state presence in areas under its jurisdiction. In a remote location, less mediated by the State agencies, for instance, the political space controlled by "Nokma" could be rather large despite its meager resources. In addition, the overlapping powers between formal and informal layers and the ensuing legal loopholes in government decision-making procedures, further adds to the scope for local actors to find more apace and important roles in local affairs (Kumar, 2004). Traditional authorities also continue to maintain their spheres of influence on the local population since specific local "procedures" (government and nongovernment) require prior approvals from traditional authorities (for instance, citizen registration documents required by ADCs).

⁵ See Meghalaya Transfer Act of 1972 and the Meghalaya Benami Transaction Prohibition Bill

⁶ Confidential Source. Office of the Presidency of the Garo Student Union. Tura. Meghalaya.

It is important to note that the traditional institution of Gares, known as "*Laska*," or the "Judge", elected by a group of villages, is directly involved in peace and justice issues in the state. Earlier, the Laskar was the first contact point in tribal quest for peace and justice at the community level, especially regarding offenses that did not fall under the Indian Penal Code. The recent justice and law enforcement reforms undertaken by the state have undermined this traditional institution which provided the layer of third circuit judges.

Civil society in Meghalaya, organized traditionally along the lines of ethnicity and religion also serves informally to facilitate governance and conflict resolution issues. Many such organizations were encouraged by the British to serve as sites of informal discussions and mediation among contending groups. Various Student's Unions and Church Forums (United Churches Peace Forum, Shillong Khasi Jaintia Church Leaders' Forum, Meghalaya Baptist Convention) offered platforms for this purpose. The civil society involvement provided extensive networks and communication channels across several layers of governance, often engaging high profile politicians, local businessman and individuals in-hiding. For instance, the Christian church played an important role in promoting negotiated settlements of the state-insurgency dispute and the Student's Unions were instrumental in diffusing tensions in the Garo-Rabha clashes in 2010.⁷ Also, Women organizations like the Mother's Union worked towards ensuring peace in the Garo Hills. Along with the Garo Baptist Church, the Mother's Union played a crucial role in bringing peace in the hills at the time of crisis in the Garo Hills in the year 2003.

Besides the groups based on ethnic or religious beliefs, new civil society initiatives and actors have lately emerged around such concerns such as human rights, gender equality and inter-ethnic justice. These new actors have questioned the "traditional" expressions of political agitations and lobbying imposed by Student's Unions and mass-oriented politics (Srikanth, 2005). However, they are facing massive resistance from tribal hardliners who refuse to take

⁷ Speculation exists concerning the operative nexus between the influential Student's Unions and the armed groups. For example, it is believed that the Garo Students Union was not only involved in "tax" issues of GNLA but that one of its functionaries was GNLA's secretary. See See "*NGO-Politico- Ultras Nexus comes to fore*" article in the Shillong Times, January 5, 2012; see also <http://theshillongtimes.com/2012/01/05/ngo-politico-ultras-nexus-comes-to-fore/> and v

public debate away from ethnic-oriented discourses. The hard liners question civil society's right to exist on grounds that a non-tribal has no right to political agitations in tribal dominated spaces (Baruah, 2007).

Embedded conflict scenarios

While the colonial legacy seems to provide a background of the way borders were drawn and conflicts generated in Indian northeast, many conflict scenarios are due to the political predicates and processes of 'post-colonial' governance imperatives. For instance, the northeast has largely been construed through the matrix of India's strategic interests, which regarded the region as buffer zones often ignoring the regional imperatives of its inhabitants.

The British used the notion of 'North-Eastern Frontier' as they conquered the region, on the Burmese border, towards at the end of the nineteenth century. These regions, regarded as backward and even primitive with respect to the rich local oral traditions, were administered as a territorial appendage rather than integral administrative units (Nepram, 2006). Major socio-political changes were introduced amongst the tribal population under the banner of modernization and development, overlooking the ethnic and culturally complex identities. The quest of quick development attracted huge influx of migrant labourers, thus disturbing the demographic and ethnic balance of tribal areas. Since the concept of private property was relatively unknown, the land speculation caused by migration started impacting the local economic dynamics (Baruah, 2006), causing a shift from simple productive activities towards more lucrative activities, like tea, extractive industries such as oil, mining and forest exploitation.

In order to ease the local fears of being reduced to a minority in their own territory, the Union government established a set of restrictions against uncontrolled (unofficial) immigration. However, the "Inner-line" system, along with India's partition in 1947, and the definition of a legal border for the region, further contributed to political anxieties in the northeast. A range of conflict provoking structural conditions came to the forefront; such as dependency on external aid, the extractive economy, competition among inter-ethnic elite, resource allocation,

lack of local identification with the national development vision, non-tribal targeted ethnocentric politics, exclusionary political discourse, uneven and deficitarian democracy and armed struggle.

Conflict map of Meghalaya

Given the above context and developments over the past years, it is not surprising that the episodes of violence are multi-faceted. A cross-factual analysis of insurgency in the State reveals that insurgency dynamics are closely related to the extractive industry and the ethno-demographic tension in the State (See. Fig. 2).

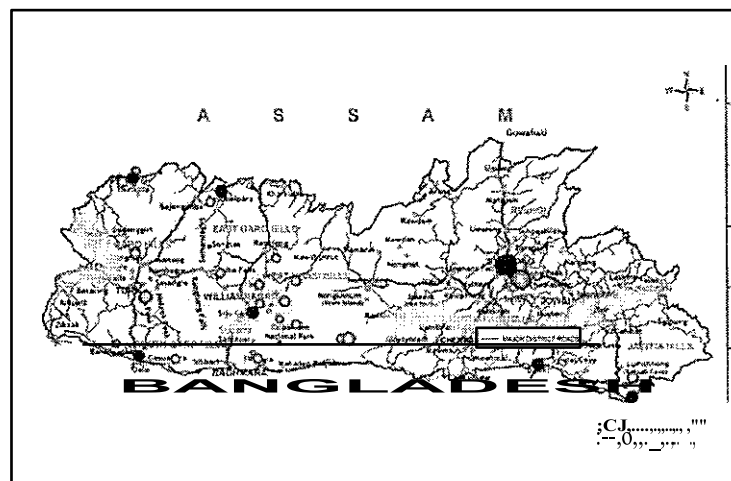


Figure 2: Map elaborated by Luis Perez Torner. For reference only. Some locations might change

The Meghalaya state is rich in minerals, like coal and uranium. These minerals comprise the primary export product of the state. Due to the lack of regulatory framework for the extractive industry, illegal mining is rampant, making it more vulnerable to extortion than other industries or even the service economy (Baruah, 2006). In the service sector and the tourism industry, profit margins are reduced due to instances of violence which in turn pushes entrepreneurs to re-locate economic activities to more peaceful environments. Instead, the mining industry becomes an easy target for extortion/ unofficial taxation since it is located in remote areas and cannot be re-located, regardless of socio-political developments. The impact of these extractive

activities, like coal and limestone (*in "green" in the above map*) and uranium (*in "yellow" in the map above*) leads to (i) degradation of the environment and displacement of the population (accompanied with social unrest); and (ii) concentration of capital in a few hands with parallel exploitation of manual labour which is easily framed by an anti-neocolonialist discourse to protect the local legacy. Interpretation regarding the second marked line (*in "Blue" in the map*), is the grievances that are perceived as unattended and the sense of insecurity regarding ethnic groups in conflict. Natural resource being a private property had been kept out of the purview of the state authority. And due to this, the two competing ethnics consider the allocation of rights and resources as a zero-sum game in which the loss of one is the gain of the other. The modality in which the state allocates rights and resources often undermines their confidence in the State and justifies their security organizations. This in turn gets "mirrored" in the armed confrontation scenarios from the other side. For example, the ethnic armed groups of both the Khasi (HLNC) and Garo (ANVC and GLNA) are involved in seeking authorization over the resource area especially in case of coal mining belt in the Garo and Jaintia hills. This territorial occupation of these armed groups acts as an easy means for carrying out extortion activities. (*in "red" and "yellow" respectively, in the map*).

Ethnic Tensions

The tendency of glorification of one's own ethnic culture often described as ethnocentrism could be discerned in Meghalaya since very onset of the British Raj. However, its fierceness was first noticed in 1979 when a solitary incident of beheading of the idol Goddess Kali in Shillong allegedly by a Khasi unleashed a massive riot against the Bengali community in Meghalaya leading eventually to the demand of ethnic cleansing in Khasi hills. The incident was fueled by the "Durbars" like Laitmukhra, whose orders prompted the tribal population to resort to violence. The Khasi hills soon became the epicenter of jingoism which resulted in two people getting killed and, as the newspapers called it, a "trail of human woes" (*The Shillong Times*, 1979). While the army was brought in to restore law and order, the seeds of ethnic hatred had been sown among the Khasis.

Ethnic cleansing took a more aggressive form during the 1987 and 1992 -1993 riots when

Nepali and Marwari and Bihari communities were targeted. It is interesting to note that despite the Khasi Student's Union (KSU), along with Federation of Khasi Jaintia and Garo People, being instrumental in the displacements of non-tribal people from their homes, a section of the Khasi people, who were against such violence, condemned these activities. However, the clan-based nature of the community hampered individual Khasis from helping non-tribals. In fact, a large section of the non-tribal population had to flee from Meghalaya, abandoning their lands that later got occupied by the Khasi rioters.

The Khasi dominated hills were not the only regions in the State that came under the wrath of ethnic riots. In 1987, a major riot took place in the Garo Hills wherein non-tribals (Hindus and Muslims) were targeted. This violence, believed to be triggered by a Muslim boy's comments on a Garo girl, resulted in the death of 50 persons. Though the conflict was resolved through the mediation of religious leaders, both tribal and non-tribal, non-tribals continue to have a sense of insecurity and fear.⁸ The non-tribals of the Garo Hills, likewise in the Khasi Hills, are similarly deprived of basic rights (of buying land, doing business, protesting, etc.) and facilities and often have to obey conditions laid down by the Garo mafia before they start any activity in the area.

Alongside the dominant tribal-non-tribal conflict, the discourse on Garo-Khasi conflict has also been a cause of concern. Even though the conflict has remained mostly dormant, it has often shown the potential to escalate into a violent confrontation. The general impression is that while the Khasi people have been more assertive, the Gares have suffered as underdogs and that more resources have poured into the Khasi Hills, while the justifiable development demands of Garo Hills have been overlooked. With political and administrative powers concentrated in the hands of the Khasis, Gares complain of an increasing sense of alienation that they frequently express through their demands for a separate *Garoland* (Sangma, 2008). Despite higher job reservation quotas for Gares, a sense of deprivation prevails in the popular image of the community.

⁸ Uday Narayan Mali, Poojari of the Hindu community in Tura, interviewed at the Durga Temple, Tura, 7 February 2012.

The ethnic disaffection between the Khasis and the Gares has spilled *over* in sporadic outburst of violent conflicts. In 2003, the Khasis 'stretched their assertiveness to kill three Garo students in Shillong.⁹ In 2005, the Khasi Students Union demand of reorganization of the Meghalaya Board of School Education was vehemently opposed by the Khasi leadership, leading to the escalation of the usually subdued Khasi- Garo conflict. Various Garo organizations alleged this to be another instance of Khasi hegemony. The Garo Students Union, along with other organizations, launched a protest movement against the "bifurcation" (Karlsson, 2011) of the Meghalaya Board of School Education. During one such protest in Tura and Williamnagar on 30 September, 2005, the police and paramilitary forces opened fire against students, killing four students (including two minors) and injuring hundreds. This event, popularly known as "Bloody Friday", cast doubts on the neutrality of state machineries and believed that that they favoured the Khasis. As a result, the demand for separate Garoland increased in intensity and became the main concern of the Garo Students Union.

In addition, discourses against the *Dkhars* or outsiders still persist in Meghalaya. Although sporadic incidents are rare, the non-tribals are insecure and are in constant fear of being ousted from their homes. The non-tribals claim that since the riots (that happened during 1979, 1987, 1992-93) the demographic equation of the state has changed and that their population decreases each year by 2%.¹⁰ The non-tribals lack adequate access to basic rights in the Khasi hills, be it education, jobs or engagement in local political processes. Besides the legal constraints, drafted by ADCs to secure the dominance of local tribal groups, non-reserved job posts are also intercepted through unofficial means, even in high profile government agencies.¹¹ Moreover, the riots of 1979 set a precedence of restrictions on the right to publicly express one's religion, like confining non-tribal processions (Hindu, Muslim) to only specific areas of Shillong, while Christians are permitted take out walking processions.

Immigration of the Bangladeshi nationals, working as laborers in agriculture or the mining

⁹ Interview with Apurba K Baruah, 1February 2012

¹⁰ Manas Choudhuri, Founder/ Chief Editor of *The Shillong Times*. Interview held in Shillong on_ 7 February 2012

¹¹ During his tenure as Education Minister, Manas Choudhuri had appointed three non-tribals as teachers in the colleges in Shillong. Certain sections of Khasi people along with KSU launched a protest against these recruitments. This protest movement forced the government to stop the induction of the non-tribals for the referred posts.

industry, adds on to the existing difficulties that non-tribal face. The KSU keeps a vigilance especially on the Bangladeshi people¹² and has presented to the government the three main ways to address the immigration issue:

i. Three -tier ID: In this system, the denizens (non tribals of Meghalaya) are to be accorded with citizenship by keeping 1971 as the bench mark for their settlement in Meghalaya. This system said to be asserted into three categories. They are: Permanent (who had lived in Meghalaya from a long time), Semi-Permanent (who came to Meghalaya during 1971) and Temporary (basically daily wagers who are recruited on contractual basis). This system is on the verge of implementation.

ii. Inner line permit: This system entitles Indian citizens to travel to prohibited areas of the north east of India for a certain valid period. At present, this system is applicable only in Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, and Manipur. With the growing concern over the rising influx of illegal migrants, KSU has demanded for its implementation in Meghalaya too. However, the government is yet to take decision on its implementation.

iii. Work Permit: In this system, as per the Interstate Migrant Workmen Act 1979,¹³ migrant employees working on contractual basis in Meghalaya are required to produce a valid document stating their duration period in the state. Though KSU has been vocal in its implementation, the government has shown less concern over it. While the Government is reviewing and better articulating the "Three-tier ID" and the "Inner line permit" systems, they are on the verge of implementing the "Work Permit" system. This phenomenon of illegal immigration also influences the tribal imaginaries and their expectations on representative democracy, so the issuing of voter ID's is still a contentious issue in Meghalaya.

¹² Hamlet Dohling, Public relations secretary of the Khasi Student Union. Interview held in Shillong on 6 February 2012.

¹³ "KSU: Show Work Permits or Leave Megha/aya", <http://www.northeasttoday.in/our-states/meghalaya/ksu-show-work-permits-or-leave-megha/ayal>, April OB, 2012.

Insurgency Layers

Although Meghalaya is considered peaceful than its neighbours, it has a history of conflicts, homegrown insurgencies and processes of peace enforcing and/or peacebuilding. Some of these ongoing conflicts and corresponding efforts of conflict resolution and dialogues, especially concerning the *A'tchik Liberation Matgrik Army* (ALMA), and its successor the *A'tchik National Volunteers Council* (ANVC), may help us in evaluating various aspects of peace in a state that claims its establishment through "non-violent means".

The porous frontiers of Meghalaya with Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal always had the potential for encouraging anti-immigration tirades. These dynamics finally spilled over the state borders and led to a multi-ethnic Hynniewtrep Achik Liberation Council (HALC) being floated in the late 1980's. Inter-tribal antagonisms between Garos and Khasi-Jaintias eventually led to a division of the HALC outfit into two factions: The (Khasi-Jaintia) Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC) and the (Garo) A'tchik Liberation Matgrik Army (ALMA) in 1992. The anti-immigration agenda of HNLC soon acquired violent language, with the Khasi Student's Union being the most influential non-government body in the Khasi Hill Districts to spearhead the movement. This outfit remains dormant and the government has not reached any formal peace arrangement with them. On the other hand, the ALMA remained active from 1994 to 2004 and conducted low-intensity guerrilla warfare in the surroundings of three Garo Districts. The recent emergence of a new militant outfit, the *Garo National Liberation Army* (GNLA), its banning by the Union Government under the *Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act* on 1 February 2012, and the subsequent debate on modalities for dealing with this group, have provided an interesting background for analysis of the dominant discourse, expectations and (meta) narratives of ALMA and HNLC.

The ALMA processes

The ALMA or A'chik Liberation Matgrik Army carried out an abducting/extortion campaign, without prior political agitation, against the Union Government. The campaign was specifically, but not solely, directed against the Coal India Company, which was then

promoting massive -scale exploitation of the state's mineral resources. It also targeted small entrepreneurs, demanding a "Tax for the Sons of the Soil". They also entered into a flexible networking collaboration with stronger regional outfits such as the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-IM (NSCN) for training and weapon support in exchange for a maximum of 70% share of profits from robbing banks and ransom demands.¹⁴ Although relatively small, the ALMA insurgency managed to ward off attempts to industrialize mineral extraction in the Garo Hills. Investors, vital for the region's development, fled and the potential for employment reduced. This hampered the direct economic interests of the local Garo population which expressed its concerns and brought across its voices through the Christian church. This led to the formation of a Peace Committee comprising four members of the Garo Baptist Church (GBCH), including L.D. Shira, a prominent humanist working for the preservation of the Garo language and culture. It also helped in including ALMA in the tripartite talks with the Union and State Governments.¹⁵ The GBCH strategy was two-fold. On one hand, it mobilized public opinion against the insurgency by organizing Peace Rallies in Tura and other locations in the Garo Hills; on the other, as negotiations drew close, they contacted their underground leadership by letters delivered through multiple couriers and by holding secret talks in the jungle.¹⁶ It is important to mention that the Union government acknowledged and approved of this method. Simultaneously, the State government, acting through the Director General of Police (DGP) ventured into the intelligence and counter- insurgency activities in order to reduce the operative space of the insurgent group. In 1993, it started allocating INR 10,000 among villagers for securing the "villagers' cooperation".¹⁷

Financial motivation was also used to facilitate the implementation of the two-stage pacification agreement. Firstly, ALMA leaders would get INR 30,000 as advance compensation before they officially surrendered to the State Police (presenting themselves in

¹⁴ Skylance G. Momin. Superintendent of Police, Tura, 1999 -2005, Interview at the Garo Autonomous Council Office, Tura, West Garo Hills, 9 February 2012.

¹⁵ Confidential Source. Interview at the Office of the Presidency of the Garo Baptist Convention, Tura, West Garo Hills, 8 February 2012

¹⁶ Confidential Source. Office of the Presidency of the Garo Baptist Convention, Tura, West Garo Hills, 8 February 2012

¹⁷ Skylance G. Momin. *Op. Cit.*

military uniform and with weapons). On surrender, each insurgent would get INR 75,000 plus other cash money for each weapon surrendered.¹⁸ The ALMA officially surrendered in October 25, 1994. The last part of the Peace Accord included in an armistice wherein the State of Meghalaya would remove the charges levied against them. This was not implemented completely since the leader of the outfit, Jerome Momin, was accused of criminal charges related to networking activities undertaken in Assam. This has been considered the main reason for the failure of the peace-process in becoming a long or at least mid-term peace strategy.¹⁹ Momin swore that he would float a new insurgency outfit on breaking out of prison. In December 1995, four months after his interesting escape from the Shillong District Jail, Momin floated the A'tchik National Volunteers Council (ANVC) with the help of the NSCN - IM.

ANVC Peace Process

Jerome Momin's history surrounded his figure and the outfit with an aura of myth and glamour. Yet, it took almost four years of killings, abductions, and extortion campaigns for the outfit to articulate a clear political manifesto. It wasn't until 5 May 1999 that the ANVC submitted its demands to Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, then the Prime Minister of India.

The core demand of the Council was the creation of a State, specifically for the Garos, through an amendment of the North-East Areas (Reorganization) Act of 1971. Another demand was the recognition of the Garos living in various parts of Assam as a Scheduled Tribe. This would alter their status and entitle them to benefits extended to other scheduled tribes. In order to justify their demand for inclusion, into the Garo Hills, of Goalpara and Kamrup areas in Assam which have a predominant Garo population, the ANVC referred to the linguistic and identity criteria (Marak, 2005:100); a criterion that the Indian Government recognized in the State (Reorganization) Commission Report (1955) as a valid reason for reorganization of States and re-adjustment of boundaries. The memorandum added that it would have been possible to preserve ethnic identity only through the establishment of a separate state for each tribe.

¹⁸ *ibid*

¹⁹ Confidential Source. Office of the Presidency of the Garo Baptist Convention, Tura, West Garo Hills, 8 February 2012

This set of demands is said to have set into motion, official mechanisms aimed at declaring the ANVC as "unlawful". In November 2000, both the Garo insurgent group and the HNLC urban guerrilla were banned by the Union Government under the provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act of 1967. This ban came into force after ANVC had clearly stated its demand for separate Garoland. Before then, ANVC was working as an armed outfit, involved in abductions and extortions. These extortions were collected daily from the business community in the name of 'Fund Collection'. ANVC was also involved in the circulation of fake currency. Security and geopolitical concerns also pushed the Union Government to broaden the legal scope that could be used against these outfits.

Although both academics and security officials acknowledge that not more than three hundred cadres were operating under the flag of the A'tchik National Volunteers Council, the importance of containing the armed group comes from a bigger security and geo-political dictum that worked against the net-working dynamics in the region. It is believed that the initial growth of ANVC was due to the assistance it received from NSCN-IM and a slow subsequent shift of alliances towards the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), and the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA). The alliance shift was primarily due to ANVC's territorial dominance *over* the Assam-Bangladesh corridor that stretches through the South and East Garo Hills and the West Khasi Hills that permitted it to have a better bargaining power in procuring weapons, training and funds.

Some characteristic features of the ANVC peace negotiation process differed from the ALMA peace process, for e.g. ANVC's appeal among the local population was much stronger and the outfit leadership was also reluctant to hold talks with a government considered to be untrustworthy. The peace effort too had a broader scope for stakeholders. The GBCH was compelled by the State government (Hussain, n.d.) to act as a key interlocutor for bringing the rebels to hold talks with the central government. However, in this process efforts were directed towards soldiers rather than the leadership.²⁰ Another important motivation towards the

²⁰ Confidential Source. Office of the Garo Baptist Convention Presidency. Tura. West Garo Hills. 8 February 2011.

agreement came from a once- rebel turned mainstream politician, Mr. Zoramthanga, the Mizoram Chief Minister, who offered his support for exploratory talks with ANVC in Bangkok in April 2003.

A second element of this peace process was the deliberate effort of the negotiating parties to address the cross-boundary networks and dynamics of the Garo insurgency and the widening of the territorial scope related to it. Four elements support the above effort: i) ANVC incorporated, in their list of demands, the inclusion of Garo dominated communities of Goalpara and Kamrup, located in neighbouring Assam and the Nongkhlaw region, into the Khasi Hills; ii) for the first time, the Union Government agreed to hold talks, either within the Indian national borders or abroad, as well as provide support for related logistics (the first round of talks with Zoramthanga and the Indian Intelligence Bureau Chief, K.P. Singh, was held in Bangkok, Thailand); iii) the influence of the GBCH on the Bangladeshi Garo community represented a major asset during the negotiation since many insurgents wanted to take advantage of a more peaceful environment on the other side of the border. This influence finally proved fruitful in facilitating GBCH contact with insurgents in a private house in Bangladesh²¹; iv) the negotiation approach of the Union Government was coordinated by the Bangladesh military and police against these outfits operating in their country and profiting from the tactical predominance generated by outfit network disruption. This disruption was caused by the "Operation All Clear" of Bhutanese army flushing out the outfits operating in its territory on December 2003.

Provisions of the Peace Accord with ANVC

- The ceasefire deal is for a period of six months, renewable thereafter;
- Both the ANVC and the security would stop operations against each other;
- ANVC to stop violence and unlawful activities like extortion, killing, abduction and intimidation and not to carry weapons in public;
- The ANVC cadres would be housed in two designated camps along with their

²¹ ibid

arms and the security forces would regulate their movement. They would have to move outside their camps accompanied by police guards, at least one of which would be from the Meghalaya Police. The settlements would be placed in Samanda, East Garo Hills; and in Chokpot, West Khasi Hills. Later, a new location was provided in the Allotgre Hostel near Tura, West Garo Hills. *(This point throws light on a fundamental element of the peace-building strategy deemed hereafter as "Rehabilitation Schemes")*

- A joint monitoring group headed by Joint Secretary (North East) in MHA has been established to oversee the implementation of the ceasefire deal.
- The group would have representatives from the Meghalaya Government, the ANVC and different federal security agencies.
- A ceasefire-monitoring cell has been set up at the Coal India Complex at Araimile in Tura, headquarters of the West Garo Hills district.

Rehabilitation schemes

Ever since the Government of India started applying negotiation and peace accords as a peace-building mechanism to halt the insurgency dynamics in the India's North East (INE), different rehabilitation schemes have been adopted - and adapted - to bring rebel cadres back into the 'mainstream society' and to incorporate some insurgency sections into the democratic electoral political process (Baruah, 2006: 100). Various rehabilitation camps have been established under the administration of the Union government through the Ministry of Home Affairs; the State government through the State Police; and the Army through one of its regional divisions.²² This created a heterogeneous regime of practices anchored in the economic field of government schemes for the surrendered cadres and their leadership. However, effectiveness of these schemes is still debated.

The rehabilitation process starts when a cadre surrenders before the police or a central

²² Confidential Source. Indian Army. Office of the Counter-insurgency unit. Interview realized during a Seminar on Conflict Studies, Guwahati University. Guwahati, Assam.

government agency. Successively, there is an evaluation stage in which the rehabilitation scheme is decided and can broadly be described thus: (i) "a committee of eight members from the intelligence and security committees investigates rehabilitation candidates on a case-by-case basis; (ii) the State police then conducts research on the credentials of the candidates (home address, references of family and relatives, etc.); (iii) the scope and spectrum of the rehabilitation scheme is then decided (ibid).

During rehabilitation, Surrendered Cadres (SC) is provided with pocket money and vocational training so that they can better re-integrate in civic life. Their movements, however, are limited and monitored by security forces (most SC decided to stay on in camps so as not to lose the rehabilitation money). There are cases in which persons with the most advance military training are integrated into the army or the paramilitary forces ²³ or are used as guides for further operations.²⁴

The performance and development of the "rehabilitated" cadres is monitored and tracked for a period of up to 10 years. Once rehabilitated, their citizenship right is completely restored. It was not clear whether they had the right to go abroad. The most important profiles in the outfits (i.e., leaders, chairmen, treasurers, or members of the politburo) do not go through the same rehabilitation schemes as the rest of the insurgents. They are allowed to go back into public life and start businesses (private or government contracts) with the funds allocated for their specific rehabilitation scheme.²⁵ Another exception is the married persons who are permitted to stay with their families in their villages.²⁶

In the case of ANVC, though exact facts and figures about its surrendered cadres are not available, it was roughly estimated (by S.G.Momin, SP of the West Garo Hills during ANVC process) that 12-15 cadres of the ANVC had surrendered. Initially, the surrendered cadres were placed in the designated camps in Samada and Chokpot region of the Garo Hills. These surrendered cadres received a remuneration of Rs.2000 per month. According to S.G.Momin,

²³ Confidential Source. Indian Army. Office of the Counter-insurgency unit. Interview realized during a Seminar on Conflict Studies, Guwahati University. Guwahati, Assam. 2 February 2012

²⁴ Skylance G. Momin. *Op. Cit.*

²⁵ *ibid*

²⁶ *ibid*

the surrendered cadres who stayed in these camps belonged to the poor community, who were devoid of the basic amenities. These camps turned out to be their homes where they received daily food and other facilities. However, with ceasefire taking place between ANVC and the Government of India (every 6months), the rehabilitation scheme was not effective to a great extent. This scheme of the government had generated a lot of insecurity among the SCs which made them maintain ties with other armed organizations. The possession of arms among the cadres was a proof of this insecurity. And with promises (such as promise of vocational training and jobs) not being fulfilled, many cadres left the camps to continue with their unlawful activities. As a result, the cadres who left the camps stopped receiving their monthly payment. At present, these rehabilitation camps are non - functional. Although the Church played a major role in bringing the parties together for peace talks, religious services and counseling is not part of the official rehabilitation strategy (the GBCH claims that this is due to lack of interest of the religious organizations to further get involved into this type of politics)²⁷. However, some local churches including the Garo Baptist Church provided occasional service in the camps on special dates.

It is important to understand and recognize the origins and the nature of resources used on counter insurgency operations and rehabilitation activities. "Source Money" is provided by the central government to fund both ground counter insurgency operations, intelligence payrolls, open and uncovered negotiations and financing the rehabilitation of surrendered cadres. This money is usually unaccountable and considered part of a lost fund, thus creating an economic interest in prolonging the conflict for continuing to secure the existence of the above schemes.²⁸

Moreover, there are certain basic limitations, such as the economization of the rehabilitation process, that set forth a new set of complications since it becomes challenging to compete against the insurgent life-style on monetary grounds. This pushes the SC to look for alternative sources of income, which usually fall back into the illegal activities. For example, with the ANVC process being unsuccessful in terms of long-lasting peace, the SCs returned back to

²⁷ Confidential Source. Office of the Garo Baptist Convention Presidency. Tura. West Garo Hills. 8 February 2011.

²⁸ Interview with Apurba K. Baruah. Guwahati University. Guwahati, Assam. 1 February 2012

their illegal activities. This was because of the monetary benefits in insurgency being more alluring than the rehabilitation scheme of the Government. Therefore, there is no doubt in insurgency being a well-paid business. There were allegations about previously "ceased-fire-cadres" undertaking, once again, extortion drives against the local coal extractors. Like, the ex-SCs were involved in extortions from the coal contractors is said to be a rumour. These allegations remained as rumours as there was fear of reprisals.²⁹ The interactions with the local population clarified that due to the fear of retaliation by the insurgent groups on the business community, the extortion activities are said to be a rumour.

Finally, the preeminence of the economic share in the rehabilitation process eclipsed other aspects necessary for its success. The local population "is not happy with them being on the rehabilitation camps (Samanda [EGH], Chokpot [WKH] and Allotgre Hostel [Tura]), because by staying there and mingling with the local population they can influence the younger generations with narratives of easy money and power."³⁰

Assessment of the agreement

Although the negotiation process with ANVC had a higher profile than the previous one, i.e., the ALMA, the results of the ALMA peace process were more modest. The ANVC could not reach an internal consensus prior to the negotiation and this eventually led to a split in the outfit. Chairman Dilash Marak and Commander-in-Chief Jerome Momin were in fact absent at the time of the agreement. The splinter group led by them decided to remain underground in the East Garo Hills and the West Khasi Hills. Those, in the so-called "pro-talks" faction, represented by General Secretary Wanding K. Marak along with five other members, agreed in New Delhi, on 23 July 2004 on a cease-fire agreement (described by some key stakeholders as merely a truce)³¹ with the Government of India for a period of six months. Since then, the cease-fire has been periodically renewed. Most talks were related to development and the perceived inequalities between the Garos and the Khasis as beneficiaries of State services. Yet,

²⁹ Confidential Source. Office of the Garo Baptist Convention Presidency. Tura. West Garo Hills. 8 February 2011.

³⁰ *ibid*

³¹ Skylance G. Momin. *Op. Cit.*

the marginal participation of the State government³² underscored the faultlines of the federal balance regarding peace and security issues between the Union and State Governments. Finally, the multiple extensions of the past seven-year ceasefire reveal the limitations of consensus- building among parties and the significant setbacks caused by changes in government administration.

Despite addressing the Joint Monitoring Group, the peace process seemed far away from success. The government resisted ANVC's refusal to drop its demand for the creation of a Union Government funded Garo Autonomous Territorial Council that had stronger power and role in implementing development schemes than the actual Autonomous District Councils and its demand of 'de-proscription'³³, prior to its surrendering of arms (Dash, n.d.). Processes get more complicated since the incoming governments do not really follow up peacebuilding processes that were initiated by the outgoing governments.

A major challenge on the path for peace in western Meghalaya is the power vacuum generated, in the Garo Hill Districts, due to the de-mobilization of a part of ANVC. The years following the ceasefire between the Government and the insurgency, witnessed a mushrooming of amorphous outfits such as the United Achik National Front (UANF), Liberation Achik Elite Force (LAEF), United Achik Liberation Front (UALF), Achik National Liberation Front (ANLF), Hajong United Liberation Army (HULA) and Retrieval Indigenous Unified Front (RIUF) and the Garo National Liberation Army (GLNA). These outfits, while trying to control the former ANVC territory and extortion networks, stepped on the toes of bigger regional outfits such as the United Front of Assam and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland to replace the latter's tactical arrangement with the Garo insurgency and secure their cross-border movement to Bangladesh.

³² Confidential Source. Office of the Garo Baptist Convention Presidency. Tura. West Garo Hills. 8 February 2011.

³³ The Union Government extended the Ban over the ANVC and the HNLC in 9 November 2006.

Truce erosion and the rise of GNLA

In early 2012, ANVC started splitting up. During the field-work, confidential information was provided regarding a possible division among the members of the ANVC. These rumors were confirmed in late march when the news of the split finally reached the media (The Shillong Times, 2012). The official version of this states that the reason for the rupture laid on the contents of the negotiation process, which has its core issue is the creation of a Garo Autonomous Council. Yet, it would be wrong to deem the partition as a result of ideological differences. A provisional, and thus likely to be modified, evaluation of this would point out the inter-group competition that had set into motion during the peace-negotiations of 2004. During this time, it was acknowledged, "that the Suspension of Operations agreement was signed between the State, Central Government and the ANVC without realizing the fact that there was an armed group within the ANVC working independently" (Shillong Times, 2012). The fact that the new faction, labeled ANVC - B, immediately looked for their own negotiation process with a separate truce agenda reinforces the idea of *bargaining insurgencies*.

On the other hand, among the splinter groups that appeared after the ANVC peace process in 2004, the most relevant for analyzing the insurgency layer in Meghalaya, both because of its consolidation as the most trained and violent outfit in the State and its strong relationship with the State security infrastructure, is the Garo National Liberation Army. According to intelligence data, a former Deputy Superintendent of Police, Meghalaya, Pakchara R. Sangma alias Champion R. Sangma, floated this outfit after deserting the Police force. Sangma had gone "missing" for several months until it was discovered, in March 2010, that he was leading the GNLA. He issued a press statement 'confirming' his position as the "chairman" of the GNLA with Schan D. Shira, former ANVC 'area Commander' for the East Garo Hills, as the 'Commander- in-Chief'. The cadre base of the outfit mainly comprises deserters from ANVC, LAEF and NDFB (Pradhan, n.d.) and has been often reported on charges of extortion, abducting, killing (including traditional authorities) and detonating a bomb blast in the Garo capital of Tura on October 9, 2010.

The outfit was initially regarded only as a criminal organization, a statement supported by the

lack of a political manifesto from the GNLA. However, in December 12, 2010, the Meghalaya CM Mukul Sangma invited the group for "talks to facilitate their surrender" to which its chairman declared that he would only consider going into talks if the Union Government requested. The Indian government stands differed and after years of talks between the two levels of the State, the group was declared a 'terrorist organization'³⁴ on February 1, 2012. It is important to mention that notwithstanding the implementation of the federal "Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act," the Union Government refrains to use its security forces in counter-insurgency operations in the State of Meghalaya (The Hindu, 2012). According to military sources, the implementation of the federal Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act does not ensure the implementation of COIN operations in the conflicting states. Without this act also, COIN operations are carried out in the conflicting states. Depending upon the impact of the conflict, the Centre in accordance with the State government uses its central forces in counter insurgency operations. In case of Meghalaya, despite the implementation of this act, it is the state police who are in charge of counter insurgency operations. The central forces are not used in Meghalaya as the magnitude of the conflict is much less in respect to other north eastern states.

At present, it seems that the frontal approach used against the GNLA will again be complemented by an economic motivation. The latest tool added to the counter- insurgency strategy has been a ransom mechanism sponsored by the State police (The Shillong Times, 2012) in exchange for 1) the capture of information that led to the arrest of the GNLA leaderships or 2) information that leads to the securing of illegal weapons.

Challenges and Lessons Learnt

A first approach to Meghalaya's state architecture, comprising multiple governance levels, designed to bring the government closer to the ground and institutionalizing the common law, might project the idea of a democratic government adapting its institutions to the cultural

³⁴ The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act was reformed in 2008 to match India's commitment in the War against Terrorism.

context of governance. However, the existence of these varieties of layers should not be paralleled with bottom-up governance. The normalization of the conflicts, and the generation of economic interests in prolonging insurgency are driven by the monetarization of counter-insurgency strategies. This has established a corporatist logic to the governability in Meghalaya since the latter relies on a permanent negotiation among state policy makers, elites, opinion leaders and rebel leadership whose agreements are expected to spill-over to the rest of the population. This reflects in a democracy deficit both in the Federal-State government and the citizen-state relations in which the civil society has to permanently struggle to keep spaces for dialogue open.

Furthermore, overlapping loyalties in the INE impose a multi-factual logic to the conflicts in the region. This creates a barrier to approach the insurgency issue without addressing the competing relation between government agencies in field such as border definition or assignment of ethnic schedule quotas; or to understand the fragmentary dynamics generated by the trend of celebrating tailored-suit peace agreements along with the following war-tug dispensation. This same complexity accounts for the lack of political space for negotiation, among warring parties and obstacles, and the formulation of long-lasting commitments.

The rehabilitation schemes should be fostered under a more holistic and civic approach. There is an urgent need to address the multi-dimensional nature of humans and that their recognition is not always achieved by monetary allocations. In this sense, an effective result-oriented education program and proper counseling can bring much more success than hardline security and surveillance. As reflected in the case of ANVC SCs, who being dissatisfied with the rehabilitation scheme, left the camp to join the monetary benefited insurgency. Moreover, the lack of professional training had left the SCs without any future job security.

Either the official and unofficial discourse of development or the lack of it is the greatest challenge to sustainable peace.³⁵ The faultlines of the institutional architecture, the prevalence of insurgency, which should be regarded as a continuum rather than intermittent episodes of

³⁵ Sharma Commission mentioned in its report of 1995 the lack of development as the main cause for the insurgency in the State.

insurgent uprising, also breeds from extra- institutional aspects. Every day practices within the peace-building institutions, such as the lack of socio-professional mobility of security force personnel, the endemic corruption of the institutions which hold and drain the development funds provided by the Government of India, the local rationale of bringing all into ethnic zero-sum games, the "electoralization" of the peace process and the developmental activities, and the persistence of some civil-society segments to use power and agitation politics to pursue their own agenda. This has greatly reduced the pacification scope to the immediate and apparently neutral economic sphere which itself generates more competence as mistrust among the concerned agencies, thus reinforcing the vicious cycle.

The peace-building strategy often appears to be directionless and unaccounted allocation of funds to the region could prove to be self-stultifying. Development schemes should be implemented in areas where they are lacking and must be implemented under a peace-building dictum that seeks to improve governance (e.g., communication facilities in isolated communities, bringing the positive presence of the State in areas where it's needed, rehabilitation of the exhausted post-mining environment, etc). In spite of not being addressed in this paper, the "great" State policies, such as the "Look-East" policy, should find the balance between these concerns and the economic logic that is its primary engine. Another concern should be the visible "dead end" that one reaches once regional integration projects meet the deep-rooted ethnocentric reality of the INE.

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