

Makeover of Rainbow Country Border Security and Connecting the Northeast

Lt Gen J S Bajwa (Retd)
Maj Gen NG George (Retd)
Brig Deepak Sinha (Retd)



Centre for Land Warfare Studies
New Delhi



KNOWLEDGE WORLD
KW Publishers Pvt Ltd
New Delhi

Editorial Team

Editor-in-Chief : Brig Kuldip Sheoran (Retd)
Managing Editor : Ms Geetika Kasturi

ISSN 23939729

**Centre for Land Warfare Studies**

RPSO Complex, Parade Road, Delhi Cantt, New Delhi 110010

Phone: +91.11.25691308 Fax: +91.11.25692347

email: landwarfare@gmail.com website: www.claws.in

CLAWS Army No. 33098

The Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), New Delhi, is an autonomous think tank dealing with national security and conceptual aspects of land warfare, including conventional and sub-conventional conflicts and terrorism. CLAWS conducts research that is futuristic in outlook and policy-oriented in approach.

© 2016, Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), New Delhi

Disclaimer: The contents of this paper are based on the analysis of materials accessed from open sources and are the personal views of the author. The contents, therefore, may not be quoted or cited as representing the views or policy of the Government of India, or Integrated Headquarters of MoD (Army), or the Centre for Land Warfare Studies.



KNOWLEDGE WORLD

www.kwpub.com

Published in India by

Kalpana Shukla

KW Publishers Pvt Ltd

4676/21, First Floor, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110002

Phone: +91 11 23263498 / 43528107 email: knowledgeworld@vsnl.net • www.kwpub.com

Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Understanding Internal Conflicts	2
3. Overview of International Boundaries	6
<i>India- China Boundary in the Northeast</i>	6
<i>India–Myanmar Boundary</i>	11
<i>Indo-Bangladesh Boundary</i>	14
4. Security Threats and Challenges	17
<i>Border Areas Development Programme</i>	18
<i>The External Security Dimension</i>	20
<i>The Internal and Non-Traditional Security Dimension</i>	21
<i>Infrastructural Issues</i>	23
5. Recommendations	25
<i>Structural Initiatives</i>	25
<i>Internal Policy Initiatives</i>	25
<i>External Policy Initiatives</i>	26
6. Conclusion	27
Notes	28

Makeover of Rainbow Country Border Security and Connecting the Northeast

....will be able to walk tall, without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity – a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world.

– Nelson Mandela in his Inauguration Speech

Introduction

India's northeastern (NE) region is described, as the government's vision 2020 document succinctly puts it, as "...rainbow country...extraordinarily diverse and colourful when seen through parted clouds.... stretches from the foothills of the Himalayas in the eastern range, and is surrounded by Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Nepal and Myanmar. It includes the seven sisters: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura, along with a small and beautiful cousin in the Himalayan fringes, namely, Sikkim. The region is rich in natural resources, covered with dense forests, has the highest rainfall in the country, with large and small river systems nesting the land and is a treasure house of flora and fauna. Marked by diversity in customs, cultures, traditions and languages, it is home to multifarious social, ethnic and linguistic groups".¹

The northeastern states of India, leaving aside Sikkim, pose enormous security challenges, both external and internal in nature. These seven states cover approximately 263,000 sq km and share a 4,600 km international boundary with China, Myanmar and Bangladesh. The region is home to over 200 tribes and 75 major population groups and sub-groups speaking over 400 languages and dialects and belonging to the same Mongoloid and ethnic stock that is spread over northwest China and Southeast Asia. In addition, existing internal and international boundaries do not conform to ethnic or tribal boundaries, leading to tribal affiliations and loyalties on both sides that adversely impact on the internal security situation.

To add to the complexity of the problem is the geographical isolation that exists due to the area being bounded by the Himalayas in the north and

northeast and by the Patkai and Garo Hills to the east and south. To the west, is the deltaic region of Bangladesh which forms a barrier to direct connectivity between mainland India and the northeast, leading to an extension of the logistical infrastructure by an additional thousand odd kilometres through the strategic Siliguri or “Chicken’s Neck” Corridor. Difficult terrain conditions have resulted in poor road, rail and air connectivity, mainly being restricted to the major towns and valleys.

The problem is further accentuated by a host of historical, geo-political, environmental, social and cultural issues. The disputed border with China in Arunachal and the likelihood of Chinese influence in the region lies at the crux of the problem. The inability of the Myanmar government to pacify and control the border regions has resulted in uncontrolled smuggling in narcotics and small arms and the provision of safe havens to groups inimical to India along with a growing Rohingya problem. The environmental and economic issues within Bangladesh have led to illegal immigration and demographic changes in Assam and Tripura, with consequent violent upheavals.

These external factors, along with pre-independence historical aspirations, ignorance and social ineptness of “mainland” Indians to understand their northeastern compatriots, the existing economic disparity, lack of opportunities and the perception of the region’s people that the mainland only seeks to exploit its vast forest and mineral wealth have led to an increase of divisive forces that have further impacted on development activity. While we may take a holistic and generalised view on dealing with the existing security issues, the vastly differing socio-economic and security situations within each of the states implies that solutions that are implemented have to be tailor-made to ameliorate the conditions of that specific state.

This paper is structured along the following lines:

- Understanding Internal Conflicts.
- Overview of International Boundaries.
- Security Threats and Challenges.
- Recommendations.

Understanding Internal Conflicts

Geography, history and circumstance combined to create the environment that led to the violent secessionist movement in Nagaland. It is referred to as the mother of all insurgencies in the NE because it inspired and even

nurtured other insurgencies in the region. Mass migration into Assam and Tripura from the erstwhile East Bengal and the continued, often abetted, illegal migration after independence added a new dimension, the long-term consequences of which were obviously not fully recognised. Detachment and poor governance contributed to the spread of the insurgency to Mizoram, Manipur, Tripura, Assam and Meghalaya.

Each of these insurgencies has been controlled effectively through military action. They have not attained closure because the political initiatives lacked synchronicity and failed to keep pace. Insurgent sanctuaries across the borders provide life support to some groups and are the cause of sporadic violence. Ill-conceived measures like open-ended ceasefires and Suspension of Operations (SOO) against insurgent groups have led to the proliferation of these groups and provide legitimacy to their nefarious anti-people and, sometimes, anti-national, activity.

The prevailing situation is low on violence. It has led to a dangerous level of complacency in a critical border area where development has been stalled and the institutions of the state are being undermined, particularly in states like Nagaland and Manipur. There is need for intervention by the central government to influence the process of restoration of normalcy. It involves terminating various arrangements arrived at by Government of India (GOI) with myriad groups wherein they continue living in camps, armed with weapons, to go about illegal businesses. They remain the single significant stumbling block to progress, capacity building and ushering in development.

Large areas of the northeast are experiencing peace but lack the capacities locally to exploit its benefits. In fact, there is an existential danger of the culture of violence prevailing in some areas spreading to previously unaffected areas. Arunachal Pradesh typifies such an eventuality. While developmental initiatives take root, there is an urgent need to rehabilitate the cadres of underground groups in the troubled states. This is case for separate analysis. It is, however, pertinent to mention that the states will need strong governance to see them through, and Nagaland will probably need a spell of central rule to effect such change.

The situations in the states other than Nagaland need to be viewed differently. Insurgencies are political movements and cannot survive in a stasis over long periods of time. They, like other such movements, either

gain momentum and ascendancy or wither away without public support. Yet, the insurgencies we face in Manipur, Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura appear to be different; they are to neither withering away nor gaining momentum to progress to the next stage of civil war. The only logical conclusion that can be drawn from this state of affairs is that what we face today is no longer an insurgency in the correct sense of the term, but the business of insurgency. This is borne out by the fact that there are numerous groups that have no distinct ideology, and only limited public support, that too mainly based on coercion. They thrive on their ability to control a range of illegal activities, in cooperation with international criminal gangs, ranging from drugs and small arms smuggling to human trafficking to skimming government developmental funds. There is also evidence in the public domain to suggest that these groups are intimately linked to politicians, bureaucrats, law enforcement and security forces personnel.

In addition, if we are to also include the fact that these states have had popularly elected governments in place for decades, then it may not be incorrect to conclude that what we face in these states is not insurgency but a law and order issue of a high magnitude. It then becomes necessary to ask the question: is counter-insurgency the appropriate or relevant response at the present time? Is, therefore, the elaborate counter-insurgency infrastructure that is in place that includes the Army and Para-Military Force (PMF) deployments and the necessary legal safeguards they require such as the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), meant to provide security to the people of the region or to coerce them into accepting the status quo that enables the business of insurgency to thrive? In addition, the central government's ill-conceived attempts to counteract the perception of isolation and bias within the region by making development funds easily available only goes to strengthen the insurgent groups that corner these projects, leading to little impact on the quality of life of the populace at large.

While the motivation of local politicians, bureaucrats and police to maintain the status quo is easily understood, it also appears that the Army gains as well, despite hardships and man management issues confronted by prolonged deployment in counter-insurgency operations. First and foremost, it provides the hierarchy an ideal platform for enabling units to undergo "live training" in combat conditions that appears to be becoming the norm as the chances of full-fledged conventional wars reduces due to various factors,

including the aspect of nuclear powers in the region. Secondly, it provides the added incentive to commanders and units to prove their worth, other than having to do so with their oratorical skills in war games or administrative prowess in organising social, training and sporting events on which career progression depends in a peace-time Army, apart from added financial remuneration in terms of allowances as well.

Finally, since the military is given short shrift by the political leadership and the bureaucracy under normal circumstances, its emergence as the dominant power centre in insurgency affected areas certainly adds to its feelings of self-worth. The District Commissioner who otherwise only interacts with a Brigade Commander or above, is suddenly willing to socialise with a Company Commander because his security and functioning depends on this. While the Army's involvement in counter-insurgency operations, especially along the border areas is important and unavoidable, the circumstances, wherein its presence is unwittingly or otherwise leading to a forcible perpetuation of the *status quo*, needs reconsideration.²

In effect, this calls for an urgent review of the strategic political and military aims of the policy in place and its transformation from a counter-insurgency bias to that of law and order policing. At the outset, it requires the recruitment, training and deployment of the police, including the armed police, to be able to provide the requisite law and order cover required. Along with this would be the need to gradually reduce the Army/PMF/CAPF (Central Armed Police Force) from the urban centres initially and from the hinterland subsequently, in synchronisation with the revocation of AFSPA. All this would require to be carried out on the basis of a well-publicised and unalterable time-table that would be strictly adhered to.

It may also well be that there may be circumstances where the local police requires additional assistance from the Army in carrying out its assigned law and order tasks, especially those involving neutralisation of criminal gangs involved in trans-border smuggling of drugs and small arms and in human trafficking. There is international precedence for this type of assistance as has been provided by the US and British Special Operations Forces to countries in South America in the efforts to neutralise drug cartels. A similar advisory and training role can be taken on by elements of the Army here while in addition, the Special Forces can be utilised for carrying out specific intelligence-based direct action tasks to destroy criminal-bases and hideouts, both within the

state and across international boundaries, with appropriate assistance from the states involved, as was done recently in Myanmar. While these troops would require legal provisions to cover their activities, it would certainly not be as intrusive as AFSPA nor would extensive troop deployment be required.

Efforts at resolution of the conflicts in the NE need strategic direction, wherein both external and internal factors are considered. It would require undertaking strong diplomatic initiatives with the Governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh to deny sanctuaries and support to Indian Criminal Groups (ICG) in their territories, something that has been the focus of the present government in recent times. In addition, effective joint border management which includes developmental measures to benefit populations across the border, on the lines of the Border Areas Development Programme (BADP) in place in our border districts, which is touched on elsewhere, may also be considered.

The Government of India suffers from a lack of credibility, particularly in the areas that have faced insurgencies over the years such as Nagaland and Manipur. There is need for greater direct involvement of the Centre with the region. Regular coverage of the NE in the national media will be an excellent beginning. Development and progress in the NE must factor in local sensitivities and the environment. The region has the potential to be developed as a tourist and educational hub, with focus on agriculture and horticulture. India's NE can become a "draw" for the larger region.

Management of the NE presently lacks coherence for want of strategic direction. Ministries and agencies function independently, often at cross-purposes. There needs to be cohesion in planning and execution. Non-traditional institutions such as the Church and the village headmen must be coopted into this process. Traditional forms of administration like the Village Council are highly effective and need to be strengthened. This is of particular importance to manage demobilised cadres who cannot be recruited. Agreements with, and demobilisation of, the so-called insurgent groups lie at the heart of development of the NE. This aspect requires a separate study.

Overview of International Boundaries

India-China Boundary in the Northeast

Territorial disputes have a bearing on a state's national sovereignty and territorial integrity, its core interests. Historically, they have been the most common issues over which states collide and go to war. Decisions to

cooperate or escalate in pursuit of a state's territorial claims have enormous consequences for peace and stability in international relations.³

India's land frontiers where both political as well as human geography have played significant roles have been divided into the northwest and northeast. In sharp contrast to the western half, long embattled and a trouble spot down the ages, the eastern part, remarkably quiescent for the most part, has been called a "neglected" and a "forgotten" frontier. Study of frontier history has generally confined itself to seeking out the routes taken by Alexander and has been indifferent to the eastern part which, some felt, was of the greater significance from the political and also military stand-point⁴.

The Inner Line was created by the East Bengal Regulations of 1873. Its chief purpose was to define a territorial limit beyond which regular administration did not extend, nor were taxes realised. British subjects did not cross it without special permits. It also served to prevent friction between the tribes living beyond it and the plains people who went into these areas to tap wild rubber or to catch elephants, thereby coming into contact, and sometimes conflict, with the tribesmen.⁵ However, there seemed to be various interpretations of the Inner Line, some fairly restrictive. These were not accepted by the Chief Commissioner of Assam who held that the local authorities "have the jurisdiction and, in practice, exercise authority anywhere beyond the inside boundary as far as they can get their orders obeyed and their jurisdiction is not limited by the Inner Line, which was laid down for a very different purpose...."⁶ The Commissioner clarified these remarks by two further amplifications. Firstly, that "it was not necessary to raise the question of what is the precise boundary of British territory in the direction of the various independent or semi-independent tribes...." Secondly, that "for all practical purposes, British territory extends wherever the Deputy Commissioner can enforce obedience without calling in the aid of a military expedition"⁷. However, in one of his communications to his superiors in Calcutta, the Commissioner does make mention of several agreements executed between the Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur and the Abors in 1862, 1863 and 1866 wherein it was stated that British territory extended to the "foot of the hills"⁸.

The 'Outer Line', which lay beyond the 'Inner Line', marked the limits of the loose administrative control. Yet to confuse it with the "international boundary of British India" or the "frontier of India" would be an incorrect assessment of the then existing ground realities. The line of the Assam Himalayas was generally

well-known and accepted as the frontier of India – both as a traditional fact and a historical legacy – and for the British to lay down “the line of the foothills” as the international boundary would have been foolhardy. What the ‘Outer Line’ connoted was a limit beyond which British administration was so thinly spread that responsibilities that go with the conduct of day-to-day affairs could not be readily assumed⁹. In 1899, the then Secretary of the Foreign Department of the Government of India made it clear that “the Outer Line on the map in Assam is only an imaginary boundary”¹⁰. A week later, his deputy confessed that “if the Outer Line...has ever to be precisely defined, it may not be easy, for the information possessed by authority on these areas was admittedly very vague”. As a matter of fact, before the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1910, neither the Government of India nor that of Assam had turned their minds in a conscious or deliberate manner to the question at all¹¹.

Post-independence, the occupation of Tibet by China in 1950-51 brought the boundary question to the fore. India established its administrative structure in the Northeast Frontier Agency (NEFA) from 1950 onwards. Tawang was brought into the Indian fold by one ex-Army Major ‘Bob’ Khathing in 1951, then serving with the Indian Frontier Administrative Service, having set out with a band of 200 Assam Rifles soldiers on the orders of the then Governor Jairamdas Daulatram and that too without the sanction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Helplessly accepting the reality, India recognised Tibet as an integral part of China. With this passive recognition, Nehru sought to get a favourable response from China in endorsing its boundary with Tibet at an early date. China was in no such tearing hurry. In 1954, Nehru raised with Chou Enlai, the question of some Chinese maps showing parts of Indian territory as part of China. The Chinese Premier responded by saying that they were old maps which China had not had the time to revise. Again in 1956, during Chou Enlai’s visit to India, the reference of the McMahon Line came up in his discussions with Nehru. Chou Enlai stated that he did not consider this Line as fair but since it concerned two friendly countries, India and Burma, China could recognise it. Nehru minuted the discussion and communicated this to the Chinese Premier through a letter dated December 14, 1958.

However, in mid-1958, a Chinese magazine, *China Pictorial*, depicting the Chinese boundary in NEFA running along the foothills brought in an entirely new dimension to the issue. Chou Enlai’s response to Nehru’s letter was dated January 23, 1959, wherein he categorically mentioned for the first

time that the Sino-Indian boundary had never been formally delimited. “Nor historically, any treaty or agreement was ever concluded on this issue.” He further went on to state that, in actual fact, certain differences did exist. Chou Enlai later went on to term the McMahon Line as a “product of British policy of aggression against the Tibet Region of China and has never been recognised by any Chinese Central Government and is, therefore, decidedly illegal”. In due course, more areas of dispute began to emerge. In August 1959, the Chinese blatantly attacked and captured Longju and established a permanent outpost south of the McMahon Line as well as the watershed. Thus, by this one action, they rejected the McMahon Line and the basic principle of main watershed, thereby effectively trashing the Simla Agreement. The declassified United States documents reveal that “the late August clashes point of a mode of thought which has remained an ingredient in the Chinese leaders’ calculations on the border dispute: ‘When the Indians show a temperament to advance on the ground, we must alter their frame of mind by letting military action take over political caution. Besides, military risk itself is negligible, because we are the stronger side’”.¹² The Chinese *modus operandi* does not seem to have changed till date.

Political contortions and incidents along the perceived boundary continued in a spiral escalation till October 08, 1962, when China launched a major offensive commencing in the areas beyond Tawang. The large scale pre-planned offensive engulfed the entire boundary of NEFA in the Kameng, Subansari, Siang and Lohit divisions and, in a later phase, also eastern Ladakh. On November 21, 1962, China declared a unilateral ceasefire and withdrew its forces to locations held prior to the commencement of hostilities. The group of representatives of six countries under Prime Minister Bandaranayke of Ceylon mediated to resolve the intractable boundary issue between India and China. However, due to the intransigence of both parties (India and China), the effort failed.

The McMahon Line has since been transposed on modern large scale maps as the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and, importantly, India stakes the Line as its international boundary. In this process, the basic principle of the ‘main watershed’ has been adhered to and any areas falling north of it have been foregone, considering the very basic cartography that existed at the time when McMahon was preparing these maps and also due to the abominably small scale of the map used to mark the Line. However, China holds the McMahon Line, as it interprets it, as the LAC but continues to claim

areas right up to the foothills as its international boundary. Thus, the situation emerging is that when India and China discuss the LAC, China would be negotiating India's international boundary and, at the same time, making its own claim of the international boundary non-negotiable. This is a politically unacceptable predicament for any government in New Delhi.

There are two additional issues that merit mention. First, on the declaration of a ceasefire on November 21, 1962, and when Chinese forces withdrew north of the McMahon Line, why did the Chinese continue to hold Longju? A plausible reasoning could be that withdrawing from Longju at that juncture would mean accepting a mistake, that they had misinterpreted the alignment of the LAC. This would not fit in the Chinese character, they would 'lose face' and, therefore, they continued to retain a hold of this area well south of the watershed. Second, if China was convinced that Tawang was always a part of Tibet, why did the Chinese forces not remain in the area holding territory up to the river line of Tawang Chu, thus, forcing India back to the line of Se La, a line actively considered by McMahon too? The possible reason for this is that had the Chinese remained in Tawang, as they had done in Longju, their claim of territory up to the foothills would be nullified and non-justifiable, thus, 'losing face' terribly.

Why do and when do states offer concessions for resolving a conflict that might otherwise escalate to war, and why and when are they prepared to use force? The Tibetan government-in-exile, functioning from Dharamsala, poses an internal security threat to China. The boundary issue gives it leverage against India. It is evident that the India-China boundary dispute is not likely to be solved in a hurry, through official diplomatic channels or under the ambiguous empowered political representative's format. Evidently, the existing measures are only sufficient to keep the issue alive. There is a school of thought that when a state concludes that an adversary is strengthening its relative position in a dispute, inaction becomes more costly than threatening or even using force to halt or reverse its decline.¹³ The raising of India's 'Mountain Strike Corps' with the declared aim of employment along the northern borders against China could actually suit China to risk the use of force before the corps is operationalised. Due to the intricate nature of the issue, no head of government on the Indian or Chinese side can come up with a solution in their lifetimes and nor should they try. It is imperative that the issue be kept on the back-burner while ensuring that *status quo* is diligently

maintained by the forces of both sides deployed on the ground. Progress in relations in other fields can continue without making boundary resolution a benchmark. A solution can be evolved in due course of time, probably two generations down the line when true globalisation has taken strong roots in international affairs, and when borders truly become irrelevant in the juggernaut of the unfolding dynamics of progress and development. Sixty-six years is not too long a time in the life of these two nations.

India–Myanmar Boundary

India-Myanmar relations are rooted in shared historical, ethnic, cultural and religious ties dating back centuries. The geographical proximity of the two countries and especially the fact that Myanmar was a part of British India till 1935 has helped develop and sustain cordial relations and facilitated people-to-people contact. A large population of Indian origin—according to some estimates about 2.5 million—continues to live in Myanmar¹⁴. India and Myanmar share a long land border of over 1,600 km and a maritime boundary in the Bay of Bengal. While this border provides India with a land bridge into Southeast Asia, its viability and importance for use for commercial purposes at the present time is severely restricted due to internal security challenges and poor road connectivity on both sides, though its future potential remains immense.

The difficult terrain and ethnicity of the border region makes it vulnerable to numerous security challenges. While the international boundary was formally demarcated in 1967, it remains an artificial line dividing ethnic kinships among communities on either side. They continue to maintain strong tribal linkages across the international boundary even though the Free Movement Regime (FMR) which permits residents along the border to travel 16 km across the boundary without visa restrictions, stands suspended in Mizoram and Manipur due to its misuse.¹⁵ However, both sides of the border are beset with ongoing serious internal rebellions and separatist movements due to a variety of reasons, including historical aspirations, economic deprivation, ethnic and religious discrimination.

The inhospitable terrain and dense forest cover, with the lack of roads and tracks, provide militant groups on both sides with adequate safe havens to which they can withdraw when under pressure from the security forces, which in any case are in no position to dominate the complete area effectively, especially so on the Myanmar side, primarily due to a lack of

military capability or motivation. The situation is further aggravated by its close proximity to the “Golden Triangle”, the main drug producing area in Southeast Asia, which has resulted in international criminal gangs working in tandem with militant groups. The lucrative illegal trade in drugs, small arms and human trafficking is the mainstay of the economy of the region that is mired in poverty and unemployment. All this has severely impacted the social, educational and cultural institutions and has resulted in widespread drug addiction and a high proportion of the population, especially the young, being affected by AIDS, primarily due to the use of infected needles. The complete absence of governance and rule of law and extremely high levels of corruption within the political, bureaucratic and security establishments have only added to the problem. In this area of darkness, the recent opening up of Myanmar and its move towards democracy, however imperceptible, despite the lack of any serious border dispute, the Hollenphai incident, included, between India and Myanmar that can destabilise the relationship, are reasons for immense optimism.

That said, however, the increasing religious intolerance shown towards the Rohingyas by the Buddhist majority in Rakhine (formerly Arakan) state bodes ill for the region as a whole and for India, despite the fact that India does not share a direct border with the state. The growing ethnic conflict there has resulted in creating a growing refugee problem which is bound to adversely impact the democratic process that has been initiated. More worrying, from the Indian point of view, is the growth of fundamentalist Islamic ideology and militant groups gaining traction within the Rohingya community that in all likelihood will receive logistic, financial and training support from the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) through the Islamic terror groups based there and in Bangladesh.¹⁶ These groups were expected to pose a serious threat to Buddhist shrines and places of worship in Myanmar and India, an assumption that has been borne out with the attack in July 2013 at Bodh Gaya.¹⁷ The adverse repercussions of such attacks in the communally sensitive states of Bihar, Jharkhand and Bengal are not difficult to fathom.

A more pressing security concern for India is the Chin refugee population that has been displaced by the long standing conflict between Myanmar’s military and the ethnic Christian Chin minority. At present, the refugee population is estimated to be close to 100,000, based mainly in Mizoram.¹⁸ There has been a gradual increase in hostility towards the Chin refugees in

Mizoram, despite their religious and ethnic affinity, primarily as the locals are worried about employment opportunities being taken away and a fear that political power may shift to the refugee population in the future. There have even been incidents of violence reported against refugee settlements in recent times, mainly by the Young Mizo Association.¹⁹ The lack of a comprehensive institutional or legislative protocol or framework to deal with refugees with regard to their resettlement, health care, employment or education is mainly due to the fact that India is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol.²⁰

The recent decision of the central government to construct a border fence, as has been done along the Bangladesh boundary, and to hand over the border to the Border Security Force (BSF) not only reflects inadequate understanding of the issues involved but also creates potentially damaging dynamics that we could do well without. “The inhospitable terrain and lack of lateral communications make physical detection and prevention of movement of small groups across the border virtually impossible, regardless of the number of troops deployed for the task. Fencing of the border is also retrograde as the terrain offers many opportunities to overcome such obstacles without detection. Maintenance and guarding of the fence would also eat away a large number of troops and resources, rendering such exercises futile. We need also to look into the suitability of deploying the Border Security Force (BSF) in the NE. Unlike the Assam Rifles (which has 30 percent locals), BSF personnel do not come from the area and lack local language skills and cultural sensitivities. The Assam Rifles has built up a formidable reputation and rapport with the local people over the past century and remains the best option to guard these borders”.²¹

The Army and the Assam Rifles have correctly continued to focus on counter-insurgency deployment in Manipur and Nagaland instead of deployment along the border due to the fact that it is beyond the capability of either the local police or the central police forces to tackle insurgent groups located inside. There is, however, a requirement to carry out a fresh appraisal of force levels required within Manipur and Nagaland and carry out a redeployment of forces along the border. However, in Mizoram, the tardiness of the Assam Rifles to deploy along the border, keeping in view the internal security situation, must be corrected at the earliest. Another aspect that needs to be factored in is that the Assam Rifles, while under the Ministry of Home

Affairs (MHA), continue to work under the command of the Army which is not the case with the BSF. Thus, border management would be adversely impacted if the BSF is to take over the border as it would imply dual control and result in lack of coordination and confusion, as is the case along the Indo-Tibetan border. It would, therefore, be appropriate for the government to reconsider the decision to replace the Assam Rifles with the BSF.

Finally, infrastructural facilities at the two designated border crossings at Moreh and Zokhawatar are not up to scratch. The land customs stations lack screening and detection machines, communication devices, banking facilities, warehouses, parking and quarantine facilities. These infrastructural deficiencies, along with a restrictive trading list and opening of Namphalong market by Myanmar's government on the other side of the border have adversely affected normal trade at Moreh. While the Government of India has begun the process of upgrading the land customs station at Moreh into an Integrated Check Post (ICP) housing all regulatory and security agencies within a single complex with all modern amenities to boost trade and curb smuggling, the project implementation has been poorly organised and greatly delayed.

Indo-Bangladesh Boundary

Bangladesh and India, two neighbouring countries, have a shared history of common heritage, ethnic, linguistic and cultural ties. Both countries also have a common history of struggle for freedom and liberation. In 1905, after Bengal was partitioned, a robust, prolonged and violent protest forced the British authorities to abrogate their administrative decision and keep Bengal intact. However, in 1947, Bengal and parts of Assam were incorporated into East Pakistan with the subsequent trauma of what partition entailed. After its creation in 1971, Bangladesh inherited the disputed borders as a legacy of the partition.

The border divides the Ganges delta region and the Sundarbans mangrove forest. It is criss-crossed by a large number of rivers. The area is mostly flat with slight hilly terrain in the Meghalaya, Assam, Tripura and Mizoram sections. The border area is densely populated. The land is extremely fertile and is cultivated right up to the border pillars. Sometimes, the border line passes right through villages, even buildings. The area is patrolled by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) of India and the Border Guards of Bangladesh (BGB). India has a 4,023 km border with Bangladesh. The Indo-Bangladesh border passes through

the West Bengal (2,216.7 km.), Assam (263 km.), Meghalaya (443 km.), Tripura (856 km.) and Mizoram (318 km.). In addition, the situation was further compounded because of enclaves on both sides. There were about 92 enclaves of Bangladesh within India and 106 enclaves of India in Bangladesh. The residents of the enclaves live in abysmal conditions, with a lack of water, roads, electricity, schools and medicines. They can only go to their respective countries on the production of an identity card, after seeking permission from the border guards. Recently, however, both countries have moved towards a reciprocal agreement to absorb the enclaves within each other's territories.²² At midnight of July 31, 2015, 111 enclaves (17,160.63 acres) in India of Bangladesh and 51 enclaves (7,110.02 acres) in Bangladesh of India changed hands – converting a *de facto* reality into a *de jure* situation. The agreement sought to resolve the contentious issue of 6.1 km of the undemarcated boundary, exchange of enclaves and adverse possessions. The exercise involved the grant of citizenship to approximately 37,334 Indians in enclaves in Bangladesh and about 8,000 Bangladeshis in the enclaves in India.

With this landmark agreement, the Indo-Bangladesh border is likely to be more amenable to effective border management. On the issue of demarcation of the land border, only 6.5 km of land along the Comilla-Tripura border is considered as officially disputed. There have, however, been other disputes regarding demarcation as was clearly demonstrated from the border conflict of 2001 on the control over village Pyrdiwah in Meghalaya that Bangladesh claimed was under the illegal possession of India since 1971.

On the maritime front too, there had been problems in the absence of a clearly demarcated boundary. In June 2011, the Bangladesh government adopted a draft resolution staking its claim in the Bay of Bengal to the potentially large reserves of oil and gas within its territorial claim lines. While India has successfully concluded treaties on the maritime delimitation of Andaman and Nicobar Island with Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia, the problem of maritime boundary delimitation with Bangladesh was referred to the Law of the Sea Tribunal for arbitration by Bangladesh. On July 07, 2014, the Hague-based Permanent Court of Attribution (PCA) awarded Bangladesh approximately four-fifth of the total 25,600 sq km or approximately 20,000 sq km of the disputed maritime boundary in the Bay of Bengal. It has clearly delineated the maritime boundary between India and Bangladesh, including the

limits of Bangladesh's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and its sovereign rights of undersea resources in the continental shelf, extending as far as 345 nautical miles (nm) in the high seas, taking the Chittagong coast as the base line. The acceptance of this verdict by both countries can certainly act as a catalyst for further consolidation of friendly relations, especially with regard to the ratification of the Land Boundary Agreement and also to reach a mutually acceptable understanding over the sharing of the Teesta waters.²³

Over the years, the border region has been prone to extensive smuggling of livestock (cattle), food items, medicines and drugs from India to Bangladesh. Moreover, illegal immigrants from Bangladesh cross the border to India in the search for improvement in their lives that has seriously impacted the demographic stability of West Bengal and the northeastern region. Some estimates suggest that illegal migration has crossed the 20 million mark. There are fears that millions more will flood over the border if Bangladesh's economy continues to founder, and those numbers will multiply if the projected impact of climate change leaves tens of millions in low-lying areas homeless or foodless, displaced by disaster or without arable land to sustain them.²⁴

Another aspect that has impacted security and has been worrisome has been the extensive support and network that religious fundamentalist parties and groups have developed within Bangladesh. It is well known that these parties and groups have a strong anti-India bias and have been used by Pakistan's ISI to foment trouble and push its Islamist agenda.

In order to primarily control illegal migration and cross-border terrorist movement, the Indian government has been in the process of constructing a 3,436 km fence and another 4,500 km of roads along the border over the past 26 years. While there were initial objections by Bangladesh to this unilateral move, the issue has now been amicably resolved after the April 2005 bilateral agreement requiring India to consult with the Bangladesh Foreign Ministry regarding any proposed construction within the 150-metre area. The issue has been complicated by the numerous allegations of killings and torture on both sides of the border. It came into prominence when the international media reported the tragic killing of 15-year-old Felani Khatun who was trying to cross into Bangladesh to be married. She was shot when her salwar kameez got caught in the wire. Her screams alerted the BSF guards, who shot her as she struggled. Horrifyingly, her body was left hanging on the fence for five hours before it was cut down.²⁵

While the border fence has been effective to some extent, there are vast portions of this riverine terrain where it has not been feasible to either construct the fence or effectively patrol it. It is through this area that cross-border movement continues unhampered. More importantly, dozens of villages act as unofficial, illegal transit posts and at each, a “lineman”, handsomely remunerated, pays off the guards from both notoriously corrupt countries, and directs the illegal traffic, which can run into scores of people and livestock at a time. This endemic corruption among the BSF and immigration authorities has adversely impacted on the efficacy of the fence reportedly built at a cost of over US \$1 billion and the vast sums required to maintain it against the vagaries of weather.

While India and Bangladesh have several border management instruments such as the Joint Working Group on the Border, bi-annual meetings of BSF-BGB commanders and periodic flag meetings among local commanders to resolve any issues that may arise, the border continues to be a source of conflict among the locals and governments on both sides. From the Bangladeshi point of view, it tends to “reflect a hegemonic attitude of a big neighbour towards its small counterpart. It seems that India is trying to stretch its hegemony over Bangladesh like Bhutan or Nepal. We have the experiences of US-Mexico and Israel-Palestine which is enough to signal a threat to Bangladesh which can only worsen stability in this region.”²⁶ Undoubtedly, effective border management and maintenance of peace and tranquillity along the border are only possible through mutual cooperation and both sides need to constructively engage together and develop trade and infrastructure along and across the border so that Bangladesh also has stakes in maintaining a peaceful and tranquil border. India, as a big and powerful neighbour, needs to play a greater role to dispel mistrust and suspicion in the bilateral relations.²⁷

Security Threats and Challenges

Till the end of the Cold War, the concept of national security had purely military and economic connotations, with exclusive stress on territorial security and security of the state. This was achieved by controlling the movement of people and goods and information by the state through a wide variety of controls, including physical barriers. However, with the abrupt end of the Cold War and the ushering in of the IT revolution, the process

of globalisation gained momentum, overwhelming the traditional outlook towards national security.

This has led to a shifting of the discourse from security of the state to security of the people through sustainable human development. As Wilson and Hastings note, “International borders are becoming so porous that they no longer fulfill their historical role as barriers to the movement of goods, ideas and people and as markers of the extent of power of the state.”²⁸ As has been graphically demonstrated over the past decade and as governments in Latin America, Africa, Central Europe and in the Middle East have learnt to their cost, it has become impossible to lock up people or ideas and isolate them from the global discourse. Today, while traditional physical threats to our nation and the northeast continue to pose serious challenges, it is the non-military threats that are more dominant. These arise out of cross-border insurgency, internal ethnic conflicts, proliferation of small arms, drug trafficking, ideological differences, the politics of exclusion, social degeneration, endemic corruption due to the nexus among criminals, police, bureaucracies, business and politicians, environmental degradation and economic exploitation. In the northeast, the establishment of an internally secure political order, the mitigation of social deprivation and addressing the grievances of the tribal communities are the essential preconditions for cohesion and stability. While this approach to security cannot be taken to undermine the protection of territorial integrity and national sovereignty, we need to look at the challenges that need to be engaged to achieve our stated aims.

Border Areas Development Programme

In this context, the Border Areas Development Programme (BADP) which was started in 1986-87, initially aimed at balanced development of the border areas of states bordering Pakistan, and, then, subsequently, extended to all the land borders, is an important initiative, though its impact till date has been minimal. Its main objective remains to meet the special developmental needs and well-being of the people living in remote and inaccessible areas situated near the international border and to saturate the border areas with all essential infrastructure through the convergence of central/state/BADP/local schemes and a participatory approach. The funds under BADP are provided to the states as 100 percent non-lapsable special central assistance and this scheme is being implemented in 367 border blocks of 104 border districts in these 17 states.

The programme is supplemental in nature and the budget allocation for the financial year 2015-16 is Rs.990 crore. However, what is of importance is the initiative taken by the Modi government to carry out comprehensive modifications after discussions with all stakeholders:

- Coverage of BADP has been extended to all the villages which are located within the 0-10 km of the international border, irrespective of the border block abutting on the international border or not of 17 states which constitute the international land borders. However, priority will be given to those villages which are located within 0-10 km from the international border and within that, the villages identified by the Border Guarding Forces (BGF) shall get uppermost priority.
- Representatives of some more Union Ministries viz. Ministry of Rural Development; Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs; Ministry of Health and Family Welfare; and Ministry of Human Resources, have been made members of the Empowered Committee (EC) on BADP under the Chairmanship of the Secretary, Department of Border Management, Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), to ensure convergence with the schemes of these ministries with BADP schemes.
- The list of schemes permissible under BADP has been expanded to include schemes/ activities relating to the *Swatchhta Aabhiyan*; skill development programmes; promotion of sports activities in border areas; promotion of rural tourism/border tourism; protection of heritage sites; construction of helipads in remote and inaccessible hilly areas, which do not have road connectivity; skill development training to farmers for the use of modern/ scientific techniques in farming, organic farming, etc.
- Provision has been made for a third party inspection and quality control mechanism under the MHA for random inspections of the BADP schemes by independent monitors (individual/agency) to be designated as National Quality Monitors.
- It has been provided that the state governments shall enable the monitoring of the BADP schemes by the existing district level monitoring/vigilance committee where local Members of Parliament (MPs) and Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) are represented.
- Special/specific area schemes such as composite development of at least one village of sizeable population surrounded by five-six or more villages close to the border as model villages; *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan*:

construction of toilets in schools, public places particularly for women; warehouses for food grains and fodder in hilly areas particularly in the snow-bound areas of Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarkhand, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir, E-chaupals, agrishops, mobile media vans, etc. have been made.²⁹

The External Security Dimension

The traditional security threat emanates from the protracted boundary dispute with China. The latent potential of a threat of heightened insurgency in the hinterland, supported by inimical forces, when coupled with a conventional military threat, will continue to present a formidable security challenge in the region for the foreseeable future. During World War II, this region witnessed challenging engineering feats being undertaken to improve mobility to undertake operations against the Japanese in Burma, and in Manipur and Nagaland. A number of Advanced Landing Grounds (ALG) were constructed in the hills along with airports astride the Brahmaputra. The Ledo Road (Stilwell Road) over the Pangsau Pass reached Kunming in China by January 1945. The need for speedy accessibility to the border areas remains paramount. While the strategic roads are being constructed, the activation and operationalising of the existing ALGs is imperative. These are Walong, Anini, Tuting, Menchuka, Along, Daporijo, and Ziro. Though the Vijoyagar ALG was activated in November 2011, it has not been in use since, due to, strangely, perceived Chinese sensitivities. Ironically, the road connectivity between Vijoyagar and Miao in the Brahmaputra plains is extremely poor. The road inaugurated in 1974 lies abandoned, compelling the population to undertake a six-day trek covering 157 km between these two places. Fort Hertz in Myanmar across the Chaunken Pass, barely 40 km away from Vijoyagar, is much more easily accessible.

The decision to hand over the Indo-Myanmar border area to the Border Security Force (BSF) along with construction of a road running parallel to the boundary, which will be fenced, overlooks the aspect of the intimate connect between insurgency in the northeast and the safe havens of these groups in Myanmar. Presently, the Assam Rifles is responsible for border guarding in synergy with Counter-Insurgency/Counter Terrorism (CI/CT) operations in the hinterland. The Assam Rifles, under a homogenised command and control structure under the Army, had effective control of all operations and intelligence gathering. The induction of the BSF will bring in a dual command

structure and shift the focus to general policing, anti-smuggling and such other economic threats in a narrow strip of the border area all along the boundary line. Such a deployment will be detrimental to the Assam Rifles/Army's intelligence gathering operations. Consequently, the CI/CT operations will be reduced to reacting to armed actions undertaken by insurgent groups and terrorists. Such operations will be seriously limited in quelling insurgency to a level where the civil administration can effectively function.

The border areas along the Indo-Bangladesh boundary remain prone to infiltration of insurgent elements and migration of population for economic reasons. This continues despite the construction of the boundary fence and deployment of the BSF. The migration of population has strained the availability of resources. Due to selfish political motives, they have been permanently absorbed into the Indian mainstream. This issue will continue to be the main cause of animosity and rivalry between the immigrants and the indigenous population. It is, therefore, pragmatic and in India's interest to help the Government of Bangladesh to create political stability in the country and assist in its economic development, enabling Bangladesh to create an environment that can generate sizeable reverse migrations which, in turn, will ease the inter-community tensions in the region. The present political dispensation in Bangladesh has, to a fair extent, limited the easy functioning of insurgent groups within Bangladesh. Senior leaders who had taken sanctuary, have been handed over to India or have been forced to flee. With further improvement in the bilateral relations, Bangladesh could share intelligence and undertake military operations against such elements or allow the Indian security forces to carry out surgical strikes based on actionable intelligence. Such a harmonious relationship can result only if the government seeks to engage bilaterally.

The Internal and Non-Traditional Security Dimension

In the NE, we are faced with a trans-border Insurgency affecting our states and Myanmar that has metamorphosed into a serious law and order issue due to trans-national criminal syndicates having established linkages with armed gangs that are opposed to the existing political status quo. This has also been accentuated with these groups being used by China and Pakistan for meeting their own nefarious designs. In this context, the clash between ethnic groups and migrant populations, both those internally displaced and external, has placed excessive strain on the socio-economic stability of the

region and hugely impacted on political supremacy and governance issues.

Criminal syndicates have extended their reach to include complete control and dominance over all smuggling activities, be it of small arms, psychotropic drugs, livestock or human trafficking. This economic clout has enabled them to subvert elements within the political parties, the bureaucracy and the security establishment. This illegal activity is far in excess of officially sanctioned trade and is a well-known fact, for example, the local military commanders of the Myanmar Army in this region, because of their connection to criminal gangs, do not necessarily follow directions from higher headquarters that may impact on their “business interests,” leading to an adverse impact on relations with India. A similar impact cannot be ruled out among bureaucrats and security personnel on the Indian side, albeit at a lower level, and also among the more established insurgent groups, undoubtedly a reason for the increase in factionalism plaguing this region. This has also resulted in violent clashes among insurgent groups that have further added to the law and order problem and the inability of the government to proceed with peace negotiations in a holistic manner.

The reasons for the armed violence in the region that has clearly impacted security are not difficult to diagnose. It is a potent cocktail of political brinkmanship among local political figures with extremely narrow and short-term agendas fuelled by economic disparity, lack of employment opportunities, rampant corruption, easy availability of arms and ethnic and tribal conflict. It has been further impacted by poor governance, ineffective policing, agonisingly slow judiciary and unchecked criminal activity. The ability of the common man to oppose all the injustices heaped on him has been very subtly neutralised by the use of the security forces with wide ranging powers under AFSPA to maintain the status quo.

All of this has resulted in individuals belonging to all strata of society feeling insecure and uncertain of what the immediate future may bring. This has been accentuated by an increasing sense of alienation and a breakdown in traditional family relationships due to the increasing trend of young people leaving the region for education and employment in other parts of India. It has also led to communities being disrupted by increasing tension and perceived exclusion as different ethnic, religious and tribal groups within villages and towns face off against each other to try and achieve economic and political dominance. Increasing economic disparity has provided fertile ground for the socio-economically marginalised to take to criminal activity. As local

politics and issues become increasingly more important and fractious, the wider implications of the impact on development and national security are ignored by local leaders. This results in the region being viewed as violence prone, lacking both cohesion and stability that ensures it is not given due consideration by industry and business which results in an unending cycle of socio-economic deterioration and violence.

Infrastructural Issues

The sheer geographic dimensions of the NE region and the varied relief impose a connectivity problem of immense magnitude. The divide created by the Brahmaputra further aggravates the problem, particularly in the states through which its course runs. The paucity of bridges across the river forces detours which add to the distances and time taken to access areas. It also tends to isolate populations in their limited areas which, in turn, gives rise to parochial trends and a strong sense of regionalism and tribal loyalties. There is also a desire to preserve the old way of life and any change is looked at with suspicion. Representative democracy is not seen as an inclusive model for pursuing their limited interests.

The economics of laying out of any infrastructure network due to its “no returns” have to be undertaken entirely at government expense and money poured into its maintenance annually. In any developing country, it is the responsibility of the government to provide a network of basic infrastructure to include rail network, road network, electricity supply and telecommunications. These are the fundamentals of empowerment of the people and encourage entrepreneurs to bring in technology and industry into the region. Such a model of development more than compensates for the heavy initial investment by the government.

Over the last three decades, the railway network has developed in the region south of the Brahmaputra with the only cross-river link at Guwahati. With the road-railway bridge at Bogibeel to be commissioned by December 2015 and the broad gauging of the railway line from Rangiya to Murkongselek on to Pasighat there will be a considerable improvement in the connectivity in the region. The commissioning of the loop line to Naharlagun near Itanagar, the state capital, has brought Arunachal Pradesh on the rail map of India. Broad gauging of the line from Guwahati to Silchar, Silchar to Imphal, Silchar to Agartala, Silchar to Bairabi to Sairang (in Mizoram), Dimapur to Kohima and Sevok to Rangpo will connect all the state capitals by railway lines. This will

make a substantive impact on the administration and development pace of the region. Extensions beyond Imphal to Myanmar and Agartala to Bangladesh will give further impetus to development and prosperity of the region.

Roads are one of the single most important development demands from the NE states. Density of roads in the northeast region is far less than the national average. The road network was initiated under the aegis of the Border Roads Organisation which was set up in 1960 with the Prime Minister as the Chairman. The progress was slow due to constraints of equipment and resources. While there is now a plethora of agencies funding and constructing these roads under the overall supervision of the Ministry for Development of the NE Region (MODNER), the constraints remain. The road construction technology is of a vintage model, equipment too is limited, with modern tools and machinery not being deployed, and there is the problem of non-availability of skilled manpower and labour which becomes debilitating when local politics do not allow import of labour. The geological structure of the relief has a two-fold impact on road construction. The lower hills have a high content of mud and sandstone, making them prone to landslides in the heavy rains that this region experiences in the prolonged monsoon period. The need to transport stone aggregate increases the cost of construction. All construction activity comes to a halt during the monsoon period. Invariably, most of the resources have to be diverted to repair the roads that have been severely damaged due to the monsoon. These factors have been responsible for the continued isolation of large pockets in the region.

Northeast Region (NER) Vision 2020 and the XIth Five-Year Plan also emphasise the criticality of expansion, maintenance and improvement of the road network at all levels from National Highways (NH) to rural roads and even porter tracks to provide the essential basis for trade and economic development. Even though the road network per capita is significantly higher in the NE region relative to the rest of the country, the road length per unit area is low. Therefore, construction of roads at all levels in the NE is of the highest priority to the central and state governments. A massive programme of road construction and improvement has been taken up by the government for the NE region from different sources.

The course of the Brahmaputra and the lean period discharge enable the development of a robust inland water transport system. With suitable agreements with Bangladesh, this can be an additional mode of transport

of goods and mineral ores to the port of Kolkata. Induction of air-cushion vehicles can contribute to round the year connectivity to even remote areas which can continue even during the monsoon when the region is adversely affected by floods.

Recommendations

Structural Initiatives

- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and Ministry of Defence (MoD) need to be staffed with representatives of the armed forces who are competent to influence policy and decision-making, the former in relation to internal security.
- There is an urgent necessity to focus specifically on Nagaland and Manipur requiring the creation of the post of Joint Secretary (JS) (Nagaland & Manipur).
- All planning of alignment and monitoring of the construction of roads except defence roads to be brought under one agency, viz. MODNER.
- Establishment of integrated check posts along the Sino-Indian, Indo-Myanmar and Indo-Bangladesh border. The number of transit points along the Myanmar and Bangladesh border needs to be increased.

Internal Policy Initiatives

- Border management needs to be consolidated under a single agency. Along the Indo- Bangladesh border this could be the BSF while along the Sino-Indian and Indo-Myanmar border it could be the Indian Army till the situation improves.
- The state government of Arunachal to expedite the issue of land for ALGs.
- Reconsider raising of new BSF battalions for the Indo-Myanmar border and carry out a fresh review with regard to Assam Rifles deployment within Mizoram, Nagaland and Manipur.
- Many of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) are facing shortages in recruitment. There is need to have a time-bound dispensation for educational standards and age to increase intake from the NE, especially from the more remote areas. Induction of these qualitatively good soldiers will also serve to enhance national integration.

- Restate the threat of force while simultaneously offering concessions to all militant groups, while all ceasefire arrangements need to be terminated. Armed cadres must be rehabilitated for which there are many options.
- Undertake a separate study for demobilisation of armed cadres.
- Institutional changes in states to energise governance within the states. Professional competence is a deficiency that needs to be addressed at the earliest. Institutions of the state stand severely compromised: they need to be reinvigorated with discreet induction of expertise. Local officials have “grown roots” over the prolonged period of the ceasefire. They are, at most times, functionally held captive by insurgent groups. They need to be selectively steered by those who do not have personal stakes when functioning in their official capacities.
- Undertake developmental initiatives, short-term ones that directly affect the people and long-term one to enhance living standards and the economy.
- Disenfranchise the migrants from Bangladesh.

External Policy Initiatives

- In the context of China, look at long-term resolution of the border issue on “as is where is” basis. In the short-term, there is need to rapidly enhance capacities/ infrastructure.
- While continuing to restrict movement within Arunachal Pradesh, open up transit points that should be able to provide visas on arrival for Chinese people so that we can show *de facto* territorial sovereignty over the region.
- Reintroduce the FMR not only along Indo-Myanmar border but also along the Indo-Bangladesh border. There is need for innovative measures to manage the migrant issue. Introduction of work permits, especially for Bangladeshis, could be a partial way out.
- Reconsider construction of a fence along the Indo-Myanmar border. Diplomatic initiatives and gaining the goodwill of Myanmar are of utmost importance. Resolving the issue along the Nagaland border will facilitate the same along the Manipur and Mizoram borders as well.
- Diplomatic initiatives with Bangladesh have moved forward, substantively consequent to the signing to the Land Boundary Agreement which came

into effect at midnight of July 31, 2015. In addition, headway in transit arrangements, resolving of all border disputes and the Teesta water treaty are important to keep the Islamists out. It is of prime importance to improving our internal situation in the NE.

- There is need for enhanced trade and infrastructure development with Bangladesh. Also, it is necessary to include joint initiatives such as military exchanges and joint operations against militant safe havens.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to clearly enunciate what ails the policies adopted by successive central governments over the years in their dealings with our northeastern states. The traditional approach towards security of the state through control of territory has been overtaken by the necessity to provide security to the people through sustainable development, thanks to the increasingly inter-connected world that we live in, but this is yet to be fully understood by those responsible for the security of the state. Non-traditional security threats have gained currency over the past few years and can only be neutralised through a community-based approach by our security forces. A purely military-based approach alone cannot resolve the protracted problems faced by these states. In that sense, the recently signed accord by the central government with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak Muivah (NSCN) (IM) is a step in the right direction, though we are still unaware of its major contours.

The Government of India is presently perceived as manipulative. This lack of credibility affects the negotiations and agreements with the militants. There is a need to reestablish credibility. This can be initiated with developmental efforts that reach the lowest levels and require that education and jobs be given the utmost priority. While improving educational facilities will take time, job requirements can be addressed in an earlier time-frame.

A focus on rapidly enhancing the infrastructural capacity of the region on priority will not only help in the cultural and emotional integration of the people of the northeast with the rest of India, but will also provide the means for a better understanding of the region by people from the rest of India through tourism and commercial opportunities. The paper has gone on to suggest practical measures that need to be adopted if Mr. Modi's policy of "Act East" is to be implemented and not remain just on paper.

Notes

1. North-Eastern Region: Vision2020; Ministry of Development of North-Eastern Region and the North-Eastern Council; 2007, p. 1.
2. Brig Deepak Sinha (Retd), "Manipur Ambush: The Real Lesson we Need to Learn", *Indian Defence Review*; <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/news/manipur-ambush-the-real-lesson-we-need-to-learn/>
3. M. Taylor Fravel, *Strong Borders Secure Nations: Cooperation and Conflict in China's Territorial Disputes* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008), p 10.
4. Purshotam Mehra, *The McMahon Line and After* (New Delhi: Macmillan, 1974), p. 1.
5. *Ibid.*, p.90.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*, p.90.
10. *Ibid.*, p.5.
11. *Ibid.*, p.91.
12. The Sino-Indian Dispute, Section I:1950-59, DD/I Staff Study, CIA/RSS March 02, 1963, Approved for Release May 2007, p 33.
13. Fravel, n.3, p. 5.
14. Gareth Price, *India's Policy Towards Burma* (London: Chatham House, June 2013), Asia ASP 2013/2.
15. Maj Gen Dhruv Katoch (Retd), "Guarding the India-Myanmar Border", CLAWS Article No 2527, January 01, 2014, <http://www.claws.in/Guarding-the-India-Myanmar-Border-Dhruv-Katoch.html>
16. Indrani Bagchi, "Buddhist-Rohingya Conflict in Myanmar Spells Trouble for India", *The Times of India*, July 08, 2013, http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-07-08/india/40442452_1_rohingya-muslims-sittwe-central-myanmar
17. Bridget D Certo, "Bodhgaya Attack Revenge for Rohingyas: Suspect", *Myanmar Times*, January 13, 2014, <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/9242-bodhgaya-attack-revenge-for-rohingyas-suspect.html>
18. "Myanmar: Bleak Prospects for Chin Refugees in India", IRIN; <http://www.irinnews.org/report/95699/myanmar-bleak-prospects-for-chin-refugees-in-india>
19. Chin Human Rights Organisation, "Assessment Report on Chin Refugees in Mizoram and Delhi", <http://www.chro.ca/index.php/resources/refugee-issues/286-assessment-report-on-burmese-refugees-in-mizoram-and-delhi>
20. n.18.
21. Katoch, n.15.
22. Dr. Abdullah Al Faruque, "Bangladesh-India Border Relations: A Truncated View", *Foreign Affairs Insights and Reviews*, January 17, 2014, <http://www.fairbd.net/Details.php?Id=104>
23. Rupak Bhattacharjee, "Delimitation of Indo-Bangladesh Boundary", IDSA Comment, http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/DelimitationofIndo-Bangladesh_rbhattacharjee_190814.html
24. Ben Doherty, "India's Border Fence has Crossed the Line", *Sydney Morning Herald*, April 21, 2012, <http://www.smh.com.au/world/indias-border-force-has-crossed-the-line-20120420-1xc5g.html>
25. *Ibid.*
26. Al Faruque, n.22.
27. *Ibid.*
28. Thomas Wilson and Hastings Donnan, "Nation, State and Identity at International Borders" in Thomas M Wilson and Hastings Donnan, eds., *Border Identities: Nation and State at the International Frontiers* (UK, Cambridge: University Press, 1998).
29. "Comprehensive Approach for Border Area Development Programme", Press Information Bureau, Government of India, Press Release July 09, 2015.