

AN APPRAISAL OF THE SOCIO-POLITICAL TENSIONS IN THE NORTH EASTERN REGION

R. GOPAL KRISHNAN, Shillong

ABSTRACT: The author traces the origin and persistence of socio-political tensions in the North-Eastern region. Besides the conspicuous ethnic and regional factors, a slow pace of change and continued in-migration were other factors that led to socio-political tensions.

INTRODUCTION

The situation in the country amply illustrates the variations in geography, history, social and economic relations. It enabled three distinct zones to emerge in varying degrees of importance and role-perceptions. These are (in the descending order) (1) The Gangetic Plains, (2) The Deccan Plateau alongwith the Coastal Plains and Island, and (3) The North-Eastern Region or the Eastern Himalaya (Subba Rao, 1956, and Spate, 1968). The population of the country despite absorbing the Asian and W. European influences, exhibits the domination of inter and intra-community/regional differences and cleavages.

In this apparent heterogeneity, tension situations asserted themselves in the local, regional and national landscape (Roy, 1970). It encouraged numerous entities to emerge with clear local and regional orientations and alignment. In the process, latent factors of caste, religion, language and so on, formed a part of the social political interactions and processes that determined the power relations between inhabitants, elite groups and the territorial unit. This enhanced parochial tendencies and encouraged narrow territorial percep-

tions and loyalties to get firmly entrenched in the local, regional and national polity. These gave way to regionalism (Knight, 1982). And, when the status was conceded, it did not correspond with the demands of the regionalistic forces. As a result, a whole range of tension situations emerged with spatial and temporal dimensions. These narrow regionalistic priorities began increasingly to question the modalities of territorial controls, exercised by the majority population groups in the federal states, legitimacy and at times, the concept of the Indian Nation as well (Menon, 1968 and Gopalkrishnan, 1988).

In this context, regional inequalities and disparities assumed wider ramifications with development-as it involved politicization of the fragmented social structure through a penetration of political forms, values and ideologies (Kothari, 1970). Resources became contentious issues. Factors of social and economic relations encouraged the growth of tension by not bringing about a consensus. This latter aspect not only encompassed but also overrode the inter and intra-unit (administrative) relations and exerted a continuous pressure on the polity.

The period after independence also saw the minority population groups and sub-groups expressing themselves in political and economic terms. This enabled these groups to adopt a strong ideological stand. They made their impact on the existing spatial arrangements by emphasising the need for change in their impact on the existing spatial arrangements by emphasising the need for change in their dependency status and subordinate positions. This exhibited a developmental paradox—for in the context of larger territorial units, they were in minority and in specific locations, they were in majority, spread over a homogeneous area. In fact, this suggested the importance of geography and resources as determining factors. Policies to a large extent were also responsible for this.

THE NORTH-EASTERN REGION OF INDIA

The region has numerous and diverse territorial population groups and sub-groups that represented a miniature replica of the country. These groups found confidence and guidance from the fact that they were aware of their locational advantages and of the sense of distinctiveness from rest of the population of the country in terms of geography, social and cultural aspects. These groups through the processes of state formation and political participation, at one level of generalisation, were brought within an overall integrative system—the principle political extent of which was determined by inter-administrative unit boundaries in the region.

However, contemporary spatial pattern of change and development in the region was largely a product of attitudes and perception (including response) of the inhabitants to the stimulus originating both within and from outside the region as well as to the administrative measures that were adapted from time to time. It will take quite sometime before the

traditional pattern and those that were superimposed on the former cease to reflect the function and requirements of colonial territorial, political and economic set up in the region. Restructuring of the pattern to form a part and parcel of the national community, therefore, will involve periods of instability in the region.

Pre-independent pattern of administration, objectives and contacts were primarily governed by politico-economic and strategic objectives. Policies in operation in the region at that period, encouraged movements of population into the sparsely peopled north-east from the densely populated Gangetic delta (Gopalakrishnan, 1986). In addition to this, pattern of land use and land tenure that was in practice, reflected a distinct bias towards preserving the individual economic interests and colonial political and commercial goals for the region—particularly after 1826 when tea plantations were coming up rapidly in the upper Assam and surrounding hilly periphery. This gave the needed impetus along with administrative and transport-service sectors, for migration to accelerate and settle in those areas that were considered to be negative by the inhabitants of the region. In other words, these aspects firmly implanted imperialism in the complex but fluid traditional socio-economic milieu of the region.

The imprint of effective administration (colonial) penetration (extension of territorial control) and localising the impacts of different scales, to a greater extent froze the interests of the minority groups. This resulted in compartmentalisation of the area—each depicting its particular brand of political, economic and social characteristics and interactions.

Colonial requirements, however, demanded (and were in fact carried out in a manner that was) a system that was not too controlled, in the Brahmaputra valley. This gave way to

construction of road and railway networks linking the producing areas with the points of export (in this instance with Calcutta and to a lesser extent Chittagong), growth of towns, spread of education, extension of missionary activities in the interior and peripheral hill areas and other related factors drew the inhabitants of the region from the traditional matrices to broad socio-cultural communications encouraged by the administrators. This was powerful and had profound impact on the inhabitants, particularly in terms of demands. Yet, it was apparent that the peripheral hill areas of the Brahmaputra valley were largely ignored and remained subservient to the interests of the valley and administrators.

Broadly speaking, British annexation of the region in 1826, transformed the traditional equations in the region. Location of major population groups and sub-groups was, more or less, permanent with only few groups in the eastern and southern sections of the regions continuing the realignment and relocation. The traditional base of subsistence was geared towards commercial exploitation of resources to garner to the needs of the colonial interests. This was followed by significant reorientation and transformation of social and political milieu. This also brought the region within the national and international gambits and influences for the first time. As a result, traditional equations and adjustments within and between the groups became no longer valid. In its place, competition for space and the attendant consequences became the concern of population of the region. In post-independence period, this aspect along with others became important in administrative re-organisation.

Prior to 1947, the region was divided into Assam, consisting of Garo, Khasi and Jaintiya hills, North Cachar and Mikir hills, the Naga Hills, the Lushai hills; North-Eastern

Frontier tracts and the territories of Manipur and Tripura (Chaube, 1967). Later, after independence till date, following changes took place-

- i) North-Eastern Frontier Tracts was renamed as North-Eastern Frontier Agency in the 1950's, it continued to under the purview of the Centre and Assam state. Mainpur and Tripura became the Union Territories.
- ii) Naga Hills became a separate state and was carved out of the Assam province; Naga Hills, Tuensang area and the area occupied by the Konyak Naga Tribe in Present Arunachal Pradesh were merged together to form the state of Nagaland in 1953.
- iii) Between 1963 and 1969, there was all round opposition to the language bill promulgated by the Assam Government from the tribal population. This culminated in formation of Meghalaya as a autonomous unit in 1969. It attained full statehood in 1972. Manipur and Tripura was also elevated to full statehood in 1972. The same year, Lushai hills or Mizoram was elevated to the status of Union Territory from a district in Assam. North-Eastern Frontier Agency was renamed Arunachal Pradesh and became a Union Territory.

The Union Territories of Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh became full fledged states in 1987.

SEPARATIST TENDENCIES IN THE NORTH-EASTERN REGION

The dissatisfaction among the ethnic minorities, along with its manifestations, has become a matter of central concern today (both from the point of the country as well as the region) It has remained a dominant theme in the historical development of the region (Gait, 1926;

Bhuyan, 1949). Pre-Ahom and post-Ahom periods (the colonial period) and the post-independence periods were replete with instances when the Governments were faced with the onerous task of maintaining the territorial unity and political stability of their respective units. This was in the background of possible isolation and disintegration. Yet, it is abundantly clear that the population per se did not become active participants in movements for separation and independence in the initial formal phases (Bernard, 1957). This participation and involvement was to a large extent influenced by concatenation of events that succeeded the policy decisions and consequent role perception of the inhabitants (Menon, 1958, Mach and Snyder, 1957).

Suffice it to say that, with strong possibilities of achieving separation, the minority ethnic groups found in the fissiparous tendencies elements strengthening their traditional political and social structure that could well withstand the constant pressure from the modernizing influences that pervaded as a result of administrative order in the region after 1826. However, this was not to be so; inter and intra-group conflicts and divergence of interests kept them apart and divided from each other as well as from the development affecting the region also (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970). This was because, irrespective of numerical size, location of the minority groups was strong enough to express their need to strengthen their identity and individuality.

This was reinforced by the fact (that was also valid for the country as such) that -

1. Linguistic/dialect and cultural differences within and between the various population groups in their spatial context as well as in the region itself, persisted and survived strong pressures of assimilation. The minority groups intensified their ac-

tivities after independence (SRC, 1956, Bondurant, 1958).

2. Among the population groups and sub-groups in the region, new interests groups emerged. These groups gradually sought more political power, participation, varying degree of autonomy for their respective territorial units. They were also able to swing the population to their viewpoints and were able to demonstrate their demands (Desai, 1969, Gundevia, 1969; Roy, 1970).
3. In all cases, common with the rest of the country, perceived and actual exploitation remained one of the major causes (along with social political backwardness) for making demands for redressal and eventually separation. This often spilled over to adjacent territorial units (Desai, 1969; Dutta, 1940; Davy, 1975).

Ethnic minorities and to an extent the majority community also (majority community Assamese in the context of the immigrants) individually encompassed, more or less a relatively homogeneous territory and aimed at resolving their respective problems through prolonged instability and socio-economic stagnation (Gopalkrishnan, 1986).

Separatist movement in the North-Eastern Region of India was a form of challenging the inevitability of assimilation. This became an important carrier of ethnic group identity that provided possibilities of encouraging social and economic regeneration (Whebell, 1973; Smith 1979). At the same time, leaving adequate anomalies for assimilation to take place. Among the cultural distinctive groups in the region (Assam valley is dominated by mongoloid and Indo-Iranian races; hilly peripheries of the valley like Nagaland, etc. are dominated by Tibet-Burman groups of races and in the southern part of the valley along the Garo, Khasi and Jaintia hills, by the Mon-

Khemar group) separatism was resorted to as a justification for separate existence and which provided an ideology full of opportunities (Gross, 1967; Anand,1981; Goswami,1975). In the process, it ensured upward mobility for the members of the ethnic strata who had hitherto to been either denied or excluded from the local-regional power equations (Bhuyan and De, 1940; Barpujari, *et al*,1977).

Aspects of separatism (territorial and ethnic-Williams,1981) in the region blended together and presented a difficult framework. This was reinforced by region's terrain, historical development, variations in needs and perception, etc (Gopalakrishnan,1981).

In the region, the Brahmaputra valley, cachar plains and to an extent the Imphal valley, became the focal points that encouraged development of distinct personality. These became the regional geo-political cores that either controlled the region or permitted access for its eventual conquest and annexation by other powers. The mountainous periphery, surrounding the Brahmaputra valley came within the gambit of these cores and as a result played insignificant role (except as a factor in territorial expansion). Subsequent developments made the region, particularly the mountainous periphery, dependent on the regional and national foci (Goswami, 1963; Guha,1977).

Constant exposure to modernisation processes through extension of administration, missionary activities and participation in the two World Wars, brought greater political awareness among the inhabitants of the region. These fostered a sense of freedom and natural rights of independence through self-determination. This enabled tribal groups like the Nagas, Mizos, Bodos, etc., to formulate separate political ideologies. Their perception and response, was rooted in geographical, histori-

cal and psychological environments; each group emphasised its own priorities of action. In addition to this, they emphasised the separate relationship they had with British India.

However, with the initial sparks of the separatist movements being evident soon after the independence, geographical and historical processes encouraged largescale mobilisation of the population of the strategic mountainous periphery. Socio-economic isolation and inaccessibility provided strong motivation to escalate the movement to wider and interior areas, e. g., intitial stages of insurgency in Nagaland and Mizoram.

Further, demands for separation was made by defined groups through formal organisations to achieve greater political manouvreability and economic independence (if not, at least total autonomy). To an extent, interaction in social realtions brought substantial gains (as in Nagaland and Mizoram, for the first time, it enabled the various tribes and sub-tribes to unite and form a loose confederation to perpetuate separatist movement and finally negotiate with the government for settlement-Anand,1981;Horam,1975; Goswami,1975).

Yet, the events were functionally differentiated and never coincided with the administrative or formal divisions of territory. As a result, inter and intra-unit differences surfaced. It was at this point that the ethnic theme became important explanatory variable. It emphasised the factors of identity, ethnicity and diversity. Through these themes, the minority ethnic groups, whether in Assam or surrounding six states in the North-Eastern Region, expressed the possibilities or restoring their rightful place, status and position (See also Dofny and Akiwowo,1980).

In addition to this, spatial contiguity and dispersion of the tribal population in the region (Roy-Burman,1965) as well as relative uniformity in socio-economic conditions,

suggested the spread of separatism among all the peripheral population groups (these were evident in Nagaland, in Manipur, in Mizoram, in Tripura and latter as a reaction to immigrants in Assam and Meghalaya). The only exception to this in the North-East, were the plain tribals like the Bodos, Kacharis, etc., who are spatially intermingled and were considered part of the majority in an enlarged version. At least this was the inference which the present author was able to make when the anti-migrant movement or the Assam movement was at its height between 1979-85. And, in such circumstances, the ethnic minority groups involved in the movement, exhibited a total lack of geographical distinction and perception that was required for autonomist nationalist movements (Desai, 1969; Agnew, 1981). This was, in turn, reinforced by political and administrative setup in the region. Language and religion exerted considerable influence and were responsible in complicating the problems further.

After independence, the tribal communities inhabiting the mountainous periphery, continued to retain their positions of social and institutional distinctiveness; with the exception that they were brought into the national mainstream. The VIth schedule of the Constitution extended adequate guarantees to these ethnic minorities and safeguarded their interests. For the disenfranchised elements, these measures encouraged them to move towards separate independent existence.

This latter aspect gave a new twist to their ideological positions (as stated by the protagonists of separatism). Identity and positions were subjected to narrow interpretation, often at individual level. Collectively, these were expressed in the forms of demands for a Constitutional status as enjoyed by the state of Jammu and Kashmir in the India Union. In practical terms, these moves aimed at restrict-

ing the scope and level of intermingling while allowing easy access to the factors of modernisation and development (Rokkan and Urwin, 1983).

As a result, the ethnic minorities in the North-Eastern Region of India,

- i) in sizable numbers, were concentrated in specific locations and were able to exert considerable pressures;
- ii) were concentrated at the top of the social, economic, and political setup and hierarchy in their respective territorial Units. They dominated the land ownership; and,
- iii) with adequate Constitutional and legal safeguards, they were able to achieve maintaining separate identity. (this was strengthened by the fact that each of such prominent population groups and sub-groups was granted statehood (in case of sub-groups, districts); some got through peaceful transition like the Garo, Khasis and Jaintiya - Meghalaya; or some through violence like Mizos Mizoram or Nagaland for the Nagas.

Development of the Movements in the North-Eastern Region

The region had continuously exhibited the dominant role of the centrifugal factors that divided the people and the territory constantly. The region frequently succumbed to pressures. This enabled the population elements to continuously strive towards autonomy if not separation. However, with the consolidation of the region and administrative re-organisation that gave different population elements a political outlook and a strong ideological basis, many instances of social political movements came to be treated as law and order problem.

Reviewing the events that led to separatist movements in the region, it is clear that—

a) Nagaland had remained the cradle of insurgent movement in the region. Tracing its background to pre-independence period, Naga movement gathered momentum after independence. In 1953-54, intense political activity encompassed all the areas of the state. In 1956, the military phase was initiated when all the tribes joined hands and rose against the Central Government. It was at this time that the moderate elements began to stress on creation of a separate Nagaland within the Indian Union. This led to merger of Naga hills, Tuensang area and Konyak territory to form the state of Nagaland. This proposal was accepted and the State of Nagaland came into being in December, 1963.

While keeping the doors for negotiation open, the Central Government stepped up the counter-insurgency operations. The success of the operations were evident from gradual weakening of the insurgent base. The insurgents were, for the first time beset with the problems of desertion, surrender by sections of activists and loss of population support. Frequent cessation of hostilities was brought into force at the intervention of the moderates. These efforts finally paid off in 1975, when the Shillong Accord was signed by the Central Government and the insurgents. This officially brought the insurgency in the state to an end. However, there were elements in the insurgent movement who did not accept the Accord, like the Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland, which linked up with insurgent groups in Manipur and Upper Burma, to prolong the insurgency in the state and the region (Anand, 1981; Gundevia, 1969; Chander, 1985).

b) The majority Mizo tribal groups and sub-groups began to express their latest demands for autonomy and separation after the

State Government's failure to provide adequate relief in the famine affected area of the Lushai hills. It was a district in the state. The demand spread to all parts of the district and was led by the protagonist who displayed feudal connections. The military phase of the movement immediately became apparent after the failure of the relief measures. Counter-insurgency operation was soon affected with significant success in restoring the status quo. The dominant element of the movement was the Mizo National Front which continued the insurgent operations from sanctuaries in the Chittagong Hill tracts (now in Bangladesh), from Upper Burma and the inaccessible, densely forested mountainous areas of the area. The 1971, Indo-Pakistan War and the emergence of Bangladesh, restricted the scale of insurgent operations. This was followed by the elevation of the Lushai Hills district in Assam to a Union Territory status for this district that became Mizoram.

Effectiveness of counter-insurgency operations soon became evident when the negotiations between the insurgent elements and the Government started. This was protracted. It was in 1987, that an agreement was reached - the Mizoram Accord - when the hostilities officially came to an end. The political status of the Union Territory was elevated to a full statehood.

c) Even though Mainpur (as compared to other states in the region) has the closest link of cultural affinity with the rest of the country, insurgency has spread to all parts of this unit which was a Union Territory till 1972 and after that a state. This state has fostered many violent separatist movements since the 1960's.

Separatist movement in the state began

with the Naga elements in northern Manipur Hills who advocated Greater Nagaland. Other important groups which have been carrying out insurgent activities in the state are Revolutionary People's Front, People's Liberation Army, People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak, Kangleipak Communist Party and so on.

The wider application of the term 'Kangleipak' by extremist organisations in the state, clearly reflected the perceptions of the insurgents. This was the ancient culture of the area or the pre-hindu Manipur. Normally termed as Meitei extremists, the insurgents have unsuccessfully sought severing of their links with hinduism and encourage development of their ancient culture. In the process, like their Naga and Mizo counterparts, they began seeking assistance from other countries.

Even though, the insurgent elements in the state have forged close links with other similar elements, both within the state and outside the state, there were many structural and ideological differences and cleavages in their association. One of the significant reasons attributed to Meitei fanaticism had been lack of perceived economic development in the state. Insurgent activities and counter insurgency operations continue to dominate the Manipur landscape today.

- d) In Tripura, insurgency was a response of the original tribal inhabitants against the immigrants. The original tribal inhabitants consisted of 19 prominent groups of Tripuri, Reang, Jamatia, Hushai Chakma and others. They were nearly 51% in 1941. This was reduced to 28.5% in 1981 and accounted for less than one-third of population spread over two-thirds of the state's area of 10,491 km². The immigrants, particularly after the partition

overran the tribal heartland. The tribal response to this immigration from the delta was in the form of Reang's revolt in 1943. Later, their response took the shape of a political entity termed as Tripura Upjati Juba Samiti (TUJS) and became a reckoning force in 1967. However, soon open display of violent sentiments by distinct elements led to split within the TUJS ranks. The dissident factions formed the Tripura National Volunteers (TNV) which combined insurgency with terrorism. It tied up with Mizo National Front also.

Yet, the signing up of the Assam Accord and Mizoram Accord, brought in new perspectives and significant reorientation among the insurgents. This was further compounded by Chakma Tribal refugees from Bangladesh. This put immense pressure on the insurgent elements in the state. After, an accord was signed between the insurgents and the Government that brought this movement to an official end.

- e) In Assam, the problem of immigrants assumed a wider socio-political and socio-economic ramifications. The native inhabitants viewed the immigrant population (which started right from the time of British annexation of the area and opening up of the area in 1826) as a threat to their identity and economic well-being. And, termed this as Cultural imperialism by the dominant group of Gangetic delta.

Series of native reactions to this emerged from time to time in a sporadic manner. This was hesitant and slow. It was only in the 1970's, that it became a statewide phenomenon and became a protracted struggle. This lasted from 1979 to 1985, in which the protagonists of the movement resorted to blockades, strikes, etc. An agreement

was reached between the leaders of the movement and the Government in 1985 and came to be known as the Assam Accord. (Gopalakrishnan, 1986). However, like other movements in the region, there were extremists also in the movement. These elements were known as ULFA who have now resorted to terrorism.

All these situations indicated the stress and strains that had continuously exerted pressure on the inhabitants of the region. This had resulted in the reorganisations in the existing regional arrangements and are distinct expressions of regionalism.

Yet, some of these movements that have put sub-national demands have proved to be counter productive. This is because of the growing complexity of social and economic relations within the major population groups and sub-groups. This has led to demands that require serious re-thinking of the existing spatial arrangements in the existing administrative units in the region.

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Movements in the North-Eastern Region have enough attributes to be classified under the broad category of socio-political movements. These have distinct political geography features like inaccessibility, isolation, scarce but dispersed resource endowments, and so on. Many of them have shown weak resource base and strong political ideology base.

Most of the observers of these movements particularly insurgency in the region have emphasised on the aspects propagated by the protagonists of the movements. What has been conveniently avoided has been why these movements in the North-East have shown greater tendency to turn into full scale insurgency frequently adopting extra-constitutional

means to attain their respective objectives. Most of the problems faced by different administrative units of the region are of socio-economic nature. And, in order to achieve parity with other parts of the country in socio-economic developments and political representation on the local, regional and national level, insurgency as a means, seems to be a weak form of redressal.

Continuous instability, in one form or the other, has radically transformed the priorities of spatial arrangements in the region; so that no population groups or sub-group could claim exclusive rights over specific locale. The resultant dilemma, transformed itself into either with holding a group or encouraged them to strive towards self-determination.

Full self-determination in the present day context is unlikely to be conceded or supported. Some considerations and arrangements within the existing administrative system, that allowed the different population elements to exercise their choice through which they can retain their identity and status. It also allowed for possible territorial restructuring. In short policy of accommodation extended to local and regional scales.

In addition to this, the impact of immigrants on the regional landscape has been profound and compelled the inhabitants to reassess their position. But, the situations as they developed indicated the operation of the tension parameters that were directly and indirectly abetted by region's geography and history. These parameters, (1) natives versus outsiders, and (2) natives versus natives, became part of the socio-economic and political crisis and centred around resource allocation and transfers, political participation and decision-making.

Pace of change was slow and specific. Factors of transportation and communication and inaccessibility continued to hinder the spatial spread of development and encouraged the

centrifugal tendencies. For example, both Nagaland and Mizoram exhibited extremely backward socio-economic scenario over and above difficult topographic conditions. This to a large extent thwarted any effective large-scale efforts to accelerate development. Even today, despite better infrastructural facilities available, the pace of development could not keep up with the expectations and aspirations of the people. This, along with sympathetic population both within and across the international frontiers enabled the protagonists to move towards separation. Inherent in such attempts was the possibility of overcoming the natural obstacles and accelerating the development process in their respective areas.

Yet, there has been a conspicuous regional cum ethnic protests movement that continued to make its impact in the region. The Assam movement, insurgency in Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram or in Tripura as well as the plain tribal movement in Assam today, consistently brought to the surface a historical pattern of geographical politics.

This suggested that the multi-ethnic mosaic of the region with several layers of identity contained potential for political expressions including separatism. The question that needs to be resolved is therefore, how, when and to what extent, there is a metamorphosis from social and geographical distinctiveness to political expression.

Thus, the locational perspective offered by the North-Eastern Region of India, can be viewed from both within and outside, as an essential feature towards understanding the complex social political processes that shaped the response reaction of the inhabitants. This led to different forms of ethno-regional movements. Further, if it can be assumed that the nature and pattern of systems in operation in the area, is of local character, then, it can be stated as affecting the strategy of the inhabi-

tants or those factors that have induced changes in the region's structure.

However, such trends have encouraged the development of a political myth which encouraged the growth of local and regional movements. These instances were related to the perceived needs of the inhabitants and were closely linked with aspects of power (political) and resource. This had remained paramount and had far reaching impact in shaping the course of events.

This left profound changes in the regional landscape and enabled the consequences to undermine the process of unification of the local and regional territorial units with the mainstream. What was and is essentially needed was the perception and attitude that encouraged the process of interdependence, of agglomeration, spatial pattern of resource-use and diffused features of values and symbols.

Analysing the political decisions, transactions and their diffusion in the region - through time - it can be said that it has resulted in area formation and area interaction. It has not only influenced the basic political structure of the various population groups and sub-groups but also introduced fundamental changes in the landscape. It can be argued, therefore, that it was this aspect that enabled the establishment to recognise the conformity between the political action area and the original political area (geographical) of the North-East. Yet, lack of conformity had been accepted in some quarters as challenging the effectiveness and legitimacy of the government.

In this context, it can also be stated that the nature and extent of situations have to be viewed as a part of participation and transactions in the political geographical processes. What has risen in the region was that the action area came as a product of reorganisation. It was a mosaic of conflicts between

territoriality and political perception of space. Action area often extended well beyond the original political area. This often led one to question the validity of the fact that landscape changes stemming from the reinforcing processes often created a basis for converting the action area into new political area. This ultimately influenced the ideological positions of the action groups (protagonists of movements) to include consolidation, amalgamation and later separation in their stand.

These points have been raised in this paper largely because North-East has distinct

counter action areas which are territorially based on perception of space and functionally coincident with the area. In fact the societal factors that operate in the region preceded the political processes. But, obviously these forces were receptive to change and resulted in conflict between traditionalism and modernism. This had significant impact on space, area and landscape. Thus, the totality of the separatist movements in the North-Eastern Region, is the amalgamation and interaction of the political processes and geographical space.

REFERENCES

- Anand, V. K., (1981) *Conflict in Nagaland*, New Delhi.
- Bachrach, P. and Baratz, M. S., (1970) *Power and Poverty : Theory and Practice*, New York.
- Barpujari, H. K., et al., (1977) *Political History of Assam*, 3 vols. Guwahati.
- Bernard, J., (1957) "Parties and Issues in Conflict", *Journal of Conflict and Resolution*, V.1(2).
- Bhuyan, A. C., and De, S. P., (1940) *Political History of Assam*, Guwahati.
- Bhuyan, S. K., (1949) *The History of Ahoms*, Gauhati.
- Bondurant, J. V., (1958) *Regionalism versus Provincialism; A study in problems of Indian National Unity*, Indian Press Digest, Monograph series No.4, Berkeley.
- Chander, S., (1985) *Nature and Pattern of Insurgency in Nagaland A Geographical Analysis*, Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, North-Eastern Hills University, Shillong.
- Chaube, S. K., (1967) *Hill Politics in the North-East*, Delhi.
- Davvy, B., (1975) *Economic Development of India; A Marxist Analysis*, Bristol.
- Desai, A. R., (ed) (1968) *People's movement in India*, Bombay.
- Dutt, R. P., (1940) *India Today*, Calcutta.
- Dofny, J. and Akiwowo, A. (1980) *National and Ethnic Movements*, Sage, Pal Alto.
- Gait, E. W., (1926) *History of Assam*, Calcutta.
- Gopalakrishnan, R., (1981) "Environmental considerations in geo-political studies; and analysis of the nature and pattern of insurgency in North-East India", *Proc. Third Annual Conference, National Association of Geographers*, India, New Delhi.
- (1986) "Geographical Aspects of a crisis in the Brahmaputra Valley", *Indian Journal of Political Science*, V.48(3) 366-82.
- (1988) "North-East India: Its profile and Typology", in Rahamathullah, B.(ed) North-East India, forthcoming.
- Goswami, B. B., (1975) *Unrest in Mizoram*, Delhi.
- Goswami, P., (1963) *Economic Development of Assam*, Gauhati.
- Guha A., (1977) *Planters Raj to Searaj*, New Delhi.
- Horam, M., (1975) *Naga Polity*, Delhi.
- Knight, D. B., (1982) "Identity and Territory: geographical perspectives on nationalism and regionalism". *Annals, Association of American Geographer*. V.72, 514-31.

- Kothari, R., (1970) *Politics in India*, Orient Longmans, Delhi.
- Mach, R. W., and Snyder, R. C., (1957) "The analysis of social conflict-towards an overview and synthesis". *Journal of Conflict and Resolution*, V. 1(2).
- Rokkan, S., and Urwin, D. W., (1983) *Economy, Territory and Identity*, Sage, London.
- Menon, V. P., (1968) *Transfer of Power*, Longmans, Delhi.
- Roy, Amal (1970) *Tension Areas in Indian Federalism*, Calcutta.
- Roy-Burman, B. K., (1965) Demographic Profile of the North-East India, *Census of India*, Delhi.
- Spatte, O. H. K. and Learmonth, A. T., (1968) *India - A General and Regional Geography*, Methuen London.
- Smith, A. D., (1979) "Towards a theory of ethnic separatism", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 2(1), 21-37.
- State Re-Organisation Commission Report*, 1956, Government of India Delhi.
- Subbarao, M. S., (1956) *Personality of India*, Baroda.

ADDRESS OF THE AUTHOR

Dr. R. Gopalakrishnan
Department of Geography
North-Eastern Hill University,
Shillong.