

**SUB-REGIONAL RELATIONS IN
THE EASTERN SOUTH ASIA:
With Special Focus on India's North Eastern Region**

**Edited by
Mayumi Murayama
Kyoko Inoue
Sanjoy Hazarika**

Joint Research Program Series No.133

INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPING ECONOMIES
IDE-JETRO

Prof. A. C. Sinha

**SUB-REGIONAL RELATIONS IN
THE EASTERN SOUTH ASIA:
With Special Focus on India's North Eastern Region**

**Edited by
Mayumi Murayama
Kyoko Inoue
Sanjoy Hazarika**



Joint Research Program Series No.133

INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPING ECONOMIES
IDE-JETRO

CONTENTS

List of Contributors	iv
Acknowledgement	v
Introduction	Mayumi Murayama1
1. Objectives of the Research.....	1
2. Rationale of the Research.....	2
3. Field Trip.....	3
4. Some Findings.....	4
Chapter 1: Integration of the North East	Kyoko Inoue17
1. Brief History of the North East	18
2. States Formation of the North East after Independence	20
3. The Case of State Formation for the Nagaland	24
4. The Formation of the North Eastern States	26
5. Conclusion.....	28
Chapter 2: Arunachal Pradesh	AC Sinha33
1. Land and People	34
2. Evolution of Arunachal Pradesh.....	35
3. British Himalayan Policy	36
4. The Tea Factor	37
5. Abor Expedition and its Consequences.....	39
6. Arunachal Pradesh in the Indian Union.....	39
7. Sino-Indian Border Dispute.....	40
8. Arunachal and her Neighbouring States.....	44
9. Potential for Trade and Commerce across the Boundaries.....	45
10. Prospects of Industry	46
11. Ranching and Meat Processing Industry	47
12. Eco and Adventure Tourism.....	48
13. Conclusions	48
Chapter 3: Assam	Udayon Misra51
1. The Ahom Period (1328-1826)	51

2. The British Period (1826-1947)	57
3. Independence and After.....	60
Chapter 4: Manipur	Bhagat Oinam67
1. Introduction: Land and People	67
2. Polity and Politics.....	70
3. Agriculture, Industry and Traditional Economy.....	77
4. Infrastructure and Trade	85
5. India's Look East Policy	95
6. Conclusion: Challenges and Prospects.....	105
Chapter 5: Meghalaya	MN Karna.....113
1. Meghalaya: A Profile	113
2. Location and Demographic Scenario	113
3. Social Structure	116
4. Agrarian Structure and Land Relations	117
5. Economy.....	123
6. Meghalaya and the Sixth Schedule.....	129
7. Traditional Institutions of Governance.....	133
8. Identity Politics	137
9. Economics and Politics, Centre-State Relations.....	142
10. Traditional Trade.....	144
11. Contemporary Border Trade	147
12. Prospect for Sub-Regional Economic Cooperation.....	150
13. Potential of Sub-Regional Cooperation.....	151
Chapter 6: Mizoram	Lal Pudaite155
1. Physical Features.....	155
2. Socio-Political Structure.....	159
3. Economic Profile.....	176
4. Relations with Neighbouring Regions.....	186
Chapter 7: Nagaland	Charles Chasie243
1. Land and people	243
2. Religion	245
3. Political History.....	245
4. Nagaland State.....	249

5.	The Economy	250
6.	Strengths.....	252
7.	Summary	253
8.	Relations with Assam, Manipur and Myanmar.....	255
9.	Nagaland – Assam.....	259
10.	Nagaland – Manipur.....	263
11.	Nagaland – Myanmar	266
12.	Trade with Myanmar	270
13.	Does Present Trade Help NE Economy?.....	271
14.	Nagaland Initiatives.....	272
Chapter 8: Sikkim		AC Sinha.....277
1.	Land and People	278
2.	Political and Economic Profile.....	281
3.	Sikkim and India	285
4.	Sikkim and its Immediate Region	294
5.	Eco-Tourism, Mountain Tourism.....	296
Chapter 9: Tripura		Arunodoy Saha.....301
1.	Background: Land and People	301
2.	Agartala - Shared by Two Countries	306
3.	Population Dynamics	307
4.	Relationship with Bangladesh.....	312
5.	Conclusion.....	316

List of Contributors

- Charles Chasie** **Activist and Researcher, Kohima, Nagaland**
- Sanjoy Hazarika** **Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research (C-NES),
Guwahati and New Delhi (also Consulting Editor of The Statesman,
film maker and author)**
- Kyoko Inoue** **Daito Bunka University, Japan**
- M.N.Karna** **Former Professor, Department of Sociology, North Eastern Hill
University, Shillong, Meghalaya**
- Udayon Misra** **Department of English, Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh, Assam**
- Mayumi Murayama** **South Asian Studies Group, Institute of Developing Economies
(IDE-JETRO)**
- Bhagat Oinam** **Department of Philosophy, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New
Delhi**
- Lal Pudaite** **Former Ambassador of India to Myanmar, Aizawl, Mizoram**
- Arunodoy Saha** **Department of Economics, Tripura University, Agartala, Tripura**
- A.C. Sinha** **Former professor, Department of Sociology, North Eastern Hill
University, Shillong, Meghalaya (currently in New Delhi)**

Acknowledgement

Many individuals and organisations in Japan and India extended their cooperation and shared information, for which we would like to express our utmost gratitude. Here, their names are enlisted with profound appreciation. Although some of the names may not have been included in the list due to my not being able to note down all the names whom we met, I would like to emphasize that their kind support has not slipped out of our memories.

In Japan, Ms. Etsuyo Arai and Ms. Yoshiko Suzuki, the colleagues at IDE-JETRO, Mr. Hiroshi Sato, former Director of IDE-JETRO, Professor Masanori Koga, Professor Akinobu Kawai and Professor Kei Nemoto were a source of intellectual stimulus. The timely and flexible administrative support by Ms. Kumiko Sakumoto was an indispensable part of the project.

It was a pleasant and memorable experience to work with the Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research (C-NES). Besides those who contributed with insightful articles, we are extremely grateful to those who assisted the research and coordinated the visit of Japanese team to India; Ms. Patricia Mukhim, activist and scholar, Shillong, Meghalaya; Mr. Ajay Kumar Gupta, an entrepreneur, Shillong; Mr. Sanjay Sharma, Coordinator, C-NES, Guwahati; Mr. Prakash Gogoi, researcher, C-NES, Dibrugarh; Mr. Sandeep Vats, C-NES, New Delhi and Mr. and Mrs. Manoj Jalan, an entrepreneur in Dibrugarh.

I would like to record special thanks to the following people who shared their variable time and information; Mr. S. Majumder (JETRO, New Delhi), Mr. Gopal Pillai and Ms. Shefali Shah (Ministry of Commerce & Industry), Lt.Gen. V.K.Nayar (C-NES), Mr. Subir Ghosh (Northeast Vigil), Mr. Subimal Bhattacharjee (Argus Integrated Systems), Dr. Rajan Katoch and Mr. C.Laldinliana (Planning Commission), Mr. Kumar Tuhin, Mr. Ashok Kantha and Ms. Neelam Deo (Ministry of External Affairs), Lt. Gen. B.S. Malik, Mr. Anjan Roy (FICCI), Mr. S. Ghosh (Consulting Engineering Services), Mr. Prabir De (RIS), Dr. T. Kumar and Dr. Suranjit Mitra (DONER), Prof. B. Bhattacharyya (Institute

for Integrated Learning in Management), Mr.Sudeep Banerjee and Mr. C. Balakrishnan (Ministry of Human Resource Development), Mr. Ajay Singh (Governor, Assam), Mr. Himangshu Sekhar Das (Government of Assam), Mr. Dileep Chandan (Asam Bani), Mr. D.D. Lapang (Chief Minister, Meghalaya) and his colleague ministers, Mr. Peter James Bazeley and other high officials (Government of Meghalaya), Mr. P.L.Thanga (NEC), Dr. Belajied Syiem (Syiem of Khyrim), Mr. A.H. Scott Lyngdoh (former Finance Minister of Meghalaya) and his family, Mr. M.M.Jacob (Governor, Meghalaya), Prof. Mrinal Miri, Prof. Darlando Khathing and his colleagues (North Eastern Hill University), Mr. Chris Cajee (Anderson), Mr. Prabhat Sawyan and Mr. Larsing. M. (Centre Point Group Enterprise), Mr. Ramesh Bawri (Meghalaya State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission), Mr. Archie Kharpuri and Mr. A. Zulf (Grace Systems), Mr. A. Bhattacharjee (Superintendent) and his officers (Land Customs Station, Dawki), Mr. Subhash Agarwala, and Mr. Sudip De, Mr. Sanjib Lahkar, and Mr. Chinmoy Sharma (FINER: Federation of Industries & Commerce of North Eastern Region), Mr. Anil Saraf (AB Group), Mr. Abhijit Barooah (Premier Cryogenics), Prof. Sanjib Baruah and his colleagues (CENISEAS), Mr. Chiranjit Chaliha, Mr. D.K.Sarma, Mr. Sanjib Baruah, Ms. Sonia Nangia Chaudhuri (NECCI: North East Chamber of Commerce & Industry), Jatin Hazarika (Assam Administrative Reforms Commission), the villagers of Kurua, Darrang District, Dr. Jayanta Madhab (C-NES), Dr. Mahfuza Rahman (Rashtriya Gramin Vikas Nidhi), Mr. K. Ahmed and Mr. Gautam Dutta (Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship), Dr. Monisha Behal (North East Network), Prof. Abu Nasar Saied Ahmed (Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development), Mr. Sushant Kumar Pal (South Asia Enterprise Development Facility), Mr. Tarun Gogoi (Chief Minister, Assam Government), Mr. Pradyut Bordoloi (Minister, Assam Government), Mr. J.P. Saikia and his officers (NEDFi: North-Eastern Development Finance Corporation), Dr. M. Ahmed (R & D Centre, NEDFi), Mr. Robin Borthakur, Mr. Harihar Dass, Mr. Rajesh Misra, Col. Retd. P.K.Ghosh, Mr. Harkirat Singh Sidhu, and Mr. Mahesh Saharia, (Bharatiya Char Parishad, Dibrugarh), Mr. Ranjeet Das and Mr. Doljit Pagging, Ms. Atu Jamir and Mr. Manas (Purvi Discovery), Bhikkhu Prajnasiri (Namphakey Buddhist Monastery), Prof. R.K.Kar, Prof. K.K.Deka, Prof. H. Goswami, Prof. S.D.Goswami, Prof. S.K.Sarma, Prof. Archana Upadhyay, Prof. Tilottoma Misra, Prof. Shiela Bore, Prof. B.N.Borthakur, Prof. R.C. Baruah, Prof. Bhim Kanta Boruah (Dibrugarh University), Prof. Kalpana Khound

(D.H.S.K.Commerce College), Mr. Sarabjit Singh (Williamson Tea Assam Ltd), Mr. Sidhartha Sharma (J. Thomas & Co.), Mr. M.C.Bore (Coal India Ltd), Mr. Sarma, Mr. Mahantha, and Mr. Nandan Saikia (Indian Oil Corporation), Mr. J.K. Talukder, Mr. Mohan Bhandary, Mr. Ganesh Baruah, Mr. R.K.Sachdeva, Mr. Nripen Bharali, Mr. Joyanto Borgohain, Mr. T. Hussain, Mr. Prosanto Borkakoty, Ms. Deepanjali Borborah and Mr. Bijan Goswami (Oil India Ltd.), Prof. S. Sengupta, Prof. Farida Ahmed Das and their students (Department of Anthropology, Dibrugarh University), Mr. Mr. Sudhir Nath (Library, Dibrugarh University), Prof. A.C.Bhagabati, Prof. Birinchi Kumar Medhi, and Dr. S.K.Roy (Guwahati University), Mr. Shantikam Hazarika, Dr. N.N.Sarma, Dr. A.K.Sharma, Dr. R.P.Kakoti, and Ms. K.B. Baruah (Assam Institute of Management), Dr. M.S. Prabhakara (Special Correspondent, The Hindu and Frontline), and Prof. Imtiaz, Ahmed (Dhaka University).

Editors

Introduction

Mayumi Murayama

1. Objectives of the Research

The present study forms part of a research project entitled 'Potential of Regional Relations among Eastern South Asian Countries' that is being conducted at IDE-JETRO during the 2004 financial year. The Eastern South Asia sub-region is defined in our study as the area comprising Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and the states of West Bengal, eight states of North Eastern India. We have also included Myanmar and Yunnan Province of China because of their contiguity with, and growing importance over, the sub-region.

This study, which focuses attention on the North Eastern Region of India, follows previous studies conducted jointly with the Centre for Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh and the Centre for Bhutan Studies (Inoue, Murayama, Rahmatullah and Centre for Bhutan Studies 2004). IDE-JETRO approached the Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research (C-NES), India, because of the latter's active involvement in issues concerning India's North Eastern Region not only in the field of research but also as regards development programmes and projects as well as policy making. The wide and balanced human and organizational network of C-NES has made an indispensable contribution to our entire project.

The study has three objectives: firstly, to garner fundamental information with respect to the current state of economic, political and social inter-relatedness among the constituent areas of the North Eastern Region as well as with surrounding countries and regions, and secondly to seek out the down-to-earth views of local people, governments, the business sector and civil society organisations towards the future course of sub-regional co-operation. Lastly, through our research, we intend to deepen our understanding of the problems and potential of the North Eastern Region, which has hitherto been a rather a neglected area in our work on South Asia.

2. Rationale of the Research

While our objective is first and foremost to analyse the scope of socio-economic development through the strengthening of regional cooperation in South Asia, we wish to focus, mainly on practical as well as on academic grounds, on Eastern South Asia in particular, rather than on the whole of the South Asian region.

From a practical point of view, we can cite the recent development of the 'Look East' stance in some of the South Asian nations and of several sub-regional initiatives in the region. In the current global economic context, various initiatives to integrate national economies have been promoted at bilateral, sub-regional and regional levels. In the case of South Asia, however, the development of a regional framework, namely the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the consolidation of amicable bilateral relationships have been disappointingly slow. In response to this stagnation of relationships within South Asia, some countries in search of meaningful economic partnerships, including India and Bangladesh, have been increasingly looking east beyond the region, especially to ASEAN and China, whose economies are growing rapidly.

Meanwhile, since the latter half of the 1990s, new moves for strengthening sub-regional ties within the eastern part of South Asia have been gradually given shape by the initiatives of various actors including governments, the private sector, civil society institutions and multinational agencies. Included amongst these are the South Asian Growth Quadrangle (SAGQ), BIMST-EC, the Kunming Initiative (BCIM), and the Asian Land Transport and Infrastructure Development (ALTID) programme¹. We would like to clarify to what extent the 'Look East' policies and the 'sub-regional frameworks' are realistic approaches given the economic, political and social conditions of Eastern South Asia.

In the academic field, studies of regional cooperation among the countries of South Asia have so far tended to concentrate on economic cooperation between the various nation states. Despite numerous meetings and writings on SAARC, the regional association has made little headway in terms of strengthening economic and political ties. Thus, studies on SAARC *per se* seem to remain largely theoretical or normative in nature. On the other hand, focusing on bilateral relationships of particular countries has often fallen short in respect of both the macro framework of looking at issues in broad terms and the micro information

that is needed to reflect local realities. In this project, we take an intermediate approach to the issue of regional or sub-regional co-operation. In taking that approach, we delimit our field of study to the sub-region of Eastern South Asia while also looking beyond the limits posed by the boundaries of nation states.

In the methodological approach described above, the North Eastern Region of India is of great importance due to its geographical location. It not only occupies a central position in Eastern South Asia, bordering with all other countries and states, but is also a bridge for connecting the Subcontinent with East and the Southeast Asia. The North East has been a crossroads for people, trade and culture since ancient times. It will resume this function again in the future if sub-regional cooperation makes real progress. In reality, however, the post-colonial framework of nation-states and subsequent changes in bilateral relationships have served to hinder rather than promote the expansion of regional integration. Instead, an incessant flow of people across the borders of the North Eastern Region has instigated tensions among people competing for scarce economic and political resources.

An analysis of the sub-regional relationship from the perspective of the North Eastern Region would entail a complexity additional to that of a single country or a state, for the North East is a group of independent states in India as well as a region within India. The former fact raises the question of whether conflicts of interest might occur among the individual states of the North East as well as among different ethnic and social groups of people within the individual states. The latter point concerns the relationship between the Centre and the states, and how this relationship affects the North East. The relationship with the Centre has a far-reaching influence by way of limiting the power of the individual state to make decisions with respect to the promotion of sub-regional co-operation. Therefore, we should take note of the diverse views of people regarding sub-regional relationships and also look into their embedded social, economic and political conditions.

3. Field Trip

The field trip was made for the duration of three weeks from August to September 2004². We visited New Delhi, Guwahati and Dibrugarh in Assam and Shillong and Dawki in Meghalaya. Thanks to the wide network of the C-NES, we were

given opportunities to meet people who were concerned with the problems of the North Eastern Region in various capacities including government officials, business representatives, academics and other members of civil society.

4. Some Findings

Detailed information concerning each state and its politico-economic relationships with surrounding states and countries is presented in the subsequent chapters. Here, as an introduction, I will briefly summarize points that occurred to me during the course of the interviews that were held during our visit. It should be emphasised that these essentially casual observations need to be followed up and substantiated by future in-depth research.

It is not a matter of money?

Our trip started from New Delhi where we met several high officials of the Planning Commission and also of Ministries relevant to our research, including Commerce, External Affairs, DONER (Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region), and Human Resources. A renewed emphasis on the development of the North Eastern Region was orchestrated through the voices of the government officials.

Since the latter half of 1990s, there has been a shift in the approach of the central government towards the North Eastern Region. In 1996 the then Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda announced a Rs.6,100 crore economic package, following his visit to the region. This was endorsed by his successor I.K. Gujral. The previous BJP Government led by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee provided another package of Rs.10,217 crores in 1998 to boost the region's development. As well as the 'gifts' by successive prime ministers, there is a stipulated allocation for the North Eastern Region from the budgets of the central Ministries/Departments. In October 1996, under the 'New Initiatives for North Eastern Region', it was stipulated that at least 10 percent of those budgets should be earmarked for the development of the North Eastern states. Responding to a fall in expenditure below the 10 percent target, the BJP government, following the Lok Sabha elections of 1998, created a Non-lapsable Central Pool of Resources (NLCPR). NLCPR pools the unspent balance of the budgets of the central Ministries/Departments concerned. The broad objective of the NLCPR scheme is

to ensure speedy development of infrastructure in the North Eastern Region by increasing the flow of budgetary financing for new infrastructure projects and schemes in the region. For the financial year 2003/04, NLCPR approved support for the projects amounting to a total of Rs. 3,484.76 crores against the opening balance of Rs. 3,643.67 crores (DONER 2004). Along with the administration of NLCPR, matters related to the planning, execution and monitoring of development schemes and projects of the North Eastern Region have been handled by DONER. It should be noted that DONER is the only Ministry of the Indian government that deals exclusively with a specific region. DONER was initially created as a Department in 2001 and was upgraded to a Ministry in May 2004 under the present Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government. The continued interest of the central government in the issues of the North Eastern region has been confirmed by the fact that the region has been proclaimed as a national issue in the National Common Minimum Programme.

However, the earmarked allocations have not been fully realised. The actual expenditure in the North Eastern States by the various central Ministries/Departments in 2002/03 was 8.54 percent, below the target of 10 percent, although an improvement has been registered over the years as the rate was 6.63 percent in 1998/99 (DONER 2004). At both the Centre and in the states of the North Eastern Region, there are factors inhibiting the smooth flow of money. A high official of DONER refers to the absorption capacities of the states at the stage of budget implementation. Although DONER admits monitoring and evaluation of projects has been essential for successful utilisation of resources, and several measures have been taken including frequent visits to the projects by high-ranking officials, close monitoring is hindered due to delays and to flaws in the reports submitted by the state governments.

In the eyes of the people of the North Eastern Region, the states are not solely responsible for the under-utilisation of central funds. A senior official in the North Eastern Council (NEC) based in Shillong states that the Centre's decisions are often not suited to the realities of the North East. For instance, construction of a number of small-scale dams is considered preferable to the building of a large-scale dam, a choice of the Centre, because the latter could cause irreversible social and environmental impacts and does not fit the topographical conditions of the North East. In general, the societies of the North Eastern Region have a problem of adapting to systems devised by the Centre. According to the official,

the communities of the North East have indigenous systems of governance that are in many ways superior to the unqualified adoption of universal systems imposed by the Centre. However, the laws and regulations enacted by the Centre for application to the North Eastern Region do not take cognisance of indigenous systems and customary laws.

A critique against the central government for its lack of understanding regarding the realities of the North Eastern Region was echoed also by one of the Khasi chieftains (*Syiem*) whom we met in Meghalaya. At issue was the impact of the Supreme Court verdict of 1996, imposing a ban on the felling of trees. Although this case initiated by public interest litigation is considered to be a victory for environmental protection, it abruptly deprived a large number of tribal people of their livelihood without finding them an alternative means of survival. For the chiefdoms, it also meant a loss of their largest source of income in the form of the earnings that they derived from forest products and related levies and tolls³. The *Syiem* questioned the attitude of the Centre as well as the random application of legal judgements to regions which exhibit varied social, economic, cultural and climatic environments (See also Nongbri 2001).

Cleavages exist not only between the Centre and the states but also between Constitutional bodies such as the State Governments and District Councils⁴, and traditional institutions of governance. Khasis have a traditional system of governance called *Dorbar*⁵. The Panchayat Raj local government system was institutionalised by the 73rd and 74th amendment acts of the Constitution in 1992. At that time Meghalaya, along with other areas such as the States of Nagaland and Mizoram, was exempted from implementation of the system because it was equipped with pre-existing self-governance institutions. Nevertheless, conflicts exist between the District Councils and the *Dorbars*. The Sixth Schedule stipulated that the District Council has the power to make laws with respect to the appointment or succession of Chiefs or Headmen. Subsequently, the Succession of Chiefs and Headman Act of 1959 conferred on the District Councils powers to appoint or dismiss any *Syiem* (Mukhim 2004). This tends to cause the arbitrary dismissal of *Syiem*s who are not cooperative from the point of view of the District Councils' officials. The increased flow of development projects is exacerbating this tendency. According to the *Syiem*, the expansion of Indian political system through the State and the Districts has been responsible for a proliferation of corruption. By co-opting rural elites, corruption has also permeated into the traditional systems as well.

On the whole, people accept with respect the authority of traditional institutions. Nevertheless, the indigenous institutions are not free from innate problems, as was pointed out by Patricia Mukhim, our facilitator in Meghalaya. A subtle point is that the *Dorbar* excludes women from assuming leadership (Mukhim, undated). Although the Khasi is a matrilineal society and seemingly more egalitarian, the traditional institution has a clear gender bias whereas Panchayat Raj takes gender issues into consideration as it stipulates that not less than one-third of the seats should be reserved for women. Moreover, there are other 'undemocratic' elements inherent in the traditional system, such as its exclusion of the non-tribal population living in the localities concerned, and its stipulation that only people belonging to a certain clan can elect *Syiem*.

Some of the village *Dorbars* are involved in development projects and according to a top official of Meghalaya government, their indigenous knowledge is highly valued in projects such as natural resource management. Nevertheless, we could not help but conclude that conflicting relationships among the various governance bodies are bound to hinder the smooth implementation of development projects as well as the effective delivery of social services for the people.

The approach of the Centre towards the North Eastern Region was for a long time based on the government's security interests. Earlier, in 1972, the NEC was established as a development wing of the Ministry of Home Affairs. The creation of DONER in 2001 signifies a policy shift towards putting more emphasis on development rather than on security. It is assumed that insurgencies or more moderate forms of general dissatisfaction among the people of the North East will be pacified through providing them with the fruits of development. However, pumping in money without proper streamlining and utilisation has opium-like effects, says Bhagat Oinam of Jawaharlal Nehru University, who is from Manipur. This opinion is endorsed by Jairam Ramesh, Member of Rajya Sabha, in his inaugural lecture at a symposium organised by the Centre for Northeast India, South and Southeast Asia Studies (CENISEAS)⁶. After delineating the paradigm shift in the approaches of the central government towards the North East, Ramesh categorically said, 'public expenditure is the least of the problems as far as the North East is concerned. It's not the problem, in fact it has become the problem' (Ramesh 2004).

Looking for the North Eastern way of development

During our visit to India, we met with the Governors, the Chief Ministers, the Ministers and the high ranking bureaucrats of both Assam and Meghalaya, with business representatives of institutions such as the Federation of Industries and Commerce of North Eastern Region (FINER), the North East Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NECCI), the Confederation of Indian Industries, Assam Chapter, Bharatiya Cha Parishad and a group of Meghalaya-based entrepreneurs, the Indian Oil Corporation, Assam Division and Oil India Limited, with academics at North Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Dibrugarh University, Guwahati University and Assam Institute of Management, with officials of the North Eastern Development Finance Corporation (NEDFI), and we were present at roundtables organised by C-NES and CENISEAS. On each of these occasions, we were made aware of the vast development potential of the North Eastern Region (see for instance NEC 2004). Personally, I am indeed impressed with the abundant natural and human resources of the North East, resources that include the co-habitation of a myriad of different ethnic groups. The North East makes a sharp contrast to its neighbour, Bangladesh, on which I have worked, and to which I therefore referred as an implicit framework of comparison. Nevertheless, compared with Bangladesh, which seems to have discovered its own path of development after numerous experiences of failure, I feel that the North Eastern Region is still in the process of embarking on its course of development⁷.

There is no denying that the region suffers from peculiar constraints especially in relation to political, economic and social integration with the rest of India as well as within the region itself. These constraints make it extremely difficult to reach consensus and to promote concerted efforts for development, the ultimate goal of which is the well-being of the people. Even when the same opinion is expressed by a number of people, it seems to me that there is an absence of coordination among the various organisations and groups of individuals, a failing that reduces the explanatory power that they deserve. An example of another kind of difficulty is that in the North Eastern Region the social space of NGOs is limited compared with Bangladesh where NGOs have managed to occupy leading positions in the development discourse, especially with respect to social development and poverty reduction. An important reason for this is the problem of the credentials of the NGOs which, in the view of the government which anticipates the arrival of a great number of such organisations, have links with anti-government militancy

groups. Because of this, a high official of DONER states that partnership with NGOs is very difficult. On the other hand, we should not neglect the fact that so-called 'insurgent' groups have in a way facilitated development activities by drawing attention to localities about which the government was previously indifferent. (Hazarika 1994). As already mentioned, the indigenous institutions are also playing a role of development catalysts⁸. And then there are government agencies. Thus, there is a plethora of development agencies and capable individuals all differing in their approaches. What makes it more difficult for the North East is that differences of opinions and approaches tend to be solved by means of arms and money and not by dialogue.

That promoting economic relationships, particularly trade with the surrounding countries, is an important key for the development of the North Eastern Region was one of the common views shared by the people we met. It was stressed that promoting trade is not just for economic advantage, but that trade would bring with it different kinds of relationship as mentioned by Mrinal Miri, Vice-Chancellor of NEHU. With respect to the insurgency problem, too, trade might open a new vista for coping with contentious issues through involving people beyond man-made borders in dialogue (Baruah 2004).

In the various sub-regional initiatives mentioned above, the North Eastern Region occupies a strategic location. Nevertheless, the geographical advantages of the North Eastern Region do not necessarily ensure the continuation of its role as a main player in initiatives developed since the 'Look East' policy of India. The interests of China could well advance in directions that bypass the region while, moreover, the North East could be dragged down by age-old confrontational politics within and beyond its borders. At this particular juncture, there is a pressing need to grasp the opportunities of the moment, and exploit them with a carefully worked-out plan for bringing the utmost benefits to the region's people. In this regard, the efforts of networking by civil society groups such as C-NES and CENISEAS, and the convergence forum involving businessmen, academics and other members of civil society in Dibrugarh referred to by Manoj Jalan, an entrepreneur, are highly welcome as contributions toward the creation of synergy effects. Sanjib Baruah of CENISEAS states that in order to overcome the opposition to sub-regional cooperation, which is based on security concerns, it is necessary to fire people's imaginations as to what sub-regional cooperation can achieve.

Perceptions towards the Neighbouring Countries: Myanmar and Bangladesh

Although a new perspective is important, when one considers sub-regional cooperation, one needs to be realistic and specific, warns Sanjoy Hazarika of C-NES, our main facilitator. His comments were made in relation to the re-opening of the Stilwell Road. This road connecting Ledo, Assam and Kunming, Yunnan Province of China, through Myanmar was constructed during the Second World War under the leadership of American General Joseph Stilwell in order to provide logistic support to then Kuomintang Government which was fighting the Japanese army. After the war, the road lost its *raison d'être* and its condition deteriorated (Webster 2003). Pradyut Bordoloi, the Assam Minister of Environment and Forests, and a popular MLA from the Ledo area, together with many other people strongly emphasised the merits of re-opening the road.

Sanjoy Hazarika who has driven along the other major road, which is being pushed by Myanmar – Moreh in Manipur through Tamu and Kaleaw in Myanmar down to Mandalay and then down to Yangon (the road goes further east to Kunming), while admitting the significance of the road, questioned the viability of the project. Besides pointing to the deplorable condition of the road, he has also drawn attention to the possibly less than keen reaction from the Myanmar government, for the road passes through areas in Myanmar where anti-government forces are active. The Indian government also seems to prefer a different road, which passes through the Moreh (Manipur) and Tamu (Myanmar) border areas. However, there is another opinion regarding the response of the Myanmar government towards the Stilwell Road as reported by a representative of the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII). CII is one of the active players in promoting trade and investment with Myanmar. According to their representative, the Myanmar Government is positive about the renovation of the Stilwell Road and is asking India for financial assistance. CII is also calling for interested investors on the basis of a BOT arrangement. As for the character of the current Myanmar Government, there is a difference of opinion among the academics and the journalists, and the business people. Whereas academics and journalists harbour reservations about the repressive nature of the military junta and its attitude to human rights, the business people seem to think that economic imperatives will prevail and that economic development will lead to the democratisation of the country. How do local people view the changes and possible impacts stemming from closer economic relations with Myanmar? We are informed that the social ties of the same ethnic groups are spread across

political boundaries and that the local people will therefore benefit from development on the far side of the border⁹. However, on this matter it remains necessary for us to continue to listen carefully to the voices of the local inhabitants.

We had an opportunity to visit the Land Customs Station in Dawki, on the Meghalaya border with Bangladesh. Thanks to the arrangements made by Income Tax Superintendent, A. Bhattacharjee and his counterpart on the Bangladesh side, we were able to walk down to the Sylhet Customs Station. Dawki customs office was opened in 1948, and is one of India's oldest customs offices. Both people and goods move across this border so there are two immigration officers present as well. About 14 to 20 people cross the border daily, and according to the officers, they are mostly Bangladeshis and a few Indians crossing into Bangladesh. A primary Indian export going through this customs office is coal produced in Meghalaya. As Indian trucks are not allowed to enter Bangladesh territory, there is a coal dumping ground close to the border. Recently, an innovative business practice has been on the rise. Boulder stones are exported through this customs station to Bangladesh where they are broken into small pieces by employing cheaper labour, and are then re-exported to Agartala, Tripura. In terms of road connectivity, however, even the long-existing route from Shillong to Dawki, and beyond to Sylhet in Bangladesh, is not well cared for by the government. A bridge constructed in 1932 over the Piyang River (Umngot River) near Dawki outlived its fifty-year usage period more than 20 years ago. To protect its durability, a weight ceiling of six tons has now been imposed. Construction of a new bridge was approved some time ago but nothing has yet been done. An alternate road provides a detour but it, too, requires much repairing.

The significance of Bangladesh for India and particularly for the North Eastern Region was succinctly stated by Rajiv Sikri, Secretary (East) of the Ministry of External Affairs, in the CENISEAS forum: Bangladesh, he pointed out, is the joint connecting the North Eastern Region to the rest of India (Sikri 2004). As far as I have seen, the North Eastern Region's perception of Bangladesh is very complex, with both superior and inferior attitudes being held towards Bangladesh. In the North East, perceptions have been based on historical experience, and mainly concern the issue of massive migration of people from Bangladesh, the area formerly known, over the last 200 years, as East Bengal and East Pakistan (Hazarika 2000; Baruah 1999). In the understanding of the people of the North East, Bangladesh is nothing but a poverty-stricken country, and the main source

of migrants aiming to exploit the abundant land resources of the North East. The people of the North East fear the Bangladeshis because they cleverly snatch away the resources and the opportunities that rightfully belong to the North East. Whenever the Bangladesh issue is raised it seems that all the people's identities converge into one, namely that of the Indian. I wonder to what extent groups such as the Muslim Bengalis and the Garos who are currently living in the North Eastern Region, share common identities and preserve relationships with the Muslim Bengalis and the Garos in Bangladesh, as is the case among the Nagas who live on either side of the India - Myanmar border.

At the diplomatic level, Bangladesh is considered to be a stubborn, difficult opponent to deal with. In addition to Jairam Ramesh and Rajiv Sikri, C.V. Ranganathan, former Ambassador to China and one of the main promoters of sub-regional cooperation, admits this difficulty. Diplomats have expressed some pessimism about improving relationships with Bangladesh although they also expect that the sub-regional framework, rather than bilateral negotiations, will ease the attitude of Bangladesh towards India¹⁰. Industrial concerns such as the Indian Oil Corporation and Oil India Limited based in Digboi and Duliajan in Assam have expressed the hope of tapping the Bangladesh market and taking opportunity of the business chances related to natural gas reserves in Bangladesh. With respect to the latter, however, the top executives of Oil India Limited have stated that since there is no immediate likelihood of Bangladesh changing its attitude, they are currently more interested in gas reserves in Myanmar.

Rethinking self-perception is very difficult. One may not be able to understand how others view oneself until one stands in the other person's position. I have personally experienced this predicament in the course of our trip to the North Eastern Region. My view of Bangladesh and India was constructed from the vantage point of Bangladesh, and while staying in the country, I saw Bangladesh as a state overshadowed by Big India. The geographical location of Bangladesh on the map symbolises its disadvantageous position vis-à-vis India. However, when the map shifts our focus to the North East, we are obliged to recognize that the region is 'Bangladesh-locked' and that Bangladesh is by far the bigger and stronger player, as has been mentioned by Rajiv Sikri (Sikri 2004). The experiences of leading Bangladeshi intellectuals and a business tycoon who visited the North East also corroborate the importance of re-evaluating self-images and knowing one's own strength and weaknesses (C-NES 2004).

In a lively discussion chaired by Udayon Misra of Dibrugarh University, one professor introduced a commonly held opinion to the effect that the devastating flood which affected Assam in 2004 was caused by Bhutan opening its dam. This struck a chord with me because it was the same logic that I often heard in Bangladesh, as applied to India when Bangladesh is affected by floods. Such statements symbolise people's mind sets, which are plagued with phantom and sinister images of 'India', 'Bangladesh' and 'Bhutan'. However, if it were possible for one to know that the other person fears and blames one just as much as one fears and blames the other person, one may easily appreciate the futility of such logic. It will be the local-to-local contacts of people rather than government-to-government contacts that are more likely to bring about the alteration of fixed mind sets. In that sense, sub-regional cooperation could make an important contribution by creating a new space of interaction and by providing new perspectives on important problems.

References

- Baruah, Sanjib. 1999. *India against itself: Assam and the Politics of Nationality*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- . 2004. *Between South and Southeast Asia: Northeast India and the Look East Policy*. Guwahati: CENISEAS.
- C-NES 2004. *India's North East and Bangladesh: Problems and Opportunities*. New Delhi: Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research.
- DONER (Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region). 2004. *Annual Report 2003-2004*. Government of India
- Hazarika, Sanjoy. 1994. *Strangers of the Mist: Tales of War and Peace from India's Northeast*. New Delhi: Penguin Books India.
- . 2000. *Rites of Passage: Border Crossings, Imagined Homelands, India's East and Bangladesh*, New Delhi: Penguin Books India.
- Inoue, Kyoko, Mayumi Murayama, M. Rahmatullah and Centre for Bhutan Studies. 2004. *Sub-Regional Relations in the Eastern South Asia: With Special Focus on Bangladesh and Bhutan*. JRP Series 132. Chiba: Institute of Developing Economies.
- (http://www.ide.go.jp/English/Publish/Jrp/jrp_132.html).
- Mukhim, Patricia. 2004. 'State of Governance in Meghalaya'. *Dialogue*. vol.5. no.4. (http://www.asthabharati.org/Dia_Apr04/patricia.htm)
- . 'Governance – Role of Traditional and Constitutional Bodies'.

Unpublished mimeo.

Nongbri, Tiplut. 2001. 'Timber Ban in North-East India: Effect on Livelihood and Gender'. *Economic and Political Weekly*. May 26: 1893–1900.

NEC. 2004. *New Hopes, New Opportunities*. Shillong: North Eastern Council.

Ramesh, Jairam. 2004. 'Northeast India in a New Asia'. Inaugural lecture during CENISEAS Forum: 'Towards a New Asia: Transnationalism and Northeast India'. (<http://www.ceniseas.org/newasia/rameshlecture.doc>).

Sikri, Rajiv. 2004. 'Northeast India and India's "Look East" Policy'. A lecture presented in CENISEAS Forum.

(<http://www.ceniseas.org/newasia/sikrilecture.doc>)

Webster, Donovan. 2003. 'Blood, Sweat and Toil along the Burma Road'. *National Geographic*. November Issue.

¹ See Inoue et.al.2004 for the details of those initiatives.

² Our team members are Kyoko Inoue of Daito Bunka University, Masanori Koga of Nihon Fukushi University, Yoshiko Suzuki and Etsuyo Arai of IDE and myself.

³ The Supreme Court ruling had a substantial impact also on industrial activity as it caused the closure of plywood factories. According the report of the North Eastern Development Finance Corporation, nearly 300 plywood factories in Assam producing 371 lakh sq. meters of commercial plywood per annum have had to close down since 1996.

http://databank.nedfi.com/content.php?menu=1113&page_id=74

⁴ District Councils were created by the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

⁵ *Dorbar* consist of three tiers of institutions comprising *Dorbar Shnong* or village level council, *Dorbar Raij* or a conglomeration of villages and *Dorbar Syiem* or the chieftainship.

⁶ Two day symposium titled as 'Towards a New Asia: Transnationalism and North East India' was held on 10th and 11th of September 2004 in Guwahati. See <http://www.ceniseas.org/newasia/guwahati.html> for the details of the conference.

⁷ The instances of micro credit, population control and export-oriented readymade garments can be cited as instances of success for Bangladesh. I do not deny that there remain many serious problems as well as hidden agendas behind each 'success'. However, at least the successes have contributed to improving the image of Bangladesh in the global arena and have shed light on the livelihoods of the poor and the socially weak including women, recognising the value of their agency. Lt. Gen. Nayar of C-NES admits there are things that the North East should learn from Bangladesh.

⁸ NEDFI provides micro credit to traditional organisations such as the village council of Nagaland and the Young Mizo Association in Mizoram.

⁹ Lt. Gen. Nayar, as cited earlier, made this observation. When he was stationed in Nagaland from 1981 to 1983, there was no educational institution in adjacent Myanmar territory, so Nagas living in Myanmar sent their children to India while Indian Nagas acted as their guardians until the children had completed their education. On their return, educated Naga children had a better scope of employment in Myanmar.

¹⁰ In the tripartite meeting of the energy ministers of India, Bangladesh and Myanmar held in Yangon on 12 and 13 January 2005, Bangladesh for the first time agreed to give permission for the construction of a cross-border gas pipeline, which carries natural gas from Myanmar to India. In the meeting, Bangladesh sought trade transit to Nepal and Bhutan through India. Although a more detailed analysis will be needed to clarify the Bangladesh stance, this can be cited as an example that a sub-regional framework rather than bilateral negotiations can provide more comfortable space for Bangladesh in its dealings with India.

Chapter 1

Integration of the North East: the State Formation Process

Kyoko Inoue

North East India in this study consists of eight states (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, and Sikkim), and is enclosed by Bangladesh, Bhutan, China (Tibet), and Myanmar¹. A narrow corridor between Bhutan and Bangladesh provides the only overland connection between the North East Region and mainland India. The population of the North East consists of the original, indigenous inhabitants together with various ethnic groups, including people from Tibet, Burma, Thailand and Bengal², who migrated into the region at various periods of history. Although there are migrants of long standing, who have become integrated into the local population over very many years, an increasingly large inflow of recent migrants over a short period has caused friction with the local population. During the British colonial period and even after independence, the North East, adjoining China, has been a difficult frontier region.

Throughout the British colonial period, the North East was treated separately and differently from other regions of British India. In the early colonial period, the region formed part of Bengal Province and it was governed as though it were an adjacent subordinate area of Bengal Province even after it became the separate province of Assam in 1874. Moreover, with the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873, a Line System was introduced on the pretext of protecting the minority indigenous ethnic groups in the hill areas of Assam by restricting outsiders' entry, business activities, land transactions and settlement. For the same purpose, in 1935 the hill areas were demarcated and divided into "excluded areas" and "partially excluded Areas"³. The former fell under direct British jurisdiction and the latter were given a limited representative system under British administrative control. In short, separation and isolation formed the core of British policy towards the North East.

The history of separation and isolation from the rest of India in the colonial period created a problem for the national formation and integration of independent India. In the North East, a sense of incompatibility grew into one of resentment against

being made a part of India, and an anti-India sentiment emerged amongst the region's people, especially when the Indian government cold shouldered local aspirations. Given the region's historical background, antagonism could be easily instigated.

The most urgent task for the Indian government after independence was the consolidation of a new nation state. As national integration was the most pressing of the issues confronting the new sovereign state, any movement that might disrupt the process of integration had to be dealt with stringently, and in some cases oppressively⁴. Moreover, after the India-China border conflicts in 1962, the North East became a strategic region as regards the national security of India. Any indigenous ethnic movement was considered as "anti-national" and became a "security trouble". As such, it had to be suppressed. Suppression invited resistance and resistance was countered with more oppressive measures from the government, creating an antipathy among the people, and providing the groundwork for armed confrontation and, furthermore, a growing aspiration for an independent homeland.

In this chapter, I examine the issues relating to India's nation-state building and the North East, focusing especially on political developments and reactions to them during the process of administrative integration.

1. Brief History of the North East

The Ahom kingdom was established in the Brahmaputra valley by the Shans, who migrated from upper Burma in the first half of the 13th century. In 1818, disturbed by repeated invasions from Burma, the Ahom king requested assistance from the British East India Company, which was then based at Calcutta. The British East India Company responded to the request, and fought and defeated the Burmese armies. The war ended with the Treaty of Yandaboo, by which the Burmese agreed to withdraw from Assam and the Ahom king ceded a part of his territory to the British East India Company as a reward. The war gave the East India Company an opportunity to establish rights and interests in the North East, leading to the extinction of the Ahom kingdom in 1838 (Lahiri 1955). The history of the North East until independence in 1947 is a history of the expansion of British rule and of social, economic and political changes in the region.

After the great Indian revolt of 1857, British rule over the North East gathered pace and the North East was tossed about by colonial policy. Expansion of the area under control and administrative rearrangements were among this policy's characteristics. For example, Assam was ruled as a part of Bengal Province until 1874, when it became Assam Province governed by a Chief Commissioner who was subordinate to the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal Province. Between 1905 and 1921, Assam Province was merged with Bengal Province to become East Bengal and Assam Province, a unit that was again divided into two in 1921 following strong protests against the merger. Under the new arrangements, Assam was named Assam Province, and was directly administered by the Governor-General of Assam Province. Even so, Assam's independence as a province remained unsatisfactory⁵.

Another critical aspect of the administrative change was that hill kingdoms such as Khasi and Jaintia were annexed one after another, while hill areas like the Lushai (Mizo) hills and the Naga hills, where distinctive ethnic groups had lived, were merged into Assam Province. There was a growing sense of loss and a feeling of being deprived, and anxiety for the future among the people in the region was very strong.

Together with these developments, another issue poured fuel on to the flames of this volatile situation. This was population inflow, especially an inflow of Muslims from Bengal Province in pursuit of land and jobs. The inflow created political tension. The major reason for the population migration into Assam was the economic development of the region during the British period. Among the opportunities for employment were the tea gardens that were established in the 1930s. Assam's tea gardens expanded rapidly by mobilising a large-scale workforce from outside the region. As for the tea garden workers, there were many who, after the end of their employment contracts, obtained land in the vicinity of the tea gardens and settled down (Guha 1977; 1991 and Barpujari 1998). Labour has also been in great demand from the oil and coal fields, and from road and railway construction, and as a result, the inflow of population has increased continuously (Baruah 1996: 46).

Above all, the arrival of immigrants from Bengal Province was widely perceived as a penetration into the living space of the local people that changed the demographic as well as the economic situation. The colonial administration and political rivalry were related to these changes.

The population inflow became an issue with the introduction of the representation system under the Government of India Act of 1935. Political rivalry gradually took on the aspect of a confrontation based on places of origin, namely Assam and Bengal, and on religions, namely Hinduism and Islam. Public opinion was divided on the future of the North East after British withdrawal. On the one hand the Assam State Congress Committee, which was set up in Assam in 1921, drew support from Hindu Assamese, who claimed that Assam should belong to independent India. On the other hand the Muslim League, supported by a growing number of Muslims, many of whom were immigrants from Bengal Province, argued in favour of affiliation with Pakistan. The cleavage became wider, especially when partition became imminent and the religious composition of the population took on greater importance as a factor deciding the future of Assam. Each side used tactics that were clearly designed to increase its own population numbers within the region. For example, while the Congress government banned immigration into Assam, the Muslim League, when it came to power in the province, reversed the previous government's decision and tried to encourage Muslim immigrants by easing land holding regulations for immigrants from Bengal Province (Hazarika 1994: 58-59; Barpujari 1998: 37-38) .

Another focal point was the status of the North East after British withdrawal. It was not clear whether Assam would be separate from India or independent from it, and the extension of the region's autonomy became the subject of heated discussion. Even before independence, there were calls for an exploration of the possibility of establishing a separate political entity especially among the hill ethnic groups such as the Nagas and Mizos⁶. In other words, merger with India was not a foregone conclusion, at least not so far as some people in the region were concerned.

The final decision was left to the last Governor-General of British India, Mountbatten, who decided in June 1947 that Assam and the North East should belong to independent India.

2. States Formation of the North East after Independence

The regional composition of the North East at the time of independence consisted of the Assam plains of the old Assam Province, the hill districts, the North

Eastern Frontier Tracts (NEFT) of the North Eastern borderland, and the princely states of Manipur and Tripura, both of which opted for merger with India in 1949. As for administrative changes in the wake of the transfer of power on 15th August, the administrative jurisdiction of the excluded and partially excluded areas in the hills of Assam was transferred to the Government of Assam which acted on behalf of the government of India.

The Indian government after independence was unable to sensitively respond to the intricate realities of the North East. Rather it seemed to follow the colonial policy of isolation and alienation, treating the North East differently from the other Indian states (Füerer-Haimendorf 1991: 39; Savyasaachi 1998: 13) .

The Constitution promulgated in 1950 contained a special provision in the form of the Sixth Schedule for the administration of “tribal” areas that were meant to protect the tribal people who were living scattered throughout the country. The provision was applied to the ethnic groups in the hill region of the North East. Under it, the “tribal” areas in the North East were divided into two parts, Part A and Part B. The United Khasi and Jaintia Hills District, the Garo Hills District, the Lushai Hills District, the Naga Hills District, the North Cachar Hills District, and the Mikir Hills District were placed in Part A as Autonomous Districts administered by the Government of Assam, with a limited representation in the Assam State Legislative Assembly and in the National Parliament, The North East Frontier Tract, the Balipara Frontier Tract, the Tirap Frontier Tract, the Abor Hill and Mishmi Hills Districts and the Naga Tribal Area came into Part B, which was administered by the Governor of Assam acting as Agent of the President of India. Tripura and Manipur were not promoted to states but were made special administrative regions under the control of central government. Hereafter, state formation in the North East followed a process whereby the area once unified into Assam was separated and ultimately turned into a state.

Sikkim, a small mountainous area surrounded by China in the north, Nepal in the west and Bhutan in the east, followed a different process of state formation. It was a kingdom at the time of the British arrival. In 1819 British India signed a treaty, known as the Treaty of Titalia with Sikkim, through which and other engagements the British was able to exercise influence in Sikkim. In 1947 when India became independent, a treaty was signed between India and Sikkim, under which Sikkim was able to retain a special status of a protectorate of India. Sikkim to become a fully-fledged 22nd state of India on 16th May 1975. The institution of king was

abolished. In 1975 Sikkim was merged with India.

Sikkim, an Indian State on the Eastern Himalayan ranges, is counted among states with Buddhist followers, which had strong cultural ties with the Tibetan region of Peoples' Republic of China. Because of its past feudal history, it was one of the three 'States' along with Nepal and Bhutan known as 'the Himalayan Kingdoms' till 1975, the year of its merger with the Indian Union.

The State Assembly met in an emergency session and passed this resolution: "The institution of Chogyal (the head of the state) is hereby abolished and Sikkim shall hence forth be a constituent unit of India". The ruler went on asking for right of self determination to Sikkim, the above Resolution of the Assembly was put on a state-wise referendum on April 14, 1975. Ninety-seven percent electorate favoured the resolution. This led to the Indian Parliament passing the 38th Constitutional Amendment Bill on April 26, 1975. Thus, Sikkim ceased to exist as Indian protectorate and became the 22nd state of the Indian Union. Accordingly, the office of the Chogyal stood abolished and provisions of the Indo-Sikkimese Treaty, Tripartite Agreement and the Government of India ACT, 1974 were made inoperative. Lhendup Dorji Kazi (L D Kazi), the Chief Minister, emerged as the central figure after these epoch making developments. His style of functioning was that of an old-world patriarch, addicted to advice from all corners, but too old to learn any thing afresh.

Table shows the state formation process in the North East except of Sikkim after independence. Four states (Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram) were separated from Assam one after another. These four states were the areas to which entry was regulated during the British colonial period. In the four states, even before independence, there were several indigenous cultural and political organizations representing the interests of the hill peoples. After independence, some of these groups began to pursue political activities, including protest against unity with Assam, a demand for expansion of autonomy within Assam, a demand for separation from Assam, and a further demand for statehood.

During state reorganization in India in 1956, fourteen states were created based on language characteristics. In the North East, however, only Assam State was approved. The demands of minority groups for a Nagaland State to be created out of Assam and for separation of the Mizo areas from Assam were not met. On the contrary, the State Reorganization Commission suggested an enlargement of

Table States Formation of the Northeast

Year	Event	Area	Assam state	Mizoram state	Tripura Princely State	Manipur Princely State
1947.8.15	Independence	(NEFT)	Assam state	(Lushai Hills district)	Annexation to India (CGAA)	Annexation to India (CGAA)
1949			hasi & Jaintia, Garo Hills District			
1950	Constitution	NEFA		Mizo Hills district		(Union Territory)
1954						
1956	State Reorganization					
1957						
1963						
1970						
1972						
1987						
As of 2003						

Note: Constitution classifies Tripura and Manipur as "Part C States" and puts them under the administration of a central government.

:NEFT: North East Frontier Tracts, NEFA: North East Frontier Agency.

:CGAA: Central Government Administrative Areas.

:Union Territory: The area, having assembly and government, directly comes under the central government jurisdiction.

Source: By the authors.

Assam State to include Tripura and Manipur. This proposal was put forward on the grounds of administrative efficiency, regional stability, resource constraints and security needs, even though Assam was going to be a multi-lingual state, a development that ran counter to the Commission's original policy. The suggestion was not taken up⁷.

Disappointment surfaced. Ethnic groups in various areas, especially the people of the hill area, expressed dissatisfaction with the outcome of the reorganization. They argued that the real purpose of the reorganization was to institutionalize the hill people's subordination to the Assamese and that it was a negation of their ethnic identities. Dissatisfaction of this kind led to a demand for autonomy and a further demand for the establishment of a separate state. When the answer fell short of what had been demanded, discontents tended to turn into anti-government movements and in some cases into armed conflicts with the government.

3. The Case of State Formation for the Nagaland

After Assam, the first area to achieve statehood in the North East was Nagaland, in 1963. Because the establishment of Nagaland and the way it was formed influenced succeeding state formation in the area, it is necessary to look at the process in some detail.

The Tuensang area, which was defined as the "Naga Tribal Area" in the Constitution, was formed into a district within the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA). In 1957, The Tuensang area was joined with the Naga Hills District to form the Naga Hills Tuensang Area (NHTA) as a Central Government Administrative Area. The NHTA was renamed as Nagaland by the Nagaland (Transitional Provisions) Regulation of 1961. The Regulation of 1961 was replaced with the State of Nagaland Act of 1962 which made Nagaland a fully fledged state. The State of Nagaland was inaugurated in December 1963.

The formation of Nagaland has a complicated history that began in the British colonial period. As we have seen, in order to avoid conflicts with the Nagas and to avoid disrupting traditional Naga society, the British administration maintained as much as possible a policy of non-interference, thus committing the Nagas to isolation (Rustomji 1983:23-24; Baruah 1999: 34-35) . On the other hand, even then there was a movement for advancing the Nagas to independence. As early as

1918, an organization called the "Naga Club" was established with British patronage⁸. The Naga Club discussed the future of the Naga hills after British withdrawal and decided to demand the restoration of the autonomous status formerly enjoyed by Naga society (Misra 2000: 28) . Because the Naga hills were remote and isolated and the relations with the rest of British India weak, it was to some extent possible to preserve the identity of the Nagas. The spread of the Christianity during the British period was another characteristic of Naga society and helped to mould the Nagas' identity.

The Naga Club changed its title to the Naga National Council (NNC) after the Second World War and the NNC demanded an autonomous status for the Naga area in a memorandum presented to the British government in June 1945. The claim took a new turn as India's independence approached. In December 1946, the NNC decided to claim for home rule for all Naga tribes, and in February 1947 for the right of self-determination (Misra 2000: 31) . The NNC listed ethnic identity, the original social system, customary law, religion and so on as the grounds for their claim (Kumar 1996: 24) . Then in May 1947, the NNC made a demand for an interim government (Misra 2000: 32) . After these demands were presented, the NNC met the Governor of Assam in June 1947 and reached an accord with him⁹.

Apart from whether it was legitimate for both parties to enter into such an accord, an entanglement arose concerning the accord's Article Nine. This stated that both parties agreed to maintain present administrative arrangements for ten years and if the Naga so wished, the arrangement would be continued after ten years; if otherwise, a new treaty would be drawn up. While the Assam Governor understood that the accord meant the continuation of the existing administrative set up, the NNC preferred to see the agreement as paving the way for self-determination or independence.. In the meantime, hardliners led by A.N. Phizo increased their influence over the NNC. After Phizo became its Chairman in October 1949, the NNC inclined strongly toward winning Naga's independence from India (Guha 1977: 326) . In February 1950, the NNC declared that it would hold a referendum to decide whether the Nagas should attain independence from India or remain in India. The referendum, which was conducted in May 1951, was said to indicate that ninety-nine percent of the Nagas supported independence (Kumar 1996: 10; Hazarika 1995: 98) . The Indian Government and the Government of Assam rejected the result. Talks between the NNC and the Indian Government broke down (Roychowdhury 1986: 112) and the NNC boycotted the

first general election of 1952 (Guha 1977: 326-327; Maxwell 1973: 10) .

However, at this juncture, the NNC had not yet entered into an armed struggle. It followed a course of disobedience in public life (Kumar 1996: 28) , but the Government responded to this with strong countermeasures and in June 1955 sent police and security forces to the Naga area. In January 1956 it declared the Naga hills area a “Disturbed Area”, putting it under the Indian Army’s command. Phizo escaped to East Pakistan in December 1956 and defected to London.

Under military pressure, the NNC’s hardliners pursued a separatist course and in March 1956 declared the establishment of the “Federal Government of Nagaland”. (Kumar 1996: 28-30; Maxwell 1973: 11; Chaube 1999:161) . In response to this crisis, the Indian Government took a conciliatory approach by conceding to the Nagas’ demand for self-government. In 1957, the Naga Hills District was separated from Assam and became a Central Government Administrative Area, and in December 1963, Nagaland was established as the smallest Indian state with the population of 350,000. The reconciliation was possible with the help of moderates among the Nagas who agreed to solve the problem within the framework of the Indian Constitution. On the government side, there were circumstances that required a compromise. The government did not wish to complicate the situation of the border area, as the India-China border conflict of 1962 had created a serious security problem and had caused a heightening of military tension. In order to pacify the area, the government settled the problem by accepting the Naga moderates’ move for statehood.

4. The Formation of the North Eastern States

The establishment of Nagaland brought about various demands for statehood from other hill regions and secessionist movements for state designation were intensified. For instance, at the time of the state reorganization, representatives from the Khasi and Jaintia Hills District and the Garo Hills Districts expressed the hope of forming their own Hill State. This was not accepted by the State Reorganization Commission. But the aspiration turned into a stronger demand for statehood when Asamiya (Assamese) was proposed as Assam state’s official language in the language bill of 1960. The representatives of the hills area formed an All Party Hill Leaders Conference in July 1960 and demanded separation of the hill area from Assam (Sinha 1970) . The movement for statehood continued

and in 1970 Meghalaya Autonomous State was established. It became a fully-fledged state in 1972. The process of state formation was comparatively peaceful in the case of Meghalaya, because the movement was mostly conducted within the framework of India, and the hill area was distinctive insofar as a majority of its population belonged to two major ethnic communities, the Khasis and the Garos, each of them inhabiting its own territory in the hills¹⁰. In a case such as this, the central government was able to take an accommodating stance.

The Mizo hills area, which was an excluded area during the British period, became the Lushai Hills District within Assam at the time of independence, and in 1954 was renamed the Mizo Hills District of Assam. A separatist movement from Assam was active even before independence. Against the background of prevalent discontent with government relief works to the victims of the famine of *mautam* in 1959 to 1961, and under the guidance of Laldenga, a Mizo leader, the movement began to work for "independence",¹¹. It might not be coincidental that the Mizo National Front under Laldenga's leadership intensified the movement for secession from Assam when Nagaland was given separate status as a Central Government Administrative Agency in 1957. As in the case of Nagaland, the government began by attempting to suppress the Mizos' movement by military force, but by reaching accord with the moderates in the MNF in 1972, the government established Mizoram with the status of a Union Territory, and Mizoram attained statehood in 1987.

Tripura Princely State and Manipur Princely State became Central Government Administrative Agencies after they joined India in 1949. They were given the status of Union Territories, and later, in 1972, they became Tripura State and Manipur State.

In the case of Arunachal Pradesh, the shift to statehood was peacefully executed through the initiative of the central government. The area was integrated into Assam at the time of independence. But adjoining China and with an unsettled border, the area had a military importance for the central government¹², and was put under direct government control (Rustomji 1983; Elwin 1997). The area was upgraded to become the Union Territory of Arunachal Pradesh in 1972 and in 1982 it became a state. The formation of Arunachal Pradesh can be understood as a part of the process of state formation in the North East, but at the same time, it might also be possible to interpret Arunachal Pradesh's promotion to statehood as a move by the Indian government aimed at indicating to China that national

integration was being achieved even in the frontier region of the North East.

5. Conclusion

The North East was once characterized as a remote, underdeveloped, difficult area inhabited by many conflicting ethnic groups. A history of isolation nurtured this impression. But the North East does not have to be seen in these terms. Rather, as a new frontier, the North East can develop into a new region. Bordered by four countries and facing towards southern China and Southeast Asia, India's North East can work as a driving force for regional development and send a political message of ethnic harmony to a diversified world in an era of globalization.

State formation, a process that the central government took up rather belatedly in the North East, cannot be seen as a panacea for all the problems of the North East. The multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic character of the region brings forth ever increasing demands for autonomy or statehood on the basis of individual ethnic identities. Even the demand for local economic development has not been able to escape from parochial ethnic interests. The logic of ethnic identity contains an ideology of exclusion on the one hand and expulsion of other ethnic groups on the other. Creation of a state on the basis of ethnicity often means the fulfilment of one ethnic group's aspiration and at the same time exclusion and oppression of other smaller ethnic groups in the vicinity. There seems no end to this ethnicity pursuit. We see many examples in the ethnic movements active in the region¹³.

The cleavage grows acute when political movements are subjected to military pressure. In the North East, military measures, aimed at containing local ethnic movements, were adopted by the government too easily and too often. Military solutions or other oppressive measures invite stronger resistance, often in the form of armed revolts. We know that with the establishment of Nagaland State, the hardliners among the NNC opposed reconciliation and went underground to continue armed struggle over many years with the help of neighbouring countries. This created problems for the Indian government not only in dealing with local issues but also in conducting international relations. It is only recently, after many long years, that some kind of reconciliation between the government and the Naga militants has got under way, though it is still too early to make any judgment on this matter. It might turn out to be a positive change for the better, but caution is advisable in the light of reports that there have been tie-ups among

the anti-government militant groups not only in the region but also across the region's borders.

In such circumstances, the only useful course available will be the maintenance of reconciliation through dialogue on the one hand and the pursuit of the national integration process, by way of administrative and developmental efforts, on the other. Being underdeveloped with tremendous resource constraints, the North East's developmental task will be enormous. The North East is not in a position to execute this task on its own. The peculiarity of the area requires more government efforts and more productive regional cooperation, including cooperation from surrounding countries. For that, the central government's initiative is going to be ever more important.

References

- Barpujari, H.K. 1998. *North-East India: Problems, Policies and Prospects*, Delhi: Spectrum Publications.
- Baruah, Sanjib. 1999. *India against Itself: Assam and the Politics of Nationality*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Chaube, S.K. 1999. *Hill Politics in Northeast India*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman.
- Coupland, R. 1944. *The Future of India: The Third Part of a Report on the Constitutional Problem in India Submitted to the Warden and Fellows of Nuffield College*. Oxford and London: Oxford University Press.
- Dasgupta, Jyotirindra. 1998. "Community, Authenticity and Autonomy: Insurgence and Institutional Development in India's North-East", in Basu, Amrita, and Athul Kohli, eds. *Community Conflicts and the State in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press .
- Elwin, Verrier. 1997. (originally 1961 by the Research Department Secretariat, NEFA, Shillong). *Nagaland*. Guwahati: Spectrum Publications
- Fürer-Haimendorf, Christoph von. 1939. *The Naked Nagas*, London: Methuen & Co. Ltd.
- Guha, Amalendu. 1977. *Planter-Raj to Swaraj: Freedom Struggle and Electoral Politics in Assam 1826-1947*. New Delhi: Indian Council of Historical Research.
- 1991. *Medieval and Early Colonial Assam: Society, Polity, Economy*. Calcutta: K.P. Bagchi & Company on behalf of the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences.

- Hazarika, Sanjoy. 1994. *Strangers in the Mist: Tales of War & Peace from India's Northeast*. New Delhi: Penguin Books India.
- 2000. *Rites of Passage: Border Crossings, Imagined Homelands, India's East and Bangladesh*. New Delhi: Penguin Books India .
- Kumar, B.B. 1996. *Re-organization of North-East India (Facts and Documents)*. New Delhi: Omsons Publications.
- Lahiri, R.M. 1955. *The Annexation of Assam (1824-1854)*. Calcutta: General Printers & Publishers.
- Maxwell, Neville. 1973. *India and the Naga*. London: Minority Rights Group.
- Misra, Udayon. 2000. *The Periphery Strikes Back: Challenges to the Nation-State in Assam and Nagaland*. Simla Indian Institute of Advanced Studies.
- Reid, Robert. 1966. *Years of Change in Bengal and Assam*. London: Ernest Benn Limited.
- Roychowdhury, Profulla. 1986. *The North East: Roots of Insurgency*. Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited.
- Rustomji, Nari. 1983. *Imperilled Frontiers: India's North-Eastern Borderlands*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Savyasaachi. 1998. *Tribal Forest-Dwellers and Self-Rule: The Constitution Assembly Debates on the Fifth and Sixth Schedules*. New Delhi: Indian Social Institute.
- Sinha, Kamaleshwar. 1970. *Meghalaya: Triumph of the Tribal Genius*. Delhi: Publication Division (Indian School Supply Depot).
- Weiner, Myron. 1978. *Sons of the Soil: Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India*. Princeton. N.J.: Princeton University Press.

< **Indian government publication** >

Report of the State Reorganisation Commission, Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi, 1956.

1 Sikkim is included as a part of the Northeast in this paper but it underwent a different process of integration. This will be briefly explained in the text.

2 Bengal consists of West Bengal, a state of India, together with Pakistan's East Bengal, which later became Bangladesh.

3 The excluded areas are Northeast Frontier District, Naga Hills District, Lushai Hills District and North Cachar Hills Subdivision. The partially excluded areas

are Garo Hills District, Khasi and Jaintia Hills district except Shillong and Mikir Hills district.

4 India faced serious problems of national integration just after independence. The princely state of Hyderabad claimed independence and waged a war against India. Kashmir became a flashpoint and a zone of confrontation between India and Pakistan. Goa remained a Portuguese colony.

5 An example for this is language policy. Bangali, not Assamese, was the court and education language in Assam Province from 1837 to 1873. Baruah points out that during the whole colonial period, the British treated Assam as a frontier of Bengal (Baruah 1999: 38-39).

6 Some examples are the "Independent North-East" plan and the "Crown colony" plan promoted by the British who had been engaged in work in the Northeast (Reid 1966: 110; Coupland 1944: 164-165).

7 Report of the State Reorganisation Commission, Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi, 1956.

8 Charles Pawsay, the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills District, was the main promoter of the organization.

9 A Nine Point Agreement, or The Naga-Akbar Hydari Accord, after the name of the Assam Governor. For the text of Accord, see Hazarika 1995: 346-348 and Appendix C The Naga-Akbar Hydari Accord.

10 Khasis and Garos form about 80 percent of Meghalaya's population, according to the 2001 Census.

11 Caused by the bamboo flowering.

12 Under the Simla Agreement of 1914, China, British India and Tibet agreed on the McMahon Line as the border between India's northeast and Tibet. China crossed the McMahon Line at the time of Indo-China border conflicts in 1962. China does not recognise the McMahon Line as the border.

13 The Bodoland movement in Assam is one such instance.