

Security *and*
Development *in*
India's Northeast

GURUDAS DAS

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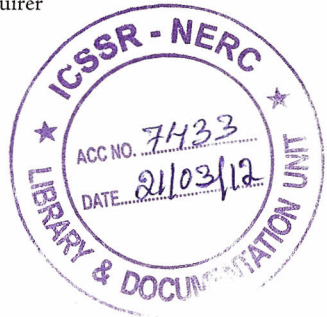
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For
Professor Bani Prasanna Misra
who ignited our minds to see things beyond the boundaries

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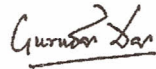
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1 August 2011

NIT, Silchar



Gurudas Das

Abbreviations

AASU	All Assam Students Union
ADC	Autonomous District Council
AFSPA	Armed Forces Special Powers Act
AGP	Asom Gana Parishad
AI-FTA	ASEAN-India FTA
AL	Awami League
ALMA	A'chik Liberation Matgrik Army
AMRTDMWU	All Manipur Road Transport Drivers and Motor Workers' Union
ANVC	Achik National Volunteer Council
APCC	Assam Pradesh Congress Committee
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
APHLC	All Party Hill Leaders Conference
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting
ATPLO	All Tripura People's Liberation Organization
ATTF	All Tripura Tribal Force
AXX	Assam Xahitya Xabha
BBIN-GQ	Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal-Growth Quadrangle
BdSF	Bodo Security Force
BIMSTEC	Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation
BPO	Business Process Outsourcing
BSF	Border Security Force
BTC	Bodoland Territorial Council
CAG	Comptroller and Auditor General
CBM	Confidence Building Measure

CBO	Community-based Organization
C-DAC	Centre for the Development of Advanced Computing
CEA	Central Electricity Authority
CECA	Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement
CENTO	Central Treaty Organization
CEPA	Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CMS	Centre for Media Studies
CPI(M)	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
DHD	Dima Halim Daogah
DNSF	Dimasa National Security Force
DNV	Dimasa National Volunteers
DPIP	Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EHP	Early Harvest Programme
EHS	Early Harvest Scheme
EITU	Eastern India Tribal Union
EMI	Equal Monthly Instalment
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FGN	Federal Government of Nagaland
FRIDE	Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior
FTA	Free Trade Area
GAIL	Gas Authority of India Ltd
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GLO	Gorkha Liberation Organisation
GoI	Government of India
GPRN	Government of Peoples' Republic of Nagaland
GSDP	Gross State Domestic Product
HNLC	Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council
HPC	Hmar People's Convention
HPC-D	Hmar People's Convention (Democratic)
IB	Intelligence Bureau
ICSSR	Indian Council of Social Science Research
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IDSA	Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses
IMCEITS	Indo-Myanmar Centre for Enhancement of IT Skills
IPR	Intellectual Property Right
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
ITA	Integration through Assam
JSG	Joint Study Group
KIO	Kachin Independence Organization
KLO	Kamatapur Liberation Organisation
KNA	Kuki National Army
KNV	Karbi National Volunteers
KYKL	Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup
LAC	Line of Actual Control
LIW	Land Lijke India War Group
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MCC	Maoist Communist Centre
MEA	Ministry of External Affairs
MGI	Mekong–Ganga Initiative
MHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MICELT	Myanmar-India Centre for English Language Training
MIEDC	Myanmar-India Entrepreneurship Development Centre
MLA	Muslim Liberation Army
MNF	Mizo National Front
MOD	Ministry of Defence
MOS	Memorandum of Settlement
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSCA	Muslim Security Council of Assam
MSF	Muslim Security Force
MTF	Muslim Tiger Force
MULFA	Muslim United Liberation Front of Assam
MULTA	Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam
MVF	Muslim Volunteer Force
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NCIP	Netherlands Council on Indigenous People
NDFB	National Democratic Front of Bodoland
NEC	North-Eastern Council

NEFA	North-East Frontier Agency
NEHU	North-Eastern Hill University
NER	Northeastern Region
NERC	North-Eastern Regional Centre
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NHTA	Naga Hills–Tuensang Area
NIT	National Institute of Technology
NLFT	National Liberation Front of Tripura
NNC	Naga National Council
NNO	Naga Nationalist Organization
NPC	Naga People's Convention
NSCN	National Socialist Council of Nagaland
NSCN (I-M)	National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isaac-Muivah)
NSCN (K)	National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang)
NSCN	National Socialist Council of Nagaland
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OKDISCD	Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development
PDS	Public Distribution System
PLA	Peoples' Liberation Army
PLF–M	People's Liberation Front of Meghalaya
PREPAK	People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak
PULF	People's United Liberation Front
PWG	People's War Group
RAW	Research and Analysis Wing
RIMS	Regional Institute of Medical Sciences
RIS	Research and Information System for Developing Countries
RTIA	Regional Trade and Investment Area
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SAFTA	South Asian Free Trade Area
SAPTA	SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement
SAWTEE	South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics & Environment

SEATO	South East Asia Treaty Organization
SORO	Special Operations Research Office
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council
SULFA	Surrendered United Liberation Front of Assam
TAR	Tibet Autonomous Region
TNC	Trade Negotiating Committee
TNV	Tripura National Volunteers
TTDF	Tripura Tribal Development Force
TTVF	Tripura Tribal Volunteer Force
TUJS	Tripura Upajati Juba Samiti
TYF	Tribal Youth Force
UBLF	United Bengali Liberation Force
UK	United Kingdom
ULFA	United Liberation Front of Assam
ULFS	United Liberation Front of the Seven Sisters
ULMA	United Liberation Militia of Assam
UMFO	United Mizo Freedom Organization
UMLFA	United Muslim Liberation Front of Assam
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNLF	United National Liberation Front
UPDS	United People's Democratic Solidarity
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WANA	West Asia and North Africa

Introduction

The Need for Dovetailing Security and Development Policies

Security and development has not yet been established as a separate branch of study, although both security and development are quite old as separate branches of pedagogy. For long, security studies have focused primarily on military security from external forces which is essentially state-centric. While security perception of the States is largely rooted in the doctrine of balance of power—global, regional, or local—and dynamics of international relations, the development discourse is fixated strictly within the national framework. However, with the reduction of inter-State wars in post-World War II scenario and the rise in civil wars in poor and less-developed countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, it is increasingly realized, mainly at the policy circles, that the perspectives of both the branches need to be harmonized in order to integrate the security and development policies. The contemporary debate on the securitization of development policy or developmentalization of security policy takes its cue from such growing realization about the interdependence between security and development.

Security and development are intricately related. A secure environment promotes development and development, in turn, reduces threat to security. Economic underdevelopment breeds conflict and violence as it provides limited livelihood opportunities to people

and denies basic human needs. Similarly, insecurity negatively affects economic development as it raises the level of risks for investment and encourages flight of capital. Thus, insecurity and underdevelopment are both cause and consequence to each other.

Recurring violence is the major source of insecurity in many developing countries of the world. The triggers of conflict are many. Each conflict evolves in a particular social dynamics and hence there is no one-size-fits-all solution for them. Although causes of conflict are different, the consequences are similar—human suffering. It is thus important to delineate the drivers of conflict and recurring violence, and the dynamics of their interlinkages in a particular case to fathom a best-fit strategy for its resolution.

Drivers of Violence

The literature on conflict studies has identified a number of structural factors that increase the risk of violence. Economic underdevelopment is found to be positively correlated with the risk of conflict. Countries with low per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) are found to face higher risk compared to countries with higher per capita GDP (Tschirgi *et al.* 2010). Economic underdevelopment means fewer opportunities available for decent livelihood and low opportunity cost for engaging in violence (Collier 2007). Much of the conflict-prone areas and civil-war zones are located in the poor countries and regions that indicate some sort of association between economic underdevelopment and risk of conflict. Besides low income, economic shocks arising from factors beyond the control of a state, like food and energy price shocks, can also raise the risk of conflict (World Bank 2011).

Horizontal inequality between identity groups—ethnic, caste, or religious—is another powerful driver of conflict. Such inequalities may arise due to unequal access to political, economic, or social opportunities. In a multiethnic society characterized by a major ethnic group sharing the socio-political space with a number of smaller ethnic groups, minorities might suffer from perceived or real discriminations. This gives rise to a sense of relative deprivation among the minorities leading to interethnic schism and conflict. Minorities often seek separation projecting their distinct identities as they can only assume the place of majority in a newly carved-out separate political unit.

Resource curse hypothesis (Sachs and Warner 1995) also explains an important cause of conflict in resource-abundant countries. It has been found that economic growth in resource-abundant countries is sluggish compared to resource-scarce countries. This sluggish growth exacerbates conflict. In fact, natural resource occurrence triggers conflict in different ways. Resource ownership often acts as a source of conflict. As resource deposits occur in certain places, people residing in those areas might stake a claim of ownership and oppose the central government to extract it for the benefit of the elite. Rebel leadership might mobilize people based on ethnic identity and demand for secession. Suppression of this demand by the central government then would lead to conflict and violence. Rebel groups might capture and control resources which provide them the sustenance to carry out their rebellion leading to resource war. The greed hypothesis (Collier and Hoeffler 2004) views the greedy behaviour of the rebel groups for the appropriation of resource rents as the cause of conflict. Moreover, resource rents might be used to practice the politics of patronage rather than politics of performance by the elite who appropriate the resource revenue. This will in turn undermine the values of democracy and lead to factional war (Collier 2007).

Inter-group competition for state privileges often acts as the springboard of conflict. Identity groups often compete with each other for a share of government jobs and other privileges like government contracts, trade licences, supply orders, and other pecuniary benefits. Besides public privileges, groups also often compete for land, water, forest, and other natural resources. This competition for public and private resources often leads to inter-group rivalries resulting in conflict and violence (Das 1996; Menkhaus 2010).

Identity and ethnicity are powerful drivers of conflict. An identity group can, in retrospect, question the historical or political process of integration of their homeland with a federal state and assert their identity to claim secession without making any reference to horizontal inequality. Identity may be constructed by the elite of a group for claiming measures of positive discrimination in a federal structure. Ethnocentric behaviour of a group often encourages others to reconstruct their identities. The politics of identity then results into inter-group conflicts which might lead to ethnic cleansing or genocide. Clan cleavages are also found to be a potential source of conflict (Menkhaus 2010).

The youth bulge hypothesis (Cincotta 2010) suggests that countries having large proportion of youth in their population structures tend to have higher risk of conflict. Existence of youth bulge amplifies the inherent tensions that prevail in a society. Youth bulge societies burdened with educated, unemployed youth bear a higher risk of conflict as the young adults are easily attracted by rebel groups and criminal gangs. Youth bulge societies characterized by horizontal inequalities face greater challenges in maintaining social harmony as the youth in minority communities tend to take a lead role in conflicts seeking social justice.

Corruption is another important driver for escalating social conflict, and is responsible for low economic growth, high income inequality and poverty, and lower level of human development (Akçay 2006). It undermines the state's legitimacy and, in extreme cases, may render a country ungovernable and lead to political instability, chaos or war (Bottelier 1998). Rent-seeking behaviour of the elite makes the institutional structure of a country dysfunctional. The frustration among the people in general and the youth in particular who find it difficult to advance their careers in a corrupt environment may join the rebel movements who vow to eliminate it by overthrowing the existing regime.

State oppression and human-rights abuse also acts as triggers for conflict. The direct and indirect victims of state oppression can be easily mobilized by the rebel groups against the state. Moreover, state oppression creates an environment where acts of violence by the opposing forces receive public sympathy. Extrajudicial killing, arbitrary detention, torture, false accusations by the law enforcing agencies, suppression of the freedom of press—all increase the risk of violence. A strong statistical correlation is found between past human-rights abuses and current risk of conflict (World Bank 2011).

Existence of large-scale unemployment is another driver that increases the risk of conflict in a society. Youth who do not find opportunities for living a decent life become frustrated and readily agree to join the rebellion. As the opportunity cost of joining a rebellion is almost negligible, it at least provides them with a certain identity and purpose in life. While the policy circles recognize the problem of unemployment as one of the basic causes of conflict and violence,

academics are yet to establish the direction of causation between these two (World Bank 2011).

Weak institutions increase the risk of violence. Societies which lack in well-defined rules, regulations, customs, and norms to govern human behaviour, or even if the regulatory framework is merely there on paper, but not executed or executed only selectively, conflict resolution in such an environment becomes problematic. It has been observed that States with weak institutions run the greatest risk of the onset and recurrence of violence (World Bank 2011).

The psychology of relative deprivation—a feeling of deprivation due to the difference between expectation and attainment—is a powerful driver of conflict and violence (Gurr 1970). A collectivity may compare its socio-economic status with another within the same state and feel deprived. The level of expectation of people rises with educational attainment, but if there are no sufficient job opportunities, people may get frustrated and indulge into violent political movements to press forward their demand. This psychology often becomes stronger where horizontal inequality exists. The intensity of the conflict is determined, to a significant extent, by the degree of perception of the feeling of deprivation among the members of a collectivity.

Polarization of identity is found to act as a significant explanatory variable for civil-war onset (Montalvo and Reynal-Querol 2005). Polarization leads to alienation of ethnic groups and cements binding within the groups (Murshed and Tadjoeiddin 2007). As polarization leaves little commonly shared spaces, the scope for negotiated settlement is reduced. Groups having conflicting interests may harden their position leading to conflict and violence.

Failure of democratic conflict-resolution mechanisms is another source of violence. In a parliamentary democracy, political parties articulate the grievances of various segments of the people. Non-fulfilment of aspirations under a particular regime may lead to a change in regime facilitating new initiative towards their resolution. This happens through elections. An electorate may choose a different political party or a combination of forces, which they think will serve their interest better. This is why elections in democracy is often referred to as a silent revolution. However, this built-in conflict resolution mechanism in a democratic process is largely biased in favour of the majority group in

a polyethnic society. The smaller communities, not being in a position to influence the outcome of a political verdict, attracts less attention from the competing political parties. The minorities, who are left in a political vacuum, transform themselves into political communities and adopt violence as a political mode of communication (Das 2005a).

Ideology is also one of the powerful drivers of conflict and violence. However, ideology-based conflicts often cut across narrow identities relating to ethnicity or racism or clannish perspectives and seek to effect social transformation for the welfare of the people of a State.

Besides these drivers, external support to rebel groups in a country often helps conflict to linger for a long period causing recurrence of violence. Hostile governments often provide logistics to rebel groups in their fight against the government they oppose. Reciprocal support from hostile neighbours keeps insurgent groups afloat. In many cases, with the involvement of hostile powers, rebel groups in fact wage a proxy war. Once the support structure is withdrawn, such rebellions might collapse (Collier *et al.* 2003). Besides the external governments, diaspora also often plays an important role in supporting conflict as well as in building peace in the country of their origin. Remittances from diaspora are often used for initiating, fomenting, or renewing conflict in their homeland. Since the diaspora live in relatively wealthier societies, far away from the conflict theatre, and are not directly subject to the consequences of violence, they might pose as more 'national' or 'ethnic' than their counterparts who remain in their place of origin (Brinkerhoff 2011).

In most cases, multiple drivers are embedded in a conflict situation. It is thus important to understand as to which structural causes act as the primary trigger for conflict and which is the derivative. For example, while economic underdevelopment acts as the primary driver, unemployment becomes the derivative. If we address the former, the latter will be automatically taken care of. However, irrespective of the nature of drivers, all types of conflict and recurring violence deteriorate the security environment which in turn negatively affects economic development.

The concern for the integration of security and development policies emanates from the involvement of developed countries as aid donors

to the conflict-ridden fragile States. The increasing realization that state fragility allows the emergence of ungoverned spaces, which act as incubators of terrorism and pose a serious threat to their own security in a borderless globalized world, has led the developed countries to take active initiative for conflict mitigation in poor countries (Hout 2009). However, donor countries are faced with the dilemma as to how development aids can be used for conflict prevention, conflict mitigation, and promoting the human security in the recipient countries. Although the direction of causality between these two policy goals is still hazy, and some tension exists between the notion of security-informed development and development-mediated security, a focus on supporting governance reforms acts as a potential link between security and development objectives (Youngs 2007). Democratic governance is viewed as fundamental for poverty reduction, conflict resolution, and promotion of human security. The fragility can best be addressed through governance reforms, establishment of rule of law, strengthening the anti-corruption measures and political inclusion, and building of institutions. As investments in the conflict-ridden poor countries are unable to unfold their impact due to the existence of political instability, it is realized that development policy can only achieve its effects if security measures are designed to restore the political stability in them (Faust and Messner 2004). This realization has led the donor countries to adopt a policy of securitization of development in fragile States. By way of designing security-linked conditionality for development aids and a number of instruments linking elements of governance and security, on the one hand, and adding more and more development-oriented components to the security policy design, on the other, donor countries are making effort to dovetail both the concerns for development and security in fragile States.

While state fragility is manifested in almost half of the world's sixty poor countries like Sudan, Congo, Palestine, Somalia, Colombia, Afghanistan, Rwanda, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, Haiti, Timor-Leste, Yemen, and so on, the concern for the international community, the fragility syndrome persisting in some regions of a country is a serious concern for its national government. Taking cue from the international experiences in conflict mitigation, the national governments can also devise a suitable response combining the security

and development concerns to address their regional fragility and in turn can also contribute to the international discourse on state fragility. The present book deals with the regional fragility in India's NER.

Next to Jammu and Kashmir, NER comprising Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura, euphorically called the seven sisters, has become the second soft underbelly of India. The state-centric security perception arising out of cold-war stratagem, Nehruvian model of integration of the hills of region through Assam, Nehruvian tribal development policy, aspirations of the Assamese to make Assam a nation-province for the ethnic Assamese, post-partition landlocked location, growth of proto-nationalism, failure of democratic conflict-resolution mechanism, failure of the states to provide effective security of life, high level of corruption, poor governance, practice of the politics of violence, large-scale immigration across the border, low economic growth, high incidence of unemployment—the interplay of this host of factors has created a material base fertile for thriving insurgency in the region.

The present study explains the dynamics, both external and internal, of unfolding of issues relating to the (in)security and (under) development in the NER. The state-centric and orthodox security perception during the early decades of independence kept India's land borders in general and northeastern borders in particular inaccessible so that they could act as the natural barriers against any external aggression. In fact, till the 1962, an Sino-Indian border conflict, development of the NER had become the hostage of traditional approach towards border security. During the 1960s, an intense feeling of territorial insecurity precluded any major investment in the NER as India was not sure whether it could hold the NER in case of any simultaneous thrust from China and Pakistan across the Chicken's Neck (Das 2002a). By the time Pakistani threat to India's northeastern border melted down following the liberation of East Pakistan and a policy of forward engagement put in place by way of reorganization of the NER in 1972, gain in external security environment was outpaced by deteriorating internal security environment with the rebellion of the Nagas, Mizos, and Meiteis getting into momentum. The fast proliferation of ethnic militancy since the 1980s has made it difficult for development to take root.

Thus, the dynamics of external security threats, underdevelopment, and deterioration of internal insecurity environment arising out of grievance-based ethnic militancy have led NER into a conflict trap. The book analyses such social and political dynamics and suggests context-specific measures for breaking the conflict trap in the NER.

It pleads for a three-pronged strategy for breaking the vicious cycle of insurgency and underdevelopment in the NER. First, integrating the economy of the NER to that of South Asia and Southeast Asian regions through active economic diplomacy which will then break the landlocked condition of the region, a *sine qua non* for initiation of market-led economic development, on the one hand, and which will, on the other hand, provide the necessary leverage to the Indian State to address the internal insecurity issues arising out of cross-border operation of the ethnic militant groups. Second, entails adopting a community-based development model which is more suitable for the conflict zones particularly where the institution of state has failed as an agency mainly due to ingression of anti-state and anti-people forces into the state structure. Use of community-based organizations as a development agency will not only improve state–society relationship, but also invigorate internal production, consumption, and distribution. Third, is improving the governance through the practice of politics of inclusion as counter to politics of identity and reining on corruption.

Chapter 1 focuses on the implications of India's external security concern in the eastern border for the development of the NER. That is, as to how the development prospect of the NER has been affected due to external security concern arising out of hostile relations between India and the neighbouring Pakistan and China. How India's conduct of foreign policy in relation to her neighbours delimited the external perimeter as well as inner contents of development of the NER. Chapter 2 focuses on the political dynamics emerging out of the efforts of the Indian State to integrate the tribal communities inhabiting the northeastern fringe and the efforts of the ethnic Assamese elite to convert Assam as the nation province of the Assamese. It makes an attempt to explain as to how the conflict between these two approaches—integration approach of the Indian state and making-Assam-a-nation-province-of-the-Assamese approach of the ethnic Assamese elite had ultimately led to the dismemberment of Assam, which might be

viewed as India's response towards internal adjustment to counter external security threats. Chapter 3 focuses on the social, economic, and political dynamics behind the growth of fragility syndrome in the NER. Chapter 4 captures the interlinkages between in(security) and (under) development by way of accounting for economic costs of insurgency in the NER that has contributed to the onset of the conflict trap. Finally, Chapter 5 outlines the policy measures for breaking the conflict trap.

Security and Development in India's Northeast

This book is an insightful account of the security and development paradox in India's Northeastern Region (NER). It examines the social dynamics of proliferation of ethnic militancy and civil war in the region during the 1980s.

The volume explores the strong interlinkages among external security threats, economic underdevelopment, and the consequent deterioration of internal insecurity in the region. These, it establishes, have led the NER into a 'conflict trap'.

Gurudas Das argues in favour of cross-border cooperation as a way out of grievance-based ethnic militancy arising out of peripheral underdevelopment. He suggests a three-pronged approach for breaking the conflict trap: integrating the NER economy with that of South and Southeast Asia through active economic diplomacy; adopting a community-based organization led development model for conflict zones; and improving governance through the practice of politics of accommodation as opposed to politics of identity.

This topical book will be a useful reading for students and scholars of political science and

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Indian politics. It will be of particular interest to policymakers and administrators, strategic affairs and security experts, and journalists working on the region.

Gurudas Das is Associate Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, National Institute of Technology, Silchar, Assam.

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