

Terror Sans Frontiers

*Islamist
Militancy in
North East
India*

Jaideep Saikia



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Islamist Militancy in North East India

This book is the first clear-eyed assessment of the explosive situation unfolding in India's North East. While ethnic insurgency in North East India, its "little wars", have been around ever since India's independence, there is now the menacing new phenomenon of Islamist terrorism developing in the region. This could well introduce a different order of extremism altogether than has traditionally existed. Islamist militant activities have begun to proliferate in the region with an urgency that could usurp the separatist mantle from the traditional ethnically based insurgent movements. Equally, it conspires to further an agenda which has religious fanaticism and division as its important coordinates. The region is also witness to myriad subterfuges by the Inter Services Intelligence of Pakistan (ISI) and the Directorate General of Field Intelligence (DGFI) of Bangladesh, which are beginning to expand their aid to North East insurgent organizations by inducting Islamic groups into the region. Indeed, this has been compounded by the fact that the present government in Bangladesh is also purportedly turning a blind eye to the fundamentalist engineering currently underway in the Islamic Republic, which has led to large-scale migration of Hindus out of Bangladesh.

The state of Assam in North East India not only has a sizeable Muslim population, but also a long and porous border with Bangladesh, factors which help Islamist insurgency. Indeed, a majority of the population of four geo-strategically positioned districts of Assam is now Muslim — reportedly a consequence of the illegal migration from Bangladesh. Recent reports have also indicated that the ISI and the DGFI are encouraging the illegal influx with an eye to carving out a Brihot Bangladesh (Greater Bangladesh) in the region. The Islamist militant movements in the region find an organized parish in this illegal migrant population whose ideology and socio-religious commitment continue to be informed by experiences from across India's borders. The problem has grown in magnitude as a result of the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) jettisoning its

(Continued on back flap)

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“One of the most important books on the question of insurgency yet to appear. While some of Jaideep Saikia’s conclusions may be controversial, there is no doubt that this book must be consulted by anyone seeking a fuller picture of the problems of revolutionary war and separatism in India’s North East.”

**Stephen Philip Cohen, The Brookings Institution,
Washington DC, USA**

“By highlighting the activities of (Islamic) fundamentalist elements in the North East, Jaideep has done well to focus attention to the grave threat it poses to our national security.”

**Lt Gen (Retd) S. K. Sinha, Governor of Jammu & Kashmir and
former Governor of Assam**

Jaideep Saikia—acknowledged as one of India’s best-informed analysts on the security challenges in the North East—has an important story to tell. It is a story not fully appreciated in New Delhi, let alone beyond Indian shores. This book fills the void.”

**Robert M. Hathaway, Director, Asia Program, Woodrow Wilson
International Center for Scholars, Washington DC, USA**

“A fascinating study of the nexus between Islamic militancy and the demographic challenges in India’s North East. Jaideep Saikia is a superb observer of the realities in Assam. All those who wish to understand similar developments in Europe and the Middle East should read this book.”

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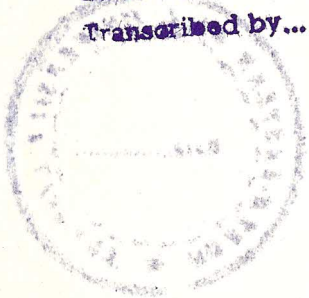
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For

Matthew Aaron Rosenstein

Terror Sans Frontiers is a book about militancy and not religion. The word "Islamist" has been used as a prefix only in order to separate the militancy it engenders from ethnic militancy movements, and in order to state that a universal agenda, which is seeking to draw from Islam, is unified in its sinister design. It is this commonality of usage that has brought forth not only the growing menace of terror, but also the mistake that Islam is a faith that enjoins its members onto diabolic action.

Contents

<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	11
<i>Author's Note</i>	13
<i>Prologue</i>	21
Chapter 1 : Shadow Over Crescent	27
Chapter 2 : The Crescent Waxes Eastward	41
Chapter 3 : Swadhin Asom or Brihot Bangladesh	66
Chapter 4 : Fundamentalism at the Doorsteps	95
Chapter 5 : In the Name of Islam	124
<i>Epilogue</i>	156
Appendix I : Muslim Fundamentalist Organisations in North East India—A Compendium	163
Appendix II : Details of Surrendered Muslim Fundamentalists (1.1.1999—31.3.2004)	178
Appendix III : Details of Apprehended HuM Militants (1.1.1999—31.3.2004)	179
Appendix IV : Details of Apprehended MULTA Militants (1.1.1999—31.3.2004)	180
Appendix V : Details of Apprehended MULFA Militants (1.1.1999—31.3.2004)	181
Appendix VI : Details of Apprehended PULF Militants (1.1.1999—31.3.2004)	182

Appendix VII : Details of Apprehended ILAA Militants (1.1.1999—31.3.2004)	183
Appendix VIII : Details of Apprehended MSF Militants (1.1.1999—31.3.2004)	184
Appendix IX : Details of Apprehended IURPI Militants (1.1.1999—31.3.2004)	185
Appendix X : Details of Apprehended AIMLF Militants (1.1.1999—31.3.2004)	186
Appendix XI : Details of Apprehended ISFI Militants (1.1.1999—31.3.2004)	187
Appendix XII : North East Indian Muslim Fundamentalist Organisation Camps in Bangladesh	188
Appendix XIII : Main Islamist Organisations of Bangladesh	190
Appendix XIV : Order of Battle of the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami of Bangladesh	192
Appendix XV : Percentage of Hindus in Bangladesh's Population	196
Appendix XVI : Directorate General of Field Intelligence (Bangladesh)	197
Appendix XVII : Jamaat-e-Islami (Bangladesh)	198
Appendix XVIII: North East Militants Camps in Bangladesh	200
Appendix XIX : Percentage of Muslim Population in Assam (Top Nine Districts)	206
Appendix XX : Inter Services Intelligence (Pakistan)	207
Appendix XXI : Population Growth Rate of Assam since 1901	208
Appendix XXII : United Liberation Front of Asom's Battalions	209
<i>Select Bibliography</i>	210
<i>Index</i>	220

List of Abbreviations

AASU	: All Assam Students' Union
AAGSP	: All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad
AGP	: Asom Gana Parishad
AIMLF	: All India Muslim Liberation Front
ARNO	: Arakan Rohingya National Organization
ATTF	: All Tripura Tiger Force
BIM	: Bangladesh Islamic Manch
BJP	: Bharatiya Janata Party
BNP	: Bangladesh National Party
BSF	: Border Security Force
CHT	: Chittagong Hill Tracts
DGFI	: Directorate General of Field Intelligence (Bangladesh)
FEER	: Far Eastern Economic Review
HUJI-B	: Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami of Bangladesh
HUM	: Harkat-ul-Mujahideen
ICS	: Islamic Chatra Shibir
ILA	: Islamic Liberation Army
ILAA	: Independent Liberation Army of Assam
IM (DT)	: Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals)
IOJ	: Islamic Oikyo Jote
ISFI	: Islamic Security Force of India
ISI	: Inter Services Intelligence (Pakistan)
ISS	: Islamic Sevak Sangh
IURPI	: Islamic United Reformation Protest of India
JEI	: Jamaat-e-Islami
JIC	: Joint Intelligence Committee
JKLF	: Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front

JUEH	: Jamaat-ul-Ulema-e-Hind
LITF	: Liberation Islamic Tiger Force
LTTE	: Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MFO	: Muslim Fundamentalist Organisation
MLTA	: Muslim Liberation Tigers of Assam
MULFA	: Muslim United Liberation Front of Assam
MULTA	: Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam
MSF	: Muslim Security Force
MVF	: Muslim Volunteer Force
NDA	: National Democratic Alliance
NDFB	: National Democratic Front of Bodoland
NSCN	: National Socialist Council of Nagalim
NWFP	: North West Frontier Province
OIC	: Organisation of Islamic Countries
ORBAT	: Order of Battle
PLA	: People's Liberation Army (Manipur)
POK	: Pakistan-occupied Kashmir
POTA	: Prevention of Terrorist Act
PS	: Police Station
PULF	: People's United Liberation Front
PVSM	: Param Vashisht Seva Medal
RAW	: Research & Analysis Wing
RSS	: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
SIMI	: Students' Islamic Movement of India
SIO	: Students' Islamic Organisation
ULFA	: United Liberation Front of Asom
UNPO	: Unrepresented Nations and People's Organisation
URPA	: United Reformation Protest of Assam
USRA	: United Social Reform Army
VDP	: Village Defence Party
VSMF	: Village Security Force of Muslims

original ideals. This most prominent ethnic separatist movement in Assam has now become a willing hostage of the ISI and the events and factors which are in play in Bangladesh and in the neighbourhood.

This meticulously researched book provides both a timely warning and original insights into the linkages between Islamic militancy and the broader issues of security in North East India. It is an unfolding crisis to which New Delhi has yet to awake.

The Author

Jaideep Saikia is a security analyst with over two dozen published and presented academic papers on security and strategy and the author of the book, *Contours: Essays on Security and Strategy* which received excellent reviews in the media. He has also published a collection of his poems, *Lyrics from the Amygdala* and is co-editor of the book, *Development Challenges in India: Assam in the 21st Century*. The present book, grew out of his research as an ACDIS-Ford fellow in the Arms Control, Disarmament, and International Security program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA.

Born in 1966, Jaideep Saikia had his education at the Rashtriya Indian Military College, Dehra Dun and at St Stephen's College, University of Delhi. He has travelled widely in USA, Europe and in South and South East Asia on academic assignments. He travelled to Pakistan as the guest of President Gen Zia-ul-Haq in 1988. Earlier, he travelled to Kashmir and studied the security situation on a fellowship from the National Foundation for India, New Delhi and to Sri Lanka on a Regional Centre for Strategic Studies fellowship. He visited the People's Republic of China where he lectured and interacted with the top think tanks and universities of Beijing, Fudan and Zhejiang. He was also an 'International Visitor' to USA to study 'International Crime Issues & Global Cooperation' on the invitation of the US Department of State. Saikia was part of an international expert group for a mandated agency of the United Nations in its project 'Devious Objectives and Spoilers in Peace Processes.' He examined the thesis with an eye to Kashmir.

Jaideep Saikia lives in Guwahati and is presently working on a book on the ULFA.

Praise for *Terror Sans Frontiers*

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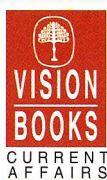
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“Essential reading for anyone who is concerned about India’s volatile North East and the increasingly unstable Bangladesh.”

Bertil Lintner, *Far Eastern Economic Review*



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