

**ANATOMY OF REVOLT IN THE  
NORTH EAST INDIA**

London Books

India's north-eastern border lands are in turmoil; revolutionary "liberation fronts" are cheaper by the dozen, crises of identity have spawned militant ethnic groups and "ethnic cleansing" has begun. The Brahmaputra valley is the home of terrorism and, Manipur, the testing ground for orthodox insurgency and Maoist dogma. The Tripuri rebels are wooed by the Left and the Right, leaving the administration confused and tentative. Meghalaya illustrates the skilful use of attrition to create panic among the minorities and the "under-privileged" and bedevil relations between the hill tribes and the plains people. Nagaland remains disturbed and Mizoram relatively quiet but for the Hmar's ethnic ambitions, an internal problem with grave consequences, if mishandled. Arunachal provides a corridor for insurgents to commute between India and Myanmar (formerly Burma) to acquire weapons and undergo training.



S. Gurudev graduated from the Loyola College, Madras in 1955. Began professional career as a sub-editor with *Hindustan Standard* (Delhi edition). Selected for the desk in *The Statesman* in 1958. Took up a field assignment as its special representative for the North-East Region Retired during 1993 after witnessing & reporting on the gathering storm and the hinge of fate which were to change the course of history and recondition the tribal psyche.

ISBN : 81-7201-057-0

Price Rs. 260/-

F239  
1306

# ANATOMY OF REVOLT IN THE NORTH EAST INDIA



S. GURUDEV



**Lancers Books**

*Gen*

NEHU LIBRARY

Acc. No. 212845

Acc. by AP

Date 22/7/02

Class by

Sub. Division by

Enter by

Transcribed by

COMPUTERISED

XF  
954.16  
GURJ

1st published : 1996

© S. Gurudev

ISBN: 81-7095-057-0

Price Rs. 260/-

Published by : S. Kumar

Lancers Books

P.O. Box 4236, New Delhi-110048

Phone No. 6414617

Printed at : D.K. Fine Art Press (P) Ltd, New Delhi.

## CONTENTS

<i>Foreword</i>	vii
<i>Prologue</i>	ix
<b>Chapter 1</b> The Melting Pot	1
<b>Chapter 2</b> All this and Heaven too	11
<b>Chapter 3</b> Crown Colony : An Exercise in Futility	23
<b>Chapter 4</b> Birds of a Feather Flock . . .	33
<b>Chapter 5</b> Of Men and Mice	50
<b>Chapter 6</b> Outsider, Outsider	59
<b>Chapter 7</b> Terrorism : Darkness at noon intelligence: The Favourite Whipping Boy	69
<b>Chapter 8</b> Third World's "Atomic Bomb"	88
<b>Chapter 9</b> Separate Tables	93
<b>Chapter 10</b> Ethnicity and Militancy	104
<b>Chapter 11</b> Epilogue	116
<i>Annexures</i>	122
<i>Bibliography</i>	176
<i>Index</i>	178

## FOREWORD

A study of the geometry of conflicts and tensions in the North Eastern region of India particularly during the last century is of special interest for all those in the field of socio-political study and research. Strategically located in the remote north eastern corner of India, this region has been a transitional zone between High Asia and Indo-China, in terms of political geography and is marked by distinct individual traits and characteristics, of its own. Following British annexation of Assam in 1826, this region was incorporated in the British India and after independence of the country it continues to be a part and parcel of India. Locational characteristics, rigorous environment, physical and social isolation from the rest of the country were the factors which generally encouraged, at times, the shy but proud inhabitants in some pockets of the region to demand autonomy and in some cases secession. The inroads of modernisation and the process of neo-assimilation that started with growing migration of people from outside the region revealed their inherent inadequacies and created a sense of assault on their traditional socio-economic bases. Misguided and swayed by misconception, in most cases, public sentiments were often whipped up in some areas of the region to seek alternative centres of power, deemed capable of providing alternatives. A sense of intransigence thus appeared to hold sway over some social groups giving rise to conflicts and tensions. The multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious characteristics on a super-imposed setting of the region, over the last decades, have seen diffusing patterns of ramifications and manifestations of the Social conflicts. The insurgency, terrorism and ethnic conflicts in several States of the region since independence are, in fact, conflicts between tradition and modernity, forming a part of the gradual socio-psychological adjustments in the process of national unity and assimilation.

The systemisation, re-orientation and effective administration as well as the developmental policies taken up since independence, have however ushered in significant changes in the socio-political behaviours in the North East. Such positive changes are going on with ever-increasing intensity and the apparent irritants existing so long in the form of various fissiparous tendencies are expected to die down with wider awareness and participation of the mass-people in the nation-building process.

Sri S Gurudev has been intimately connected with the affairs of the region, as a prominent journalist of national repute, for over two decades. He is well acquainted with the intricacies and complexities of social, political and economic developments of the region, their growth, relationship and linkages. His in-depth knowledge of the conflict-tension situations in all the seven States finds vivid reflection in the pages of this valuable book authored by him. His deft treatment of the history of evolution of socio-political process, detailed investigative analysis and explanatory interpretations have been a consistent attempt to bring to the surface both the subjective and structural aspects of the cult of insurgency, terrorism and ethnic clashes as well as the emerging trends in the North-East. I believe that this book, a product of hard labour and vast experience of a veteran journalist like Sri Gurudev will provide all discerning readers a deep insight into the developments of the region, and help in identifying its problems in proper perspectives to defuse conflict-tension situations. Sri Gurudev rightly deserves credit and thanks for presenting to the public his wide knowledge and experience about the region in the form of this book and I hope that it will be widely acclaimed by all readers.

Hiteswar Saikia  
Chief Minister, Assam

## PROLOGUE

India's north-eastern border lands are in turmoil; revolutionary "liberation fronts" are cheaper by the dozen, crises of identity have spawned militant ethnic groups and "ethnic cleansing" has begun. The Brahmaputra valley is the home of terrorism and, Manipur, the testing ground for orthodox insurgency and Maoist dogma. The Tripuri rebels are wooed by the Left and the Right, leaving the administration confused and tentative. Meghalaya illustrates the skilful use of attrition to create panic among the minorities and the "under-privileged" and bedevil relations between the hill tribes and the plains people. Nagaland remains disturbed and Mizoram relatively quiet but for the Hmar's ethnic ambitions, an internal problem with grave consequences, if mishandled. Arunachal provides a corridor for insurgents to commute between India and Myanmar (formerly Burma) to acquire weapons and undergo training.

The forbidding landscape is a slur on five decades of Indian administration after Independence; by contrast, one is tempted to admire the British genius in planting the Union Jack in the remote corners of the region, largely by conquest and stratagem, yet, earning the gratitude and loyalty of the hill tribes in particular. The sheer exploitation of Assam's primary products, tea and oil, without a nominal return for the indigenous people and labour, lakhs and lakhs of whom were brought from Chota Nagpur, Orissa and further south, is hardly remembered with indignation. Britain's commercial interests were protected by driving a wedge between major segments of the population and creating a climate of isolation.

The divide-and-rule or carrot-and-stick policy is still practised, and a measure of its success can be gauged by the retention of the Inner Line Regulations (of 1873), though conceived in a colonial context. The objective was to restrain over-zealous British planters from

transgressing an imaginary line and exceeding their limit, which, however, was kept flexible. The Regulation has come to be regarded as a safeguard for backward tribes and groups in danger of being swamped by the more advanced and better organised plains inhabitants. The British would say that it was tantamount to “inoculating” the tribes against political infection. Were they genuinely concerned about the hill people being “enslaved” by the cunning babus?

The British period which began in 1826 marked the divide between the neo-Vaishnavite renaissance of the medieval ages (15th and 16th Century), the golden era of goodwill, tolerance and understanding, and the post-World War two debris of collapsing colonial empires, decay and anarchy. To understand his glorious past, the A samiya’s hopes and aspirations, his fears and frustrations, it should be remembered that a part of his inner self dwells in the past. He has much to give and much to forget. His individuality and “Indianness” are complementary; his contribution to the spread of Vedic culture and the Ramayana-Mahabharata tradition in the north east is significant.

The Chinese traveller Hieun Tsang who visited the court of Kumara Bhaskaravarman of Kamarupa in the 7th Century AD was struck by the catholicity and liberal outlook of the ruler who was regarded as the “King of the East”, which included present-day Bihar, parts of Bengal and the delta, the whole of Assam and the Surma valley (Bangladesh). If the Chinese was struck by the grace and charm of the people, Dr. Verrier Elwin in this century was “intoxicated” by a “certain beauty in human relationships”; he had never found so much courtesy and friendliness in ordinary people.

As early as the first millennium, AD, Saivism was the regional faith before the Prince from Mithila, Narakasura, introduced the Sakti cult; both flourished. The Kiratas of Bodo stock propitiated Lord Shiva by sacrificing pigs, fowl and offering rice beer as was their custom. Vishnu was worshipped without bigoted interference. The great social reformer Sri Sankar Dev’s message was simple, practical and secular. His nam-kirtans inspired an itinerant fakir to compose devotional songs or zikirs which enriched Assamese folk culture and ensured religious tolerance (a Ahom ruler built a hall for the fakir to carry on his discourses on Islam). The Ahom Kings patronised Vaishnavism and allocated large tracts free of revenue to establish the satras. The Koch kings who claimed to be descended from Shiva, built temples dedicated to the Devi.

The North-East came within the Vedic Aryan world around 1000

BC, opening the door permanently to the civilisation and culture of Gangetic India, getting together the non-Aryan tribes of the Brahmaputra valley and the Sanskritised Hindu influx. Social relationships were harmonious and enlightened. Assamese renaissance, unfortunately, was a product of literature and art; trade, commerce and industry were left to the administration with its reliance on clerks and imported skills. What emerged was not a soul-less product but a colourful mosaic of diverse traditions, including the significant tribal contribution. Historically, a heterogeneous people had created a mutual trust, be it language, music and ethnic pride.

In bygone centuries, Assam, the "Eastern Sentinel", was the corridor linking the Indian and Chinese civilisations. A Chinese explorer and soldier of fortune, Chang K'ien (2nd Century B.C.) mentions a trade route from Assam to south-west China. Silks were exported from China to the then western world by that route. Assam's own silk cottage industry established an ancient trade chapter. The land route was preferred to the sea route from Tamralipti (Tamluk in Bengal). The British closed it, fearing Chinese expansionist ambitions. The McMahon Line (watershed) underlined policy considerations in the days of British imperialism.

The Ahoms, by their unyielding resistance to the Muslim invaders, including the Moghals, perhaps changed the course of history. Had the Muslim hordes overrun the Brahmaputra valley and penetrated Burma, Tibet and beyond, the history of South East Asia may have been different. Archaeology and other evidence suggest, according to Dr. P.C. Choudhury, the historian, that the north-eastern region "lying on one of the migration routes of mankind, received wave after wave of immigrants . . . Negrito, Austro-Asiatics or Austrics, Indonesian, Alpine Aryan, Tibeto-Burman and others". Rajmohan Nath regards the Austrics as the first race of people with a more or less organised form of society, identified with the ancestors of the Khasis and Syntengs (Jaintias) who came from northern Sumatra.

The coming of the Ahoms, the last of the Mongoloid migrations from the East, was linked with the general movement of the Tai people from Southern China, leading ultimately to the settlement of the Shans in northern Burma (the Ahoms were a branch of the Shans who were cousins of the Bodo race from eastern Tibet). The origin of the Tai people remains obscure. The Cradle of the Shan published in the 19th century, traced the migration to the Altai mountains 2000 years before Christ. The Rev. W. Clifton Dodd who looked upon the Tai race as the

“elder brother” of the Chinese, developed the theme in his book which was also a publication of the previous century. E.F. Von Eickstadt and his contemporary Wolfram Eberhard believed that the Tais lived on the banks of the Yangtse Kiang and the Huang Ho which would make them a riverine people who were pushed south. Some scholars perceived a greater linguistic affinity between the Tai and Indonesian languages than with the Chinese. Whatever their origin, the Shan race was spread over southern China (Yunnan region), northern Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar and north-east India.

The gradual decline and fall of the Ahom kingdom had much in common with the great empires and civilisations that crumbled. Wars of succession within the royal family and open, if not a secret invitation to a neighbouring power or mercenaries, recall a familiar scenario. The Burmese could hardly wait. They overran and terrorised the Brahmaputra Valley for five years (1819-24) but were driven out by the British who added Assam to their empire. Assam ceased to be an independent state for the first time in recorded history. Assamese unification in its heyday under a powerful monarch centered on language and culture, the twin pillars of individuality which, says Prof. Suniti Kumar Chatterji, was “Assam’s great contribution to the synthesis of cultures and fusion of races in the formation of a great nation which, like a cut gem has many facets of which the north-eastern frontier facet is the most remarkable”. The Hinduism of north-eastern vintage was not weighed down by dogma and orthodoxy; the caste system was peripheral and the society was happily free of social evils like untouchability and the dowry system (Critics from the Other Backward Classes (OBC) may differ but the comparison is relative to the shambles in community relations in the other states).

The advent of the British, whether fortuitous or not, brought about a radical transformation of life in the Brahmaputra valley, segregated the hills from the plains and introduced systems of administration to maximise revenue and maintain law and order (the Indian Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code still form the basis for law-enforcement). The “natives” were gradually introduced to parliamentary democracy prompting Lord Elgin, the Viceroy, to say that “we have taught the babus to preach sedition”. Whatever legislative competence that the Indian acquired, it was a half-way house. The pace of implementation and numerous policy directives and measures to classify and protect an expanding tribe of the downtrodden and the neglected, provided the administration with options. One was to

regulate periodic violence or soft-pedal the basic issues and differences, giving themselves a locus standi. The custodians of the Raj were convinced that the Indian lacked the temperament and commitment to rule over a country unparalleled in diversity, religion, linguistic, ethnic and communal background. The "Anatomy of Revolt" traces the relevant factors to their origin.

## CHAPTER - 11

### EPILOGUE

India's north-eastern border lands were the last to be incorporated in the British empire in 1926, but the radical changes that the region underwent in politics, the population structure, ethnicity and the Christian reformation were unique in contemporary history. True to its commercial instinct, John Company made the Brahmaputra valley the home of tea. We have seen how the road and rail transport were geared to serve the primary sector; how lakhs of coolies were reduced to chattel and slaves and how immigrants from the then East Bengal created granaries out of virgin jungle in the lower valley. The Assamese, as a community, and the middle class/intelligentsia were "accommodating" and, by nature, hospitable. Bigotry and communal violence were marginal but there was ample scope for a colonial power to create and exploit divisive tendencies, evolving a system of checks and balances.

Fortunately, for Britain, relations between the hill tribes and the plains people were far from congenial; there was little or no interaction. The Ahoms favoured a policy of containment. Barter trade in traditional items at specified markets or "hats" was encouraged; border violations led to gruesome retribution. The British went a stage further, combining containment with a military presence, planting the Flag, as it were, and kept recalcitrant tribes like the Angami "on the leash" through punitive expeditions, for which purpose they built strategic roads linking the Barak valley and Manipur with the Brahmaputra valley. The British genius was to create a new generation of protective safeguards for the hill tribes in particular, legalising their isolation and seemingly concerned over the likelihood of the tribes being swamped by the comparatively educated, better organised and dominant communities. How much of the isolation was due to ingenious concepts like "Excluded" and

“Partially Excluded” Areas and the Inner Line Regulations during the Raj and how much to administrative blunders after Independence and the inability to understand the tribal ethos is the substance of the anatomy of revolt.

The British administrator had a sense of identification and the guidelines were unambiguous. The “twice born” (the ICS gentry) kept the trader and businessmen at a distance and the corridors of power relatively clean. Corruption had not vitiated public life. The dhoti-clad satyagrahi was a revolutionary in a different mould; he spoke of moral victories in a new idiom. But, as Nehru remarked, the truly historic events were consigned to oblivion among the north-eastern tribes, kept in purdah, ostensibly, for their own good. Were the apprehensions justified? Was the “noble savage” in fear of losing his identity? Were the missionaries over-zealous? The tendency among the converts to form their villages, breaking away from the parent community was regrettable. Tribal ecology was the key to an integrated future from a heterogeneous past. Determining the golden mean between doing too little and doing too much was the answer; better still, would be to project an image of power and glory while assuring the tribes autonomy and security provided they “behaved” themselves and refrained from “head-hunting” which was repugnant to the pastors and the white sahebs. The Deputy Commissioner’s fatherly image in a feudal society ensured a family structure, and, as it happens, “delinquent children” were punished or ostracised, depending upon the gravity of the offence.

Although the tribes were “quarantined” against political infection, it must be remembered that the “mainlander” lacked an elementary awareness of the bewildering diversity in the north-east which remained a remote abstraction. It was left to the odd exception like Dr. Verrier Elwin (partnered by Nehru) to project the best in tribal life in a organic manner. The new frontiersman had to be both administrator and guardian which taxed the ingenuity and dedication of Political Officers and their successors, the Indian Frontier Administrative Service. The transition from the Enchanted Frontiers to the Imperilled Frontiers revealed the unforeseen and irretrievable consequences of “impetuous” changes in the socio-economic structure of the tribes.

The identity crisis or syndrome had its roots in the formative years of colonial supremacy and force majeure, but it was only after the likelihood of the transfer of power that the empire loyalists and constitutional pundits thought of creating a Crown Colony. But, by

then, the tribal instinct favoured nation states (actually, district states) under an ethnic umbrella.

World War two and the collapse of the colonial empires gave the north-eastern tribes the opportunity to set their sights on independence, a chance of a life-time and well beyond the irredentist trends. Phizo and Laldenga, the men of destiny, changed the focus. A larger identity, ethnic or otherwise, and tangible safeguards were poor substitutes for an insurgency based on the claim to sovereignty and the lapse of British paramountcy.

The insurgencies tested Government of India's reflexes in a delicate and vulnerable situation. Why had the Nagas and Mizos rebelled when the path to progress was paved with good intentions, reinforced by unique constitutional safeguards? Nehru's concern for the tribes and their individuality, and his fundamental principles of tribal administration could hardly be excelled. But Phizo's politics of confrontation restricted New Delhi's options in dealing with our "misguided brothers". Phizo's brilliant lieutenant Sakhrie was tortured and killed when he questioned Phizo's obsession with a violent struggle. Political parties like the NNO defied Phizo's diktat and urged the Nagas to seek a political settlement within the Indian Constitution.

Apart from the fires the Phizo, Laldenga and the others lit which took time to be extinguished, the creation of the state of Nagaland against accepted criteria prepared the ground for other ethnic and racial groups to demand statehood. Balkanisation was round the corner but, far from envisaging correctives, the tragic consequences were underwritten by the Centre paying the price to keep the Nagas within the "family" while exercising the military option to counter insurgency. Thousands of security personnel and non-combatants poured into the disturbed areas and, with them, came an army of skilled and unskilled workers to build outposts and cantonments and ensure urbanisation. The inevitable influx of wage-earners and casual labour from the neighbouring states aroused the innate fears of the tribes.

Unscrupulous elements traded upon the tribal's ignorance, gullibility and addiction to liquor to appropriate his lands and property (benami deals and land alienation reduced the Tripuri tribes to hangers-on and serfs). Relations between the tribal and the non-tribal were in a flux but the euphoric aftermath of Independence dominated the landscape. The Assamese were neither pre-emptive

nor assertive, and, when they did assert themselves, declaring Assamese as the official language, the Khasis and Garos launched the APHLC movement which helped attain statehood peacefully. Meghalaya was created to allay fears of “Big Brother’s” linguistic and cultural ambitions just when the Assamiya was in the throes of despair over the dismemberment of his beloved Asom, which, he imagined, would form the nucleus of a “Greater Assam” after freedom. The Mizos blamed the Mautam famine on a callous Assam Government (Laldenga called it an “economic blockade”). The Mizo insurgency (Operation Jericho) led ultimately to the creation of the state of Mizoram out of the Lushai Hills district of composite Assam.

Phizo and Laldenga had no ideological (Maoist) pretensions but they looked to China to help equip and train their men in guerrilla warfare (the Chinese instructors, in return, respected their Christian sentiment). The NSCN factions, the Manipuri PLA and ULFA, however, subscribed to the Maoist creed; Muivah and Isak Swu perceived no contradiction between Christianity and Maoism. The rallying call, Nagaland for Christ, was meant to reassure the Church leaders but there was no certainty about the compulsions in the underground. After years of bloody purges and dwindling options, Muivah’s survival depended upon the geo-political climate on the Indo-Myanmar border and his image with the numerous extremist organizations sprouting all over the north east. (NSCN instructors had a foothold in the Garo Hills which could provide safe access to Bangladesh for sanctuary and training). Realising that consolidation was necessary to carry conviction with the new outfits (the Indo-Burma Revolutionary Front was far too simplistic and ambitious), Muivah floated the concept of a sovereign Naga republic which would be larger than Nagaland and guarantee autonomy for non-Naga tribes like the Dimasa Kacharis of the N.C. Hills, who, even otherwise, had formed a Dimasa National Security Force as the strike weapon on the pattern of the Bodo Security Force.

The regional Congress leaders were behind the creation of militant groups to dislodge the then Asom Gana Parishad Government. Back in power, the Congress ministry was saddled with the responsibility to deal with the militants who had developed their own cult of violence. The Bodo Security Force, the Dimasa National Security Force, the Hmar Volunteer Cell . . . provided the “muscle” to emphasize the alternatives, gather funds by holding tea garden managers to ransom or demand hefty donations from businessmen or

kidnap top executives. The emerging scenario left no doubt that the "mailed fist" was a vital element of ethnic politics. Should the Centre or the state make vital concessions under "duress" or should they make it clear that there was a limit beyond which negotiations would be counter-productive? The time element was crucial; sooner rather than later, the Garo extremists trained by Muivah's instructors would develop a "strike capacity". As it is, Shillong has problems of fundamentalism, drug peddling, secret sales of weapons and criminal activities. A Garo homeland, however, is a larger issue, incorporating portions of Mymensingh district in Bangladesh. Religious sentiments are involved.

The Phizo's Laldengas and Muivahs were not unduly perturbed by "crises of identity", although crises in general were grist to the mill. In addition to tying up several corps of security forces for decades, "fortuitous circumstances" created separatist tendencies which were not adequately diagnosed and "treated". The reorganization of the north-east in 1972 into full-fledged states (Mizoram and Arunachal graduated later) created volatile situations; radical measures overnight to transform a neglected and under-privileged society led to classic maladjustment which was blown out of proportion by younger elements "symbolising" the hopes and aspirations of the people of the Brahmaputra valley, but not necessarily the region. Having sidelined the political parties in Assam, the AGP, the political heir to AASU, was elected to power. A disastrous innings exposed the limitations of student power and, perhaps, compromised the prospects of student organizations occupying the driver's seat. A direct consequence was the birth of extremists/terrorist groups on the one hand, and, on the other, regional activists who sought a drastic sons-of-the-soil policy.

In Meghalaya, the power brokers and an urban elite exploited the Khasi Students Union and later, the Federation of Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Peoples, to paralyse life in Shillong alleging that the government had failed to protect vital tribal interests in securing optimum employment and educational facilities. The FKJGP's field of investigation covered Burra Bazar or Iewduh in Khasi. FKJGP was not anti-state but its methods were high-handed and tended to disturb the peace. If the bone of contention was that "outsiders" were making hay with illegal and "invalid" licences issued by one of three authorised agencies, denying the indigenous people avenues to a better and balanced life, the aggrieved hill men could seek legal

redress. Alternatively, a positive administration with clear directives could have ended the policy of drift. Instead, militants and the ultra regional school condoned violence against “outsiders” who had built up trade and business and acquired property over two or more generations. Was it no longer advisable to save for the proverbial rainy day or was it a cliché! Periodic protests bandhs, rasta rokos etc. in a tense atmosphere made it incumbent upon the political leadership, the law and order machinery and a conscientious public to assert themselves but there were no takers. Under the circumstances, Meghalaya may well become a “laboratory” to determine the answers to specific problems affecting the sons of the soil.

The KSU factions have a fair proportion of dropouts which raised serious doubts about its competence to organise public opinion on weighty matters like educational policy and admissions to institutions of higher learning. They were exploited by vested interests which, however, does not absolve the government of its primary responsibility to keep its offices functioning. Real politik suggests that the “peaceful” agitations to rectify the socio-economic imbalance which, arguably, was against the tribal interest, were no longer an isolated phenomenon but a well-structured campaign of attrition. Given the increase in extremist organizations and their links with Pakistan’s under-cover ISI and other anti-Indian agencies, the north-eastern border lands face an ominous future. Economic disparity, political opportunism and evident signs of a drift in the administration may combine to create yet another secessionist movement in Assam. The visits of several top-ranking ULFA leaders, including the “C.-in-C.” Paresh Barua, to Islamabad underline Pakistan’s options to destabilise the region and motivate militants preparing for a showdown.