

South Asia's Fractured Frontier

**Armed Conflict, Narcotics
and
Small Arms Proliferation in
India's North East**

Binalakshmi Nepram

A MITTAL PUBLICATION



A staggering 500,000 people are killed in the world each year by small arms, 90 percent of them women and children. 300,000 dies as a result of armed conflict in places that include North East India each year. The illegal arms industry with a \$ 3-6 billion profit together with illegal narcotics industry with \$200-300 billion profit forms the World's largest illegal trade.

"South Asia's Fractured Frontier" is the first book to directly address the interlinked issues of Armed Conflict, Narcotics and Small Arms proliferation in India's North East.

The book explains the ways in which guns have slowly peretrated the land where the only weapons were daos, machetes, spears, khukris and poison and bows and arrows. It also looks into the types, makes and sources of small arms that is flooding North East India for the last five decades. The book also traces the growth of narcotic drug use in the region and reviews the damage it is doing to North East Society. The author also points out the role that China, Pakistan and Burmese rebels have played in the North East India armed struggles. The book also illustrates the role that women in the North East are playing to survive and to bring peace in a war-zone.

This book is not only a book. It epitomizes the conviction of a young woman from the region that a day of peace, prosperity and understanding will dawn to heal this "Fractured Frontier". She is writing and working, to hasten that day.

Rs. 595



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SOUTH ASIA'S FRACTURED FRONTIER

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South Asia's Fractured Frontier

—Armed Conflict, Narcotics and Small Arms
Proliferation in India's North East



Binalakshmi Nepram



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Dedicated to

My loving Parents

Y. Ibemhal Devi & Nepram Bihari Singh,

The People of North East India

and to

Jupiter Yambem (1956-2001)

(Who perished in the attack at World Trade Centre,

New York on September 11, 2001)



How long is blood going to flow in this
country ?

What do you gain when you start killing
and shedding blood ?

Can you drink it ?

Can you make bricks from it ?

Who has really benefited from blood
running in the streets ?

*President of Burundi in August 1994 after
the slaughter of 2,000 people in a town*

...There is nothing bad as war.
Even peasants know better than to
believe in a war.

There is no finish to a war . . .

War is not won by victory.

One side must stop fighting.

Why don't we stop fighting?

—Ernest Hemingway
'A Farewell to Arms' (1929)

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FOREWORD

Among the varieties of conflicts in South Asia, "destructured conflicts" or "low intensity wars" have been quite conspicuous for a long time. Unlike many other theatres, they are not exactly the "post-cold war phenomenon" in this region. They are triggered by a range of complex factors including colonial misadventure, political alienation, economic deprivations, state sponsored persecution and violence, and environmental dislocations. The majority-minority number games in terms of religion, ethnic composition, political authority and psychological one-upmanship have conspicuously figured in almost all these conflicts. These conflicts have been made more acute in their direction, intriguing in their structure and devastating in their consequences by the rampant use of sophisticated arms, the cross border linkages of actors and agencies, and the free play of politics of narco-terrorism. No South Asian country can claim to be safe and sound today from this intricate linkage of arms-narcotics-violence led instability, topped by an unparalleled basket of border features.

Within South Asia also there are 'hot spots'. They are located in the centre of a particular country and fast spill over to the periphery of the same country and across the border. This not only triggers the 'export of armed conflict' but also its inherent costs including migration, socio-economic paralysis and instability. This makes the resolution of such conflicts both Herculean and evasive.

The North East region of India has been a 'hot spot' in South Asian conflict dynamics, with a multiplicity of actors-agencies of the nexus between politicians and drug barons, and the abundant supply of sophisticated arms have changed the entire profile and content of criminal, terrorist and

insurgency activities. The extortions and commissions from development projects are the most flourishing industry today in the North East. The document entitled "Bleeding Assam", brought out by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, squarely accuses Assam government employees of being in cahoots with the banned ULFA.

The peculiarity of the North East region has been the inexplicable multiplicity of forces and their demands, and the Union Government's inability to discard traditional uni-directional resolution mechanism. The conflicts in the North East have metamorphosed into layers and sub-sets, while the State reacts to them with the psyche and techniques that have far outlived their efficacy. In other words, the complexity that characterises the armed conflicts in the region is much beyond the comprehension of the machinery deployed to resolve them. There have been some definite flickers of change in the intervention mindset which made a remarkable difference in the past. The much discussed Mizo Accord is a direct outcome of this fresh and novel thinking. But these attempts and instruments were never institutionalised. Their advocates were caged into total oblivion by the 'status quoists.'

Interestingly, many of us can roughly draw a circle of how insurgency is sustained in the North East. Insurgents were a product of a particular situation and context which did not receive a well thought out of effective reconciliatory intervention. In order to sustain themselves, they procured weapons hitherto unknown. This made the conflict more pernicious and fatal. This brought instability in the system and weakened the sinews of state control, particularly on law and order. When the state failed to protect the people, particularly those with economic clout, the 'insecure' latter tended to organise their own security, sometimes by succumbing easily to the financial and other demands of the insurgents. This often institutionalised friendly extortion. Thus the State literally got side-tracked in the process and its role was vastly eroded.

Binalakshmi Nepram's present volume exactly looks into these issues of the fast changing structures and strategies of armed conflicts in the North-East region of India, and the

inability of the State agencies to comprehend and then grapple with the newly emerging inability of the State agencies to comprehend and then grapple with the newly emerging vicious forces. The author's first hand experience of studying at least some of these conflicts both as a civil society member and a student of the physiology of conflict makes this volume both interesting and provoking. She raises questions and issues that require much deeper empirical analysis and more serious policy treatment. She has deftly put together the critical linkages of actors and agencies both within and across borders. She brings home the point that much needs to be done in first understanding the matrices that make the permutations and combinations of the violent conflicts sustainable.

Though there is tremendous scope for the optimum development of the region based on its varied and rich natural resource endowments, the growth regime in the North East has been relatively dismal and lacklustre.

The Union Government only pumped in money, without thinking about the needs and priorities, institutions and development managers. It made people too dependent on the government, confiscated their creativity, and compromised the existence of traditionally voluntary societies. The private entrepreneurs and parties also started devouring public funds for private gain. This ultimately built an unholy nexus between the politicians, some rent-seeking bureaucrats and private parties. Every one knows this nexus today, let alone the insurgents.

In a society for which the embryo of governance has been voluntary community action, the modern type of governance has serious adverse effects, as transparency and accountability become more and more far fetched. There has been no trace of monitoring and evaluation of any development projects. But the hope lies in integrating development with the societies, so that mainstream India is created there in the ever neglected North East and not in Delhi, Calcutta and Bangalore.

✓ The North East remains unexplored in many ways. Tourism, energy, bio-diversity, its market and human resources, and its importance as a gateway to the entire East

and South East Asia have never been effectively debated. The present discourse on the North East as a hub of the proposed South Asia Growth Quadrangle and BIMSTEC, if realised, may transform the entire development agenda and content there. The development issues in the North East therefore, need to be reassessed and re-examined by bringing in newer definitions and paradigms. Only fresh thinking and development practices can win back the population from underground activities and give insurgents opportunity to assume a normal life style thereby leading to their political participation.

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INTRODUCTION

The States of India's North-East region are a fractured frontier in many senses. They represent a fracturing of India's political integrity. They are themselves fractured with conflicts, 'small wars' within and between them. They suffer fractured economies, and social structures. Above all, there are fractured lives, the direct and indirect effects of years of conflict. The three issues addressed in this study, conflict, small arms and drugs, are linked through the lives of young people in the North-East. The destructive characteristics of each issue reinforce the harm of the others in a damaging spiral that draws in hundreds of thousands of young lives.

For outsiders mention of the states and peoples of the North-east conjures up a host of different images: the magnificence of the mountain scenery, forests, gorges and rivers; the diversity of languages, dress and customs; the richness of tribal cultures; there are also images of strife and of the alienation of many people from 'mainland' India, of the long-running struggles for independence or autonomy, and since the 80s the spreading scourge of drug use and HIV infection. It is the tragic reality that this region, blessed in so many ways, is also afflicted by conflicts and their destructive effects.

Binalakshmi's study places the North East in its greater regional context, at the borders of China, Myanmar, and Bangladesh, in the 'cockpit' of neighbouring geopolitical ambitions. She also emphasises the ethnic heterogeneity of the North East itself, and the alienation and resentment felt against mainland India, both for its presumptions inclusion of the whole area into independent India, and for the way that inclusion has been enforced over the years. All these factors

contribute to the unfolding tragedy that needs to be better and more widely understood before it can be resolved. This study is a contribution to that resolution.

This pioneering study confronts three very sensitive, illegal, and in many contexts unmentionable topics, and, for the first time explores how intimately related they are in India's North-East. Binalakshmi writes :

"The narrative of small wars and insurgencies in South Asia is also the narrative of small arms, narcotics and insurgency as arms of all types and make are pumped in to fight the war and cultivation of narcotics in remote areas is encouraged to fund the wars." (p. 36).

Binalakshmi explores the relationship between these elements, mapping their characteristics and destructive effects. Her objective is to help turn the tide of this destruction. Her hope is that a better understanding of these issues by the communities, the leaders and people of India, and of the North-East in particular, will speed that change. It is refreshing that a young author from Manipur who has personally experienced the effects of the conflicts there, is making her analysis of the situation accessible to a wide, civil society audience. Her plea is for a rationale and constructive response to this situation.

The sensitivity of the issues have presented many difficulties in research, in getting beyond 'secondary sources', verifying the hearsay, and sharing conclusions of the research while safeguarding the sources.

Binalakshmi details the vicious cycle of insurgency, military response, lack of investment, the collapse of basic services and opportunities, which in turn feed into further insurgency. Indeed she shows that it is worse than a vicious cycle, more a vicious spiral descending into more tragedy, and becoming more intractable and complex with each rotation. Binalakshmi writes :

"The growing unemployment and corruption., and the deteriorating socio, economic and political situation and the abject lack of development further led to the rise and small arming of other militant outfits."

The economic collapse has reduced opportunities for employment, and the availability of funds for public services, such as health and education. Poor education facilities and low standards increase the inability of many young people to find employment to be able to meet their legitimate personal aspirations for success and security. The result is large numbers of ill-educated, unemployed and frustrated young people.

Outside actors from elsewhere within South Asia and beyond have been able to exploit the situation to India's discomfort, by supporting, training and supplying insurgent groups. Binalakshmi's research shows that large quantities of a huge array of small arms have flowed into the North-East region from China, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Pakistan through the "weapon warehouses" of Afghanistan and Thailand.

Additionally the proximity of the North-East region to some of the world's major drug producing areas of Myanmar and Thailand has meant that drugs are easily available. Binalakshmi documents 32 drug refineries along the Indo-Myanmar border. For the drug barons onward supply routes through conflict areas are safer than through areas with established police authority. Drug traffickers want small arms to protect themselves and their trade. Insurgents need funds for arms. The three elements are already in the melting pot of the North East region. Each takes advantage from the others. Disillusioned and unemployed young people are easily drawn into the maelstrom.

Chris Smith, of Kings College, London, a leading researcher and campaigner against small arms, remarked in March 2002 (at a follow up meeting in New Delhi to the UN conference on Small Arms), that he had seen no study to document the assumed connection between the supply of small arms, drug trafficking and insurgency. This study starts to unravel this nexus of interests in India's North-East.

The vicious spiral described above at the macro level, is tragically reflected in the lives of individuals at the micro level. Many young men, already frustrated without employment, are under pressure from insurgent groups to join them, and are under suspicion from the security forces, at

risk of arrest and abuse. They suffer extreme tensions and anxieties. Other family members, including young women, face similar pressures, at risk of harassment and abuse from either side. They suffer the traumas of losing loved ones in 'incidents', through summary arrest, violence or disappearance. With limited employment prospects, and the sense of terror or injustice from military restrictions or excesses, it is small wonder that many young people join the insurgents. Small wonder that others seek escape from the pressures of life, or from frustration and boredom, in drug use.

It is not surprising that the extreme anxieties and traumas experienced as an insurgent, or as a soldier, lead to increasing dependence on the power of the gun, to some abuse of that power, and to increased risk taking in drug use to help to cope with these pressures. The dynamics of masculinity in men under such pressure leads to an increase in their resort to violence both personal and collective, and an ever greater dependence on the 'props' and supports for that behaviour - small arms and drugs. Each increases the dependence on the other. The vicious spiral destroys the lives of individuals, as similar forces are affecting society as a whole. Women are at greater risk of sexual abuse and exploitation when men are armed - and thereby at greater risk of HIV infection.

The alarming incidence of HIV and AIDS in some states in the North East is a further symptom of the conflict situation and adds a further deadly dimension to the problems. Infection initially spread through unhygienic injecting drug use, is continuing and probably accelerating now also through sexual transmission. Dependence on drugs costs money. For the unemployed one option for raising cash is commercial sex work, another is the further supply or couriering of drugs. Drug dependence becomes a motivation to supply and make others dependent. The pressures of living with trauma, and in frustration and fear make others susceptible to trying that route of escape.

While there is widespread HIV infection elsewhere in India, in areas not particularly affected by conflict, it is not incidental that the high incidence of HIV infection in some states in the North East coincides with long running situations

of conflict and economic collapse. The spectre of widespread, and now unavoidable loss of life, leading to acute distress and suffering in tens of thousands of families, is further motivation not just to address the symptoms of this HIV epidemic - advice on prevention, individual behaviour change, care for those infected and affected - but to redouble efforts to address the root causes of the crisis.

Addressing the root causes means reversing the vicious spiral, resolving the conflicts, reducing the need and demand for small arms and creating jobs through investment. This will enable young people to fulfil their legitimate ambitions without resort to arms or drugs, and so provide a preferable alternative to the present morass in which they find themselves. Binalakshmi's study is a contribution to us turning that corner.

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BINALAKSHMI NEPRAM

LIST OF INSURGENT GROUPS IN NORTH EAST INDIA

1. Achik Liberation Matgrik Army	ALMA
2. Adam Sena	AS
3. Adivasi Cobra Militant of Assam	ACMA
4. Adivasi Tiger Force	ATF
5. All Tripura Tiger Force	ATTF
6. Arunachal Dagon Force	ADF
7. Bodo Liberation Tiger Force	BLTF
8. Bru National Liberation Front	BNLF
9. Dima Halam Daogah	DHD
10. Garo National Front	GNF
11. Hmar Peoples Convention (Democracy)	HPC (D)
12. Hmar Revolutionary Front	HRF
13. Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council	HNLC
14. Indo-Burma Revolutionary Front	IBRF
15. Ireipak Kanba Lup	IKL
16. Islamic Tigers	IT
17. Kamtapur Liberation Organisation	KLO
18. Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (Oken)	KYKL (O)
19. Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (Tonjamba)	KYKL (T)
20. Kangleipak Liberation Organisation	KLO
21. Karbi's People Force	KPF
22. Kangleipak Communist Party	KCP
23. Koch Rajbangshi Security Force	KRSF
24. Kom Rem People's Convention	KRPC
25. Kuki National Front (Military Council)	KNF (MC)
26. Kuki National Front (President)	KNF (P)
27. Kuki National Front (Zogam)	KNF (Z)
28. Kuki Security Force	KSF
29. Kuki/Khongshai Revolutionary Army	KKRA
30. Manipur People's Revolutionary Front	MPRF
31. Mizo Accord Implementation Committee	MAIC
32. Muslim Security Force.	MSF

33. Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam	MULTA
34. Muslim Volunteers Force	MVF
35. National Democratic Front of Bodoland	NDFB
36. National Liberation Front of Tripura	NLFT
37. National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isaac-Muviah)	NSCN(IM)
38. National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang)	NSCN (K)
39. North East Minority Front	NEMF
40. People's Liberation Army	PLA
41. People's Republican Army	PRA
42. People's United Liberation Front	PULF
43. Peoples Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak	PREPAK
44. Sadam Bahini	SB
45. Social Democratic Force of Tripura	SDFT
46. The National Militia of Tripura	TNMT
47. Tripura and Tribal Commando Force	TTCF
48. Tripura Defence Force	TDF
49. Tripura National Force	TNF
50. United Bengali Liberation Front	UBLF
51. United Kuki Liberation Front	UKLF
52. United Liberation Front of Assam	ULFA
53. United Liberation Movement of Arunachal Pradesh	ULMA
54. United Liberation Volunteers of Arunachal Pradesh	ULVA
55. United National Liberation Front	UNLF
56. United People's Volunteers of Arunachal Pradesh	UPVA
57. United People's Democratic Solidarity, Tripura	UPDS
58. Zomi Revolutionary Army	ZRA

LIST OF SMALL ARMS FOUND IN NORTH EAST INDIA

1. AK 47
2. AK 56
3. AK 57
4. AK 74
4. GPMGs
5. Rocket Propelled Guns
6. Anti-Tank Guns
7. Anti-Personal Shells
8. Pistols
9. Carbines
10. Margarine
11. Revolver
12. .303 Rifles
13. SBBL Guns
14. Sten Guns
15. 410 Hunting Rifle
16. Chinese Hand Grenade
17. Detonators
18. GF Rifles
19. M 14
20. M 16
21. M 20 Pistol
22. M 22
23. 417 Hunting Rifle
24. Musket Rifles
25. 9 mm Pistol Country mode 32 P
26. .32 Pistol
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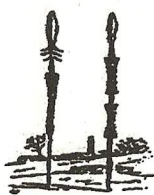
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6

CONCLUSION

Approaches Towards Resolution of Protracted Armed Conflict and Containing of Narcotics and Small Arms Proliferation

Conflict, its resolution and prevention.. involves the whole person, the nation or the identity group of the person, the political system, and the physical environment.

—John Burton.

North East India has been facing the twin menace of the influx of small arms and narcotics for a long time. Thousands of young lives have been lost in the various small wars and insurgencies that dot the region. This is followed by the rise in drug abuse and subsequent soaring of HIV and AIDS infections. This has caused serious socio-economic, political and security problems. The region because of its huge poverty stricken population, underdevelopment and nascent nationalism has the potential for the proliferation of small arms and narcotics.

North East India is a unique region of South Asia and while working out Conflict Transformation and Resolution measures, we need to understand the region well. There is a misjudgement in the minds of not only laymen but also in the minds of intellectuals, NGOs, researchers and peace and conflict activists in the metropolitan areas that the whole region is 'one'. Unless this attitude is changed, no amount of Seminars, Workshops held in cushioned rooms of the India International Centre, Habitat World or other Social Science Institutions will bring a change.

I would like to narrate what goes on in many activist and intellectual circles of New Delhi vis a vis furore after the North East India's protracted conflicts. At the height of the Bangkok Agreement of June 14, 2001 that was signed between Government of India and the NSCN IM, a number of meetings were arranged by various groups. One such meeting was held at the Sutlej Hostel Mess Hall of Jawaharlal Nehru University. The group that organised the meeting, the **Democratic Students Union**, had clearly taken the pro-Naga stand. This antagonised many of the Manipuri students who were studying in the campus. The meeting whose aim was to "Support the Extension of the Ceasefire Without any Extra-Territorial Limits" failed as it became a one-sided pro-Naga affair. The Democratic Students Union may have had noble intentions of espousing the Naga cause, but what needs to be kept in mind is that by doing so, progressive, intellectual groups as DSU are falling into the trap played by power hungry politicians. For them, its **"Divide, Fragment and Rule North East Region"**. May I put forward a question :

"In a Region where over 200 tribes and various communities exist, which side are you going to take?"

Thus, an attempt to address Conflict Resolution measures in one of South Asia's most conflict-ridden zone needs a greater understanding. One should keep in mind that there is a **"War within a War"** syndrome here in India's North East Region. One tribe's **"Freedom Fighter"** or **"Nationalist Armed Group"** is another tribe's **"Terrorist Group"**. In a bid to reclaim that certain Kuki inhabited parts of Manipur State are 'Naga' territories, in the 1990's, thousands of Kukis were slaughtered by the NSCN-IM insurgents in the worst ethnic cleansing in the history of the region. Similarly, was the slaughtering of the Santhals in Bodo dominated areas of Assam.

✓ The North East region can be said to be the region from which South East Asia starts. In cultures, dress and food habits, the region has more in common with South East Asian countries than with other parts of India or South Asia. A region that houses over 200 tribes, 32 million people, speaking over 178 languages and dialects tucked away in 7.6 percent of the total land area of India has been literally devastated by the twin menace of the proliferation of small arms and narcotics

since the 1940s. In working out conflict resolution processes, we need to know that the fire of insurgency has engulfed this strategic area (region shares 90 percent of its border with China, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal) for the last 50 years making it one of South Asia's most disturbed regions besides Kashmir, certain provinces of Pakistan, Sri Lanka and of late, Nepal. Findings have shown interlinkages between the North East and other disturbed areas of the region. Over sixty insurgent outfits are operating in the region. These outfits are fighting for causes ranging from "independence from Colonial India" to asking for autonomy within India. The following table will make the causes of the demands for which they are fighting clear.

Table 38 : Militant Outfits Operating in the North East and their Reasons for Armed Struggle	
<i>Name of outfit</i>	<i>Cause for Struggle</i>
United National Liberation Front, Manipur (UNLF)	Independence from India. Forming of Indo-Burman Front
National Socialist Council of Nagaland IM (Nagaland, now called 'Nagalim'), [NSCN]	Earlier Independence from India. But are cooperating with Government of India for a possible resolution within the framework of the Indian Constitution
People's Liberation Army, Manipur (PLA)	Independence from India
United Liberation Front of Assam, (ULFA)	Independence from India
Bodo National Liberation Front, Assam (BNLF)	Autonomy within India
Bru National Liberation Front, Mizoram (BNLF)	Autonomy within India
Kuki National Front, Manipur (KNF)	Autonomy within India
Tripura National Liberation Front, Tripura (TNLF)	Loss of identity; fight against illegal migrants
Hmar People's Council, Manipur (HPC)	Autonomy within India

We also need to look into the causes of the widespread insurgency in the region. Research unravels the following as some of the root causes:

- Asking for Independence
- Autonomy within the country
- Conflict over resources
- Fight against illegal migrations
- Lack of development
- Preservation of the identity of various ethnic groups.
- Indifference shown by the Central Government. Inhabitants of the region complain about step-motherly treatment by the Centre.

As noted earlier, an attempt should be made to understand that the industrial development in the North-East Region is very poor. Only a negligible percentage of the country's total number of factories is in the North Eastern Region. Most of the factories in the region are engaged in the manufacture of food products, wood and wood-based products and non-metallic mineral products. According to M. Dattatreyyulu of the **Indian Institute of Foreign Trade**, some of the factors responsible for the poor industrialization include the extreme lack of trained manpower, inadequate public and private investment, weak institutional finance, a low domestic demand, absence of the use of the latest technology, low yields of agriculture, absence of post harvest management practices, a very poor rate of capital formation, low per capita income and besides capital deficiency, existence of a poor law and order situation. Mr. Dattatreyyulu also identified poor credit facilities, lack of efficient transport facilities for men and materials, inadequate exploitation of riverine routes, restrictions in agricultural land use and barriers in the free movement of people to be the factors that compound the already existing conflict situation and vice-versa. This needs to be taken up seriously if together we all have to fight for a gun free, drug free and a war free North East India and South Asia. The above view is also substantiated by a noted economist of the region, Mr. Jayanta Madhab. According to him :

The credit-deposit ratio being very low in the region, the banking sector transfers, something like Rs.5,000 crore from this region to other regions for investment. Because of the prolonged insurgency in the region, despite abundance of natural resources (oil, gas, coal, granite, limestone, water and forest wealth), no outside investment has taken place. Indeed there was capital flight in the last eight years from the region. Unemployment, particularly educated unemployment, is high. All these have compounded the problem.

However, the above view of economic under-development as the cause of, and reason for the prevailing situation in the North East is refuted by Nari Rustomji. According to him:

Though economic neglect is often cited as one of the cause for the unrest on India's North-Eastern frontiers, it is by no means the major factor. Despite a minimum of expenditure in the frontier areas, the British were able to win the goodwill and loyalty of the tribes through engendering of feeling of confidence that they had no interest in interfering with their religion, culture or way of life. Nothing gives rise to so much anger, hostility, even hatred, as the apprehension of cultural aggression. And it is this apprehension that has been at the root of the unrest on India's North Eastern Frontiers since the British withdrawal ... it has been sought to be shown that heavy economic investment is of little avail in gaining the goodwill of the people of India's North-Eastern borderlands and that a strong military presence often creates more problems than it solves. It is only if they can be convinced that their culture and way of life are not in jeopardy and will not be undermined by the alien pressures that there is hope for a peaceful and secure frontier.

When one works on Conflict transformation and resolution measures both within the region or outside it is important to understand what led to a tremendous influx of small arms in the region. The search into the origin of these arms unravelled a series of sources ranging from the South East Asian black markets to the Afghan weapons pipeline to weapons that are being supplied by various criminal and militant networks. However, bulk of the weapons have been found to come from South East Asian countries in which the insurgents

outfits of Myanmar has played an important supply role of its infusion in the region.

Over thirteen sources of the origin of arms in the region had been identified:

1. Myanmarese insurgent groups/arms bazaar.
2. China
3. The Southeast Asian black market.
4. South Asian countries black market and Cambodia - Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka (state sponsored)
5. South Asian militants outfits of LTTE, Jammu and Kashmir outfits, Punjab extremists, Maoist Communist Party operating in Bihar, Andhra Pradesh. Nepalese Communist Maoist forces.
6. Other parts of India. U.P. etc, pilferages from legal gun factories
7. Criminal gangs operating in India and other South Asian countries.
8. The Indian security forces. Home security guards are the most vulnerable.
9. Other international market e.g. Romania, Germany.
10. Some tribes in the region produce that traditionally produces their own weapons since time immemorial. Many of the tribes in the region are not unfamiliar with arms and ammunition in the region. 'Small arms' like *knives spears, daos* which are used sometimes are produced within the region itself. The Khasi's '*poison arrows*' lethality is well known. This was reportedly used in the 1992 communal riots in Shillong to kill non-tribals.
11. Arms are obtained from fellow militant outfits.
12. Of late, some North East politicians reportedly have become suppliers of weapons.
13. The Indian intelligence RAW (Research and Analysis Wing) has been known to arm some outfits operating in the region.

The first training and weapons were given by the Chinese to the Manipuri and Naga militants in 1960s. After the Chinese,

the Myanmar insurgent outfits continued to train and arms the North East insurgents. It was at this time i.e. late 70s that drug addiction began to rise in the various North East States especially Manipur and Nagaland. The reasons could be gauged from the fact that Myanmar around that time had become the world's largest producer of opium. Most of the opium trade was controlled by the insurgents. The lawlessness due to insurgency was taken advantage of by various drug traffickers and the region became flooded with narcotics. It is no wonder that the tiny North East state of Manipur became known as the AIDS capital of India with third highest number of HIV positive cases. The situation has since then deteriorated wrecking the socio-economic and political fabric of the already fragile and trouble torn region.

The 1980s saw the mushrooming of over 20 heroin refining units along the Indo-Myanmar border. Even Myanmar housing around 62 ethnic identities has been seeing the emergence of insurgent activities since independence resulting in the influx of arms and narcotics in the region to fund these wars. The North East states of India have fast emerged as major transit points for heroin from Myanmar and nearly 20 kg of heroin is believed to be smuggled daily turning the region into the largest consumer of narcotics in India. Many of the North East insurgents were trained by Myanmar rebels as for example it was the Kachin Independent Army (KIA) who trained and gave arms to the Nagas and Manipur militants after the Chinese stopped their aid. To date, Naga, Manipur, Assamese and Kuki insurgents are given sanctuary in Myanmar.

In the late 80's and early '90s, there was the mushrooming of various insurgents outfits in the region. The demand was not for secession like of the Manipuris and Assamese, but for autonomy, preservation of identity. The 1990s saw a lot of ethnic clashes between various tribes in the region. Mention may be made of Kuki-Naga clashes, Kuki- Paite (in Manipur), tribals and non-tribals (Tripura), Reangs and Mizos (Mizoram), Bodos and Santhals (Assam). Thus one can see the 'Chain-reaction' phenomenon in the region. The following table shows when and in what way the influx of arms and narcotics occurred in the region:

Table 39 : Tracing the Origin of the Armed Struggles and the Influx of Narcotics in North East India

Year	Happenings
1940s	Struggle for independence starts in Nagaland and Manipur. Struggle was by peaceful means.
Early 1960s	Groups of insurgents (Naga and Manipuris) go to China via Kachin Corridor for arms and training. China provides these free of cost.
Late 60s	Insurgents return with Chinese arms and ammunition. Help also comes from Pakistan. Mizo insurgency starts off after the 'Mautam' famine episode.
1970s	Training of insurgents and supplies taken over by Burmese rebels... for a price. Militancy in Assam starts in protest against illegal migration.
1980s	A prairie fire of insurgency engulfs the three states of Manipur, Nagaland and Mizoram. Drug addiction on the rise in the North East. Boom time of opium cultivation in Myanmar and other Golden Triangle Areas.
1990s	First HIV case detected. HIV/AIDS epidemic spreads in the region due to intravenous drug using. Ethnic clashes start occurring between: Kuki-Naga (Manipur) Kuki Paite (Manipur) Tribals-Non-Tribals (Tripura) Reangs vs Mizo (Mizoram) Bodo vs Santhals (Assam) Assamese vs Illegal Migrants (Assam) Insurgency engulfs the comparatively peaceful states of Meghalaya, Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh. Mayhem unleashed in Tripura.
2000s	Situation continues

The events in North East India cannot be seen in isolation. They have to be seen in relation to events in South Asia and South East Asia especially Myanmar together and these two regions are a subset of the international system.

The search for the origin of small arms and narcotics takes one to the Cold War policies of the Post World War times. With the world divided into two blocks, the Asian region too became a region of contention between the Americans and the Soviets. Arms were pumped into Thailand, and later into Afghanistan in 1979 to counter the communist threat. Drug production was encouraged to be able to finance the costly

wars. Most of the arms used by insurgent are from these Cold War stock piles.

To fight the communists, the US intelligence supplied arms to the Kuo Mintang (KMT) through a company based in Thailand known as the South East Asia Supplies Corporation and weapons were brought in from the CIA stocks in Okinawa in exchange for opium. Thus, Thailand became a major drug cultivation centre and Myanmar followed suit. It is from these black markets that most of the weapons used by the North East militants are obtained.

The happenings in this region has strong parallels with that of the happenings in Myanmar. In Myanmar the various ethnic groups namely the Kachins, Shans, Was, Kokangs, Kayah, Karens, Mons, Chins and the Rohingyas revolted against the 'Rangoon' government and demanded independence There are around 67 ethnic groups in Myanmar and the country like India suffers from a tremendous centrifugal tendency. The second parallel can be drawn from the fact that the sate of insurgency started in both the regions around the same time just after the colonial powers left the region.

Besides, the happenings in South East Asia, events in the South Asian region too had its impact on the North East region. Some South Asian nations have been found to be engaging in sponsoring insurgency to achieve their own means. Sources analyzed earlier show how the ULFA activists were given arms and training in Pakistan and that many camps of North East insurgents exist in Bangladesh and Bhutan too. The role of Pakistan in sponsoring terrorist activities have been dealt in detail in the earlier Chapter 4. The Government of Pakistan since the beginning has been giving assistance to the minority groups like Nagas and Mizos since the early '60s From May 1962 to June 1964, it was the Pakistanis who trained and armed the hostile Nagas seeking self-determination. In 1965 a group of Nagas consisting of 1,500 men were given arms and training. It was the return of these groups which heralded the state of insurgency in Nagaland.

The role of China in fomenting trouble in the North East has also been looked into in detail in earlier chapters. The

reason for China's involvement in the North East has been mostly its border problems with India which remains unresolved till now. China has not recognised Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh as parts of India claiming the states belong to them. The Manipuri insurgent leader Nameirakpam Bisheshwar and 18 of his men were given arms and training by the Chinese authorities in Tibet. It was after their return that a prairie fire of insurgency engulfed the North Eastern state of Manipur for the first time.

The menace of small arms and narcotics is slowly spreading to other South Asian countries as well having deeper social, economic, political and security implications. Unless the situation in South Asia improves, the twin menace of small arms and narcotics will continue to haunt the North East region for years to come.

The analysis of the impact of small arms and narcotics has shown that women and children have been the worst sufferers. According to the United Nations' Secretary General Report, women and children account for 80 percent of all casualties inflicted by small arms. By 1988, as many as 2,00,000 children under the age of 16 were estimated to have participated in conflicts in 25 countries and since then, this situation has worsened. In the North Eastern states, there has been increasing number of women and children who have been seriously affected by the massive influx of arms and the state of insurgency. Women have been, the targets of sustained and frequently brutal violence committed by both parties of armed conflict. Both the sides often use violence to punish or dominate women believed to be sympathetic to the opposite side. Women in the North East have been threatened, raped and murdered.

As far as narcotics is concerned, the situation in the region under study has been found to be extremely grim. The area being situated near the Golden Triangle area bordering Myanmar is one of the main drug trafficking zones resulting in many of the youths in the region being addicted to drugs entering the region. Besides, the state of insurgency creates a state of lawlessness which many of the drugs traffickers are taking advantage of. Of late, HIV/AIDS have invaded this

fragile region and the future of this region seems extremely bleak. Another aspect we dealt in the earlier chapters was that of the impact of arms and narcotics on the environment of the region. The preparation of heroin from opium requires certain chemicals and as most of the refining units are illegal ventures, the chemicals after their use are dumped into rivers and lands with serious repercussions on the environment.

As far as the impact of insurgency the 'small arms' factor is concerned, we need to keep in mind that militants cause extensive damage to the environment too. According to the local people, Bodo militants have caused extensive damage to the dense forests of Dhubri and Kokrajhar district in lower Assam during the Bodoland Movement.

Poachers in league with Naga, Bodo and ULFA militants have also been found to have played havoc with the reserve and sanctuaries of various states. For example, the Manas Tiger Reserve in Assam which has been declared a world heritage site by UNESCO in 1986 is used as a hide-out by Bodo tribals who indulge in indiscriminate destruction of forest resources and endangered animals like tiger, rhino and elephant.

In Assam's Kaziranga Sanctuary bordering Bhutan, a major and lucrative transit point for wild-life contraband-wild animals like rhinos and elephants are mowed down by sten-gun yielding Naga militants who enter the park from the Dimapur side of the Assam-Nagaland border. According to Vivek Menon, Programme Officer of *Traffic India*, an organization which monitors the illegal killing and trading in wild life,

...almost all the poachers in Kaziranga are from Nagaland where arms are easily available because of the ongoing militancy and proximity to Myanmar. The one-horned rhino in Kaziranga is the most threatened by the militants because of the high price it fetches in the global market.

Besides tiger, elephant and rhino, the insurgents also mow down deer, wild bear, panther, clouded leopard, sloth bear and a variety of birds and the prized golden langur. Most of the hide-outs and training camps of the insurgents

are located in jungle areas. With every attack, the militants have to move on, clearing more jungle areas. The disturbance in the already fragile ecosystem thus can not be ruled out.

The region of North East has thus been brutally engulfed in insurgency leading to the influx of arms and narcotics. Solutions need to be chalked out for a bright and a better future. For herein lies the good not only of the people of the region but of India and South Asia as a whole.

An analysis of various ways to bring about peace and stability in the region has also been made.

There are a variety of confidence building measures being undertaken in the North East. A series of accords have already been signed. They are the Shillong Accord of 1975, the Mizo Accord signed on 30 June, 1986 and the Assam Accord, 1985. The Memorandum of Settlement signed between the Mizo National Front (MNF) leader Laldenga and Government of India on 30 June, 1986, reads:

With a view to restoring peace and normalcy in Mizoram, the MNF party, on their part, undertakes within the agreed time-frame to take all necessary steps to end all underground activities, to bring out all underground personnel of the MNF with their arms, ammunition and equipment to ensure their return to civil life, to abjure violence and generally to help in the process of restoration of normalcy.

It was after this that Mizoram returned to normality. However, the Shillong Accord heralded the beginning of an intense armed struggle in Nagaland. Beside the accords, there has been continuous talks. There has been the ongoing Naga Peace Talks with NSCN (IM). The Government of India has also been preparing novel packages for the insurgents to inspire them to shun violence. In a rehabilitation package that was announced in May 1999 each of the surrendered militants was given training in some vocational courses including electrical and computer skills. Each one of them was also provided with a stipend of Rs.1800 per month. Those who surrendered along with a gun were given an additional

amount. For instance, for surrendering an AK-47 would fetch an insurgent an amount of Rs.25,000. Seven years back, the Assam government had given Rs. 2 lakh each to surrendered ULFA insurgents in an attempt to wean them away from violence.

The center also drew up a 52-point comprehensive national strategy to bridge the yawning gap between the perceptions of the policy makers at Delhi and the aspirations of 32 million populace tucked away in the region. Some of the proposals included :

- at least 25 percent of all Plan funds being released by the Center to the states should go directly to the district councils or panchayats.
- each year, 1,000 youths from the North East be provided vocational training with scholarship in institutions outside North East for the next five years.
- an amount of Rs.50 crore per annum should be made available from non-lapsable pool created in Planning Commission for developing infrastructure for agricultural marketing etc.
- new ITI's to be opened in the North East.
- a Central Forest Protection Force, in line with paramilitary force be raised for protection of forest areas in the North East.
- eminent men from the North Eastern states be given prominent position at national level committees, boards etc.
- conscious efforts be made to increase exposure of Mongoloid North East people on Doordarshan and other TV channels, by appointment as announcers, news readers and for advertisements.

There has also been the creation of institutions like the North Eastern Council, technical institutions, universities etc. Besides, the above mentioned confidence building measures undertaken by the government, the roles played by the non-governmental, tribal and women's organization are also of

paramount importance in diffusing the tension in the region.

The *Meira Paibis* i.e. women vigilant groups came up in almost every village of Manipur after armed militancy raised its head in the late seventies and the deployment of troops to tackle it. Initially, the women activists launched campaigns against alcoholics and drug abuse, and also awareness campaigns to protect themselves from crimes against women. In the present times, the *Meira Paibis* are up in arms to protest against army atrocities. On many occasions, the women activists have prevented the army from apprehending youths.

Of the other organizations, the Naga People's Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) has also been doing a lot of positive work. In October last year, a team of NGOs led by NPMHR and Naga Students Federation met NSCN (K) Chief S.S. Khaplang in his head quarters somewhere in Myanmar. Apex tribal organizations, like Naga Hohos and the churches too have been working for a peaceful solution to the five decade old insurgency in the region.

Tackling the Small Arm and Narcotics Issue in North East

For tackling the issue of the massive influx of small arms in the region, certain "micro-disarmament" measures as envisaged by the former Secretary General of United Nation, Boutros Boutros Ghali need to be taken up. According to Tara Kartha, an ideal disarmament programme should incorporate the following features:

- stress peace with honour and not surrender.
- ideally concentrate in bringing in the entire group.
- militants to be publicly treated with decency and respect.
- Involve the militants who have surrendered in working for development of areas in which they have operated.
- Involve NGOs with requisite experience.

One should also maintain an Arms Register at the state and region level on the lines of United Nations in order to monitor the various kind of small arms which are found in the region. The Criminal Records Bureau needs to be sensitised in this regard to take on the issue of small arms. And a proper

mechanism to control weapons in conflict areas should be made so that the weapons do not fall into the wrong hands.

Table 40 : List of Different North East Communities/Tribes and the word 'Small Arms' in their Languages/Dialects

Sr. No.	Name of Community/Tribe	Word for "Small Arms"	Word for "insurgents"
1.	Meitei	Nongmei	Naharol/Nongmeipaiba
2.	Vaiphei	Meithal	Thing'loimi
3.	Ao Nagas	Perang`bong	Telong Nung
4.	Assamese	Bonduk	Ugrapanthi
5.	Sema Nagas	Alka	Agalumi
6.	Zou	Selai~/Thao	Singnuai`mi
7.	Thadou	Meithal	Gamnoimi/Gollthangho
8.	Angami Naga	Mic`i (proned, Meshi)	Nhanuko`
9.	Khasis	Pistols/Suloi	Leh~ Noh
10.	Hmar	Silai	Ramnoimi
11.	Paite/Simte/Zou	Thau	Helpawl

Efforts should be made to sensitise the people about 'Small Arms'. For Narcotic drugs and HIV efforts are being made. But for Small Arms, hardly any work has been done. This book is an attempt in this direction. It is to be noted that what small arms are known in different regions in North East as for example the Manipuris call it 'Nongmei' and the Ao Nagas called it 'Perang bong' (See Table 40).

On the South Asian regional front, efforts have continued to combat terrorism too. In accordance with the decision of the SAARC Heads of State or Government, the Government of Bangladesh convened a meeting of the SAARC study groups on Terrorism in June 1986 in Dhaka. In the meeting Sri Lanka stressed the need to widen the scope of proposed measures of co-operation and urged to government to focus on the following practical measures that include the following:

- i. The combating of cross-border terrorism by denying the use of territory of one state to commit terrorist activities against another State; and.
- ii. The formulation of an arrangement within the SAARC region for the extradition of the terrorists and the regard

terrorist offences as 'non-political' for purpose of extradition.

The Report of the Second Meeting of the SAARC Group of Experts on Terrorism, apart from identifying the offences of a terroristic character, which were to be regarded as non-political for purpose of extradition, also provided a mechanism to implement other measures of co-operation among SAARC countries.

The principal areas covered in the Report were the following:

- i. co-operation among security agencies of SAARC member-states in the field of exchange and sharing of information and intelligence relating to terrorism in the region.
- ii. provision of training facilities in the field of anti-terrorists techniques, including training to selected personnel engaged in high terrorist - risk occupations on how to handle crisis situation, including the holding of seminars and workshops on negotiating tactics with terrorists in crisis situations; and
- iii. consultations among member state with a view to evolving a commonly policy on how to react to terrorists demands.

Since 1988, with the entry into force of the SAARC Convention, greater emphasis came to be placed by some member - states on the need to move into practical areas of cooperation, such as the exchange of information, intelligence and expertise among the security agencies in the region, by way of preventing acts of terrorism. The government of Nepal, in its Report to the SAARC Secretariat expressed the view that a meeting of concerned security agencies of member states would be desirable in order to evolve a possible mechanism for such cooperation among them particularly in the field of exchange of information and intelligence.

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is doing its best for drug control both in law enforcement and in demand reduction activities through the SAARC Convention on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic

Table 41 : Steps taken all over the World to Combat Small Arms Proliferation (in Ascending Order of Years)

Sr. No.	Year	Local/National/Regional & International Steps	Aims & Objectives
1.	July 1996	The Wassenaar Arrangement, Vienna	Promote transparency and responsibility over arms and sensitive technologies It lists a break down of conventional arms technology
2.	June 1997	European Union Programme for Preventing and Combating Illicit Trafficking in Conventional Arms (EU)	-
3.	November 1997	Inter-American Convention against the Illicit manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials	-
4.	April 1998	Presidents of member States (Argentina, Brazil Paraguay and Uruguay & Associated States Bolivia & Chile signed a joint Declaration (Mercosur)	To create a joint register mechanism of Buyers and sellers of fire-arms, explosives, ammunition and related materials
5.	Mid 1998	United Nations Coordinating Action on Small Arms (CASA)	Create to provide a "focal point" within the Department for Disarmament Affairs (DDA) in order "to co-ordinate on a UN-wide basis all action on small arms"
6.	May 1998	Southern Africa Regional Action Programme on Light Arms and Illicit Arms Trafficking	To identified the need to develop a regional approach to the problem of light arms proliferation
7.	June 1998	European Union's Code of Conduct	Most comprehensive regional attempt to harmonise the export policies of member states. Member states are required to consider each arms export licensing application by assessing their compatibility with 8 given criteria, one of which includes, "Respect for human rights in the country of final destination" (of small arms).

Table 41 : [contd . . .]

Sr. No.	Year	Local/National/Regional & International Steps	Aims & Objectives
8.	June 1998	Organisation of African Unity (OAU) adopted a decision on the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.	Stressed on role that OAU should play in coordinating efforts to address the problem in Africa.
9.	October 1998	ECOWAS moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons	The Agreement commits ECOWAS States to a politically binding moratorium on the import, export and manufacture of Light weapons. By signing the moratorium, West Africa became the only region to announce a political commitment to halt to further light weapons procurement.
10.	November 1998	EU-SADC working group on Small Arms	Aims to Combat Illicit Trafficking Strengthen Regulation and Controls on Accumulation and Transfers Promote removal of arms from Society and the Destruction of surplus Arms Enhance Transparency, Information Exchange and Consultation
11.	17 Dec. 1998	European Union Joint Action on Small Arms	Heads of State & Government of Latin America
12.	June 1999	Rio de Janeiro Declaration	and Caribbean Islands and EU joined hands to combat small arms proliferation.
13.	June 1999	Workshop on Small Arms and Light Weapons on Small Arms on topic "Illicit Traffic in Small Arms : Latin American & Caribbean Issues".	Conducting broad-based consultations on illicit trafficking in small arms

contd . . .

Table 41 : [contd . . .]

Sr. No.	Year	Local/National/Regional & International Steps	Aims & Objectives
14.	July 1999	OAU's "African Common Approach"	To address the problems related to the UN, transfer, and illegal manufacturing of small arms and to develop a common African approach for the UN Conference in 2001.
15.	December 1999	US-EU "Action Plan on Small Arms and Light Weapons".	Promote practical disarmaments measures in conflict and post-conflict situation and to promote the collection and destruction of small arms and light weapons
16.	December 1999	EU-Canada working Group on Small Arms	Address Small Arms and Light Weapons proliferation in broader terms of "human security".
17.	December 1999	Conference on Export Controls, Sofia	—
18.	January 2000	Workshop on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Slovenia	Possible contribution to the stability pact for South-Eastern Europe
19.	February 2000	Working Table on Security Issues on Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, Bosnia and Herzegovina	—
20.	March 2000	Workshop on Stockpile management & security of small Arms and Light Weapons, Thun, Switzerland.	—
21.	March 15, 2000	Nairobi Declaration on the Problem of Proliferation of Illicit small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa	Strengthen legal controls on weapons possession and transfer enhance operational capacity to combat illicit arms trafficking removing and destroying surplus weapons developing education programmes enhancing the capacity of sub-regional institutions for implementation

contd . . .

Table 41 : [contd . . .]

Sr. No.	Year	Local/National/Regional & International Steps	Aims & Objectives
22.	April 3-5, 2000	Forum for Security Cooperation (OSCE) conducts Seminar on Small Arms and Light Weapons at Vienna	—
23.	May 2000	United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and Pacific and the Governments of Indonesia and Japan meets at Jakarta (UN & ASEAN)	Efforts of ASEAN for positive contribution to the debate on illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons
24.	May 11-20, 2000	Ministerial Meeting of the Human Security Network, Lucerne, Switzerland	—
25.	May 2000	First Continental Meeting of African Experts on Small Arms & Light Weapons, Addis Ababa	—
26.	June 2000	International Consultation on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons (Addis Ababa)	Preparatory Process for the 2001 UN Conference in Asia Region
27.	July 2000	Government of Canada, Sri Lanka and Regional Centre for Strategic studies with United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs organised Conference called "Countering Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation in South Asia.	First Conference in South Asia in which issues of Small Arms. issues and UN Conference was discussed
28.	August 2000	Council of Ministers of the Southern African Development Community agreed on a Protocol	Control of Control of firearms, ammunitions and other related materials in the region of community.
29.	Nov. 24, 2000	The Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) adopted OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons	—

contd . . .

Table 41 : [contd . . .]

Sr. No.	Year	Local/National/Regional & International Steps	Aims & Objectives
30.	Nov. 30, Dec, 1 2000	OAU Ministerial Meeting at BAMAKO. Bamako Declaration (Mali)	Called for a coordinated Action to control Small Arms Proliferation in Africa at the national, regional and international level
31.	2001	Organisation of American States (OAS) Convention Against Illicit Firearms Trafficking	— See Annexure I
32.	July 9-20, 2001	United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects	See Annexure II
33.	Jan. 10, 2002	Kathmandu Declaration on Small Arms	—
34.	Jan. 23-25, 2002	The Tokyo Follow-up Meeting to the UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms in All its aspects	—
35.	Feb. 19-20, 2002	Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms in All its aspects. Organised by Indian Coalition Against Small Arms (ICASA), SAP- India with International Alert and Safer World (London).	Evolve, identify issue to combat Small Arms proliferation.

An Overview of Steps taken at Northeast States SAARC in New Delhi levels on Small Arms

Levels of Initiation	Year of Initiation	Strategic Steps Taken on Small Arms
Assam	No Steps Taken so far	None
Manipur	No Steps Taken so far	None
Nagaland	No Steps Taken so far	None
Meghalaya	No Steps Taken so far	None
Tripura	No Steps Taken so far	None
Arunachal Pradesh	No Steps Taken so far	None
Mizoram	No Steps Taken so far	None
Sikkim	No Steps Taken so far	None
North East Council (NEC) Level	No Steps Taken so far	None
SAARC Level	No Steps Taken so far officially	None

Substances which entered into force in 1993. Also SAARC and UNDCP became signatory to an MOU in 1995. (See Annexure).

The initiation of combating drug abuse and trafficking started at the Islamabad Summit, 1988. In the summit, the member states of SAARC expressed grave concern over the growing magnitude and the serious effect of drug abuse and drug trafficking and recognized the need for urgent and effective measures to eradicate this problem including the possibility of concluding a Regional Convention on Drug Control.

Article 2 of the Convention mentioned the promotion of cooperation among member states. It urged the member states to carry out necessary measures, including legislative and administrative measures in conformity with the fundamental provisions of their respective domestic legislative systems.

Article 12 of the Convention mentioned measures to eradicate cultivation of Narcotic Plants and to eliminate illicit demand for Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic substances. Article 12 (i) states:

Each member state shall take appropriate measures to prevent illicit cultivation of and to eradicate plants containing narcotic or psychotropic substances, such as opium poppy, coca bush and cannabis plants, cultivated illicitly in its territory .

Article 12 (ii)

"The member states may cooperate to increase the effectiveness of eradication efforts. Towards this end, Member States shall also facilitate the exchange of scientific and technical information and the conduct of research concerning eradication".

Article 14 of the Convention clearly mentions the need for co-operation among the SAARC countries in their attempts to eradicate this menace.

In collaboration with the governments and regional organizations of South Asia, UNDCP is developing multi-sectoral programmes, with a balanced approach to supply and demand reduction and assisting with their

implementation. For, central to the UNDCP strategy for South Asia is the understanding of drug abuse as a *development* issue. Poverty, employment, health, education, gender equality, human rights and drug abuse are inextricably linked. Thus, there is a need for a multi-sectoral involvement to ensure that drug control receive the appropriate emphasis within the broader context of socio-economic development.

In this world of globality, unless steps are taken to contain the problems with easy availability of arms costing as little as \$ 8 per AK-47 rifle, protests tend to become violent. Violence only begets violence. Many of the problems occur due to lack of insight of the policy makers in tackling a particular problem. Most of the policy measures are superficial make-shift arrangements. The bloodshed and misery suffered in North East India has its origins in the peaceful protests by the people residing in Nagaland and Manipur against the unconstitutional merger of these two regions with the Union of India. Instead of solving the problem amicably, Nehru sent in armies to suppress the dissenters. Even today, no proper measures have been taken to solve the various grievances of the people of the North East region. Granted that the politicians in the region are corrupted, granted that the system has failed but as a Government, why the failure to help the region develop well. Why the bias in the allocation of investment and other infrastructure development funds?

It is high time that attempts are made for a deeper analysis of the problems of the region and attempts made to solve them at all levels - historical, economic, social and political. But more than anything else, the change has to come from the entire country itself and its people and their attitude towards the Mongoloid people inhabiting this mesmerising land of the North East.

We need to start confidence building measures between the Government of India and the various dissenting ethnic groups of the region. Also, between the various ethnic groups living in the region. The term 'Confidence Building Measure' is broadly defined as action and measures which contribute to peace by reducing the levels of mistrust, misunderstanding, or uncertainty, which often endanger or sustain war or other

forms of international hostility. The term has its origin in the concept of 'confidence-building' which is a form of arms control possessing genuine promise for reducing the basic volatility of a specific political environment. The concept evolved in the political and military context of Europe during the 1973-1986 period. A healing touch is thereby urgently required in this very much fractured part of South Asia.

The happenings in the North-East region of India cannot and should not be seen in isolation. In fact, besides the origin of the tension in the region, the situation there is severely aggravated by the happenings in the entire South Asian region, as illustrated in the previous chapter. And therein lies the need for the formulation of confidence-building measures for the entire South Asian region and beyond to bring about peace, stability and development in the North-East. It is only when these effort are made that the influx of arms and narcotics in the region, which has its repercussion not only in the region but in India and in South Asia at large can be curbed.

As already noted, the resolution of conflict and its prevention involves the whole person, the nation or identity group of the person, the political system and the physical environment. Deep-rooted problems like the influx and proliferation of small arms and narcotics have permeated all social levels and in all cultures on a scale not previously experienced, resulting in violence and mayhem every where. There is a need for greater women's participation in the search for peace in North East India.

Thus, in order to find long term solutions in the North East region of India, approaches have to be taken that involve individuals as well as communities, working together for everyone benefit—before the whole region is manipulated by others into destroying itself or becoming a Necropolis or the City of the Dead.

Comments

Binalakshmi Nepram has undertaken a great deal of useful research for this publication on an area of considerable insecurity and underdevelopment in India. In particular, good research on conflict and the availability of illegal small arms and light weapons is at premium in the aftermath of the UN conference on small arms. It is to be hoped that publications such as this raise levels of awareness on the gravity of the problem and, eventually, encourage constructive programmes for change

—**Dr. Chris Smith,**

International Policy Institute, King's College, London

A pioneering work by a young researcher that confronts three very sensitive, illegal, and in many contexts unmentionable topics of armed conflict, narcotics and small arms. Binalakshmi's Book is a major contribution in the field of Small Arms and Conflict Studies.

—**Marcus Thompson, MBE**

Senior Programme Adviser, OXFAM, South Asia.

"Binalakshmi Nepram through this book has started a journey to uplift her state and the region ...With her first book she attempts to share her knowledge and experiences and use them to bring about some socio-economic transformation in North East India . . . A budding author who deviates from the beaten track".

—**The Tribune, July 28, 2002.**



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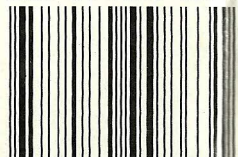
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