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Does Counterinsurgency Theory Apply in Northeast India?

BETHANY LACINA

Introduction

January 2007 saw one of the worst separatist attacks in Assam in several years. At least 72 migrant laborers were slaughtered, presumably by the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA). In the days that followed more people were killed as bombs exploded in the Guahati train station and a local Congress Party politician was shot outside his home.[1] This recent onslaught is a reminder of some of the ugliest features of the violence in India's Northeast: inter-communal hatreds; brutalities against civilians; and the menacing role of coercion in local politics. Numerous commentators have pointed out that there has been a change in character of violence in the Northeast as compared to the early 1990s:[2] groups active in the region have been increasingly implicated in attacks on civilians, close ties to organized crime, and obstruction of normal democratic politics, while attacks against state targets have declined.[3]

The changing patterns of violence in the Northeast call for a reexamination of the likely efficacy of security and political interventions that are aimed at quelling a rural insurgency with a grassroots base. The persistent role of small and weak separatist organizations in the region is not due to resilience in the face of Delhi's coercive power or to a strong base of popular support. Rather, the lack of rule of law in the region allows small-scale violent actors to manipulate local political institutions and exploit opportunities for extortion and black market transactions. Interventions that are designed to undermine insurgencies organized in a conventional sense will not remove the enabling conditions of these very different patterns of violence.

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Policy debate on Delhi's actions in the region has largely missed this point and continues to depart from the supposition that some mixture of strategies designed to deal with rural insurgency – military saturation, negotiated settlement, and addressing core popular grievances – will reestablish peace in the area. Some commentators insist better security is a prerequisite to setting up civilian institutions[4] and that development aid to the region is throwing good money after bad.[5] Those more impressed by the separatists' asserted grievances argue that military interventions deepen the public's alienation from the center[6] and that a change in aid strategy to address underdevelopment[7] is the way forward for the region. But separatist insurgency against the state has evolved into a very different species of violence, which is bolstered primarily by weak rule of law. Reestablishing rule of law in the region would mean putting visible effort into running transparent and effective criminal justice systems in the area rather than emphasizing the military and paramilitary tools associated with emergency conditions. This argument contrasts with the view that further institutional reform in the Northeast should be delayed until all violence is quelled, but also rejects the notion that the region will remain violent indefinitely so long as ethnic rivalry and poverty prevail.

The article proceeds as follows. The next section gives an overview of separatist violence in the Northeast with the particular aim of pointing out the decrease in the level of violence directed against the state and in separatists' organizational coherence since the early 1990s. The third section argues that surviving separatist organizations in the region have relatively few characteristics of mass-based rural insurgencies and more features of private protection rackets working on behalf of elite clients. The fourth section discusses how present counterinsurgency policy – both military and political – is poorly designed to address this type of violence, and the fifth section argues that the Northeast will only see further reduction in violence through improved rule of law, an argument against claims that the imposition of emergency conditions and outside control will improve the stability of the region anytime soon.

An Overview of Separatist Violence in the Northeast

This article can only briefly present a history of conflict in Northeast India,[8] but the summary offered here is primarily intended to draw attention to patterns manifested in the most recent period of violence.

Since the early 1990s the trends have been the increasing incoherence of armed movements; a growing role for inter-communal and inter-factional violence as opposed to attacks on the state's security forces; and a proliferation of movements due to ethnic groups arming in response to each other.

The Northeastern states of India are geographically and culturally remote from the heartland of India, and home to a number of ethnically and linguistically distinct peoples, some of whom are classified as "tribes." There is a high but imperfect correlation between tribal populations, upland regions, near-subsistence agriculture, and practice of animist and Christian faiths rather than Hinduism.

At the time of Indian independence in 1947, the Northeast was organized as just two entities: the state of Assam and the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA). In 1949, the principalities of Tripura and Manipur were incorporated into India as a centrally administered area and a union territory, respectively. Continuing with the British tradition of the "inner line," under Section VI of the constitution tribal peoples in the Northeast had special autonomy over their local affairs, including language, social policy, and in-migration.[9] Tribal status and autonomy provisions have been contested ever since, resulting in an increase in the number of groups classified as tribal and repeated revision of autonomy arrangements.[10] And even prior to independence there were advocates for independence of various peoples in the region as well as "sons of the soil" movements in response to immigration, especially from Bengal.[11]

Nagaland

The first insurgency to appear in the Northeast was in Nagaland, where a self-proclaimed independent government was formed in 1954 and armed operations by the Naga National Council (NNC) began two years later. Initially, Delhi's coercive response to the NNC was quite heavy-handed and the center refused to negotiate with the rebel leadership. In 1960 negotiations between Delhi and Naga civilian politicians led to an agreement that the state of Nagaland be formed, beginning the balkanization of the state of Assam. Naga rebel violence persisted, particularly because the security forces had created a significant backlash in the insurgents' favor. Forced to negotiate with the rebels, in 1975 Delhi signed the Shillong Agreement and the NNC's top members moved into civilian political leadership. However,

hold-outs from that accord formed the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) almost immediately. Personal rivalry and external support contributed to this schism, but the NSCN was also heavily drawn from the Naga populations of Manipur and Myanmar, who did not benefit directly from the existence of a Naga state within current borders. Large-scale counterinsurgency operations continued in Nagaland until as late as 1978. Violence against the state during the 1980s was only sporadic, in part because the NSCN was splitting along kinship lines, into the NSCN (I&M), dominated by Nagas from Manipur, and the NSCN (K), whose leadership is more closely tied to the Nagas of Myanmar.[12]

By the early 1990s there had been some regrouping within the Naga rebel organizations and in 1992 violent activity jumped considerably; in fact, the early 1990s saw a surge in violence throughout the Northeast as well as in the much larger conflicts in Jammu-Kashmir and Punjab. However, a return to security saturation has had considerable success reducing the level of violence against state targets, in particular by working with Myanmar to eliminate rebel bases in the border area.[13] More difficult to curtail are the numerous deaths caused by fighting between the factions and the attacks of civilians and rival ethnic separatists in areas of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, and Myanmar that the NSCN factions insist are part of greater Nagaland.

Since 1995 the government has engaged in a series of talks with both factions of the NSCN; patchy ceasefires have been in place since 1997 with the NSCN (I&M) and 2000 with the NSCN (K). However, competition between the two factions encourages them to harden their negotiating stances[14] and a number of their demands are unworkable from Delhi's point of view, as such concessions would require the cooperation of ethnic groups that are themselves potentially or actually hostile to Delhi.

Mizoram

The second oldest insurgency in the Northeast began in 1959 with sporadic violent incidents in Mizoram (then a part of Assam) in response to the government of Assam's failure to respond adequately to a famine in the area.[15] In 1966, the Mizo National Front (MNF) began an armed campaign for independence on behalf of the Mizo tribe. In 1972, Delhi, frustrated by the failure of the state to prevent violence in the tribal areas, split the union territory of Mizoram and

the state of Meghalaya from Assam, while also making Manipur and Tripura states and transforming the NEFA into the union territory of Arunachal Pradesh.[16]

As in the rest of the region, the center's coercive response in Mizoram was formidable. Repeated waves of defections weakened the MNF's fighting strength and peace negotiations proceeded slowly until 1986, when a settlement was signed providing for Mizoram to become a state. The MNF leaders moved into normal politics but, unlike the NNC in Nagaland, did not face significant opposition from a holdout movement. In fact, the MNF has proven to be an effective and popular political party, able to discredit the few rump groups that have tried to continue the insurgency and to win credit from the public for improving the quality of public services.[17] Mizoram remains somewhat lawless, but has never seen renewal of insurgency.[18]

Manipur

Manipur too has a long history of separatist insurgency, dating from 1964 when the United National Liberation Front (UNLF) emerged, making demands on behalf of the ethnic Meitei population. Meiteis are not classified by the government as tribal and the UNLF protested against special set-asides, particularly of land, extended to Nagas and Kukis living in the state. The UNLF was repressed quite harshly by the government in the 1960s but reemerged in the form of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in 1978. Intense counterinsurgency campaigns had seriously weakened the PLA by the end of the 1980s but the group reemerged in 1992 along with a reincarnation of the UNLF. The reassertion of state control through counterinsurgency in Manipur has had mixed success since the early 1990s; Manipur and Tripura are the only states in the Northeast at present where tens of people still die each year as a result of violence between separatists and the government.[19] Talks between Delhi and the UNLF and/or the PLA have never enjoyed much success. Both the PLA and the UNLF have fractured multiple times since 1992, primarily in leadership disputes. Continued turmoil is in part because Delhi has been anxious to negotiate a peace with the NSCN factions, some of whose demands directly encroach on Meitei separatist aims. UNLF and PLA activities are frequently responses to developments in the peace process for Nagaland, and have led to the militarization of Meitei relations with the Naga, Kuki, and Muslim populations of Manipur.

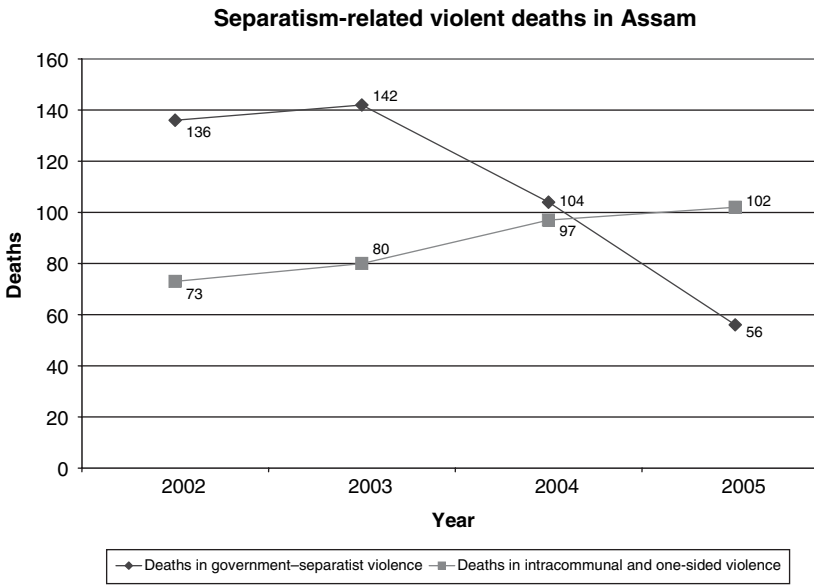
Assam

Inter-communal dimensions of conflict have been most prominent in Assam. The British based their Assam policies on a division of the area into a Hindi lowlands area and non-Assamese-speaking, non-Hindi uplands; the former areas were classified as non-tribal and incorporated into British India. The particular grievance of the Assamese under British rule was that the colonial bureaucracy relied almost exclusively on Bengali migrants. That rivalry has been complicated by the immigration of unskilled laborers from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, non-Bengali Muslims who primarily work on tea plantations, and Bengali Muslims entering illegally from Bangladesh.

Resentment of (illegal) immigration became an explosive issue in the late 1970s because of fears that non-natives had flooded the voter rolls and would make it impossible for local parties to win elections. In 1979 the United Liberation Front of Assam appeared, combining in its rhetoric appeals for independence with concerns over illegal immigration from Bangladesh. After a first wave of counterinsurgency operations in the area, the 1985 Assam Accord brought many of the civilian groups that paralleled ULFA into the state government. ULFA refused to join this accord, however, and the new government was hamstrung by its close links with the rebels and discredited by its own corruption and mismanagement.[20] The government also alienated non-Assamese individuals as its policies became increasingly nativist, dropping the distinction between legal and illegal migrants to the region. By 1988 the All Bodo Student Union (ABSU) was escalating violence to protest the concentration of power among the ethnic Assamese and the influx of settlers into historically Bodo areas.

Amidst growing turmoil, the state government was dismissed in 1990 and Delhi pursued major counterinsurgency operations in the state. Cooperation with neighbors to close cross-border sanctuaries has been the most effective tool for putting pressure on ULFA and in recent years the group has been losing key leaders and may be splitting.[21] As the group's appeals have become oriented toward Assamese nationalism exclusively, inter-communal violence has become a greater part of its repertoire. This trend can be demonstrated graphically because the information about deaths in Assam is considerably richer than that available for other states. Figure 1 depicts the recent dominance of violence against non-state rather than state targets in Assam.

FIGURE 1
COMPARING TRENDS IN TYPES OF SEPARATIST VIOLENCE IN ASSAM



Source: Data from Uppsala Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala Conflict Database (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2006).

Although there have been no major talks between Delhi and the Assamese insurgents, a 1993 agreement between Delhi and the ABSU promised more autonomy for the Bodos within their main areas of concentration. Implementation of the treaty was never completed, in part because of the protests of other ethnic groups; Bodos are not a majority in any district claimed as the historical Bodoland. Two breakaway movements, the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) and the Bodo Liberation Tigers Force (BLTF), began operations in the region in the mid-1990s, eventually leading to another round of negotiations with Delhi in 2000. A settlement was reached that threw out the previous autonomy arrangements and organized the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC). This deal was rejected by the NDFB but the group has more or less maintained a ceasefire with the government since 2004.[22]

Tripura

In Tripura, as in Assam, immigration has figured prominently among the spurs to conflict. The Tripuran tribe has gradually become a

minority within that state because of immigration from West Bengal and Bangladesh. In 1978 the Tripura National Volunteers (TNV) began operations with a wave of inter-ethnic attacks lasting into 1980. Again, an extensive army counterinsurgency response led to a reassertion of government control[23] but attempts at a peace process have been halting. In 1988 a ceasefire led to the splintering of the TNV: in 1990 the All Tripura Tribal Front (ATTF) appeared and the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) began attacks in 1991. Since that time, waves of defections have meant an ever more fractionalized insurgent landscape. Tripura sees high levels of indiscriminate violence against civilians and entrenched ties between rebel groups and political parties.[24]

Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh

The most peaceful areas of the Northeast are Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh. No major insurgencies have emerged to date in these areas, although inter-communal politics has something of the militarized character that is common elsewhere in the region.[25] Tribal groups in Meghalaya, the largest of them being the Khasis, Achiks, and Garos, have been mobilizing against each other.[26] Arunachal Pradesh has likewise seen only limited violence but the Arunachal Dragon Force (ADF) recently emerged, demanding a homeland for the Khamti tribe. Again, the size and weakness of the group have meant that its primary mode of operations has been to harass non-Khamti citizens rather than to launch attacks against state targets.

The Present Situation in the Northeast

Levels of violence against the state have been dramatically curbed in the Northeast. Previous coercive interventions have destroyed rebel organizations to the extent that insurgency *against the state* is unlikely to emerge on a major scale in the near future. Delhi's influence is felt in the region through the continued presence of outside security forces and close control over local administrative matters, the detrimental effects of which are described by one retired military officer:

> Control over all matters of even trivial policy is currently exercised through Delhi. This implies handling by bureaucrats and politicians sitting in Delhi, who do not even know the north-east or comprehend the local situation – their portfolios are also

> changed very frequently – one can even quote situations where there were no officials to handle important subjects for long periods during crisis-ridden times.[27]

Delhi's political and military tutelage do little to build institutional capacity in the region. The Northeastern states are almost totally financially dependent on large transfers from Delhi, although much of this aid has been stolen outright or severely mismanaged.[28] This corruption, combined with high rates of kidnapping and extortion, reduces incentives for investment in physical or human capital.

In theory, the center's tight control over the region is to be relaxed in the future when some kind of political accommodation is achieved. But peace negotiations are proceeding at a very slow pace, in no small part because of the sheer complexity of the jigsaw of competing ethnic claims in the area. Delhi has prioritized negotiations with the NSCN (I&M) because of that group's role in organizing and supporting other violent separatist movements, but is hamstrung by the fact that Naga radicals' demands encroach on the claims of other groups hostile to the center; in particular, negotiations with the NSCN (I&M) have contributed to turmoil in Manipur. At the same time, the center's demonstrated willingness to reorganize institutions by modifying state boundaries and creating special autonomy arrangements both provides groups with opportunities for cultural autonomy and self-determination and gives ethnic elites the incentive to seek their own fiefdoms. This tends to promote the redefinition of ethnic groups for purposes of political mobilization and the proliferation of movements with conflicting claims. For example, some tribes organized in the pre-Independence period as Naga nationalists today claim an identity distinct from that of the majority in Nagaland and have clashed with the NSCN.

The Evolving Violence in the Northeast

Presently, even the largest violent separatist organizations in the Northeast have only a few thousand members; none has ever grown large enough to drag the region into a war on the scale of the violence that prevailed in Jammu and Kashmir in the 1990s or in Punjab in the 1980s.[29] Most observers agree that secession of any part of the Northeast is impossible[30] and that even overthrowing a state government would be almost unthinkably difficult for any currently active violent

organization in the region. Yet since the early 1990s there has been a mushrooming of small violent organizations; one observer estimates more than 50 self-proclaimed rebel groups are active.[31] Why, despite decreased violence against the state since the early 1990s, has the region tended to see a proliferation of violent groups?

The multiplication of violent organizations is explained by the increasing percentage of attacks in the region aimed at inter-communal struggles, local provision of protection, political extortion, and crime. None of these activities is directly related to a major gap in the coercive penetration of the area by the military or a well-articulated, popular set of grievances. Instead, such violence is enabled by the abysmal condition of rule of law that endures in the Northeast even as mass insurgency has been curtailed. The next sections of this article will argue that the new roles for violent organizations in the Northeast imply that security and development responses tailored to defeating an insurgency against the state are not well suited to present conditions in the Northeast. Here these roles will be explicated.

Violent separatist organizations in the Northeast penetrate regional politics in a manner reminiscent of the role of organized crime in other Indian states.[32] Throughout the region – with the partial exceptions of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, and Mizoram – tacit associations have appeared between particular political parties and particular separatist groups.[33] In some cases, there are historical origins in common between the political organization and the rebel group, in other cases, as in the alleged alliance between Congress(I) and the National Liberation Front of Tripura, the connections seem more arbitrary. In exchange for using coercion to support a certain politician or organization – for example, by tampering with elections, enforcing general strikes, or threatening political rivals – violent groups enjoy impunity for other crimes and claim a share in the development money that comes into the region from Delhi.[34] Impunity created by political clout means separatists can also bribe and threaten uncooperative government officers. As one author notes: "An arrested insurgent can become a petty thief in the police records if the inspector in charge receives sufficient *Cha thaknaba* [a bribe]."[35] Thus, the weakness of the region's formal institutions – their inability to discipline both their political and bureaucratic functionaries – is the condition that is here referred to as the lack of rule of law. It enables violent actors to manipulate the Northeast's government, economy, and citizenry.

In this environment of impunity, there are extensive opportunities for violent organizations to make criminal profits. Extorting "taxes" from civilians is an activity in which many guerilla organizations engage,[36] but there are multiple opportunities for criminal profits in the Northeast that do not require a grassroots organization of significant size, discipline, or coherence. These include extortion from large corporations, kidnapping, and the cross-border smuggling and drug trades.[37] Interviews with demobilized insurgents in Latin America and Africa suggest that this kind of easy black market funding tends to go hand-in-hand with breakdowns in violent groups' discipline and coherence, and increasing numbers of personal rivalries among leaders.[38]

Finally, armed groups serve as the thugs of the inter-communal struggles that beset the region. Some of this violence is a product of direct competition between separatist organizations for access to important smuggling routes or resources. But it is also the case that in an environment where legal institutions are inefficacious, insurgent groups can gain power and money by providing security and vigilante justice in the face of inter-communal brutalities and by deploying violence against other groups in order to intimidate voters, change migration patterns, drive peasants from their land, practice indiscriminate retribution for crimes, and maintain existing social hierarchies. Thus, multiplication of violent groups is a self-reinforcing cycle of competitive ethnic mobilization.

The Future of Counterinsurgency in Northeast India

The Indian Army's recently released doctrine on sub-conventional warfare states as its central thesis:

> The management, and finally the resolution, of such [sub-conventional] conflicts necessitates a multi-pronged thrust by all elements of national power to address the root causes. The application of Armed Forces in the initial stages is aimed at providing a secure environment, wherein various institutions of the government can function devoid of any inimical interference. Having provided this environment, the Armed Forces, thereafter, function in a manner that strengthens the hands of the civil authorities.[39]

This call for an integrated political and military response to internal violence and use of force only insofar as it is necessary to restore

security to civilian institutions is not just normatively appealing. It also reflects the evolution of Indian counterinsurgency doctrine[40] and agrees with the consensus on theories of unconventional warfare among the world's major democracies.[41] That body of theory, in turn, is grounded in a set of empirical claims about how insurgencies survive.[42]

As in other democracies, Indian counterinsurgency theory builds on the premise that sub-conventional warriors survive by stealth and evasion. Therefore, they require civilian cooperation, be it voluntary or coerced. Civilians are not always sources of material support for the rebels, but they are often important for the provision of the information necessary for rebels to both ambush and evade government forces.[43] The role of civilian intelligence support in facilitating rebellion has been documented in many cases of successful insurgency – e.g. China during the Communists' rise to power;[44] in Vietnam during insurgency against the French[45] and in the war between North and South;[46] and in the case of Eritrean independence.[47] Even in cases where insurgent groups have had entirely coercive relationships with citizens and little reliance on them for material or intelligence services, their survival has still depended on using some combination of bribes and terror to prevent civilian (and defector) cooperation with the government.[48]

The commonly prescribed military response to insurgency is, as the Indian doctrine above suggests, to provide civilians with a level of security such that rebels cannot coerce them into providing information and civilians can be persuaded to cooperate with government counterinsurgency.[49] As civilian support for the rebels wanes, rates of defection will climb and civilian militias or a restored normal police force will be able to take over from military forces in securing civilian areas.

The importance of inducing civilian cooperation with the government may also require introducing political initiatives that tend to reduce the insurgents' rhetorical appeal and, by improving expectations about the future, make peace more attractive. The government should show a willingness to negotiate with moderates in order to identify and address grievances that tend to tilt popular sentiment toward the guerillas. Specific interventions may include modifying formal institutions and granting particular legal concessions, investing in development or implementing economic policies such as land

reform, holding democratic elections, and making provisions for amnesties of civilian collaborators and rebels. For example, land reform is thought to have abetted Thailand's struggle against communist insurgents;[50] dismissal of the Protestant-dominated government was a necessary step toward ending Catholic support for the Irish Republican Army;[51] and autonomy arrangements and power sharing are associated with greater post-civil war stability in cross-national statistical studies.[52]

In the abstract, nothing in the foregoing counterinsurgency doctrine is particularly controversial. And, over time, Delhi has done a better and better job of conforming to its doctrinal ideal in its operations in Northeast India. Saturation of the region by security forces has greatly reduced the amount of violence against the state since 1989.[53] Indian security policy remains very controversial from a human rights perspective but there is broad agreement that levels of abuse and restrictions on civil rights have improved[54] and, instrumentally more important for Delhi, violent separatist groups have lost enough of their own legitimacy through brutality and crime that they cannot capitalize on allegations and instances of abuse to gain political capital as easily as in the past.[55]

Coercive responses have also been followed by political initiatives, again as Delhi's counterinsurgency policy prescribes. On the other hand, all of Delhi's political initiatives in the region – the continuation of the inner line at independence, the subdivision of Assam, the recognition of new tribes and further autonomy grants, and immigration reforms – have been variously criticized by commentators across the political spectrum as ineffective, counterproductive, and even disingenuous.[56] And although substantial development resources flow into the region, the impact on the lives of ordinary citizens has not been even close to comparable with the resources spent.

Rule of Law and the Northeast

Taking stock of Delhi's counterinsurgency policy to date, commentators are divided over the proper response to continued violence. Some analysts call for greater security saturation, others for further rounds of negotiation and political reorganization in the region. This article is not particularly sanguine about either approach, as both are designed to isolate separatists from their network of civilian informers, decrease their popular legitimacy, and destroy their resilience and coherence as

insurgent organizations. But separatists in the Northeast do not primarily rely on any of these advantages to survive. The most important enabling condition of the present violence in the Northeast is poor rule of law, which neither continued military/paramilitary presence in the region nor political concessions tackle directly.

The argument that Delhi could, through negotiation with separatists and a wide variety of stakeholders in the region, come up with more legitimate or just political institutions than those currently in place may be true, but the search for a high politics solution to lawlessness is likely to be fruitless. First of all, in face of the bewildering variety of zero-sum claims that have been raised in the Northeast, it is not at all clear what kind of a negotiated program of changes to formal institutions would be satisfactory or even stable. More importantly, formal political initiatives, like new promises of development aid, have to be implemented through failed institutions penetrated by violent organizations. Violent organizations could survive in their current form in an environment of weak rule of law without popular backing. But even if ugly and xenophobic political debates persist in the Northeast, violent separatist organizations could be curtailed or eliminated through a functioning police and judicial system. Wilkinson has shown that ethnic riots, for example, occur not because of changes in public sentiment but when the police apparatus fails to act in accordance with its legal duties.[57] Lasting reductions in violence in the Northeast are unlikely under the current decayed institutions regardless of any *de jure* political accommodation negotiators obtain.

Because rule of law cannot emerge overnight, the more difficult problem becomes evaluating how Delhi's security policy could best contribute to building up the rule of law. India has already shown it can deploy coercion sufficient to maintain territorial integrity and state presence in the most fundamental sense, but the continuation of the security regime in its current form may plausibly contribute to the very institutional weakness on which extant violent organizations prey. A well-documented impact of external security provision in the region is the alienation this has created among the public, which may tend to dissuade civilians from making use of all government institutions, perpetuating their illegitimacy. Provision of security from outside the region may tend to delay reform of local institutions, and create a moral hazard problem by which politicians can allow local police forces to deteriorate, knowing that national forces are available

in times of need. Inter-communal policing tasks are also not where the expertise of military or even most paramilitary troops lies. The likelihood of incompetence and abuse is higher when soldiers are asked to perform roles for which they are not specially trained. And a military and emergency response to violence grants separatists legitimacy, by signaling that the state considers these groups to be struggling for sovereignty on a special plane where normal political and legal constraints are set aside. External security forces in the Northeast should instead serve as a signal of the center's commitment to establishing rule of law in the region. Notices of this intent could be to restore the entire region to the nation's full civil rights regime[58] and to deepen efforts to deal with allegations of security force abuses in a manner that is routine, swift, and fair.

Unfortunately, poor quality of local law and order is a problem all over India, raising serious questions about whether institutions will improve anytime soon in the Northeast. Evidence from other democracies suggests that a symbiotic relationship between political actors and protection rackets is normally broken only when prosecutors reporting to some authority outside that nexus are given significant financial backing and political support – internal revenue services are the most frequently cited example of a (relatively) politically autonomous agency that may be able to lead a campaign against organized crime.[59] Except for the state of Maharashtra, India lacks the kind of laws against criminal conspiracies that other democracies have developed in order to punish the leaders of predatory organizations without recourse to extra-legal means.[60] And, unlike political organizations, protection rackets tend to be resilient to extra-legal repression since violence only increases the demand for the services they provide.

Conclusion

The key argument of this article is that there is a misalignment between the sub-conventional warfare doctrine applied in the Northeast and the character of the violence in that region. Separatist groups have adapted to take advantage of gaps in the rule of law in the area and opportunities for political exploitation and criminal violence. Meanwhile, Delhi's policy in the region calls for security saturation in the short term, on the theory that externally-imposed stability, negotiated rearrangement of formal institutions, and a generous amount of

development aid will eventually establish an accommodation between peoples of the Northeast and Delhi, thereby ending violence. That expectation seems unwarranted. Major insurgency against the state is unlikely in the foreseeable future but a powerful commitment by the center to building the rule of law in the region is necessary to deepen peace in the Northeast.

NOTES

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11. Myron Weiner, *Sons of the Soil: Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978).
12. Lawrence E. Cline, "The Insurgency Environment in Northeast India," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* Vol. 17, No. 2 (2006), pp. 126–47. The name NSCN (I&M) refers to the leaders of this faction, Isak Chisi Swu and Thuingaleng Muivah. NSCN (K) refers to that group's leader, S. S. Khaplang.

13. Uppsala Department of Peace and Conflict Research, *Armed Conflict Database* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2004).
14. Cline, "The Insurgency Environment in Northeast India."
15. Paul Brass, *The Politics of India since Independence*, Vol. 1: *The New Cambridge History of India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
16. Arunachal Pradesh became a state in 1987.
17. R. K. Satapathy, "Mizoram: Positive Vote for the State Government," *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 39, No. 51 (2004), pp. 5527–8.
18. Theses offered for the success of the peace process in Mizoram are generally unsatisfactory. The peace process had a high level of civil society involvement but this has also been true of failed treaties, such as the 1960 treaty in Nagaland or the 1985 Assam Accord. Mizoram is considerably more ethnically homogenous than other states in the Northeast, but homogeneity is arguably endogenous to peace given that conflict has led to competitive ethnic mobilization of once undifferentiated groups in other states.
19. Uppsala Department of Peace and Conflict Research, *Uppsala Conflict Database* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2006). A caveat to all the arguments that will follow must be introduced here. The article goes on to argue that in the Northeast nothing resembling a true guerilla operation currently exists and, as a result, developing responses to the violent groups in the area as though they were insurgents against the state has tended to lead analysts astray. Unfortunately, the applicability of this argument to Manipur and Tripura is difficult to ascertain. Because of travel restrictions on these areas, the information available about the amount and nature of the violence in these states is of very poor quality. The pronounced inter-communal character of the violence that is reported implies that the arguments in this article are relevant, but the representative character of these incidents is indiscernible.
20. Hazarika, *Strangers in the Mist*.
21. Cline, "The Insurgency Environment in Northeast India."
22. Uppsala Department of Peace and Conflict Research, *Uppsala Conflict Database*.
23. Uppsala Department of Peace and Conflict Research, *Uppsala Conflict Database*.
24. Kumar, "Tripura: Beyond the Insurgency–Politics Nexus."
25. Cline, "The Insurgency Environment in Northeast India."
26. Uppsala Department of Peace and Conflict Research, *Armed Conflict Database*.
27. Lt. General J. R. Mukherjee, *An Insider's Experience of Insurgency in India's North-East* (London: Anthem Press, 2005), p. 95.
28. For detailed budget analysis see Ajai Sahni, and J. George, "Security and Development in India's Northeast: An Alternative Perspective," in Gill, ed., *Terror and Containment Perspectives of India's Internal Security*. For a more anecdotal but more measured account of local corruption and diversion of aid see Hazarika, *Strangers in the Mist*.
29. Bethany Lacina and Nils Petter Gleditsch, "Monitoring Trends in Global Combat: A New Dataset of Battle Deaths," *European Journal of Population* Vol. 2–3 (2005), pp. 145–66.
30. Robert L. Hardgrave and Stanley A. Kochanek, *India: Government and Politics in a Developing Nation* (New York: Harcourt College Publishers, 2000).
31. Ajai Shani, *Survey of Conflicts and Resolution in India's Northeast South Asia Terrorism Portal* (New Delhi: Institute for Conflict Management, 2005).
32. Verinder Grover and Ranjana Arora, eds., *Violence, Communalism, and Terrorism in India: Towards Criminalisation of Politics* (New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications, 1995); Atul Kohli, *Democracy and Discontent: India's Growing Crisis of Governability* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).
33. Hazarika, *Strangers of the Mist*.
34. Hazarika, *Strangers of the Mist*.
35. Paolienial Haokip, "Counter-Insurgency in the North-East: A Counter-Perspective," *Manipur Online*, January 5, 2003 (http://www.manipuronline.com).
36. Chalmers A. Johnson, "Civilian Loyalties and Guerilla Conflict," *World Politics* Vol. 14, No. 4 (1962), pp. 646–61.

37. Arup Kumar Deka, "ULFA and the Peace Process in Assam," *IPCS Special Report* Vol. 21 (2006); Shani, *Survey of Conflicts and Resolution in India's Northeast*.
38. Jeremy M. Weinstein, "Resources and the Information Problem in Rebel Recruitment," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* Vol. 49, No. 4 (2005), pp. 598–624; Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy Weinstein, "Handling and Manhandling Civilians in Civil War," *American Political Science Review* Vol. 100, No. 3 (2006), pp. 429–447.
39. India Army Training Command, *Doctrine for Sub-Conventional Operations* (Shimla: Headquarters Army Training Command, 2007).
40. K. P. Misra, "Paramilitary Forces in India," *Armed Forces and Society* Vol. 6 (1980), pp. 371–88; Rajesh Rajagopalan, "'Restoring Normalcy': The Evolution of the Indian Army's Counterinsurgency Doctrine," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* Vol. 11, No. 1 (2000), pp. 44–68; Mukherjee, *An Insider's Experience of Insurgency in India's North-East*.
41. On the isomorphism of counterinsurgency doctrine among democracies see Ian F. W. Beckett, ed., *The Roots of Counter-Insurgency: Armies and Guerilla Warfare, 1900–1945* (London: Blandford Press, 1988); Anthony James Joes, *Resisting Rebellion: The History and Politics of Counterinsurgency* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2004).
42. The theoretical literature on guerilla warfare is summarized in Azeem Ibrahim, "Conceptualisation of Guerilla Warfare," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* Vol. 15, No. 3 (2004), pp. 112–24; Chalmers Johnson, "The Third Generation of Guerilla Warfare," *Asian Survey* Vol. 8, No. 6 (1968), pp. 435–47.
43. Frankin Mark Osanka, "Social Dynamics of Revolutionary Guerilla Warfare," in Roger W. Little, ed., *Handbook of Military Institutions* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1971), pp. 399–416.
44. Chalmers Johnson, "Peasant Nationalism Revisited: The Biography of a Book," *The China Quarterly* Vol., No. 72 (1977), pp. 766–85; Chalmers Johnson, *Autopsy on People's War* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973).
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46. Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
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