

**POLICIES AND
PRACTICES**

50

Peace by Governance or Governing Peace?

**A Case Study of the
United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA)**

July 2012



Policies and Practices 50

July 2012

Published by:
Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group
GC-45, Sector-III, First Floor
Salt Lake City
Kolkata-700106
India
Web: <http://www.mcrg.ac.in>

Printed by:
Timir Printing Works Pvt. Ltd.
43, Beniapur Lane
Kolkata-700 014

This article is based on research carried out for a project entitled “ The role of Governance in the Resolution of Socioeconomic and Political Conflict in India and Europe ” (CORE). It is funded by the Socio-economic and Humanities in the European Community’s Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007-2013) under grant agreement no. 266931.

**Peace by Governance or Governing Peace?
A Case Study of the
United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA)**

Samir Kumar Das

2012

Peace by Governance or Governing Peace? A Case Study of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA)

Samir Kumar Das *

At a time when conflicts are sought to be resolved through governance, a new policy gaze is focused on forms and technologies of governance. No other region in India has been subjected to such constant experimentations with governance as the Northeast has been since the colonial times. In simple terms, the Northeast has always turned out to be governors' nightmare. This essay seeks to study such changing forms and technologies of governance as a means of addressing – if not resolving – the conflicts that have hitherto marked the region. Since the essay focuses mostly on postcolonial times, its basic contention is that there has been a shift in the art of governing the region particularly since the 1990s. The earlier means of governing the 'troubled periphery' by deploying such hard counterinsurgency measures as military operations and grouping of villages, albeit with a heavy flow of cash being liberally showered by the State, thereby keeping large sections of people dependent on them, and granting of autonomy in such forms as formation of states, autonomous district councils, and recognition of customary laws and traditional institutions etc., have by and large been successful in *pacifying* the region so much so that we can now conclude that as India moves into the new millennium the first phase of insurgency is almost over. Now that the incidence of violence and insurgency in the region has touched an all-time low, it is now poised for 'development'. Thus a new set of governing technologies – which we propose to describe generically as *developmentalism* – are now being introduced to the region since the early 1990s. The transition from the first to the second mode of governance has of course triggered off new contradictions and anomalies. In both these cases, peace however is sought to be governed – more than resolving conflicts. While in the former, peace is governed through pacification, in the second, it is primarily through the developmentalism of the 1990s. This essay, therefore, focuses not so much on peace *per se* but the quality and kind of peace that is produced through the deployment and circulation of various forms and technologies of governance.

'Governed' peace instead of completely ruling out conflicts and war makes a 'convenient' mix of war and peace – convenient to all the parties and stakeholders involved in such conflicts and war. Peace that is achieved through governance thus stands in an entire range of relationships with conflicts and war. It obviously goes against the commonplace assumption that peace is the absence of war and vice versa. Governance, in other words, complicates the otherwise simple relationship between war and peace thereby making a deeper understanding of the nature and kind of peace all the more necessary for researchers.

India's Northeast, in general, and Assam, in particular is now in a peace mode particularly since the late 1990s. The Government of Assam has already announced suspension of operations against various insurgent groups including United People's Democratic Solidarity (UPDS), Black Widow (BW), Dima Hasao Daoga (N), Adivasi Cobra Force (ACF), Birsa Commando Force (BCF),

* Is a Member of CGR and Vice Chancellor University of North Bengal

Karbi Longri North Cachar Hills Liberation Front (KLNLF), Pro-Talks Factions of National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) and ULFA led by its chairman Arabinda Rajkhowa. The Anti-Talks Faction of National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) has however announced a unilateral ceasefire. As recently as on 24 January 2012, 676 cadres belonging to eight rebel organizations¹ 'laid down' their arms in Guwahati.

One can of course argue that peace prevails in the region in the sense that the incidence of insurgency – in terms of both the number of incidents as well as the loss of human lives and property – has come down significantly in the first decade of the new millennium compared to what it was, let us say, in the 1990s. The region has been pacified with a reasonable degree of success and, as one perceptive commentator puts it, 'mainly through force'.² But the peace that is said to have returned to the region – particularly in such hitherto insurgency-affected states as Nagaland, Tripura and Assam – is hardly accompanied by any resolution of the conflicts underlying those insurgencies.

Peace achieved mainly through pacification, that is to say without any resolution of conflicts, is constantly haunted by the spectre of war. The story of arms surrender mentioned above and albeit widely celebrated in public – particularly in official circles – needs also to be demystified. The number of arms surrendered on the eve of the Republic Day in 2012 is only 201 – all of which are said to be 'locally made'.³ Some of the outfits are reported to have 'laid down' their arms for the second time after they had done the same a few years back – implying thereby that they make it a ritual to be observed at regular intervals with much fanfare. Many of the rebel leaders threatened to go back to the jungles – if their demands are not met – although the Government did not make any written assurance to them in this regard. On the same day Assam's Chief Minister has issued a tough warning to the Anti-Talks Faction of ULFA, asking them to come to the negotiating table or else face stern measures. The talks between National Socialist Council of Nagalim (IM) and the Government of India have been continuing since 1997 without any possible solution in sight while there have been reports that the relations between the two parties have 'run into rough weather' on the eve of state assembly elections in Manipur.⁴ One has to take note of the fact that there are different kinds of peace;⁵ and peace achieved through pacification 'mainly by force' and peace based on some durable solution to conflicts, respecting the triadic principles of rights, justice and democracy, are certainly not the same – although there is no denying that one may be the precursor to the other.

The incidence of insurgency and violence may have come down but this work seeks to strike a somewhat discordant note and is intended to (a) examine how prolonged and chronic conflicts acquire newer forms in course of their evolution; (b) closely study the nature and quality of peace and pacification in the Northeast that has returned to the region in general and Assam in particular and find out how older and traditional modes of managing conflicts and governing conflict resolution by the state have been rendered redundant and the newer technologies of governing the region are being introduced, explored and experimented with since the 1990s; (c) find out how peace processes in the region at the same time push continuously out of circulation many a concern for rights, justice and democracy and finally (d) focus on how all this has brought the agenda of rights, justice and democracy into the centre of today's peace agenda. For reasons of convenience, this paper proposes to drive home the above arguments by way of making a study of the case of Assam with only occasional reference to a few others.

Accordingly the paper is divided into three albeit unequally divided parts: The first part makes an attempt at studying the insurgency in Assam. The second part seeks to present the main arguments of the case study within a wider, comparative framework. The third part seeks to draw our attention to the newly emergent concern for rights, justice and democracy in the Northeast and how

it has been playing a critical role in triggering off a series of new social movements in the region particularly in Assam. Insofar as the public agenda is being redefined, a new citizen seems to be surfacing in the region – a citizen who harps less on her distinctiveness from the outsiders or the foreigners as seen in course of the Assam movement (1979-1985) but more on the three key issues of rights, justice and democracy. The process is likely to be a trendsetter for peace in future – although it is highly unlikely that it will not face any reverses – given that the region has until recently been a standing witness to ethnic schism occasionally erupting into acute xenophobia, violence and insurgency. The paper ends with a brief recapitulation of the findings reached in all the three parts.

The Beginning and End of the First Phase of Insurgency

By all accounts, the Ganga-Meghna-Brahmaputra basin of the once-undivided subcontinent had had a long history of peasant migration since the pre-colonial times. Assam was considered as one of the most favourite points of destination of the migrants – mainly the peasants – by the end of the 19th century. On the one hand, the population explosion in the eastern part led vast masses of land-hungry peasants to migrate to Assam and settle there. On the other hand, Assam had had much to offer to them whether in terms of surplus land and abundance of resources or in terms of land fertility and its alluvial nature. Although, according to Amalendu Guha, the middle class Assamese intellectuals woke up to the problem only at the beginning of the twentieth century and not before that, large-scale immigration continued unabated even after their protest and resistance with a varying degree. Immigration becomes a problem only after the international borders were reorganized in the wake of Partition and the large-scale migration has started being perceived by the natives as a threat to the fragile ecological and demographic balance of the region, their language and culture, their land and livelihood resources. Immigration in Assam is believed to have (a) created pressures on land, (b) caused unemployment to the ‘Assamese’ people claiming ‘native’ to the region and (c) their percentage decline vis-à-vis the immigrants and as a result (d) fomented social tensions and often sparked off ethnic and communal riots (Das 1993:165-175). This, according to some, poses a threat to the democratic setup of the state. As a result of the population movement from Bangladesh, out of 126 Assam Assembly constituencies, minorities are said to be a deciding factor in as many as 40.⁶

There is hardly any authentic estimate yet available to us, on the actual number of ‘foreigners’ settled in Assam. The Census practice of enumerating population according to their place of birth every ten years serves only as an unreliable pointer. In his report to the President of India in 1998, the Governor of Assam assessed the growth rate of Hindu population at 41.89 percent and that of Muslim population at 77.42 percent in Assam during 1971-91. The Muslim growth rate is more than the national average and was found to be disproportionately larger in the districts bordering Bangladesh. Dhubri – as the report notes – has already become a Muslim-majority district. This could not have been possible without immigration of largely Muslim population from across the borders.

The six-year long Assam movement (1979-1985) – one of the longest in the history of post-Independence India – was keyed to the threefold objective of detecting, disenfranchising and deporting the foreigners settled in Assam. The organizations involved in the movement were not in complete agreement on the question of the exact number of foreigners settled in Assam. All the estimates made during the movement ranged between 4.5 to 5 millions. The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) that emerged from out of the movement and formed the government in 1985 did little in deporting the ‘foreigners’. Its performance, as I put it elsewhere, was ‘dismal’. The AGP Government

during its tenure of office (1985-1990), according to official figures, could only deport 157 persons (Das 1998:122-26).

Immigration continues to haunt the minds of the Assamese. They make claims to preferential policies in jobs. As recently as in early 2005, the Chirang Chapori Yuva Mancha (based mainly in Dibrugarh, upper Assam) launched a campaign asking the Assamese not to employ the 'illegal migrants', not to sell land to them and also not to use the vehicles owned or driven by them. The campaign was so successful that an estimated 10,000 Bengali-speaking persons were believed to have fled upper Assam as a result of this.

It is for instance argued that the intense police and army atrocities during the Assam movement – particularly during its closing years from 1983 to 1985 – led a section of its leadership and ideologues to embrace a more militant course. In fact, there were many precursors to the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) in the form of such organizations as Brachin National Liberation Army (BNLA) and Assam Peoples' Liberation Army (APLA). The violence and repression seem to have persuaded them to believe that in the face of massive repression and atrocities committed by the security forces some sort of a resort to violence would be necessary to realize the objectives of an otherwise non-violent movement. This at one level led BNLA to emphasize the importance of building solidarity across the region while putting up a unified struggle against 'New Delhi'. The term 'Brachin' highlights the conjunction between the two rivers of the Bra(hmaputra) in the Northeast and the Chin(dwin) in Burma. But at another level, the growing resort to violence also prompted them to question the monopoly of the state over the legitimate instruments of violence – in short the State's sovereign power. There is reason to believe that ULFA did not view sovereignty as an end-in-itself; for it, sovereignty was a means to the end of establishing a state free from repression and exploitation. An ULFA document reproduced verbatim in *Budhbar* in 1990 unambiguously points out:

... [O]ur objective ... is to create a society which is devoid of any exploitation; we are not for Sovereign Assam for the sake of it. We shall have no compunction to give up the demand for separation if we can establish exploitation-less society within India" (*Budhbar* 4 March 1992).

In simple terms, the twin issue of pan-Mongoloid solidarity cutting across the Northeast and Burma (now Myanmar) and Assam's sovereignty (contingent however on India's failure in meeting the demand for an 'exploitation-less society') provides the template of insurgency in Assam after the Assam movement. Eventually a more militant fringe of the movement broke away, drawing from alleged police repression of the movement enough justification for setting up a separatist group called ULFA on 7 April, 1979.

Although ULFA was born in 1979 as a fringe of the Assam movement, it seemed to have distanced itself from the Assam movement when in the early 1990s it brought out a pamphlet emphasizing that the people from erstwhile East Bengal were 'an indispensable part' of the Assamese community. As the Assam movement reportedly ended up in a fiasco with detection, disenfranchisement and deportation of foreigners remain a distant 'dream' and only few of the estimated migrants could be detected, Nagen Saikia – the former president of Asom Sahitya Sabha and one of the principal ideologues of Assam movement – criticized ULFA for its turn in these terms:

One vital question that erupts in (the mind) of every conscious person of Assam today is how much ULFA itself is independent – the organization that wants to make Assam sovereign by armed struggle ... It is most unfortunate for the Assamese people that ULFA which emerged from the anti-foreigners' Assam movement (against the Bangladeshis) is now taking shelter in Bangladesh ... the whole world knows that Pakistan stands nowhere vis-à-vis India's military might – not to talk about Bangladesh. In such a situation, can any militant organization even dream of liberating Assam with the help of

Pakistan's military might and the population of Bangladesh? If that unthinkable ever happens, whose Assam will be this? In that case, Assam will be an extension of Bangladesh! ... What an erosion of self-respect and dignity! (Saikia 2005).

By all accounts, it was not until 1983 that ULFA surfaced in the public arena and people could become aware of its presence in the politics of Assam.⁷ It started as a more militant stream of the Assam movement mentioned above and gradually broke away from the moderate forces that were associated with it. In a book written in 1994, I described ULFA's intervention post 1983 in Assam's economic, political and cultural life as 'decisive' (Das 1994: 51). ULFA first came to the limelight when it joined hands with the All-Assam Students' Union (AASU) and All-Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) combine in enforcing the boycott of polls of 1983 till the names of the illegally settled 'foreigners' were struck off from the electoral rolls. The first four years may therefore be regarded as the period of silent consolidation. But, as ULFA shot into prominence whether by way of organizing exceptionally daring bank banditries or by initiating rural development works particularly in areas where presence of the Indian State was only cosmetic or even by conducting retributive killings and meting out summary justice in those areas or any of their combination. There is reason to believe that the State for whatever reasons did not come down heavily on the insurgents. As one ULFA leader subsequently acknowledged that they had no idea that this could be such a cakewalk for them: they asked for little but they got more than what they had asked for (in Roy ed. 1991). For one thing, ULFA was declared illegal only as late as on 27 November 1990. For another, the ruling Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) regime that came to power in 1985 as a legatee of the Assam movement was reportedly 'hand in glove' with them (Hazarika 1994: 175) and 'most of the ULFA cadres were drawn from the ranks of AASU' (Misra 2000: 134). Bhadreswar Gohain, for example, who was the first chairman of ULFA was actively associated with the Assam movement and became the deputy speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly as an AGP nominee. Although – as we have already pointed out – they were both organizationally and ideologically distinct, many of the ULFA cadres were, according to some, personally very close to a section of ministers and leaders across party lines and were indirectly instrumental in bringing them to power both in 1985 and also in 1996 (Das in Phukon & Adil-ul-Yasin eds. 1998:1-18).

Peacemaking without Peace

1990 marks a watershed for it was in this year that ULFA was declared illegal, an army operation – the first of its kind codenamed 'Operation Bajrang' – was launched against it and it was invited by the Government of India to come and join the peace talks. The history of peace with ULFA therefore is as old as that of war. ULFA shot down the offer as 'a clever means employed by the capitalist groups and the State of disarming ULFA' and of creating 'rift within its ranks'.

Again in 1991 when the second military operation was in full swing, the Government and ULFA were reportedly engaged in dialogues with the help of mediators consisting mainly of the locals from the central services and the journalists. It seems that by the middle of 1991, ULFA was clearly divided on the question of whether to enter into dialogues with the Indian State or not. According to *Budhbar*, it was possible to identify the 'moderates' and 'extremists' on this crucial question (*Budhbar*, 30 October 1991). In an interview with *Budhbar*, Raju Baruah – then chief of ULFA's Nalbari unit – observed: "There has been no change in our position on (the issue of, the author) freedom (*swadhinata*). The struggle will continue. The question of compromise with the treacherous State or its representatives is absurd" (*Budhbar* 8 January 1992). On the other hand, there were reports that five ULFA leaders under the leadership of Arabinda Rajkhowa acquiesced to the

Constitution and signed what Parag Kumar Das termed ‘a treaty of compromise’ with the Government of India (*Budbbar* 22 January 1992).

In 1992 immediately after the military operation was over, a section of ULFA leadership was involved in peace talks, which however broke off when one of its delegations led by Arabinda Rajkhowa decided to withdraw due to ‘the pressure from his uncompromising “commander-in-chief” Paresh Baruah’ (Misra 2000:139). Baruah is said to have expressed his ‘dissatisfaction’ with the ‘unconditional surrender of arms’ and ‘one-sided acquiescence to the Constitution of India’. Rajkhowa subsequently walked away from the talks describing his compromise-seeking colleagues as ‘Government revolutionaries’. Finally on 22 July 1992, a full-house General Body meeting of ULFA was held at an undisclosed place in Bhutan. The meeting was attended by Arabinda Rajkhowa, Paresh Baruah and Anup Chetiya etc. All the 18 District units including that of Karimganj took part in it. The meeting arrived at a ‘unanimous decision’ that the question of ‘falling into the trap laid by the Indian State through deceit and treachery in the name of discussions does not arise’ (*Budbbar* 29 April 1992). The meeting also decided to prepare a list of compromise-seeking leaders, described them as ‘counter-revolutionaries’ but did not assign to itself the responsibility of punishing them. It resolved that the people would ‘judge and punish’ them. It seems that the hardliners prevailed over the moderates in that meeting.

In a signed statement issued by Mithinga Daimary – its publicity secretary in July 1996 – it again extended an offer of peace to the Government and set somewhat abstractly drafted immediate stoppage of ‘the forceful Indianisation of the people of Assam’ as one of the preconditions. The organization reiterated that the talks would centre on the issue of ‘Assam’s sovereignty’ and be held in ‘a third country’ under the UN supervision.⁸

Again in 1999, a section of S(urrendered)ULFA cadres – popularly known as SULFA – reportedly sent ‘feelers’ to the Government circles expressing its willingness to enter into some form of peace negotiations with the Central Government. Immediately after the operations in Bhutan that led to the busting of its headquarters and killing of a number of its top-ranking cadres in December 2003, an offer of peace was made by the organization although the same issues of ‘sovereignty of Assam’ and ‘venue of third country’ were set as preconditions by Paresh Baruah. The Government of India’s response was very cautious in the sense that it accused ULFA of trying to initiate peace talks with a view to regroup itself usually after any army operation.

Indira Goswami – one of the highly respected Asomiya litterateurs based in Delhi – in her letter to the Prime Minister written in November 2004 urged New Delhi to take steps for holding talks with the insurgents. Arabinda Rajkhowa – the outfit’s Chairman – had also expressed his willingness to begin dialogues provided it received a formal invitation on “the Government of India’s letterhead with a signature and office seal”. In an email message to the media Rajkhowa made a case for holding plebiscite on the contentious issue of ‘sovereignty’ of Assam as ‘sovereignty’, according to ULFA, rested with the people of Assam.

The need for initiating an ULFA-Centre peace process was highlighted in a Jatiya Mahasabha (national conclave) held in Guwahati. Organized under the aegis of the People’s Committee for Peace Initiatives (PCPI), the two-day conclave urged the Centre to start talks with ULFA on the issue of Assam’s ‘sovereignty’ or hold a plebiscite. The Assam Government however rejected the demand for plebiscite. Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi rubbished it as “a futile exercise” on the ground that the question of plebiscite did not arise since elections were held democratically and the people had been exercising their franchise despite calls for boycott of elections by various outfits including ULFA. ULFA seems to have moved a step ahead by dropping the first two conditions and Paresh Baruah had reportedly agreed to come over to New Delhi or Dispur to attend such talks. In a statement

issued in August 2004, he pointed out: “Sovereignty is the core issue for us and we are willing to sit for dialogue anywhere if this is discussed.”

On 16 November, 2004 Goswami met Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and handed over a memorandum drafted in consultation with the academics from Delhi University. The Government of India was reportedly consulting legal experts for an interpretation of ‘sovereignty’ and its place in the Indian Constitution. She also consulted Soli Sorabjee – the then Solicitor General of India. *The Telegraph* commented on the draft in the following terms: “Legal opinion seems to be that there could be various kinds of sovereignty, some of which are not against the Constitution. Economic sovereignty is a possibility, for instance.”

The Prime Minister however put to rest any speculation of talks and said in Guwahati on 22 November 2004 that “if they shun violence, then I will invite them for talks but violence and talks cannot go on simultaneously.” Responding to Singh’s categorical rejection of ULFA’s ‘sovereignty’ demand on 22 November, ULFA’s “commander-in-chief” Paresh Baruah said, “The commitment made by the PM was not unexpected and not different from that made by his predecessors. It is evident that the Centre’s colonial policy will continue.”

Sometime in early 2005, Indira Goswami again met Prime Minister – Dr. Manmohan Singh (who happened to be one of her ex-colleagues from Delhi University) – requesting the start of a dialogue between ULFA leaders and the Government. An 11-member People’s Consultative Group (PCG) consisting mainly of well-known civil society activists was set up by ULFA to conduct negotiations with the Government. This is the first time that ULFA inducts the civil society persons into the peace process. The Prime Minister met them in late November 2005 and the members of PCG expressed satisfaction over their first meeting with the Prime Minister.

The talks broke down abruptly when both sides got involved in armed engagement. The military operations against ULFA in the Dibru-Saikhowa forests of upper Assam were enough to jeopardize the peace process. While according to one estimate at least 13 rounds of talks were held between the Government of India and PCG, no less than 36 ULFA cadres were killed by bullets of the security forces (‘ULFA-kendra katha ...’ 2006). ULFA too went on a rampage and claimed responsibility to the carnage that killed over 70 ‘Hindi speakers’ – most of them Bihari brick kiln workers whose families, as subsequent findings bear out, had migrated to and settled in Assam more than 100 years ago. ULFA’s attacks were meant mainly for avenging the alleged death of five ULFA cadres in Kakopathar in early January that year by the Bihar Regiment deployed there.

Although ‘deadlocked’ from September 2006 with the resumption of army operations on 24 September 2006 and PCG backing out from talks, the Government never ruled out the possibility of holding peace dialogues even at the height of army operations. Even in early January 2007, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh offered ‘safe passage’ to ULFA leaders, should they come for direct negotiations. After the recent army operations began, V.K. Duggal – the then Home Secretary to the Government of India, for example observed: “Let them (ULFA) come for talks”. He also dismissed a question whether there was lack of will on the part of the Centre to open talks with ULFA. The war game is clear from the army brief – the objective of which this time is to exert pressure on the insurgent outfit to give up violence and come to the table. J.J. Singh – the Army Chief for example pointed out: “The Army has been given as assignment to perform. If we can compel them to come to the negotiating table and abjure violence, the peace and prosperity will come back to Assam” (quoted in Pandit 2007:7). Peace, according to this understanding, can be achieved only by completely defeating ULFA.

ULFA’s 28th Battalion – the pro-talk group – made the offer of peace talks in 2007. This is the first time that one of ULFA’s fragments came up with the offer of peace. The inner schisms within

ULFA were increasingly becoming evident. The A and C Companies of the Battalion under the leadership of Mrinal Hazarika, Mrinal Dutta and Prabal Neog declared cessation of war on the security forces. The Battalion went on record saying that it did not subscribe to ULFA's demand for 'Swadhin Asom' in the following terms:

... [W]e the pro-talk ULFA group looking at the (a) global political and economic situation, (b) continuous threat from the neighbouring countries surrounding Assam, (c) possible terrorist attacks in Assam by anti-Indian religious and fundamentalist groups, (d) age-old religious and cultural ties with India have adopted a resolution in favour of Full Regional Autonomy instead of Independent Assam as a pragmatic approach (Manifesto 2009:1).

The cadres of the Battalion after their surrender have been living in the designated camps of upper Assam and the Pro-Talk group started popularizing its agenda in order to create appropriate conditions for peace by way of holding workshops, seminars and contributing newspaper articles etc. It seemed to have brought back the issue of immigration. As it puts it in its letter to the Prime Minister of India:

... [I]t is the prime duty of central and state government to protect and safeguard the interests of the citizens from foreign invasions and check infiltration. By performing this duty a state can maintain its territorial integrity and safeguard the interests of citizens. We believe, Sir, you will agree with our painful observation that in the last 61 years, the government of Assam has failed miserably to discharge responsibilities sincerely. Sir, nowhere in the world, it has been witnessed that, for preserving and protecting the regional language, building up refineries, Tea Auction Centres, roads and bridges, sealing of borders, protesting against the illegal migrants; has the youth started movements and thousands of youth have laid their lives fighting for the above causes ... Sir, we sincerely believe that, full autonomy to the State of Assam will not only remove the fear and insecurity from the minds of the indigenous people and will provide safeguards to land, language, economy and right to self-determination. This will reduce the resentment towards the Indian government and will help to refrain from hostile activities (Charter 2009)

The major initiative was undertaken by Assam Jatiya Mahasabha which organized its first national convention on 24 April 2010. More than 109 organizations, activists and intellectuals across the state gathered in Guwahati on this day to meet and chalk out the modalities of possible talks between Government of India and ULFA. The draft resolution of the convention made a plea to the top leaders of both the Government and ULFA for sitting together to resolve all issues: "All core issues of the ULFA, including the issue of sovereignty, can be discussed. However, both the government and the ULFA should shun violence."

It is interesting to note that many organizations representing communities other than the Assamese like the Bodos, the Dimasas, the Matakas and the Morans did not participate in the Convention. The All-Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) did not participate on the ground that they considered it as 'too ULFA-centric a forum' to allow the ventilation of their concerns. The Matak-Moran leaders considered it as an attempt at isolating Paresh Barua – who is a Moran. They urged Prof. Hiren Gohain – the President of the Convention – to play a proactive role in bringing Paresh Barua to the negotiating table.

Indeed, there is a difference between the PCG, which was appointed by ULFA in 2005 and Prof. Gohain-led National Convention (*Sanmilit Jatiya Abhimartan* or SJA). Whereas PCG looked upon itself as a facilitator bringing only the rivaling parties to the negotiating table, SJA actively evolved the framework for developing certain ground rules for talks. PCG did not give up the idea of 'Sovereignty of Assam'. But SJA categorically set 'sovereignty' aside as the main demand. Secondly, PCG did not urge either ULFA or the State to shun violence whereas SJA categorically pointed out that violence and talks could not go together.

Now that much of Assam has returned to peace mode, many of the ULFA cadres who are on the run are said to have been holed up in the neighbouring countries. It is important to note that India has been able to take initiatives in flushing out the ULFA rebels from many of these neighbouring countries – thanks to the fact that in many of them power is seen to have been transferred to regimes apparently friendly to her. In a paper written about a year back (Das in Hazarika and Raghavan eds. 2011), I pointed out that the Government's twin strategy of getting Bangladesh to detain and hand over the ULFA leaders to the Indian authorities subsequently to arrest them and release them on bail on condition that they promise to sit for peace talks might not help at least on two counts: First, there still remains a not-too-insignificant section of leaders under Paresh Barua, its Commander-in-Chief, who are yet to join peace talks if not completely opposed to it. Secondly, the pro-talk leadership that – according to its own admission – has 'not surrendered' – might run out of steam if it does not develop some synergy and come to terms with the larger social body that comprises many other stakeholders. The society in Assam has changed beyond the recognition of its cadres since ULFA was banned and they went into hiding.

An eight-member ULFA delegation led by its chairman Arabinda Rajkhowa met the Home Minister and Home Secretary in February 2011. Although this was regarded as the first round of talks held for the first time directly with the ULFA leaders there is no denying that it was more of an attempt at breaking the ice. The first round is expected to be followed by many more such rounds in the near future. However, by all indications, 'informal talks' with ULFA, according to Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi, are being held on a 'positive note' almost on a regular basis ('Ulfa talks likely ...' 2011:8). Talks are reportedly being held without Paresh Baruah, ULFA's 'Commander-in-Chief' who is still at large and the Chief Minister makes it clear that they "would not wait for him for an indefinite period."

It is interesting to note how ULFA's original demand for 'sovereignty of Assam' got translated into 'sovereignty of the People of Assam' within the framework of the Constitution of India. As Sasadhar Choudhury, ULFA's Foreign Secretary points out in an interview given immediately after the first round of talks:

We want to explore the viability of protection and enforcement of the sovereignty of the people of Assam in all its dimensions within the flexibility of the Indian Constitution as proposed by the Prime Minister Dr, Manmohan Singh (Deb 2011: 20).

ULFA emphasizes the need for exploring the option of 'full autonomy' within the purview of the Constitution of India. While elaborating on the idea, Pradip Gogoi, ULFA's Vice Chairman informs Swati Deb in an interview:

We want (to put) utmost stress on the true federal structure of the Constitution. This has to be worked out. Ethnic reconciliation is needed in Assam and that can be ensured only through genuine Constitutional mechanism (Deb 2011: 19).

On the occasion of ULFA's thirty-second anniversary in April 2011, Arabinda Rajkhowa – its President – in his address to the people of Assam welcomes the 'promise' of a 'respectable and acceptable solution' that he claims to have received from the Government of India and argues:

Although the United Liberation Front of Assam harbours an armed resistance programme in Assam, it wants a peaceful political, solution to the Indo-Assam conflict. Any military solution to the conflict is a position opposed to ULFA's principles and Constitution (Sanjukta Mukti Bahinir ..., 2011:24).

While strongly disputing that they have ever relinquished their demand for 'Swadhin Assam', he highlights the importance of discussion and negotiation in order to find out a 'durable solution to the question of Assam's existence' (Sanjukta Mukti Bahinir ..., 2011:18).

On 7 May 2011, a National Convention was organized in Guwahati and a voluminous document containing the charter of demands was produced. The Convention describes it as 'a letter

of advice' (*paramarsha patra*) to ULFA. An abridged version of 37 pages of this otherwise voluminous document was circulated through the local press. The document revolves around the demand for 'full autonomy' (*purna swayattasasan*). The Constitution of India does not have any provision of 'full autonomy' – although it has its provisions for Sixth Schedule and local self-government institutions. If the demand for 'full autonomy' is to be addressed, it is important that the Constitution is appropriately amended. The demand for 'full autonomy' is modeled on Article 370 that applies to the State of Jammu and Kashmir – although a concern is expressed that the provision might not work if what is granted by the Constitution is taken away through frequent Presidential interventions.

The document significantly does not regard 'political independence' (*rajnaitik swadhinata*) as the key to the solution of all of Assam's problems. It, for instance, makes the point that 'political independence might not make development possible'. It also states that 'Assam and the people of Assam may achieve its right to control its destiny even without political independence'. The document makes a distinction between 'political independence' and 'political power' and argues that 'political power is necessary for the enjoyment of economic independence.'

According to Sabhapandit, ULFA took up the arms – without seeking any guidance and advice from any National Convention. But if it were to be in the 'national interest' (meaning in the interest of Assam and the Assamese), then the guidance and advice from the National Convention presently set up are more than necessary (Sabhapandit 2011:13).

What if the talks fail and the pro-talk leaders fail in achieving what they intend to do? One may get a hint when Jiten Dutta – one of ULFA's top ranking leaders – back in 2009 argued:

We will not say now what we will do but we will take some decisive steps. The government has turned a deaf ear towards the issue. Despite repeated requests to clear its stand, there is simply no response from the government. This will be our final meeting with the government as we want to clear the air once and for all (Barman 2009:110).

On 5 August 2011, ULFA leader Arabinda Rajkhowa submitted the charter of demands, which ULFA hardliners have completely rejected. Their patience seems to be running out. Paresh Baruah has reportedly refused to join the peace process saying no talks could be held unless the issue of sovereignty of Assam is discussed. On 6 August 2011 Arunoday Dohutia who is in charge of hardliners' publicity wing pointed out: "ULFA does not recognize the charter of demands that has nothing to protect the rights of the indigenous people of the state" (quoted in 'Paresh Faction' *Times of India* 2011:14). Their stand may dash the hopes of pro-talks faction led by Arabinda Rajkhowa and his associates.

Peace Impasse

While insurgency and violence are only more congealed and hardened forms of conflict along a scale offered for measuring the intensity of such forms, these acquire certain momentum in the sense that the cause/s that are said to have inspired them are gradually being pushed into the background without consequently resolving them. The irony of peace in today's Northeast is that peace has returned without the issues and problems being addressed – let alone solved. Earlier I made a distinction between peace that is fragile and constantly haunted by the spectre of war and peace that is durable in the sense that it seeks to address the triadic concerns of rights, justice and democracy (Das in Samaddar ed. 2004: 19-31). I have shown how conflict everywhere in the Northeast exists as a 'complex cacophony' of voices and how all these voices get finally articulated and funnelled into a mega-conflict and in the process rendering many other voices hitherto involved in the cacophony silent. Prolonged violence and insurgency are seen to requisition newer 'causes' in order to sustain

themselves or these are simply rendered silent – ‘forgotten’ and eventually dry up. Sanjib Baruah designates the process as the ‘disappearance of conflicts’. Few conflicts in world history, as he puts it, get resolved – most of them get ‘marginalized’ over time (Baruah 2008:46-48). The point is: the silent voices do not simply ‘disappear’ – these may remain hidden marginalized but constantly interrupt not only the final articulations of conflicts as well as the peace that is made to address them. Peace being made bears the traces of these conflicts that are sought to be silenced through it and are constantly pushed into the margins.

The insurgency in Assam spearheaded by ULFA illustrates how the ‘original’ objective of driving out the foreigners gets redefined – how the way the Government sought to resolve the conflict by way of signing the Assam Accord (1985) as it were opens up the Pandora’s Box and catalyzes a new set of conflicts represented by the politics of ULFA. One has to take note of the protean nature of conflicts in the region so as to appreciate the need for dynamic solutions.

Peace that is made or is sought to be made, as we emphasize, is not the end of conflict. Indeed, as we argue in this paper the way peace is brought about produces newer conflicts. Peace and conflict form a continuum and their distinction gets blurred as is evident in almost all the peace processes now underway. For instance, the very way peace talks are conducted plays – perhaps more than any other factor – a key role in influencing and shaping the outcome of such talks. In simple terms, peace defined as an end of war acquires a dynamic of its own and often poses an obstacle to the realization of the agenda of rights, justice and democracy peace talks are designed to culminate in. Peace is understood here as a strategy adopted by the State for disarming the militant non-state actors and pacification of the society. Or it may serve as a means deployed by the armed groups that are on the run – of regrouping and reinvigorating themselves. Peace in the limited sense of pacification becomes an obstacle to the realization of rights, justice and democracy. While peace talks with ULFA have been as old as the war that broke out between the ULFA and the Indian State, peace continues to be a chimera. Peace talks have only perpetually deferred peace.

The pro-talks faction is facing a problem. Many of the cadres seem unwilling to go back to the jungles and undergo the same pain of fighting the battle; the people in general have developed an enhanced stake in the peace that emerges after the war has more or less come to an end. But this enhanced stake does not mean complete eradication of the roots of disaffection. The dream of bringing ‘colonial rule’ to an end still eludes the cadres. Their movement could not so far spark off any major institutional reforms by the State. The dilemma is that the insurgents are not all too comfortable with the peace that exists after the guns have largely fallen silent but are too unwilling to return to jungles and resume the warfare. Unlike peace that presumably is of more durable nature, I propose to describe it as ‘pacification’, that is to say, peace that is constantly visited by the spectre of conflict and war.

A survey conducted in 2001 on a sample representing such background variables as religion, geographical distance, demographic composition, literacy rate, caste etc of as many as 29 of Assam’s 126 Assembly constituencies as part of a pre-election survey indicated the declining support base of ULFA. 91.23 percent of the respondents were of the opinion that ULFA’s support base did not exist any more and 76.40 percent refuse to give credence to the view that Assam is not part of India as claimed by ULFA (*The Sentinel* 1-5 May 2001). Another survey conducted on a fairly representative sample drawn from across the people of Assam points to the flagging support base of ULFA. A whopping 87 percent do not lend support to ULFA’s concept of ‘Swadhin Asom’ while a significant part of the sample sympathizes with the issues of ‘neglect’ and ‘colonial extraction of Assam’s economy’ highlighted by ULFA (Barman 2009: 103). One problem with these surveys is that they do

not shed light on the question of whether declining support base of ULFA necessarily implies swelling support for the state.

We introduce the concept of *peace impasse* in order to capture the heart of this dilemma that marks much of the pacification campaign whether in Assam or in Mizoram Nagaland and Tripura. The concept is helpful in understanding how peace might turn out to be stumbling block to the trinity of rights, justice and democracy.

New Developmentalism since the 1990s

Much of the theoretical literature on International Relations in general and Conflict Resolution in particular is based on the commonplace assumption that peace emerges from out of mutually hurting stalemate. In the Northeast however, peace talks begin to be held when the asymmetry between the Government of India and insurgent organizations is at its highest. The former rebel leaders of Mizo National Front (MNF) – whom I had had the opportunity of interviewing only recently – uniformly pointed out to me that their objective was never to win war against India – but to make her negotiate and listen to them.¹⁰ In other words, peace talks are not held unless the enemy is softened – if not completely defeated. Peace talks start when the war ends and by the time insurgents join the peace talks they are as if they were militarily defeated. The same story is repeated – as we have already noted – when the army was briefed to bring the ULFA leaders to the negotiating table or as in more recent times the captured ULFA leaders were bailed out of prison only on condition that they would join peace talks. As a commentator puts it, this is peace ‘at the point of a gun’. Pacification unlike peace is only a continuation of war.

In the first phase of insurgency, state measures consisted predominantly of (a) counter-insurgency campaigns including full-scale military operations, village grouping and driving a wedge between different sections of people etc; (b) responding to the independentist demands of the insurgents by way of granting some degree of autonomy (ranging from statehood within the Indian Union to the formation of an Autonomous District Council (ADC) and conferment of recognition on the traditional institutions, so on and so forth); (c) initiating development by creating dependency of the insurgency-affected states through grant of doles and subsistence, recognition of their special category status and doles and subsistence eventually feeding into the insurgent coffers and their economy.¹¹

Such pacification campaigns have developed certain anomalies in both Mizoram and Assam. First, in both cases – particularly in Assam, military campaigns are accused of having routinely violated human rights. While in Mizoram the issue of human rights was yet to emerge as a public discourse – although by all accounts it turned the Mizo masses against the state, in Assam examples of people and human rights groups protesting against such violations became more vociferous particularly during the 1990s. Indeed, as we have seen, the rise of a more militant form of politics in Assam since the beginning of the 1980s may at least in part be explained with reference to such routine violations of human rights especially during the closing years of the Assam movement (1983-1985). Such protests definitely cut into the legitimacy of military operations.

Secondly, in each case autonomy granted or promised to a particular group in preference to others led others to voice their resentment against the majority community and press for some form of autonomy for them. The Bodos were the first to fall out in Assam – followed closely by the Ahoms of upper Assam, Dimasas, Karbis and others in Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills. In Mizoram, almost all the other communities living there remained an integral part of the Mizo movement since the 1960s but subsequently walked out and formed their respective militant

organizations. The autonomy logic is carried to an extreme end where it resembles the process of peeling of an onion.

No region of India has been subjected so much to such dense and unprecedented policy interventions as the Northeast has been in recent times. 'Look East', for example, refers to a cluster of such policies that mark the high tide of new developmentalism. Since I had had the occasion of writing rather elaborately on Look East policy, in this paper I propose to confine myself to an analysis of primarily two major policy documents viz. *North East Region: Vision 2020*, volumes I & II prepared by the Ministry of the Development of the North east Region (MDONER), Government of India and *Natural resources, Water and the Environmental Nexus for development and Growth of Northeast India: Strategy Report* prepared by the World Bank.

Although the first document traces Northeast's present status as 'one of the most backward regions of the country' to its 'history and geographies', it holds such factors as 'frustration and disaffection from seclusion, backwardness, remoteness and problems of governance' responsible for breeding 'armed insurgencies' (MDONER 2005:2). While it identifies 'weak administrative capacity' as the single most important factor, this is what makes armed insurgencies highly profitable and yield 'high rates of return' (MDONER 2005:9). The problem is not so much that violence and insurgencies mark the region's politics but very much that violence and insurgencies yield 'high rates of return' so much so that it becomes difficult to break the vicious cycle and end them.

"By 2020", as the document declares, "they (the people) aspire to see the region emerge peaceful, strong, confident, and ready to engage with the global economy" (MDONER 2005:9). Its objective is to steer the economy and help the region develop in a way that invests it with the ability to compete in the global economy. While most of the Northeast is as much peaceful as the rest of India, the region has been a victim of bad publicity and newspaper reports reproduce the image of the region as one afflicted by chronic insurgency and extortion. Insurgency and extortion have been a 'major deterrent' in holding back 'private sector initiatives in economic activities'. Insurgency is viewed in this document as an aberration for having 'taken a heavy toll on economic progress and people's happiness in the region'. As it puts it: "The people of the North East would like peace to return to their lives, leakages to cease and development to take precedence" (MDONER 2005:18). The document in other words creates the impression that insurgency has no real basis in the society and economy of the region and will come to a stop once development and economic progress are undertaken. Although it feels the necessity of 'dealing with the issue of insurgency where it exists in a spirit of accommodation, pluralism and subnationalism' (MDONER 2005: 16) – most significantly without elaborating on it, the underlying economism that runs through the vision should not escape our notice.

The Vision Statement highlights that attracting private investment in the region needs a shift from the current protective policies of assistance and subsidies to more market-friendly policies of incentives, easy credit facilities, tax holidays, export promotion parks and capital investment subsidies. The inflow of private capital is directly related to responsive administration and governance, availability of critical inputs like power, connectivity and other infrastructure, access to markets and well-defined procedures to ensure accountability, transparency and good governance. The natural and human resources of the region, in other words, need to be mobilized in a way so that it can be 'an asset for economic returns' (Bhattacharya 2011:164).

'Enabling conditions' must be created so that the region's economy becomes competitive and can engage with the global economy. This first of all requires 'protection of people's property rights'. While development and economic progress are left to private sector initiatives, such initiatives can thrive only when the inalienability of property rights is guaranteed. Insurgency and violence are

considered by it as a direct threat to such rights. The headway that tourism in Sikkim could make in recent years is 'due to the lack of any insurgency in the State' (MDONER 2005:164). The whole idea is to trump insurgency and violence by rapid economic development that can make good the lost time and help resolve the crisis. The document calls for massive public investment in order to attract and encourage private enterprise in this context:

Public investment alone will help in the creation of a critical mass which will facilitate private investment from outside the region. Thus the role of the State would be to ensure certain basic minimum prerequisites: free and unhindered mobility of goods and services (infrastructure) across the region as well as within the region, well-defined property rights; and law and order and security of life such markets can function and reflect the true scarcity costs for goods and factors (MDONER 2005:327).

In simple terms, it envisages a critical turnaround only by putting the region's economy on the fast track. The idea is to tap the resources of the region in a way that these can be marketed by way of improving connectivity and ensuring institutional reforms particularly with the twin objective of opening the region to the 'powerhouse' economies of Southeast Asia and securing private property. While marketization of resources is expected to make the economies of the region competitive, so long as prices are determined in the global market, poor and backward hill states of the region have 'no role to play in determining them' (Chakraborty 2010:15).

By contrast, the World Bank report views reestablishment of community ownership and control over such resources as forest and water as the means of solving the problem of insurgency. As it points out:

The demands of local communities to retain control over their natural resources are typically supported by more than 20 armed insurgent groups that reject national efforts to exert control over indigenous areas. Effective efforts to develop a conservation area network in that region will necessarily be required to involve these cultural communities as "owners" of the land, rather than following a North America model of State-sponsored and managed national parks and wildlife areas (World Bank 2006: 94).

By all indications, the introduction of newer technologies of governance in the second phase of peace does not address these larger questions of rights, justice and democracy. Strangely enough, the newer attempts at setting the region free from its present landlocked status by way of linking it with the 'powerhouse' economies of Southeast Asia are likely to make many groups and communities of the region vulnerable to further isolation and primitive accumulation. This, as I argued, is likely to set off a fresh series of conflicts in the region (Das 2005:65-69).

Peace in the negative sense of managing conflicts and pacifying the society has indeed run the full circle in the Northeast. But unless the larger questions underlined here are addressed, the gains of pacification will not take time to get dissipated and a new series of insurgency might ensue. This peace that is 'arriving' or is said to have 'arrived' is likely to be fragile for it is constantly haunted by the threat of conflict and war.

Peace and Assam's Quest for New Citizenship

It is now being increasingly realized that each of these measures has its snowballing effect on violence and insurgency in the region. The Assam/Bodo problem is a case in point. Pacification and the democratic idea of justice therefore seem to move in opposite directions. While peace accords set off ethnic consolidation and homogenization, the democratic agenda of justice highlights the necessity of reconciliation by way of recognizing difference amongst individuals and communities. Justice elementarily does not consist in what one claims it to be but in how diverse claims are called

upon to address and mitigate each other. The agenda of justice has to do with, as Plato puts it, 'giving one one's due'. The task involves incorporating these claims and counterclaims into an integral whole – an order that is considered as just by those who are its constituent parts. While division-based ethnic accords seek to do the impossible of ethnicizing and homogenizing the space in a region that is irreducibly plural, justice seeks to 'give them their due' by making them an integral part of a just social order that includes many others. Justice therefore is not what one considers as just – it precisely involves transcendence of many such singularities. The binary between the self and the other that has hitherto defined many a social movement in the Northeast is slowly giving way to the movements of a different kind – movements that supersede the self-other opposition and work towards justice. In the movements against injustice, the other plays a crucial role. As Balibar argues:

The experience of injustice (which of necessity is a lived experience, which is not to say a purely *individual* experience: on the contrary, it must involve an essential dimension of "mutuality", sharing, identifying with others, and witnessing the unbearable in the person and the figure of the other), is a necessary condition for the *recognition* of the reality and existence of the institutional injustice (Balibar 2008:33).

All of us know how the Naga Reconciliation Process ended up in a fiasco (see for details, Das 2007:22-35). These fail not because of any innate social division in the society – but because claims to self-determination are seen to outweigh the imperative of social reconciliation and mitigation of these claims. The civil society institutions that get involved in reconciliation are unwilling and/or unable to prevail over the claimants to exclusivism and extreme self-determination. Naga-Kuki clashes in Manipur Hills in 1993 are a case in point. The post-accord society in Mizoram is often identified as 'Mizo society' and self-determination claims of other non-Mizo communities refuse to subscribe to such a simple identification. Similarly, the Assam Accord (1985) was signed without the Assamese and the Bodos – otherwise comrades-in-arms during the Assam movement – coming to terms between themselves.

While insurgencies in the Northeast are based on the claim to some form of exclusivism and self-determination, this claim is officially responded to – by conceding to these claims *only if* these become unmanageable and cross a certain threshold. In our understanding of peace this concept of threshold is very important. Peace accords in Nagaland (1947, 1960, 1975), Mizoram (1986) and Bodoland (1993, 2003) are illustrative of the point. In other words, claims and responses reinforce each other and hit what I prefer to describe as *homeland bind*. The post-accord scenarios in Mizoram, Assam (1985) and Bodoland are a case in point.

The struggle for justice as evident in a spate of new social movements for transparency and accountability in governance, movements against displacement of people induced by development projects etc seems to have brought about a mitigating – if not unifying – impact on the otherwise conflicting communities. Now that internal pacification is nearly complete and the state has been able to establish its hegemony over the body politic – thanks to the subsidence of insurgency all over the Northeast – the agenda of rights in the region seems to have shifted from citizenship being defined in contradistinction with the outsiders to a new citizenship being defined as people's right to equality and equal opportunities and right over natural resources (like oil, coal, forests etc.). The new citizen is constituted as the new agent of peace in the Northeast. Peace too seems to have shifted its constituency from the so-called NGOs and voluntary organizations masquerading as civil society organizations to new citizens fighting for their rights mentioned above. These new issues are going to relegate the ethnic issues of homeland, territoriality and autonomy into the background and likely to bring the otherwise conflicting communities together. According to this new notion as evident in the series of movements led by Akhil Gogoi and his Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) established in 2005, the presently established 'centralized control over resources' must go. Besides, the people

also raise their voice of protest against the government's inability to protect them against such natural calamities as floods and droughts, against man-made disasters like massive population displacement induced by so-called development projects and dams. Fight against corruption has developed into a popular movement. People's right to tenure over land and control over forest resources is high on the rights agenda. All this highlights the failure of the government in providing 'civic governance' and the success of the popular movement in 'shaking off self-absorption and melancholia associated with radical dissent in Assam' so far (Barbora 2011:22). In the context of Assam, the rights are increasingly being perceived as ones pertaining to not just *an* ethnic community or as being exclusive to any group of them to the point of depriving others of it. Today rights are being claimed for the entire 'public living in Assam' (*Asombasi Raji*). The KMSS stands for the *ganadebata* (the public as the God), as Akhil Gogoi, its leader, calls it.

Assam's 'new voice of dissent' brings a new citizen into existence – a citizen who makes a departure from the earlier citizenship movements in the region on at least two counts: One, unlike in 'the anti-foreigners' upsurge' today's citizen harbours a concern for the moral basis of herself. Citizenship has become more inwardly directed than it had hitherto been. The citizen today is unhinged from the obligation of being pitted against an *other*. It is less about how and what others should be deprived of and more about what we succeed in achieving for ourselves while becoming what we want to become. Never before in the recent past history has the imaginary of citizenship been invested with so much of self-reflexivity and inspired by the project of making of the self. The new citizen, in sum, is self-critical. Two, citizenship is not simply a matter of Constitution, body of laws and judicial pronouncements – as Roy and Singh (2009) make us believe when they point to Assam's reversion to a more narrow and ethnicized version of citizenship, but it over and above is about people and their struggle for a new agenda of rights. Citizenship is defined not by the laws, not even by the judiciary that is called upon to protect their sanctity but by people's movements that continuously aim at widening its scope.

By all indications, the Northeast is quietly undergoing a regime shift towards a new citizenship that is yet to arrive but is continuously announcing its imminent arrival. To say that it is a shift towards global citizenship is premature; yet the signs of the region's uneasiness with the older version of citizenship are only too discernible.

The new citizen is caught somewhere between these two extremes: On the one hand, she refuses to accept the parliamentary democracy with all its representative institutions is the be all and end all democratic politics. The majoritarian argument has lost much of its edge. Justice is not necessarily expressed through the rule by the majority, Tocqueville so eloquently points out. The contemporary popular movements in the Northeast are only a pointer in this direction. On the other hand, there are many more to violence and insurgency than the parties involved in them. The resolution of conflicts depends neither on pacification nor on rapid economic development through heavy dose of public investment – but by bringing into existence a social and political order that is considered as just not just by one community but by the society as whole. Northeast is showing albeit very early signs of the emergence of a new citizen who instead of belonging to any particular ethnic community in exclusion from another longs to situate her within an irreducibly plural social order consisting of many groups and communities.

Concluding Observations

Governed peace, as we have seen, makes a judicious combination of war and peace – a combination that becomes convenient to all the parties and stakeholders involved in the war. During the first

phase of insurgency, almost consecutive military operations organized since the ‘Operation Bajrang’ the first of its kind launched in 1990 were meant for softening and weakening the armed might of ULFA as an organization. But it was a victory that was not to be seen as ‘victory’. For, it was also ‘convenient’ for both of them to ensure that the weakening and softening of ULFA were not be construed as its straightforward defeat. Viewed from the State’s perspective, victory cannot be posted against ‘one’s own people’. The founding of India as a ‘democratic republic’ with the introduction of the new Constitution also brought about a change in the official perception of the rebels and insurgents of the Northeast. Gone are the days when the British would organize punitive raids in order to keep the ‘savages’ and ‘primitives’ at bay. While in colonial times, they were seen as ‘savages’ and ‘primitives’ posing a threat to the ‘subjects’ submitting to the colonial authority, with Independence (1947) the clock seems to have turned a full circle and these people are regarded by the postcolonial State as ‘our men’ who were misguided by the outside forces including some of the ecclesiastical organizations and foreign forces and therefore need to be brought back to the fold of the nation with great care and affection (Das 2007).

This is obviously is in keeping with democracy’s eternally unfulfilled promise of incorporating everyone within its ambit. In fact, democracy in theory cannot thrive without keeping this promise alive and without celebrating itself.¹² This at the same time renders the promise perpetually unrealizable. Post-colonial democracy in principle has room for everyone – including the insurgents and rebels within the territory. So the weakening and softening happen with the view of bringing them to the negotiating table. ULFA, as we have seen, is constantly pushed into a position where it is forced to negotiate. Democracy is fated to privilege dialogue and negotiations over war and conflicts and the conflicting parties are equally destined to make peace between them. Democracy comes with the heavy tag of peacemaking. Peacemaking however has no necessary connection with peace per se. In fact in the Northeast it has been the other way round – insofar as peacemaking is subjected to the norms and institutions of governance, it perpetually defers peace. If one refuses to dialogue and negotiate, democracy forces one to do it. It has to be a dialogue anyway in a democracy. In a grotesque caricature, democracy’s infectious myth of leaving nothing outside it only hits it back.

So, it is ‘our men’ who have taken shelter outside – in the neighbouring countries – need to be brought back. Diplomacy becomes a tool of governing the rebels. They must be arrested – and kept inside the prisons till they agree to make peace. They are bailed out on condition that they will sit around the negotiating table. The demands for self-determination need to be calibrated in a way that they should not violate ‘the order of things’ – in this case the system of states in South Asia.

The call for negotiation gives ULFA the route that would not make the end of the first phase of insurgency appear as ‘defeat’ for it. Dialogue is to be distinguished from the appearance of a dialogue. Democracy is committed to this *appearance* – the appearance that is necessary for fulfilling its otherwise unfulfillable promise – not so much dialogue per se. The appearance and enactment of a dialogue are convenient for both parties in order that the conflict and war can continue ‘through other means’. Several examples in this essay sharply point out how conflicts and war often refuse to be subdued under the threshold of norms and institutions of peacemaking through dialogue and negotiation in order that the opposition feels much greater need for peace and negotiation and is nudged to give way. This only shows that the threshold norms and institutions per se are not important – but are important only insofar as they help in governing the rebels and insurgents. Democracy forces one refusing to dialogue to do it much in the same way as Rousseau makes it imperative to force one to be free in a democracy.

While ULFA has always looked upon civil society as one of its force multipliers (PCG being reported as an instance) in its battle against the Indian State, it is only very recently that civil society has largely been able to pitch itself between the conflicting and warring parties. Civil society may have come of age in Assam in that sense – but again it has turned out to be a tool of governance. SJA – unlike PCG – insists that the parties need to shun violence for violence has no place in democracy and ULFA, most importantly, must distance itself from its demand for ‘Sovereign Assam’. The civil society in our neoliberal age – perhaps more than the State – has a stake in maintaining and preserving ‘the order of things’. The new developmentalism has led to the governmentalization of civil society in Assam.

Most importantly, ‘governed’ peace results in blunting the sharp edges of claims and counterclaims that keep the conflicting parties apart. The pro-talks faction of ULFA seems to have irreversibly relinquished its claim to ‘Sovereign Assam’. As we have pointed out, since sovereignty – more than being that of Assam now belongs to the people – needs to be connoted and denoted by the people. If mission of ‘ending the colonial rule’ can happen in a way other than establishing a ‘Sovereign Assam’ then, as it feels, the demand for ‘Sovereign Assam’ cannot be regarded as sacrosanct and non-derogable. Secondly, if the Constitution of India can guarantee power to the people of Assam, then ‘Sovereignty’ is not to be construed as a necessary condition for realizing the mission. Governing, in other words, makes the people develop a stake in the development of the region that is now underway and it becomes clear from the instances cited above that ULFA has developed such stake.

In a sense the new developmentalism of the 1990s has brought about certain anomalies and contradictions – relating to forced migration and displacement, of ownership and usufruct of the common property resources, of marginalization of women, ecological disaster and environmental degradation, so on and so forth. These issues seem to have bound people across ethnic communities hitherto fighting between themselves under one common front – and galvanized them into the force of Assam’s new citizenry. The new citizenry has become the new vanguard of peace in the region.

By speaking for the rainbow society that the Northeast – particularly Assam represents – the new citizen becomes the new vanguard of peace in the region. For, she is generously invested with the critical potential of crossing the ethnic divide by highlighting the issues that commonly affect all of us. Now it is for the society to face the challenge of following her and articulating into a wider peace constituency.

Notes

¹ These eight organizations are: Adivasi People’s Army (APA), All-Adivasi National Liberation Army (AANLA), Santhal Tiger Force (STF), Adivasi Cobra Militant Army (ACMA), United Kukigam Defence Army (UKDA), Kuki Revolutionary Army (KRA), Kuki Liberation Army (KLA) and Hmar People’s Convention (Democratic).

² Rajat Ganguly, ‘Democracy and Ethnic Conflict’ in Sumit Ganguly, Larry Diamond & Marc F. Plattner (eds.), *The State of India’s Democracy* (New Delhi: Oxford, 2009), p. 62.

³ A report telecast on the Frontier TV channel on 24 January 2012 mentions this.

⁴ ‘Centre wants to tackle NSCN with iron hand’ in *Seven Sinters’ Post*, 25 January 2012, p.1

⁵ For a theoretical review of various kinds see, Samir Kumar Das, ‘Defining Peace Studies’ in *Peace Studies: An Introduction to the Concept, Scope, and Themes, South Asian Peace Studies I*. (New Delhi: Sage, 2004), pp. 19-31

⁶ Reported in *The Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), 27 September 2000.

⁷ This is only a brief summary of an otherwise detailed biography of ULFA from 1979 to 1991, see, Das (1994: 68-89).

⁸ ULFA has more or less consistently stuck to these three conditions since 1992 until recently.

⁹ http://www.telegraphindia.com/1050222/asp/frontpage/story_4408414.asp [Accessed on 20 June, 2012]

¹⁰ Pu. Rualchhina in an interview on 3 December, 2010 in Aizawl, for example told me: “Ours was a national army – its task was to defend our people rather than anything else.” In an interview held in Aizawl on 4 December 2010, Pu. Tawnluia, formerly the chief of Mizo National Army (MNA) pointed out: “We were sure that we could not win but what we definitely could was inflict some casualties”.

¹¹ G. Das has shown how development and insurgency form a nexus and how the nexus has actually tied the economies of this region down to a ‘low-equilibrium trap’ (G. Das 2009 mimeo). Chakraborty shows how increasing dependency of the hill states on the Centre cuts into the states’ ability to spend – particularly on social sector and foments the ‘movements for autonomy, exclusive ethnic homelands and right to self-determination in order to attract more share of the state expenditure’ ((2010:14-15).

¹² Badiou describes it as the ‘egoism’ of democracy and its ‘desire for petty enjoyments’ (Badiou in Agamben et al 2010:5).

References

[Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from original non-English sources are mine – Samir Kumar Das]

---- (2011): ‘Paresh Faction trashes Rajkhowa Charter’ in *The Times of India*, 7 August.

---- ‘*Sanjukta Mukti Bahini, Asomar Dwi-Trinshatitam Pratishtha Dimas Upalakshe Sabhapati Arabinda Rajkhowar Abhibhasanar Sampadit Rupa Kiyadansha*’ (in Assamese) [United Liberation Front of Assam, Excerpts from the Edited version of the Address of the President Arabinda Rajkhowa on the occasion of the thirty-second Birth Anniversary] in *Pabekiya Aami* (Sivasagar, Assam), 15-30 April 2011, 6(2).

---- ‘Ulfa talks likely this month-end: Gogoi’ in *The Times of India* (Kolkata), 17 June 2011.

AASU (1983): *The foreigners’ Problem: Why A Solution Is Still Elusive?* Guwahati: Publicity Secretary, AASU, June 1983.

Badiou, Alain (2010): ‘The democratic Emblem’ in Giorgio Agamben, Alain Badiou, Daniel Bensaid, Wendy Brown, Jean-Luc Nancy, Jacques Ranciere, Kristin Ross, Slavoj Zizek (eds.), *Democracy in What State?*, trans. from French by William McCuaig. New York: Columbia University Press.

Balibar, Etienne (2008): ‘Justice and Equality: A Political Dilemma? Pascal, Plato, Marx’. Distinguished Lecture Series. Kolkata: Calcutta Research Group.

Barbora, Sanjay (2011): ‘Assam’s New Voice of Dissent’ in *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLVI (28), 9 July.

Barman, Prateeti (2009): *Changing Perception of Freedom: Civil Society and Its Response to united Liberation Front of Asom*. New Delhi: Akansha.

Baruah, Sanjib (2008): Intervention in the Panel Discussion on ‘Northeast and the Bigger Picture’ in *Contested Space and Identity in the Indian Northeast*, ATWS Monograph 14, New Delhi: Academy of Third World Studies.

Bhattacharya, Rakhee (2011): *Development Disparities in Northeast India*. New Delhi: Foundation Books.

Chakma, Suhas. 2004. “D’jà vu for the Brus,” *The Statesman* (Kolkata), April 3.

Chakraborty, Gorky (2010): ‘Encountering Globalization in the Hill Areas of North East India’, Occasional Paper 23, Kolkata: Institute of Development Studies.

Das, Gurudas (2009): *Final report of the Research Project entitled Security and Development in India’s North East* (mimeo). Shillong: Indian council of Social Science Research, North East Regional Centre.

Das, Samir Kumar (1993): ‘Immigration and Agricultural Modernization: The Case of Assam (1979-83)’, *Socialist Perspective*, 20 (3-4), December 1992 – March 1993, pp. 165-75.

Das, Samir Kumar (1994): *ULFA: A Political Analysis*. Delhi: Ajanta.

--- (1998): *Regionalism in Power: The Case of Asom Gana Parishad 1985-1990*. New Delhi: Omsons.

--- (2004): ‘Defining Peace Studies’ in Ranabir Samaddar (ed.), *Peace Studies: An Introduction to the Concept, Scope, and Themes, South Asian Peace Studies I*. (New Delhi: Sage, 2004).

-
- (2005): 'The Ethnic Dimension' in *Seminar*, Special Issue on 'Gateway to the East: A Symposium on Northeast India and the Look East policy', 550, June 2005.
- (2007): *Conflict and Peace in India's Northeast: The Role of Civil Society*, Policy Paper 42, Washington DC: East-West Center.
- (2007): 'Les Terroristes du Nord-Est de l'Inde on L'improbable d'un dialogue' (in French) [Terrorists in the Northeast and Dialogues with Them? The Improbables in the Hypothesis] in NAQD (Paris), *Terror/isme: Etats & Societes*, Automme/Hiver 2007.
- (2011): 'ULFA, Indo-Bangladesh Relations and Beyond' in Sanjoy Hazarika & V. R. Raghavan (eds.), *Conflicts in the Northeast: Internal and External Effects*. New Delhi: Vij Books
- Deb, Swati (2011): 'ULFA Peace Talks: All That Glitters Might Not Be Gold' in *Eastern Panorama*, XIX(3), March.
- Guha, Amalendu (1977): *From Planter Raj to Swaraj: Freedom Struggle and Electoral Politics in Assam*. New Delhi: PPH.
- Guha, Amalendu (1980): 'Little Nationalism Turned Chauvinist: Assam's Anti-Foreigner Upsurge, 1979-80' in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Special Number, October 1980.
- Jafa, V. S. (1998): 'Counterinsurgency warfare: The Use and Abuse of Military Force' in *Faultlines: Writings on Conflict and Resolution*, vol. 3.
- Ministry of the Development of the North east Region (MDONER) (2005): Government of India *North East Region: Vision 2020*, volumes I & II.
- Nag, Sajal (2002): *Contesting Marginality: Ethnicity, Insurgency and Sub-Nationalism in North East India*. New Delhi: Manohar.
- Nag, Sajal (2011): 'Human Rights and Peace Audit Exercises of Partitions as a Method of Resolving Ethno-Nationalist Conflicts' (mimeo).
- Roy, Anupama & Ujjwal Kumar Singh (2009): 'The Ambivalence of Citizenship: The IMDT Act (1983) and the Politics of Forclusion in Assam' in *Critical Asian Studies*, 41(1).
- Sabhapandit, Ranjit (2011): 'Purna Swayattasasan, ULFA-Sarkarar Alochana: Asombasiye Ki Ki Bishayak Loi Alochana Bichare' (in Assamese) [Full Autonomy, Talks between ULFA and the Government: What the People of Assam Want to Discuss] in *Prantik*, 30 (13), 1 June.
- Saikia, Nagen (2005): 'ULFA-r Swadhinata Kiman' (in Assamese), [How far is ULFA's (notion of) Freedom] in *Amar Asom*, 27 May.
- The Pro-Talk Group, 28th Battalion (2009): 'Charter of Demands to the Prime Minister of India', February.
- The Pro-Talk Group, 28th Battalion (2009): 'Manifesto', February.
- World Bank (2006): *Natural resources, Water and the Environmental Nexus for Development and Growth of Northeast India: Strategy Report*. Washington DC: World Bank.

Newspapers

- Budbbar* 4 March 1992
Budbbar, 24 June 1992
The Sentinel 1-5 May 2001

CRG Publications

Books in English

1. **Living on the Edge** - Edited by Subir Bhaumik, Meghna Guhathakurta & Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury, Co-published with SAFHR and Distributed by Manohar, Delhi
2. **Refugees in West Bengal** - Edited by Pradip Kumar Bose Distributed by the Ekushe, Kolkata
3. **Reflections on Partition in the East** - Edited by Ranabir Samaddar, Distributed by Vikas, Delhi
4. **South Asian Peace Studies (I)** - Edited by Ranabir Samaddar, Published by Sage Publications, New Delhi
5. **Refugees and the State** - Edited by Ranabir Samaddar, Published by Sage Publications, New Delhi
6. **Internal Displacement in South Asia** - Edited by Paula Banerjee, Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chawdhury and Samir Kumar Das, Published by Sage Publications, New Delhi
7. **Indian Autonomies: Keywords and Keytexts** - Edited by Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chawdhury, Samir Kumar Das and Ranabir Samaddar, Published by Sampark and CRG, Kolkata
8. **The Politics of Autonomy: Indian Experiences** - Edited by Ranabir Smaddar, Published by Sage Publication, New Delhi
9. **Peace Processes and Peace Accords**- Edited by Samir Kumar Das, Published by Sage Publication, New Delhi
10. **The Materiality of Politics (Volume-I & II)**-Edited by Ranabir Samaddar, Published by Anthem Press, New Delhi
11. **Autonomy Beyond Kant and Hermeneutics**- Edited by Paula Banerjee & Samir Kumar Das, Published by Anthem Press, New Delhi
12. **Women in Peace Politics**- Edited by Paula Banerjee, Published by Sage Publication, New Delhi
13. **Fleeing People of South Asia: Selections from Refugee Watch**- Edited by Sibaji Pratim Basu, Published by Anthem Press, New Delhi
14. **Human Rights and Peace: Ideas, Laws, Institutions and Movements**- Edited by Ujjwal Kumar Singh by Sage Publication, New Delhi
15. **Gandhi's Dilemma in War and Independence**- Authored by Ranabir Samaddar by FontPage Publication, Kolkata
16. **State of Social Justice of India: Social Justice and Enlightenment**- Edited by Pradip Kumar Bose & Samir Kumar Das by Sage Publication, New Delhi
17. **State of Social Justice of India: Justice & Law**- Edited by Ashok Agrwaal & Bharat Bhusan by Sage Publication, New Delhi
18. **State of Social Justice of India: Marginalities & Justice**- Edited by Paula Banerjee & Sanjay Chaturvedi by Sage Publication, New Delhi
19. **State of Social Justice of India: Key Texts on Social Justice In India**- Edited by Sanam Roohi & Ranabir Samaddar by Sage Publication, New Delhi
20. **Terror, Terrorism, States and Societies: A Historical and Philosophical Perspective**- Edited by Samir Kumar Das & Rada Iveković by Women Unlimited, New Delhi
21. **Minorities in South Asia and Europe** - Edited by Samir Kumar Das by Samya, Kolkata
22. **Counter-Gaze : Media, Migrants, Minorities**- Edited by Subir Bhaumik by frontpage
23. **Politics in Hunger – Regime (Essays on the Right to Food in West Bengal)** - Edited by Sibaji Pratim Basu and Geetisha Dasgupta by frontpage
24. **Sustainability of Rights after Globalisation**- Edited by Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury and Ishita Dey by Sage Publication, New Delhi
25. **Women In Indian Borderlands** - Edited by Paula Banerjee and Anasua Basu Ray Chaudhury by Sage Publication, New Delhi
26. **Forced Migration in North East India: A media Reader**- Edited by Nilanjan Dutta by frontpage, Kolkata
27. **Political Transition and Development Imperatives in India**- Edited by Ranabir Samaddar and Suhit K.Sen by Routledge , New Delhi
28. **New Subjects and New Governance in India**- Edited by Ranabir Samaddar and Suhit K.Sen by Routledge , New Delhi

Books in Bengali

1. **Anya Pakistan** - A Bengali collection of translated writings from, Other Voices from Pakistan, Edited by Ranabir Samaddar, Distributed by Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata
2. **Parbotyo Chattogram** - Simanter Rajniti O Sangram - Debjani Datta & Anasua Basu Ray Chaudhury, Distributed by Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata
3. **Abiram Raktopat** - Tripuranarir Sangram - Edited by Krishna Bandyopadhyay, Distributed by Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata

Distinguished Lecture Series

1. **Justice and Equality: A Political Dilemma?** Pascal, Plato, Marx by Etienne Balibar Published by Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group (MCRG)
2. **Rethinking 1905: Spatial Inequity, Uneven Development and Nationalism-** Authored by David Ludden Published by Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group (MCRG)
3. **Climate Change Induced Displacement: A Challenge for International Law-** Authored by Walter Kalin Published by Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group (MCRG)

Reports

1. **Civil Society Dialogue on Human Rights and Peace in the North East (First, Second and Third)**
2. **A Report on a Workshop on Globalisation, State Policies, and Human Rights**
3. **UN Guiding Principles on the IDPs - A Report on Workshops, Advocacy Meetings, and Translations of Documents (2004-2005)**
4. **Media and Displacement I, II and III**
5. **Gender, Media and Human Rights**
6. **First CRG Winter Course on Forced Migration, 2003**
7. **Second CRG Winter Course on Forced Migration, Racism, Immigration and Xenophobia 2004**
8. **Report on Second CRG Media Programme and the Creative Media Workshop (2004-2005)**
9. **Third CRG Winter Course on Forced Migration, Racism, Immigration and Xenophobia 2005**
10. **Voices of the Internally Displaced In South Asia 2006**
11. **Eroded Lives: Riverbank Erosion and Displacement of Women in West Bengal**
12. **The Responsibility to Protect**
13. **Dialogues on Justice**
14. **Fourth CRG Winter Course on Forced Migration 2006**
15. **A Toolkit: Orientation Programme on Rethinking Rights, Justice and Development**
16. **The Responsibility to Protect: IDPs & Our National & State Human Rights Commissions**
17. **Fifth CRG Winter Course on Forced Migration 2007**
18. **Report of a Research & Dialogue Programme on Social Justice**
19. **Sixth CRG Winter Course on Forced Migration 2008**
20. **Report of a Dialogue on Protection Strategies for People in Situations of Forced Migration**
21. **Seventh CRG Winter Course on Forced Migration 2009**
22. **State of Research on Forced Migration in the East and North-East**
23. **Eighth CRG Winter Course on Forced Migration 2010**
24. **Ninth CRG Orientation Course on Forced Migration 2011**

CRG Series on Policies and Practices

- 31 Local Dynamics, Universal Context : Border Trading through Moreh, Manipur
- 32 Two Studies on Asylum Seekers and Other Immigrants in Finland
- 33 Endangered Lives on The Border: Women in the Northeast
- 34 Globalisation and Labouring Lives
- 35 Right to Information in a Globalising World
- 36 Bengal-Bangladesh Border and Women
- 37 Between Ecology and Economy : Environmental Governance in India
- 38 Incomplete Citizenship, Statelessness and Human Trafficking: A Preliminary Analysis of The Current Situation in West Bengal, India
- 39 Place of Poor in Urban Space
- 40 Law and Democratic Governance: Two Studies from Europe
- 41 Finding a Point of Return: Internally Displaced Persons in Sri Lanka
- 42 Colonialism, Resource Crisis and Forced Migration
- 43 Situating Transit Labour
- 44 Two Essays on Security Apparatus
- 45 Governing Flood, Migration and Conflict in North Bihar
- 46 A Gigantic Panopticon: Counter-Insurgency and Modes of Disciplining and Punishment in Northeast India
- 47 Public Interest Litigation in India: Implications for Law and Development
- 48 Governing Caste and Managing Conflicts-Bihar, 1990-2011
- 49 Emerging Spaces and Labour Relations in Neo-Liberal India

CRG Series on Policies and Practices

- 1 People on the Move: How Governments Manage Moving Populations
- 2 Resources for Autonomy - Financing the Local Bodies
- 3 Peace Accords as the Basis of Autonomy
- 4 Debates Over Women's Autonomy
- 5 Unequal Communication: Health and Disasters As Issues of Public Sphere
- 6 Globalisation, State Policies And Sustainability of Rights
- 7 Autonomies in the North and the North East: More Freedom or the Politics of Frontier Management?
- 8 Examining Autonomy : The 73rd Constitutional Amendment in Assam
- 9 Democracy, Autonomy and the Community Media
- 10 Women and Forced Migration
- 11 Flags and Rights
- 12 A Status Report on Displacement in Assam and Manipur
- 13 Weapons of the Weak: Field Studies on Claims to Social Justice in Bihar & Orissa
- 14 Towards a New Consideration: Justice for the Minorities
- 15 Conflict, War & Displacement
- 16 The Draft National Rehabilitation Policy: A Critique
- 17 Limits of the Humanitarian: Studies in Situations of Forced Migration
- 18 Prescribed, Tolerated, and Forbidden Forms of Claim Making
- 19 Three Studies on Law and The Shifting Spaces of Justice.
- 20 Primitive Accumulation and Some Aspects of Work and Life in India in The Early Part of The Twenty First Century.
- 21 Citizens, Non-Citizens, and The Stories of Camps
- 22 Tales of Two Cities
- 23 Ways of Power, Minorities, and Knowledge on Minorities: An Assessment of Research Policies and Practices.
- 24 Whither Right to Food? Rights Institutions and Hungry Labour in Tea Plantations of North Bengal
- 25 Hunger, Food Scarcity, & Popular Protests in West Bengal
- 26 Cyclone Aila & the Sunderbans: An Enquiry into the Disaster and Politics of Aid and Relief
- 27 View from India: Media & Minorities in Europe
- 28 Protecting the Rights of the Tsunami Victims: The Sri Lanka Experience
- 29 Nation Building and Minority Alienation in India
- 30 Environment and Migration Purulia, West Bengal

POLICIES AND PRACTICES is the research paper series brought out by the Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group (CRG). Writings under this series can be referred to and used for public educational purposes with due acknowledgment.