

Components of Peacebuilding: Conflict Resolution through Political, Social and Economic Development with Reference to Northeast India

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Abstract

Peacebuilding is one of the approaches towards conflict resolution in peace and conflict studies. It focuses on political, economic and social development to resolve conflicts through the establishment of legal and institutional frameworks which are expected to manage internal conflicts so that there may be sustainable peace. Northeast India has been a region of conflicts and insurgencies since India's independence in 1947. Some of the Government of India's approaches for resolution of conflicts in the region such as reorganization of states, creation of regional institutions like the North Eastern Council and special administrative provisions such as the Sixth Schedule may be categorized as peacebuilding. This paper seeks to identify and study the contributions of the government's peacebuilding initiatives for conflict resolution in Northeast India.

Keywords: Peacebuilding, Conflict Resolution, Northeast India, Development, Peace

The term "Peacebuilding" first emerged in 1976 through the work of Johan Galtung in *Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking and Peacebuilding*. In his words, "The mechanisms that peace is based on should be built into the structure and be present as a reservoir for the system itself to draw up... More specifically, structures must be found that remove causes of wars and offer alternatives to war in situations where wars might occur."¹ From the words of Galtung, peacebuilding is necessarily the establishment of peace mechanisms or structures in the state that will manage itself to create favourable conditions for peace and remove the causes and roots of conflicts. The peace mechanisms or

structures, in the Indian context, may comprise the government both at the centre and the states, an autonomous government within a state, other decentralized governments and institutions such as the North Eastern Council and the Ministry of DoNER. The favourable conditions for peace may include political, economic and social development as most of the armed conflicts in Northeast India find its roots in the claim for the right to rule coupled with economic deprivation and social oppression.

Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the then UN Secretary-General published *An Agenda for Peace* in June 1992 which describes

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the role of the United Nations for international peace and security. The report described interconnected methods of conflict resolution for the maintenance of peace and security in the post-cold war context. They are:²

- Preventive diplomacy: It is the action to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of conflicts.
- Peacemaking: It is the action to bring conflicting parties to agreement through peaceful means. The agreement may be manifested in the form of peace accords.
- Peacekeeping: It is the action of deployment of peacekeeping forces in the field of conflict with the consent of the parties concerned. The purpose of peacekeeping is to create conditions for both the prevention of conflict and the making of peace.
- Peacebuilding: It employs building and rebuilding of institutions and infrastructures of states torn by conflicts; and building bonds of peaceful mutual benefit.

The components of peacebuilding may be divided into establishment or strengthening of political institutions, economic development and social development. There are overlappings in the functions of the three components of peacebuilding. Establishment of an institution may have economic and social impact but at the same time economic and social development may take place outside the institution.

One of the most important components of peacebuilding is development and strengthening of political institutions. In this respect, the award of autonomous governments under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India; the Northeastern Areas (Reorganization) Act, 1971; and the award of Statehood to Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh in 1987 comprise the Government of India's efforts to include, accommodate and integrate the Northeast region into the Indian Union. The Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution enumerated in Articles 244(2) and 275(1) was a pre-accord peacebuilding initiative by the Constituent Assembly. It was adopted in 1952 and provides special provisions for the administration of Tribal Areas in the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. It creates autonomous governments which have a certain degree of executive, legislative, financial and judicial powers. The 'tribal areas' specified in Paragraph 20 of the Sixth Schedule are:

Part I

- 1) The North Cachar Hills District
- 2) The Karbi Anglong District
- 3) The Bodoland Territorial Area District

Part II

- 1) Khasi Hills District
- 2) Jaintia Hills District
- 3) The Garo Hills District

Part IIA

Tripura Tribal Areas District

Part III

- 1) The Chakma District
- 2) The Lai District
- 3) The Mara District

It may be noted that the Sixth Schedule does not guarantee peace. To cite the case of Bodoland Territorial Council, it is the most powerful autonomous government established under the Sixth Schedule, however, this does not pacify the desires of the Bodos to have a separate state from Assam. On the other hand, the autonomous district councils of Mizoram have been pushing for amendment of the Sixth Schedule for the enlargement of their powers and functions in line with the Bodoland Territorial Council.

The enactment of the Northeast Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971, was another peacebuilding initiative of the Government of India. According to the Act, it created three new states, Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura and the Union Territories of Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram were created. For example, the creation of Union Territory of Mizoram on 21st January, 1972 strengthened the political institution of the Mizos. It had a 33 member Legislative Assembly (30 elected and three nominated) and one seat each in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. After 20 years of armed conflict, Mizoram state was inaugurated by the then Prime Minister,

Rajiv Gandhi on 20th February, 1987 to become the 23rd Indian State with 40 member State Legislative Assembly. It also has one Member of Parliament each in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha.

As a consequence of the Northeast Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971, the North Eastern Council was also created in 1972 so that coordinated efforts of the new units may be geared towards balanced socio-economic development and filling the development gap with the rest of India. B.P. Singh, a senior Indian civil servant who held key positions both in the NER and the Indian Home Ministry, referred to this process as “twins born out of a new vision for the Northeast”.³

The NEC and the Ministry of DoNER are two important institutions that comprise the economic component of peacebuilding. The NEC was inaugurated on 7th November, 1972 by the North Eastern Council Act, 1971 for securing balanced and coordinated development and effecting coordination among the Northeastern States. The NEC, in its inauguration, was addressed by the Prime Minister as an advisory body and not a supervisory body.⁴ However, the NEC acts as a planning and funding agency since the very beginning.

The Sector-Wise Release of Funds under NEC Plan during the 12th Five Year Plan (Rs in crores) is given in Table No.1 below:

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No.	Sectors	12th Plan Approved Outlay	Annual Plan (2012-13) Actual Expenditure	Annual Plan (2013-14) Actual Expenditure	Annual Plan (2014-15) Budget Estimate
1	Agriculture & Allied	425.99	77.34	81.98	104.67
2	Power Renewable Resources of Energy	1,135.98	66.5	73.65	74
3	Irrigation Flood Control & Watershed Management	227.2	36.19	45.84	33
4	Industries & Tourism	483.64	33.49	54.8	47.46
5	Transport & Communication	2,732.04	368.4	319.84	347.32
6	Medical & Health	454.39	45.92	26.81	50
7	Human Resource Development & Employment	454.39	76.83	69.7	72.93
8	Science & Technology	129.5	17.44	17.69	27.94
9	Information & Public Relations	56.8	8.89	7.05	9.63
10	Evaluation & Monitoring	8.07	1.76	0.69	3.05
Grand Total		6,108.00	732.76	698.05	770

Source: NEC Secretariat, Shillong.⁵

The State-Wise NEC Fund Released for the members of the NEC are given in Table No.2 below: (2010-2012: Rs. in lakhs and 2012-2014: Rs. in Crores)

State	Rs. in Lakhs		Rs. in Crores	
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Arunachal	11,387.06	10,568.51	91.7	75.7
Assam	8,835.30	5,715.64	91.4	69.05
Manipur	4,613.78	4,481.67	52.55	91.06
Meghalaya	7,185.73	5,623.58	86.35	53.23
Mizoram	4,394.89	7,403.50	83.18	55.54
Nagaland	4,856.85	8,455.43	84	114.86
Sikkim	3,233.28	5,340.00	55.84	53.12
Tripura	4,209.70	5,275.44	37.99	81.37
TOTAL	48,716.59	52,863.77	583.01	593.93

Source: Source: NEC Secretariat, Shillong.¹

The above tables explain the role of the NEC as a funding agency. Table 1 shows the sector-wise release of funds by the NEC. One of the priority sectors as seen from the funding is transport and communication. Development in inter-state transport and communication infrastructure through road, railways and air open up markets, private investment and create employment opportunities for the youth of the region. The Look East Policy also necessitated this development.

The Look East/Act East Policy is one of India's foreign policies that strengthen economic peacebuilding for the Northeastern region though the sole purpose of the policy may be otherwise. The region is the only gateway to the eastern and the south eastern Asian countries such as Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand etc. Thus, the region holds an important strategic location and India cannot talk of the Look East/Act East Policy without its Northeast India. In India's pursuit of the Look East Policy, border trade agreement was signed with Myanmar on 21st January, 1994 which sanctions border trade to take place through two Land Custom Stations (LCSs) i.e. Moreh in Manipur and Zokhawthar in Mizoram, corresponding to Tamu and Rih in Myanmar respectively. It came into effect on 12th April, 1995. The agreement has served to fulfill the Mizo Accord that of 1986 which provided a provision for border trade in local produced or grown agriculture commodities under a scheme to be formulated by the Central

Government, subject to international arrangement with neighbouring countries.

The establishment of Development of North Eastern Region (DONER) comprising the eight northeastern states in September 2001, and its subsequent upgradation into a Ministry in May 2004, was another governance initiative that can be perceived as peacebuilding. As per the Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961, the Second Schedule (Rule 3), the Ministry of DoNER has been allotted subjects such as: (i) matters relating to the planning, execution and monitoring of developmental schemes and projects of NER including those in the sectors of power, irrigation, roads and communications; (ii) Hill Area Development Programme in NER; (iii) Non-Lapsable Fund for NER; (iv) North Eastern Council (NEC); (v) North Eastern Development Finance Corporation (NEDFC); (vi) North Eastern Regional Agricultural Marketing Corporation Limited (NERAMAC); (vii) the Sikkim Mining Corporation Limited; (viii) North Eastern Handloom and Handicrafts Development Corporation (NEHHDC), Shillong; (ix) Road works financed in the whole or in part by the Central Government in the NER; (x) Planning of road and inland waterways transport in the NER.²

The Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources (NLCPR) was created during the Devegowda's United Front government in 1997-98 (operationalized in 1998-99). It is the accrual of the

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unspent balance of the mandatory 10% budgetary allocation of the Ministries/ Departments. The broad objectives of the NLCPR Scheme is to ensure speedy development of infrastructure by way of filling the existing infrastructural gaps (economic and social) in the region by making funds available from the pool.³ To cite an example, Tuirial Hydro Electric Project (60 MW) in Mizoram, being implemented by North Eastern Electric Power Corporation, Ministry of Power has been partly funded under NLCPR-Central Scheme. So far, an amount of Rs. 97.94

crores has been released to Ministry of Power against Rs. 300 crore to be provided by Ministry of DoNER for the Project.⁴ With the signing of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) Accord in 2003 by the Government of India, the Government of Assam and the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT), the Government of India is to provide financial assistance, BTC Package of Rs.100 crore per annum for a period of five years.⁵ The table below shows the year-wise release of funds under NLCPR and BTC Package by DoNER:

State	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13 (Up to 28.02.13)	Total
Arunachal	152.89	152.17	194.33	98.21	770.65
Assam	107.49	168.61	122.46	177.87	639.03
Manipur	90.09	96.32	77.81	45.28	410.43
Meghalaya	76.72	58.42	88.28	79.56	378.63
Mizoram	19.91	73.73	59.64	79.62	198.04
Nagaland	102.94	98.43	136.28	54.93	513.16
Sikkim	22.91	61.04	45.88	92.1	241.2
Tripura	95.67	97.05	74.31	56.83	418.62
TOTAL NLCPR	668.62	805.77	798.99	684.4	3569.76
BTC Area Projects	3.15	50	50	11.16	270.18

Source: Press Information Bureau (Rupees in Crore)

Building or strengthening of political institutions and transfer of power therein creates a sense of ownership and therefore occupies an important position in peacebuilding in India. It also creates a sense of trust towards the Government of India. The creation of Mizoram as a result

of the peace accord between the Government of India and the Mizo National Front (MNF) has become a successful peacebuilding initiative and the State has seen 30 years of peace now. Thus, the guarantee of decentralization in India's federal framework needs to be

secured and protected. It is also evident that regions such as Manipur where political institutions are weak have remained the sources of tensions and conflicts as it does not fall under the Sixth Schedule. Institutions for governance such as the NEC and the Ministry of DoNER have offered development possibilities regional in character and have addressed the issues of connectivity, unemployment, lack of skilled labour and lack of opportunities.

Sustainable peace is not the absence of conflicts. Conflicts are inevitable and can occur anytime. One may look for a cost-effective peacebuilding in Northeast India but the situation is complex as the region is diverse in terms of economy, identity, culture and polity as well. The region had been detached from mainland India and from infrastructural development throughout the British rule. Development and integration of the region in the Indian Union takes time. The true essence of peacebuilding is to create peace mechanisms that will ensure political, social and economic development. In this context, sustainable development will also mean a system where political, social and economic development takes place and where the system is able to manage internal conflicts itself. (Source: Press Information Bureau).

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