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Recurring Conflicts in Northeast India

An Analysis at the International, Federal and Group Level

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Nikoline Fon Holmøy

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Acronyms

ABSO: All Bodo Student Union

AFSPA: Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act

ATPLO: All Tripura People's Liberation Organization

ATTF: All Tripura Tiger Force

BLT: Bodo Liberation Tigers

BLTF: Bodo Liberation Tiger Force

BSF: Border Security Force

CNF: Chin National Front

COW: Correlates of War

CRPF: Central Reserve Police Force

DGFI: Directorate General de Forces Intelligence

FGN: Federal Government of Nagaland

GoI: Government of India

HI: Horizontal Inequalities

HNLC: Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council

INCB: International Narcotics Control Board

ISI: Inter Services Intelligence of Pakistan

KNA: Kuki Nationalist Army

MNA: Mizo Nationalist Army

MNF: Mizo National Front

MNFF: Mizo Nationalist Famine Front

MU: Mizo Union

MULTA: Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam

NEFA: North East Frontier Agency

NDFB: National Democratic Front of Bodoland

NLFT: National Liberation Front of Tripura

NNC: Naga Nationalist Council

NSCN: National Socialist Council of Nagaland

NSCN-K: National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang

NSCN-Khole-Kitovi: National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khole-Kitovi

NSCN-IM: National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak-Muivah

NSCN-U: National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Unification

OAC: Operation All Clear

PLA: People's Liberation Army

PREPAK: People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak

PRIO: Peace Research Institute in Oslo

SATP: South Asian Terrorism Portal

SFP: Security Force Personnel

SSG: Pakistan's Special Service Groups

SOO: Suspension of Operations

TNVF: Tripura National Volunteer Force

UCDP: Uppsala Data Conflict Program

ULFA: United Liberation Front of Asom/Assam

UNLF: United National Liberation Front

YMA: Young Mizo Association

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1.0 Introduction

What makes a conflict continue for several years? Why are we not able to stop wars from starting again after resolutions have been found? The answers to these questions are not easy to find, and they are too complex for us to answer directly. There have been many studies on how peaceful resolutions to ending conflicts can be found, as well as studies on what keeps a conflict going. Not only is it difficult to give answers to the continuation of conflict, it is also difficult to give a clear answer to *when* a conflict continues, as opposed to when there is a new conflict. It would be reasonable to expect that after numerous years of warfare, especially within a country, people would be so sick and tired of this that the conflict would die out, yet this is not the case. Conflicts can go on for several years if the issue is one which neither the government nor the rebel group are willing to budge on.

This is the issue in Northeast India today. Since the 1960s there have been conflicts in the Northeast of India, and these conflicts have still not been resolved. The insurgencies started as conflicts where tribal groups wanted autonomy and statehood, and this is the problem today as well. The States[1] where there are insurgencies today are Assam, Manipur, Nagaland and Tripura, which means that in four of the eight States classified as Northeast India (Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Sikkim[2] are the last four), there are conflicts. As many as 50 insurgency groups are said to operate in the region, many of them cooperating together with others (Cline 2006: 127), as well as cooperating with neighboring countries. Despite all the research, there are few (to my knowledge) who have been able to explain why there are still conflicts there, even after some of the tribal groups were granted statehood in the Indian Union. Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland were all part of Assam when the conflicts started, and Manipur and Tripura were still Union Territories, while today they are all States of the Indian Union (Egreteau 2006: 21).

The South Asian Terrorism Portal (SATP) catalogues every act of terrorism and insurgency in South Asia today. They bring daily updates on what happens in the region, as well as weekly and yearly assessment of the areas[3]. As shown in Table 1 below, there have since 2006 been 4527 people killed from the different insurgencies in Northeast India (data till 5 May 2013). Over one third of the fatalities are civilians, making the conflicts in Northeast India a security

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[1] States with a capital S means States within the Indian federation.
[2] In this thesis Sikkim is left out of the analysis, because it has not experiences any conflicts and was only added to the Northeast in 2002 (Baruah 2005: 45; Cline 2006: 127).
[3] http://satp.org/satporgtp/satp/index.html.

threat to the Southeast Asian region as well as an internal security problem in India. The number of fatalities is also large for an area of 262,230 square kilometers with almost 45 million people belonging to different ethnic and cultural groups (Nayak 2009: 2; *India Online Pages* 2013). These numbers are also very high for a democracy. Numbers of fatalities per year in the respective States is found in Appendix A.

Table 1: Fatalities in Northeast India 2006-2013

Years	States	Civilians	SFP*	Terrorists	Total	Inhabitants in State
2006-2013	Arunachal Pradesh	2	3	73	78	1,382611
	Assam	882	124	735	1741	31,169272
	Manipur	545	142	1240	1926	2,721756
	Meghalaya	58	16	99	173	2,964007
	Mizoram	5	4	8	17	1,091014
\	Nagaland	95	3	353	451	1,980602
	Tripura	38	31	72	141	3,671032
		1620	322	2578	**4527**	44,980294

*Security Force Personnel

(Numbers from SATP 2013; *India Online Pages* 2013).

This thesis aims to explore in depth the recurring conflicts in Northeast India. I will focus my analysis on three levels and attempt to explain which of these levels matter when it comes to the conflicts in Northeast. The first level is international and the focus is on the international borders surrounding the Northeastern States as a safe haven for the rebels to hide, and how support from the neighboring nations China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Bhutan complicates the peace processes for the Government of India (GoI). The different countries and their relationship to the insurgency groups in Northeast is examined, as well as some policy measures the Indian government has done in order to make these relationships harder to maintain (Egreteau 2006; Bhaumik 2007; 2009; Mukherjee 2007; Saikia 2009; Upadhyay 2009).

The second level is national or federal. The policy the Indian government has towards the Northeastern States and the federal system that exists in India today has been criticized by several influential authors (Rajashekara 1997; Adeney 2000; Baruah 2003; 2007; Hassan 2008). Federalism and how it is effective for multi-ethnic societies have been researched by many (Smith 1995; Kymlicka 1998; 2005; 2007; Adeney 2000; 2002; McGarry & O'Leary 2005; Deiwiks, Cederman & Gleditsch 2012). This theoretic research will in my thesis be

compared to the claim by Sanjib Baruah (2003) that India is a cosmetic federation - where the structure is based on a federal model from the outside, but where it does not work properly from the inside - in order to see if this can explain the Northeastern conflicts.

The third and last level is the group level, concerning horizontal inequalities (HIs) and unequal treatment of groups. As mentioned, there are at least 50 insurgency groups in the Northeast (for an overview see Appendix B), and they are mostly based on ethnicity or tribal affiliations. Not only are there around 200 tribes in the region (see Appendix D), but over 500 different languages are spoken (Cline 2006: 127). This creates an environment where it is easy to put the tribes against each other, and all of them demanding special privileges given to them (Baruah 2003; Das 2010; Hassan 2006a; 2006b; 2008). When groups feel that they receive less than they feel entitled to, compared to others in the same society, this creates relative deprivation (Gurr 1970), which again can cause horizontal inequalities (Stewart 2000). Lately, extensive research has been conducted on horizontal inequalities and its relationship to conflict and civil war (Stewart 2008; Murshed & Gates 2005; Østby 2008; Rustad, Rød, Larsen & Gleditsch 2008). This theoretical groundwork will be applied to the case of Northeast India to see if it can explain the insurgencies there.

These three levels are chosen because they offer explanations as to why the Northeast region suffers from so much continuing and recurring conflicts, despite numerous peace agreements[4]. The main research question is therefore:

Why do India's Northeastern States experience recurring insurgencies?

From this research question, three hypotheses follow, and they help to specify the main research question. These hypotheses are based on the three levels of analysis: international, federal and group level. Through this approach the thesis will contribute to the existing research field by (i) examining more closely the federal nature of the Northeastern States and their treatment by the GoI, (ii) looking at the differences between the ethnic and tribal groups in the Northeast, and see whether or not there are horizontal inequalities in the region, (iii) focusing on the insurgency groups and their cooperation with neighboring nations, and examining if the international borders prolong the conflicts and (iv) seeing whether any of these factors can explain the recurrence of insurgencies.

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[4] A discussion of these can be found in Bhaumik 2007 and Rajagopalan 2008.

This is therefore a thesis where I focus on one case, Northeast India, using a qualitative analysis of the recurring conflicts there. Through a thorough discussion of the three levels in relation to Northeast India I am able to see which of the three levels is most important, and I will also be able to tell whether any of the three levels have little explanatory power, due to the lack of empirical findings. This thesis will add to the extensive research on the insurgencies in the Northeast of India, many of them addressing why the conflicts started, and why the government has not been able to stop them, thereby making them a recurring problem (Baruah 2005; Bhaumik 2007; Mukherjee 2007). The fact that three levels are looked at is what distinguishes this thesis from other works, and the fact that the conclusion is that all three levels of analysis are necessary, because they all contribute to understanding why there are recurring conflicts in Northeast India. However, the horizontal inequalities and the issue of identity have the most explanatory power and give support to the other two levels.

This introduction is followed by five chapters. Chapter 2 defines what a recurring conflict really is, as opposed to when there is a new conflict. The chapter also gives background information on States in Northeast India, and the history behind the conflicts in each of the States in the region is given. Chapter 3 introduces the theoretical backdrop used in this thesis, at the three levels of analysis. After an explanation of why international borders and the geography of a conflict matter, an introduction to the federal theory follows before horizontal inequalities are examined. The three hypotheses are introduced in this chapter. The case study as a method and a discussion on its validity are examined in Chapter 4. The variables used in this thesis and how they relate to the hypotheses are also a part of Chapter 4. In Chapter 5 the empirical analysis is presented, and the international, federal and group levels are examined. At the international level I first look at the five neighboring nations China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Bhutan, and then India's foreign policy towards these nations-Look East Policy and trade agreements follow. The federal level examines the power of the States, and how the State capability differs in Nagaland and Mizoram, as well as it discusses asymmetry, cosmetic federalism, the power of the rebels and the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), which is the early response from the Indian government. At the group level I examine cultural and political horizontal inequalities, the inter-group relationships and the support the groups receive from the inhabitants of Northeast India, as well as I look at migration from neighboring nations, the treatment the ethnic groups are given by the Indian government, and lastly I compare the issue of identity in Nagaland and Mizoram. A conclusion to which of the levels can answer my research question is arrived at in Chapter 6.

2.0 Recurring conflict and background

In this chapter a discussion on what a recurring conflict is, and how we can say that the conflicts in Northeast are recurring is explained, and there is also a general introduction to the seven States in Northeast and their different conflicts.

2.1 What is recurring conflict?

The advantage of writing a qualitative analysis is that it is not necessary to compile different conflicts into one broad definition. Case studies have the possibility to differentiate more and give more nuanced definitions of war. Quantitative studies use battle deaths per given year in order to see whether there is a civil war or not, but the problem here is that many small conflicts that slowly accumulate deaths will then be coded as civil wars, depending on the coding of the data (Sambanis 2004: 819). This is the case in India, where several small conflicts led to numbers with over 1000 battle-related deaths per year, but where there is not one big civil war going on. It is clear from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), which tracks all types of war, both interstate, intrastate, one-sided violence and non-state conflicts, that India has experienced all of these types of conflicts since 1946 (SATP 2013; UCDP 2013b).

It is not only battle-deaths which are important when classifying a civil war or an armed conflict. UCDP focuses on separate elements of the definition of an armed conflict which is summed up like this: "[a]n armed conflict is a contested incompatibility which concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths" (UCDP 2013a). This standard is approved by Sambanis (2004):

> In the absence of a clear standard of how to handle such complicated cases, a rule of thumb should be to code a "civil war" in countries with many overlapping insurgencies when the violence escalates markedly and not at the start of low-level hostilities. In the case of India, this means that if we were to combine the rebellions in the Northeast states, a civil war should be coded as starting in the 1980s, when violence escalated in Assam, Tripuras, and Manipur (Sambanis 2004: 819-820).

Nevertheless, Correlates of War (COW), developed by Singer and Small, operates with a definition of a civil war with a threshold of 1000 battle-related deaths per year for a conflict to qualify as a war, which is a very high number compared to UCDP and their definition, and this is criticized by for example Sambanis (2004) (Gleditsch, Wallensteen, Eriksson, Sollenberg & Strand 2002: 617; Sambanis 2004: 816). There are numerous discussions on

how we can define civil wars and armed conflict[5], and in these discussions the issue of when an armed conflict starts and when it ends is also debated.

In the case of Northeast India, what we call an armed conflict is very difficult to define. Due to the fact that there are seven States which all have had insurgencies, and several different rebel groups that operate in not only one, but maybe more of the States, how can we know that the conflicts are recurring as opposed to new conflicts? Different rebel groups from the same ethnic group and their different factions create troubles when trying to analyze this. Nevertheless, because it can be debated endlessly how we should define recurring conflicts, my view in this thesis is that there have been recurring conflicts in the different States, and even though the rebel groups have changed names and leaders, since they fight for the same thing; secession, the conflicts in Northeast India are recurring. Sambanis (2004) refers to Northeast India when talking about this:

> A useful example to consider is Northeast India (Nagaland), where Fearon and Laitin (2003) code an ongoing civil war since 1952. I was not able to find evidence that many (say, more than 100) deaths per year occurred in armed conflict there from 1952 to 1961. According to Gleditsch et al. (2002, appendix) and Small and Singer (1982, 339), there was no war or intermediate violence during any year of the conflict in Nagaland. This case illustrates not only the problem of how to code war termination with the cumulative threshold but also the related difficulty of how to handle several chronologically overlapping insurgencies in the same country. Combining regionally concentrated insurgencies in India's Northeast states may be reasonable and would probably satisfy the aggregate-data threshold in the period considered by Fearon and Laitin. But a strict application of the cumulative-death rule in such cases is problematic, given that in other countries, chronologically and even geographically overlapping insurgencies are often treated as separate conflict (Sambanis 2004: 819).

Because of these difficulties, a qualitative analysis of Northeast India, where these issues are addressed specifically and each state studied in detail, is best, and a case study is therefore ideal here.

As seen in the case of Nagaland for example, the Naga Nationalist Council (NNC) which was established in 1947 started arguing for Nagas to get their own nation already then (Hussain 1994: 30). This rebel group signed a peace accord with the Government of India in 1978, but around 140 NNC cadres refused to surrender and these cadres formed an underground movement called the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) (Kotwal 2000: 758; Hussain 2008: 550). This movement was split in 1988, into two factions; NSCN-IM and NCSN-K. These two rebel groups are still active today, and the Indian Government has tried to sign ceasefire deals with them, but the conflicts still continue (Lacina 2007: 173; Hussain

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[5] See Gleditsch et al. (2002) and Sambanis (2004).

2008: 547). The group name may change, but the conflict remains between the same insurgents (DeRouen & Bercovitch 2008: 59). This thesis will argue that these conflicts are recurring, since there is no peace to be had for the inhabitants in Nagaland, and the people there are always preparing for battle. The problem is that the peace process is difficult because there are several players who all want different things, and this prolongs the conflict (Cunningham 2006: 875-886). The number of these factions or parties matter in a peace process, because "[t]he more hostile and numerous the factions, the more difficult is the peace process, and the more international assistance/authority is needed to establish peace" (Doyle & Sambanis 2000: 781). Several researchers have found that that more than two warring parties tend to complicate and have a negative influence on peace building and in these cases mediators must try to include all factions in the peace agreements. Different factions are spoilers for each other and they are therefore able to undermine the agreement that has been reached in a particular case. They may come from inside one of the parties which have signed the agreement, but they may also come from the outside. This is because not all leaders or factions see peace as beneficial, and "[e]ven if all parties come to value peace, they rarely do so simultaneously, and they often strongly disagree over the terms of an acceptable peace" (Stedman 1997: 7).

Walter (2004) claims that "earlier wars set the stage for conflicts that occur in later years because the original grievances were not resolved, because violence exacerbated ethnic divisions making coexistence difficult, because war ended in unstable compromise settlements, or because the human costs of war created psychological barriers to building peace" (Walter 2004: 372). It is based on the fact even if a conflict is temporarily ended, a more satisfying solution will be fought for as soon as one or both sides have "regrouped sufficiently" (Walter 2004: 373). The conflict can start and stop repeatedly over many years and the conflict may therefore exist many years after the fighting stops (DeRouen & Bercovitch 2008: 56).

Not only must the rebel groups and their claims for secession be addressed here, but it is also necessary to look into the Government of India and see why they have behaved the way they have. Since "[s]ocieties that have experienced one civil war are significantly more likely to experience a second or third war than are societies with no prior history of violence" (Walter 2004: 371), it is reasonable to expect that a government will try to avoid war and end the conflicts as soon as possible. But 'ending the conflict' does not necessarily mean that they will sign peace agreements and, in the case of secession, grant the rebel group their demands.

It is unlikely that this will happen, especially in a state with many ethnic groups. This is because "governments are significantly more likely to fight against a particular separatist group if the *number of future challenges* and the potential *long-term losses* from future challenges are high" (Walter 2006a: 314, emphasis in original; 2006b: 110). The governments therefore have to:

> Weigh their immediate interests and capabilities when determining whether to grant concessions, but they also carefully calculate the effect this behavior may have on future challenges and future losses. If a government believes it could face multiple additional challenges over numerous pieces of territory, it has greater incentives to invest in building a reputation for toughness than if it knew it would face only one challenge, or relatively few challenges. The risks and costs of *future* confrontations, therefore, should factor into a government's decision to compromise or fight at least in cases where it expects a series of similar challenges making similar demands over time (Walter 2006a: 313, emphasis in original).

In general, governments are rarely willing to budge when it comes to issues related to territory, and a peaceful settlement is especially difficult if "the contested piece of land holds important natural resources, serves vital security functions, or plays a critical role in the identity of the country; they will peacefully relinquish lands that do not" (Walter 2006a: 313).

Conflicts not only depend on governments, but also on rebel groups. These groups must have both the opportunity and the motivation to seek secession, and in order for this to happen they have to be "more geographically concentrated, are mobilized to pursue particular interests, or have grievances against the state have greater motivation and opportunity to seek self-determination" (Walter 2006a: 323). This means "that the strength of the rebels relative to the government must be understood along two separate dimensions; namely, offensive strength, or the ability to inflict costs on a government in the center and the ability to resist or evade government repression in the insurgent's "home" territory in the periphery and the underground" (Cunningham, Gleditsch & Salehyan 2009: 575). It is not necessarily the case that *all* ethnic groups in a nation will seek secession, because:

> The characteristics that may motivate groups to take up arms are often inherently local, and may not bear any resemblance to national level aggregates. This can easily be seen in the context of many measures of ethnic heterogeneity and fractionalization. Minority groups seeking independence such as the Achenese in Indonesia are often a trivial fraction of the national population, and will not exert much impact on ethnic fractionalization measures at the national level (Cunningham et al. 2009: 592).

Groups which seek self-determination are also the ones that most likely have territorial bases, and are able to oppose oppression by the state (Cunningham et al. 2009: 575). These groups will look to independence as the only reasonable answer for themselves, and for this they are

willing to go to battle and take risks in order to achieve this (Walter 2006b: 129). If groups have knowledge of the territory and can avoid getting caught by hiding from government forces, or they are helped by the locals, this will increase the chances of the rebels (Fearon & Laitin 2003: 88). Fearon and Laitin (2003) have written one of the most cited articles in conflict research, and they use the following criteria on what constitutes a violent civil conflict:

(1) They involved fighting between agents of (or claimants to) a state and organized, nonstate groups who sought either to take control of a government, to take power in a region, or to use violence to change government policies.
(2) The conflict killed at least 1,000 over its course, with a yearly average of at least 100.
(3) At least 100 were killed on both sides (including civilians attached by rebels) (Fearon & Laitin 2003: 76).

It is clear from this that some years will constitute as years with violent civil conflicts, but the years where there have been 'lulls' will not have produced this amount of killed civilians, rebels or government forces. But, because civilians must expect attack, and the tribal groups are armed in order to fight the government forces, this thesis operates with recurring conflicts from the 1960s to today in Northeast India, and there seems to be no end to the fighting and no solution in sight. The federal system has been able to accommodate regional autonomy for the ethnic groups, and these "minority groups are influential in government decisions" (Walter 2006a: 323), but this has actually been shown to increase the chance of additional wars. This is because of the fact that concessions over territory make it easier for other ethnic groups to initiate their own demands (Walter 2004: 379).

2.2 Background to the Northeast

The Northeast of India lies where South Asia becomes less and less South Asia and more and more South East Asia and vice versa and in the region "an otherwise vast and culturally contagious space with one of the longest histories of almost incessant immigration from both sides was eventually reorganised into a number of heavily territorialised nation-states with at least in theory rigid and impenetrable international borders around them" (Das 2010: 344).

The region of Northeast India was earlier the seven sister States of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura, but after 2002 Sikkim is also included (Baruah 2005: 45). Initially all of these States were part of the Ahom Kingdom, but political reasons have led to the division of this region. Sikkim has been included after it was annexed by India, but since it has not experienced the unrest of the other States, in this thesis

the seven original States are the focus (Cline 2006: 127). These States border China's Tibet region, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Bhutan, and about 99 percent of their borders are with foreign countries (see map on page 11) (Cline 2006: 127; Baruah 2007: 6). The mighty Brahmaputra River System and its numerous large and small valleys are included in the Northeast, which is part of the eastern Himalayan Mountain Range (Baruah 2007: 6). The Northeast region is linked to the rest of India by a narrow strip of land some 20 kilometers wide (Baruah 2003: 920).

The Indian State of Assam has, since Independence, gradually fragmented into smaller States (Maaker & Joshi 2007: 384). Nagaland became a State in 1963, due to secessionist conflicts. Nagaland is composed of the Naga Hills district of Assam and NEFA province (Nayak 2009: 7). The North-eastern States Reorganisation Act of 1971 "upgraded the Union Territories of Manipur and Tripura, and the Sub-State of Meghalaya to full statehood, and Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh (then Tribal Districts) to Union Territories" (Bhattacharyya 2005: 13). Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram became full-fledged States in 1987. The demands for statehood today are for Bodoland, Karbi-Anglong and Poorbanchal in Assam, Kukiland in Nagaland, Garoland in Meghalaya and Hamar state in Mizoram (Singh 2003: 93-94). India realized its vulnerabilities in the Northeast during its border war with China in 1962, and these vulnerabilities were also exposed by the unrest of the tribals/indigenous people (Baruah 2003: 915-920). It was after this war that the Indian government "began to fear the prospect of the external and internal 'enemies' in this region coming together and constituting a serious threat to India's national security" (Baruah 2003: 920).

A larger share of the population in Northeast, except for Mizoram, is poor compared to the rest of India (Hassan 2006b: 15). Especially Assam has a high proportion of people living in poverty; "[d]espite a decline in the proportion, more than a third of its people are below the poverty line" (Nayak 2009: 6). In term of the literacy of the people however, the Northeast has performed better than the rest of India. This is not due to the state, but due to the Christian missionaries and the continued support of local communities (Hassan 2006b: 15). The States in Northeast do not have very many revenue sources, because of their status as 'Special Category States' they must "rely primarily on central government assistance, which they get on a concessional basis of 90 per cent grants and 10 per cent loans" (Sachdeva 2000; Baruah 2003: 924; 2007: 36). India's national security goals in the region have fitted well with the creation of the small States in Northeast, because their complete dependence on New Delhi when it comes to finance and they are thus vulnerable to the government's direct involvement

in their daily affairs (Baruah 2003: 924-925). These small States have therefore been seen as a sensible policy in the national perspective, even if the "how and when these States would become financially viable was not clear either to the Central planners or to the State governments" (Sachdeva 2000). Nevertheless, because the Indian government has never asked for accountability and transparency from the State government, but only have poured hundreds of millions of rupee into the region, some people have become enormously rich. But this includes only the people in politics or the bureaucracy and their favorite contractors, the majority has not reaped any benefits from these schemes and are therefore suspicious to the government (Hazarika 2004: 779). These corrupt politicians "siphon funds and buy property elsewhere in India and abroad to conceal their ill-gotten wealth; even rebel leaders invest elsewhere in the world" (Bhaumik 2009: 257).

Figure 1: Map of Northeast India

 (Maps of India 2013b).

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Arunachal Pradesh

All of the States in the Northeast have seen some measure of conflict between rebel groups and the government of India. Arunachal Pradesh, is believed to be the most peaceful State, but this has mostly been due to spillovers from the surrounding States. The militants from Assam and Nagaland use the western part of Arunachal Pradesh, which borders Myanmar, as a hideout, and the eastern part of Arunachal Pradesh "has emerged as an effective transit route to Burma and also a huge source of extortion, illegal trade and recruitment" (Upadhyay 2009: 46). The border war with China in 1962 was due to the issue where the Chinese claim that Tibet had control over the area which is now Arunachal Pradesh before the British arrived, and from the 1950s they therefore laid claim to the entire area of Arunachal Pradesh north of the River Lohit which borders Tibet (Mukherjee 2007: 57). Even though Arunachal Pradesh is geographically the largest State in the region, there are only about half a million people living there, and they are interspersed in a huge and inaccessible area, which is heavily forested, generally underdeveloped with few roads, and for the different ethnic groups in the most interior areas, this has ensured isolation and distinctiveness. It has also hindered political modernization, which is why the state is the most diverse, but also the most peaceful one (Bhaumik 2000: 153; 2009: 39; Mukherjee 2007: 56-57).

Mizoram

Another State in the region which is relatively peaceful today, but where there have been a fair share of conflicts, is Mizoram. Mizoram borders to Assam and Manipur to the north, Tripura to the west, internationally with Myanmar on the south and east and Bangladesh to the west (Bareh 1994: 1). The Mizo insurgency began after the Mizos experienced a famine and the government Assam failed to address the issue adequately in 1959. It is therefore the second oldest insurgency in the Northeast (Lacina 2007: 168). During this famine the party Mizo National Famine Front (MNFF) was established, in order to organize relief work (Chandhoke 2006: 22). The group was renamed in 1961 to the Mizo National Front (MNF), under the leadership of Pu Laldenga, whose goal was "complete political independence for greater Mizoram". The Central government failed to respond adequately to this, so the armed wing of MNF, the Mizo National Army (MNA) turned the struggle violent in 1966 (Chandhoke 2006: 22). The Mizos felt that they lost their identity under the Assamese domination, and this was a factor in their struggle for independence. Mizoram became a Union Territory in 1972 (Egreteau 2006: 21). For Laldenga, the status of Union Territory was

seen as a transitional phase, and the insurgency therefore resurfaced in 1974 (Chandhoke 2006: 22-23). After negotiations, an Accord was signed and on 20 February 1987 Mizoram became a full-fledged state (Egreteau 2006: 22). This Peace Accord ended the insurgency, and today there are no violent conflicts in Mizoram.

Meghalaya

Meghalaya is the third State which has been relatively stable compared to other States in the area. Because of the immigration problems that developed in Tripura and Assam after independence, the Mizos and Khasis started their demands for separate States due to neglect from the Assam government. The Nagas had risen up as an example, and New Delhi had no choice but to follow up with granting Meghalaya statehood in 1972. The issue in Meghalaya today has to do with Nepalese and Bangladeshi immigration (Mukherjee 2007: 48). The economic situation in Meghalaya is also bad; there is little industrial development, and even though Meghalaya is well endowed with natural resources, but the State is poor. Good governance might be able to solve this, "the problem is socio-economic and coloured by ethnic strife and nascent insurgency which needs to be resolved by good governance" (Mukherjee 2007: 49). There have been issues between the Khasis, the Garos and the Bodos, based on tribal differences, and there have been talks about splitting the State. Previously the Khasis mainly targeted Nepalese and Bengali immigrants, but now they are targeting all communities (Mukherjee 2007: 48). Low-level insurgent campaigns have been present in the State, by several militant groups:

> The Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC) represents the Khasi tribe and the Achik National Volunteer Council represents the Achik. Both these groups formed in the 1990s after the splintering of the Hynniewtrep Achik Liberation Council that purportedly served the interests of both tribes. Smaller tribes also have their own movements, including the Hill State People's Democratic Party and the Garo National Movement. The Naga NSCN has supported several of these group's operations (Cline 2006: 140).

For the other four States in the region, Nagaland, Assam, Manipur and Tripura, severe insurgency has been a fact, which has diverted attention to security issues instead of development (Bhaumik 2009: 238). These States are therefore ranked the most violent in the region, while the other three have had the potential to wage violent conflict, but the Indian Government has managed to prevent this proliferation of rebel groups in these States (Upadhyay 2009: 36).

Manipur

Historically, Manipur has acted as the bridge to and the balance of power towards the Burmese (Hassan 2008: 61). Four hills districts in Manipur have a large Naga population, and there has been a growing trend of inter-tribal unrest in the past two decades. The valley which covers only 10 percent of the state's geographical area is inhabited by the Meiteis, who constitutes more than half the population in Manipur, making them the largest ethnic group in the State (Upadhyay 2009: 40-41). Manipur's strongest separatist group was formed in 1964 by Meitei youths; the United National Liberation Front (UNLF), making demands on behalf of the ethnic Meitei population (Lacina 2007: 169). They were weakened due to the counterinsurgency campaigns by the Indian Army in the 1980s, but reemerged in 1992. They managed to fight back when "a determined Indian military offensive in 2005-06" tried to overrun the base areas in parts of the State bordering Mizoram and Myanmar. New Delhi has tried to negotiate with UNLF, but due to breakaway factions based on leadership disputes, there is still turmoil in the State (Cline 2006: 137; Lacina 2007: 169; Bhaumik 2007: 3).

When one ethnic group starts an insurgency, in this case the Meiteis, other ethnic groups will respond to this with their own rebel groups. This has happened in Manipur as well:

> But Manipur has a number of other rebel groups representing smaller tribes like the Kukis, the Paites and Zomis – and more than half a dozen of these Kuki and Zomi groups are now actively collaborating with Indian troops against the Meitei rebel groups like the UNLF and the RPF after they signed Suspension of Operations (SOO) agreements with the Indian army and not with the country's Home Ministry which normally negotiates with such groups (Bhaumik 2007: 3).

The Kuki National Front and KNA are fighting for a separate State for the Kukis, and the fighting between them and the Nagas, who are supported by the NSCN-IM, have had particularly violent and intense clashes (Cline 2006: 137). The discontent among the Manipuri is fuelled by a "number of accumulated grievances, several of which are historical in nature" (Upadhyay 2009: 40). Further alienation of the minority tribal communities has been a result of the political mobilization by Meitei state leaders to create a society based on their limited identity. This was done in part to enable them to capture political power away from the central forces which were then in control of the State (Hassan 2008: 65). The Meiteis demand a separate homeland, one where they can eliminate the Indian script for writing and return to traditional cultural practices. Language has been a sensitive issue in Manipur, because it was only in 1992 that the Manipuri language was given the status as an official language in the Indian Union (Cline 2006: 137; Upadhyay 2009: 40). An estimated 15 militant groups operate

in Manipur today, with approximately 10,000 fighters (see list in Appendix B) (Lacina 2009: 1016).

Tripura

As Manipur, Tripura was also a princely State, but Tripura was peacefully added to the Indian Union in 1947 and became a full-fledged State in 1972. Tripura borders Assam and Mizoram in the Northeast, but has international borders along all the other sides. In Tripura the major clashes have been between the tribal population and the immigrants from East Pakistan/Bangladesh, after the hill tribes have now been turned into a minority in their own State. The percentage of tribals sank from two-thirds to one-third in only a few decades, making the demographic profile completely different (Bhaumik 2007: 3; Upadhyay 2009: 44). Today the tribals and their distinctive culture has nearly been wiped out; they are dislocated from their traditional habitats and have experiences socio-economic deprivation. The native language in the region has even been replaced by Bengali as an official language, which further aggravated the tribals. The only way the indigenous Tripuris have resisted this transformation is by supporting the rebels, who are aiming at throwing out the immigrants in the State (Bhaumik 2004: 222; Cline 2006: 139; Baruah 2007: 25; Mukherjee 2007: 53).

In 1978 the militancy began in earnest, with the formation of the Tripura National Volunteer Force (TNVF), who seemed to base their agenda solely on the anti-immigrant efforts without having much further ideology. They wanted to win 'Tripura's freedom' and they were instrumental in an "explosion of ethnic violence in May 1979 and June 1980, in which some 1,800 were killed" (Upadhyay 2009: 45; Cline 2006: 139). The TNVF agreed to a ceasefire in 1988, but in the early 1990s two new separatist groups were formed to continue the armed agenda against the Bengali settlers; the All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF) and the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) (Rajagopalan 2008: 27; Bhaumik 2007: 3; Lacina 2007: 172). Another group called the All Tripura People's Liberation Organization (ATPLO) has also emerged (Upadhyay 2009: 45). The forming of new insurgency groups happens quite often:

> All the movements have been marked by factionalism extreme even by regional standards. The government has succeeded in convincing insurgents to surrender en masse – at times including entire insurgent groups – but new groups seemingly form almost as fast as the surrenders occur (Cline 2006: 139).

Most of the struggles within Tripura then, both of the violent and non-violent kind, have revolved around the issues of expulsion of foreigners, restoration of tribal lands, immigration

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controls and reservation of seats in the legislative assembly for the tribals (Upadhyay 2009: 44-45). Today the two dominant groups in the State, ATTF and NLFT, operate with camps in Bangladesh (Rajagopalan 2008: 28). The fractionalized insurgent landscape sees high levels on violence against civilians and ties between the political parties and the rebel groups (Lacina 2007: 172).

Nagaland

The conflict in Nagaland is one of the longest running conflicts in the world, and it has been the source of many of the conflicts in the region. Nagaland was incorporated into the Indian Union in 1947 under the direction of Assam, but after the NNC was established in April 1946 the insurgency for a sovereign nation state started for the Nagas (Hussain 1994: 30; Sahni 2002). In March 1956 the first violent clashes between the NNC and the Indian security forces erupted, and large-scale violence continued throughout the Naga Hills before the GoI tried to appease the NNC by granting Nagaland statehood under the Union of India in 1963 (Kotwal 2000: 758; Goswani 2007: 288). The NSCN's reason for continuing the insurgency after the Shillong Accord was the fact that they claimed that legitimately, the Naga areas have never been part of the Indian Union, and their stand on independence is therefore inflexible. For the government "the separatist agitation is perceived as a violation of the territorial integrity of the state" (UCDP 2013b). The rebel violence in Nagaland has persisted because "the security forces had created a significant backlash in the insurgents' favor" (Lacina 2007: 167). In 1988, NSCN broke into two factions; NSCN-IM and NCSN-K. Clashes between the two factions went on for many years, but because of the role NSCN-IM has as organizer and supporter of other separatist movements, Delhi has prioritized negotiations with them, leading to a ceasefire between the government and NSCN-IM in 1997 (Lacina 2007: 173; Hussain 2008: 547).

NSCN-IM claims that the tri-junction of China, India and Myanmar has always had the sovereign existence, and they want their Nagalim (homeland of the Nagas) back (Upadhyay 2009: 36). The NSCN-IM wants all of the 120,000 square kilometers to be a part of the Naga nation state:

> Nagaland extends to the River Chindwin in Myanmar; covers almost the entire Manipur; Cachar and North Cachar Hills and the Disturbed Area belt in Assam; Tirap, Changlang and Lohit districts in Arunachal Pradesh – but excluding the Kuki-Chin-Mizo belt in south Manipur – a huge area with a population of near 3 million. This is indeed a very difficult demand which cannot be met as giving in would amount to separating a large number of other ethnic groups from their primary treasure – 'land' (Mukherjee 2007: 30).

The factions of NSCN have developed satellites in Tripura, Assam, Mizoram, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh, thereby extending their reach beyond the Naga-inhabited areas. Through this they have broadened the scope of their operations and the support base for their activities (Bhaumik 2009: 99). Nagas are numerous in the Northeast and not all of the followers of the NSCN factions come from Nagaland. The leadership of NSCN-IM and "at least 40% of their cadres are from the Tangkhul Tribe of the Nagas in Manipur and not Nagaland, with another 40% being from other Manipuri, Assamese and Arunachali Naga tribes", which means that less than 15 percent are from Nagaland tribes (Mukherjee 2007: 34). NSCN-K is headquartered in Myanmar adjacent to Arunachal Pradesh, and they also have control in parts of Nagaland and in the Naga inhabited areas in the adjoining States (Mukherjee 2007: 34).

Assam

The last violent State in the region is Assam. Assam was originally the overlord of the Northeast, being the largest and most populous State. Geographically it is a core State, and it shares a boundary with all the other six States in Northeast (see map on page 11). Parts of Assam have gone to Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh. And it even lost its capital Shillong, to Meghalaya (Bhaumik 1998: 317; Upadhyay 2009: 5). The political unrest in the State we know as Assam today was initiated due to the illegal immigrant flow from Bangladesh, and by 1979 it had become a great political issue (Cline 2006: 133). It became an issue because there were fears that non-natives have flooded the voter rolls and this has made it difficult for the local parties to win elections (Lacina 2007: 170).

The United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) was headquartered in Assam, organized with the help of NSCN, the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan, and Bangladeshi intelligence, and it carried out social work at the same time as organizing itself into a rebel group. Pressure from the Army and the police has relocated the ULFA to Bangladesh, where its headquarters are today (Cline 2006: 134; Mukherjee 2007: 20-21; Upadhyay 2009: 43). Mukherjee (2007) claims that even though ULFA originally started as the 'protector of the people's image' and had a severe anti-immigration policy, ULFA is today "merely a tool in the hand of foreign powers to wage proxy wars against India in Assam" (Mukherjee 2007: 22). ULFA has, just as NSCN-IM, supported insurgencies beyond their own borders, by helping other insurgent groups obtain funding, arms, training and cross-border sanctuaries. They have a strength of some 2500, and they have been "very active in extortion, with Indian security forces seizing millions of rupees that the group has gained through its 'taxation,' and

reportedly has become increasingly involved in the regional drug trade" (Cline 2006: 134). Their territory has therefore increased and this has diluted the Indian military's presence in the region (Lacina 2009: 1004).

The Bodos, one of the larger tribal groups in Assam, have complicated the insurgency environment further. After 1990 New Delhi has pursued major counterinsurgency operations in Assam, after the State government was dismissed. These operations were against ULFA, as well as other rebel groups in the State, such as the All Bodo Student Union (ABSU), which "was escalating the violence to protest the concentration of power among the ethnic Assamese and the influx of settlers into historically Bodo areas" (Cline 2006: 135; Lacina 2007: 170). Two breakaway factions of this group; National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) and the Bodo Liberation Tigers Force (BLTF), have negotiated with the Government of India, and even though NDFB did not sign an agreement, ceasefire has been upheld since 2004 (Lacina 2007: 171). Thousands of members of other tribes have been displaced because "the Bodo insurgents have conducted as many attacks on other tribal groups – including civilians – as they have against security forces", resulting in the arming of several tribes (Cline 2006: 136; Bhaumik 2009: 121). The Karbis and Kukis, who are of Bodo origin, have long led their own rebellions, and as a result of this there are talks between the government of Assam and the centre to try and resolve their grievances, and the Dimasas and Karbis have been given limited autonomy (Mukherjee 2007: 23).

3.0 Theory

In this chapter I explain the theories behind the hypotheses in this thesis and look at the earlier research done on international environment, federal states and horizontal inequalities as reasons for rebellions. This chapter is therefore divided into three parts, each corresponding to three hypotheses which contribute to understanding why there are recurring conflicts in Northeast India.

3.1 International level

A number of scholars have emphasized the issue of geography and international borders as important explanatory factors for civil wars and recurring conflicts (Toft 2003; Buhaug 2006, 2010; Salehyan 2007; Rustad et al. 2008; Buhaug, Gates and Lujala 2009; Lacina 2012a, 2012b). I will look into the issue of geography before looking at how international borders can affect recurring conflicts. Geography is relevant because:

> Geography significantly affects the duration of civil conflict. The relative location of governmental and rebel forces can enhance as well as reduce the relative military capabilities of the belligerent parties. Relative military capacity and distance play a fundamental role in determining who wins and who loses. Short of victory or surrender, the decision to continue to fight is shaped by the ability to wage war. In this regard geography plays a critical role in determining the dynamics of armed civil conflict (Buhaug et al. 2009: 566).

Buhaug (2006) discusses the distinction between separatist and state control conflicts and concludes that the rebel groups "are often highly successful in denying government troops territorial control in rural areas but may be ineffective in toppling the ruling coalition" (Buhaug 2006: 695). This means that state control is difficult for a rebel group in the periphery to achieve, because they will have problems capturing the control of the state, and also upholding state power will be difficult (Buhaug 2006: 695). But then again, this is also most likely not the objective of the rebel group. Because of their placement in areas far away from the capital, where the public commodities are produced, they do not get the same profit for their taxes, making their incentive for secession greater than in more central areas (Buhaug 2006: 697). "This is, of course, why contemporary separatist activities exclusively occur along the rim of the conflict-ridden countries" (Buhaug 2006: 695). Because the interest of this case study is Northeast India, where none of the rebel groups have shown a wish to gain control over the state, rather they all are separatist conflicts, the focus of this theory will relate to secessionist conflicts. Many scholars have also tested the particular geographical factors of a region, such as rough terrain, mountainous areas and forest cover, but they conclude that

these factors generally do not affect the conflict (Buhaug & Gates 2002; Buhaug & Rød 2006; Rustad et al. 2008). However, that is not to say they may not be important and influential in a single conflict, but I have nevertheless chosen to leave them out of this thesis, because they are shown to be non-significant.

The demand for sovereignty by an insurgency group will depend on two things: "First, their capabilities must give them a reasonable chance of gaining control of the territory they desire. Second, they must believe that their cause is legitimate" (Toft 2003: 21). Monica Duffy Toft, a leading scholar on the importance of geography in conflicts, expands this issue like this:

> *Capability* refers to the capacity to wage a successful fight for independence. The number of group members influences the resources (including armed combatants) that can be brought to bear in the fight. These resources include control over economic, political, and social networks (and their more formal counterparts, institutions), access to communications and media that are vital to concerted action, and money or other goods that can be exchanged for weapons, food, medical supplies, or mercenaries… *Legitimacy* refers to the perceived justness of the cause; because it determines the *effectiveness* of mobilizing capability, legitimacy directly influences a group's decision to seek sovereignty... Two principles of legitimacy links settlement patters to a group's demand for sovereignty: homeland and majority rule… The homeland principle is the idea that a people with deep roots and a historical attachment to the land have right to control it. control over the homeland is vital because it determines how economic and political resources are distributed, how many foreigners can immigrate, which languages are recognized, sponsored , and spoken, and which gods may be worshiped (Toft 2003: 22-23, emphasis in original).

Therefore, the regions where the rebellions occur are regions the insurgent groups have ties to, and "the incidence of separatist war reflects governments' political ties to competing ethnic groups in the periphery" (Lacina 2012b: 2). The fact that this concerns the periphery is an important factor which it is necessary to expand on.

Geography, and through this the issue of peripheral conflicts, means that "[c]onflicts that occur far away from the state center last substantially longer; the average duration for the 10 percent most distant conflicts is more than twice as long as that of the decile located closest to the capital" (Buhaug et al. 2009: 546). Operations over long distances will disadvantage the government forces, such as "physical barriers for transportation of troops and equipment (such as mountains and lack of proper transport network), higher costs associated with longer distance, limited knowledge of the local government, and, as is often the case, lack of support from the local population" (Buhaug et al. 2009: 550). The fact that small minority populations back different guerilla bands, especially when they are confined to the periphery of a country makes it much more difficult for the government forces to fight the rebel groups (Buhaug 2010: 115). Distance to the capital is important because when rebel groups using guerilla

tactics choose the areas of fighting, they want to make the potential harm the government forces can inflict as small as possible, and "[t]his means exploiting remote and generally inaccessible areas" (Buhaug & Rød 2006: 318). It is also much easier to organize a rebellion in these regions because they are harder to reach for the government (Buhaug & Rød 2006: 319), and "the risk of a separatist war is positively associated with the distance from the capital" (Buhaug & Rød 2006: 326). Rustad et al. (2008) support these findings: "[t]he further away the conflict zone is from the capital the lower the probability that the conflict will end", and the duration of the conflict is therefore affected by the distance to the capital (Rustad et al. 2008: 775). This does not mean that secessionist conflicts may not occur close to the center of the nation state, it only means that the rate of success is greater for insurgent groups further from the capital. Distance to the capital is therefore one factor which may explain why it is easier for the rebel to gain control, and the fact that they can control where the fighting occurs, is an advantage they have over the government (Buhaug 2010: 110).

Lacina (2012a) actually goes as far as to claim that the distributional conflict between the center and the periphery is the core cause of separatist war, and this is supported by the empirical work (Lacina 2012a: 4). The general pattern is therefore that "civil conflicts in areas favorable to guerilla warfare last longer" than conflicts in other areas (Buhaug et al. 2009: 545). The insurgency groups take advantage of the favorable geography by "establishing bases in the mountains or behind national borders, limiting the area of operation to rural districts where the rebellion enjoys local support, and generally avoid open encounters with regular forces by conducting hit-and-run assaults" (Buhaug 2010: 111).

National borders as a place to hide are emphasized in this thesis, because of the nature of the case in question. Buhaug et al. (2009) claims that "conflicts where rebels have access to an international border are twice as durable as other conflicts" (Buhaug et al. 2009: 546), and Toft (2003) finds that that rebel sanctuaries in other countries are associated with a greater likelihood of state conflict (Toft 2003: 60), and the conflicts close to international borders also last longer than conflicts in the middle of a country (Rustad et al. 2008: 776). This is because:

> International borders are hypothesized to be related to the size of a conflict zone because of the value of such borders to a rebel army. Rebels will push to gain access to an international border because neighboring countries often provide a safe refuge away from governmental troop, but also because weapons and natural resources are traded and transported across these borders. Control of international borders thus ensures that the rebel army will fight another day (Buhaug & Gates 2002: 422).

The issue of international borders is relevant because not only is it important for the rebel group to mobilize from a safe place, and neighboring countries can provide these "external sanctuaries", but the other reason is that "they complicate the underlying bargain between states and rebels by exacerbating informational problems and introducing new actors into the bargaining environment" (Salehyan 2007: 218). This does not mean that the neighboring nations actively aids the insurgents from the original country, but "one of the most common types of foreign support for rebel groups is the provision of safe havens or sanctuaries on one's territory" (Salehyan 2008: 54), and weak states may not be able to prevent this use of territory by foreign rebels (Salehyan 2007: 237; 2008: 55). Buhaug and Gleditsch (2008) expands this finding when they find that "[a]ll else being equal, countries in a poor neighborhood are considerably more likely to experience domestic conflict at any given time than countries with wealthy neighbors" (Buhaug & Gleditsch 2008: 225). Not only is the poverty levels relevant, but if any neighboring countries are involved in conflict themselves, the original country is "twice as likely to experience an outbreak of conflict" (Saideman 1997: 725; Buhaug & Gleditsch 2008: 225). This is because the risk of mercenaries moving across boundaries, easier access to cheap arms and cross-border rebel sanctuaries "contribute to the spread of violence" (Buhaug & Gleditsch 2008: 220). These conflicts can therefore "provide new sources of interstate tensions, and support for rebel organizations can complement or substitute for the direct use of force between states" (Gleditsch, Salehyan & Schultz 2008: 502). There may also be ethnic ties between the groups in both sides of a border, making it more likely that the insurgency group will find shelter there and therefore it is more difficult for the government to defeat them (Saideman 1997: 727; Moore 2002: 79; Cederman, Girardin and Gleditsch 2009: 413).

The fact that neighboring countries provide safe havens for insurgency groups create problems for the government forces, since they can only operate in their confined area; "They cannot easily exercise force outside of their national boundaries, as doing so would necessarily violate the sovereignty of others" (Salehyan 2007: 221). The chance of effectively beating the rebel group is reduced because the army cannot "operate outside of the state boundaries" (Buhaug et al. 2009: 552). Not only this, but "[c]ounterinsurgency operations across national boundaries are hampered because the state lacks familiarity with the terrain and population; it risks a confrontation with the host state; and it invites international condemnation for sovereignty violations" (Salehyan 2008: 56). This is probably why

Salehyan (2007) finds that 55 percent of rebel groups have used external bases (Salehyan 2007: 218). The reason why support is important is explained by Stewart (2000) like this:

> Conflicts need resources, including arms, soldiers and food. Some can be seized from the local territory – more readily if the conflict is popular locally, which again depends on whether the group involved regards itself as being seriously disadvantaged. Fighting can survive without foreign resources, but the availability of support from outside – credit, food, technical advice and arms – clearly helps the resource situation and thus "feeds" the conflict (Stewart 2000: 251-252).

External sanctuaries therefore complicate negotiation as well as exacerbate information problems, making it "an information-poor environment" (Salehyan 2007: 227). Another type of problem is commitment problems:

> Second, external mobilization exacerbates commitment problems. For civil wars to end, combatants must credibly promise to lay down their arms and forgo future violence. Yet, as it is difficult to for states to gather reliable information about rebel mobilization, it is also difficult to monitor and verify full compliance with demobilization efforts. After a peace agreement rebels can hide resources across the border and regroup in external sanctuaries so long as permissive conditions in other states persist: this allows rebels the opportunity to renege on a deal in the future (Salehyan 2007: 227).

But it is important to emphasize here it is not the case that the international borders *cause* the wars, but they increase the risks and opportunities in the nation, increase the uncertainty in the nation and thereby "contribute to the potential outbreak of violence" (Siverson & Starr 1990: 50).

Reasons for why a state will choose to fight the insurgent groups in the first place are when they fear precedent setting, which "arise when states fear that granting independence to one group will encourage other groups to demand independence, unleashing a process that will threaten the territorial integrity of the state" (Toft 2002: 85). Therefore violence will erupt because the territory is essential and indivisible (Toft 2003: 3). Toft (2003) calls this the theory of indivisible theory; "Attempts to negotiate a resolution short of war will fail when (1) the ethnic minority demands sovereignty over the territory it occupies, and (2) the state views that territory as indivisible" (Toft 2003: 127). The state will view the territory as indivisible when it has either a strategic value or an intrinsic value, and they are differentiated like this:

> Strategic worth describes the security value of a given piece of territory. Is the territory astride major routes of communication? Does it share an interstate border? Does it contain natural barriers to invasion from other states or from states considered historical enemies? Intrinsic-value arguments focus on the wealth or resources that inhere in a territory. Does the territory contain a concentration of mineral or natural resources? Does it possess an infrastructure or industry of value? Does it have space for population expansion or arable land that could support an expanded population? If the loss of the contested territory threatens to undermine

the security or economic survival of an actor, then that actor is likely to resort to force (Toft 2003: 6).

Based on this evidence on international borders and the danger for recurring conflicts due to these borders, the hypothesis is as follows:

Hypothesis 1: International borders offer a safe place for the rebels to hide and make it more difficult for the government to stop the conflicts, especially if the neighboring countries are hostile towards India, and this explains why there are recurring conflicts in Northeast India.

3.2 Federal level

Norman (2006) explains federal nations as a common political space which "two or more self-governing communities share", and the citizens "are members of both their province – sometimes called a canton, land, autonomous region, or somewhat confusingly, a state – and the larger federal state" (Norman 2006: 77). This is done in order "'to accommodate the desire of national minorities for self-government', principally by creating a province (or provinces) in which one or more minority group can constitute a clear majority of the citizens and in which they can exercise a number of sovereign powers" (Norman 2006: 88). It therefore divides and diffuses power, and if there are minorities, linguistic, national or ethnic, in the nation and they form the majority in one of the federal units, they can participate politically in these smaller political units more actively and obtain positions of power there (Woehrling 2011: 139). This makes it a democratic nation, because it "enhances political and democratic rights inasmuch as citizens can participate more effectively in political life within smaller political units where the *locus* of power is situated nearer to them" (Woehrling 2011: 140, emphasis in original). The power is divided like this:

> [I]n a federal system both levels of government have certain sovereign powers as a matter of legal right, not simply on a delegated and revocable basis. Both the central government and the federal subunits possess sovereign authority over certain policy areas, and it is unconstitutional for one level of government to intrude on the jurisdiction of the other. The central government cannot 'reclaim' the powers possessed by the federal subunits, because those powers never belonged to the central government. Conversely, the subunits cannot reclaim the powers possessed by the central government, because those powers never belonged to the subunits. In short, unlike administrative decentralisation and confederation, both levels of government in a federal system have a constitutionally protected existence, and do not just exist on the sufferance of some other body (Kymlicka 1998: 120).

A federation is therefore a nation where the national government has some power, and the federal units have some power, thereby dividing the responsibility of the state. Since some of

the units consist of the majority group in the nation, and some are dominated by the national minority, the units and the groups might be treated differently, as explained by Kymlicka (1998):

> For national minorities, federalism is, first and foremost, a federation of peoples, and decisions regarding the powers of federal subunits should recognise and affirm the equal status of the founding peoples. On this view, to grant equal powers to regional-based units and nationality-based units is in fact to deny equality to the minority nation, by reducing its status to that of a regional division within the majority nation. By contrast, for members of the national majority, federalism is, first and foremost, a federation of territorial units, and decisions regarding the division of powers should affirm and reflect the equality of the constituent units. On this view, to grant unequal powers to nationality-based units is to treat some of the federated units as less important than others (Kymlicka 1998: 131).

It is important for the national groups that they are represented at the central level, and that they are given their own rights over the territory, that the language is made official in the territory and that they can have control over public institutions such as education (Kymlicka 2007: 36-37). When a unit feels that it is less important than other federal units, it might be the case that the federal nation is asymmetrical. A federation is either symmetrical or asymmetrical, depending on the different groups in the nation. The difference is that:

> When federations are symmetric, national minorities who believe they ought to possess more rights and powers may chafe at being equal to mere provinces or states. This may compel those who are part of a national minority to seek a change to the status quo in a way that makes their powers more appropriate to their status. When federations are asymmetric, increased institutional resources are granted to groups that might otherwise seek to secede or engage in conflict with the center. While this might mollify those who might otherwise support secession, it does provide the region with increased institutional resources and it provides other regions – regions that do not benefit from symmetrical arrangements – to be aggrieved and, therefore, seek secession (Anderson 2010: 135).

We can therefore call it an asymmetric federation if the amount of power given to a minority group in a subunit differs (Karmis & Norman 2005: 16; Kymlicka 2005: 278). The difference in treatment is done because of the "validity of dealing with the differentially situated units differently", and therefore treating alleged equals equally (Smith 1995: 2). The problem with asymmetry is that it might induce political divisiveness, because autonomy and regional interests are encouraged, and this "will strengthen the sense that these minorities are separate peoples with inherent rights of self-government, whose participation in the federation is conditional and revocable" (Kymlicka 1998: 140; 2007: 44; McGarry & O'Leary 2005: 263; Burgess 2006: 282). One objection to asymmetry is the issue with democratic accountability, which "arises when representatives of an asymmetrically autonomous region in the common legislature of the federation or unitary state are able to vote on matters that do not concern their region, while other legislators have no say on such matters within the autonomous

region" (McGarry 2007: 112-113). Nevertheless, asymmetry is not always a problem, it is by nationalist sub-state governments seen as preferable to symmetrical decentralization "because this recognizes the privileged national status of the sub-state relative to other sub-states within the same federation: after all, such sub-states demand recognition as nations, not simply as sub-states with a degree of autonomy within a given federal framework" (Marchildon 2009: 445). And it is also the case that asymmetry does not create difference, it only reflects it, and in the pursuit of legitimacy it is designed to achieve flexibility (Burgess 2006: 221).

Because minorities and majorities are treated differently, some say that:

> [F]ederalism provides a viable alternative to secession, since it is uniquely able to accommodate ethnocultural diversity. Federalism, it is said, respects the desire of groups to remain autonomous, and to retain their cultural distinctiveness, while nonetheless acknowledging the fact that these groups are not self-contained and isolated, but rather are increasingly bound to each other in relations of economic and political interdependence (Kymlicka 1998: 112).

The opposite view of the above claims that federalism increases the political instability, since it forces minority groups with a legitimate claim for secession to remain in the larger nation, and consequently encourages movements for secessionism (Kymlicka 1998: 111). There are some minorities which "seek a role in federal foreign policy, or to be directly represented in international organizations" (McGarry & O'Leary 2005: 274). It is also easier for the minorities in federal units to claim secession, because the system makes it possible with referendums where the peoples' support is gained, and it "provides the minority with political and bureaucratic resources that it can use to launch a bid for independence" (McGarry & O'Leary 2005: 275; Kymlicka 2005: 288; Smith 1995: 9). Their political confidence is then strengthened, and this affirms their national identity and makes secession more likely (Kymlicka 1998: 139).

Territorially concentrated ethnic groups can through a federal system promote and protect their own culture and values, and this "enables them to develop professional and political careers in the administrative and representative structures within their sphere of jurisdiction" (Martinez-Herrera 2010: 143). These territorial lines make it easier for the ethnic groups to implement segmental autonomy, and the groups can therefore justify secession with fact that the federal system is either abandoned or undermined, and it is no longer a contract between partners, based on mutual respect, tolerance and reciprocity (Adeney 2002: 15; Burgess 2006: 280-281).

Norman (2006) claims that the logical extreme of federalism is secession (Norman 2006: 119) and he explains it like this:

> When ethno-cultural groups come to see themselves as nations, this implies, by definition, that they seek self-determination *and* recognition in the family of nations. If a federal arrangement is being held out as a preferred alternative to secession or independence, it must also provide at least a degree of both self-determination and recognition. (Of course, the two often go together, most notably when powers of self-determination, or a right to secede, are given 'asymmetrically' to the minority-controlled provinces only.) In short, although it can be difficult to judge the appropriateness of any *particular form* of constitutional recognition for minority or majority groups, it is much less controversial that some form of recognition is appropriate and that its complete refusal is problematic (Norman 2006: 161, emphasis in original).

The fact that one majority within a province demands independence will create uncertainty for the other groups inside the province, as well as for the other provinces, and this is only increased if the independence is backed by a "reasonably democratic referendum" (Norman 2006: 174). Yet, the units are also made more homogeneous, and this leads to federalism being used as "an effective harmonizing device" (McGarry & O'Leary 2005: 269-273). Adeney (2000) agrees with this, and claims that it is not the homogenous units which are responsible for provinces managing or attempting to secede, it has more to do with the federal design (Adeney 2000: 3). It might also be that the provinces manage to negotiate a certain degree of autonomy within the nation-state (Tierney 2011: 121). The claim for autonomy is actually a vicious circle, where "autonomy leads to nation-building, which leads to demands for more autonomy, and so on, until well-mobilized demands for secession are inevitable" (Norman 2006: 74). This will lead the other national ethnic groups to feel they are left out, for example:

> [I]f only one of several provinces in a federation happens to be controlled by a national minority, and if that province is granted special powers (e.g. control over education, the right to secede, or the right to veto constitutional amendments) that the other provinces do not enjoy, then the people of that province are both symbolically recognized as being unique *and* given special powers to manage their uniqueness" (Norman 2006: 76, emphasis in original).

So even though federations are better able to manage different types of requests from the national majorities and minorities, symmetry is difficult to achieve, and asymmetry can lead to the slippery slope of increasing self-government. Therefore, "if limited autonomy is granted, this may simply fuel the ambitions of nationalist leaders who will be satisfied with nothing short of their own nation-state" (Kymlicka 1998: 141). And the nation-state will be reluctant to grant *any* territorial autonomy to national minorities, since this may lead to other minorities seeking secession as well (Woehrling 2011: 142). Autonomy demands also depend on the power of the government and state. If it can handle grievances through democratic

means and accommodate the demands, or it is able to repress the secession movement, conflict is less likely, because "the motivation for violent rebellion will be lessened" (Hendrix 2010: 273). But, asymmetry has both advantages and disadvantages:

> In most plurinational federations, only some constituent states, sometimes only one, are control-led by a national minority and thus insist on more local autonomy. The other constituent states, which are inhabited by the national majority, will more easily accept the trend toward a greater centralization of power at the level of the federation. A way of accommodating these different positions could be to accept more asymmetry in the powers allocated to the constituent states inhabited by the national minority, on the one hand, and to the states that serve as territorial sub-divisions of the national majority on the other. However, such an asymmetry is difficult to reconcile with the principle of equality between the constituent states as well as equality between all citizens of the federation (as long, at least, as equality of treatment is understood as identical treatment rather than different treatment according to different situations) (Woehrling 2011: 142).

This shows that although federations, especially multi-national ones, even if they allow minorities some degree of self-government, do not necessarily work as "conflict-regulating devices (McGarry & O'Leary 2005: 13).

> *Hypothesis 2: Cosmetic federalism and political asymmetry contribute to the feeling that the Northeast has no real power, which in turn contributes to recurring conflicts in Northeast India.*

3.3 Group level – Horizontal Inequalities

When there are different ethnic groups in a nation-state, there are also differences between these groups, differences which are not always apparent to outsiders. For the ethnic groups in question these differences are important, since they separate their ethnic identity from others. There are different views on why ethnicity matters when it comes to differences and identity, and the three main ones are primordialist, instrumentalist and constructivist. The primordial view of ethnicity is that "ethnic identity is etched deep in the subconscious of the individual from birth" (Stewart 2008: 8). They mean that religion and ethnicity is tied to the history of the people, and it is therefore unchangeable. They have been criticized for not being able to explain the change in identity over time and space, and cannot explain new or transformed identities (Ellingsen 2005: 312). This means that conflict follows naturally from differences, and that this will not be changed overnight (Lake & Rothchild 1996: 5). The instrumentalists on the other hand, "see ethnicity as being developed instrumentally, to be used by groups and their leaders in order to achieve political or economic goals" (Stewart 2008: 8). What matters is therefore how individuals, groups or elites treat identity and culture which is important and

"upon whether the elites see it in their interest to use religion and ethnicity as tools to mobilize support for conflict or not" (Lake & Rothchild 1996: 6; Ellingsen 2005: 313). Culture will then only matter as a basis for conflict if the elites chose to focus on it. Critics of instrumentalism feel that identity is not only focused on if the elites do it, it is embedded in something bigger than that (Lake & Rothchild 1996: 6). The last are the constructivists, who blend the two previous views, and say that a community controls and anchors culture and identity. It is therefore too big for a person to control or decide themselves, the masses matter as well. Identities may evolve and differentiate over time and place (Ellingsen 2005: 313; Lake & Rothchild 1996: 6). Constructivists "believe that ethnicities are frequently used instrumentally for political purposes, but their emphasis in on the 'making' and 'remaking' of ethnic boundaries that must occur to make such instrumentalism possible. Differences are emphasized, even invented, by leaders in order to construct social groups" (Stewart 2008: 9).

Because the conventional way of measuring inequality is individual-level, differences between groups and regions are not accounted for, and it is these differences that have shown to be "highly salient in ethno-nationalist and secessionist conflict" (Deiwiks et al. 2012: 290). When these differences manifest themselves as inequalities, where one group is prioritized over other groups, this is called horizontal inequalities. Horizontal inequalities can be based on different dimensions, political, economic, cultural and social inequalities between different groups (Stewart 2008: 3), and these dimensions have different impact on the chances of conflict (Østby 2008: 145). Stewart therefore categorizes the inequalities into four areas:

> [P]olitical participation; economic aspects; social aspects; and cultural status. Each of these contains a number of elements. For example, HIs in political participation can occur at the level of the cabinet, the parliament, the bureaucracy, local government or the army, amongst others. HIs in economic aspects encompass access to and ownership of assets (financial, land, livestock and human and social capital), employment opportunities and incomes. HIs in social aspects encompass access to various services (education, health, water, sanitation and housing), and human outcome indicators (such as measures of health and educational achievements). HIs in cultural status include the extent to which a society recognizes (or fails to recognize) a group's cultural practices (for example, in matters of dress, holidays and so on) (Stewart 2008: 13).

Langer and Brown (2008) particularly emphasize the cultural dimension of horizontal inequalities, and how it does not have to rely on political or socioeconomic inequalities. They define the inequality in cultural status as "as perceived or actual differences in the treatment, public recognition or status of different groups' cultural norms, practices, symbols and customs" (Langer & Brown 2008: 42). It does not necessarily have to be explicitly expressed by the state that that they afford difference statuses to the different cultures, and it is enough

that there is an implicit popular perception of differences in this cultural status, which creates anxiety (Langer & Brown 2008: 42). They therefore find a link between "culture and group mobilization, including violent conflict, is the extent to which cultural groups' practices and customs are *differentially recognized in and by the state"*(Langer & Brown 2008: 42, emphasis in original). Language is a part of this cultural dimension, the fact that one or more languages are deemed as 'official' languages, may make minority-language speakers feel as though they are not only significantly underprivileged, but also symbolically excluded, when the nation is promoting an overarching identity, where the minority-language speakers are dominated by the ones whose mother tongue is the official languages (Langer & Brown 2008: 47).

The social dimension of horizontal inequalities, "such as when groups use discriminatory educational policies to oppress minorities" (Østby 2008: 148), may also play a role in leading to conflict. Østby (2008) finds that "[r]obust results from panel and cross-section analyses show that social polarization and horizontal inequality are positively related to conflict outbreak" (Østby 2008: 143, 157). Even though it is not the direct outbreak of the conflicts which are discussed in this thesis, these horizontal inequalities may explain why the conflicts are recurring again after lulls in the fighting. These dimensions may also be connected:

> In contrast to multivariate approaches, we view the onset of civil war as influenced by a set of processes that interconnect political, economic, and social factors – a prime example of a complex adaptive system, in which many decision-making agents, each with their own characteristics and behaviors, interact with and change both the physical environment and other agents, leading to nonlinear and path-dependent dynamics" (Bhavani & Miodownik 2009: 35).

These differences between groups do not necessarily lead to conflict. When groups try to employ political routes and these routes are blocked, violence may be viewed to be the only viable option. According to Gibney (2008), groups are therefore "driven to achieve on the streets what they cannot attain through parliament or resort to gunfire because reliance on the ballot box is futile" (Gibney 2008: 25). In those cases where inequalities lead to conflict, their motivation may be personal, but it may also primarily be motivated by the individual's group identity, especially if the boundaries between groups are "relatively clearly defined and have some continuity over time" (Stewart 2008: 7). The fact that these boundaries must exist over time, is emphasized by Brown (2008) when talking about the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia. He says that there are "[s]imilar historical 'preconditions' and processes of demographic and socioeconomic marginalization created conditions of severe grievance

among nationally peripheral ethnic groups in all three separatist cases" (Brown 2008: 253). He compares the cases of separatist conflict, and finds that:

> We have seen, then, that in the three separatist cases under consideration here, a combination of demographic transformation and the emergence of spatial and ethnic horizontal inequalities created conditions ripe for conflict. In the Philippines, violence did emerge, but in the form of sporadic intercommunal rather than antistate violence. In Aceh, a separatist movement was launched, but with little popular support, and was thus quickly suppressed. In each case, the mobilization of *mass* support for an explicitly separatist movement was linked to changes in government policy that were interpreted by the ethnic minorities in question as evidence of direct state discrimination. While horizontal inequalities generated occasionally violent communal tensions, violent antistate mobilization was directly linked to politicization of horizontal inequalities and their association with the state *qua* state, rather than the 'other' ethnic group (Brown 2008: 279, emphasis in original).

The fact that these groups not only experienced relative disadvantage in comparison with the dominant ethnic or religious group, but also experienced "broader regional socioeconomic decline relative to the rest of the country" (Brown 2008: 253), leading to a double experience of horizontal inequalities.

Studies on civil war and conflict have found that ethnicity seems to be a dimension leading to conflict, especially in developing countries, and horizontal inequalities therefore seem to matter when it comes to violent conflict (Mancini 2005; Murshed & Gates 2005; Østby 2008; Cederman, Weidmann & Gleditsch 2011: Deiwiks et al. 2012;). Murshed and Gates (2005) finds that whether it is based on religion, language or something else, ethnicity "is a powerful organizing principle, far superior to social class", because when there are well-defined and ethnically distinct groups, this "resolves the collective action problem of mobilizing groups to fight one another" (Murshed & Gates 2005: 122). Fearon and Laitin (2003) also concludes with the fact that "ethnic antagonisms, nationalist sentiments, and grievances often motivate rebels and their supporters" (Fearon & Laitin 2003:76). The findings when it comes to horizontal inequalities are supported when Cederman et al. (2011) claim that "both political and economic inequalities contribute to civil war" (Cederman et al. 2011: 478). Stewart (2008) also argues this in her book:

> [G]roup mobilization along lines of identity is a central feature of many conflicts, taking a broadly social constructivist view of group formation. The salience of particular identities is increased by political action – by political leaders, media or the education system – sometimes in order to raise consciousness of own identities, sometimes of that of others. Yet, though we take a social constructivist line, we also argue that people themselves can become strongly convinced about the *essential* nature of their identities and that of others – which is why mobilization by identity can work. Moreover, while people can choose which identities are important to them, for the more enduring aspects of their identity they are not free to choose any identity, as it were, 'off a shelf', shifting to whatever seems more convenient at a given moment. Thus, while someone can readily choose to change their social club or to abandon it

altogether, Kenyans without mixed parentage cannot choose to stop being Kikuyu and become Luo, though they can choose to downplay their 'Kikuyuness'. In any particular case, history and social context will determine the possibilities (Stewart 2008: 10, emphasis in original).

In federal nations this is a particularly relevant assumption to look at, because there are often multiple nationalities, and the boundaries between these groups and the regions are not necessarily clear, and they may overlap. Violent struggles may arise over grievances when it comes to interregional inequalities (Deiwiks et al. 2012: 290).

> Diverse groups sharing the same political space (that is, residing within the same administrative boundaries that create local political units) create a scenario in which the local ethnic configuration affects the ability and willingness of elites at the center to accommodate minority groups. In ethnically heterogeneous regions within countries, local politics can become a zero-sum game, where state accommodation of one group disadvantages another. States facing demands from minority ethnic groups in this situation may be unwilling or unable to use accommodative strategies in response to minority demands because they will inflame other ethnicities in the shared space (Cunningham & Weidmann 2010: 1036).

Poorer regions are more likely to see conflict, especially secessionist (Deiwiks et al. 2012: 290), and larger groups are more likely to experience these rebellions as well (Cederman, Wimmer & Min 2010: 104-105). They show that:

> [C]onflict with the government is more likely to erupt (1) the more representatives of an ethnic group are excluded from state power, especially if they experienced a loss of power in the recent past, (2) the higher their mobilizational capacity is, and (3) the more they have experienced conflict in the past. In view of these findings, we conclude that ethnonationalist struggles over access to state power are an important part of the dynamics leading to the outbreak of civil wars (Cederman et al. 2010: 88).

In general Mancini (2005) claims that there is an indirect positive effect of horizontal inequalities on mobilization, when measured as "an intensity weighted sum of intergroup political, economic and social differentials", and the findings also shows that "the likelihood of civil conflict is highest when low within-group coexists with high between group inequalities" (Mancini 2005: 10). From this evidence, the last hypothesis is derived:

> *Hypothesis 3: Horizontal inequalities in Northeast India complicate the ethnic environment and lead to recurring conflicts between the ethnic groups due to different treatment.*

4.0 Methodology and Research Design

In this chapter, I present the choice of the research method, and the reasons for choosing such a method is discussed. Since the goal of this thesis is to explain the recurring conflicts in Northeast India, it is a case study, where Northeast India is the case scrutinized. A case study is characterized by the unit of analysis, not the topic (de Vaus 2006: 6; Merriam 2009: 41). Because there are seven smaller States within Northeast India, these units will be compared in order to explain the overall case of the Northeast. The research technique depends on the question asked. The question "Why do Indian's Northeastern States experience recurring insurgencies" is best answered through a case study of Northeast India. According to Yin (2009) case studies are the preferred method when "how" or "why" questions are being posed, where there are operational links which need to be traced over time (Yin 2009: 9). When the investigator has little control over events and relevant behaviors, and when the focus is on contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context, the case study is preferred (Yin 2009: 11-13). This description fits my question perfectly, since it is a "why" question, Northeast India is a contemporary real-life situation and it is not a case which can be controlled by anyone. Three different theories and levels of analysis are used in this thesis; all of them will be used as explanations for why there are recurring conflicts in Northeast India. I am therefore using these theories as a basis for my research, and seek to apply them to the case of Northeast India. There are of course many more features which can be studied in the case of Northeast India, but I have chosen three different levels to be studied thoroughly and carefully. This is important in a case study, because everything cannot be studied (Stake 2006: 3). This is also because there are multiple levels of components in this case, and we can only get a clear picture of the case if we combine the smaller elements (called embedded units) which make up the larger unit (Eisenhardt 1989: 540; de Vaus 2006: 6-7).

The goal of this thesis is to *explain* recurring conflict in Northeast India, not develop a new theory, nor make a new theory for generalizing purposes, and this is generally a goal for case studies (Lijphart 1971: 692; de Vaus 2006: 11; Chadderton & Torrance 2011: 53). It is because Northeast India is an interesting case that I choose it, and that interest will be illuminated through this in-depth study of the case (Merriam 2009: 48 and 81). Case studies give ideas and guidelines on which variables one should examine further through quantitative studies. Through this comparison of cases, we can see which variables are and which are not significant, and through this make more general theories. Case studies therefore serves as a corrective for quantitative studies, they inform the theories. As I progress in my research, I

will be able to ascertain in what ways the theories work and how they do not work for the case of Northeast India. This thesis is therefore what Moses and Knutsen (2007) claims that case studies usually evolve into, "a combination of scientific objectives: including both theory development and theory testing" (Moses & Knutsen 2007: 140). The thesis is descriptive, which means that want I want to accomplish is to have a thorough and reliable description of Northeast India and try to understand this case (Stake 2006: 2; Merriam 2009: 43). The data on Northeast India is interpreted and analyzed through the concepts of theoretical interpretations and the findings in the thesis are discussed in relation to knowledge and theories which already exist. By doing this the thesis contributes "to expanding the knowledge base" by modifying the existing theories (Merriam 2009: 70).This will be done by:

> Drawing from the literature wherein the theoretical framework is lodged you identify what is known about the topic (citing appropriate literature), what aspect of the topic you are going to focus on, what is known (the "gap" in the knowledge base), why it is important to know it, and the precise purpose of the study (Merriam 2009: 68).

By going through the theories on international borders, federalism and horizontal inequalities (see Chapter 3) and then applying these theories to Northeast India, an explanation for the recurring insurgencies is found. Because of the complex nature of the case, a complete solution for what can and should be done in order to stop the rebels is too ambitious in this thesis, but I hope that the analysis will give better insight into the international, federal and group situation there. Case study is therefore ideal in this situation, as explained by George and Bennett (2004), "case studies remain much stronger at assessing *whether* and *how* a variable mattered to the outcome than at assessing *how much* it mattered" (George & Bennett 2004: 25, emphasis in original). Because Northeast India is a single case study and the emphasis is on understanding the recurring conflicts, it is not ideal for generalizing. But, I hope that this thesis can be a basis for other case studies, where the theories can be applied to other places with recurring conflicts. This is a possibility, because, as Merriam (2009) claims, "[e]very study, every case, every situation is theoretically an example of something else" (Merriam 2009: 225).

The case of Northeast India is very complex, making it difficult with surveys or experiments, and the case study is therefore used to explain the causal relationship between recurring conflict and the three levels which will be investigated (Yin 2006: 84). Causality is not something that can be proven 100 percent, and Yin (2006) explains causality and theory as follows:

> A *theory* is simply an a priori explanation of why some educational phenomenon might have occurred the way it did. The explanation is causal in the sense that it identifies cause-and-effect relationships among a series of events, with each relationship being expressed as a hypothesis. The causal chain also must conclude with some measure-able outcome (Yin 2006: 86-87, emphasis in original).

He concludes that for case studies in general theory development is essential, and rival theories make a strong design for a case study (Yin 2006: 87).

Because of Northeast India's complex history and the varied States there, a statistical analysis would not sufficiently explain the differences and the analysis would therefore be too superficial. This is because in a statistical analysis the specifications are very broad, and a topic like *recurring conflicts* will be difficult to code correctly. The strict limitation of 25 battle deaths per year which UCDP/PRIO operates with, or 1000 battle deaths per year which the COW dataset uses (discussed in Section 2.1), will not be able to account for the case of Northeast India. It is not quantity, nor amount, frequency or intensity which is the focus in a qualitative case study, it is not the variables which are important, rather the "socially constructed nature of reality" is important (Denzin & Lincoln 2011: 8). In a case study there can exist more nuances in the definition of *recurring conflicts,* because the conflict can be analyzed as recurring as long as people are mobilizing or preparing for battle, even though there might not be up to 25 battle deaths per given year. This type of detail would interrupt "the process of developing generalizations", which is the goal of quantitative researchers (Denzin & Lincoln 2011: 9).

According to de Vaus (2006), case studies have been important to the development of the social sciences, and he discusses the different cases one can study (de Vaus 2006: 5-6). In my thesis, the case is the region Northeast India, a place therefore functions as a case. No analysis is able to take into account all relevant factors for a case, since the situation is too complex, and we can never provide a complete objective overview of the case, since "[o]bjective representation of reality is impossible" (Denzin & Lincoln 2011: 10) . But, as de Vaus (2206) claims:

> A well-designed case study will avoid examining just some of the constituent elements. It will build up a picture of the case by taking into account information gained from many levels. The final case study will tell us more than, and something qualitatively different from, that which any constituent element of the case could tell us. In the case of a school, the insights gathered from students, teachers, parents, administrators and community members will probably differ and, when taken together, provide a much fuller, more complex understanding of the whole than would the perspective provided by any particular element of the case. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts (de Vaus 2006: 7).

This is an explanatory case study, where I use theories to explain recurring conflict in Northeast India. Because this is a single case where there are three units of analysis; international, federal and group level, the result will be an embedded case study (Yin 2009: 50). An embedded case study will make sure that a fuller and more complete understanding of the recurrence of conflict in Northeast India is provided. The larger unit Northeast India is the focus, not the smaller analyses of the subunits (Yin 2009: 52).

There have been several good studies on Northeast India, but as far as I know, none who have been done on three levels of analysis and a comparison of them, and this thesis should therefore "be embedded in a well-informed assessment that identifies gaps in the current state of knowledge, acknowledges contradictory theories, and notes inadequacies in the evidence for existing theories" (George & Bennett 2004: 74). The problem with doing the analysis on three levels is the fact that there will be conflicting explanations, and it might be that they have to be reconciled in order to explain the case. In this case George and Bennett (2004) make it clear that the different interpretations of a case not necessarily compete with each other, they just explains different aspects of the case (George & Bennett 2004: 91-92, de Vaus 2006: 11).

The aim of this thesis is that it will be able to achieve what Merriam (2009) deems as necessary for a case study:

> Anchored in real-life situations, the case study results in a rich and holistic account of the phenomenon. It offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand its readers' experiences. These insights can be construed as tentative hypotheses that help structure future research; hence, case study plays an important role in advancing a field's knowledge base (Merriam 2009: 51).

There are many who deem the case study a valuable way to conduct research, among them Stake (1995), Lijphart (1971), de Vaus (2006) and Yin (2003, 2009). But there are also several things that need to be considered when using case studies. Because it is difficult to generalize from one single or a small number of cases, there are many who do not accept the case study as a useful tool in the social sciences (Kennedy 2006: 92; George & Bennett 2004: 25). According to Walton (1992) it is therefore important that "[c]ase studies get at the causal texture of social life, but drift without anchor unless they are incorporated into some typology of general processes, made casually explicit within the case, and ultimately referred back to the universe which the case represents, at least hypothetically" (Walton 1992: 124). And even though case studies are "particularly suited to situations involving a small number of cases with a large number of variables" (de Vaus 2006: 19), it is critical that these small-N studies

measure the variables correctly and take care when developing the design (Lieberson 1992: 114-115). And even if the case study is criticized for not being so involved with the quantitative research where frequency is important, "[c]ase study researchers are more interested in finding the conditions under which specified outcomes occur", than finding out how often they occur (George & Bennett 2004: 31). Lijphart (1971) claims that there is only one big difference between the statistical method and case studies; "The crucial difference is that the number of cases it deals with is too small to permit systematic control by means of partial correlations" (Lijphart 1971: 684), but this will depend on the question and measurement. Flyvbjerg (2006) summarizes common misunderstandings about case studies in his article, and reaches the conclusion that:

> It is correct that summarizing case studies is often difficult, especially as concerns case process. It is less correct as regards case outcomes. The problems in summarizing case studies, however, are due more often to the properties of the reality studied than to the case study as a research method (Flyvbjerg 2006: 241).

Flyvbjerg (2011) claims that some of the strengths of case studies are that by studying a topic in depth, we develop an understanding of what causes a phenomenon, and can understand the context and processes with the linking of causes and outcomes. He also emphasizes the high conceptual validity we can achieve through case studies (Flyvbjerg 2011: 314).

4.1 Validity

Yin (2006) has given a reasonable explanation to how validity is achieved in case studies:

> Internal validity is achieved through the specification of the units of analysis, the development of a priori rival theories, and the collection and analysis of data to test these rivals. Similarly, external validity is achieved through the specification of theoretical relationships, from which generalizations can then be made (Yin 2006: 88).

The external validity deals with generalizations and is "concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations" (Merriam 2009: 223; Yin 2009: 40). We can generalize if we have similar situations as Northeast India, through comparisons of competing explanations and precise descriptions of the cases. According to Yin (2009) case studies rely on analytical generalization, not the statistical generalizations used in quantitative research (Yin 2009: 43).

Internal validity is "seeking to establish a causal relationship, whereby certain conditions are believed to lead to other conditions, as distinguished from spurious relationships" (Yin 2009: 40). The issue of internal validity therefore deals with how the conclusion drawn in the

research matches reality; if we really are measuring and observing what we think we are measuring (Merriam 2009: 213).The problem of making inferences is a problem for internal validity, as well as not being aware of the fact that a third factor z may have caused the event y, and not only event x. Through the use of competing explanations for why there are recurring conflicts in Northeast India, and explanation building, the aspect of internal validity is addressed (Yin 2009: 42-43). By using multiple sources of evidence (the data on Northeast India is collected from different places, but they have the same findings), and establishing a chain of evidence (the theoretical and empirical knowledge are based on the research question, and the conclusions drawn will be based on the theories and explicit information of Northeast India), the importance of measuring what we think we are measuring is underlined. The goal is that the thesis will maximize its validity (King, Keohane & Verba 1994: 25; Yin 2009: 41-42). Because of the fact that case studies only look at one or few cases, there is no danger of combining cases that are dissimilar, or that do not really belong together. A small number of cases will allow for better validity, because of the "conceptual refinements". Because of the focus on fewer cases, this makes it easier to "identify and measure the indicators that best represent the theoretical concepts the researcher intends to measure" (George & Bennett 2004: 19).

The validity of a case study must be addressed in order to justify the method, as well as the reliability if the study; "The connection between reliability and internal validity from a traditional perspective rests for some on the assumption that a study is more valid if repeated observations in the same study or replications of the entire study produce the same results" (Merriam 2009: 221). King et al. (1994) also emphasize reliability and mean that the fact that the data-collection methods will give the same result when applying the same procedure is essential (King et al. 1994: 25; Yin 2009: 40). Unlike a statistical study, case studies cannot be replicated directly, but through referencing, any other researcher should be able to get the same results:

> Replication of a qualitative study will not yield the same results, but this does not discredit the results of any particular study; there can be numerous interpretations of the same data. The more important question for qualitative research is *whether the results are consistent with the data collected…* That is, rather than demanding that outsiders get the same results, a researcher wishes outsiders to concur that, given the data collected, the results make sense – they are consistent and dependable. The question then is not whether findings will be found again but whether the results are consistent with the data collected (Merriam 2009: 221, emphasis in original).

The stability of the data collected is increased by using documentary material, which is done in this thesis. These data are more objective than interviews or observations, since what is being studied is not altered by the presence of the investigator (Merriam 2009: 155). This thesis is based on written documents like primary sources such as newspaper clips, as well as secondary sources; research done by investigators with direct contact to Northeast India. The distinction between primary and secondary sources is relevant because:

> An important distinction for historians that qualitative researchers might also attend to is whether documents are primary or secondary sources. Primary sources are those in which the originator of the document is recounting firsthand experience with the phenomenon of interest. The best primary sources are those recorded closest in time and place to the phenomenon by a qualified person. Given this definition, most personal documents and eyewitness accounts of social phenomena could be considered primary resources. Secondary sources are reports of a phenomenon by those who have not directly experiences the phenomenon of interest; these are often compiled at a later date. Interestingly, the same document could be classified as primary or secondary depending upon the purpose of a study (Merriam 2009: 152).

Because of the situation in Northeast India, with different insurgent groups and warfare, and also because of their restriction on visitors to the area, I would not be allowed in to conduct fieldwork, and the thesis is therefore based on documents. In the case of India, English is an official language, so all relevant data can be found in English.

4.2 Variables in the thesis

I am expecting the relationship between the levels of explanation to look like this:

Figure 2: Relationship between dependent and independent variables
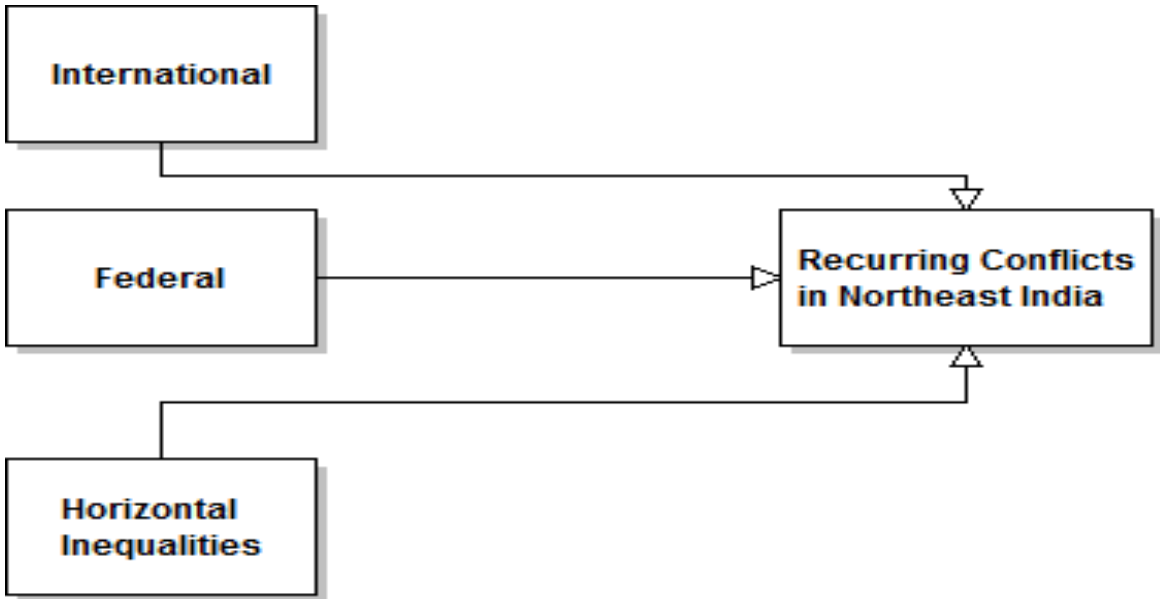
The three levels are therefore independent variables, while "recurring conflict in Northeast India" is the dependent variable. Figure 2 shows that I am anticipating horizontal inequalities to have an effect on recurring conflicts, the federal system to have an effect of recurring conflict, as well as the international borders to have an influence on the recurrence of conflict in Northeast India. This does not mean that all of the independent variables necessarily have an effect on the dependent variable, and it also does not exclude other independent variables from having an effect on the recurrence of conflicts.

The different levels have different variables (as explained in Chapter 3) and the relationship between the variables and the hypotheses is explained in this table:

Table 2: Relationship between variables and hypotheses

Level of explanation	Independent variables	Hypotheses
International	Safe havens Far away from capital Hostile neighbors	International borders offer a safe place for the rebels to hide and make it more difficult for the government to stop the conflicts, especially if the neighboring countries are hostile towards India, and this explains why there are recurring conflicts in Northeast India.
Federal	State power Asymmetry Cosmetic federalism	Cosmetic federalism and political asymmetry contribute to the feeling that the Northeast has no real power, which in turn contributes to recurring conflicts in Northeast India.
Horizontal inequalities	Identity Differential treatment	Horizontal inequalities in Northeast India complicate the ethnic environment and lead to recurring conflicts between the ethnic groups due to different treatment.

5.0 Empirical evidence for recurring conflicts

In this chapter the three hypotheses derived from the theory are tested in order to see which of them are supported and which has the most explanatory power when it comes to the case of Northeast India.

5.1 International level

In this section the first hypothesis is discussed: *International borders offer a safe place for the rebels to hide and make it more difficult for the government to stop the conflicts, especially if the neighboring countries are hostile towards India, and this explains why there are recurring conflicts in Northeast India*. State conflicts are accentuated by international borders, making conflicts twice as durable due to the rebel sanctuaries in the other countries (Toft 2003: 60; Rustad et al. 2008: 776; Buhaug et al. 2009: 546). There are five countries which needs to be examined when it comes to the international borders of Northeast India; Myanmar[6], Bangladesh, China/Tibet, Bhutan and Pakistan. These countries and their ties to the rebel groups are looked at in this chapter, as well as the foreign policy India has responded with regarding trade agreements and their Look East Policy.

The seven States in Northeast India share borders with China to the north, Bangladesh to the south west, Bhutan to the north west and Myanmar to the east, and approximately 99 percent of the borders are international (see the map at page 11) (Sahni 2002). A total of 5200 kilometers are bordering these four countries. These countries have either failed to control their own frontier regions, or they have been hostile to India, making it easy for the rebel groups in northeast to hide or get support from them (Bhaumik 2007: 26). Because of this the Northeast region is fairly closed off from the rest of India. The seven sister States are in the periphery of New Delhi, which means that the rebel groups have no chance of seizing control of the government of India, and they deny "territorial troops territorial control in rural areas" (Buhaug 2006: 695). However, because of their peripheral position, the rebel groups in Northeast are more likely to demand secession or a separatist state (a list of the insurgency groups can be found in Appendix B).

Based on Toft (2003) and her focus on capability and legitimacy, this is examined for the case of Northeast India (Toft 2003: 21). The capability of the rebel groups in Northeast is

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[6] In this thesis the name *Myanmar* will be used instead of Burma, unless there are direct quotes where Burma has been used.

dependent on the number of group members, as well as control over different networks and money (Toft 2003: 22). The number of group members is difficult to know, since these are insurgency groups, meaning people generally do not declare themselves as members of an insurgency. Control over the economic and political networks is something the largest groups have, due to corrupt politicians and taxing of the population (Hazarika 2004: 774; Lacina 2009: 1015). When it comes to money this taxation of the population also comes into play, as well as the surrounding countries willingness to trade this money for weapons, food and medical supplies. Legitimacy is the justness of the cause; in the case of Northeast the issue of *homeland* is especially relevant (Toft 2003: 23). Most of these groups fight for their own State, because they believe that this is what rightfully has always belonged to them, not the Indian state. Even though none of the secessionist groups have ever managed to break out of the Indian federation, there have been ten separatist wars in India, and they have had "substantial costs in terms of national, regional and human security, claims Lacina (2012a: 13).

What Buhaug et al. (2009) mentions as severe problems with government forces having to travel great distances in order to reach the place of the insurgency are all supported in the case of Northeast India: physical barriers such as mountains and lack of proper transport network, limited knowledge of local government and lack of support from the local population (Buhaug et al. 2009: 550). The narrow 'chicken neck' or 'Shiliguri Corridor' which separates northeast India from the rest of India is approximately 33 kilometers on the eastern side and 21 kilometers on the western side, a small stretch of land between Bhutan/Nepal and Bangladesh (Sahni 2002). This small corridor creates problems when transporting a number of armed men, and it also hinders easy travel from Northeast to North Bengal (Egreteau 2006: 7).

5.1.1 China

India and China has had a tense relationship ever since the "Indian intelligence supported the Tibetan armed struggle against the Chinese" in the 1950s, (Bhaumik 2007: 26). The Chinese were irritated with India about border disputes, resulting in wholehearted support to the separatist insurgencies in the Naga and Mizo Hills and in Manipur (Mukherjee 2007: 14). The Indian army cooperated with the Americans between 1951 and 1961, and they trained large batches of Tibetan guerillas, while the Naga insurgents were trained by the Chinese and Pakistani intelligence (Chadda 2002: 56; Bhaumik 2007: 28). The fact that the west and America supported India "only strengthened China's determination to help the Indian

insurgent groups, India's antagonism to Pakistan gave Pakistan the resolve to support these groups through East Pakistan joining hands with China" (Mukherjee 2007: 14). China and Pakistan actually set up a "China-Pakistan Coordination Bureau" in order to coordinate the insurgency wars in Northeast, especially in the beginning of the Naga insurgency. Large batches were sent to China and Pakistan to train, due to their element of surprise, while, in order to slip through, smaller groups were sent later (Bhaumik 1998: 314-315; 2007: 28; 2009: 159; Upadhyay 2009: 50). There are estimates which show that nearly 5000 Naga guerillas were trained in all by, among others, instructors from Pakistan's Special Service Groups (SSG), an elite special forces unit (Bhaumik 2007: 27; 2009: 158). The Chinese agencies are working through the ISI, and the intelligence agencies are "working in tandem to create mayhem in India's North-Eastern region" (Bhalla 2012). China has prompted all insurgent groups in the Northeast to demand secession from India, making the environment very unstable (Mukherjee 2007: 21).

These aids to different insurgent groups, among them NNC, the MNF and later the PLA of Manipur, have been considerable, although it has been confined to training and arms (Bhaumik 2007: 27; Saikia 2009: 148). The PLA's core leadership was trained in China, and the Chinese tried to politicize Naga leaders like Thuingaleng Muivah, the present general secretary of NSCN, as well. He has trekked to China at least three times via Myanmar's jungles, and the NSCN-IM keep in contact with Beijing through the ruling communists, like they have since the 1960s (Bhaumik 2009: 45; Dholabhai 2010). In the early 1980s however, the Chinese stopped supporting the insurgency groups in Northeast, and by now they seems to have stopped backing guerilla armies against one another. Nevertheless, there have been unconfirmed intelligence reports on "a fresh batch of PLA and ULFA guerillas received training in China since mid-2009" (Bhaumik 1998: 323; 2007: 26; 2009: 17 and 45). This is what Stewart (2000) is talking about when she mentions that conflicts needs support from the outside; arms, food and training (Stewart 2000: 251-252). The support the Chinese have given the rebels in Northeast has led to it being difficult for the Indian government to stop the rebels, leading to recurring conflicts.

Today India is worried about the use of Burmese as an access to the Northeastern States, as are China's strategic attempts (Aung & Myint 2001: 100). The Chinese intelligence agencies are cultivating contacts and use them to get information about the forces which the Indian Army has in the Northeast (Dholabhai 2010). Malik (2007) claims that what have upset the Chinese calculations are the strategic implications of India's 'Look East Policy', as well as

India's ability to have such a high growth rate as eight to nine percent, and the recent hardening of China's stance on the territorial dispute in the China-India relation is due to the internal reassessment of India (Malik 2007). In the case of China Hypothesis 1 is supported, they have been hostile to the Indian government and have helped the rebels in Northeast, making it difficult for the Indian government to stop the conflicts.

5.1.2 Pakistan

As claimed above, Pakistan has managed to create considerable difficulties for India by supporting the insurgency groups, both with and without the links to the Chinese intelligence. The Indian Government is also very quick to see the "hidden hand of Pakistan being almost all unrest within India, but there are strong indications that Islamabad has provided some fairly significant support to several insurgent movements in the northeast states" (Cline 2006: 140). The ISI actually has strong bases in Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya and Manipur (Bhalla 2012). By working together with China, the ISI has given a new dimension to the violence in Northeast by using other nations to destabilize India (Sekhon 2005: 11). Ever since the Naga insurgency started in 1951 Pakistan has helped the rebels with safe-havens and support in what was then East Pakistan (Sekhon 2005: 5; Sahni 2012). This support was given because it evened up Pakistan's loses in Kashmir, "by engaging inner turmoil in the troubled north-eastern frontiers of India and consequently weakening India's internal security system", which meant that the scope of activities under Pakistan's ISI expanded (Upadhyay 2009: 50). Between 1956 and 1971, the ISI backed the NNC, the MNF and the Sengkrak of Tripura (Bhaumik 2007: 27). In order to keep the pot boiling in the Northeast, ISI has also sponsored the groups National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT), All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF), ULFA, NDFB, NSCN, Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam (MULTA) and others (Sekhon 2005: 6).

After East Pakistan became Bangladesh, the links still persisted between ISI and the insurgency groups in Northeast India. During the 1980s the operations carried out by ISI was increased as they developed safe locations in and close links with the intelligence in Bangladesh. Both Pakistan and Bangladesh provided weapons, training and sanctuary for the Northeast rebels, and they were "instrumental in operating training camps in Bangladesh, where separatist rebels of the North East, collectively known as the 'United Liberation Front of Seven Sisters' were trained in subversive activities" (Bhaumik 2007: 26; Upadhyay 2009: 50). Upadhyay (2009) explains the activities like this:

> ISI's subversive activities are widespread and include: overt and covert financial and material support to the local militia; indiscriminate violence against civilians; creation of new ultra groups such as fake passports, visa and other documents; deliver weapons and counterfeit currency; engage and encourage drug transfer and trade; sabotage oil and gas pipeline and other key installations, communication lines, railways and roads and; accentuate communal cleavages by way of disinformation campaigns (Upadhyay 2009: 50).

Because of this Pakistani support, India's initial response was to back a neighboring insurgency, and this aggressive regional diplomacy was added to India's counter-insurgency repertoire in the mid-1990s. Islamabad's support for insurgents in Kashmir and Punjab, as well as support for the Northeastern rebels, has been reciprocated by Indian support for the rebellion in East Pakistan, and Mohajir outfits in Sindh and Balochistan. The mutual backing of the other country's rebel groups went hand in hand for two decades (Bhaumik 2007: 8; Saikia 2009: 146).

By all accounts the ISI still continue to aid or at least have a close rapport with the ULFA and the other rebel armies (Bhaumik 2009: 155). The ISI is using Bangladesh as a bureau in the Northeast region. According to Saikia (2009) "[i]t is from its erstwhile eastern wing that Pakistan launches their covert operations in India's mainland and North East India" (Saikia 2009: 145). Today, the ISI are training cadres from ULFA, ATTF and Islamist groups in "various insurgency tactics, including mortar firing and in the use of explosives, later on the lines of car, motorcycles and cycle bombs" (Saikia 2009: 151). They are not doing this alone, but are supported by the CIA, and they are fomenting insurgency in order to destabilize the whole region (*Times of India* 2011). According to a report a mushrooming of madrassas has emerged in Manipur, which now is a hub of ISI activity (Sekhon 2005: 8).

Since Pakistan does not share direct borders with the Northeast, they operate through Bangladesh. The fact that the neighboring countries give shelter to the rebels ensures that the rebels have control of the borders and can continue fighting. As Buhaug and Gates (2002) claim, "[r]ebels will push to gain access to an international border because neighboring countries often provide a safe refuge away from governmental troops, but also because weapons and natural resources are traded and transported across these borders" (Buhaug & Gates 2002: 422). The rebels in Northeast do not have to push to gain access to international borders, as already mentioned, 99 percent of this region's borders are international, making the environment very unstable (Baruah 2007: 6). For Pakistan, who fights against India in Kashmir, it is an advantage if the Government of India's attention is diverted away from Kashmir and towards Northeast India instead. They have therefore helped the rebels fight the Indian government and contributed to the recurrence of conflicts, supporting Hypothesis 1.

5.1.3 Bangladesh

Bangladesh emerged as a hideout already when it was East Pakistan, due to the Pakistani support to the NNC and their parallel government, the Federal Government of Nagaland (FNG). Officials in the Indian military actually estimate that as many as 3000 Naga guerillas were trained in East Pakistan (Bhaumik 2009: 157). Several batches of 200-300 militants started pouring over the borders, for training and weapons (Bhaumik 2007: 9). After this, as spite to Pakistan during the Bangladesh Liberation War, the Indian intelligence trained "thousands of Bengali guerillas in hundreds of camps located in the northeastern states of Tripura, Meghalaya and Assam as also in West Bengal" (Bhaumik 2007: 26). In mid 1978, Bangladesh first started providing shelter for the rebels, as a response to the Indian support, training and arming of the Shanti Bahini. One of the first groups to set up camps in the Chittagong Hills Tract after the birth of Bangladesh was the MNF (Bhaumik 2007: 31; 2009: 168).

According to different reports, there are several militant camps and hideouts in Bangladesh, with over a hundred camps located in the border areas alone (Upadhyay 2009: 51). Bhaumik (2009) claims that these numbers are exaggerated by the Indian intelligence, "but there is no denying that at least 63 camps and large hideouts of safe houses of eleven rebel groups from northeast India remain operational" (Bhaumik 2009: 174). He further claims that:

> After 1990, the DGFI developed close links with the ULFA, the NDFB, the PLA and United National Liberation Front (ULFA) of Manipur. Now even Meghalaya rebel groups like the Achik National Volunteers Council and Tripura rebel groups like the All-Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF) and the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) are all based in Bangladesh. The Indian government has recently claimed that 108 bases belonging to as many as 11 rebel groups from northeast India exist in Bangladesh (Bhaumik 2009: 169).

The ULFA, as well as other groups of Assam and Meghalaya, all have training areas in Bangladesh. The National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) is actually believed "to be the second largest insurgent groups present in Bangladesh" (Upadhyay 2009: 52). This makes Bangladesh the major foreign area, even though the Bengali population there is less then friendly towards the ULFA or the NDFB and the border is largely riverine (Bhaumik 2007: 31; 2009: 177). Das (2008) explains the border like this:

> The porosity of the border, lack of economic opportunities, poverty and underdevelopment, attitude of the people towards petty crimes, laxity in vigilance, nexus between criminals, and police and border guarding forces all contribute to the escalating trans-border crimes. Smuggling of cattle, arms, and other essential items, human and narcotics trafficking, counterfeit currency, kidnapping, and thefts are quite rampant along, the India-Bangladesh border (Das 2008: 372).

It is difficult to differentiate between the citizens of India and Bangladesh, making it easy to cross the border to a welcoming population, since the trans-border ethnic and socio-cultural ties exist even today (Das 2008: 369). This is what Cederman et al. (2009) are referring to when they mentions ethnic ties, and how they make it difficult for the government to differentiate and defeat the insurgents (Cederman et al. 2009: 413). The DGFI (Directorate General de Forces Intelligence) of Bangladesh and the ISI have a myriad of subterfuges in the Northeast, and they are beginning to "expand their aid to the insurgent organizations of North East India by including Islamist groups in the region" (Saikia 2009: 155). These two intelligence agencies are believed to stand behind several anti-India operations, which are facilitated by the overwhelming presence of the illegal immigrants in the Northeastern States. The bases in Bangladesh are also very strategic for the rebel groups, because "it provides them proximity to the Cox Bazaar port – the key receiving point of weapon consignment shipped from the black markets of South East Asia" (Upadhyay 2009: 51-52). Through this Bangladesh has emerged as the major transit base for smuggling of arms into India due to the fact that "ISI facilitates meetings between various Indian insurgent groups, arranges founds, weapons and ammunition for them" (Sekhon 2005: 3). Hypothesis 1 is strengthened when it comes to Bangladesh, because the country harbors many rebel camps and is a safe haven for the insurgency groups.

5.1.4 Myanmar

The 1643 kilometers long border India shares with Myanmar is just as dangerous as the one shared with Bangladesh, if not more so, since most of the insurgent groups have camps there (Saikia 2009: 152; Das 2010: 348). It is also an important border for India, marking the bridge to Southeast Asia, and because it is unfenced, it is used as a springboard for hit-and-run strikes from the militant outfits (Kanwal 2010; Roche 2010). Since Myanmar are geographically contiguous to four of the Northeastern States, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram, it is important that India maintains "a cordial relationship with Myanmar's non-democratic military junta to extend its influence in Southeast Asia and due to internal security concerns of its north-eastern states which are under continuous threat from various insurgent groups" (Routray 2011: 299). Mukherjee (2007) feels that "[u]nfortunately our pro-democracy and anti-military rule policy towards Myanmar, a military ruled state, led to misunderstandings with the country, with a result that Myanmar gave sanctuary to a number of north-eastern insurgent groups" (Mukherjee 2007: 78).

In the early 1990s, India shifted its Burmese policy, in order to search for stability in India's troubled Northeast region, to counterbalance China's growing regional presence as well as looking at the economic opportunities tendered by Myanmar (Egreteau 2008: 939). China has a high degree of political and economic influence in Myanmar, and this poses an obstacle for India to push for its own economic and strategic goals there (Egreteau 2008: 954). Aung and Myint (2001) explain the transition like this:

> There were waves of refugee exodus from Burma to neighbouring countries as a result of these military campaigns. In particular, hundreds of Nagas refugees fled to Nagaland in India in the beginning of 1992. India protested over this Naga refugee issue and asked the Burmese government to stop atrocities on innocent villages on the border. Later, India and Burma worked together of the repatriation of these Naga refugees to Burma. There were cases then Burmese army personnel crossed the Indian border in pursuit of the Burmese rebels. When the Burmese government started paying attention to Kachin insurgents of the Indo-Burmese border, an unwritten understanding developed between the authorities of the two countries: troops from either side could cross the border to a certain limit in pursuit of the insurgents. As in the 1970s, India realized that it needed a friendly relationship with the Government of Burma to contain its own insurgency problem in Northeast India, as some of these groups established their camps within Burma (Aung & Myint 2001: 93-94).

The military cooperation between India and Myanmar became more concrete in April 1995 when, in order to dismantle the base camps of the ULFA, the PLA (People's Liberation Army), NSCN-IM, NSCN-K and the CNF (Chin National Front), "both armies conducted a joint counterinsurgency operation called Operation Golden Bird against various ethnic rebel outfits" (Egreteau 2008: 941). During this operation about 40 insurgents were killed and a huge cache of arms was recovered (Kanwal 2010).

Myanmar and India have continued with these military operations after 1995, for their mutual benefit. In October 2000 Burmese military fired on what they believed to be Naga rebels, but what turned out to be an Indian patrol party, killing three Indian soldiers (Aung & Myint 2001: 96). On 17 November 2001 the Indian Home Minister L. K. Advani and Burmese Home Minister Col. Tin Hlang had a meeting, where it was agreed that the Burmese military would be extending its cooperation to Indian in countering the insurgents on the border (Aung & Myint 2001: 99-100). The Myanmar army raided several Manipuri rebel bases in November 2001, where they rounded up almost 200 rebels and recovered around 1500 guns. These operations are also necessary to control narcotics trafficking and to limit the increase of small arms in the region (Kanwal 2010). But despite "the counterinsurgency operations launched every winter against Naga and Manipuri rebels by the Burmese armed forces", New Delhi's expectations have not been fulfilled, even though they have been effective (Egreteau 2008: 946; Das 2010: 346). This is much due to the fact that the rebel groups have

exceptionally mobile base camps in the remote hills of western Myanmar, as well as reliable information networks which ensures their continued existence and resistance (Egreteau 2008: 947).

The heightened insurgency in 2002 led to the Assam Rifles guarding the Myanmar border (Ranjan 2012). The border problems between Myanmar and India includes among other things, the problems posed by Nagas and Mizos, who for decades have been living on both sides of the border (Aung & Myint 2001: 92). This is what Moore (2002) sees as a problem which can increase foreign policy conflict, especially between bordering countries (Moore 2002: 79). These ethnic ties between the Nagas and Mizos on both sides on the border make it easier for the Indian Nagas to get support from and be able to hide with the Burmese Nagas. However, Cline (2006) claims that it is not so much Burmese support to the insurgent groups which is a problem, it is more to do with the fact that Yangon itself has problems controlling its periphery, making the whole area perfect for hide-outs and rebel camps (Cline 2006: 141).

India started helping Burmese rebel groups in order to dislodge the NNC and NSCN, the MNF and the Manipuri rebel groups from their camps in Myanmar, and the Indian intelligence "ran hideouts and arms catches in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram for the Kachin Independence Army, the Arakan Army and the Chin National Front of Burma" (Bhaumik 2007: 27). It was relatively easy for rebel groups such as the Nagas, Mizos, Meiteis and Tripuras to find training facilities and safe havens in Myanmar, due to the fact that "[t]he Kachins of North Burma have for long been suppliers and trainers to the Nagas and host of other North Eastern ultras, notably the ULFA, the PREPAK from Manipur and the PLA from Tripura" (Upadhyay 2009: 52). The backing for these rebel groups has stopped and New Delhi tries to appease the Burmese military junta instead, and the junta then undertakes campaigns on the Northeast militants based on its Sagaing Division (Bhaumik 2007: 26). In order to make Myanmar turn against the Northeast rebels, India has offered military hardware and other concessions (Bhaumik 2007: 8). They have also offered tanks, military pieces and an assortment of other heavy weapons (Bhaumik 2007: 32).

Myanmar does not actively support the militant groups anymore, although they are "non-institutional subterfuges that take place in the lower echelons of the Burmese army – primarily for money" (Saikia 2009: 152). Even though Myanmar and India have not reached a diplomatic stand-off or conflict since independence, they "are cooperating in many fields, including countering insurgency on the border, sharing intelligence on a real-time basis,

promoting trade and investment" (Aung & Myint 2001: 87). This development has happened because the Indian government realized that "India's national interest is best served by a strong and stable Myanmar that observes strict neutrality between India and China and also cooperates with India in the common fight against insurgencies raging in the border areas of both the countries" (Routray 2011: 306). India has therefore tried to obstruct the external sanctuaries which can complicate negotiation, something Salehyan (2007) mentions as reasons for an environment with little information, and which have helped the recurring conflicts (Salehyan 2007: 227). The recurring conflicts are aided by Myanmar and the rebel groups have a place to hide on Myanmar's side of the border. The fact that Myanmar is also hostile to India strengthens Hypothesis 1.

5.1.5 Bhutan

Bhutan borders Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, and has usually been considered a peaceful royal kingdom. Nevertheless, "porous borders, weak Bhutanese armed forces, the strength of the militant outfits from the Northeast, the rise of Maoist insurgency in Nepal, the problem of "unwanted" refugees and a conflict of political interests have drawn the kingdom into the turmoil affecting India's Northeast" (Egreteau 2006: 135). Although Myanmar has taken over some of the camps to the Bodo insurgents, ULFA and the NSCN-K, insurgents in Northeast still play a role in the dealings between India and Bhutan (Aung & Myint 2001: 107). Bhutan depends on India for economic survival, due to its landlocked geographical position, which poses obstacles on the road to establishing independent foreign relation since it is a nation between the superpowers China and India (Hsu 2005: 3). Bhutan is, however, "a lot closer to India, and the two share intimate bonds in the areas of foreign affairs, economy, trade, education and technology, and national defense and security" (Hsu 2005: 9). This is why it is a problem that the border areas of Bhutan are used as safe havens for militants who have established sanctuaries in the Manas Reserve Forests and the Manas Game Sanctuary in lower Assam (Upadhyay 2009: 60). The southern borders of Bhutan have been occupied by rebel groups for a long time (Hsu 2005: 11). Bhutan has made no secret of the fact that the Northeast rebels have camps in the kingdom, contrary to what Bangladesh has done. Instead of a protracted military operation however, the royal government tried persuading the rebel leaders of ULFA and NDFB to leave Bhutan. This move was motivated by three factors; pressure from India, disturbances on Bhutan's southern borders increased and the Lhotshampa issue (Mazumdar 2005: 569; Bhaumik 2007: 178). The Lhotshampas are a group in Bhutan, and they resided near the Indian insurgents camps. Due to the fact that officials though the

insurgents might be "supplying arms to the Lhotshampas and causing a full-scale ethnic insurgency in the southern areas", it was necessary to act against ULFA and NDFB (Mazumdar 2005: 572). But these rebel groups would not leave, and their presence was gradually becoming a security threat for Bhutan itself, "as the groups were propping up Maoist presence owing to their strengthened links with the Nepalese Maoist insurgents" (Kumar 2004: 391). This has created uncertainty in Bhutan, and the rebel groups from Northeast India are therefore doing exactly what Siverson and Starr (1990) mentions as the dangerous element with international borders; they contribute to the potential outbreak of violence in Bhutan (Siverson & Starr 1990: 50).

This is not the only threat the insurgents present:

> There were also fears among royal government officials that India might carry out "hot pursuit" of insurgents across the border at some stage to deal with the rising problem. This would be a violation of Bhutan's sovereignty but, considering the mismatch between the capabilities of the two countries, Bhutan would not be able to respond to such incursions. Officials therefore thought it prudent to prevent escalation. In addition, the frequent attacks on Bhutanese citizens made the presence of the insurgent groups an internal security issue for Bhutan, which was forced to address it (Mazumdar 2005: 579).

The Indian government had a strategy which involved the royal Army of Bhutan demolishing nearly thirty camps of three separatist groups from Assam and northern Bengal in 2003 (Bhaumik 2007: 8).

Bhutan's Operation All Clear (OAC) was launched in 2003, and it was an operation where "the use of force to enact the 'will of the state'" reaffirmed the idea "that the state alone must remain the agency for the 'legitimate use of force' within its territory" (Kumar 2004: 392; Egreteau 2006: 137). OAC may be what future military cooperation between South Asian neighbors in the war against terrorism is all about, because "so far they backed insurgent forces against each other but now many of them are joining ranks in trans-national joint coordinated operations to control and neutralize insurgent armies" (Bhaumik 2007: 32-33). Due to its treatment of the insurgency groups, New Delhi has used Bhutan as a model for other nations in the region, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar, urging them to follow the examples set by Bhutan (Mazumdar 2005: 580). But, India also fears that the refugees from Nepal in Bhutan would join the rebels and make them stronger, as well as rebels remaining in Bhutan and still pose a threat to Indian security (Hsu 2005: 12). The case of Bhutan does not actively strengthen Hypothesis 1, since they are not hostile to the Indian government, but the

fact that they do not have complete control of their borders still makes it easy for the insurgency groups to hide there.

5.1.6 Look East Policy

The Look East Policy is supposed to benefit India's Northeastern States, and has been a solution the government of India has looked at in order to make it more difficult for the rebellions in Northeast to receive support from neighboring countries. The aim of the policy is to liberate the region "not only from its presently landlocked and peripheral status but also from the governmentalised modes of imagining it" (Das 2010: 344). The policy is posited as part of India's foreign policy, and it came about in the beginning of the 1990s (Das 2010: 348; Yuanying 2012). The major focus is on economic cooperation, and in the 21st century, "India began adopting specific action, transforming to all-round cooperation from exclusive economic exchanges and enlarging its foreign policies from the Southeast Asia to East Asia and Australia" (Yuanying 2012).

> Diplomacy, communications, economics and military means are other options, that India has explored in varying degrees. While on the one hand, through sustained campaigns India has sought to focus global attention on the nature and extent of eternal involvement in its troubled frontiers, on the other, it has also been trying to aggressively engage its eastern neighbours through its *Look East Policy*. The idea is to revive the historical and geographical links between North East India and the immediate neighbourhood. Post-partition, the disruption of the communication network with East Pakistan – rail, road and river links – put an end to the geographical advantage that the region enjoyed, located at the crossroad of the newly emerging nations of Asia. The 1962 border war with China and the increasing hostilities with Pakistan, transformed the region sharing 4500 kms of border with the newly emerging nations of Asia, namely, China, Burma, East Pakistan, Bhutan and Nepal, into a landlocked outpost of a large continental economy" (Upadhyay 2009: 94).

The Look East Policy involves opening points along the border with Myanmar, covering Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, and make this into continental connections, because it makes strategic and economic sense (Upadhyay 2009: 95).

The focus of the government is for Northeast India to become a gateway to Southeast Asia, and in order for the Look East Policy to be successful, Upadhyay (2009) claims that the Southern Silk Road and the Ledo Road need to be opened, because the Southern Silk Road connects "China to the Indian Ocean, from its Sichuan and Yunan province to Yangon (Rangoon) in Burma, the Ledo Road connects the Ledo town in Upper Assam to Yuban in China" (Upadhyay 2009: 98). This was something that President Kalam looked at in 2006, "in order to facilitate movement of people and commodities" (Das 2010: 348). Gokhale (2012) claims that India's Northeast and Myanmar should be the main target markets of many

products manufactured in the Special Economic Zone "to once again make India's north eastern states and northern Myanmar a natural economic zone, which they historically were, providing a sustainable economic life line to the north eastern states" (Gokhale 2012). There is illegal and legal trade between India and Myanmar through Tamu in Myanmar and Moreh in Manipur, so the economic linkages already exist. This will make it easier to make Myanmar the linking route between India and the other Southeast Asian countries, as well as the point of convergence (Gokhale 2012). The Look East Policy tries to work for peace and stop the recurring conflicts in Northeast, it a therefore a policy the Indian Government put forward as a response to the insurgencies. Because of the value the GoI has put on the Look East Policy, they feel that the international borders are a problem with regard to the insurgencies, and their policies therefore support Hypothesis 1.

5.1.7 Trade

Indian government has also looked at other methods in order to stop the recurring conflicts in Northeast. The other solution when it comes to better relationship between the neighboring countries is trade agreements. India and Myanmar signed a boundary agreement in 1967 (Routray 2011: 302). The main gateways from India to Myanmar, the Tirap and Changalang districts of Arunachal Pradesh are today important centers for illegal trade and recruitment (Upadhyay 2009: 61).

> A bilateral agreement was also signed to regularize and promote border trade to be conducted through Moreh in Manipur State of India and Champhai in Mizoram State of India corresponding to Tamu and Hri on the Burma side. The border trade was, accordingly, officially opened on 12 April 1995 at Moreh in the presence of the Indian Commerce Minister P. Chidambaram and the Burmese trade minister Lt. General Tun Kyi. Since that time, the Indo-Burmese relationship has been steadily improved and there have been a number of informal and formal visits of senior officials and ministers of the two countries (Aung & Myint 2001: 94-95).

There has also been other agreements, one "was signed to regularise and promote border trade to be conducted through Moreh in Manipur and Champhai in Mizoram corresponding to Tamu and Rhion the Myanmar side" (Routray 2011: 305). The Bangladeshi Cox Bazaar is a haven for militants and gun runners, and arms are smuggled into India in this tri-junction which is the 'no-man's land' between Bangladesh, Myanmar and India. The southernmost part of the relatively peaceful State of Mizoram, which lies in this tri-junction, "has emerged as a turf for both nacro-terrorism and gun running" (Upadhyay 2009: 61).

Narcotics is becoming a big problem in the Northeast, and although the military, paramilitary and police deployment are checking the insurgent activity, they are not able to keep narcotics out of the area. It does not help that that "[t]he Burmese army is believed to be already involved in heroin smuggling, and in any event the heroin-producing cartels of Myanmar enjoy substantial protection from the army which is also the ruling authority" (Bhaumik 1998: 326). The States Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland are identified as "extremely fragile areas along the drug trafficking route" by the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) (Upadhyay 2009: 57). Full-time drug trade is an attractive venture, since the Northeast insurgents draw their strategic and tactical inspiration from across the borders anyway, especially from Myanmar (Upadhyay 2009: 57). It has even gone so far that "[e]thnic separatists taking to drug trade, are also known to encourage tribal farmers to cultivate poppy, particularly in parts of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland and Assam" (Upadhyay 2009: 58).

The illegal border trade has been overlooked by the State governments because it creates a lot of economic activity in Northeast India. Sachdeva (2000) claims that certain areas in the region should be declared Free Trade Areas, since for all intents and purposes, they are practically free trade areas anyway. There is corruption at every turn since the commodities are not officially declared legal, and this is a problem solved by free trade areas (Sachdeva 2000). The border today is a barrier for India to both Southeast Asia and China, but given the strategic importance of the Northeast region, India needs to "devise a clear strategy to open up its eastern frontier to its neighbors", so that Myanmar can be seen as a continental gateway to Southeast Asia, not just a maritime one (Egreteau 2008: 956). Today the border with Myanmar is corrupt and problematic:

> Some quantities of weapons' supplies to militants in the Northeast are also being sources from various other countries. A number of weapons recovered from the ultras in recent times were of German, Italian and Israeli manufacture. These were also brought into India mostly through Myanmar, and it is believed that Dimapur has become a hub for transaction of such weapons by the militants groups. Sources of weapons recovered in the Northeast have also been identified as including Pakistan, Belgium, Thailand, Russia, USA, UK, Czechoslovakia, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia and Myanmar (Sahni 2012).

The smuggling routes through Myanmar and Bangladesh offer access to the rebels in the Northeast, and small arms from China appear to have been released into the region (Sahni 2012). Groups in both Nagaland and Assam are rumored to have received these arms consignments, and "in this regard, it is significant that China's three largest arms clients are

Pakistan, Burma and Bangladesh" (Upadhyay 2009: 48). The routes for transporting these illegal weapons in the region are:

> From here, the arms are routed to destinations in Burma and North east India, through different routes. The Naga Hills in Burma's Chin state, adjoining Manipur and Mizoram, is one of the prominent routes through which arms sneak into North East India. Some of the arms move up the CHT and enter India through Tripura, Assam, Meghalaya and Nagaland. It is noteworthy that Shillong, the capital of Meghalaya and Dimapur in the Assam-Kohina border, have emerged as the important chains in this underground arms network. Besides smuggled arms, country-made weapons also contribute towards the proliferation in a significant way (Upadhyay 2009: 56).

In general the arms into the Northeast have come through Myanmar or through Bangladesh, and Southeast Asia is the natural arms bazaar for the insurgents in the Northeast (Routray 2011: 316).

Based on the evidence in this chapter it becomes clear that the international environment contributes to the recurring conflicts in Northeast India. Not only does India's neighboring countries actively support and help the different insurgency groups, but they also make it much more difficult for the Indian government to know how many rebels they have to negotiate or fight with. Whenever there are lulls in the fighting between the government troops and the insurgency groups, the latter can go into hiding in China, Bangladesh, Myanmar or Bhutan, and there they can gather weapons, food and intelligence and build up their strengths before they start the insurgency again. Even though the response from the GoI has been trade agreements and Look East Policy, they have not managed to stop the recurring conflicts. Since the insurgency groups fight for the same thing all the time; sovereignty, the conflicts can be characterizes as recurring, because the entities in the conflicts, the GoI against whichever rebel group, are the same. Hypothesis 1 is therefore supported by the evidence in this chapter; the international borders in the Northeast make it more difficult for the government of India to stop the recurring conflicts. Nevertheless, not all of the seven States have recurring conflicts, even though they all have international borders, which show that Hypothesis 1 is not the hypothesis with the most explanatory power.

5.2 Federal level

In this section Hypothesis 2 is tested: *Cosmetic federalism and political asymmetry contribute to the feeling that the Northeast has no real power, which in turn contributes to recurring conflicts in Northeast India*. Narang (2003) summarizes the federal system in India as follows:

The scheme of the Constitution was described as one of 'cooperative federalism', but in fact India is a federation with a strong centre and with certain unitary features. It is so structured as to establish the supremacy of the union, while assuring the autonomy of the states in certain fields. The scheme of distribution of powers in the legislative, administrative and financial fields under the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution has been so affected as to make the union government more powerful than the states. In addition, the residuary powers are also conferred on the union government. The Constituent Assembly has originally assumed that residual authority would be left with the state governments, but after the agreement on partition, the Assembly decided that, as part of the general attempt to strengthen central powers, residual authority would vest in the centre (Narang 2003: 73).

The focus of Indian politicians has therefore been on making the centre strong, in order to maintain the unity and integrity of the country, as well as to serve the interests of balanced development. Indira Gandhi in particular advocated this unitarism and she wanted to restructure the institutional framework. The response from the States however, was to demand greater political autonomy, supported by the political participation of the people, which happened not only in the Northeast, but also in Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab (Narang 2003: 78). This unitarism is supported by the fact that the States in India are not the cause of Indian federalism, rather they are the consequence of it, since the Indian nation is not made up of pre-existing States and the federation-making has been carried out from above (Bhattacharyya 2005: 11, 14).

India has always been a country with many languages, regions, cultures, tribes, traditions, religions and communities, which are identity markers that have fuelled a certain degree of regionalism. These differences are recognized in different federal nations, which are constructed precisely for this reason. A federation is considered to be the solution for sustaining a durable peace in a diverse society, as it is more able to accommodate these distinct regional differences (Neisah 2000: 55; Adeney 2002: 9; Bhattacharyya 2005: 2-3; Miklian 2011: 26-27). This is what Norman (2006) talks about when he says that the minority groups in a nation can be a clear majority in their given State, and where they then can "exercise a number of sovereign powers" (Norman 2006: 88). Singh and Verney (2003) means that one of the important distinguishing features in India compared to other federations is the "reluctance to allow important demographic changes to be reflected in the composition of Parliament itself" (Singh & Verney 2003: 12-13). Neisah (2000) claims that the "rigid control exerted by the centre over the chief ministers of state governments" is one of the symptoms which have weakened the federal structure in India (Neisah 2000: 54). I will now see if this federal system is the reason for the recurring conflicts in Northeast India, thereby testing Hypothesis 2.

5.2.1 Power of the government and the States

How the Indian federation works in practice is essential for our understanding of the different States. The responsibility of the Indian nation is divided between the national government and the federal States, just what Kymlicka (1998) explains as what signifies a federal nation (Kymlicka 1998: 120). The working of the federation in regard to the power and influence of the separate States are summed up in short here:

1. The central government has the powers to control and command the State government, this through the office of State governor (Rajashekera 1997: 247).

2. There are three layers for the State as a federal unit: district, block/taluka/village, and the balance between these layers is difficult to determine (Mathew 2003: 281).

3. "Article 355 empowers the central government to intervene in the affairs of states under three circumstances: external aggression, internal disturbance, and when a state government cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution" (Rajashekara 1997: 249).

4. There is a basic division of powers, "with a 'concurrent list' enumerating shared powers such as civil and criminal law, and planning; a 'state list' enumerating state powers such as education, agriculture and welfare; and a 'union list' enumerating the centre's powers" (Neisah 2000: 57).

5. The State is subject to two conditions: "first, that the state legislation should have received presidential assent, and second, that nothing in this clause shall prevent Parliament from enacting a law with respect to the same matter, including a law adding to, amending, varying, or repealing the state law" (Rajashekara 1997:248).

6. Article 244 stipulates that there are two types of decentralized units within certain States. The Fifth Schedule concerns Tribal areas in Indian States, and the Sixth Schedule concerns the Tribal areas in Northeast India, and it covers Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura (Mathew 2003: 278).

7. "The states have to spend huge amounts of money on the welfare of backward castes, rural development, health, education, women, child development, agriculture, irrigation, road construction, and so on, and they do not have adequate financial resources to carry out development programs effectively" (Rajashekara 1997: 251).

8. Parliament may by law increase or diminish the area on any State, alter the boundaries or name of any State, form a new State by separation of territory from any State, or by uniting two or more State, or parts of States, or by uniting any territory to any part of any

State (Bhattacharyya 2005: 9). This means that the States are destructible and its identity can be altered or even obliterated (Rajashekara 1997: 246).

Based on these stipulations, the States do have some power, but the political centre controls the finance and laws. Because the States are not allowed to borrow money from outside the country, and without the consent of the Union government they cannot borrow public funds even within India, they are dependent on Central funds. This has created a government monopoly in employment, and encouraged patronage and corruption (Rajashekara 1997: 251; Sachdeva 2000). The District Council in the region "has power to levy and collect taxes on profession, trade, callings and employment, animals, vehicles and boats , even within the jurisdiction of the Regional Council" (Prasad 2004). New Delhi is therefore central in shaping the development of the region, since the planning, design, and financing of projects are done there. This means that the local visions of the future are not considered, and the local politicians are given incentives to encourage fiscal irresponsibility. Since 2001 a cabinet-level Department of North East Development has been included in the central government, even though no other region has this type of presence. Through this the autonomy of the States is compromised (Baruah 2003: 920, 924; Baruah 2007: 36). The result is:

> The existence of states and the very survival of their elected governments is dependent upon the will of the Union government. The single Constitution for the whole country (except Jammu and Kashmir), the unilateral power of Parliament to amend it, the provision for supersession of state governments and centrally appointed state governors, the discretionary powers of governors to reserve state bills for consideration of the President and his veto power over such bills, the affluence of the Union government, the vertical planning system, and the centralized party system have been mainly responsible for the aberration, distortion, and perversion of Indian federalism (Rajashekara 1997: 252).

When all the power is in the hands of the government, the States have no choice but to follow the stipulations that government has for them, they are not able to stop the rebel groups and the federal environment thereby leads to these recurring conflicts, supporting Hypothesis 2.

5.2.2 Asymmetry and the Sixth Schedule

In order for federalism to work as a conflict regulation mechanism among ethnic groups, there can be no great disparity between the units, be this either in size or in the distribution of resources (Adeney 2000: 22). If there is great disparity, this is called asymmetric federations. It needs to be emphasized that in a formal constitutional sense, India is not an asymmetric federation, but in practice this might be different (Tillin 2006: 62). It is also more reasonable to assume that asymmetric federalism will be legitimate in India, as it will allow the "diverse

communities to negotiate the federal compact to best suit their particular interests and aspirations" (Nesiah 2000: 63).

One aspect of the asymmetric federalism which exists in India is illustrated through the Sixth Schedule, and its stipulations on the Northeast. Under this Schedule, "the authority for land administration is vested in the autonomous District Councils, which run the administration in accordance with the old customs and usages of the region" (Singh 1987: 149). The elected councils in the States have the powers to administer justice in limited cases, to regulate the shifting cultivation, to determine the occupation or use of land, as well as to regulate customary law. These elected councils are elected for the autonomous districts and autonomous regions within those districts (Baruah 2003: 919). More closely they have these responsibilities and powers:

> The District Councils have powers to make laws for allotment, occupation, use of land, other than reserved forests for purposes of agriculture, grazing and other residential and non-residental purposes; management of unreserved forests, use of water courses and canals for agriculture purpose, regulation of shifting cultivation, establishment of village councils and town committees, administration of village policy, public health and sanitation, appointment and succession of chiefs or headmen, inheritance of property, marriage, divorce and social customs, money lending and trading by non-tribals within the autonomous districts. The Governor has power to alter laws or rules passed by the District Councils, which are in violation of the provisions of the Sixth Schedule. The Sixth Schedule, thus makes the Governor the head of the Autonomous District Council (Prasad 2004).

To date there are two District Councils in Assam, three in Mizoram and Meghalaya each, six in Manipur and one in Tripura, in total fifteen District Councils in Northeast India. Even though the Sixth Schedule was practically provided for the Nagas, Nagaland has no District Council presently (Prasad 2004). This Sixth Schedule, which creates a distinction between the tribal areas in Northeast compared to those in the rest of the country, is noteworthy when it comes to asymmetric federalism. "Unequal economic and political opportunities coupled with unequal access to resources, aggravate perceptions of being deprived among the disadvantaged, who clearly feel discriminated against in a setup that does not depend upon institutions but culture" (Upadhyay 2009: 32). The issue within Northeast India is that the States there are not as homogenous as other States in India, and this has led to secessionist conflicts (Adeney 2000: 18).

Because ethnicity emerged as an accepted principle of reorganization in Northeast, and tribal identities were emphasized, there were more demands for separate States, or reorganization of districts (Bhaumik 1998: 320). For example for the Bodos, which are a larger group than Nagas have not yet received their own State. Though it has been proposed a Bodoland

Territorial Council in Assam, to be created under the Sixth Schedule, this has not happened to date. The problem is that the Bodos will not be a majority in Bodoland, despite the fact that the State was proposed in order to protect their identity in the region where they live today (Bhattacharyya 2005: 7). This is an example of what Kymlicka (1998) mentions as a problem which creates political instability in federations; minority groups with legitimate claims for either their own States or their own nation are forced to remain in the larger nation or State (Kymlicka 1998: 111). The Bodos in Assam seek recognition and self-determination, and when they do not get this the response is secession and fighting in order to accomplish this (Norman 2006: 161). The asymmetry of the Indian Union and the feeling the Northeast has of being left out makes it easier for rebel groups to control the States, because the States have no real power, and this leads to recurring conflicts, and supports Hypothesis 2.

5.2.3 Integration and state capability of Nagaland and Mizoram

There has been a demand for greater autonomy for the States, in order to bring the government closer to the people. This is proposed to be accomplished through "increased financial resources, decentralization of planning, more independence in administrative areas for which states are constitutionally responsible" (Hardgrave 1983: 1172), and New Delhi has tried to accommodate some of this. It has "offered settlement packages that involve devolution of greater political and administrative autonomy, a much greater flow of federal funds for economic development (part of it also siphoned off to rebel coffers to keep them happy) and an expressed commitment to promote local culture and interests" (Bhaumik 2007: 5). Nevertheless, despite the rich natural resources which exist in the region, the States here remain at the bottom of the process of industrialization (Bhaumik 2009: 236). Even though it can be claimed that there is a cosmetic federalism existing in India, particularly concerning the Northeast region, not everyone agrees that the Northeast are overlooked. Mizoram's Governor A. R. Kohli said in 2004 that the Northeast is the "most spoiled child in the country", and did not agree that the Northeast was the most neglected region. Kohli "attributed the reason for this to the Northeast being pampered by the Centre, which "showers funds and other goodies" liberally on it" (*The Telegraph* 2004). The North East Students' Union, which is a conglomerate of youth organizations in the region, reacted to this statement, since:

> For decades now, the Northeast has been crying for attention from successive governments in Delhi and has been accusing the Centre of exploiting the region's rich resources without giving anything in return. This perceived neglect of the region has been the rallying point for

mass organisations to launch countless agitations and has also spawned armed insurgencies (*The Telegraph* 2004).

This has led to the questioning of state capability in Northeast, and this authority has failed to perform the basic functions of a nation, such as the monopolization of legitimate power, protection of citizens, and the influence on social and economic behavior. The effective role of the state has been absent, and this is critical in order to understand the instability in the region. The task of providing for its citizens is hindered by rival social forces (Hassan 2008: 58-59). The Indian government is so far from the region, and because of its apathy and neglect, the people feel alienated and distant. The legacy of colonial times have increased this feeling, since the reliance of chiefs and tribal strongmen instead of police have continued, and "the presence of the formal coercive authority of the state – the police and investigative agencies – is only symbolic" (Hassan 2006b: 9). Because of India's diversity, there are generally demands for a decentralization of power and resources, to levels below the state as well as the highest level (Bhattacharyya 2005: 22). And the problem is that when people lose faith in the state institutions, "they are compelled to resort to violence outside the sphere of formal politics, or in an extra-institutional space" (Chandhoke 2006: 7). As I will come back to later, these key functions that the state is responsible for are not taken care of, leading the people to turn to the militant organizations, which do protect the citizens. Many of the locals in Northeast think that the insurgency groups not always want political autonomy, but that they come about because of "the behest of security and intelligence agencies combating insurgency" (Baruah 2002: 4178; Baruah 2007: 9). Why there has been a loss of security is explained by Bhaumik (2009) like this:

> The legislative instability in northeast India has been caused by a combination of the following factors: (a) a political culture based on parochial loyalties, personalities and ethnic affiliations and not on ideology or long-term vision; (b) the small size of the assemblies, mostly comprising 40 or 60 members (only Assam has an 126-member assembly), which makes it possible to topple a ruling party or coalition by engineering the defection of a small group of legislators; (c) the designs of parties or coalitions in power at the Centre, as a result of which the office of the governor and the services of the central intelligence services are frequently misused to put in power a government of the Delhi's choice or bring down if it does not like; (d) the emergence of powerful vested interests (business-contractor lobbies, insurgent-NGO and military-bureaucrat combines) who seek to bring down a government that refuses to oblige; (e) endemic corruption, as a result of which legislators change loyalties when promised ministerial berths or chairmanship of state-owned corporations and (f) growing political competition. When these factors combine in a state, systemic instability is sure to follow (Bhaumik 2009: 222).

New Delhi initially tried to integrate the region, "[b]ut when such assimilationist efforts provoked discontent and armed revolt, Delhi responded with a combination of force,

monetary inducements, split and political reconciliation", leading to further alienation (Bhaumik 2007: 1; Routray 2011: 314). This alienation has in turn led to secessionist conflicts, which the government has not been able to stop. Baruah (2001) claims there are three reasons for why these insurgencies have turned into recurring conflicts:

> (a) the goal of counter-insurgency is limited to creating conditions under which particular insurgent groups or factions surrender weapons, come to the negotiation table on the government's terms and make compromises in exchange for personal gain; (b) counter-insurgency operations do not dramatically change the conditions on the ground that breed and sustain the insurgent political culture and lifestyle; and (c) the political initiative that accompany and supplement counter-insurgency operations try to utilise former militants in the war against insurgents, thus creating a climate of mistrust and a cycle of violence and counter-violence between anti-government and pro-government insurgents" (Baruah 2001).

As an example of the strength of the States in Northeast and how this matters, I have looked into Nagaland and Mizoram, where the latter has managed to end the insurgencies, and the former has had recurring conflicts the last 49 years. In the case of Nagaland, the NSCN-IM and the NSCN-K have been able to break the ceasefire rules many times, without a response from the Indian Government (Lacina 2009: 1015). This could be because they have led insurgencies in so many years, making the NSCN-IM one "of the most sophisticated militant outfits in the region in terms of their access to weapons and funding, level of training, and network of safe areas" (Lacina 2009: 1014). But for the citizens in Nagaland it has gone so far, that, in order to protect the civilians, "the local villagers have undertaken counter-insurgency measures by forming their own small groups of armed young men for security against insurgents raids especially at night". This is a role that should be reserved to the police, but the nation's security forces have remained aloof or inconsequential, and the role have passed to these "small village defense units, which are without any steady payroll and ill-equipped to fight highly armed insurgents" (Bhaumik 2007: 11; Goswani 2008; Goswani 2009a: 78). The NSCN-IM and the NSCN-K have their own security dictates, and exercise control which is normally reserved for the Indian Government (Baruah 2002: 4178; Lacina 2009: 1015).

If many theorist criticize what the GoI has done in Nagaland, they applaud what have been done in Mizoram, where "the process of state-making was such that it consolidated the public legitimacy and authority of reigning institutions among all sections of society, resulting in the strengthened capability of government agencies to provide services, manage group contestations and avoid breakdown" (Hassan 2008: 53). Mizoram has therefore been able to provide justice and maintain order. Goswani (2009a) attributes this fact to the inclusive

democratic institutional mechanisms, where there have been institutional successes which have "gradually strengthened peoples' loyalty to state agencies" (Goswani 2009a: 72). The government had a strategy where they appealed directly to the hearts and minds of the people, and they wanted to develop the society. Chandhoke (2006) thinks that "[t]he Mizo case clearly shows that when the Central Government sincerely sets out to tackle the structural causes of the insurgency, conditions become favourable for cessation of violence" (Chandhoke 2006: 28-29). Hassan (2008) explains the process in Mizoram like this:

> Greater participation of the Lushais in the power structure post-1986, the cementing of the pan-Mizo construct and its being made the core of the Mizo state had the effect of making state power better grounded in a broader in a broader Mizo society, envisaged this time as having the elements of both Lushais and non-Lushais. This grounding may have provided state leaders in Mizoram with cohesive power that in conjunction with an integrated social structure helped create the internal demand for restoration of peace and contributes to the state's continuing stability. Today, the state and civil society's persistent efforts to maintain this pan-Mizo edifice, sometimes at the cost of excluding non-Mizos, may be seen as the anxiety of the ruling elite there to sustain that social base of power and maintain order (Hassan 2008: 73).

As mentioned earlier by Kymlicka (2007), it is important that the groups in the nation are represented at the central level, that they control their own public institutions, that they are given their own rights over territory, as well as their language being made official in the territory (Kymlicka 2007: 36-37). The case of official languages is a problem for example in Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland, where the language or dialect spoken by an overwhelming number of people is not recognized, and the "state level official languages are not spoken by the majority of the people in the states" (Bhattacharyya 2005: 8). When groups and States are not represented properly in the political environment, there are greater chances for insurgency and recurring conflicts, giving support to Hypothesis 2.

5.2.4 Cosmetic federalism

The Northeast has been treated different than other States, leading to what Sanjib Baruah (2003; 2005) calls 'cosmetic federalism':

> It is unlikely that the protective discrimination regime of Northeast India will be removed any time soon, but the strains on the regime as a result of demographic change are quite apparent. In order to contain the potential political fall-out, the government of India, through constitutional amendments, has frozen the balance of seats reserved for STs in the state assemblies of the region. This should not obscure the political significance of the demographic facts on the ground: whether intended or not, the trend towards the minoritization of the indigenous populations, despite the symbolically significant phenomena of state legislatures and state governments made up of their representatives, appears to be one of the most predictable effects of developmentalism and cosmetic federalism in Northeast India (Baruah 2003: 933).

This cosmetic federal order came into being after Nagaland was formed, because it "became de-linked from the questions of either fiscal viability or of compatibility with the constitutional architecture of the pan-Indian polity" (Baruah 2003: 919). After the border war with China the Indian government felt the need to nationalize this frontier space, by extending the institutions of the state all the way into the international border zones. This has changed the demography of the region, making the political trends much more complex (Baruah 2003: 921-922). The central government of India "has powers over important areas and the national security establishment in New Delhi even has the capacity to monitor and control political developments" (Baruah 2005: 38). According to him, it was clear already from the beginning that "the promise of autonomy embedded in India's federal constitutional design, and the realities of the cosmetic federal regional order of Northeast India" would create tensions, because of the forced demographic change. The Constitutions Sixth Schedule reinforced and modified the tribal autonomy, while the nation-building process marginalized the tribal peoples in their own habitats (Baruah 2003: 925, 927):

> The governmental infrastructure of the region has been fundamentally redesigned to create a number of mini states, all endowed with the formal institutional apparatus of Indian state government. However, the new regional order is federal only in a cosmetic sense: the central government has powers over important areas and the national security establishment in New Delhi has the capacity to monitor and control political developments. This new arrangement has, in effect, enabled the penetration of the Indian state and has put some of the remote parts of this frontier region on a developmentalist track (Baruah 2003: 921).

It is a middle ground that would "enable penetration of pan-Indian institutions into the region and, at the same time, allay the fears of the people of this sparsely populated area about being swamped by immigrants from the rest of the country" (Baruah 2003: 927), only this strategy has not worked. The area is much more closely managed area than the rest of India, largely because of their small size. They have a relatively low population, but they are still organized into both districts and sub-divisions (Baruah 2002: 4178). These tribal regions have therefore remained under a largely military rule from the government, due to "both the continuing danger of unrest and the strategically vulnerable nature of the region" (Hardgrave 1983: 1174). The only beneficiaries of developmentalism and cosmetic federalism are the emerging modern elites, who are, through the development as an instrument in the project of nationalizing space, provided with "a mental map to navigate the increasingly problematic social reality around them" (Baruah 2005: 57). The fact that the Northeastern States are treated differently than other Indian States is what leads to cosmetic federalism and Northeastern inhabitants being unhappy with their government:

Military formations much larger than brigades – corps headed by lieutenant generals and divisions headed by major generals – are now stationed in Northeast India. In Vairengte, a Mizoram village, there is even a Counter-Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School for officers to fight the militias. And the Indian Army is only one of the security forces deployed in the region. Other paramilitary units controlled by the central government, such as the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the Border Security Force (BSF), the Assam Rifles, various intelligence bureaus and the police force of each state, are also involved in counter-insurgency operations. And, as I would argue in this chapter, overseeing these operations is a parallel political structure that works outside the rules and norms that govern India's democratic political institutions (Baruah 2005: 61).

Institution-building has to be the priority in Northeast India, because when the money spent to accelerate development goes right to the coffers of the rebel groups, the State does not receive the attention needed, leading to the policy-agenda overlooking the issue of the quality of institutions (Baruah 2007: 18-19). Effective states can only exist if the "state leaders have been successful in making themselves the sole provider of rules and sustenance in society, in opposition to their non-state rivals, who typically base their legitimacy on local resources, symbols and organisations" (Hassan 2008: 59). Because the Northeastern States feel that they are only being placated by the Indian government, and that even though they are given segmental autonomy, they still do not have legitimate control, the rebel groups will continue to fight for secession. They continue with their attacks on the government, leading to recurring conflicts, because they feel that the federal system undermines them, and the relationship between the Northeastern States and the government is not based on mutual respect and reciprocity, thereby justifying their claims for secession (Adeney 2002: 15; Burgess 2006: 280-281). This evidence leads us to believe that Hypothesis 2 is supported and that the cosmetic federalism leads to recurring conflicts.

5.2.5 "State power" of the rebels

Cosmetic federalism is not the only problem, it operates together with "ambiguous financial incentives, and social and political expectations, that are largely absent from discussions of the law's implementation" (Farrelly 2009: 289). The common people pay taxes to the rebel groups, and the total annual budget of these rebel groups is comparable to certain sectors of government spending. The groups also "extort huge ransoms from business groups and government organizations" (Bhaumik 1998: 323). This is the major source of income for these militant groups, usually called extortion, but Baruah (2002) claims it can be seen as "taxation by non-state actors" (Baruah 2002: 4180; 2007: 12). This illegal taxation is an issue in the whole of the Northeast, and "it is not merely insurgent organizations, but mainstream political parties, student organizations, corrupt officials, all resort to coercive and illegal

modes of 'tax collection' from businesses – big or small" (Baruah 2005: 73). The insurgents are able to gather better information about the inhabitants, based on popular perceptions and credible rumor rather than what is officially declared as income, and they can therefore impose higher taxes because they can assess income more realistically (Baruah 2005: 73). The extremist groups can provide the security the state cannot for the ethnic groups, which is why the funds granted to development in the region goes into the hands of militant groups (Baruah 2002: 4180). It is also difficult to separate the political actors who are rebels and the ones who are mainstream, because "[a]rmed rebels at times could be on the same side as significant sectors of civil society and even mainstream local politicians – all united against pan-Indian authorities" (Baruah 2007: 12). The rebels even spend their money in a way that the Indian government should note:

> Much of the funds raised are spent on routine expenses such as cadre salaries, arms purchases and operational expenses, but huge funds are also invested in companies and stocks so that the rebel groups do not have to worry about funds in future to keep the organization going (Bhaumik 2009: 256).

The fact that Indian security forces are known for human rights violations such as torture, illegal detention, rape, disappearances, and destruction of villages, property, foodgrains and lifestock, does not create trust among the people. But since preying on the people is also done by the militant groups, the population is caught between armed groups (Hazarika 2004: 773).

> The government has implemented varying degrees of autonomy for particular tribal groups, but this has certainly been a double edged sword politically. As particular groups have been singled out for more autonomy, other groups have increased their demands in response. Any suggestion of the government favoring certain groups has commonly resulted in intercommunal violence. The government's treatment of the various ethnic groups appears to be much less a deliberate policy of 'divide and conquer' than it does as being a short-term reaction to political exigencies (Cline 2006: 143).

The violent groups in the region enjoy impunity for different crimes and claim a share of the development money that comes from New Delhi, and in exchange for this they use coercion to support a certain politician or organization, "for example, by tampering with elections, enforcing general strikes, or threatening political rivals" (Lacina 2007: 174).

> Finally, armed groups serve as the thugs of the inter-communal struggles that beset the region. Some of this violence is a product of direct competition between separatist organizations for access to important smuggling routes or resources. But it is also the case that in an environment where legal institutions are inefficacious, insurgent groups can gain power and money by providing security and vigilante justice in the face of inter-communal brutalities and by deploying violence against other groups in order to initiate voters, change migration patterns, drive peasants from their land, practice indiscriminate retribution for crimes, and maintain existing social hierarchies. Thus, multiplication of violent groups is a self-reinforcing cycle of competitive mobilization" (Lacina 2007: 175).

Because the insurgency groups have this much power in their respective States, it makes it much easier for them to continue fighting even when the fighting mainly kills civilians and rebels (see Table 1 and Appendix A). This contributes to making the conflicts in Northeast recurring, because the rebel groups are never completely beaten or a peace is not negotiated with all factions of a rebel group, thereby supporting Hypothesis 2.

5.2.6 Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act

The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) was introduced by the Indian government in 1958, as a response to the violence in the Northeastern States (Ministry of Home Affairs 2013). Not only does the state lack legitimacy, but unified identities, common civic spaces, or a common civic basis of citizenship are not created through mobilization, and this fragmented social structure leads to a state system that does not really fit (Hassan 2008: 78). These democratic issues are escalated by the controversial AFSPA, which needs to be questioned, even though "India has steadfastly resisted any international attempt at monitoring the AFSPA regime" (Baruah 2007: 21). Bhaumik (2007) explains the problems like this:

> Extra-judicial killing, ethnic cleansing and large-scale massacres followed by substantial internal displacement – India northeast has witnessed it all. The growth of civil society in the strife-torn region has been impeded by the lack of democratic space, because special laws, all very draconian and very unpopular with local communities, have remained in effect in the Northeast to fight the insurgencies. The high level of legislative instability in some of the northeastern states have been compounded by the growing linkages between legitimate political parties and the underground rebel factions or those who have gained state patronage after surrender (Bhaumik 2007: 2).

In order to deal with the insurgents, one of the key elements for stopping national fragmentation is AFSPA, which provides the legal framework where the security forces have sweeping powers to engage in counterinsurgency operations against armed rebellions in the region (Baruah 2007: 1-2; Farrelly 2009: 283). The special powers of the armed forces are summarized in Appendix C, and AFSPA stipulates that any officer in the Indian Army can go to extreme measures in order to stop the rebels (Ministry of Home Affairs 2013). The law has not been received positively, because:

> Emotions against the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) – a law that gives sweeping powers to security forces engaging in counterinsurgency operations – reached explosive new heights after the abduction, suspected rape, and killing of Thanjam Manorama in July 2004. The Indian Army claimed that Ms. Manorama was a member of the banned People's Liberation Army, and it challenged the Manipur State government's authority to hold an inquiry, citing the controversial act. In July 2004 about a dozen Manipuri women protested the Manorama incident with an act of unusual courage and eloquence. Standing naked in front of the Indian army's base in Manipur's capital city Imphal, they held a banner that read

"Indian Army Rape Us". There is little more than Manipuris can do to draw the nation's attention to the vulnerability that civilians, especially women, feel during counterinsurgency operations (Baruah 2007: 1).

In Manipur there has been other protests as well; "another Meitei Irom Sharmila has continued an indefinite fast (broke only by force-feeding) for six years" as a way to get the Indian government to listen, saying that "she will only eat when the controversial act will be revoked (Bhaumik 2007: 18; 2009: 113). This is perhaps "the world's longest continuous protest of this kind, the hunger strike led to her arrest and force-feeding at a hospital". Local human rights activists outwitted security and intelligence officials and whisked her away to New Delhi in October 2006. She hoped to arouse the nation's conscience by continuing the hunger strike, "but she was arrested and removed to a hospital, where she continued to be fed forcibly" (Baruah 2007: 2). It is claimed that this law has led to illiberal democracy in Northeast India, because "beyond the intimidating presence of armed forces in the region, it also empowers officers to act without the normal restraints of warrants and permissions (Baruah 2007: 54; Rajagopalan 2008: 33).

The AFSPA is criticized by national and international human rights organizations due to its violation of human rights laws and norms. It applies to Nagaland, Manipur and Assam, as well as in Tirap and Changlang districts of Arunachal Pradesh and in specified areas of Tripura, after having been amended to account for changes in names and States after its implementation in 1958 (Baruah 2007: viii-2; Bhaumik 2007: 18; Farrelly 2009: 289). However, all rebel groups in the region are targeted:

> In a borderland of many other secrets, the number and diversity of militant outfits in Northeast India is striking. All are targeted by the AFSPA. Some of these rebel movements are no longer the potent forces of the past and have made tentative ceasefire arrangements. Some have fully surrendered. Some continue to build economic power through extortion. Others still, as far as can be discerned, have continued to recruit and expand their military operations. In Manipur and Assam, in particular, some are still engaged in fighting not only with the government but also with other armed groups. The area that is nowadays most often identified with this ongoing sub-national warfare in Manipur, which hugs a long border with western Burma. It was about 15 active armed groups and a further 25 inactive groups; although there is, like much else, still some confusion about the exact number (Farrelly 2009: 287).

The failure to resolve the federal issue in Northeast has led to "violent agitations and insurrections, which in turn led to the emergence of the security state" (Bhaumik 2009: 207).

This chapter has looked at the federal nature of the Northeastern States, in order to see whether it influences the recurring conflicts. As becomes clear from the empirical evidence, the asymmetric relationship between the different Indian States, and through this the issue of

cosmetic federalism, does influence the recurrence of conflicts. The way the ethnic minority groups in Northeast are treated gives legitimacy to their cause of secessionism, and this in turn leads to both support from the people and continued recruitment to the insurgency groups. This in turn leads both to recurring conflict and to continued recruitment to the insurgency group, which leads to recurring conflicts. This is true for the four States where there are recurring conflicts today; Assam, Manipur, Nagaland and Tripura, but it cannot explain why there have not been recurring insurgencies in Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya. Because all the States in Northeast India are treated equally by the Indian government, neither of them is given any real power, and Hypothesis 2 is therefore partly supported due to the fact that four out of seven States have recurring conflicts. There have been conflicts in the three other States, but they have not been recurring due to the federal environment. The conflicts in Arunachal Pradesh are mostly due to "'overflow' of violence from Nagaland", and cannot be attributed to the federal environment (Sahni 2002). The conflict in Mizoram ended because Rajiv Gandhi managed to arrange a peace agreement with MNF in 1986, and the Mizos then received what they wanted; statehood (Bhaumik 2007: 14). As can be seen in Appendix A, there are still fatalities in Meghalaya due to insurgencies. Egreteau (2006) claims that there is increasing instability in Meghalaya, and that the State may be entering a period of destabilization due to the State being controlled by criminal outfits (Egreteau 2006: 88). The evidence from these three States therefore show that Hypothesis 2 is only partly supported, and in the next section on horizontal inequalities I will see if Hypothesis 3 might explain the upsurge in conflicts in the three latter States.

5.3 Group level – Horizontal Inequalities

Horizontal inequalities are differences between groups based on the dimensions political, economic, cultural and social differences, which are the differences Stewart (2008) base her analyses on. In this section the horizontal inequalities in Northeast India are looked at, thereby testing Hypothesis 3: *Horizontal inequalities in Northeast India complicate the ethnic environment and lead to recurring conflicts between the ethnic groups due to different treatment*. In India all of these differences are apparent, but in Northeast the differences are first and foremost based on ethnicity and cultural differences. It is therefore the issue of identity, when it comes to "us" as an ethnic group, compared to "the other" ethnic group. The whole region is diverse, linguistically, religiously and ethnically, but this in itself may not necessarily lead to conflict. As emphasized by Langer and Brown (2008), it is first when some

of the groups perceive that they are differently treated from other groups that conflicts may arise (Langer & Brown 2008: 42), which is what has happened in Northeast India.

According to Sachdeva (2000) the Northeast is in fact quite egalitarian compared to the rest of India; the type of poverty which exists in other parts of India is not present there, making the region more homogeneous (Sachdeva 2000). Nevertheless, there is an enormous diversity which is reflected in the fact that there are over 500 different ethnic groups, and 110 of these are major groups, and the only thing they have in common is "a partially mongoloid heritage" (a list of the ethnic groups in the respective States can be found in Appendix D) (Mukherjee 2007: xiii). Based on the fact that it is only their heritage which is similar, it is easy to see why there might be a conflict due to identity issues such as religion, ethnicity, language and political status. This heritage is also a fact which separates the Northeast from the rest of India, since they do not look like Indians. The ethnic groups in Northeast India stems from China (Tibet) and the Indochinese peninsula, and this makes the appearance of Northeast Indians closer to Indochinese than to the ones from the Indian continent (Egreteau 2006: 9; Mukherjee 2007: 5, 10). This is illustrated through the Inner Line, which originally formed the security parameter of the colonial India, but which is still in force today in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram. The line is "designed partly to keep "primitives" bound to their "natural" space in the hills, the Inner line defined the limits of the "civilizational" space beyond which the colonial state would not provide security of property" (Baruah 2007: 26). The Northeast is therefore differently recognized by the Indian state than the other parts of India, and this creates a reason for insurgency for the groups in that region. There are therefore not only horizontal inequalities between the ethnic groups in Northeast India, but there is also an "us vs. them" attitude between the people in Northeast and the rest of the Indian Union. Through this Hypothesis 3 is supported.

5.3.1 Cultural Horizontal Inequalities

Groups in this situation are tribes, and there are more than two hundred tribes in Northeast India, a feature B.P. Singh (1987) means that makes this region the most diverse and one with more variety than any other place in the world (Singh 1987: 28; Bhaumik 2000: 143). The definition of a tribe is:

> A tribe is usually composed of a number of clans, kinship groups and extended families. All its members have a sense of belonging to a community which once had common ancestors. This unit had found its cementing force in the tribal animistic faiths. The tribal dialects, which

in several instances, such as with the Bodos and the Khasis, have developed into sophisticated modern language, have provided cohesion to the tribal way of life (Singh 1987: 147).

The largest ones are the Assamese, the Bengalis (both Hindus and Muslims) and the Manipuris (or Meiteis). Tribal populations make up about one-fourth of the total population in Northeast, but in the States Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland, tribals are in majority (Weiner 1989: 53; Bhaumik 2000: 143; Sachdeva 2000). The tribals speak languages of Tibeto-Burmese origin, and there are almost as many languages as there are tribes (Bhaumik 2000: 143). According to Baruah (2007) it is not uncommon for someone to speak three languages, because the different dialects are so linguistically different that even among the same major tribes they may not always understand each other (Baruah 2007: 22). The Nagas for example, have a total lack of a common language. The languages are so different that "[e]ven today people of different Naga tribes and even clans can speak to each other only through Nagamese (Assamese tinged by a smattering of words of different dialects) or English (Mukherjee 2007: 31). Language is an important part of a person's cultural identity, and the fact that only some of the languages spoken in Northeast India are classified as an official language, means that the minority-language speakers feel excluded from the Indian society, feel that they are dominated by the majority-language speakers, and that they are not recognized by the Indian government. This is what may lead to conflicts (Langer & Brown 2008: 47). Only two languages in the Northeast are recognized as official, Assamese, spoken by 48,81 percent of the people in Assam, and Manipuri, spoken by 55,19 percent of the population in Manipur (Bhattacharyya 2005: 6; Maps of India 2013a). This different treatment of language in Northeast leads to horizontal inequalities because they groups are differently recognized by the Indian government and this makes for greater chances of recurring conflicts (Langer & Brown 2008: 42), giving support to Hypothesis 3.

5.3.2 Political Horizontal Inequalities

Rajagopalan (2008) talks about recognition of ethnic groups, and mentions three ways through which they can be recognized in the Indian Union:

> The first is cultural recognition by inclusion of their language in the Eight Schedule of the Indian Constitution, which lists India's national language. This carries symbolic rather than material value. Second, recognition as a Scheduled Caste or Tribe is an acknowledgement of previous oppression and present disadvantage and carries with it access to special quotas for education and employment. The third type is recognition through the creation of a territorial unit, usually named for the group (Rajagopalan 2008: 39-40).

As already mentioned, there are only two groups which have an official language, the Assamese and the Manipuris. Recognition through the definition of a Schedules Tribe or Caste is through the Constitution of India and only some of the castes in the region have this recognition. The creation of territorial units named after the groups have also been done for the larger groups; both Nagaland and Mizoram were forged from Assam after Independence due to the separatist insurgencies, and Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh were formed because it ensured that China could not make claim on these territories (Chadda 2002: 51). The States were carved out because of the "anticipation that adequate political representation would quell the upheaval" (Upadhyay 2009: 89). This has turned out to have catastrophic consequences, because, as Deiwiks et al. (2012) claim "[d]espite the hope that regional institutions may appease ethnic group in their demands for self-determination, it seems that these institutions can fuel secessionism and hence increase the probability of secessionist conflict" (Deiwiks et al. 2012: 301). This difference in political recognition and participation is an example of what Stewart (2008) calls political horizontal inequalities (Stewart 2008: 13). This can lead to conflicts because the groups will want equal treatment, and the conflicts will continue to occur until the Indian government treats them equally. As long as the Bodos in Assam, with their unique identity and large population not receive the same treatment as the Nagas when they lived in Assam (meaning, being granted their own State), the issue of different identity will continue to lead to conflict in Assam.

It is important to be aware of the fact that ethnicity has not always been such a sensitive issue in the Northeast. Singh (1987) claims that:

> The political impact of the recognition of each tribe for the conferment of certain administrative and electoral privileges that was set in motion in 1935 has been strengthened with reservations of jobs for Scheduled Castes and Tribes under the Constitution of India. The economic aspirations and, above all, politicization of ethnic identity in electoral processes, and demands for development programmes among the areas of a particular tribe, have all continued to further politicize ethnic bonds. There is a far greater awareness of ethnic labels after Independence than at any earlier time (Singh 1987: 33).

Because of the Inner Line the tribals in Northeast rarely had anything to do with the rest of India, but after independence and democratization this all changed. This internal border was between the 'settled area' and the people who lived beyond it. The international border was then known as the 'outer line' (Maaker & Joshi 2007: 381-382). This Inner Line did not only prohibit outsiders to enter what are now the States of Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram, it only prohibited Indian citizens to enter these areas (Baruah 2003: 919). Because of this, this Line compromises "the constitutional right to free movement in India, and this is

also coupled with the issue of restrictions on property ownership by non-tribals (Baruah 2003: 932). The fact that the people in the Northeast are ethnically distinctive and because they share a common history, culture, values and language, the identities have been easy to form, and this is a important and dangerous instrument for mobilization (Upadhyay 2009: 34). The collective action problem is therefore easily solved, and the importance of this is explained both by Murshed and Gates (2005) and Stewart (2008). This group consciousness may lead members of the group to help each other, or to a sense of pride, or to a more strict observance of cultural and religious practices, thereby not leading directly to inter-group conflict. But "[c]onflicts arise when a group asserts its identity by attacking the identity of other groups and, above all, when a claim for group rights is perceived by other as threatening" (Weiner 1997: 492). When these claims are either supported, or when one group attacks another, the horizontal inequalities deepen and may lead to recurring conflicts, thereby supporting Hypothesis 3.

5.3.3 Inter-group relationships and support from the people

Inter-group conflicts are the battles which have been waged after the ethnic groups have received their own States, but are still fighting among themselves. I will compare Nagaland and Mizoram here, sue to their similarities as Christian States with similar history. The Naga uprising for example did not end even though the Nagas received their own State in 1963 (Kotwal 2000: 758). The uprising was weakened when the main political party, Naga Nationalist Council (NNC), split along those who wanted their own State within India and those who wanted to continue the fight for their own nation, creating the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) in 1978 (Kotwal 2000: 758). Repeated splits along tribal lines have now lead to several factions of the NSCN fighting each other, among them NSCN-IM, NSCN-Khaplang (NSCN-K), and NSCN-Khole-Kitovi and NSCN-U. The clashes between the factions of NSCN have actually claimed more lives than the initial insurgency (Bhaumik 2004: 223; Upadhyay 2009: 103; Sahni 2012). The different Naga factions have been driven to resort to gunfire in order to get the recognition they want from the Indian government, they only saw violence as an option to achieve this (Gibney 2008: 25). The problem for the Indian Government is that what the factions of NSCN want is a composite homeland for the Nagas, which would mean stretches of territory from not only other States in India such as Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur, but also parts of Myanmar, where Nagas live as well. Because of this, the Indian government is not able to placate or negotiate with the rebels, or they only achieve to ceasefire with one of the factions, not all, and this leads to recurring

conflicts. It is therefore not only conflicts based on the horizontal inequality between the Naga identity and the Assamese identity, it is also horizontal inequalities between the different Naga identities against each other. The Naga conflict is an example where the same insurgency group is not the same all the time, but nevertheless the conflict is recurring in Nagaland, because it is always Nagas fighting for secession. The Nagas in Myanmar provide shelter for the Naga insurgents, making it difficult for the Indian Army to negotiate (Bhaumik 2009: 3; Upadhyay 2009: 102-103). This support might explain more than Hypothesis 1 can in the case of Myanmar; because this means that it is not Myanmar supporting the rebel group, but it is the ethnic cousins the rebel groups in India have across the border who give them shelter and training. The insurgency in Nagaland started uprising in the other States as well, because if the Nagas received their own State, why should not the Mizos, the Khasis, the Garos, the Bodos and the Karbis as well (Bhaumik 2009: 18). These various tribes which entered India in medieval times have made homeland demands "that has often led to conflicts and created substantial internal displacement" (Bhaumik 2009: 141). Because of these effects of horizontal inequalities, when the groups feel that they are treated differently, there is a greater chance of secessionist claims from all groups in a region (Deiwiks et al. 2012: 301).

In Mizoram, where the initial insurgency has ended, the smaller tribes have also broken out; "[t]he Hmars had fought shoulder to shoulder with the Lushais and the other groups loosely called the Mizos, but once Mizoram became a state, the Hmars demanded a separate autonomous region" (Bhaumik 1998: 320). Today, the "Hmars, Lais, and the Maras have joined the Chakmas and the Reangs to challenge the Mizos" (Bhaumik 2009: 35). The Mizos have consequently been successful in building up a common Mizo identity, not dividing it along tribal lines. And through this the conflict in Mizoram has ended, giving support to Hypothesis 3. This is because there do not exists great horizontal inequality in Mizoram, but neither are there recurring conflicts there. Identity is therefore something that differentiates between the seven States in Northeast and this is then a factor which leads to recurring conflicts. Because of the recognition the Indian Government decided to give to some of the ethnic groups in the region, the way was paved for other ethnic groups as well. Almost every insurgent organization has origins in an ethnic distinctiveness, which means that the conflicts have been waged along ethnic lines (Saikia 2009: 157).

Because the people do not trust the Indian Government to provide for their security, ethnic militias are formed in order to provide for their own security. And when one ethnic group does this, another might see this as a threat to their security and then again form their ethnic

militia (Baruah 2007: 11). There is a limit to how far an ethnic group can go to defend their cultural identity before another group feel that their identity is threatened, leading to an escalation of violence and arming of ethnic groups (Upadhyay 2009:35). Therefore:

> The creation of the new states and autonomous councils in the North East have indeed opened a Pandora's Box. The Bodos, the Karbis, the Dimasas, the Hmars and even the Garos, who have produced more chief ministers in Meghalaya than the Khasis, have militant groups fighting for new states, autonomous regions and even independent homelands (Bhaumik 2009: 23).

The Nagas number about half the Bodos, who feel that they should either, be given their own state within India, or outside it. The Kukis in Manipur are ethnic cousins of the Mizos, the latter have a state to themselves, while the former do not. The Nagas and the Kukis have been pitted against each other due to the Kukis' demand for a separate homeland, and this has led to the emergence of a separate Zomi identity. The Meiteis in Manipur refuse to recognize the Bishnupriyas as Manipuris, while their own identity "has been reinforced by the rich Manipuri language and culture" (Bhaumik 2009: 35). Many smaller ethnic groups feel that generic larger identities have been imposed on them, and they want "separate territorial identities in the form of autonomous councils or states" (Bhaumik 2000: 145). This is exactly what Brown (2008) talks about when it comes to the double experience of horizontal inequalities; the Northeastern States and the people there feel that they are treated different than the rest of the country. Smaller ethnic groups in the region also feel that there is differential treatment between them and the dominant groups in the region (Brown 2008: 253). These facts give support to the idea that ethnic identity is an explanatory factor for the recurring conflicts, supporting Hypothesis 3.

5.3.4 The issue of migration

The issue of migration is important with respect to Northeast India, because it has led to powerful mobilization among the ethnic groups. While the States that border Myanmar have been spared this kind of migration, they have tribal demands for a homeland; making it a conflict-ridden region everywhere you turn (Bhaumik 2009: 141). Northeast has always been a land frontier which have attracted large-scale immigration from the rest of the sub-continent, and because of this unstoppable demographic transformation restrictions were made, such as the Inner line and the Sixth Schedule (Baruah 2003: 930). The demographics have changed in Assam and Tripura, and this happened especially after the Partition divided the tribal populations from their ancestral lands. Migrants from Bangladesh (and before that East Pakistan) have come in huge flows as economic migrants, and a sizeable number have

also come from Myanmar and Nepal (Bhaumik 2000: 144). The responses among the original population have ranged from "complete hostility to xenophobic intolerance, that more often than not manifest as violent insurgencies intrinsically linked to the politics of ethnic cleansing" (Upadhyay 2009: 67). Through this infiltration of migrants the demographic balance has been upset, and it has also diluted the identity of the people. Bengalis are now a majority in Tripura and in Assam Bengali Hindus and Muslims nearly outnumber the Assamese (Bhaumik 2000: 144; Upadhyay 2009: 74). Mukherjee (2007) sums up the effects of the migration in Northeast India like this:

> The effects of this migration are – Tripura which had a tribal majority in the early 20th century is now a tribal minority state with a consequent long drawn insurgent movement by the tribals; Sikkim which earlier had a Lepcha and Bhutia majority now has a Nepalese majority; Assam today; has at least 30% of its population as Bangladeshi immigrants, with another 8-10% from Bengal, Bihar, UP and Rajasthan, which has changed its demographic profile and given birth to the Assam (ULFA), Bodo (NDFB and BLT), Karbi and Dimasa insurgencies; Assam now also has a minority Islamic fundamentalist movement, reduced per capita income and forest wealth;... in Meghalaya it gave birth to the Khasi (HNLC) movement and the anti non Khasi agitations; and in other hill states harsh anti immigration policies (Mukherjee 2007: 12).

In Meghalaya the Bengalis have remained relatively calm, while in Tripura the Bengalis have retaliated to the anti-migration movements (Bhaumik 2000: 149). In order to not disrupt the current political balance too much through demographic changes, the government has made a constitutional amendment where "the balance between reserved and unreserved seats in the assemblies in Arunachal, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland has been frozen" (Baruah 2007: 50). The vibrant civil society in Northeast India has an impact on the working of the state and its institutions, and several movements, for example student unions in Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura, as well as associations in Mizoram have "been at the forefront of the movement to expel illegal migrants" (Bhaumik 2009: 225; Upadhyay 2009: 92). Bhaumik characterizes that there have been eight displacement instances over the recent years, and these have been induced by the conflicts between the ethnic groups. These are:

> (a) the displacement of Hindus and Muslims of Bengali descent from and within Assam;
> (b) the displacement of *Adivasis* (also called tea Tribes) and Bodos within and from western Assam;
> (c) the displacement of Bengalis from Meghalaya, particularly Shillong;
> (d) the displacement of Bengalis from and within Tripura; (e) the displacement of the Nagas, Kukis and Paites in Manipur;
> (f) the displacement of the Reangs from Mizoram;
> (g) the displacement of the Chakmes from Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram and
> (h) the displacement of Karbis and Dimasas during the DHD-UPDS feud in October 2005" (Bhaumik 2009: 130, emphasis in original).

All these diverse groups, both migrants and tribal population, share the same political space, exhibiting what Cunningham and Weidman (2010) mentioned as a "zero-sum game, where state accommodation of one group disadvantages another" (Cunningham & Weidman 2010: 20). The GoI therefore struggles with accommodating all the diverse identities in Northeast India, and this creates horizontal inequalities among the groups. The state leaders are pulled in different directions, because "[e]thnic violence in the region exists alongside inter-ethnic contestations over resources and opportunities" (Hassan 2008: 54). Stewart (2008) mentions this as a constructivist view on the issue of identity, which Upadhyay (2009) supports, where people are mobilized based on the "*essential* nature of their identities, although this identity is increased by the leaders of the movements, who are capable of mobilizing these ethnic constituencies (Stewart 2008: 10, emphasis in original; Upadhyay 2009: 34). The people in Northeast have a dual identity, where their identity as Indians is surpassed by their ethnic identities, of class, tribe or religion (Singh 1987: 59; Farrelly 2009: 288).

> While the radical profiling approach of mainstream India has had an effect on the victims, the victims in turn are becoming radical and anti-Indian, not necessarily by taking recourse to the gun, but by demanding autonomy, redressal of problems such as unemployment, the institution of discriminatory and 'draconian' acts, centrist condescension, and corruption. In certain parts of North East India, earlier Hinduized populations are beginning to retrace their roots to their age-old ancestry. This is becoming evident with certain members of the younger generation adopting names that indicate their earlier identities (Saikia 2009: 143).

Harriss (2002) tells a story about a man from Mizoram, and his experience with the Indian security forces, which illustrates how similar the ethnic groups are in the area, and how it is difficult for the government to separate the tribals from each other.

> As we drove he talked to me about his family, and as he did so he started to recount first his father's experiences as a police officer, and then his own, witnessing the heavy-handed action of Indian army jawans as they sought to control actual or supposed insurgents. It was evident from the way in which the young man described these experiences that he had been profoundly alienated from India through his perceptions of these actions. Then later in our talk he happened to mention that for his research he would need to visit an archive in Rangoon. It would be simple he said. He'd take a horse from his village, ride to the border, cross the river and then just travel down to Rangoon. Nobody would stop him, he said, because nobody would know that he was not Burmese, given the continuities of language and ethnicity between Mizoram and other parts of the North East with northern Burma. Then he surprised me by saying that, if there were a different and more democratic regime in Burma, then he and he thought most people in Mizoram, Manipur and Meghalaya, at least, would rather be part of Burma than of India. It is perhaps only because Burma is not quite like Pakistan that the nationalities issues of the North Eastern states have not become quite so explosive as those of Kashmir. The slogan of some people in the Khasi Hills of Meghalaya is "Khasi by blood, Indian by accident" (Harriss 2002: 2).

The States in Northeast feel that they are not really a part of India, and they are not given any real power (discussed in Section 5.2), and this issue does not make it easier to remove the

horizontal inequalities which exist in the region. Some of the States are carved out of Assam, and they have never been independent from India. However, Manipur for example, does not have this experience. Manipur was a princely state, ruled by a Maharaja. On a visit to Shillong, his house was surrounded by soldiers and he was severely misinformed since he was separated from the Manipuri public opinion, his advisors and his council of ministers. Finding himself virtually imprisoned signed an agreement to fully merge his State with India. A number of militias in Manipur today view this merger as illegal and unconstitutional, and there is bitterness about the merger in Manipuri public life today, especially concerning the way it was signed. Due to this there is "a de facto parallel structure of governance directly controlled from Delhi that manages counter-insurgency operations", even though Manipur has, as all other States in the Union, an elected chief minister and an elected state legislature (Baruah 2005: 9, 60).

This shared ethnicity has been an issue with regard to the Look East Policy (Section 5.1.6), because this policy will make it easier for the communities living on the border to visit their ethnic cousins, especially with regard to Myanmar (Das 2010: 350-351). The relationship between the different tribes is tense. According to Das (2010) there are many tribal organizations including the Naga Student's Federation (NSF), which "in the not so distant past have cautioned 'their girls' against marrying the non-Nagas". There are closer ethnic ties with the people across the border then with the one in India (Das 2010: 354).

> The Indian experience suggests that preferential politics facilitate the mobilization of groups to demand preferences or their extension, creating political struggles over how the state should allocate benefits to ethnic groups, generating s backlash on the part of those ethnic groups excluded from benefits, intensifying the militance of the beneficiaries, and reinforcing the importance of ascription as the principle of choice in allocating social benefits and facilitating mobility. A major consequence of preferential policies, therefore, is that they create a political process influencing the ways in which groups organize, the demands they make, the issues over which policies are debated, and the coalitions that are formed. From a political perspective, it is the impact of preferences on ethnic group cohesion, group status, and political mobilization that is significant. Preferential policies are intended, not to destroy the system of ethnic hierarchy, but to improve the position of groups in within the hierarchy. The purpose of such policies is not only to facilitate the upward movement of some individuals, but to move an entire group within the hierarchy. Positional change, not individual mobility, is the aim (Weiner 1989: 172).

Nevertheless, the variance in the levels of separatist contestations cannot be explained by the "ethnicity-based grievance discourse", which is important but it can only explain one aspect of the struggles in Northeast (Hassan 2008: 57). Sahni (2002) does not agree with this:

> [E]ven where militant groups direct their rhetoric and their violence against the symbols of the state, the underlying motives and ideologies are more correctly interpreted in terms of

conflicting tribal identities and histories of internecine warfare based entirely on tribal, sub-tribal, or tribal-outsider rivalries and corresponding competition over limited resources, especially land (Sahni 2002).

The conflicting tribal identities and the competition over limited resources prove the argument that horizontal inequalities contributes to recurring conflicts, supporting Hypothesis 3.

5.3.5 Recognition and treatment by the Indian government

The Indian government has not managed to adequately handle the insurgencies and the treatment of the ethnic groups has not been fair, and this is difficult to rectify:

> Article 355, for example, provides for reservations of appointments of schedules castes and schedules tribes to the administrative services, and other provisions provide for reservations in parliament and state assemblies. Thus, the Indian government in its Constitution and in subsequent legislative and administrative decisions, confirmed in court rulings, established the policy that the government can and should allocate seats in legislative bodies, admit student into educational institutions, grant scholarships, provide employment in government services, and make available various other entitlements to individuals on the basis of membership in a group. Once this principle was established, the political controversies then centered on two ancillary questions: what groups should be entitled to preferences? What particular preferences should be provided? (Weiner 1989: 162).

The relationships between the ethnic groups are rooted in age-old suspicion. All groups or tribes in the Northeast have developed their own word to denote "the outsider", be it other tribal groups, those who live on the plains compared to those in the hills or the indigenous population against the migrants (Singh 1987: 56). These outsiders saw much of the land in Northeast as wastelands, while it had alternative uses for the locals, who were shifting and settled cultivators as well as hunter-gatherers. Due to "the modern politics of numbers", the tension between the outsiders and the indigenous "became a perennial source of conflict in Northeast India" and the question of whose land it was came to the fore (Baruah 2007: 26). The common mode of livelihood in the hills is slash and burn agriculture, and this confuses most outsiders. "The dispersed and mobile populations could not be captured for corvee labour and military service by the labour-starved states of the plains; nor could tax collectors monitor either the number of potential subjects or their holdings and income" (Baruah 2005: 8). The extremist groups therefore already have a support base from the beginning, through a well-defined group of people (Upadhyay 2009: 33). Even those groups who were content to belong to the larger identities, for example in Assam during the anti-foreigner movement in 1980s, where the sword-arm was the Bodos, the Lalungs, the Rabhas and the Mishings, "all want separate states now" (Bhaumik 2000: 145). Through the differential treatment the Indian government has given the different ethnic groups, the horizontal inequalities have deepened and this has lead to greater chances of conflict, supporting Hypothesis 3.

5.3.6 Identity in Nagaland and Mizoram

In order for people to identify with the state and feel connected to each other, they need a common identity. In this context factors such as ethnicity, religion, language, common history, etc. matters. In order to see how this fit with the case of Northeast India, examples from Nagaland and Mizoram are used again, since these States differ in the area of identity.

There is no overriding Indian identity that rules in Nagaland and Mizoram, and this is the reason why they demanded to become separate nations (Cline 2006: 127). As said in the background for the two States, there are twenty major tribal groups, and over twenty sub-tribes in Nagaland. While in Mizoram there are only six tribes in Mizoram, with six smaller sub-tribes as well. In Mizoram all the tribes except two speak the same language, Lushai, and in Nagaland each tribe and sub-tribe speaks a different language (Hussain 1994: 1-2; Bareh 1994: 40). The fact that Mizoram is significantly less fractionalized than Nagaland is significant in the context of identity, because twelve tribes which speak the same language are easier to unite than over forty groups speaking different languages.

In Mizoram the Mizo Union (MU) reinvented the Mizo identity, so that it did not only include one ethnic group. Its objectives were among others; "unify and integrate all Mizo people", "to normalize relations between chiefs and the commoners", "to act as a representative of the Mizo people" and "to popularise the Mizo language". The identity they devised was inclusive and unified (Hassan 2006a: 5-19; 2008: 71; Hussain 2008: 549; Goswani 2009b: 584). The process of converging the different sub-tribes in Mizoram into one Mizo Nationality with the Lushai (Dulian) language as official language, and Christianity as a common faith, was almost complete by the 1960s. The Mizo National Front (MNF), who took over after MU as the leading party in the region, was very serious about its Christian identity (Nag 2003). "There was neither factional fighting nor inter-tribal hostility for hegemony within the Mizo separatist movement", because the "process of creating a Mizo identity has empowered the state to better respond to ethnic demands and has helped it manage conflicts" (Bhaumik 2004: 235). The political actors and the state in Mizoram have therefore managed to "incorporate competing social forces into a unified whole within the state" (Hassan 2006a: 5).

Different social organizations have helped build up under this Mizo identity, and the Presbyterian Church and Young Mizo Association (YMA) have focused on "preserving the common Mizo identity and upholding order" (Hassan 2006a: 20). Because around 98 per cent of Mizos are Christian, and YMA is a centralized bureaucracy, every member of society is

bound to their framework. Since these two institutions are so central to Mizo identity, it is logical that they have emphasized the issues of "peace and order; unity and a common Mizo identity; good Christian behaviour'; and a social and political responsibility" (Hassan 2006a: 21-22).

In Nagaland, today, "a single, united, Naga voice is still nowhere to be heard" (Hussain 2011). This is because the loyalties to the tribe in Nagaland are much greater than the group loyalty, and this destabilizes the Naga society (Goswani 2007: 287). Goswani (2008) explains that:

> The increasing violence and social divisiveness in Naga society is advocated by insurgent groups aligned along tribal lines: The NSCN (I-M) is mostly made up of Thangkuls, the NSCN (U) of Semas, and the NSCN (K) of Konyaks, while the Naga National Council (NNC) comprises Angamis. The other major tribe, Ao, oscillates between the three factions, but mostly leans towards the NSCN (I-M) (Goswani 2008).

The ethnic composition of the Naga movement is weak and sporadic, and this has roots back through Naga history (Nag 2003). Since the 1940s the Naga movement has been separated by tribal infighting, the distrust and violence among the groups and clans are therefore big (Goswani 2007: 288). "Although the concept of Naga identity has gained greater momentum over the decades, many Nagas still remain Angami, Sema, Konyak, Tanghul or another tribe first" (Sashinungla 2005). There is little inter-mixing between the different Naga tribes, and the attitudes to tribes that are not one's own are unfavorable. Because of this, it is easy for the rebel groups to use this distrust to gain social support for the violence (Goswani 2008b). The rivalry between NSCN-IM and NSCN-K has led to the undoing of whatever Naga identity that existed, and the tribal identity has taken over. The elites, or the leaders, in NSCN have learned to use their identity in order to pursue their own interests, which they claim are the interests of the community. But since the elites assert two different identities, the NSCN factions can all claim to represent the Nagas, and they can also claim to represent their respective tribal identities. The community has two identities to rely on; one tribal identity, and one larger Naga identity (Sahni 2002).

In the context of Mizoram, the fact that the focus of these people's identity changed from tribe to group level, making identity changeable through time and place will give support to constructivism, and show that identity is a changeable concept. Nevertheless, constructivism cannot explain the case of Nagaland, because the original tribal identity has remained the same. Primordialists will be able to explain why the Nagas have not come together as one group. The inter-factional and inter-tribal distrust and rivalry existed before the Naga

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movement commenced, but when the question of leadership came up, distrust between the factions was intensified (Sashinungla 2005). The elites and leaders in NSCN have emphasized tribal identity, and used this as an instrument to divide the people. The NNC tried to build a common Naga identity, but the original tribal identity of the Nagas has prevailed as dominant. This supports the primordialist view that identity is unchangeable.

Given the ethnic composition of Northeast India, it is not difficult to see that the issue of horizontal inequalities will be relevant here. Due to the sheer number of ethnic and tribal groups (see Appendix D), it is virtually impossible for the Indian government to make sure that they all get the recognition they feel they deserve, especially when they are so different in numbers. The treatment they are given by the Indian government is, as seen in section 5.2, different on the State-level, which leads to one type of horizontal inequality and conflict. The other type is between the groups in Northeast. The response from the ethnic groups is to gather in insurgency groups and turn to violence in order to receive what they want. These conflicts are recurring because even though one group feels that they get what they deserve, this is often at the expense of another group, which will then turn to violence. The conflicts within the States can therefore be recurring, as well as conflicts between the different factions in an ethnic group, as seen with the example of the Nagas. The different factions of NSCN are spoilers for the others ceasefires and negotiation processes. These breakaway factions can explain why the conflict continued in Nagaland as opposed to Mizoram. Due to the common identity MNF managed to build between the Mizos, no other factions surfaced, while in Nagaland they are not able to reach a peace agreement with all factions (Bhaumik 2007: 14). This shows that the horizontal inequalities between ethnic groups in Northeast India can be a reason for the recurring conflicts and Hypothesis 3 is therefore supported through the material in this chapter. The issue of identity and horizontal inequalities can explain the recurring conflicts in Northeast India; nevertheless, Arunachal Pradesh, with its numerous ethnic groups, has never had any conflicts due to ethnic identity, which shows that Hypothesis 3 is not foolproof. Arunachal Pradesh is the most diverse of the States, but it has not been through the same insurgencies its neighboring States have. According to Mukherjee (2007) this is mostly due to "its small population being interspersed in a huge and relatively inaccessible area being heavily forested, under-developed with few roads, thereby ensuring relative isolation and distinctiveness for its ethnic groups" (Mukherjee 2007: 56).

6.0 Conclusion

As specified in the introduction, my thesis aims to explain why there are recurring conflicts in Northeast India, as stipulated by my main research question "Why do India's Northeastern States experience recurring insurgencies?". As is seen throughout the thesis, I have attempted to answer this by posing three hypotheses, one for each of the levels. All of these hypotheses, as seen in Table 3, are supported and they all contribute to answering the main question.

Table 3: Summary of hypotheses

	Supported	*Partly supported*	*Not supported*
Hypothesis 1: International borders offer a safe place for the rebels to hide and make it more difficult for the government to stop the conflicts, especially if the neighboring countries are hostile towards India, and this explains why there are recurring conflicts in Northeast India.		X	
Hypothesis 2: Cosmetic federalism and political asymmetry contribute to the feeling that the Northeast has no real power, which in turn contributes to recurring conflicts in Northeast India.		X	
Hypothesis 3: Horizontal inequalities in Northeast India complicate the ethnic environment and lead to recurring conflicts between the ethnic groups due to different treatment.	X		

As seen here, the first two hypotheses are only partially supported by the empirical evidence, while Hypothesis 3 is fully supported. The dependent variable *recurring conflicts in Northeast India* can be explained by all the independent variables on all three levels. Nevertheless the independent variable *identity* and horizontal inequalities give support to the other levels and has the most explanatory power. This is because this is the independent variable with the most difference across the States in Northeast India. All seven States have international borders and

they border hostile countries, they are also all treated equally by the Indian government, they are all asymmetrical compared to the other States in the Indian Union and they only have cosmetic power. The difference between the seven States is how many ethnic groups live in the State and how much power and political influence they have.

All three factors of international borders and support from neighboring nations, the federal nature where the States are given no real power and the different treatment of the ethnic groups in the region add together to answer the research question. The analysis of the three levels has shown that it is not only one phenomenon which explains the recurrence of conflicts, it is the fact that all three factors are present which complicates the peace process and make it very difficult for the Government of India to end the conflicts. It is therefore necessary for researchers to look at all three levels of analysis in order to understand recurring conflicts in Northeast India.

One of the advantages of doing a case study is that it makes it possible to see *whether* and *how* variables matters for the outcome of the situation (George & Bennett 2004: 25). In this case study I have shown that all three levels of analysis matters and through this in-depth analysis it is also shown how they matter for recurring conflicts. International borders and hostile neighboring countries add to the difficulties the Indian government has to stop the rebels, because the insurgency groups are given support and safe places to hide on the other side of the border. The political asymmetry between the States in Northeast and the other States in the Indian Union, and through this the fact that the Northeastern States are given little actual power, leads to growing resentment. This resentment aids the cause of the rebels and contributes to recurring conflicts. Horizontal inequalities between the ethnic groups follow from the differential treatment they are given by the Indian government. The ethnic environment with numerous ethnic groups in each State consequently leads to the recurrence of conflicts because the ethnic groups feel they deserve more than they are given and rebel in order to achieve this. If I had more space and better resources, all of the States could be analyzed and looked more closely at, as seven separate case studies, in order to see whether any of the explanation factors have different importance in the States. Actual fieldwork would also greatly improve the knowledge on why there are recurring conflicts in Northeast India, but as a Westerner the access would unfortunately be severely restricted. Other explanatory factors to why there are recurring conflicts could be examined as well, for example the negotiation processes from the Government of India, spoilers, several factions of the insurgency groups, and so on.

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Appendix A: Number of fatalities in Northeast India

All numbers are from SATP 2013 and data is till 05.05 2013.

Table 4: Fatalities in Northeast India from 2006-2013

Year	States	Civilians	SFP*	Terrorists	Total
2006	Arunachal Pradesh	0	0	0	0
	Assam	96	35	43	174
	Manipur	107	37	141	285
	Meghalaya	7	0	17	24
	Mizoram	1	0	1	2
\	Nagaland	10	1	81	92
	Tripura	11	19	30	60
2007	Arunachal Pradesh	2	3	16	21
	Assam	269	19	149	437
	Manipur	150	40	218	408
	Meghalaya	4	1	13	18
	Mizoram	2	0	6	8
	Nagaland	20	0	88	108
	Tripura	10	5	21	36
2008	Arunachal Pradesh	0	0	2	2
	Assam	224	16	133	373
	Manipur	131	13	341	485
	Meghalaya	0	1	12	13
	Mizoram	0	4	1	5
	Nagaland	42	2	101	145
	Tripura	7	4	17	28
2009	Arunachal Pradesh	0	0	9	9
	Assam	175	21	196	392
	Manipur	77	18	321	416
	Meghalaya	1	0	4	5
	Mizoram	1	0	0	1
	Nagaland	7	0	11	18
	Tripura	9	1	1	11
2010	Arunachal Pradesh	0	0	0	0
	Assam	48	12	98	158
	Manipur	26	8	104	138
	Meghalaya	3	0	17	20
	Mizoram	0	0	0	0
	Nagaland	0	0	3	3
	Tripura	0	2	1	3
2011	Arunachal Pradesh	0	0	41	41
	Assam	34	15	45	94
	Manipur	25	10	30	65
	Meghalaya	11	10	8	29
	Mizoram	1	0	0	1
	Nagaland	7	0	8	15
	Tripura	1	0	0	1

Year	States	Civilians	SFP*	Terrorists	Total
2012	Arunachal Pradesh	0	0	4	4
	Assam	32	4	55	91
	Manipur	25	12	73	110
	Meghalaya	27	2	19	48
	Mizoram	0	0	0	0
	Nagaland	6	0	55	61
	Tripura	0	0	2	2
2013	Arunachal Pradesh	0	0	1	1
	Assam	4	2	16	22
	Manipur	4	5	12	21
	Meghalaya	5	2	9	16
	Mizoram	0	0	0	0
	Nagaland	3	0	6	9
	Tripura	0	0	0	0

*Security Force Personnel

Appendix B: The different insurgency groups in Northeast today

Insurgency groups in Northeast India (Active or proscribed per. 27.03.2013) (data gathered from SATP)

Arunachal Pradesh

None

Assam

1. National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB)
2. United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA)
3. Adivasi Cobra Force (ACF)
4. Dima Halim Daogah (DHD)
5. Hmar People's Convention-Democracy (HPC-D)
6. Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO)
7. Black Widow (BW)
8. All Adivasi National Liberation Army (AANLA)
9. Karbi Longri North Cachar Hills Liberation Front (KLNLF)
10. Hill Tigers Force (HTF)
11. Karbi People's Liberation Tigers (KPLT)
12. Dimasa National Revolutionary Front (DNRF)
13. United Kukigram Defence Army (UKDA)
14. Rabha Viper Army (RVA)
15. United Democratic Liberation Army (UDLA)

Manipur

1. Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP)
2. Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL)
3. Manipur People's Liberation Front (MPLF)
4. People's Liberation Army (PLA)
5. People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK)
6. United National Liberation Front (UNLF)
7. Hmar People's Convention-Democracy (HPC-D)
8. Kuki Liberation Army (KLA)

9. Kuki National Army (KNA)

10. Kuki National Front (KNF)

11. Kuki Revolutionary Army (KRA)

12. National Socialist Council of Nagaland – Isak-Muivah (NSCN-IM)

13. People's United Liberation Front (PULF)

14. United Kuki Liberation Front (UKLF)

15. Zomi Revolutionary Army (ZRA)

Meghalaya

1. Achik National Volunteer Council (ANVC)

2. Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC)

3. Liberation of Achik Elite Force (LAEF)

4. Garo National Liberation Army (GNLA)

Mizoram

1. Hmar People's Convention- Democracy (HPC-D)

Nagaland

1. National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak-Muivah (NSCN-IM)

2. National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang (NSCN-K)

3. National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Unification (NSCN-U)

4. National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khole-Kitovi (NSCN-Khole-Kitovi)

Tripura

1. All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF)

2. National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT)

Appendix C: AFSPA

Powers under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act of 1958 (Ministry of Home Affairs 2013)

Special Powers of the armed forces – Any commissioned officer, warrant officer, non-commissioned officer or any other person of equivalent rank in the armed forces may, in a disturbed area,-

(a) if he is of opinion that it is necessary so to do for the maintenance of public order, after giving such due warning as he may consider necessary, fire upon or otherwise use force, even to the causing of death, against any person who is acting in contravention of any law or order for the time being in force in the disturbed area prohibiting the assembly of five or move persons or the carrying of weapons or of things capable of being used as weapons or of fire-arms, ammunition or explosive substances;

(b) if he is of opinion that it is necessary so to do, destroy any arms dump, prepared or fortified position or shelter from which armed attacks are made or are likely to be made or are attempted to be made, or any structure used as a training camp for armed volunteers or utilized as a hide-out by armed gangs or absconders wanted for any offence;

(c) arrest, without warrant, any person who has committed a cognizable offence or against whom a reasonable suspicion exists that he has committed or is about to commit a cognizable offence and may use such force as may be necessary to effect the arrest;

(d) enter and search without warrant any premises to make any such arrest as aforesaid or to recover any person believed to be wrongfully restrained or confined or any property reasonably suspected to be stolen property or any arms, ammunition or explosive substances believed to be unlawfully kept in such premises, and may for that purpose use such force as may be necessary.

Appendix D: Ethnic groups in Northeast India

Data from Shimray 2004 and Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment 2013.

Table 5: Ethnic groups in Arunachal Pradesh

Scheduled tribes	Other groups
1. Abor 2. Aka 3. Apatani 4. Dajla 5. Galong 6. Khampti 7. Khowa 8. Mishmi 9. Mongba 10. Any Naga Tribes (Wancho, Tangsa and Nocte) 11. Sherdukpen 12. Singpho	More than 80 groups

Table 6: Ethnic groups in Assam

Scheduled tribes	Other groups
1. Bansphor 2. Bhuinmali, Mali 3. Brittial Bania, Bania 4. Bhupi, Dhobi 5. Dugla, Dholi 6. Hira 7. Jalkeot 8. Jhalo, Malo, Jhalo-Malo 9. Kaibartta, Jaliya 10. Lalbegi 11. Mahara 12. Mehtar, Bhangi 13. Muchi, Rishi 14. Namasudra 15. Patni 16. Sutradhar	1. Chakma 2. Dimasa 3. Garo 4. Hajong 5. Hmar 6. Khasi, Jaintia, Synteng, pnar, bhoi 7. Any Kuki tribes 8. Lakher 9. Man (Tai speaking) 10. Any Mizo (Lushai) 11. Mikir 12. Any Naga 13. Pawi 14. Sytheng 15. Barmans 16. Boro 17. Deori 18. Hojai 19. Kachari 20. Lalung 21. Mech 22. Miri 23. Rabha 24. Mishing 25. Karbi 26. Bodo

Table 7: Ethnic groups in Manipur

Scheduled tribes	Other groups
1. Dhupi, Dhobi	1. Anal
2. Lois	2. Angami
3. Muchi, Ravidas	3. Chiru
4. Namasudra	4. Chothe
5. Patni	5. Kabui
6. Sutradhar	6. Kacha Naga
7. Yaithibi	7. Koireng
	8. Lamkang
	9. Mao
	10. Maram
	11. Maring
	12. Monsang
	13. Moyong
	14. Sema
	15. Tankhul
	16. Aimol
	17. Gangte
	18. Hmar
	19. Vaiphei
	20. Koirao
	21. Kom
	22. Any Mizo (Lushai)
	23. Paite
	24. Purum
	25. Ralte
	26. Suhte
	27. Simte
	28. Thadou (Kuki)
	29. Meitei

Table 8: Ethnic groups in Meghalaya

Scheduled tribes	Other groups
1. Bansphor	1. Boro
2. Bhuinmali, Mali	2. Kacharis
3. Brittial Bania, Bania	3. Chakma
4. Bhupi, Dhobi	4. Dimasa
5. Dugla, Dholi	5. Garo
6. Hira	6. Hajong
7. Jalkeot	7. Hmar
8. Jhalo, Malo, Jhalo-Malo	8. Khasi
9. Kaibartta, Jaliya	9. Jaintia
10. Lalbegi	10. Koch
11. Mahara	11. Any Kuki tribes
12. Mehtar, Bhangi	12. Lakher
13. Muchi, Rishi	13. Man (Tai speaking)
14. Namasudra	14. Any Mizo
15. Patni	15. Mikir
16. Sutradhar	16. Any Nagas
	17. Pawi, Raba and Synteng

Table 9: Ethnic groups in Mizoram

Scheduled tribes	Other groups
1. Bansphor	1. Chakma
2. Bhuinmali, Mali	2. Dimasa
3. Brittial Bania, Bania	3. Garo
4. Dhupi, Dhobi	4. Hajong
5. Dugla, Dholi	5. Hmar
6. Hira	6. Khasi
7. Jalkeot	7. Jaintai
8. Jhalo, Malo, Jhalo-Malo	8. Any Kukis
9. Kaibartta, Jaliya	9. Lakher
10. Lalbegi	10. Man (Tai speaking)
11. Mahara	11. Any Mizo
12. Mehtar, Bhangi	12. Mikir
13. Muchi, Rishi	13. Any Nagas
14. Namasudra	14. Pawi, and Synteng
15. Patni	15. Lushai
16. Sutradhar	16. Fanais
	17. Tlanglan
	18. Pang
	19. Paki
	20. Reang

Table 10: Ethnic groups in Nagaland

Scheduled tribes	Other groups
1. Garo 2. Kachari 3. Kuki 4. Mikir 5. Nagas	At least 39 smaller Naga tribes 1. Tangkhul 2. Konyak 3. Ao 4. Sema 5. Angami 6. Lotha 7. Rengma 8. Kuki

Table 11: Ethnic groups in Tripura

Scheduled tribes	Other groups
1. Bagdi 2. Bhuimali 3. Bhunar 4. Chamar, Muchi 5. Dandasi 6. Dhenuar 7. Dhoba 8. Dum 9. Ghasi 10. Gour 11. Gur 12. Jalia Kaibarta 13. Kahar 14. Kalindi 15. Kan 16. Kanda 17. Kanugh 18. Keot 19. Khadit 20. Kharia 21. Koch 22. Koir 23. Kol 24. Kora 25. Kotal 26. Mahisyadas 27. Mali 28. Mehtor 29. Musadar 30. Namasudra 31. Patni 32. Sabar 33. Dhuli, Sabdakar, Badyakar 34. Natta, Nat	1. Bhil 2. Bhutia 3. Chaimal 4. Chakma 5. Garo 6. Halam 7. Jamatia 8. Khasi 9. Any Kukis 10. Lepcha 11. Lushai 12. Nag 13. Munda 14. Naotia 15. Orang 16. Reang 17. Santhal 18. Tripuri, Trupuri, Treppera 19. Uchai