

Appendices

APPENDIX-I

The Questionnaire Schedule

1. Do you believe that the Government of India has a specific 'peace policy' in dealing with insurgent groups in Northeast India? If so, what in your view is the core of that policy?
2. Starting with the peace agreement the Government signed with the Mizo National Front (MNF) in 1986, many other accords have been reached with insurgent groups in the region. Have these agreements resulted in real peace dividend?
3. The Government is engaged in peace talks with two NDFB factions, while a third NDFB faction is stepping up violence. Is it correct for the authorities to engage in a dialogue process with more than one faction of the same insurgent group?
4. Can there be two or more peace agreements concerning problems in one single area and to meet aspirations of one single ethnic group?
5. The ULFA claims to be fighting for the interest of the whole of Assam. Can the Government come out with a solution formula to satisfy the ULFA without an overlap with the ethnic autonomous councils already existing?
6. There is a perception that agreements with smaller ethnic rebel groups like the two DHD factions has not brought about any significant change in the powers or structure of the existing autonomous council in Dima Hasao, erstwhile NC Hills District. Do you think this is the reason why new rebel groups have emerged in the area?
7. Do you agree that the Government's policy of holding peace talks with each and every militant group is actually encouraging militancy in the region by giving even splinter groups legitimacy?
8. Do you think that the Government should put a moratorium on peace talks with newer militant groups while continuing with the dialogue with groups who have already embarked on the peace process, like the ULFA and NDFB?
9. Do you think a halt to peace talks with break-away militant factions or newer outfits reduce insurgency in the region?
10. There is a feeling that the Government encourages ceasefires with insurgent groups to buy time and postpone peace as a matter of strategy. Do you agree and can this strategy work in the long run?
11. Should peace talks have a time frame? The talks with the NSCN-IM, for instance, is going on without a resolution in sight since 1997?
12. Do you think rebel outfits or factions engaged in peace talks are being given incentives by the Government, leading to those outside the peace process to indulge in more terror before they, too, call a truce, join the peace process and come to get the same benefits?
13. Do you think signing peace deals on ethnic lines rather than granting autonomy or packages for under-developed regions within states has been encouraging deprived communities to take up arms and launch militant movements?
14. Should the Government make it mandatory for different factions of one rebel group to first unite, resolve their differences, and then enter into talks with the authorities jointly, with one single charter of demands for a lasting solution?
15. Should the civil society be made a party to any ongoing peace process?
16. Do you think women organizations should be involved in the peace talks and processes?
17. Do you think that a new state for the Bodos will put an end to Bodo insurgency forever? Will creation of a state before any agreement with the NDFB make the two NDFB factions irrelevant?
18. Would you suggest some definite measures that can possibly end insurgency in the region?
19. Do you think the government of India needs to consider external factors, like support from/sanctuary in neighbouring countries, while formulating its peace policy with northeastern insurgent groups?
20. Do you think the government gives more importance to the issue of security than development while framing policies for the Northeast?
21. How do you think the formation of a common platform of northeastern insurgent groups, as claimed by Paresh Baruah in December 2013, going to influence the peace process in the region?

22. What is your overall assessment of the peace policy of the Government of India? Is it successful in handling the insurgency situation properly?

Interview with Sunil Nath, former Publicity Secretary of ULFA

The Researcher: Do you believe that the Government of India has a specific ‘peace policy’ in dealing with insurgent groups in Northeast India? If so, what in your view is the core of that policy?

Sunil Nath: Unfortunately, it does not appear that the GOI (Government of India) has any “specific peace policy”. Though, in Independent India, the Government’s attempts to subdue insurgency through so called “talks” are as old as insurgency itself, there are no visible signs of any concerted thought, planning and line of action to the talks, quite frequently held between various and diverse insurgent/rebel groups and the State. The “core” of whatever policy discernible in these talks is bound by compulsions inside and outside the Government of the day and the situation prevailing on the ground, including the strength and impact of the particular anti Govt. forces in play.

The Researcher: Starting with the peace agreement the Government signed with the Mizo National Front (MNF) in 1986, many other accords have been reached with insurgent groups in the region. Have these agreements resulted in real peace dividend?

Sunil Nath: Except for the example provided, none of the other accords have agreed in sustainable peace. It does seem that the old adage, ‘feeding only whets the appetite’ has proved to be true.

The Researcher: The Government is engaged in peace talks with two NDFB factions, while a third NDFB faction is stepping up violence. Is it correct for the authorities to engage in a dialogue process with more than one faction of the same insurgent group?

Sunil Nath: Tactically, division in the rebel ranks helps the Government but only in containing the immediate impact. Sustainable peace needs that all factors are included in any final deal. Engaging in talks with more than one faction is more a matter of compulsion than choice.

The Researcher: Can there be two or more peace agreements concerning problems in one single area and to meet aspirations of one single ethnic group?

Sunil Nath: It depends on whether the groups really reflect the aspirations and opinions of a sizeable section of the ethnic group. If an organisation or group genuinely represents a section of any ethnic group, than there is no harm in having multiple agreements acceptable to all groups and sections of the people of an area or ethnic group.

The Researcher: The ULFA claims to be fighting for the interest of the whole of Assam. Can the Government come out with a solution formula to satisfy the ULFA without an overlap with the ethnic autonomous councils already existing?

Sunil Nath: Claims and ground realities differ very often. ULFA does not carry the mandate of all ethnic groups in Assam. The reality, however, is that, ULFA does reflect the aspirations of the majority of Assamese speaking people. ULFA does enjoy the sympathy, if not support, of the Assamese people. A peace agreement with ULFA does not necessarily have to be detrimental to the interest of the ‘ethnic autonomous councils’.

The Researcher: There is a perception that agreements with smaller ethnic rebel groups like the two DHD factions has not brought about any significant change in the powers or structure of the existing autonomous council in Dima Hasao, erstwhile NC Hills District. Do you think this is the reason why new rebel groups have emerged in the area?

Sunil Nath: Perhaps it would be wiser to look at the phenomenon from a different perspective. The agreements could have been more sincere attempts to redress the real grievances of the people. Satisfying a group of erstwhile rebel leaders by offering them sops only encourages others, who feel left out in the scramble for spoils, to start anew.

The Researcher: Do you agree that the Government’s policy of holding peace talks with each and every militant group is actually encouraging militancy in the region by giving even splinter groups legitimacy?

Sunil Nath: Like I said earlier, feeding only whets the appetite but it is more a matter of compulsion than choice.

The Researcher: Do you think that the Government should put a moratorium on peace talks with newer militant groups while continuing with the dialogue with groups who have already embarked on the peace process, like the ULFA and NDFB?

Sunil Nath: If the GOI can defeat and obliterate the militant groups without resorting to talks, obviously it would be the most desirable solution for GOI. It is not engaging in talks because of its love for the militants but because it is being compelled to do so politically.

The Researcher: Do you think a halt to peace talks with break-away militant factions or newer outfits reduce insurgency in the region?

Sunil Nath: The Israel Government, after declaring the policy of not negotiating with hijackers has steadfastly stuck to it. It has yielded results. If the GOI can stick to a policy of not negotiating with insurgency, chances are that frivolous players would disappear. Reflections of genuine and justified grievances, however, tend to snowball into mass upheavals against brute repression.

The Researcher: There is a feeling that the Government encourages ceasefires with insurgent groups to buy time and postpone peace as a matter of strategy. Do you agree and can this strategy work in the long run?

Sunil Nath: Buying time through talks can be a tactic but it is not healthy strategy.

The Researcher: Should peace talks have a time frame? The talks with the NSCN-IM, for instance, is going on without a resolution in sight since 1997?

Sunil Nath: Time frames in peace talks, however desirable, are not practicable.

The Researcher: Do you think rebel outfits or factions engaged in peace talks are being given incentives by the Government, leading to those outside the peace process to indulge in more terror before they, too, call a truce, join the peace process and come to get the same benefits?

Sunil Nath: Again, more a matter of compulsion than choice. Containing the rebels by offering them sops releases pressure on the ruling party and saves it from the allegations of failure in maintaining law and order.

The Researcher: Do you think signing peace deals on ethnic lines rather than granting autonomy or packages for under-developed regions within states has been encouraging deprived communities to take up arms and launch militant movements?

Sunil Nath: I don't think so. People, having grievances would rise up sooner or later. Where ethnic contours are absent regional aspirations would come up. Let's not forget that Maoist rebels are as much a headache for GOI as ethnic insurgents.

The Researcher: Should the Government make it mandatory for different factions of one rebel group to first unite, resolve their differences, and then enter into talks with the authorities jointly, with one single charter of demands for a lasting solution?

Sunil Nath: Obviously the answer would be, it is definitely desirable wherever practicable.

The Researcher: Should the civil society be made a party to any ongoing peace process?

Sunil Nath: Definitely yes.

The Researcher: Do you think women organizations should be involved in the peace talks and processes?

Sunil Nath: Very desirable.

The Researcher: Do you think that a new state for the Bodos will put an end to Bodo insurgency forever? Will creation of a state before any agreement with the NDFB make the two NDFB factions irrelevant?

Sunil Nath: Yes, unambiguously.

The Researcher: Would you suggest some definite measures that can possibly end insurgency in the region?

Sunil Nath: Ushering in genuine development that percolates down to the poorest of the society would work wonders in ending insurgency.

The Researcher: Do you think the government of India needs to consider external factors, like support from/sanctuary in neighbouring countries, while formulating its peace policy with northeastern insurgent groups?

Sunil Nath: Yes. These foreign sanctuaries are a major factor in sustaining insurgency in the northeast. GOI could and should flex its diplomatic muscles to make these sanctuaries unsafe for the rebels.

The Researcher: Do you think the government gives more importance to the issue of security than development while framing policies for the Northeast?

Sunil Nath: Unfortunately yes. Putting the cart before horse seems to be habit GOI can't get rid of.

The Researcher: How do you think the formation of a common platform of northeastern insurgent groups, as claimed by Paresh Baruah in December 2013, going to influence the peace process in the region?

Sunil Nath: The insurgent groups of the region have diverse agendas and overlapping claims. Setting up a common platform with the notion of 'enemy's enemy is friend' is at play here. I don't think it would ever be possible for northeast insurgents to talk to GOI from a unanimous position.

The Researcher: What is your overall assessment of the peace policy of the Government of India? Is it successful in handling the insurgency situation properly?

Sunil Nath: GOI's peace policy reflects the character of the Indian State. It has not been an acclaimed success because, in its overall character, it has remained humane. Thousand of misled boys and girls have been allowed to return to normal lives. They have been virtually pardoned. This happens only in democracies like India. Naturally, the flip side is that some rogue elements are taking chance of this situation and rejoining new rebel outfits for a renewed career in insurgency. In my opinion, while there is always scope for betterment, India's policy in the matter of containing insurgency and rebellion is at least more humane than many other countries of the world.

Interview with Dr Hiren Gohain

The Researcher: Do you believe that the Government of India has a specific 'peace policy' in dealing with insurgent groups in Northeast India? If so, what in your view is the core of that policy?

Dr Hiren Gohain: I believe that the Government of India does have a peace policy. It is a dual policy. If the insurgent group challenges the sovereignty of the Indian state, it takes strong military measures against it. If the group agrees to find a solution within the Constitution of India, the Government adopts a conciliatory approach and attempts negotiations.

The Researcher: Starting with the peace agreement the Government signed with the Mizo National Front (MNF) in 1986, many other accords have been reached with insurgent groups in the region. Have these agreements resulted in real peace dividend?

Dr Hiren Gohain: In Mizoram, peace has been firmly established. And in BTC area also, apart from splinter groups, the main body of the militants have accepted a negotiated settlement. These are not inconsiderable achievements. But many insurgent groups remain and if they have not come round to a peaceful solution, that is because of their sectarian vested interests.

The Researcher: The Government is engaged in peace talks with two NDFB factions, while a third NDFB faction is stepping up violence. Is it correct for the authorities to engage in a dialogue process with more than one faction of the same insurgent group?

Dr Hiren Gohain: No opinion

The Researcher: Can there be two or more peace agreements concerning problems in one single area and to meet aspirations of one single ethnic group?

Dr Hiren Gohain: Actually, these insurgent outfits cannot be said to represent the entire ethnic group. So, more than one peace agreements may have to be signed for the sake of peace.

The Researcher: The ULFA claims to be fighting for the interest of the whole of Assam. Can the Government come out with a solution formula to satisfy the ULFA without an overlap with the ethnic autonomous councils already existing?

Dr Hiren Gohain: This will depend on the approach of the ULFA towards various ethnicities or ethnic elements in Assam who are dissatisfied with their lot.

The Researcher: There is a perception that agreements with smaller ethnic rebel groups like the two DHD factions has not brought about any significant change in the powers or structure of the existing autonomous council in Dima Hasao, erstwhile NC Hills District. Do you think this is the reason why new rebel groups have emerged in the area?

Dr Hiren Gohain: That is correct. Because the agreements rarely touch the fundamental problems of the regional or ethnic community.

The Researcher: Do you agree that the Government's policy of holding peace talks with each and every militant group is actually encouraging militancy in the region by giving even splinter groups legitimacy?

Dr Hiren Gohain: Yes, I think it is reasonable to hold such a view. Probably the Government wants to control rebellion by taking up this peace-meal approach.

The Researcher: Do you think that the Government should put a moratorium on peace talks with newer militant groups while continuing with the dialogue with groups who have already embarked on the peace process, like the ULFA and NDFB?

Dr Hiren Gohain: That will depend on the support base and reach of influence of the group concerned.

The Researcher: Do you think a halt to peace talks with break-away militant factions or newer outfits reduce insurgency in the region?

Dr Hiren Gohain: No opinion.

The Researcher: There is a feeling that the Government encourages ceasefires with insurgent groups to buy time and postpone peace as a matter of strategy. Do you agree and can this strategy work in the long run?

Dr Hiren Gohain: This misgiving is not without a foundation. There is a general suspicion that the Government dangles the carrot of ceasefire before the insurgents with the promise of an eventual settlement. But what it seems to be interested in is exhausting the patience of the insurgent group and reducing them to passivity.

The Researcher: Should peace talks have a time frame? The talks with the NSCN-IM, for instance, is going on without a resolution in sight since 1997?

Dr Hiren Gohain: Yes. Common sense would say so.

The Researcher: Do you think rebel outfits or factions engaged in peace talks are being given incentives by the Government, leading to those outside the peace process to indulge in more terror before they, too, call a truce, join the peace process and come to get the same benefits?

Dr Hiren Gohain: May be true of some outfits, but not generally true.

The Researcher: Do you think signing peace deals on ethnic lines rather than granting autonomy or packages for under-developed regions within states has been encouraging deprived communities to take up arms and launch militant movements?

Dr Hiren Gohain: Actually, within its region, the ethnic problem has its own specific character. Regional autonomy alone may not be able to address the problem of different ethnic communities who are not united by a single goal.

The Researcher: Should the Government make it mandatory for different factions of one rebel group to first unite, resolve their differences, and then enter into talks with the authorities jointly, with one single charter of demands for a lasting solution?

Dr Hiren Gohain: It is a reasonable demand but probably not very realistic. For example, one faction may be more inclined to a peaceful settlement than the other.

The Researcher: Should the civil society be made a party to any ongoing peace process?

Dr Hiren Gohain: Civil society still remains a vague term and it may not be visible on the ground in each situation insurgency. Civil society institutions may be used to bring the insurgents to the negotiating table. But I don't think they could play any part in the negotiations which might become complicated.

The Researcher: Do you think women organizations should be involved in the peace talks and processes?

Dr Hiren Gohain: It depends on the situation. In Nagaland and Manipur women's organizations are strong and vocal. But this is not true in everywhere.

The Researcher: Do you think that a new state for the Bodos will put an end to Bodo insurgency forever? Will creation of a state before any agreement with the NDFB make the two NDFB factions irrelevant?

Dr Hiren Gohain: But the creation of a Bodoland state with the non-Bodo population in a majority will create an unhealthy situation.

The Researcher: Would you suggest some definite measures that can possibly end insurgency in the region?

Dr Hiren Gohain: Yes. The only thing that is required is development, in which at every stage the local population can participate.

The Researcher: Do you think the government of India needs to consider external factors, like support from/sanctuary in neighbouring countries, while formulating its peace policy with northeastern insurgent groups?

Dr Hiren Gohain: That is true. But the internal factors are more important. If internal peace is achieved, external factors lose their power.

The Researcher: Do you think the government gives more importance to the issue of security than development while framing policies for the Northeast?

Dr Hiren Gohain: I think that is a correct view. More or less true.

The Researcher: How do you think the formation of a common platform of northeastern insurgent groups, as claimed by Paresh Baruah in December 2013, going to influence the peace process in the region?

Dr Hiren Gohain: At the moment, the people of the Northeast are tired with the continuing insurgency and unrest. Therefore, the formation of the common platform of insurgents does not at the moment much leverage.

The Researcher: What is your overall assessment of the peace policy of the Government of India? Is it successful in handling the insurgency situation properly?

Dr Hiren Gohain: I believe that though it is workable and essential, because of bureaucratic handling, the security aspect is getting more prominence than the aspect of addressing the problems raised by the insurgents.

The Researcher: All the insurgent groups claim that they represent their respective communities or people. But when they enter into a peace process with the Government, they never consult with the people on a solution formula. Does it mean that the Government engages in a dialogue with groups who actually have no connect with the people?

Dr Hiren Gohain: That will not be true of ULFA. Because the ULFA has proceeded talks with the Government on the basis of a memorandum prepared by civil society groups. It may be true of smaller ethnic groups. It is generally true that these groups consider themselves representative, actually they do not represent the entire ethnic or local community.

APPENDIX-II

- i. Bodo Accord 1993**
- ii. BTC Accord 2003**
- iii. UPDS Accord 2011**
- iv. DHD Accord 2012**