

Conflicts and Social Governance in Northeast India: The case of Nagaland

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The paper was highly analytical and articulated. It has brought out various interesting dimensions to understand age-old conflicts in NEI and subsequent contestation, State's response and its partnering with social groups. The narrative has brought out the stereotypical understanding of NEI within a securized frame and its various contesting forces through social governance. The focus of the presentation was to locate Nagaland in this context.

The paper also brought out State's idea of development and the relevance of Look East Policy in NEI as the alternative frame. In this frame, the paper has discussed State's mechanism to partner with the societal spaces and resisting forces to push this idea of development and capital.

Two aspects can be identified. One the paper can have sole focus on Nagaland, for which it has to have rationale. Two, it can place entire NEI's issue where Nagaland can be discussed. The discourse probably will be little different in two cases.

I would like to suggest for the second case for explicit understanding, and the paper can also be enriched through a contextual, logical and regional continuity. Moving away from the dual stereotypical frame of security and development issues and State response, the paper can try to explore a new understanding of conflicts by putting them in a sequence of State agenda. In this sequence the role of capital and State agenda cannot probably be seen in isolation, rather can help to connect in understanding the emerging conflicts in the region.

Thus capital inflow and external market connection in the constructed space called NEI is not a new phenomenon. The Colonial State typically created this frontier for exportable surplus through external capital and with minimum logistical apparatus. This capital had created Colonial enclave economies and configurations of modernity in this frontier, while creating metropolos and cities at other parts of the world through global market linkages. This largely aimed to destroy economic anthropology and traditional practices of this space and possibly given a seed for anger and resistance in the later times.

In the post-Colonial period, the capitalistic reorganization happened by changing the order of domination from Colonial to National framework and State developmentalism moved sequentially in the name of 'national economy'. Indigenous capitalist class was formed with State support to reassert the logic of resource access and land accumulation. This started penetrating the hills of NE. State developmentalism got legitimized in the decades of 70s and 80s with hill state formation and ethnic up-rise and creation of B'desh. By 1980s, many such institutional infrastructure and logistics were created through political negotiations like signing peace accords. This was for economic development of this constructed periphery and State capital was acceptable by the people of the region for economic and social provisioning through financial grant and support under SCS. Such State capital slowly created a space for cronyism to create a new elite class within NE as dominating force to utilize State. The paper has discussed this aspect, but could not build up the sequence of State affairs in the same domain of capitalism. It has brought out security dimension of this long period and the consequent conflicts, but possibly linking to the sequentiality of capitalist frame can also give a perspective to understand conflicts. Here intra-regional disparity can be brought out, as the paper did so for Nagaland.

Then with structural shift to neoliberal economic order (globalization) in 1990s, Indian State had to improve its global position and reconfiguration of space, economic expansion was important to connect to the global capitalism. Thus the need for next set of logistical apparatus was urgent even by interfacing and rupturing traditional institutions and spaces, and NE was targeted. It interfaced with NEI's society, ecology, and culture to allow the movement of such new global capital. This was supply driven and not necessarily evolved from the consciousness of the people of the region, as their age-old political and ideological battle still remained unfulfilled.

This change became notionally important, and India's economic imperatives gave birth to LEP. NEI was transformed in the new narratives as a most 'strategic borderland' for its proximity with neighbours and potential for regional trade. Thus need for connectivity infrastructure, commodification of nature became essential to explore NEI as a potential economic hub and corridor. This new imagination of NE as a core rather than a periphery has given a U turn in policy politics. State capital was multiplied through policy of resource pool, ensured grants, special package etc. for infrastructure creation like railways, roadways, ports. The paper has dealt with them exhaustively, but again putting it in a sequence to relate to changing nature of conflict may be more insightful.

Two sets of debates have emerged along with such State affair, one, which looks at this strategy as a need and gainful exercise for NE having a significant policy shift from security to economy. The local economy is expected to integrate and expand through people's participation. This argument is from new aspiring urban elites who look for opportunities. This group is creating newer economic channels through unfolding corporate capital on tourism, retail market, real estate business through land grab and access to resource. I think the paper has referred to.

In this crossroad, the other debate is evolving around local forces and ordinary ethnic groups, who are amidst real livelihood, moral cultural and everyday life threats. A new form of anxiety is seen among them, which are evolving into new form of contestation as counter development groups. They are unleashing and organizing through protests, obstruction and struggle for political effectiveness. This new form of indigenous struggle in contemporary NE has the potential to challenge such corporate State around three aspects of needs, rights and justice and to prevent immediate consequences like displacement and marginalisation.

As the narratives of NE are fast changing, fight for economic right is becoming more urgent now, and nature of conflicts also has been changing.

In this context of complex crisis, the paper may like to propose some new forms of social governance, which can work effectively by contesting through '**regulative universals**' and **constitutional mechanism to save this rapidly eroding local space**. Also the role of social media, technology and communication network can be justified to question State affair and can create a like-minded space to put pressure on State.

The paper has referred to some data on MPCE and PCI to justify Nagaland case. The data needs to be updated from CSO and NSSO.