



INSURGENCY IN THE 1990s: THE CASE OF TRIPURA

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ABSTRACT

Since its merger with the Indian Union in 1949, Tripura, a tiny north-eastern Indian state, has seen an increase in insurgent activities led by its educated tribal middle class. During the post-merger era, the newly formed educated tribal middle class felt disgruntled with the government's anti-tribal policies and actions. The new Indian Constitution of 1950 did not include a provision for Tripura's tribal areas to have their own autonomous district. The Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reform Act of 1960 made no provision for Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore's "tribal reserve." Bengali was designated as the official language of Tripura by the Official Language Act of 1962. These are the major reasons that led to the genesis of many tribal-centric insurgent groups. During the period covered by this study, the 1990s, many insurgent groups, such as the NLFT, ATTF, and others, launched various activities challenging state authorities to meet their demands or risk overthrowing the state administration. In this paper, I tried to provide a picture of insurgent activities that happened in Tripura during the period under this study.

KEYWORDS: *Insurgency, NLFT, Autonomous, Tribal, Reserve*

INTRODUCTION

The terms terrorism, separatism, secessionism, and insurgency are frequently used to describe a situation in which violent civil clashes erupt either against the established political regime or against the dominant class or group, with a variety of demands including separate sovereign status, regional autonomy within the State, ethnic, cultural, or religious independence, and so on. The term 'terrorism' describes a situation in which disgruntled sections turn to violence against the State, which is seen as an institutional representation of majoritarianism. Terrorists may also target members of the general population. Terrorist acts are carried out to put fear or to reveal the group's true goals. Separatism, on the other hand, is a desire for a distinct, but not always independent political life and administration.

Both terrorism and separatism are not the same thing as secessionism. It is a formal statement of intent to exist as an independent political entity. Insurgency is the tactic used in every case. As a result, the term "insurgency" will be used to describe violent movements by people to achieve any of the goals listed above, such as establishing a separate administrative entity under the same sovereign authority

The Tripura insurgency was an armed confrontation between India and multiple separatist rebel groups inside the state of Tripura. During the period covered by this paper, an increased insurgency and a wave of violence interrupted civic life and communications, as well as the closure of many educational and financial institutions, posing a danger to the government's power.

An examination of insurgency in Tripura shows that it happened due to a number of factors, including demographic pressures, cultural deprivation, poverty, land alienation and eviction, unemployment, and underdevelopment, among

others. An acute sense of inequality among group members, the establishment of a powerful elitist leadership, political competition and manipulation, governmental policies and acts, and easy access to external backing are all adequate circumstances.

MAJOR INSURGENT ORGANIZATIONS

NLFT (National Liberation Front of Tripura)

It is assumed that it was founded in April 1989. Its first violent activity took place in December 1991, the name of that operation was 'Operation Genesis'. The major leaders of NLFT were Dhananjay Reang, Ananda Reang, Nitya Debbarma, and others. It was founded after B K Hrankhawl surrendered and TNV was destabilized.

Demands of NLFT

1. Form a separate nation with Tripura.
2. Safeguarding and Propagating tribal culture.
3. Christianity to be the religion of the State.
4. To support a political party called IPFT etc these are the major demands of NLFT.

Types of activities carried out by NLFT

1. Kidnapping for extorting money.
 2. Looting banks and Bazaars for Money.
 3. Attacking security personnel and looting their arms
 4. Export illegal goods for earning money.
 5. Attacking and burning villages.
 6. Propagation of Baptist Church.
 7. End of TSR (Tripura State Rifles) etc.
- Tripura Resurrection Army (TRA)

In 1992 tension arises over the question of who will lead NLFT, Tripuri or Reangs. As the tension rises an attempt was also made to kill Dhananjay Reang. In 1993 Dhananjay



Reang founded TRA. This organization does not have any specific demands.

Other Groups are Tripura Tribal Volunteers Force (TTVF), National Militia Force (NMF), Ahimsa Bharat Suraksha Force (ABSF), Tripura National Force (TNF), Social Democratic Front of Tripura (SDFT), All Tripura Volunteers Force (ATVC), Tripura Liberation Organization (TLO), Bru National Liberation Front (BNLF), Tripura Tribal Youth Force (TTYF). These are minor organizations compared to TNV, NLFT, and TRA and they did not have any specific demands.

ACTIVITIES OF INSURGENTS

Kidnapping: A Recurrent Event

In the later part of the 1990s kidnapping was established as a lucrative business for insurgent groups. They found this as the shortest way of making a large amount of money within a short period of term. The growing kidnapping trade has added a new dimension to the womb of terrorism in this terror-ridden state. Terrorism in the state, which is more than two decades old, has gradually turned into a trade, which has become clear from the record of terrorism in the state in the last few years. According to the State Police's various intelligence sources and information published in newspapers and magazines at different times, the abduction trade of so-called enemies in the state has been on the rise since 1993. Where 96 people were abducted from across the state in 1993, it has increased fivefold in the last seven years to 480 in 1999 and to 484 by August 2000.

Surprisingly, not only the lower-level officials of schools, blocks, banks, panchayats, rural development-related government offices but also the senior officials of the administration have to pay tribute for fear of abduction of these so-called terrorists. That is why government officials have stopped visiting remote rural areas for fear of being abducted. The rising cases of abduction had seriously affected the lives of common people.

Attacks on Security Personnel

There were frequent incidents of ambush between insurgents and armed forces. It seems a daily business of insurgents to challenge armed forces staying in remote areas for protecting civilians.

Major incidents

1992-On 22nd May Nepali Tilla Police outpost in Fatikray ATTF attacked, killed three police constables, and looted arms, on 8th October ATTF attacked Ganganagar Police Station, Killed four Constables, and left six wounded.

1993-On 8th July TTF attacked BSF Jawans at Karamcherra in Nalkata, one constable and looted arms, on 2nd October again BSF Jawans were attacked Karamcherra, Nalkata, one Jawan was killed and three jawans were wounded.

1994-On 16th March CRPF Jawans were attacked at Choilengta near Manughat, one jawan was killed, on 8th December CRPF jawans were attacked in Ganganagar, one constable was killed and seven jawans were wounded.

1995- On 7th June at Anandabazar near Kanchanpur CRPF Jawans were attacked who were escorting a government official, two CRPF Jawans and Two Police constables were killed, on 10th July at Jalefa 4 CRPF Jawan was killed, on 28th July, at Jayram Para in Jirania four Police Personnel were killed, on 14th September three CRPF jawans were killed at Chechua-Bampur Road, on 2nd October two CRPF Jawans were killed in Harinchara, Ambasa.

1996- On 21st January six CRPF Jawans were killed in Hezamara, on 8th April in Gabardi six CRPF Jawans were killed, on 30th July two BSF Jawans were killed by NLFT, on 23rd September at Belchara, Khowai four Indian Army personnel were killed, on 7th November at Raisyabari, seven BSF Jawans were killed using Land Mines.

1997-On 4th January two Assam Rifles Jawans were killed in Champling, on 7th May 18 CRPF Persons were killed at Chelagang, Natunbazar, on 10th June in Chawmanu seven territorial army personnel were killed.

1998-On 12th February seven TSR Jawans were killed at Ganganagar, Ambassa-Gandachera Road, on 20th March ATTF killed one Major and one Nayek of the Indian Army, on 22nd March ATTF killed six TSR Jawans at Dhupchara, Kalyanpur, on 29th June at Kuyaiyang, Baikhora two TSA Jawans were killed,

1999- On 14th March at Nasik Para insurgents killed one OC of TP and an assistant commandant of CRPF, on 11th July five TSR personnel were killed at Karbook, Natunbazaar, on 28th July six BSF Jawans were killed at Gumsing Para, Khowai, on 22nd September four Assam Rifle Jawans were killed at Kupilong, Udaipur, On 26th September in Chaumanu eight BSF Jawans were killed, on 28th November at Krishnapur, Khowai three forest guards were killed, on 21st December six TSR Jawans were killed at Tairuma, Baikhora. These kinds of incidents continued to happen at a high and low pace in Tripura for a long time.

Attacks on Civilians

Insurgents used to target civilians to show their anger towards authorities who were not fulfilling their demands. Attacking civilians include burning villages, killing people with gunshots, laying land mines on roads, etc. Civilians belonging to tribal and non-tribal communities were attacked.

Major Incidents,

1992- On 8th May at Kakrachara, Teliamura three fishermen were killed. 1994- On 20th January five-armed tribal youth were killed assuming that they were insurgents, on 8th September a private Jeep was attacked and killed four people, at Gandacharra-Ambassa Road, on 7th September ATTF attacked Purba Colony at Sidhai and killed three people, on 16th December NLFT looted more than a lakh rupees from UBI Bank at Vangmun. 1995- On 1st August insurgents killed five villagers at Marachara, on 2nd October in a tussle between Chakma people and insurgents one villager was killed at Lalchara, Manu, on 19th November NLFT and NSCN attacked UBI Bank at Kamalpur and looted Thirty One Lakh Rupees. 1996- On 21st January one person was killed at Hezamara, On 2nd July NLFT attacked Grameen Bank at Manai Pathar, Shantir Bazaar, looted more than eight lakh



rupees and killed one and wounded five, on 6th September NLFT attacked Jampuijala Gramin Bank and looted eight lakh rupees, on 12 October five killed at Champaknagar.

1997- On 11th February mass killing happened at midnight at Takarjala, fifteen were killed and the whole village was burnt, On 16th February tussle took place between insurgents and villagers at Ramchandraghat, Khowai, houses were burnt and many left wounded, on 2nd July NLFT attacked Gramin Bank at Manai Pathar and looted more than eight lakh rupees and killed one and wounded six. 1998- On 11th February five killed at Urbari, Sadar and at Midnight seven killed and six wounded at Ganaki, on 1st April Bimal Sinha, the then health minister was killed at Salema, Kamalpur, on 10th June owner of Adarini Tea Garden was kidnapped and his son was killed at the Garden, on 26th July insurgents killed 2, kidnapper 2, burnt and 30 houses at Charkara, Santir Bazaar, on 5th August mass killing happened at Narendrapur Tea Garden, Sadar, five tea garden workers were killed and looted one lakh eighty thousand rupees, on 15th August a bus carrying passenger was attacked at Kanchanpur-Pecharthal Road, killed six and wounded thirteen passengers, on 22nd August a bus carrying tribal people was attacked and killed three students and wounded fifteen students, on 28th August at Shiv Bari, Kamalpur seven were killed, six left wounded and kidnapped seven people, on 4th September insurgents attacked Kanairambari, Takarjala and killed one and kidnapped eight, on 10th October eight people killed, five wounded and burnt many houses at Trishabari, Teliamura, on 3rd November different areas at Mainama, Baramura, and Bisramganj were attacked and killed twenty three persons and wounded thirty six, on 29th November Dumbur Hydro Electric Project was attacked one killed and eight kidnapped.

1999- On 2nd February killed four and wounded three at Kanchanmala Bazaar, on 3rd February more than six hundred houses were burnt and killed eight persons at Kanchanmala, on 10th April insurgents killed five and wounded seven at Tulamura Bazaar, Udaipur, on 12th August Shivbari was gheraoed by insurgents and killed six villagers, on 28th August NLFT looted more than twenty-nine thousand rupees from Gramin Bank at Haflong Chara, on 15th November at Panchabati, Sidhai mass killing took place where seventeen people were killed, wounded fourteen, and kidnapped five, on 10th December five killed and ten were wounded at Rupini Para, Pecharthal, on 23rd December three killed and five wounded at Lakshmichara, Melaghar and in retaliation to this attack five tribal villages at Lakshman Depha were burnt and killed three people. These are the incidents that were reported in media.

CONCLUSION

As a result of unrestricted migration from erstwhile East Bengal and Bangladesh, Tripura's tribal majority population has changed dramatically. The tribals were forced to the hills, and the Bengali-speaking locals and migrants dominated the governance in the state. The insurgency movement began as a reaction to this situation.

The period under this study witnessed both fierce insurgency and the surrender of insurgents in large numbers.

Disgruntled TNV cadres led by Dhananjay Reang created the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) in March 1989. Since then, the NLFT has gone through various splits. The leadership and cadres of the group are largely based in Bangladesh. One of the two active organisations in Tripura is the NLFT's dominant faction, led by Biswamohan Debbarma. The Ranjit Debbarma-led All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF), founded in July 1990 as All Tripura Tribal Force, is the second organisation, in addition to the NLFT, which has resolutely refused to be brought into any peace settlement with the government. On August 23, 1993, the ATTF and the Tripura government signed a memorandum of understanding. However, Ranjit Debbarma's faction chose to continue their armed campaign. The group has taken refuge in Bangladesh throughout the years and engages in hit-and-run operations in Tripura. In the early 2000s, there was a high frequency of insurgent activities. It was after 2005 that their activities declined significantly. The state administration used a two-pronged strategy to combat the most recent wave of insurgency. On the one hand, the "disturbed territory" was subjected to a robust counter-insurgency campaign aimed at restoring the rule of law. On the other hand, in the areas that were liberated from insurgent control, the administration was soon resurrected, and development programmes such as SSA, MGNREGA, and NRHM were quickly implemented. Decentralized political organisations such as the PRIs, the Tripura Tribal Autonomous District Council, and others began to play an important role in fostering an environment conducive to peace and understanding.

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