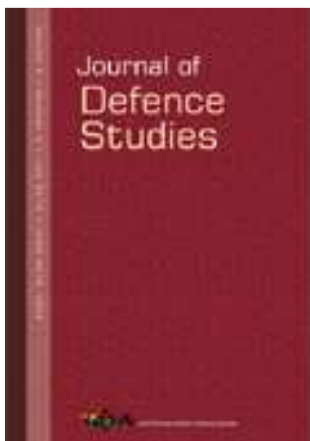


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### Birth of UNLFWSEA: Internal Dynamics and Implications for India's North-East

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## Birth of UNLFWSEA

### Internal Dynamics and Implications for India's North-East

*Rajeev Bhattacharyya\**

*A distinctive feature of insurgency in India's North-East and neighbouring Myanmar has been the tendency among rebel groups to form alliances. Cooperation is deemed advantageous in a hostile terrain, against a powerful and better organised enemy. Several coalitions were formed in Myanmar by the separatist insurgent outfits with well-defined objectives which, however, failed to produce any significant impact on the campaign for independence of the region. There were centrifugal forces pulling in different directions, often determined by the resources available with the groups, their long- and short-term goals, and the domestic situation in the areas they hailed from. The new alliance called United National Liberation Front of Western South East Asia (UNLWSEA) has emerged in the backdrop of vastly changed situations in Myanmar and India's North-East. So it is different from the previous endeavours in much the same way as it suffers from the lacunae that hampered complete unity in the past.*

#### BIRTH OF UNLFWSEA

In March–April 2015, top functionaries of four insurgent groups assembled at a camp deep in the jungles of Myanmar's Sagaing Division to form an alliance. Days later and after many brainstorming sessions, the UNLFWSEA was formed with the goal of securing sovereignty and

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independence of India's North-East and the contiguous Naga-inhabited region in Myanmar.<sup>1</sup> It also resolved to form a government-in-exile by the year end, which would focus on drumming up support for the campaign at the international forum.<sup>2</sup> The signatories belong to the anti-talks factions of the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) and National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), which are active in Assam; Kamatapur Liberation Organisation (KLO) of Bengal; and the Myanmar-based Khaplang faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-K). The six Manipuri groups that have camps in close vicinity of these outfits have extended 'moral support' to the coalition and have agreed to take part in joint operations against 'common enemies'.<sup>3</sup>

The rationale of the new coalition was to make a 'difference' and give a 'decisive punch' to the campaign of independence. The leaders realised that limited progress had been achieved so far, even after seven decades of the movement that originated in 1947 when the Naga National Council (NNC) declared the independence of Nagaland a day ahead of India's. A difference could be made only if all the like-minded organisations were united and fought the common enemy together. There was also a greater chance of securing international support if there was a government-in-exile of the alliance. According to plans, the proposed government would have a moving capital and meetings held in different destinations. A roadmap would be firmed up at the earliest for tapping regular sources of income and procuring weapons. There would be ministries as well in charge of specific departments.<sup>4</sup>

The new association caps a series of meetings among the top functionaries of the insurgent outfits at a camp at Hukwang Valley in Sagaing Division. The conclaves commenced from the middle of March until the next month, with the goal of hammering out a common minimum programme. The goal was to have all the parties on board and a coalition representative of all the outfits in the Naga region in Myanmar, but there was no consensus on some issues even after weeks of discussion. The United National Liberation Front (UNLF) of Manipur demanded that its jailed Chairman, Rajkumar Meghen alias Sana Yaima, be made the president of the alliance.<sup>5</sup> The non-Manipuri groups instead proposed the name of NSCN-K Chairman, S.S. Khaplang, since he was the eldest and it was in his territory that the other groups were keeping the flame of insurgency alive in the North-East. The conduct of Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL), another Manipuri group in Myanmar, had also been a matter of discussion since there were reports of its proximity to the Isak-

Muviah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM), which is based in the North-East. It was warned that it would have to snap with its ties to NSCN-IM if it wished to continue with the camps in Myanmar. The situation reached a deadlock until it was decided that the Manipuri groups would convey their decision soon to the rest of the outfits.<sup>6</sup>

Even as these meetings were on, Khaplang decided to abrogate the ceasefire with the Indian Government towards the end of March. The ceasefire was inked in 2001, but there was hardly any movement forward except the annual extension of the agreement. New Delhi was reluctant to begin talks with a rebel chief who was based in Myanmar and who was a bitter rival of the NSCN-IM. Khaplang saw greater benefits in befriending Naypyidaw and maintaining a distance from the Indian Government. Contrary to popular perception, the chief's decision to end the ceasefire was not sudden, rather it was the outcome of a clever strategy that had been devised two years ago.<sup>7</sup> By terminating the agreement, NSCN-K has demonstrated its loyalty to the Myanmar Government and its commitment to the separatist groups from the North-East. These events were followed by two operations in Nagaland and Manipur by the rebels between May–June 2015 that resulted in the killing of at least 26 soldiers from the Assam Rifles and Indian Army. New Delhi retaliated with two cross-border strikes against the rebels and a fresh effort to convince Naypyidaw for action against the camps.

#### **HISTORY OF ALLIANCES**

Cooperation between insurgent outfits of India's North-East and Myanmar began from the mid-1960s when the NNC decided to take the assistance of the Myanmar Nagas for the arduous mission to China. By then, the Nagas in Myanmar had also formed their own association, called Eastern Naga Revolutionary Council (ENRC), with V. Jopoh as Chairman and S.S. Khaplang as the Vice Chairman.<sup>8</sup> As many as six batches of the NNC's armed wing were assisted by the ENRC on their mission to China, where they received training and were provided with weapons and ammunition.<sup>9</sup> The Shillong Accord (1975) was a landmark event that helped the Nagas on both sides of the border to draw closer. The agreement, which was clinched hurriedly between the Government of India and a section of the NNC, was denounced by the extremists that included Thuingaleng Muivah, Isak Chisi Swu and Khole Konyak.

Khaplang joined hands with the triumvirate resulting in the formation of the NSCN five years later in Myanmar. In spite of being devout Christians, the leadership decided to demonstrate their commitment to 'socialism' with the objective of securing assistance from China.<sup>10</sup> The council headquarters was established at Challam Basti<sup>11</sup> and batches of cadres trained for the 'war of independence'. In the initial years, the organisation was low on finance and weapons, if not on human resources. Rebel groups from Manipur and Assam—People's Liberation Army (PLA), UNLF and ULFA—were allowed by the Nagas to set up camps and training facilities in Myanmar.

The bonhomie among the outfits and increasing raids by the Myanmar Army brought the NSCN, UNLF and ULFA into an alliance called the United Front sometime in the mid-1980s.<sup>12</sup> It was decided that a joint delegation would be sent to China for assistance and procurement of weapons and efforts stepped up to train cadres in Kachin. However, a couple of subsequent developments rendered the coalition ineffective. Functionaries from the other groups allege that NSCN General Secretary Thuingaleng Muivah's decision to go to China alone was a breach of trust and against the spirit of the association.<sup>13</sup> Another setback was the decision by the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) to train only the PLA and ULFA. In fact, PLA cadres were being trained by the KIA ostensibly under direction from China even before the formation of the alliance.<sup>14</sup> The ULFA followed suit by sending groups of young boys to the camps who were trained for three months and then, sometimes, deployed with combat units of KIA for operation against the Myanmar Army. Trouble began brewing from 1988 after the split of NSCN into the Isak–Muivah and S.S. Khaplang factions. The other groups were caught in a quandary until they decided to remain loyal to Khaplang since retaining the base in Myanmar was essential.

The importance of Khaplang and the Myanmar base also grew on account of developments in Kachin. In 1989, ULFA and PLA were told to vacate Kachin following a pact between KIA and Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW), India's external intelligence agency. The KIA committed that it would no longer assist or train rebels from the North-East in return for weapons which were later shipped through Arunachal Pradesh. Another objective of R&AW in sealing the deal with KIA was to prevent the groups from the North-East from enrolling as members of the anti-government coalition in Myanmar since it would have entailed secured bases and access to sources of weapons.<sup>15</sup> With the doors shut in

Kachin, all the groups fell back on the Naga base for sustenance, and the idea of reviving the defunct coalition gained momentum. It was revived in 1990 and named Indo-Burma Revolutionary Front (IBRF), although the NSCN-IM was not a part of it. The charter declared cooperation and a joint campaign for the independence of Assam, Manipur and Naga-inhabited areas of Myanmar as the goals. The alliance was crippled by shortage of weapons and ammunition and it was not until 1995 that a small consignment of weapons reached these camps from Bangladesh's Cox Bazar.<sup>16</sup>

The battle lines were drawn between the Khaplang and Isak–Muivah factions of the NSCN and a deadly turf war ensued for control of territory. While NSCN-K entrenched itself in Myanmar and the eastern districts of Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, NSCN-IM consolidated its position in a greater part of Nagaland and Manipur, and it soon emerged as the biggest militant outfit in the region with a network spanning all the seven states in the North-East. It focused on Christianity as a tool to achieve unity among the heterogeneous Naga tribes and drew close to two organisations that had a majority of Christian cadres in their ranks—NDFB in Assam and National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT). The necessity of a coalition was felt as much in the North-East since counter-insurgency operations were being intensified across the region by the security forces. Both NLFT and NDFB were active in the border areas with Bangladesh and had already managed to establish secured hideouts and camps in the neighbouring country. Moreover, with Khaplang already in close ties with groups from Assam and Manipur, it was imperative for NSCN-IM to craft a similar endeavour. So, in 1995, came another coalition, called the Self Defence United Front of South East Asian Himalayan Region (UFSEAHR), with the broader goal of uniting all like-minded organisations in the North-East and neighbouring countries. However, within a few months of its formation, NSCN-IM was engaged in secret parleys with the government for a ceasefire, which was formally signed two years later in 1997.<sup>17</sup> The goal of forging a united campaign for independence suffered a setback, although cooperation continued among these groups for some more years.

Formal talks between the NSCN-IM and the government began in 2003, but its demand of Greater Nagalim entailed bringing all Naga-inhabited regions in the North-East under a single administrative mechanism. If the government were to accept the demand, it would mean dividing Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh. It would also

have curtailed the demand of homelands forwarded by other militant outfits since many of these territorial claims overlapped with that of NSCN-IM's. Alarmed over the development, three groups from Manipur's Imphal Valley—UNLF, PLA and People's Republican Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK)—joined hands in 1999 to float the Manipur People's Liberation Front (MPLF), with the goal of protecting Manipur's territorial integrity and intensifying the movement for independence.<sup>18</sup> Although the development attracted media publicity, the front failed to move beyond sharing information on the movement of the security forces and sources of weapons. PREPAK was crippled by internal strife, which prevented regular meetings among the top functionaries. In addition, MPFL could not enlist the cooperation of the other groups active in Imphal Valley, like the KYKL and the different factions of the Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP). However, the friendly ties continued since all of them had camps in Myanmar and cooperation was necessary in a hostile terrain.

Meanwhile, hostility between the army and the insurgents continued throughout the 1990s in Myanmar even as events were galloping at a fast pace in the North-East. There were frequent encounters and raids on the villages by the army that left behind a trail of death and destruction.<sup>19</sup> On numerous occasions, entire villages shifted to the remote hills to escape the army's atrocities and its demands of forced labour and food. The situation, however, changed drastically from 2001, following an unwritten agreement between Tatmadaw and NSCN-K not to attack each other.<sup>20</sup> Tatmadaw's changed policy was part of its endeavour to reach out to as many insurgent groups as possible and conclude ceasefire agreements. Some of the bigger rebel groups that had been fighting for decades—KIA and the United Wa State Army (UWSA) which emerged after the collapse of the Communist Party of Burma—also arrived at an agreement to explore the possibility of a negotiated settlement. Peace in the Naga region encouraged more like-minded groups from the North-East to approach Khaplang for setting up camps in Myanmar. By 2005, there were as many as nine outfits from the North-East that had established a presence in Myanmar's Sagaing Division, both in the region controlled by the NSCN-K and in areas contiguous to Manipur.<sup>21</sup>

Assured that Tatmadaw would not launch an offensive against the camps, earnest efforts for an alliance among the groups were set in motion again that resulted in the emergence of the Coordination Committee (Cor Com) among the Manipuri outfits in 2010. All the seven groups

resolved to continue the campaign for Manipur's independence, abide by certain norms to sustain the close relationship among all the members, help each other in times of crisis and accept all decisions taken by the collective leadership. It also planned to form a government-in-exile by expanding the alliance to include the other three organisations that have camps in Myanmar.<sup>22</sup> Incidentally, the other three groups—NSCN-K, NDFB and ULFA—had similar objectives, and talks between the representatives from all the groups began to be held from mid-2010. After another meeting early in 2011, it was decided that the alliance would be formed by the end of the year and a declaration would be issued to the media.<sup>23</sup> Arrangements were made to receive all the senior leaders for the final meetings with adequate security, until these were cancelled a couple of weeks ahead of the event. Instead, two football matches were played—with the Manipuri groups on one side and the ULFA, NDFB and NSCN-K on the other—to celebrate the decision.<sup>24</sup> More than three years later, the aim of including all the groups under a single umbrella could not materialise following differences on some issues and the Manipuri groups abstained from becoming members of the UNLFWSEA.

#### INACTION BY NAYPYIDAW

The NSCN-K has emerged as a trusted ally of Tatmadaw and their relationship will greatly determine the shape of the political landscape in the Naga-inhabited areas in Myanmar. The unwritten understanding between the two sides since 2001 was converted into a written agreement on 9 April 2012, which speaks of the importance given by Tatmadaw to the Nagas.<sup>25</sup> The agreement was signed since it was deemed to be beneficial to both sides. For NSCN-K Chairman, S.S. Khaplang, it has meant carving a fine balance between different goals and demands. His threefold objective of non-interference in the region under his control in Sagaing Division, continuation of close ties with the rebel groups from India's North-East and integration with the Myanmar mainstream appears to have been realised with the accord. NSCN-K has also voiced support for Naypyidaw's efforts at a nationwide ceasefire with all insurgent groups and has sent delegates for the meetings with the government in the past few months.<sup>26</sup> That the relationship between the two sides has undergone a transformation can be gauged from the fact that the government made arrangements for Khaplang's treatment at a hospital in Yangon two months ago when he had fallen sick. A photograph that was subsequently



published in the media showed Aung Min, a top government negotiator with the insurgent groups meeting the Naga chief in the hospital.<sup>27</sup>

For Naypyidaw, Khaplang's support is considered crucial for several reasons. It has not yet been able to establish its authority in the areas controlled by NSCN-K. At a time when war is on in Shan State and instability in Kachin and Arakan, Tatmadaw would not prefer to wage war with the Nagas. The total strength of the Myanmar Army is only around 2.5–3 lakh and waging war in the hills of Sagaing Division would necessitate marshalling immense resources.<sup>28</sup> The agreement of 2012, on the other hand, has allowed the government to teach the Myanmar language to the children in some Naga villages. The country's flag is also now seen hoisted in some villages, which was unthinkable two decades ago. The army has been allowed by NSCN-K to keep representatives in most of the villages from the local populace and it informs the village chief before a visit to any settlement.<sup>29</sup> Gone are the days when the word 'Burma' (meaning the army) struck awe in the hearts of the people and when it only meant raids and destruction. Khaplang himself admitted that people could now sleep in peace without the danger of early morning attacks from the Myanmar Army.

As a concession to Khaplang, Tatmadaw has agreed to turn a blind eye to his close association with the rebel groups from India's North-East. Over the past 15 years, camps and training facilities have mushroomed and have become bigger in size. There are at least four locations—First Battalion, Second Battalion, Council and Taga—in the region contiguous to the eastern districts of Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland, and controlled by the NSCN-K, where camps of these groups have come up. The general layout of the camps is such that the NSCN-K would be at the centre surrounded by the other camps in a radius of 10 km.<sup>30</sup> All cadres would be able to assemble at short notice and put up a joint fight if there were to be an offensive against any of these settlements. Since 2001, several batches of new cadres have been trained at these centres and many consignments of weapons have been received.<sup>31</sup> At the same time, Khaplang has succeeded in convincing Naypyidaw that his demand of independence of the Naga-inhabited region and the alliance with the other rebel outfits would not jeopardise the long-term interests of Myanmar.

Evidently, Khaplang's slogan of independence has a range of meanings. It helps the chief to keep the North-East groups united under his leadership, and he needs these groups as much as they need him. The combined strength of these outfits would not be less than 4,000 and

more cadres can be assembled if the situation demands.<sup>32</sup> Khaplang lacks human resources since the region is sparsely populated. The economy is subsistence oriented and money as a mode of transaction is a new concept in the region under his control in Myanmar. The NSCN-K does not have a big standing army since the families cannot spare their members for service in the outfit for an indefinite period of time. Therefore, it has made military service mandatory for three years for all able-bodied males and females who could also be called to render service for the 'nation' if the situation demands.<sup>33</sup> The objective is to remain prepared for all kinds of eventualities and Khaplang would like to portray himself as a powerful chief with ample resources to take on the Myanmarese Army if the situation demands. This could deter Naypyidaw from becoming hostile and it might as well help the chief to wrest further concessions, such as autonomy, in the near future.

Therefore, it is not surprising that New Delhi's repeated pleas to Naypyidaw for an operation akin to that in Bhutan against the militant camps have fallen on deaf ears in spite of the fact that the relations between the countries has blossomed in the past few years. Soon after the cross-border raids by the Indian Army following the ambush in Manipur, Naypyidaw lost no time in issuing a statement that not only denied any such operation in its territory but sternly warned against such incidents in the future. Subsequently, India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval dashed off to Myanmar for damage control and the visiting Myanmarese Army Chief Min Aung Hlaing assured that more troops would be deployed along the border to check the movement of the insurgents, but there was no assurance on the rebel bases. However, it is doubtful if additional deployment along the border would actually be possible given the scarce resources of Tatmadaw. Moreover, Naypyidaw knows full well that New Delhi is in no position to adopt an aggressive stance due to non-action against the rebel camps. Myanmar is crucial for India—it is the gateway to the fast-growing economies of South-East Asia, and hence vital for the success of the 'Act East' policy. India has stakes in infrastructure projects in Myanmar that are currently being implemented by different agencies. Myanmar's immense reserves of natural gas also cannot be ignored given India's increasing energy demands. Like the United States, New Delhi's policy is also aimed at weaning Myanmar away from China's grip, which had begun from the late 1980s when Beijing developed close diplomatic, political and economic ties with the Junta.

#### IMPACT ON THE NORTH-EAST

On earlier occasions, efforts at unity among militant outfits in the North-East and Myanmar had fizzled out since it was a difficult task to hammer out a common minimum programme acceptable to the different groups. The social, economic and political conditions are vastly different in India's North-East and the Naga region in Myanmar, necessitating dissimilar strategies for survival and the campaign of independence. The divide in the NSCN, and later in NSCN-K, was on issues perceived differently by the leaders. Complete unity was never achieved and the rift is discernible decades later among the groups in Myanmar currently. Three months after the new alliance took birth, UNLF Chairman, KhPambei, dropped hints that a decision had not yet been taken by the six Manipuri groups on UNLFWSEA.<sup>34</sup> But that is a minor hiccup in the overall scheme of things in Myanmar's Sagaing Division. Cooperation among the outfits extends to every sphere from day-to-day activities to operations.<sup>35</sup> The Manipur ambush on 4 June 2015 was carried out by a combined team of NSCN-K, KYKL and a faction of the KCP. The operation was decided days in advance and a large group of around 40 cadres was assigned to execute the lethal plan after proper planning.<sup>36</sup> The collaboration was successful and it had the additional impact of causing a temporary strain in Indo-Myanmar relations.

The alliances and future plans notwithstanding, the trajectory of the separatist movement in the North-East will probably not undergo a major transformation in the immediate future. The outcome of the forthcoming general elections in Myanmar in November is unlikely to produce a drastic change in the Naga-inhabited region of the country very soon. The current trend of operations and encounters occasionally would continue for some more years since the base in Myanmar will remain safe with the Tatmadaw unlikely to reverse its policies. Camps in the region contiguous to Manipur which are beyond Khaplang's control exist on a tacit understanding with the Myanmar Army, which is paid an annual sum as protection money.<sup>37</sup> However, the rebels' presence in Myanmar and further operations against security forces in India could be a cause of embarrassment for Naypyidaw. Even though Naypyidaw has been able to withstand the pressure from New Delhi, giving the same explanation continuously for not being able to dismantle the camps reflects poorly on a country that has been too willing to accept Indian investments in infrastructure and cooperate in other sectors. According to the latest

inputs, Tatmadaw has advised Khaplang to refrain from further attacks on the Indian security forces.<sup>38</sup> Given the present circumstances, it is quite unlikely that Khaplang would defy Tatmadaw since it could upset the balance that he has managed to establish. Peace in the region serves the interests of both the neighbours and it will not upset NSCN-K's plans. Nor can the groups from the North-East afford to alienate NSCN-K since the base in Myanmar is crucial for survival.

It appears doubtful whether the separatist groups from the North-East would agree for talks with the Indian government since New Delhi will not accept discussion on sovereignty. In 2006, the peace process with the ULFA collapsed following its demand that sovereignty be included as the 'core issue' in the talks. The groups from Manipur also appear determined not to bow down, even if it means a reduced scope of intensifying the campaign and spending the rest of their lives in the jungles of Myanmar. In such a scenario, efforts could be stepped up to form the government-in-exile with a moving capital and cultivate support of some countries and organisations like the Unrepresented Nations and People's Organisation (UNPO). In the past, groups from the North-East have approached the United Nations and other agencies, but there has hardly been any impact on the movement in terms of international support.

The end of the ceasefire between the NSCN-K and the Indian Government has prompted civil society organisations in Nagaland to take a decision to send a delegation to meet NSCN-K Chairman S.S. Khaplang and convince him of the necessity to renew the agreement. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) welcomed the proposal and was willing to grant approval to the group to visit Myanmar. Days later, MHA appeared reluctant, especially after Khaplang was declared a wanted man by the National Investigative Agency (NIA).<sup>39</sup> But Khaplang seems to have made up his mind and is in no mood to meet the delegation. Instead, two of his senior functionaries—Vice Chairman Khango Konyak and Chief of the Armed Wing, Brigadier Nikki Sumi—are likely to hold discussions with the representatives from Nagaland.<sup>40</sup> The chief would like to send a message that he is no longer interested in continuing with the ceasefire since he is now focused more on Myanmar. Nor will Khaplang's decision have an adverse impact on the proposed agreement between the government and the NSCN-IM. There is almost a vertical split now between the Naga rebels of the North-East and Myanmar, which was not the case earlier. It will be difficult for militant outfits in Nagaland to establish bases in the neighbouring country, which means

that battling the government indefinitely may no longer be feasible. NSCN-K continues to retain support in Arunachal Pradesh's Changlang district and in the eastern districts of Nagaland. But it may not be able to throw a spanner since there is a desperate yearning for peace among the people after decades of a bloody conflict that has claimed thousands of lives. Khaplang might denounce the agreement like the rebel leaders of the other groups in the state but chances are that he would not engage in activities to thwart its implementation. There is a greater possibility of protests against the agreement erupting in Manipur than the other states.

#### CONCLUSION

In sum, UNLFWSEA is different from the earlier coalitions of rebel outfits on several counts. It has emerged in the backdrop of a changed situation in Myanmar when the government has amended its external and domestic policies and has extended an olive branch to the NSCN-K as part of its effort to end internal strife in the country. While reciprocating with the same gesture, the Nagas have firmed up their long and short-term goals and seem to have established a fine balance between diverse pulls and pressures. The competition among the major powers over Myanmar will impact the developments at the rebel base in northern Sagaing Division in much the same way as it has done in some other regions of the country. But in the Naga-inhabited region, the political landscape will most likely be defined by the relationship between the NSCN-K and Naypyidaw, which seems to be growing stronger. As such, the existing arrangement would continue even though it could provoke efforts by neighbouring countries to influence the course of events in the region. Given its ambitious plans in Myanmar, New Delhi would have to continue engaging Myanmar for greater connectivity and increased trade in spite of Naypyidaw's reluctance to initiate action on the rebel bases for obvious reasons. The troubled zone contiguous to the eastern districts of Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh will not be a hindrance in these schemes since it is far-off from the focus areas in Manipur and Mizoram. The separatist groups, on their part, have also charted their future course of action, but whether there would be a difference in the campaign remains to be seen. Insurgency-related incidents have registered a sharp decline in the North-East in the past few years and a majority of the armed groups are pitching for autonomy within the ambit of the Constitution.

## NOTES

1. Joint press release by National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang (NSCN-K), United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) and Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO), mailed to media houses on 4 May 2015. A copy of the release is available with the author.
2. Interview with ULFA Chief of Staff Paresh Baruah over telephone, 6 May 2015.
3. Rajeev Bhattacharyya, 'Why the Formation of a Common Platform by Insurgent Groups from the Northeast should Give the Government Cause for Worry', *The Caravan*, 8 May 2015, available at <http://www.caravanmagazine.in/vantage/common-platform-insurgent-groups-northeast-UNLFW-worry-government>, accessed on 8 May 2015.
4. Interview with ULFA Chief of Staff Paresh Baruah over telephone, 6 May 2015.
5. UNLF Chairman Rajkumar Meghen was apprehended in Bangladesh in October 2010 and subsequently handed over to India. He is currently in jail in Guwahati.
6. Interview with a senior functionary of People's Liberation Army (PLA) over telephone, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, on 25 April 2015.
7. Interview with overground and surrendered ULFA cadres, Assam, 2013–14.
8. *Life under Military Rule: Human Rights Violations of Nagas in Burma*, Report by the Naga Youth Organisation, Burma, 2010, p. 21. A copy of the report is available with the author.
9. Bertil Lintner, *Great Game East*, New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers, 2012, pp. 336–39.
10. Interview with NSCN-K Chairman S.S. Khaplang, Sagaing Division, Myanmar, 23–24 December 2011.
11. Challam Basti has also been referred to as Kesan Chanlam by some authors.
12. Rajeev Bhattacharyya, *Rendezvous with Rebels: Journey to Meet India's Most Wanted Men*, New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers, 2014, p. 246.
13. Interview with former ULFA functionary Kiran Barua, Guwahati, 11 May 2011; and interview with surrendered ULFA cadres, Assam, 2011–12.
14. Lintner, *Great Game East*, n. 9, p. 159.
15. Interview with a retired additional secretary of R&AW, Guwahati, 15 December 2010.
16. Interview with former ULFA functionary Biju Deka, Nalbari, 10 July 2011; and interview with a PLA commander, Imphal, 25 September 2007.

17. Khomdon Singh Lisam, *Encyclopaedia of Manipur*, Vol. 3, New Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2011, p. 464; and Samudra Gupta Kashyap, 'Towards the Govt–Naga Peace Accord: Everything you Need to Know', *The Indian Express*, 4 August 2015, available at <http://indianexpress.com/article/explained/simply-put-towards-accord-step-by-step/#sthash.Sbrm8mjt.dpuf>, accessed on 5 August 2015.
18. Phanjoubam Tarapot, *Bleeding Manipur*, New Delhi: Har Anand Publications, 2003, p. 181.
19. For more details, see Bhattacharyya, *Rendezvous with Rebels*, n. 12.
20. Interview with NSCN-K Chairman S.S. Khaplang, Sagaing Division, Myanmar, 23–24 December 2011.
21. Interview with NSCN-K functionaries in Sagaing Division, Myanmar, 20 October 2011–31 January 2012.
22. Ibid.
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