

Of northeast and northeast experts



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Abani Baruah 7 September 2017 Updated 7 Sept 6422 views

They say the World War ii produced more waiters than soldiers. Similarly insurgency has produced more Northeast experts than insurgents. If we exclude the Telangana movement which was based on class conflict, Assam is the first [state](#) which has the misfortune of tackling insurgencies based on ethnicity.

Almost after [India](#) becomes a Republic, Assam faced the extremist problem in Naga Hills and Lusai Hills – the then two hill districts of Assam. The State government under two successive respected Chief Ministers -- the late Bishnuram Medhi and Bimala Prasad Chaliha -- tried to contain the situation with its limited resources. In the 50s and the 60s, many junior officers of the Assam Police sacrificed their lives in combating insurgency.

But strangely the Centre was oblivious to suggestions of the Assam administration or even of its chief [ministers](#). Delhi relied more on their so-called experts in the region. Barring a few, they were normally IAS and IPS officers who did not have the slightest inkling of the mindset of diverse ethnic groups of the Northeast. Trained to look at all problems from the angle of law and order, these young officers simply could not understand that with Independence, the people of the Northeast expected more sympathy and concern from their brown sahibs. Instead in some cases these brown sahibs had become more arrogant than their previous white masters. As a result, a perpetual conflict between the administration and the people resulted.

Army Generals as Governors

Later this syndrome was further compounded by the politicians of national parties who were given the task of political management in different states.

This practice has two obvious flaws. First, Army men who have a challenging [job](#) in combating insurgency tend to give more importance to governors with whom they can easily identify themselves. In the process they tend to give little credence to the [state](#) government's view. Secondly, top [state](#) government officials and DGP become confused. They wondered who is their master – the governor or the chief minister? As a result the [state](#) administration which is constitutionally responsible for law and orders has become rudderless.

In a democracy, it is the opinion of the chief minister that matters in the affairs of the State. We remember during the Chinese aggression in 1962, while the people of [Arunachal](#) (then NEFA) and of Assam stoically faced the grave situation, the rest of [India](#), including its Prime Minister, could offer sympathy only. For those of us who were in schools and colleges in those days, his statement 'My sympathy goes to the people of Assam' has become a bit of joke till today. After this remark by the then all powerful Prime Minister, most of the people from outside the [State](#) left Assam. Even an IAS Deputy Commissioner abandoned his district and took the first available flight to Calcutta (in those days there was no direct flight to Delhi). But the then Chief Minister of Assam was a pillar of strength to the people of Assam.

So for God's sake, leave us to be governed by our own democratically elected Chief Ministers (no matter whether they are from the [Congress](#), the BJP or the AGP).

Abani Baruah

Abani Baruah is a retired bureaucrat and writes on issues of governance, environment.

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