POLITICAL DECENTRALIZATION AND CONFLICT IN ASSAM'S SIXTH SCHEDULE AREAS

Dissertation submitted to National Law University and Judicial Academy, Assam

in partial fulfillment of award of the degree of

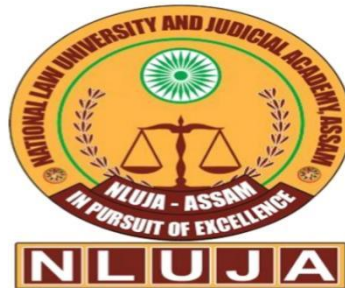ONE YEAR LL.M DEGREE PROGRAMME

Submitted by

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DECLARATION

I, **SUZANA DIFOESA**, do hereby declare that the dissertation titled **"POLITICAL DECENTRALIZATION AND CONFLICT IN ASSAM'S SIXTH SCHEDULE AREA"** submitted by me for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF LAWS/ ONE YEAR LL.M DEGREE PROGRAMME** of National Law University and Judicial Academy, Assam, is a bonafide work and has not been submitted, either in part or full anywhere else for any purpose, academic or otherwise.

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1986 - Autonomous State Demand Committee

1995 - Sixth Schedule to the Constitution (Amendment) Act

2003 - Sixth Schedule to the Constitution (Amendment) Act

2013 - Joint Action Committee for Autonomous State

Table of Abbreviations

1.	BTAD	Bodoland Territorial Area Districts
2.	ADC	Autonomous District Council
3.	APCC	Assam Pradesh Congress Committee
4.	AASU	All Assam Students' Union
5.	MNF	Mizo National Front
6.	TTAADC	Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council
7.	UPDS	United People's Democratic Solidarity
8.	DHD	Dima Halim Daoga
9.	KLNLF	Karbi People's Liberation Tigers
10.	NDA	National Democratic Alliance
11.	KPLT	Karbi People's Liberation Tigers
12.	JACAS	Joint Action Committee for Autonomous State
13.	BLT	Bodoland Territorial Council
14.	BTC	Bodoland Territorial Council
15.	KYA	Kachari Youth Association/Kachari Yubak Sanmillan
16.	AAPTL	All Assam Plains Tribal League
17.	PTCA	Plains Tribal Council of Assam
18.	BSS	Bodo Sahitya Sabha
19.	ABSU	All Bodo Students' Union
20.	AATL	All Assam Tribal League
21.	BPAC	Bodo People's Action Committee

22.	PAPA	People's Alliance for Peace Agreement
23.	ABWWF	All Bodo Women's Welfare Federation
24.	ABEF	All Bodo Employees' Federation
25.	AGP	Asom Gana Parishad
26.	NDFB	National Democratic Front of Bodoland
27.	ULFA	United Liberation Front of Assam
30.	NSCN	National Socialist Council of Nagaland
31.	BdSF	Bodo Security Force
32.	BAC	Bodoland Autonomous Council
33.	BEC	Bodoland Executive Council
34.	BTF	Bengali Tiger Force
35.	BPPF	Bodoland People's Progressive Front
36.	BRTF	Bodoland Revolutionary Tiger Force
37.	BPPF (H)	Bodoland People's Progressive Front (Hagrama)
38.	BNC	Bodoland National Conference
39.	MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
40.	MoS	Memorandum of Settlement
41.	KAAC	Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council
42.	IPF	Indigenous People's Forum
43.	CPI (M-L)	Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)
44.	NSCN (I-M)	National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah)

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Why and under what circumstances may political decentralization result in conflict? The aim of this research is to answer this issue using known literature on conflict avoidance and elite competitiveness. This research claims that the decentralization of power, a dispute resolution tactic that acknowledges the wrongs committed against ethnic groups, may have a number of unforeseen repercussions and even encourage violent scenarios. In this study, political decentralization and conflicgt are investigated. The research starts off with the knowledge that political decentralization, when used as a conflict-prevention strategy, has not successfully decreased violence in many regions of the world. In some regions of Turkey, India, New Zealand and Indonesia, for example, political decentralization has reduced violence. Nevertheless, in certain areas, such as Sri Lanka and the northeastern part of India, political decentralization resulted in protracted conflict. As a result, there is still a mystery in the field of preventing conflict about variations in the link between governmental decentralization and violence throughout time and geography.

Two sets of conflict resolution concepts are applied to comprehend the link between conflict between the ethnic minorities and preventing it. Political decentralization's effectiveness as a mechanism for decreasing conflict is explained by one set of theories, whereas the failure of decentralization as a preventative strategy is explained by another set of theories. Due to disputes between ethnic groups over homelands and autonomy, inter-ethnic relations in Northeast India appear to be unstable. Despite the existence of self-governing councils in certain communities, others have been frustrated with the lack of decentralization of authority, resulting to movements for sovereignty and autonomy. While some

movements became violent, others managed to maintain a reasonable level of tranquilly. To keep violence at bay, the state administration formed independent councils. Certain communities, like the Dimasas, were even awarded the Sixth Schedule following a constitutional transition. Violence was anticipated to decrease as an outcome of the government's sympathetic stance towards the aggrieved ethnic minority. Political decentralization produced a different result in reality, though. The establishment of autonomous regions did not provide relief for the ethnic communities who had been wronged but instead encouraged violent conflict. This research makes an effort to comprehend the circumstances under which political decentralization causes conflict. This study attempts to advance our understanding on political decentralization and conflict.

The introduction to this research includes a discussion of many ideas, including ethnic identities, ethnic conflict, and political decentralization. As we examine various concepts, we additionally relied on widely recognized literature on ethnicity, nationalism, decentralized politics and conflict. The study reviews pertinent research on political strife and decentralization in order to grasp the link between the two. The aim of this study is to identify the potential causes of violence in Assam, a politically decentralized region in northeastern India.

The federal structure of India insists on a number of efforts that are intended to foster efficient government. "Assam's establishment of independent district councils under the parameters of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution was one of the initiatives that gave tribal ethnic groups the political freedom to administer their own affairs"[1]. In the majority of Northeast India, ethnic identity politics and distinctive identities fueled violence. The development of a unique and

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[1] R. N. Prasad, "Sixth Schedule and Working of the District Councils in North-Eastern States" 2004, Volume 6 <http://www.asthabharati.org/Dia_Oct04/R.N.Pras.htm> accessed 28 May, 2023.

independent identity became a political tactic in Northeast India. The calls for self-determination reflected calls for state reorganization and the allocation of territory to the ethnic communities who had been wronged. The indigenous people's traditional practices and systems of government were preserved while new political institutions were implemented. Autonomous councils with legislative, executive, financial, and judicial authority were founded as a result of these attempts.

In Northeast India (formerly unified Assam), the establishment of autonomous councils to defend tribal people's sociopolitical institutions demonstrates the region's embrace of traditional political institutions. However, "political decentralization experiment has paved the way for the emergence of ethnic divisions to arise, leading to inter-ethnic strife"[2]. Considering the outcomes of conflicts between ethnic groupings in various autonomous councils formed under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule, political decentralization may have contradictory effects, reducing conflict between ethnic groups in certain regions, yet it encourages conflict and bloodshed in others.

Additionally, based on this study, the establishment of autonomous councils or the allocation of territory to one ethnic community may lead to fresh demands from other ethnic groups. Due to personal and political motivations, political elites have emerged in a decentralized region, which explains why this is the case. In energizing the populace, elites are essential. Elites seek long-term incentives in the shape of political and economic benefits in order to run for government in increasingly decentralized regions. In light of this, the paper believes that in Assam"s territorial independent area, elite competition is one of the main causes of discontent and conflict.

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[2] Lubomyr Hajda, "ETHNIC POLITICS AND ETHNIC CONFLICT IN THE USSR AND THE POST-SOVIET STATES" 1993, Vol. 19 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23262734> accessed 28 May, 2023.

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The choice of the topic "Political Decentralization and Conflict in Assam's Sixth Schedule Areas" stems from the recognition of a significant problem in the region. "Assam's Sixth Schedule Areas, which comprise autonomous districts controlled by the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, have experienced disputes and conflict"[3]. These conflicts often arise from tensions between different ethnic groups and their demands for political power, resources, and representation.

The issue at hand is determining the link between political decentralization, as favoured by the Sixth Schedule, and the frequency and persistence of ethnic conflicts in certain areas. While political decentralization is intended to promote local governance and empower marginalized ethnic communities, it is essential to examine whether it effectively addresses the underlying causes of ethnic conflict or inadvertently exacerbates them.

The goal of researching this issue is to shed light on the complex and nuanced link between political decentralization and conflict in Assam's Sixth Schedule Areas. This research problem calls for an examination of the factors that contribute to ethnic conflict, such as power struggles among different ethnic elites, competition for resources, historical grievances, and the effectiveness of decentralization policies in accommodating diverse ethnic groups.

Understanding this problem is crucial for policymakers, scholars, and communities in Assam's Sixth Schedule Areas to develop informed strategies and

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[3] R.N. Pras, "Powers of Autonomous Councils in Tribal Areas in North East India"

<www.ashabharati.org/Dia_04/R.N.Pras.htm> accessed 28 May, 2023

policies that can mitigate conflicts between the ethnic groups, promote inclusive governance, and foster sustainable peace and development in the region.

1.3. DETAILED LITERATURE REVIEW

The researcher can discover many topics and concerns pertinent to the study by reviewing previous research works. A review of pertinent literature is one of the requirements for any systematic research so that the researcher may proceed with the study and comprehend the current state of the relevant issue.

The researcher here explores numerous political decentralization literature and discovers several difficulties pertinent to the study.

The following are the list of articles that the researchers undergo while carrying out the research :

a. L.R. Choudhury(2013), "Decentralization under the 6th Schedule of the Indian Constitution: A Case Study in the Karbi Anglong District" - This article begins with a summary of the constitutional provisions in the Sixth Schedule, as well as their historical context. The article highlights the challenges faced in the implementation of decentralization in Karbi Anglong. Choudhury identifies issues related to insufficient financial resources, inadequate capacity building, and limited district council's administrative power. The author goes into further detail on how the district council participates in decision-making and the extent of community participation in governance. He identifies limitations in the participatory mechanisms and highlights the need for greater inclusion of marginalized communities, especially women and indigenous groups, in decision-making processes. Choudhury's study also examines the implications of decentralization for conflict resolution and peace-building efforts in Karbi Anglong. The author

suggests that while decentralization has provided some level of autonomy and empowerment to the local population, it has not fully addressed underlying ethnic tensions and historical grievances. The study emphasizes the need for comprehensive conflict resolution strategies that go beyond administrative decentralization.

b. L. E. Cline (2006), "Northeast India's Insurgency Environment" - Cline delves into the insurgency environment in Northeast India, aiming to analyze the multifaceted factors that sustain insurgent movements in the region. He begins by providing a historical overview of the insurgency landscape in Northeast India, highlighting the emergence of various armed groups and their ideological motivations. The author emphasizes the region's ethnic diversity and the historical grievances that have fueled the insurgency movements. The research investigates the sociopolitical elements that have contributed to the insurgent environment. Cline discusses issues of identity, marginalization, and the uneven distribution of resources, which have created fertile ground for discontent and support for insurgent groups. The author explores the implications of porous borders, transnational networks, and external support for the sustainability and resilience of insurgent movements in Northeast India. Furthermore, the study examines the counterinsurgency efforts undertaken by the Indian government and its security forces. Cline evaluates the effectiveness of military operations, the deployment of paramilitary forces, and the implementation of development programs in addressing the insurgency challenge. The article also discusses the intricacies and obstacles that security personnel encounter in counterinsurgency operations.

c. K. C. Das and L. R. Choudhury's (2015), "Karbi Anglong: A Journey through District Authority to Regional Authority" - This article makes significant contributions to the understanding of governance dynamics in Karbi Anglong. It

provides insights into the historical, political, and administrative aspects of the transition from a district council to a territorial council. The authors shed light on the challenges and opportunities faced during this process, the significance of talking about the ethnic tensions, guaranteeing efficient resource management and enhancing the KATC's administrative capability. The article makes significant contributions to the understanding of governance dynamics in Karbi Anglong. It provides insights into the historical, political, and administrative aspects of the transition from a district council to a territorial council. The authors shed light on the challenges and opportunities faced during this process, highlighting the significance of resolving ethnic tensions, ensuring effective management of resource, and strengthening administrative capacity of the KATC.

d. J. N. Dash (1989), "Udayachal Movement in Assam: Case of the Bodos' Socio-Political Identity" - In his article, J. N. Dash explores the Udayachal Movement, a significant sociopolitical movement that emerged in Assam and advocated for the rights and recognition of the Bodo community. Tthe movement's historical backdrop, the elements influencing its birth, and its effects on the sociopolitical identity of the Bodos are all examined in-depth in this article. The article provides valuable insights into the Udayachal Movement and its significance in the socio-political identity formation of the Bodo community in Assam. The author's analysis highlights the historical, socio-cultural, and political events that led to the beginning of the movement.. The movement's tactics and their effects on the Bodos' cultural preservation, empowerment, and recognition are also discussed in this article. The article offers a comprehensive analysis of the movement and its role in shaping the socio-political identity of the Bodo community. By exploring the historical context, objectives, strategies, and impacts of the Udayachal Movement, Dash provides valuable insights into the aspirations

and struggles of the Bodo people. This literature review has ensured the avoidance by providing an outline of the important issues, conclusions, and contributions of the study.

e. S. Endle's (1911), "The Kacharis" - In his article, S. Endle explores the lifestyle and culture of the Kacharis, a tribal group that lives in India's northeast. This article provides a detailed account of their history, customs, religious practices, socio-economic organization, and relationship with the British administration during the colonial era. The article makes significant contributions to the understanding of the Kachari community. By documenting their history, social organization, customs, and interactions with the colonial administration. Endle sheds light on the culture and sociopolitical aspects of the Kacharis. The article fills a gap in the literature by offering a comprehensive study of the Kachari people, their traditions, and their engagement with the British colonial apparatus.

f. E.A. Gait (1906), "History of Assam" - The author presents a thorough Assam's historical background from the pre historic era to the early 20th century. This article covers various aspects of Assam's history, including its political, social, economic, and cultural dimensions, shedding light on the region's indigenous communities, dynasties, foreign invasions, and interactions with neighboring regions. The article makes significant contributions to the understanding of Assam's history. By synthesizing historical sources and presenting a chronological narrative, Gait provides valuable insights into the political, social, and cultural developments in the region. The article fills a crucial gap in the historical literature by providing a comprehensive overview of Assam's history up to the early 20th century.

g. S. J. George (1994), "Bodo Movement in Assam: Unrest to Accord" - S. J. George examines the Bodo movement, focusing on its historical origins, evolution,

demands, and the path towards a peaceful resolution. The article provides insights into the socio-political context, grievances of the Bodo community, their mobilization efforts, and the negotiations that led to the Bodo Accord. The article makes significant contributions to the understanding of the Bodo movement and its impact on Assam. By analyzing the historical context, grievances, mobilization strategies, and negotiations leading to the Bodo Accord, George provides valuable insights into the socio-political dynamics of the Bodos' struggle for self-determination. The article sheds light on the challenges and opportunities in the post-accord period, emphasizing the need for inclusive governance and sustainable development.

h. B. L. Hansaria's (1983), "Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India : A Study" - The article provides a comprehensive examination of the Sixth Schedule, a constitutional provision in India that grants special administrative and legislative powers to certain regions with predominantly tribal populations. B. L. Hansaria explores the constitutional framework and Sixth Schedule's provisions, focusing on its historical context, objectives, implementation, and challenges. The article provides insights into the unique features of the Sixth Schedule and its implications for governance and tribal autonomy in India. The article makes significant contributions to the understanding of the Sixth Schedule and its impact on tribal governance and autonomy in India. Through a thorough analysis of the constitutional provisions and their implementation, The significance of the Sixth Schedule in protecting rights and interests of indigenous tribes is emphasized by Hansaria. The article sheds light on the challenges and opportunities in achieving effective governance, balanced development, and preserving tribal identity and customs.

i. N. Hazarika (2005), "Ethnic Autonomy Question in Northeast India" - This article provides a perceptive analysis of the complex issue of ethnic autonomy in Northeast India. N. Hazarika explores the challenges and dynamics of ethnic autonomy movements in the Northeast region of India. The article examines the historical background, causes, and consequences of these movements, as well as the various approaches and solutions proposed to address the issue of ethnic autonomy. The article makes significant contributions to the understanding of the ethnic autonomy question in Northeast India. By examining the historical context, causes, approaches, and challenges associated with ethnic autonomy movements, Hazarika provides valuable insights into the complexities of ethnic politics and aspirations in the region. The article sheds light on the diverse range of issues and grievances that have shaped these movements and offers a nuanced understanding of the implications for governance and inter-ethnic relations.

1.4. AIMS

This research paper's "primary goal is to examine the background and Sixth Schedule's relevance to the Constitution of India". It makes an atempt to investigate if Assam has seen decentralization of development.

1.5. OBJECTIVES

The "main objectives" of this research is to "examine at the link between ethnic conflict and political decentralization". With this purpose in mind," the study aims to comprehend the reasons that may contribute to conflict in politically decentralized regions, as well as the variances in the efficiency of conflict preventive measures as a result".

Inability to execute conflict avoidance measures can be attributed to a number of variables, although in-depth investigation of this phenomena is lacking. We'll be able to fill the gap in this research literature by doing this study.

1.6. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

Scope :

The scope of the study is to examine whether political decentralization either reduces or intensifies conflict between ethnic groups of Assam. It makes an effort to look at the underlying elements that result in the failure to put conflict prevention measures into action.

Limitations :

The analysis of legal texts, constitutional provisions, and policy documents is the main emphasis of this study. While this approach provides valuable insights into the formal legal framework, it may overlook the lived experiences and perspectives of the communities affected by ethnic conflict. Understanding the complexities of ethnic conflict requires a deeper exploration of social, cultural, and

historical factors, which may not be adequately captured through a doctrinal analysis.

The research relies heavily on textual sources such as legislation, court judgments, and official reports. This reliance on secondary sources limits the researcher's ability to gain a comprehensive understanding of the social, cultural, and historical dynamics that shape conflict between the ethnic groups in the region. Important contextual factors, such as socio-economic disparities, cultural identities, historical grievances, and power dynamics, may not receive sufficient attention in a purely doctrinal analysis.

To overcome these limitations, it is important to complement doctrinal research with empirical methods, such as fieldwork, interviews, and qualitative analysis. With the aid of this multidisciplinary strategy, the researcher will be able to comprehend the connection between political decentralization and conflict in Assam's sixth schedule region more thoroughly. By incorporating diverse perspectives and considering the lived experiences of the communities involved, a more nuanced and holistic understanding of the topic can be achieved.

1.7. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The fundamental research issues addressed in this study are the following since political decentralization has had distinct effects in various regions:

a) Does political decentralization either reduces or intensifies conflict between ethnic groups of Assam?

b) Under what circumstances may political decentralization encourage conflict?

c) How does the link between the central government and independent regional councils in Assam's Sixth Schedule regions affect conflict dynamics and political decentralization effectiveness?

d) How do different actors, including state institutions, local leaders, and civil society organizations, perceive and engage with political decentralization in Assam's Sixth Schedule areas, and what are the implications for conflict resolution?

e) How does the presence of natural resources and the management of their allocation and benefits intersect with political decentralization and conflict in Assam's Sixth Schedule areas?

1.8. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the research study on "Political Decentralization and Conflict in Assam's Sixth Schedule Area," a research methodology is employed that combines both doctrinal and comparative approaches. This allows for a comprehensive examination of the topic.

The doctrinal research methodology involves an in-depth analysis of existing constitutional provisions, policies, and laws related to political decentralization and conflict in Assam's Sixth Schedule Area. By reviewing secondary legal sources, such as statutes, regulations, case laws, and scholarly articles, the researcher gains a deep understanding of the legal and institutional frameworks governing political decentralization in the region. The emphasis is on analyzing the pertinent parts of the Indian Constitution, laws, and regulations that form and govern the autonomous councils within the Sixth Schedule Area.. Additionally, judicial

decisions and legal commentaries are studied to understand how these laws have been interpreted and applied in addressing ethnic conflicts.

In conjunction with the doctrinal approach, a comparative research methodology is employed. This methodology involves analyzing and comparing the experiences of political decentralization and ethnic conflicts in different areas within Assam's Sixth Schedule. By selecting specific regions such as the "Bodoland Territorial Autonomous Districts (BTAD), Karbi Anglong, and Dima Hasao", the researcher can contrast each region's governance setups, ethnic conflict dynamics, and political decentralization implementation. The goal is to identify commonalities, differences, and patterns that contribute to ethnic conflicts and to assess the effectiveness of political decentralization measures in addressing these conflicts. Through this comparative analysis, insights can be drawn from different contexts, allowing for a comprehensive grasp of the elements that drive grasp of the elements that drive achievement or failure of political decentralization initiatives in managing and resolving ethnic tensions.

By employing a combination of doctrinal and comparative research methodologies, the study provides a thorough analysis of the legal and institutional aspects of political decentralization, as well as a nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding ethnic conflicts in Assam's Sixth Schedule Area. This approach strengthens the research findings and enables the formulation of well-informed recommendations for policy and practice.

1.9. RESEARCH CHAPTERIZATION

The research paper on " Political Decentralization and Conflict in Assam's Sixth Schedule area" includes five chapters. The brief introduction of the chapters have been given below :

Chapter 1 covers the introduction of the topic. It contains a succinct overview of the topic as well as the historical background of the topic. The chapter also covers the goals and objectives of the dissertation topic. It also has other components, such as, literature review, research questions, research problems etc. Moreover, it contains the problem of the said topic for which the researcher has taken the topic for research.

Chapter 2 focuses on the historical analysis of Assam's governance structure, political mobilization and decentralization process. It includes about the recommendation of Bordoloi Committee for Sixth Schedule. Additionally, the establishment of Autonomous Councils and the application thereof the Sixth Schedule are covered.

In Chapter 3, BTC agreement is analyzed in details. The chapter examines the key provisions, power-sharing arrangements, governance structures, and administrative mechanisms established by the agreement. It assesses the impact of the BTC agreement on the political representation and empowerment of the Bodo community. The chapter also explores the challenges and successes encountered in implementing the agreement, including issues related to resource allocation, infrastructure development, and inter-ethnic relations.

Chapter 4 concentrates on carrying out a comparison of he BTAD, Karbi Anglong, and Dima Hasao have all been studied. It examines the similarities and differences in their governance structures, socio-economic development, ethnic

dynamics, and issues related to autonomy. The chapter aims to provide insights into the unique characteristics of each district and highlight the challenges and opportunities they face.

Chapter 5 presents the conclusion and suggestions in regards to the researcher's own interpretation based on the findings of the study. It summarizes the key points discussed in the previous chapters and provides recommendations for addressing the identified issues and challenges. The chapter aims to offer insights and actionable suggestions for policymakers and future research.

CHAPTER 2 - HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF ASSAM'S GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE, POLITICAL MOBILIZATION AND DECENTRALIZATION PROCESS

Northeast India underwent several annexations when the British seized control of Assam's hill regions. Hill tribes, like the Nagas, Kukis, and Jaintias, began to oppose British annexations of their lands. In order to deal with the hill tribes, the British government first used repressive practices and then 'non-interventional' measures of administration. Different administrative systems enforced by the colonial power exacerbated the divide between the "people of the hills and the plains". The stipulations of the Inner Line, as well as the naming of excluded territories, caused a divide between the hills and the plains. Based on steep terrain, the Indian government created the "Sixth Schedule to the Indian Constitution" in undivided Assam, which was formerly used to be excluded areas, in the post-independence era. Several administrative structures were established under the Sixth Schedule to accept and empower tribal ethnic people dwelling in the hilly regions. The goal of decentralized independent institutions was to protect the political & cultural independence of the formerly marginalized tribes while reducing grievances of the ethnic groups. In accordance with the Indian Constitution's Sixth Schedule, organizations known as the Autonomous District Councils were established to provide these regions with separate political and administrative systems. The term "political decentralization is used in this research to characterize the power devolution and decentralization process. Political decentralized government has been proposed as a method of avoiding conflict and boosting democratization by delegating resources and duties to sub-national

administrations"[4]. The purpose of this section is to investigate the history of authority devolution in the Northeast region, in addition to the colonial and post-colonial governing structures that resulted in various types of governmental activism in postcolonial India.

Despite decentralization, the conflict prevention mechanism established by the Indian constitution's Sixth Schedule and Article 244A failed to eliminate violence in some situations. The goal of this chapter is to study the impact of colonial and post-colonial governance institutions on the current system of decentralization of power in politics in Assam. This section further covers Assam's policies towards autonomy and further decentralization, as well as how these policies relate to violence.

India's northeastern region, which is also its easternmost, is only "connected to the rest of the nation by a little sliver of land"[5]. Because of their physical location, these states are known as the Northeast. It is frequently referred to as Northeast India because of its location in the far east and northern region of India. There are several ethnic groups in northeast India, each of which has unique ethnic traits. Every ethnic group has its own unique culture, language, religion, way of life, and customs. Despite their ethnic and religious diversity, these Indian states have similarities in a range of political, social, and economic circumstances. The Northeast border, which included the Assam Valley bordering areas between Bengal and Burma and which experienced several invasions, was occasionally

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[4] Rachmat Hidayat, "Political Devolution: Lessons From a Decentralized Mode of Government in India" <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2158244016686812> accessed 28 May, 2023

[5]

referred to as a boundary line and, at times, a tract . The Ahoms finally agreed to the Yandaboo Treaty with the British on February 24, 1826.

Undivided Assam was known for its rugged hills and deep valleys that were home to several tribes. The region's administrative structure altered under the British occupation. Hills with tribal populations were given their own names.

The Northeast area of India holds a significant geographical, historical, and geopolitical significance in India. Many South Asian countries share the region's international boundary. According to colonial historians, "the Dravidian was the earliest linguistic form recognizable in India and is being used today by a group of people that inhabit southern India"[6]. This linguistic group is related to the African Negroid race, implying that they originated in Africa and entered northwest India from Arabia. Even in Assam's lowlands, Dravidian families can be found. The Mundas were another language family with a distinct linguistic identity[7]. The Indo-Chinese groups migrated after the Dravidian and Munda language groups. The Indo-Chinese ethnic group is linked to tribes of Mongoloid (colonial word) roots from Western China[8]. They arrived in India from the northeast, expanded through Bengal, and Assam after crossing the Brahmaputra. When we talk about where the name "Assam" came from, opinions diverge as well. The Assamese term "asam",

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[6] Ansumali Mukhopadhyay , "Ancestral Dravidian languages in Indus Civilization: ultraconserved Dravidian tooth-word reveals deep linguistic ancestry and supports genetics" <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-021-00868-w> accessed 28 May, 2023

[7] AshutoshVarshney, 'Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in India' February 11, 2010 <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/ethnic-and-religious-conflicts-india> accessed 28 May 2023

[8] Sailen D. Das,'Ethnic and Cultural Ties between Northeast India and China: Insights from the Past' Vol. 4(1), 44-47, January (2015) <http://www.isca.me/IJSS/Archive/v4/i1/7.ISCA-IRJSS-2014-285.pdf> accessed 28 May 2023

which means "unequal" and "peerless," and which the locals used to describe to the Ahoms or the Shans, has numerous meanings. The rough terrain had a considerable influence on the colonial government's administrative organization during the British rule.

Undivided Assam was consequently made up of several linguistic families with various lifestyles. Within the groups, conflict and disagreements were regular, but communication between them was rare. In the 15th century A.D., Sri Sankardeva and his student, Sri Madhabdeva, worked to bring the Assamese people together via their religious teachings. They are regarded as the forerunners of Assamese sociocultural change. In Assam, they made an effort to enact social changes via educational and religious instruction. In order to foster assamese unity, they also introduced Bhabana, Ankianat, Bargeet, and Ojapali cultural practices, which also influenced assamese literature and culture. Most of these changes happened in Assam's plains. The hills remained uninhabited and outside of Ek Sarana Dharma's jurisdiction.

The administration of Assam during British control is explored in the section that follows -

2.1. BRITISH ADVENT AND THEIR GOVERNANCE OVER UNDIVIDED ASSAM (1826-1935)

Examining the political aspect of decentralization process in India with the formation of states as well as the political shifts that resulted in the formation of states in northeast India is critical to comprehend current political decentralization and its relationship to violence. Assam's noteworthy rulers were the Kacharis, Kochis, Chutias, and Ahoms. "Warfare with the Moamoriyas undermined and eventually overthrew the Ahom empire"[9]. Since the 1870s, all legal arrangements have included a provision detailing how the British will rule the territory. For the lowlands, the hills, and the border areas, administrative arrangements were created. Tea plantations were established in 1837 as a result of the annexation of Upper Assam, and the Assam Company was established in 1839. "To labour in the tea gardens, labourers were brought in from Central India"[10].

"Though the British controlled much of Assam's highlands, they were not interested in controlling them directly"[11]. The British imposed a few laws for the hilly terrain in the name of administration. According to the British administration, different administrative structures were created for the hill areas because they did not want to breach the traditional administrative needs of those places.

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[9]Assam State Portal, 'Assam History' < https://assam.gov.in/about-us/394 > accessed on 28 May 2023

[10] Gadapani Sarma, 'A Historical Background of Tea in Assam' <https://www.thecho.in/files/a-historical-background-of-tea-in-assam.pdf> accessed on 28 May 2023

[11] Dr. H. Thangtungnung, 'Administrative Changes In The Lushai Hills Under The British Rule' <https://www.etribaltribune.com/index.php/volume-5/mv5i4/administrative-changes-in-the-lushai-hills-under-the-british-rule> accessed on 28 May 2023

Assamese from the middle class rebelled against British rule and their taxation policy. The "British taxation system was the target of several uprisings in several uprisings against the British taxation system occurred in the latter 19th century"[12].

Local governments now have the jurisdiction to handle any conflicts touching the area of the border regions, according to a change to the Scheduled Districts Act of 1874. Previously, authority was handled by the Bengal province, but an amendment to the statute allowed the local government additional control over management. "The newly constituted local government was responsible for addressing all boundary-related concerns as well as criminal proceedings, the appointment of people to manage the collection of public monies, and the administration of the legal system inside the Scheduled Districts, as required by the legislation. It also decided to keep remote or backward portions of British India out of general authority"[13]. The British authority left the backward regions to run their The "British authorities left the backward districts to manage their own affairs through their indigenous administrative organization"[14]. People from the lowlands encroached on and exploited forest resources in the highlands. The forest ordinance, which created the province's limited woodlands, was enacted in 1891. Chapter IV of the rule set broad standards for the protection of forests and forest products, as well as a prohibition on all uses of forest products. The goal of the

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[12] Charles James Lyall, 'Journal of the Society for Arts' Vol. 51, No. 2637, JUNE 5, 1903 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41335705> accessed on 28 May 2023

[13] AshutoshVarshney, 'Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in India' February 11, 2010 <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/ethnic-and-religious-conflicts-india> accessed 28 May 2023

[14] Ibid

action was to safeguard forest resources and keep people from relocating from plains to hills. The "Act of 1886"[15], contributed in the establishment of tribal categories in Assam.

In order to distinguish between tribal and non-tribal groups, the British government created various rules for each. Hill tribes had distinct administrative structures than plain tribes inside their own tribal groupings.

The British were concerned that if they enforced new laws while removing the tribes' customary rules, the British government may be threatened. As a result, the "British authorities retained the existing administrative structures of tribal people living in Assam's hilly districts"[16]. Additionally, the strategy served to defend the plain areas from the other states by maintaining the hilly parts as a barrier.

"Land Revenue Administration, Revenue Administration, Land Records and Agriculture, Police, Jails, Registration, Excise, Education, Forest, Public Works Department, Medical and Sanitary Establishment, Local Self-Government, Municipalities, Immigration and Labour Inspection, and Regional Finance were among the powers transferred to the Chief Commissionership and Lieutenant Governorship"[17]. The "Chief Commissioner's only power was to offer reports for

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[15] "Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act, 1886", <https://www.northeastlawjournal.com/post/registration-and-mutation-of-land-under-assam-land-revenue-regulation 1886#:~:text=The%20term%20REGISTRATION%20under%20the,referred%20to%20as%20%22MUTATION%22.> accessed 28 May, 2023

[16] Ibid

[17] Ankur Bhatt, 'The Assam Agricultural Land (Regulation of Reclassification and Transfer For Non Agricultural Purpose) Act, 2015' <https://www.scribd.com/documents/512783195/The-Assam-Agricultural-Land-Regulation-of-Reclassification-And-Transfer-For-Non-Agricultural-Purpose-Act-2015pdf > accessed 29 May 2023

any rules relevant to Assam's peace and to report on the territories to the Governor-General"[18]. In Assam, the legislative authority belonged entirely to the Governor-General in Council. Additionally, the government of Assam was restricted in its ability to establish any sort of relationship with the nearby tribes. All administrative choices on preserving ties with the local tribes were made at the provincial level in Bengal. Between 1874 and 1935, administrative and judicial decisions were made based on the distinct identities of the northeastern areas.

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[18] Arupjyoti Saikia, "3 Regional Forest: Institutions and Organizations" February 2011 <https://academic.oup.com/book/25772/chapter-abstract/193344385?redirectedFrom=fulltext> accessed 29 May 2023

2.2. BRITISH GOVERNMENT POLICIES (1935-1947)

Major "laws governing tribal regions in undivided Assam were the Scheduled District Act of 1874, Frontier Tracts Regulation II of 1880, Government of India Act of 1919, and Government of India Act of 1935. The Scheduled Districts Act of 1874 established Assam as a separate province. The Chief Commissioner of Assam received authorization and power"[19]. The Chief Commissioner was given permission to expel some frontier regions from Assam under the Frontier regions Regulation Act of 1880. Due to the 'barbaric' nature of the tribes, these districts were split and bestowed with governmental authority. Tribal policies were formed with the intention of defending the interest s of the tribal population in the development of undeveloped areas.

According to the Assam State Gazetteer, the hill people and lowland people had frequent trade interactions both before and during British administration. The market served as a hub for interaction between residents of the lowlands and the hills. However, "after seizing power, the British made an effort to impose a government for the hills without harming the inhabitants of the plains. The British saw the highlands as an improper place to use the civil administration procedures that were employed on the lowlands. Based on characteristics and political status, the Government of India Bill of 1935 comprises excluded and partially excluded regions"[20].

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[19] R. N. Prasad, 'Sixth Schedule and Working of the District Councils in North-Eastern States' October-December, 2004, Volume 6 No. 2 <http://www.asthabharati.org/Dia_Oct04/R.N.Pras.htm> accessed 29 May 2023

[20] Ibid

"No act of the federal assembly was to be carried out for the administration of excluded areas or partially excluded regions unless it was required and the Governor was notified as such. For the administration of excluded territories or partially excluded regions, no act of the federal parliament was to be carried out unless it was necessary and the Governor was informed of this"[21]. Additionally, it illustrated the differences between British policy for the affluent elite and hilly regions. As a result, hill tribes received autonomy while continuing to be subject to British rule. If required for preserving peace and effective government, the governor in such regions may enact restrictions.

When Assam became a sovereign state, Gopinath Bordoloi was appointed as its Chief Minister. He concentrated on preserving indigenous groups' culture and traditions as well as their welfare. In both the plains and the hills, indigenous communities were particularly concerned with the subject of migration. However, after the Saadulla Ministry took office in 1943, the wastelands of the Nowgong, Darrang, and Kamrup districts were accessible to the Bengali migrant labourers. He removed the unauthorized encroachments from the pasture and forest areas in 1946, when the Bordoloi ministry regained control. However, the government was forced to take its time addressing the issue of migration because of resistance from the immigrants and concern about Assamese village revenge. As a result, alienation of the land of the tribals persisted.

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[21] R. N. Prasad, 'Sixth Schedule and Working of the District Councils in North-Eastern States' October-December, 2004, Volume 6 No. 2 <http://www.asthabharati.org/Dia_Oct04/R.N.Pras.htm> accessed 29 May 2023

2.3. RECOMMENDATION OF BORDOLOI COMMITTEE FOR SIXTH SCHEDULE

The Northeast was taken into consideration by the Constituent Assembly with the intention of integrating it with the rest of the nation and creating a legal framework for tribal and hill government. "To report on the Northeast Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas, a Sub-Committee was established. Mikir Hills, the N.C. Hills Subdivision, the Lushai Hills District, and the Naga Hills District were all visited during the tour"[22]. The study included issues pertaining to the management of tribal territories, including its unique features such as land, forests, courts, finances, immigration control, minerals, laws, representation, services, etc. In addition, the study noted that the hill people worry about the preservation of their property and its possible exploitation by immigrants and more affluent people.

Bordoloi Committee's proposals were accepted by the Constituent Assembly, which then discussed, argued, and deliberated on the subject on the days of September 5, 6, and 7.

Sixth Schedule sought to both fulfil local residents' needs and, at the same time, incorporate the indigenous population into the nation at large. "Ambedkar therefore supported Gopinath Bordoloi's proposals despite several criticisms and kept open the possibility of a separate governmental structure for the hill tribes of Northeast India"[23].

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[22] Ankur Bhatt, 'The Assam Agricultural Land (Regulation of Reclassification and Transfer For Non Agricultural Purpose) Act, 2015' <https://www.scribd.com/documents/512783195/The-Assam-Agricultural-Land-Regulation-of-Reclassification-And-Transfer-For-Non-Agricultural-Purpose-Act-2015pdf > accessed 29 May 2023

[23] Ibid

2.4. ESTABLISHING AUTONOMOUS COUNCILS AND IMPLEMENTING SIXTH SCHEDULE

To lessen opposition in the area, British colonialism also introduced non-interference laws and gave the hill tribal regions the right to self-governance. Political decentralization is a historical artefact that has been utilized to lessen violent tribal opposition in mountainous regions. Following the Bordoloi Committee's recommendation, the hill tribal people received territorial and administrative autonomy under the Indian Constitution's Sixth Schedule during the postcolonial era of state-building. The Sixth Schedule was implemented in undivided Assam in order to meet the concerns of the hill tribes.

The Sixth Schedule, on the other hand, is different from its Fifth Schedule. Tribes Advisory Council is provided by the Fifth Schedules to further the economic and educational interests of the native communities. Social justice and preventing the exploitation of dominant classes are further goals of the Schedule[24].

"The administration of reserved and tribal regions, as well as the creation of a local legislature or council of ministers in autonomous districts, are all addressed in Part X of the Indian Constitution. The establishment of autonomous district councils, election methods, the tenure of Executive Members, and other council regulations are all governed by the Assam Autonomous Districts Rules of 1951"[25]. The Assam Autonomous Districts Rules of 1951 created several rules and divisions of authority and responsibility for the autonomous councils.

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[24] Karnika Bahuguna, Madhu Ramnath, Kumar Sambhav Shrivastava, Richard Mahapatra, M Suchitra and Anupam Chakravartty, 'Indigenous people in India and the web of indifference' Tuesday 09 August 2016 <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/coverage/governance/indigenous-people-in-india-and-the-web-of-indifference-55223>   accessed on 29 May 2023

[25] Ibid

The administrative framework that is now in existence in the autonomous districts was developed in accordance with the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. In order for the tribal people to sustain and promote their traditional administrative practices, the constitution sought to strengthen and develop the native political institutions. The "provisions of the constitution under paragraph 8 of the sixth schedule provide the council the power to levy land revenue inside the autonomous districts. Autonomous councils demand a separate taxation system and set of laws from other districts due to their outdated administrative systems, which were granted independent administrative structures beginning in the British era"[26].

Since the colonial era, there has been a movement of decentralizing governance and establishing autonomous councils for the tribal regions of northeast India. In the colonial era, "backward tracts" were the term used to describe the regions that were decentralized under the federal system. Different legal systems were upheld throughout the colonial era in the "backward tracts" of Assam than in the rest of the plains. The Garo Hills Act of 1869, which exempted certain regions from the regular administrative framework, provides instances. The Act exempted the Garo Hills from the general applicability of Bengal's tax laws, as well as the general jurisdiction of the criminal and civil courts. The rural or undeveloped regions known as Schedule Districts were those that had never been subject to the broad application of the "Act and Regulations". The "Assam Frontier

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[26] . N. Prasad, 'Sixth Schedule and Working of the District Councils in North-Eastern States' October-December, 2004, Volume 6 No. 2 <http://www.asthabharati.org/Dia_Oct04/R.N.Pras.htm> accessed 28 May, 2023

Tracts Regulation, 1880"[27] gave the Chief Commissioner the power to remove certain stretches of backward tracts from Assam's boundary areas. Control over these territories was delegated to the Governor. As there were no governmental structures to rule them, the inhabitants of these regions were seen as being of a primitive character. Section 52A was included as part of the Government of India Act, 1919, to declare the backward areas. Any land in British India may be deemed a backward tract, as per section 52A (2) of the Governor-General's Council.

The Sixth Schedule was finally put into effect in these regions, which were designated as Tribal territory. The restrictive and discriminatory colonial practises still prevail in the modern Indian state because of its postcolonial framework.

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[27] Aniket Mishra, " Registration & Mutation of Land under Assam Land Revenue Regulation, 1886"<https://www.northeastlawjournal.com/post/registration-and-mutation-of-land-under-assam-land-revenue-regulation-1886#:~:text=The%20term%20REGISTRATION%20under%20the,referred%20to%20as%20%22MUTATION%22> accessed 28 May, 2023

2.5. POLITICAL HISTORY OF ASSAM AFTER INDEPENDENCE

In the years following independence, tribal governance practices were also in conflict with disputes about the reorganization of territories. The reorganization of states, according to some researchers, may be separated into three time periods: 1956 to 1971, 1971 to 1987, and 1987 to 1999. Assam was partitioned among other states in the second restructuring phase. What led to the fragmentation and internal remapping of the regions? Was it "for other issues regarding the security of the country" or for the "proper administration of the territories"? The Indian Constitution's First Schedule was amended to divide the states into various divisions. Assam was divided again during the Second Federal Reorganization, which lasted from 1971 to 1987. In 1956, Tripura and Manipur had been created as union territories; they became Indian states in 1972. Meghalaya was once recognized as an independent state before becoming one in 1972. First, there were border disputes with neighbouring China, and second, there were parliamentary elections in 1972 and assembly elections in 1973, which made it imperative to create states in the Northeast.

2.6. FORMATION OF STATE IN NORTHEAST INDIA

A flood of memoranda and petitions for the creation of a common state were presented to SRC during their tour to Northeast, while the hill districts wanted to see the establishment of a hill state. Tribal leaders made their desire for a Hill state known during the Tura Conference in October 1954. At the Tura conference, all of the hill districts included in section .The establishment of a distinct hill state has the backing of the Naga Hills districts as well. Nagas however persisted in calling for their independence and secession from India and Assam. India's government agreed to establish Nagaland as a separate state on August 1, 1960. Just before the 1961 census, the state of Nagaland was created. It has a 6,366 sq. mile area. The Surveyor General of India and the Director of Assam Survey estimated Assam's area at the time to be 47,091 square miles and 47,257.2 square miles, respectively. Assam has eleven districts, 23 subdivisions, 108 police stations, and mauzas as of the Census of India, which was conducted in 1961. By virtue of the "Act of 1951"[28], the Government of Bhutan acquired 32.8 square miles of land from the Kamrup district on September 1st.

At the same time, requests for Assamese to be designated the official language were made. Assam's Chief Minister, Bimal Prasad Chaliha, approved the suggestion. Districts in Cachar and the Hills criticized the decision to accede to calls for making Assamese the official language. On October 10, 1960, the measure was introduced in the Assembly over objections. At the same time, requests for Assamese to be designated the official language were made.

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[28]   "Assam (Allocation of Boundaries) Act of 1951" <https://lddashboard.legislative.gov.in/actsofparliamentfromtheyear/assam-alteration-boundaries-act-1951> accessed 28 May, 2023

Other events transpired after Assam's restructuring. On the subject of illegal immigration from Bangladesh, Assam had a significant development. The All Assam Students' Union initiated the Assam Movement from June 1979 to August 14, 1985 to combat illegal migration from Bangladesh, which marked a significant turning point in the foreign nationals issue. Different tribal organizations backed the Assam Movement, which was directed by AASU with assistance from Assam Gana Sangram Parishad. The Assam Accord was signed on August 15th, 1985, to provide provisions for Assamese citizens and to stop foreign immigrants from migrating illegally at the same time. However, due to incomplete implementation, it was unable to satisfy the necessary needs. Along with it, the 1983 legislation known as the IMDT Act approved by the parliament made things even more violent.

However, following the Accord, the native communities had their own complaints that they thought the Accord did not address. In the name of the greater composite identity of being "Assamese," all tribal groupings felt impoverished. Tribal communities consequently demanded their own political and geographical territory.

2.7. AMENDMENTS AND IMPLEMENTATIONS OF SIXTH SCHEDULE IN NORTHEAST INDIA

The first opportunity for a change came with the formation of the independent state of Meghalaya on April 2, 1970. The Assam Reorganization (Meghalaya) Act, 1969's Fourth Schedule gave the autonomous states and regions created by the Indian Constitution's Sixth Schedule more authority.

A newly founded extremist group called Black Widow carried out the demand for Dimasa-land in North Cachar in 2003, resulting in carnage. 340 DHD (J) militants surrendered in 2009, and a deal was reached between "the state government, the federal government, and two DHD organisations in 2012"[29] . In the armed activities in Karbi Anglong, both KLNLF and KPLT were active. In 2013, after the Congress administration decided to build Telangana, Karbi organisations once more mobilised under the slogan "July Revolution to call for the formation of a separate state"[30] for the Karbis. Under constitutional Article 244 (A), the JACAS spearheaded the movement to demand an independent state.

Despite the Sixth Schedule's introduction, criticisms have been made about how it has been carried out. Some members of the Constituent Assembly voiced criticism, claiming that British policies are a legacy and split tribal leaders' minds. The Sixth Schedule has remained a fantasy since autonomous areas are heavily reliant on state administrations. Because councils must rely on the state government for finances, the powers assigned to autonomous councils are

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[29]   "Incidents   and   Statements   involving   DHD: 2000-2012" <https://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/assam/terrorist_outfits/DHD_TL.htm> accessed 29 May, 2023

[30] Ibid

insufficient for self-determination. As a result, autonomous councils continue to pursue territorial secession. Conflict amongst groups as a result of competing demands and counter-demands from other communities in Assam's Sixth Schedule territories may have given rise to ethnic violence. Political violence frequently continues in Sixth Schedule regions because the autonomous councils are not properly devolved and given authority. It's possible that unsuccessful attempts to create a civic identity or a civil sub-nationalism in Assam had an impact on ethnic conflict there. The Assam Movement, which included the signing of the Assam Accord and the formation of disagreements among different ethnic groupings, contributed to the failure of the measures and may also be a source of ethnic strife.

To sum up this section, political decentralization was introduced in Northeast India to accommodate ethnic groups and lessen feelings of ethnic separatism. However, political decentralization has failed to curb separatism in Assam and other portions of the Northeast that are decentralized under the Sixth Schedule. According to the political elites, people in the decentralized zones would still seek out unique homelands for their own ethnic identities. So, disagreements and disputes continue. Following amendments to the Indian Constitution adopted in 2003, the plain areas of Assam where tribal people reside now fall under the purview of the Sixth Schedule. In order to provide geographical space and make room for the Bodos in Assam who were being mistreated, the Sixth Schedule was put into existence. We need to speak more about the intergroup relationships and ethnic mobilisation of the Bodos as a result of these adjustments. It would need further research to determine how these adjustments have affected Bodo intergroup relations and ethnic mobilisation. The application of the Sixth Schedule across Assam's plains, particularly in the Bodo areas, is examined in the section that follows.

2.8. IMPLEMENTATION OF SIXTH SCHEDULE AND POLITICAL DECENTRALIZATION AMONG PLAINS TRIBES OF ASSAM

"To avoid conflict among the Bodos, political decentralisation in the shape of the Sixth Schedule was adopted in Assam's plains tribal districts. One of the largest plains tribes in Assam, the Bodos, has been pressing for the establishment of a separate political and geographic entity to exercise their right to self-determination since the 1980s. After the Sixth Schedule, which was originally designed to handle the hill areas of Northeast India, was amended in 2003, the Bodos were given political decentralisation"[31]. The Indian Constitution's Sixth Schedule was determined to fall inside the purview of Indian law after extensive debate in the Constituent Assembly. "In order to maintain tribal governance systems in Assam's hilly regions without division, the Bordoloi Committee suggested utilizing the Sixth Schedule's provisions"[32].

"To accommodate the demands of the Assamese plains, the Indian Constitution's Sixth Schedule was amended in 2003 by the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution (Amendment) Act, 2003. The BTC was established after the Indian government and the ex-BLT leaders signed a Memorandum of Settlement"[33]. With this reform, the political-administrative structure's lower levels received decentralized political authority. According to the Sixth Schedule, autonomous district councils were constituted along ethnic lines in India after independence.

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[31] J. K. Patnaik, "Autonomous District Councils and the Governor's Role in the Northeast India" 2017,Volume 63, Issue 3 <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0019556117720594> accessed 29 May, 2023

[32] Ibid

[33] Ibid

After more than 20 years of violent mobilization, the "Bodos were granted Sixth Schedule, while falling well short of their desire for statehood"[34].

These actions served to promote the community's aspirations in terms of politics, social growth, and culture, as well as the acquisition of property and the improvement of its infrastructure. The BTC region, which included over 3,000 villages and was divided into four districts in compliance with the regulations, contained more than 3,000 settlements. In addition to other authority, the council's 46 members received political representation. In this respect, "30 seats have been designated for Scheduled Tribes, 5 for Non-Scheduled Tribes, 5 are open seats, and the remaining 6 seats are for BTC candidates"[35]. The council now has the authority to change the lower-level medium of instruction at educational institutions. The updated Sixth Schedule's and provisions also included Panchayat's authority. The modification and implementation of the plan to the plain regions, which were inhabited by tribal tribes, aided in the development of the plain areas[36].

The introduction of the Indian Constitution's Sixth Schedule aided in the construction of amenities and infrastructure in plain (Bodo-dominated) areas, but it also fanned calls for greater autonomy and independence among Bodo leaders. As a result of the plains tribes' increased demand for autonomy and decentralization of government, there has been an increase in ethnic violence in the area.

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[34] Aniruddha Kumar Baro1, "Sixth Schedule and its implementation: Understanding the case of Bodoland (BTAD) in Assam" Volume 22, Issue 12 <https://www.iosrjournals.org/iosr-jhss/papers/Vol.%2022%20Issue12/Version-3/B2212030509.pdf> accessed 30 May, 2023

CHAPTER 3 - POLITICAL DECENTRALIZATION, NATURE OF ETHNO-POLITICAL DEMANDS AND CONFLICT IN BODOLAND

In some territorially independent regions of the developing world, there has been a lot of ethnic and separatist bloodshed. Geographical autonomy was granted to the insulted tribes in response to the demands of various ethnic groups for their own territory. The transfer of power to sub-national groupings was predicated on the geographic concentration and cultural diversity of ethnic groups. This had an impact on the Assamese Bodos as well. Because they desired a distinct homeland, Bodos in Assam were given "territorial autonomy in the form of the BTC"[37]. However, conflict did not end with the creation of BTC. Violence between Bodos and non-Bodos frequently occurred. After the autonomous structure was established, there was violence in the BTAD in 2008, 2012, and 2014. Investigating the most likely causes of ethnic conflict in the politically decentralized BTAD is the aim of this chapter. This chapter makes the claim that elite competition is one of the factors contributing to unrest and conflict in BTAD territorial autonomous zones while looking at the potential causes of conflict between the ethnic groups.

Tribal groups had differences throughout the post-colonial era as a result of the homogenization process and measures implemented to include tribal tribes into the scope of the composite Assamese identity. Various tribal ethnic groups engaged in ethno-nationalist movements in Northeast India in opposition to the injustices and isolation they had traditionally suffered as the excluded communities. After independence, the assimilation efforts divided the tribal communities into

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[37] Nandita Ghosh, 'Identity Crisis in Northeast India' Aug 24, 2021 <https://www.projectstatecraft.org/post/identity-crisis-in-northeast-india> accessed 30 May, 2023

those that spoke Assamese and those that did not. The adoption of a single language policy in Assam and state construction during the post-independence era alarmed non-Assamese speakers. The non-Assamese speaking people of Assam, particularly the ethnic tribal tribes and Bengali population, began their ethno-nationalist struggle against the predominating Assamese speaking majority. The Bodos, the biggest plains tribe in Assam, challenged the Assamese speaking community's growing supremacy and began a movement for their own geographic domain. The Bodos spearheaded the movement to establish a "separate state for the largest plains tribe in Assam"[38].

The "goal of this chapter" is "to understand the politics of Bodo nationalism, the Bodoland movement, periods of government decentralization, and racial violence in the BTAD area".[39]. While doing so, the chapter makes an effort to investigate the violent movement led by Bodos and to comprehend why violence returned to areas dominated by Bodos after two cycles of political decentralization.By concentrating on elite competitiveness as one of the major factors fostering ethnic conflict in the area, this chapter makes an effort to examine ethnic violence in Bodoland. Whether political decentralization lessens or makes ethnic conflict worse is another question addressed in this chapter. What are the conditions that might come from political decentralization in ethnic conflict? This chapter will focus on "Bodo ethno-nationalism as well as stages of ethnic mobilization and violence that took place in decentralized Bodo lands in order to understand the link between conflict and political decentralization"[40]. This chapter

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[38] Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, "A Separate Assam Hills State: What Does It Mean?" Vol. 2, No. 9 (Mar. 4, 1967), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4357666> accessed 30 May, 2023

[39] Ibid

[40] Ibid

makes an effort to understand the history of Bodoland's mobilization, autonomy movement, decentralisation process, and violence. The chapter further makes an effort to understand the potential reasons behind conflict in the decentralized regions of Bodoland.

3.1. BODO'S ETHNO-POLITICAL MOBILIZATION AND POLITICAL DECENTRALIZATION DEMANDS

The Bodos are a widespread ethno-linguistic group in northeastern India that belongs to the larger Kachari family. "According to the Economic Survey and Census Report , Assam's Bodo-speaking population was 1296162 people, or 5.29 percent of the state's total population"[41]. During the era of independence, the Bodos made up half of the population. The majority of them relied on agriculture for a living.

"The Bodo tribe resides in the Brahmaputra valley's lower Assam lowlands. Similar people known as "Mech in Goalpara and parts of North Bengal are the Bodos"[42]. The frequent occurrence of their languages in the present names of the rivers serves as evidence of the prolonged Bodo supremacy in Assam's history. "Rivers with the prefix 'doi', which is the Bodo word for 'water', include Dibru, Dikhu, Dihing, Dihong, Dibong, Disang, and Dimla"[43]. Former Mon-Khmer populations, which were mostly situated in the "Khasi and Jaintia Hills", were

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[41] "Assam records decline in percentage of Assamese, Bodo, Rabha, Mishing speakers" June 28, 2018, <https://nenow.in/north-east-news/assam-records-decline-percentage-assamese-bodo-speakers.html> accessed 31 May, 2023

[42] Ibid

[43] Ibid

gradually displaced by Aryan and Bodo languages. In Assam, there have been instances of "detribalization," a term which denoted the "adoption of religious beliefs other than animist ones, among tribal or indigenous groups". A tiny group of Bodos known as Saranias adopted Sankardeva's religion. The Bodo civilisation was impacted by Christianity, and some Bodos became Christians. Christians comprise around 9.4% of the population in the four districts of Bodoland, according to the 2011 census. The rapidly expanding middle class strove to improve the sociopolitical awareness of the Bodo people and sought to safeguard Bodo civilisation. They also fought for collective rights and against the caste-Hindu Assamese speaking community's injustice, prejudice, and isolation of the Bodos in political and economic development. They created the KYA in an effort to organise the ethnic community in the 1920s. "In 1929, KYA asked the Simon Commission for separate Bodo electorates. KYA asked for the Kachari tribes' protection. The political, economic, and cultural grievances of the Bodo people formed the basis of the ethnic movement for a separate state that was headed by them. In important regions of Assam and North Bengal during the pre-colonial and pre-Ahom era, the Bodo-Kacharis established the Bodo-Kachari empire"[44]. However, the Bodo-Kachari rulers lost control of the regions in the 16th century as a result of the Ahom invasion of the Brahmaputra valley and ongoing battles with the Ahoms. The British seized control of these areas after the Yandaboo Treaty. "When the British took control of the territories, they tried to categorize the communities and created excluded areas (for hill tribes) and partially excluded areas (for plains tribes), creating indirect rule to control these territories and granting local tribal chiefs authority to administer their region in exchange for

[44] Aniruddha Kumar Baro, "Political Decentralization and Ethnic Violence in Sixth Schedule Areas of Assam" April,2018,<http://gyan.iitg.ac.in/bitstream/handle/123456789/1406/TH2075_11614116.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y> accessed 31 May,2023

regular tributes to the British administration"[45]. The "1873 Act"[46] and the "1886 Act"[47] both forbade non-tribal inhabitants from accessing these areas, enabling for the promotion and preservation of tribal groups' lands and cultures.

3.2. BODOS' ETHNO-POLITICAL MOBILIZATION AND IDENTITY POLITICS (1920s - 1940s)

Ethno-political mobilization among the Bodos began in the 1920s. The claims are supported by the Brahmaputra Valley's pre-Ahom supremacy. "The Bodo-Kacharis' expanding middle class was a factor in the founding of the AAPTL in 1933 and several other organizations after independence. The group was in charge of the Bodos' ethnic mobilization"[48]. The BSS, established in 1952, the PTCA, and the ABSU, established in 1967, were three of these that emphasised the Bodo people's quest for political authority and self-determination. To preserve their culture and defend their socio-political rights, the newly emerging Bodo middle class took the initiative.

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[45] HL Deb ,"GOVERNMENT OF INDIA (EXCLUDED AND PARTIALLY EXCLUDED AREAS) ORDER, 1936" 25 February 1936 vo 99 <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1936/feb/25/government-of-india-excluded-and> accessed 1 June, 2023

[46] "Inner Line Regulation Act of 1873" <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42761822> accessed 2 June, 2023

[47] " The Assam Land Revenue Regulation AcT of 1886" <https://www.courtkutchehry.com/Judgement/Search/AdvancedV2?s_acts=Assam%20State%20Acquisition%20of%20Lands%20Belonging%20to%20Religious%20or%20Charitable%20Institutions%20of%20Public%20Nature%20Act,%201959> accessed 2 June, 2023

[48] Rumi Roy, "Bodoland Movement in Assam" 29 June, 2008 <https://www.academia.edu/34249638/BODOLAND_MOVEMENT_IN_ASSAM> accessed 2 June, 2023

The identification of the Bodos was a key question when the Simon Commission visited Assam in 1929. Concerning the situation and the alleged exploitation of tribal tribes by the upper Hindu caste-Assamese-speaking minority, many Bodo organisations addressed to the commission. Following that, "in the 1920s, there were demands for sufficient representation and rights for indigenous groups"[49]. The Bodo rights movement began as a result of the Bodos becoming a small educated middle class. All tribal clans were gathered at Nagaon in 1933 in order to mobilise the tribes. The conference led to the creation of the AATL, afterwards known as the Tribal League. To establish effective political representation for the Bodos, Bodo leaders filed memorandums requesting a unique electorate. The 1935 Act[50], passed after the "Simon Commission"[51] gave its approval, granted the plains tribes four reserved seats and political standing. A separate homeland for indigenous people in Assam was also suggested.

The Bodos' desire to have their own nation was significantly influenced by land conflicts. The "Assam legislative assembly"[52] held discussions on the land rights of indigenous tribes and petitions from immigrants to abolish the Line System.[53]. Under the direction of F. W. Hockenhull, the Assam assembly appointed a committee in 1937 to investigate the land. In his report, he emphasised the need of maintaining the Line System and the need for the government to act

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[49] SURYASIKHA PATHAK, "Tribal Politics in the Assam: 1933-1947" Vol. 45, No. 10 (MARCH 6-12, 2010), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25664196> accessed 2 June, 2023

[50] Government of India Act, 1935   <https://www.insightsonindia.com/modern-indian-history/national-movement-1919-1939/government-of-india-act-1935/> accessed 2 June, 2023

[51] Ibid

[52] Ibid

[53] Ibid

swiftly to prevent further encroachment on tribal lands. In spite of Gopinath Bordoloi's efforts to stop the encroachment of tribal land, immigrants, Assamese, and farmers without land were permitted to dwell there. After the Bordoloi cabinet resigned in 1939, "Syed Mohammad Saadulla assumed the position of prime minister while operating under the banner of the Muslim League. Despite having signed a contract with the Assam Tribal League, Saadulla made an effort to welcome additional East Bengali immigrants in the wastelands of Assam. Saadulla Ministry made a new decision during his second term to open up the grazing lands in the districts of Nowgong, Darrang, and Kamrup in order to accommodate the immigrants and motivate Assamese farmers to produce more food[54]. The argument was that in order to harvest more grain and maintain its expanding economy, Assam need accessible manpower from East Bengal. The tribals objected to the government's decision to allow immigrants to live in the areas they inhabited even if those areas couldn't be farmed. Therefore, the 1920s and 1930s saw a climax in the Bodos' political mobilisation and the development of social consciousness. The post-independence era identity politics and ethnonationalism of the Bodos are discussed in the section that follows.

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[54] Danish Mand Khan, "Constitution Architects: Sir Syed Mohammed Saadulla's Contribution To The Constitution" Jan 16, 2023, <https://www.indiatimes.com/explainers/news/constitution-architects-sir-syed-mohammed-saadulla-contribution-to-the-constitution-590302.html> accessed 1 June, 2023

3.3. BODOS' ETHNO-NATIONALISM AND IDENTITY POLITICS (1947-93)

It is important to include grievances, underdevelopment, and immigrant movement while analysing the development of Bodo identity. A strong sense of ethnic identity can develop in a particular place as a result of injustices and grievances amongst ethnic groups. The "hill tribes were given a protection framework under the Sixth Schedule, but other tribes in the rest of India were accommodated under the Fifth Schedule and given protected belts under the Indian constitution"[55], which left the Bodos feeling ignored. The Assamese plains tribes did not receive a specific provision, unlike the tribals belonging to the hills of unified Assam. Additionally, under the Saadulla government, Assam experienced migration from other parts of India and beyond the border before to independence. The Plains Tribes Were Affected by Immigration despite the "Inner Line and Other Limits Being Placed In The Hill Areas To Prevent Migration To Tribal Lands"[56]. Soon after gaining independence, the Indian Government created the "Northeast Frontier Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub-Committee"[57] under the direction of Gopinath Bordoloi in order to evaluate the circumstances of tribals and offer suggestions about them. The Bordoloi Committee proposed designating the "Bodo-inhabited territories as tribal belts and blocks"[58] in accordance with Chapter X. As a result of this categorization, a restriction on the holding and land transfer from

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[55] Sankar Das, "THE STATUS OF SIXTH SCHEDULE IN NORTH EAST INDIA: AN ANALYSIS FROM THE COLONIAL RESPONSE TO THE PRESENT CONTEXT"VOL 7, ISSUE 08, 2020 <https://www.jcreview.com/admin/Uploads/Files/61c9f57faf4168.98003844.pdf> accessed 2 June, 2023

[56] Ibid

[57] Ibid

[58] Ibid

tribal groups to non-tribal populations was established. The purpose of the provisions was to protect the lands of the indigenous communities. They also ensured the survival of tribal communities' history, customs, unique cultures, and feeling of identity. Despite these limitations, the Bodos mobilized. The "politicization of ethnic identities and cultural practices"[59] in the 1960s established the groundwork for later waves of Bodo ethno-nationalism.

Bodos' ethno-nationalism grew stronger after Assamese became the official language of Assam. Bengali was Assam's official language during its independence. To replace Bengali with Assamese, which later became Assam's official language, a linguistic campaign was started in the 1960s. The "Bongal Kheda" movement of the 1960s was sparked by the Assamese middle class's contribution to making Assamese the state language of Assam. The Assam language movement was led by the 1936-founded Assam Sahitya Sabha and Assam Jatiya Mahasabha (Assam National Assembly). There were demands for town hall meetings, protests, and roadblocks. Bengalis organized counter-protests to incorporate Bengali as a second and alternative language. A vast percentage of tribal populations backed the Bengali people's decision since they felt more comfortable speaking Bengali than Assamese. Despite objections from non-Assamese people, the Assam Official Language Act of 1960 made Assamese the official language of the state. The "establishment of language policy heightened tensions between Assamese-

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[59] Habib Fazlul Basid, "The Assamese Language Issue: An Analysis from Historical Perspective"ISSN 2250-3226 Volume 6, Number 2 (2016), <https://www.ripublication.com/ijhss16/ijhssv6n2_02.pdf> accessed 2 June, 2023

speaking and non-Assamese-speaking tribal people"[60]. "J. N. Basumatary, Prasenjit Brahma, Shailendra Brahma, and others founded the Bodo Literary Society (Bodo Sahitya Sabha) in 1952"[61] to promote the Bodo language and culture. The BSS opposed the government's attempt to unite tribal tribes under a unified policy of the language. The "primary purpose of BSS was to promote Bodo as a language of teaching in elementary and secondary schools"[62]. The Assam government received a memorandum for consideration, and a public campaign in support of the BSS's proposal was initiated in 1960. However, the government did not respond to Bodo complaints and demands until the late 1960s. After the All ABSU took control of the movement's leadership, and Bodo nationalism moved from a mostly passive form of opposition to one that was more open, well-organized, well-publicized and militant. They linked their cultural issues to their dreams for a separate homeland, which the activists claimed could only be realised if the community gained regional autonomy by establishing a distinct federal state that is completely independent of Assam. The activists said that establishing a separate state would allow them to preserve the Bodo language as the major official language, creating a federal system that would fulfil their long-held ethno-linguistic goals. ABSU's unique techniques of building alliances and cooperating closely with other ethnic organizations such as the BPAC, ABWWF, and ABEF aided in the organization of the insurrection.

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[60] Habib Fazlul Basid, "The Assamese Language Issue: An Analysis from Historical Perspective"ISSN 2250-3226 Volume 6, Number 2 (2016), <https://www.ripublication.com/ijhss16/ijhssv6n2_02.pdf> accessed 2 June, 2023

[61] Ibid

[62] Ibid

The PTCA and the ABSU lobbied for the creation of an autonomous geographical area called Udayachal in the 1970s. The "plains tribal movement consisted of nine tribal groups: the Bodos, Mishings, Deoris, Rabhas, Lalungs, Mechs, Hojais, Sonowal Kacharis, and Cachar Barmans"[63]. The ABSU launched the foundation of the PTCA, "a Bodo-dominated regional political party, on February 27, 1967"[64]. "After independence, plains tribal people compared their constitutional protection to that of Assam's hills and other Scheduled Tribes in India"[65]. The Indian Constitution's Fifth Schedule gave advantages to Scheduled Tribes in other parts of India, while the Sixth Schedule provided benefits to hill tribes. However, tribal people on Assam's plains received no benefit from any of the two laws. The "PTCA made it clear that the plains tribals' fight was not for political gain, but rather to assure their security in all sectors"[66]. On May 20, 1967, the PTCA sent a memorandum to the then-President of India demanding the formation of a "Autonomous Region" for the tribes living in the plain areas of Assam in order to give constitutional safeguards and the preserving of tribal communities' rights. However, the PTCA's ambitions to establish Udayachal as an autonomous geographical entity were dashed when party members began to play a role in state power politics. Following electoral victory, the PTCA and Janata Party formed an alliance for forming the government. After winning the inaugural elections, the PTCA stood for office again in 1983 and 1985, both times collaborating with the Congress ministry. When they were unable to meet the

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[63] Endle, "The Kacharis" <http://dlkkhsou.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/356/10/10_chapter2.pdf> accessed 2 June, 2023

[64] Ibid

[65] Ibid

[66] Ibid

interests of the Bodos, ABSU has gained support, which advocated for radical goals and an independent Bodo state. Discrimination and hegemony of other ethnically dominant communities foster ethnic nationalism within the community. History, geography, biology, institutions of production and reproduction, community memory, power systems, and religious revelations all serve as building blocks for establishing identities. Because of common historical practices as well as the constant reminder of their "otherness," people have always identified themselves primarily by their ethnicity,through physical qualities such as biology, colour, and language. This ethnicity has evolved into a huge driver for conflict, self-organization, and, on occasion, hatred and bloodshed. Priority is given to identities based on cultural features. In many modern societies, ethnicity serves as the foundation for social differentiation, recognition, and discrimination. Similarly, ethnic movements in Northeast India are centred on the persecution of ethnic minorities based on diverse ethnic identities. The development such organisations can be considered in relation to historical movements ranging from colonialism to forces of popular democracy, as well as the lack of a suitable political environment. As a result of shifting identities and aims, ethno-political groups have developed into armed militancies.

During the 1980s, the AASU and the AGP launched a campaign in Assam calling for the identification and expulsion of foreign immigrants from the state, as well as more autonomy. The bulk of the Bodo youth that participated with AASU and supported this campaign were from one of the several ethnic clans. Together with "Bodos, Karbis and Dimasas" fought in the Assam conflict for driving the "foreigners" and "infiltrators" out from the state. The agitation ended in 1985 with the adoption of the Assam Agreement, and the leaders of AASU in 1986, formed the new AGP administration in Assam, raising expectations for the Bodos' long-

standing needs to be met. Following the agreement's signing and talks with the Indian government, the tribals believed that the accord provided them nothing. As a result, a fresh wave of homeland demonstrations erupted. Several tribal ethnic organisations pushed for territorial space and self-determination. They are the sons of the ground, according to the Bodos, and they are born with the right to their own area.

ABSU spearheaded the movement beginning on March 2, 1987. They demanded 92 points for their country. After the four-day annual meeting, they deleted "89 non-political requests from the 92-point programme and issued a memorandum with three political demands". The three political demands were:" (1) the establishment of a separate state called "Bodoland" on the north banks of the Brahmaputra, (2) the establishment of a district council in the tribal-dominated contiguous areas of the south bank, and (3) the inclusion of the Bodo-Kacharis of Karbi Anglong in the constitution's Sixth Schedule".

As previously noted, Bodo movement arose as a result of "historical estrangement and political and cultural dominance by the Assamese-speaking community. None of Assam's leaders presented a viable solution to the Bodo problem, and Bodo leaders could not envisage a common destiny for Assam's tribals and non-tribals. Second, the State Reorganization Act and article 244A were only applicable in Assam's hill districts, allowing autonomy to certain tribes but excluding plain tribals from the scope of article 244A". The plain tribals were again excluded from the Sixth Schedule after it was modified on November 29, 1988. Fear of losing their identity as a result of non-recognition drove them to protest for their indigenous rights. Middle-class non-tribal inhabitants have taken possession of tribal territory in tribal blocks and belts. The invasion was not restricted to "farmed land", but also to the "state's designated woods", where

"Nepalis, former tea garden workers, and immigrant Muslims made up a large portion of the squatters"[67]. The problem of land was so central to the Bodoland movement. Bandhs, road blockades, and mass mobilisation were the first activities that ABSU planned using these AASU-inspired tactics. However, "the movement eventually changed shape, and it was no longer a peaceful sort of activity"[68]. In order to make the Bodo community the majority in the area, "quit notices" were issued in opposition to other communities, particularly in the "Kokrajhar district and Udalguri sub-division"[69]. To further their cause and movement, attacks were undertaken against government, commercial, and educational structures. Additionally, PTCA had misgivings regarding ABSU's aggressive actions. In 1978–79, with Janata administration in place, PTCA joined the ministry due to growing tensions between the organization and ABSU. However, since ABSU was unable to unite all the tribes, they sought the establishment of a full-fledged "Bodoland" state. A significant portion of Bodos were alienated from PTCA supporters as a result of the violent tactics used by ABSU.

As a result, on June 12, 1987, the ABSU organized a peace rally for the establishment of Bodoland at Judges Field under the direction of U.N. Brahma, commonly known as Bodofa (father of the Bodos). A 50-50 split of Assam was demanded. The northern Brahmaputra, which was mostly populated by Bodos, was proposed as Bodoland during the rally, with many arguments and demands presented. The NDFB, whose objective was the Bodos' secession from India, embraced the more radical tactics. Other militant groups including the ULFA and

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[67] Habib Fazlul Basid, "The Assamese Language Issue: An Analysis from Historical Perspective"ISSN 2250-3226 Volume 6, Number 2 (2016), <https://www.ripublication.com/ijhss16/ijhssv6n2_02.pdf> accessed 2 June, 2023

[68] Ibid

[69] Ibid

NSCN were connected to the NDFB. In 1988, the BdSF made the first formal claim for Bodoland.

Under Ranjan Daimari's direction, the BdSF was later renamed the NDFB. Early in the 1990s, the leaders of the ABSU met with the Congress government for a discussion, which sparked a series of meetings with representatives from other organizations. In 1993, the initial settlement agreement was finally signed.

3.4. Bodo Agreement and Beyond (1993-2003)

After several discussions with the Congress-led administration, February 20, 1993 marked the signing of the first Bodo Accord. The ABSU, BPAC, state government, and federal government all came to an agreement. The Bodo Accord aimed to give the BAC as much autonomy as possible within the bounds of the Indian Constitution[70]. The independent council had a wide range of provisions and authority. According to the agreement, 40 people will make up the general council who would write bylaws, regulations, and orders that will be applied throughout the region. To carry out legislation in the BAC region, the BEC would be established. There are 23 topics and departments that the BAC will be in charge of. The BAC was also given some unique powers for the socio-economic advancement of the area. The BAC has 25 tea estates and was made up of 2,570 villages and many minor cities[71]. The state government allocated money for BAC under a different budget line item. According to the guidelines and regulations set out by the Government of India, the "BAC would also occasionally receive grant-

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[70] Priyanka Banerjee, 'Tea land Administration in India' 6 August,2021 <https://roundglasssustain.com/habitats/birds-tea-estates-of-assam> accessed 3 June, 2023

[71] Ibid

in-aid"[72]. The General Council, which had the authority to levy, charge, and collect taxes and other forms of revenue, was to administer the grant-in-aid solely. There are also unique provisions in the Accord for seat reservations, where the BAC will ask the Election Commission of India for permission for both the Lok Sabha and State Assembly. In line with tribal customary norms and procedure and after consulting the Gauhati High Court, it also made provisions for the setting up of a Special Court.

The agreement's signatories anticipated that it would put an end to the protracted dispute. However, the signatories were unable to come to an agreement on the planned BAC area's prior to the first council election to select the "executive members". Between the government and Bodo leaders, there were significant differences about the delineation of geographical territories. Bodo leaders demanded that additional 515 villages, which were home to both Bodo and non-Bodo inhabitants, be included into BAC. The administration, however, declined to add any further villages to the list since they fell short of the necessary threshold of 50% Bodo community residents. Second, there was no backing for the independent institution among the non-Bodo populations. The non-Bodos who reside in the Bodo regions opposed the agreement, preventing its execution and ultimately delaying the process of integrating the Bodos. Bodo leaders and extremist organizations were compelled to struggle for the Bodos' right to self-determination as a result of the accord's non-implementation. Extremist organizations turned to violence in the process. During the movement, inter-communal violence was also seen. After the 1993 Bodo Accord was signed, Assam was supposed to experience

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[72] Sankar Das, "THE STATUS OF SIXTH SCHEDULE IN NORTH EAST INDIA: AN ANALYSIS FROM THE COLONIAL RESPONSE TO THE PRESENT CONTEXT"VOL 7, ISSUE 08, 2020 <https://www.jcreview.com/admin/Uploads/Files/61c9f57faf4168.98003844.pdf> accessed 3 June, 2023

peace, but it never materialized. The BAC was rejected by the Bodo leaders because they believed it had been signed against the community's wishes and ambitions. In the months of September and October 1993, Bodo extremist organizations killed individuals in the districts of "Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon". During the movement, tensions and divisions between Bodos and non-Bodos grew. "In order to push for a separate Bodoland, the BdSF, which was hostile to BAC, engaged in violent behaviour". BSF reorganized as the NDFB after the BAC was unsuccessful. A competing rebel organization, the BLT, led by Prem Singh Brahma, was also established in 1996[73]. BLT began its campaign for a breakaway state after emerging as NDFB's opposing organization. The BLT and NDFB formed an armed force that participated in murder, extortion, and kidnapping while calling for the creation of the independent Bodoland state. Thus, two camps formed within the Bodoland movement's armed organization. More violence occurred in the intended BAC regions as a result of the rivalry between the two armed organizations. Towards the end of 1996, the "Bodo leadership made an effort to persuade the two Bodo militant organizations"[74] to put aside their differences and focus on the movement's independence goal. However, communication between the two rebel factions did not get any better. The 1993 Bodo agreement (Section 142) was unable to alleviate "the situation in the Bodo territories, and ongoing violent activity by Bodo militant groups continued to pose a threat to the safety of other ethnic populations"[75]. Various nearby non-Bodo settlements organized their very own militant organisations to oppose the Bodo

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[73] Vidisha Barua Worley,'Terrorism in India, Institute for the Study of Violent Groups' 13 July, 2006 <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343240179_Terrorism_in_India_Institute_for_the_Study_of_Violent_Groups> accessed 3 June, 2023

[74] Ibid

[75] Ibid

organizations, which led to more bloodshed. The local Bengali community established the BTF. However, the Indian government used repression against NDFB while giving the BLT opportunity for discussion. They did this by capitalizing on the internal conflicts between the BLT and NDFB.

3.5. BTC AGREEMENT AND ITS IMPACT

BLT agreed to the government's offer of a truce in 2001, giving them the ability to roam about and the chance to negotiate their demands. Assam's administration, the federal government, and the BLT entered into negotiations in 2003 to establish the "BTC as a second stage" of decentralization in the region. It was referred to as "the Second Bodo Accord", and it resulted in the creation of BTC for the "plains tribe under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. BTC is made up of the four districts of Kokrajhar, Baksa, Chirang, and Udalguri"[76]. The following is the BTC/BTAD comprehensive map:

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[76] SUSHANTO TALUKDAR, "The third Bodo accord: A new deal" February 20, 2020 <https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation/article30800941.ece> accessed 3 June, 2023
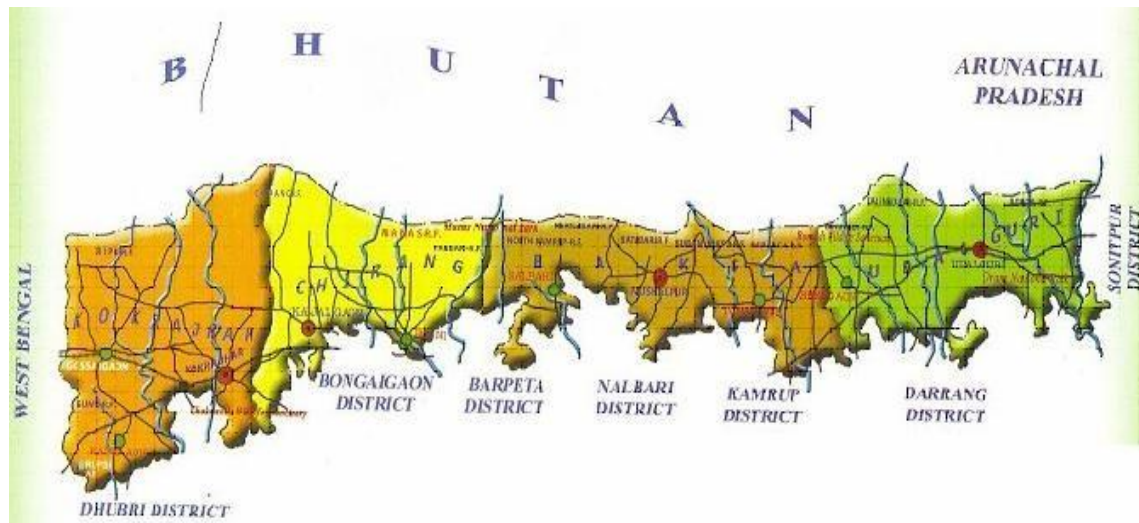
The four new districts known as the "Bodoland Territorial Area", were formed by rearranging the previous districts. To represent themselves in the electoral process, the abdicated BLTs established the BPPF. As a strategy for gaining political supremacy in the area, the newly created political party persisted in using violence. In order to support the political party during the elections, the former BLT members founded the BRTF.

A split in the BPPF occurred shortly after the first BTC elections, leading to the formation of two groups: the BPPF (Hagrama), led by Hagrama, and the BPPF (Rabiram), led by Rabiram. The disagreement arose over BTC's CEO and the question of leadership. Later, Bodoland People's Front was the name given to BPPF (H). In the "Assam Assembly elections in 2006 and 2011"[78], the gap between BPF and BPPF grew wider. Before the 2009 Lok Sabha election, in 2008,

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[77] <http://www.assaminfo.com/districts/15/bodoland.htm> accessed 3 June, 2023

[78] S.N. Phukan, "Assam Assembly elections in 2006 and 2011"

<https://geodata.mit.edu/?f%5Bdc_publisher_s%5D%5B%5D=&f%5Bdc_subject_sm%5D%5B%5D=Boundaries&page=5&per_page=50&q=india&sort=solr_year_i+desc%2C+dc_title_sort+asc> accessed 3 June, 2023

there were fratricide killings of ABSU, NDFB, and BPPF followers in the affected districts. On the other hand, NDFB said that BTC's establishment was pointless. They believed that decentralization fell short of the expectations of the local Bodo population. A cease-fire agreement was reached on May 25, 2005, as a result of negotiations and discussions between the organizations and the federal and state governments. However, "NDFB eventually broke into two groups, one of which was led by Govinda Basumatary and the other by Ranjan Daimary"[79]. I.K. Songbijit headed the NDFB section from Myanmar that was opposed to discussions when Ranjan Daimary was detained in 2011.

The formation of the BNC in 2010, aimed at uniting Bodo organizations for the movement of a separate Bodoland, marked a moderate faction embracing the accommodation process. However, the "NDFB distanced itself in 2011", claiming that the BNC was not representative enough to advocate for a separate state"[80]. Despite this, the "BNC initiated peace-building efforts in the Bodoland areas through the People's Joint Action Committee for Bodoland Movement (PJACBM), formed in 2012"[81], which aimed to unite different communities and work towards a peaceful resolution of the region's problems.

However, various organizations in the BTAD expressed discontent with the existing political arrangements. The ABSU demanded a division of Assam into a separate state, while the BPF engaged in negotiations with the state and central governments for an independent "Bodoland state". The BNC, representing the

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[79] Utpal Parashar, "NDFB disbands itself after 34-year fight to carve Bodoland out of Assam"

March 20, 2020 <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/ndfb-disbands-itself-after-34-year-fight-to-carve-bodoland-out-of-assam/story-k3gSPqFuGAr78N54v1d4UO.html> accessed 4 June, 2023

[80] Ibid

[81] Ibid

Bodo people, sought to increase the powers of the BTC, including home affairs and finance.

In 2003, a new accord was signed, granting increased self-governance and autonomy to the BTAD. This accord was more successful in implementation compared to the previous accord in 1993. It provided "legislative, executive, administrative, and financial powers to the BTC for administration in the Bodo-dominated territories"[82]. The BTC was also empowered to "formulate laws on cultural matters and education policies"[83], specifically in reference to the secondary school curriculum's use of the Bodo language. The accord, under the Indian Constitution's modified Sixth Schedule, allocated "46 seats in the BTC, with 30 reserved for Scheduled Tribes (STs), 5 for non-STs, 6 nominated by the Governor of Assam, and the remaining 5 for unrepresented ethnic groups in the region"[84].

Violence persisted in the region despite the decentralization process. Incidents occurred in 2008, 2012, and 2014, indicating that political decentralization did not effectively reduce ethnic tensions. The NDFB rejected the accord, considering it a failure. The implementation of the BTC accord exacerbated divisions between Bodos and non-Bodos, particularly regarding boundary demarcation and resource accessibility.

In summary, political decentralization through the territorial council aimed to address ethnic violence in BTAD. However, in practice, it did not succeed in

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[82] Hemanta Kumar Nath, " Assam: Bodos celebrate after NDFB, ABSU sign accord with government" Jan 27, 2020 <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/assam-bodos-celebrate-after-ndfb-absu-sign-accord-with-government-1640706-2020-01-27> accessed 4 June, 2023

[83] Ibid

[84] Ibid

reducing tensions and instead took on a different pattern. Concerns over representation, corruption, and unequal resource distribution contributed to the persistence of violence in the region, indicating that the conditions necessary for successful political decentralization were not met.

3.6. POLITICAL DECENTRALIZATION AND CONFLICT IN BODOLAND

Political decentralisation has not been successful in reducing ethnic conflict, as shown by the example of BTAD in South Asia. The main sources of contention in Bodoland since the 1930s have been concerns of land ownership, migration, population shifts, and identity politics. Due to long-standing practises of marginalisation and "denial of land rights to tribes of the plains, there has been bloodshed between various ethnic populations"[85].

Political decentralisation in BTAD, according to critics, has increased rather than reduced ethnic tensions. By only giving government amenities to the Bodo people, non-Bodo organizations contend that the BTAD administration discriminates against other communities. This unfair treatment has fueled protests and violent outbursts from a number of non-Bodo organizations, including the Onaboro Surakhsha Mancha.

Bodo extremists were active at the time, making it challenging for non-Bodo villages to get together for a single demonstration. But after one NDFB faction declared a cease-fire and indicated a desire to hold talks with the government, other local communities in the area established the "Non-Bodo Protection Forum

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[85] Bhagat Oinam, "Patterns of Ethnic Conflict in the North-East: A Study on Manipur" Vol. 38, No. 21 (May 24-30, 2003) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4413594> accessed 4 June, 2023

(NBPF)". The "All Assam Koch-Rajbongshi Students Union, Bengali Students Federation, All Assam Gorkha Students Union, and All Assam Tea Tribes Students Union were among the organizations that made up the NBPF", which represented several non-Bodo communities.

When the BPF requested a separate state for the Bodo people, tensions increased even further, leading other non-Bodo communities—particularly the Koch-Rajbongshis—to demand their own independent statehood and tribal identity. These communities responded by staging huge demonstrations and marches. In May 2012, the ABMSU issued a call for a Kokrajhar bandh (general strike), which resulted in extensive violence, including the burning of cars and the wounding of many people.

As the Bodo People's Front staged protests to support their quest for an independent state, the situation worsened as the ABMSU and other non-Bodo organisations persisted in their protests. Deadly acts, like the murder of ABMSU members in Kokrajhar and the ensuing retaliatory killing of former BLT members, were the result of the rising animosity. The Chirang and Baksa districts were rapidly impacted, while the Udalguri area was untouched.

There has always been violence in BTAD. The "1980s-era Bodoland movement originally turned violent in the 1990s, focusing on other populations living in Bodo-dominated regions"[86]. Activists for the Bodo people urged that these villages turn up their lands to the Bodo people. Armed militant organisations including the "United Tribal Nationalist Liberation Front (UTNLF), Bodo Security Force, BLT, and NDFB were more actively involved in the unrest".

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[86] Sudhir Jacob George, "The Bodo Movement in Assam: Unrest to Accord" Vol. 34, No. 10 (Oct., 1994) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2644967> accessed 5 June, 2023

Violence in the Barpeta district is famous for the conflicts between Bodos and Muslim settlers in 1993 and the following destruction of Muslim immigrants' homes in 1994. In May and June 1996, Santhals were targeted, which "led to the deaths of nearly 200 people and widespread migration"[87]. Additional conflicts that affected both Bodos and other populations took place in 1998 and 1999. Violence broke out in the Udalguri and Darrang districts in 2008, forcing many Muslims who spoke Bengali and Bodo to flee.

Violence has often broken out in the area despite efforts at political decentralization and giving BTAD autonomy. Political decentralization alone has not been enough to stop ethnic violence in the area, as seen by the violent incidents in 2008 and 2012 involving Bodos and other populations.

In conclusion, the case of Bodoland shows that while political decentralization can be a conflict prevention strategy by distributing authority and resources to sub-national entities and ethnic groups, its efficacy in decreasing ethnic violence relies on a number of variables. The historical problems of land ownership, marginalization, and discrimination against non-Bodo people have fueled the ongoing disputes in the BTAD. Tensions have been exacerbated by the inequitable allocation of government funds and the demand of independent statehood by several ethnic populations. The violence in the area illustrates that political decentralization alone is insufficient to overcome entrenched ethnic tensions and that other measures are needed to foster amity, inclusion, and equitable representation for all populations.

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[87] Abha Xalxo, "THE GREAT SANTAL INSURRECTION (HUL) OF 1855-56" Vol. 69 (2008) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44147237> accessed 5 June, 2023

Although there may not be particular case laws addressing the connection between political decentralization and conflict in Assam's Sixth Schedule Areas, there have been legal arguments and judgments regarding the implementation and operation of the district councils. These situations frequently feature disagreements between various ethnic populations as well as concerns with representation, governance, and resource distribution.

One such case is ***State of Assam* v. *Baldev Singh*** [88] **,** This case concerned the constitutionality of the BTC and its autonomy. The court supported the BTC's constitutionality, acknowledging the value of political decentralization in reducing inter-ethnic hostilities and fostering regional development.

In the case, ***BLT* v. *Union of India*** [89], the case focused on the dissolution and disarming of the BLT, an Assamese militant organization. In its ruling, the court emphasized the need for political decentralization and the necessity of resolving the problems of various ethnic communities in order to preserve peace and stability in the Sixth Schedule region.

In the case of ***AMSU* v. *Union of India*** [90], the main focus of this case was the problem of illegal immigration and how it affected ethnic tensions in Assam. The court emphasized the need of local government and efficient political decentralization in order to meet the concerns of diverse ethnic communities and guarantee their involvement in decision-making processes.

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[88] AIR 703, 2004 SCR (1) 454

[89] AIR 806 , 2006 SCR (9) 478

[90] AIR 912, 2015 SCR 568

Hagrama Mohilary* v. *Election Commission Of India[91], which was decided by the Gauhati High Court. The issue concerned the Bodoland Territorial Council's (BTC) elections and operations in the Bodoland Sixth Schedule Area. The representation of diverse ethnic groups, the autonomy and authority of the council, and the necessity of inclusive government were all topics that the court looked at from a legal and constitutional perspective.

Dossou Yovo* v. *Union of India[92], which the Supreme Court decided, is another noteworthy case. This case dealt with larger concerns of political decentralization and the right to self-governance for indigenous tribes, even though it was not specifically about Assam's Sixth Schedule Areas. The court emphasized how crucial it is to protect constitutional values while also recognizing the independence and cultural uniqueness of indigenous people.

These above cases highlights the significance of political decentralization in managing ethnic disputes, creating inclusive government, and protecting the rights of diverse ethnic groups in Assam's Sixth Schedule territory.

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[91] (Civil)/679/2021

[92] (Civil) 718 of 2021

3.7. CHALLENGES

Following the failure of the BAC, the Indian government made a further attempt at decentralization in 2003 by signing the BTC accord, which intended to reduce ethnic conflict and Bodo separatist activities. "The Sixth Schedule, which was earlier created in BTAD for the hill tribes of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram, was created by amending the constitution"[93]. The Indian government's project illustrates its dedication to fostering peace in places racked by strife. Political decentralization was unable to resolve all disputes amicably, as the previous study shown. Conflict in the area increased as a result of disagreements between various Bodo organizations about the issue of statehood.

Understanding ethnic violence in territorial autonomous zones is greatly influenced by the struggle for power among the elite. This rivalry might exist between the "political elites of several ethnic groups or between the political elites of the same ethnic group"[94]. The motivation of the elites is to increase their power, both in terms of their ability to influence politics through elections and their access to resources.

Intense rivalry and disparities between various ethnic groups lead to an intensified fight for dominance among the elites, providing an ideal environment for conflicts to develop. Elites may turn to hate speech and propaganda in their quest for power to inflame hostility and exacerbate tensions between various ethnic

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[93] Bismee Taskin, "What is 6th Schedule & why it allows parts of Northeast to be exempt from citizenship bill" July 2, 2019 <https://theprint.in/theprint-essential/what-is-6th-schedule-why-it-allows-parts-of-northeast-to-be-exempt-from-citizenship-bill/331404/> accessed 6 June, 2023

[94] Ibid

groups. They take advantage of existing racial and religious divisions to galvanise the populace and further their own political agendas.

For instance, elites were able to mobilize the populace in Indonesia based on regional religious disparities. Muslim blame was placed on Christian wrongdoing and vice versa as the local elites participated in competitive blame games. This exploitation of religious feelings and the propensity to place blame on the other group fueled tensions and aided in the escalation of violence.

In conclusion, elite power struggles are a key element in explaining racial violence in territorial autonomous territories. Conflicts are more likely to occur in an environment where elites are vying for power and when there is rivalry and inequality among various ethnic groups. Elites manipulate religious and racial divisions and utilize hate speech to inflame tensions, which contributes to an increase in violence.

3.8. BODOLAND'S ELECTORAL COMPETITION AND CONFLICT BETWEEN ETHNIC GROUPS

The connection between electoral competition and conflict between the ethnic groups in Bodoland is complex and multi-faceted. In Bodoland, a politically decentralized region, electoral contests have emerged as significant factors that contribute to ethnic tensions and conflicts. However, it is important to note that this relationship is not a direct cause-and-effect scenario, but rather a nuanced interplay of various factors.

In the context of Bodoland, different ethnic groups, such as the Bodo, Santhal, and immigrant Muslim communities, vie for political power, representation, and resources within the region. This competition for political dominance often intensifies divisions and grievances among these groups. Electoral campaigns become battlegrounds where political elites mobilize their respective ethnic constituencies by exploiting ethnic identities and addressing group-specific concerns.

Political figures and parties may employ strategies that appeal to the emotions and aspirations of their ethnic base. In some instances, this may involve using inflammatory rhetoric, hate speeches, and divisive tactics that fuel animosity and heighten ethnic tensions. The aim is often to consolidate support from one's own ethnic group while stoking fear or animosity towards other communities.

The struggle for electoral dominance and the perception of unfairness or marginalization in the political process can significantly contribute to ethnic violence. It might feel like there is a zero-sum dynamic at play when various ethnic groups compete with one another for control over resources, representation, and power. This perception can fuel resentment and frustration, leading to outbreaks of

violence as groups seek to assert their interests, protect their communities, or retaliate against perceived injustices.

It is important to recognize that electoral competition is just one piece of the puzzle when it comes to understanding ethnic violence in Bodoland. Deep-seated historical, socio-economic, and cultural factors also play substantial roles in shaping conflicts. Factors such as land disputes, economic disparities, identity politics, and historical grievances contribute to the overall volatile environment.

To address the issue of electoral competition and its potential to fuel ethnic violence, efforts must be made to promote inclusive and participatory political processes. This involves ensuring equitable representation for all ethnic groups, fostering dialogue and cooperation among communities, and addressing underlying grievances and inequalities. Additionally, the role of political leaders and parties is crucial in promoting responsible and inclusive discourse, as well as fostering a sense of shared identity and common goals.

In summary, electoral competition in Bodoland plays a significant role in shaping ethnic tensions and conflicts. It is a complex interplay of various factors, including the mobilization of ethnic constituencies, the use of divisive tactics, and the perception of unfairness in the political process. In order to promote peaceful coexistence and "reduce the likelihood of ethnic conflict in the area"[95], it is crucial to recognise and handle these processes.

This chapter explained that the establishment of autonomous structures in the region has not effectively reduced ethnic violence. On the contrary, the

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[95] Manoj Kumar Tripathi, "RECENT ETHNIC CONFLICT IN ASSAM" Vol. 75, No. 3 (July - September, 2014) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26575526> accessed 6 June, 2023

competition among non-Bodo groups for further autonomy has deepened divisions and created a fertile ground for more violence based on ethnic lines.

The research in this chapter shows how the struggle of the elite for control and wealth has been a major factor in stoking unrest and ethnic violence in the BTAD's territorially independent regions. Conflicting ethnic elites' polarization has rekindled the cycle of bloodshed. With regard to the connection between political decentralization and violence, this chapter therefore provides a potential response to the main research issue. Additionally, it demonstrates how elite rivalry may undermine regional attempts to avert violence.

CHAPTER 4 - POLITICAL DECENTRALIZATION AND CONFLICT IN ASSAM'S BTAD, KARBI ANGLONG AND DIMA HASAO : A COMPARATIVE STUDY

The purpose of this comparative study is to "examine the influence of political decentralization in resolving ethnic tensions in these three Assam regions"[96]. The research focuses on the BTAD, Karbi Anglong, and Dima Hasao, all of which have a history of ethnic tensions and violence.

The paper explores the techniques of political decentralization applied in various regions through a comparative analysis, such as the formation of autonomous councils, devolution of powers, and local government structures. It investigates how these policies have altered conflict dynamics and led to either the amelioration or amplification of ethnic tensions.

The research also examines the socio-political and historical backgrounds of each region, highlighting important elements that have fueled ethnic tensions. It looks at themes including territorial conflicts, resource allocation, identity politics, and power struggles between various ethnic groups.

The research also assesses how well political decentralization aids in fostering harmony, inclusion, and progress in these regions. It evaluates the degree to which local governing mechanisms have been effective at integrating various ethnic groups, settling complaints, and averting conflict escalation.

The paper offers suggestions and policy implications based on the findings to increase the efficiency of political decentralization in handling ethnic conflicts. It recommends actions including fostering inter-ethnic communication and

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[96] Dawn Brancati, "Decentralization: Fueling the Fire or Dampening the Flames of Ethnic Conflict and Secessionism?" Vol. 60, No. 3 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3877823> accessed 6 June, 2023

collaboration, encouraging fair resource allocation, bolstering local government institutions, and making sure marginalized populations have meaningful input into decision-making processes.

By comparing the BTAD, Karbi Anglong, and Dima Hasao, this study advances knowledge of the complexity and challenges associated with political decentralisation and ethnic conflicts in Assam. Policymakers, academics, and practitioners may use it to gain important insights about how to deal with racial tensions and advance long-term peace in these areas.

4.1. UNDERSTANDING THE LINK BETWEEN POLITICAL DECENTRALIZATION AND CONFLICT

According to preceding chapters, political decentralization gives conflicting groups the ability to manage their own affairs through political and territorial autonomy, which is supposed to reduce conflict and ethnic secession ambitions. Political decentralization has, however, only seldom been successful and, more often than not, has produced a range of outcomes. This chapter discusses the causes of the various effects of political decentralization as well as the situations in which it may promote conflict. The chapter advances the argument that "elite incentives may promote ethnic strife if there is a violent power struggle among the political elites. Within one ethnic group or sometimes between two or more distinct ethnic groups, competition for top incentives might develop"[97].

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[97] Bismee Taskin, "What is 6th Schedule & why it allows parts of Northeast to be exempt from citizenship bill" July 2, 2019 <https://theprint.in/theprint-essential/what-is-6th-schedule-why-it-allows-parts-of-northeast-to-be-exempt-from-citizenship-bill/331404/> accessed 6 June, 2023

Each sub-group within an ethnic group will compete with one another and maybe try to position themselves as the real defenders of ethno-nationalism when it comes to that ethnic group. Examples from Sri Lanka and India can be used, depending on the material already presented in the previous chapter. Communities are further divided by the elites' bitter struggle for political advantage, which breeds mistrust and suspicion. Long-term conflict could arise as a result of this. The growth of several ethnic groups may lead to a situation where political leaders of one ethnic group outbid each other for electoral benefits[98]. Extreme levels of rivalry among the elites might create a setting where bloodshed is inevitable.

"Competition among political elites for resources also plays a significant role in politically decentralized areas. If land and other resources, such as employment and services, are used as political symbols to mobilize an ethnic group on the basis of indigeneity, this could lead to ethnic conflict. The politicization of the subject of land alienation frequently has an impact on ethnic conflict, which also includes competition for resources and physical space. It is possible for competition for resources like land and other services to lead to conflict between ethnic groups"[99]. The authority and control over the resources are contested by several ethnic groups that cohabit in a decentralised region. Other ethnic groups can desire their own territory or independence inside the decentralised zones. Bodoland, which was covered in the previous chapter, might be used as an example. Communities in Bodoland that are not Bodo claim that Bodos are robbing the country of all resources, including jobs and services. In contrast, the "Bodos claim that surrounding tribes are appropriating their land. The issue of land

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[98] Dawn Brancati, 'Decentralization: Fueling the Fire or Dampening the Flames of Ethnic Conflict and Secessionism?' Vol. 60, No. 3 (Summer, 2006) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3877823> accessed 6 June, 2023

[99] Ibid

alienation and other resources is crucial when it comes to coordinating and creating mistrust among the ethnic groups, which in turn led to ethnic strife"[100].

Another illustration comes from Bodoland, where Bodo tenants are permitted to sharecrop in Bhakatpara with Muslims. However, the Bodo owners of the paddy field harvested it themselves when unrest broke out in the Udalguri District in 2008, claiming that Muslim farmers had taken their land. This increased hostilities between the two populations and exacerbated the issue. Northeast India is polarised on the issue of migration, especially in Assam. Tribes of indigenous people assert that migrant populations have appropriated their agricultural land. Despite the fact that the "Property Regulation Act of 1886 forbids tribal communities from selling property to non-tribal communities, a number of ethnic groups claimed that their properties were sold to other communities as a result of a substantial debt owed by other communities"[101]. The use of the land as a political symbol encourages individuals to engage in conflict.

Because it increases violence in areas where resources and authority are in short supply, political decentralized systems are concerned about the power struggle among political elites. Political elites are engaged in a fierce power struggle, which is one of the key reasons political decentralization has failed. The

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[100] Wasim Hassan, 'Protection of Backward Classes under Assam Land Revenue Regulation, 1886' Feb 14 2022 <https://www.northeastlawjournal.com/post/protection-of-backward-classes-under-assam-land-revenue-regulation-1886> accessed 7 June, 2023

[101] Ibid

elites typically gain more power through the control of resources and elections. Elites stir up hatred between one ethnic group and another via propaganda and lectures. Elites may have an impact on society by appealing to its most basic impulses. In the next part, we discuss how elite incentives and ethnic conflict relate in Assam's many decentralized regions. In the event that "there is a strident power struggle among the political elites, this section will attempt to illustrate how political decentralization may promote conflict"[102].

4.1.1. BTAD

The Bodos were allowed political decentralization in exchange for granting sub-national units more authority in order to accommodate the Bodos. Violence-fueled mobilization in support of "Bodoland" came before the political decentralization process. In 1993 and 2003, two agreements with the government were signed as a result of the Bodoland movement. Because of disagreements about whether to include villages in the council, the 1993 Bodo Accord, which was signed by the signatories and the administrations of the state and the federal government, was never put into effect. The agreement's failure encouraged more killing in the region by terrorist groups as well as many other ethnic populations already residing there. The national and state administrations were compelled to negotiate due to the violent ethno-political movement. As a consequence, in 2003, the BTC agreement was reached. Nonetheless, conflict between the ethnic groups resurfaced despite political decentralization. Elite struggle for political and economic dominance in

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[102] Manoj Kumar Tripathi, "RECENT ETHNIC CONFLICT IN ASSAM" Vol. 75, No. 3 (July - September, 2014) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26575526> accessed 7 June, 2023

the region is one of the likely prerequisites for conflict in politically decentralized parts of BTAD, as outlined in the preceding chapter.

4.1.2. KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL

4.1.2.1. AN OVERVIEW OF THE SIXTH SCHEDULE'S IMPLEMENTATION HISTORY

The creation and implementation of the Indian Constitution's Sixth Schedule were discussed in the previous Chapter. The Sixth Schedule was implemented after the constituent assembly engaged in extensive discussion and debate. The "introduction of the Sixth Schedule leaves a historical trace. The Government of India Act of 1935 utilised the classifications of Excluded, Partially Excluded, and Frontier Areas to classify the tribal areas of undivided Assam. The North-East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Territories Committee, led by Gopinath Bordoloi, later included these areas to the Sixth Schedule of the Indian ConstitutionThe Sub-Committee proposed classifying the hill districts as autonomous and non-autonomous entities. The Khasi and Jaintia Hills, the Garo Hills, the Lushai Hills, the Naga Hills, the North Cachar Hills, and the Mikir Hills were all included as autonomous districts in the Indian constitution's Sixth Schedule"[103]. Later, Mikir Hills was given the name Karbi Anglong, while North Cachar Hills was given the name Dima Hasao. "According to the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, these districts acquired District Councils on June 23rd,

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[103] J. Zahluna, 'CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY AND THE SIXTH SCHEDULE: With Special Reference to Mizoram' Vol. 71, No. 4 (OCT. - DEC., 2010) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42748950> accessed 8 June , 2023

1952"[104]. The "Mikir Hills were eventually upgraded and given the name Mikir Hills district after becoming a full-fledged District Council in 1971"[105]. "In 1976, the region was given the new name of Karbi Anlong"[106]. The Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) received more power when protesting parties signed an MoU with the state and federal governments in 1995. The following map provides a detailed representation of the Karbi Anglong district:

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[104] J. Zahluna, 'CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY AND THE SIXTH SCHEDULE: With Special Reference to Mizoram' Vol. 71, No. 4 (OCT. - DEC., 2010) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42748950> accessed 8 June, 2023

[105] Ibid

[106] Ibid

Source : Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council office, Karbi Anglong[107]

"Karbi Anglong was granted the authority to accommodate the Karbis and permit their own administration as part of the political decentralisation process thanks to the provisions for devolution of power in the Sixth Schedule"[108]. The decentralised institutions would have more power as a result of the legislative, executive, and judicial authority granted to KAAC, according to a 1995 agreement. However, efforts to establish a unique autonomous state continued. Violence erupted in Karbi Anglong in 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2013 to push for the establishment of a breakaway autonomous state. Karbi Anglong's other communities also endured targeted assaults.

"The Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC) was founded on May 17, 1986, and the Karbi Anglong and NC Hills Autonomous State Demand Committee (KANCASDCOM) was founded on May 25, 1986, to give some background information"[109]. The organisations want further power in the form of a sovereign state, as stated in Article 244(A) of the constitution. Rounds of discussions with the KANCASDCOM-led agitators were undertaken by the federal and state governments. Following discussions, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on April 1st, 1995, by representatives of the agitating organisations and the state and federal administrations.According to the agreement, 30 departments would receive executive, legislative, and financial authority. The

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[107] <http://www.assaminfo.com/districts/15/karbi-anglong.htm> accessed 30 May 2023

[108] Prabhat Kumar Datta and Panchali Sen, "Governance in the Sixth Schedule Areas in India's North-East: Context, Content and Challenges" April 25, 2020, Volume 66, Issue 2 <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0019556120916885?icid=int.sj-full-text.similar-articles.3> accessed 27 June, 2023

[109] Ibid

agreement, however, fell short of the Karbis' hopes, and several groups continued to demand the creation of a separate state. The Karbi Anglong Autonomous Territorial Council (KAATC) was established after the United People's Democratic Solidarity (UPDS), "a group of insurgents who had been on a ceasefire since 2006, signed the Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) with the state and federal governments on November 25, 2011"[110]. "The council would consist of 50 members, of which 50 would be elected, while six would be nominated by the governor of Assam. The government also disclosed a special package worth Rs. 350 crores for five years (Rs. 70 crores year) in addition to the expanded representation. In Karbi Anglong, political decentralisation widened the struggle for few resources"[111]. In the Karbi Anglong region, resources including government money were made available. Holding specific political positions was necessary to qualify for a portion of the council's funds for development. "According to people who took part in the interviews, there is an expanding relationship between the ruling class, contractors, and extremist groups"[112].

"Contractors and members of radical organizations supported political elites during the election by contributing funds and mobilizing support for the party. Interviews conducted in various areas of the district suggest that there is financial embezzlement in the council as a consequence of a developing nexus between the

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[110] Prabin Kalita, 'MoS signed to upgrade Karbi council' 26 November 2011 <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/mos-signed-to-upgrade-karbi-council/articleshow/10874703.cms> accessed 27 June, 2023

[111] Ibid

[112] Neha Sahgal, "Religion in India: Tolerance and Segregation" June 29, 2021 <HTTPS://WWW.PEWRESEARCH.ORG/RELIGION/2021/06/29/RELIGION-IN-INDIA-TOLERANCE-AND-SEGREGATION/> accessed 27 June, 2023

ruling elites and the contractors, which upset the citizens of the autonomous district"[113]. The process of political decentralization, which also fostered competitiveness among the region's elites, consequently served the political elites' interests by further encouraging ethnic conflict in the region.[114]. The next part goes into further depth on "the connection between political decentralization and conflict in Karbi Anglong"[115].

4.1.2.2. UNDERSTANDING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN POLITICAL DECENTRALIZATION AND CONFLICT IN KARBI ANGLONG

"Politicians in Karbi Anglong were able to use militant groups as their personal protection for campaigns and other activities because of the relationship between the political elite and the groups"[116]. The public's support for the government declined due to increased competition and extensive corruption, and animosity at decentralized institutions developed. In addition, Karbi Anglong had to contend with demands for a separate autonomous state made by a number of armed ethnic groups in support of their own political elites. The "UPDS, which

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[113] Prabin Kalita, 'MoS signed to upgrade Karbi council' 26 November 2011 <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/mos-signed-to-upgrade-karbi-council/articleshow/10874703.cms> accessed 27 June, 2023

[114] Indrani Bagchi, 'The Economic Times" 24 June, 2023 <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/?back=1> accessed 27 June, 2023

[115] Ibid

[116] Ibid

was established on May 21, 1999 by the Karbi People's Force (KPF) and the Karbi National Volunteers (KNV), is the main ethnic armed organization"[117].

The UPDS broke apart when H. E. Kathar founded the KLNLF and refused to engage in negotiations with the government. The KLNLF argued in favour of the "Karbi community's right to self-determination under Article 3 of the constitution and Article 371 of the constitution"[118]. A whole state was what they aspired. Following "the creation of DHD in 1995, it split into DHD-J (Jewel), also known as Black Widow, and DHD-D (Dilip)"[119]. DHD-D sought a distinct Dimasa state. A "separate homeland for the Kuki people was also demanded by the Kuki Revolutionary Army (KRA), which was founded in 2001"[120]. To further their demands for autonomous homelands, these militarized ethnic groupings turned to violence. On May 17, 1986, a separate political organization called the Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC) was founded with the intention of achieving statehood for the NC Hills and Karbi Anglong. Despite the 1995 signing of an MoU to create KAAC, an independent state was still required. Between 2001 and 2006, more than 200000 people were made homeless as a result of ongoing conflict between militant groups over conflicting territorial objectives. "Ethnic violence occurred in Diphu in July 2013 and Karbi Anglong between the Dimasas

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[117] Manoj Kumar Tripathi, "RECENT ETHNIC CONFLICT IN ASSAM" Vol. 75, No. 3 (July - September, 2014) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26575526> accessed 27 June, 2023

[118] Sushil Kumar Sharma, "Karbi Insurgency in Assam: The Way Forward" June 20, 2016 <https://idsa.in/policybrief/karbi-insurgency-in-assam_sksharma_200116> accessed 27 June, 2023

[119] Ibid

[120] Ibid

and Karbis in 2005"[121]. In late December 2013, the Rengma Naga Hills Protection Force (RNHPF) and the ethnic rebel organization KPLT engaged in additional ethnic violence. In late December 2013, the Rengma Naga Hills Protection Force (RNHPF) and the ethnic rebel organization KPLT engaged in additional ethnic violence. The next part will make an attempt to understand ethnic conflict patterns via the lens of elite motivations.

4.1.2.3. ELECTORAL COMPETITIVENESS AND CONFLICT BETWEEN THE ETHNIC GROUPS

Ethnic mobilization in the Karbi Anglong district was significantly influenced by intra-elite rivalry for electoral rewards. When Assamese became an official language in Assam, there was a clamour for the creation of a separate state. Between 2003 and 2005, there were incidents of violence between communities. The conflict occurred between Kukis and Karbis over control of the ginger business. Later, deadly violence erupted between the radical sections of both communities. Second, in 2005, there was conflict between Karbis and Dimasas. The murder of a Dimasa car driver in Karbi Anglong served as the initial catalyst for the violence. Dimasas believed that the driver's death was the result of a Karbis attack. The rumour that was disseminated by elites and instilled distrust in the people was what sparked the conflict between the two groups. The "relationship between political elites and extremist organizations aided the elites' efforts to incite

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[121] Mahindra Ved, 'Karbi Anglong violence:Inqiry ordered' 19 October 2005 <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/karbi-anglong-violenceinqiry-ordered/articleshow/1267338.cms> accessed 27 June, 2023

people to violence"[122]. The dominant Karbi ethnic group used violence to bolster its call for a breakaway state. A mobilization against the administration led to the violence that took place on July 31, 2013. People set fire to government buildings in a fit of rage. In the decentralized zones of KAAC, student organizations were actively involved in power politics. "More than 20 active student organizations in Karbi Anglong have joined the protesters in their quest for an autonomous state. On August 1, 2013, the Joint Action Committee for Autonomous State (JACAS) was created by the merger of 20 local organizations. JACAS condemned the ruling Congress party for the 2013 violence, blaming it on corruption and underdevelopment in the region"[123]. People burnt destroyed government offices including the Karbi Anglong District Congress Committee headquarters in protest of the governing administration[124]. Another aspect of the view was that although it was a result of public discontent with the administration, it was also politically driven.

"The competition among the leaders of the students' organizations and the political elites is one of the intriguing things to see in Karbi Anglong. The Karbi Students' Union (KSA), has various divisions, and their divides are not in the benefit of the students' organization, but in the interest of the leader. When a leader leaves one organization, they start a new one. At Diphu Dilaiji School, KSA was first form on July 21, 1959"[125]. It was established in order to protect the society's

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[122] James D. Fearon, "Review: Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity" Vol. 54, No. 4 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2601384> accessed 28 June, 2023

[123] Manoj Kumar Tripathi, "RECENT ETHNIC CONFLICT IN ASSAM" Vol. 75, No. 3 (July - September, 2014) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26575526> accessed 28 June, 2023

[124] Ibid

[125] Ibid

culture, economy, and traditions while gaining access to the political freedoms guaranteed by the Indian Constitution. In 1985, there was a disagreement inside the student organization on the creation of a permanent flag for the group. On May 25, 1986, Albert Bey, who at the time served as the office secretary, founded a group known as the Representative of the Karbi Mass Student (RKMS). However, the decision taken by Bey was not well received. This led to the formation of a new KSA, eventually known as the Congress KSA, which was likewise unable to win over the general populace. The organization further split during the 24th General Conference, which took place from January 7th to 10th, 2000. On September 9th, 2000, the organization underwent another split to create new KSA factions. In order to aid political parties in gaining support from the electorate at election season, student organizations have strong links to a variety of political organizations. Therefore, the movement headed by student organizations has become politicized as a result of the frequent collaboration between political parties and student organizations.

Minor occurrences have led to the violence that Karbi Anglong has seen. "According to interviews done in Karbi Anglong, conflicts among the groups began over the decision to transform the independent hill district into an autonomous state of Karbi Anglong. However, issues arose as a result of opposing voices of the Nagas in Nagaland's surrounding regions"[126]. A "Greater Nagalim" is what Nagas have been calling for. Greater Nagalim's proposal to incorporate certain Karbi Anglong regions gave rise to competing claims from the Karbis and Naga elites in Karbi Anglong. The Karbi community is home to a variety of political and non-political groups, all of which attempt to position themselves as

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[126] Sushil Kumar Sharma, "Karbi Insurgency in Assam: The Way Forward" June 20, 2016 <https://idsa.in/policybrief/karbi-insurgency-in-assam_sksharma_200116> accessed 28 June, 2023

the group most suited to enact the Karbi people's desires for their own separate autonomous state. "When there are few institutional outlets for expressing political demands, local elites attempt to dominate or control the available resources, which breeds hostility amongst ethnic groups"[127]. A separate autonomous state is one of the demands made by elites for their ethnic groups, and they attempt to mobilize those communities in order to get support for their claims. "In Karbi Anglong, many political and non-political parties mobilized people to support the demands expressed by various factions"[128]. The several Karbi-dominated parties did clash, nevertheless, as a result of the parties' success in gaining support. "When it came to local level politics for the elections, many organizations enlisted the aid of extreme groups to demonstrate their supremacy. Due to political tension between the political parties, violence occurred in the autonomous territories of Karbi Anglong"[129].

Election-related violence has been a significant factor in the KAAC elections. The "People's Alliance for Peace Agreement (PAPA), a coalition of 53 political groups, gained 8 seats in the most recent election of 2012, while independent candidates could only win 3 seats. The Indian National Congress (INC) constituted the council with 15 elected members"[130]. "After signing the agreement of settlement with the state and central governments, UPDS members and joint

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[127] Ibid

[128] Manoj Kumar Tripathi, "RECENT ETHNIC CONFLICT IN ASSAM" Vol. 75, No. 3 (July - September, 2014) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26575526> accessed 28 June, 2023

[129] R. N. Prasad, 'Sixth Schedule and Working of the District Councils in North-Eastern States' October-December, 2004, Volume 6 No. 2 <http://www.asthabharati.org/Dia_Oct04/R.N.Pras.htm> accessed 30 June, 2023

[130] Ibid

secretary, Surjya Rongpher, argued that the party had gotten a short amount of time to prepare for the election"[131]. The state administration, which was dominated by the Congress, gave its members a short amount of time to prepare for the election and inform the public of their plan. The Assam state administration was accused of engaging in a political plot against the local ethnic political parties by the PAPA. Election dates were made public by the state administration immediately following the UPDS's capitulation in order to maintain control over Karbi Anglong's decentralized areas. The agreement was reached by the UPDS on November 25, 2011, and the election took place on January 4. It demonstrates how fierce the struggle was among the ruling class to hold onto their positions of authority inside Congress. For "the surrendered UPDS to form a political organization, the state government gave them a very little amount of time. A small number of the militant group's members asserted that the political elites enjoyed the privilege as a result of ongoing movements by the militant organizations and the ordinary people"[132]. Other interviewees have asserted that corruption among politicians, where the money of the regular people was misappropriated, is the reason why the KAAC declined. Money granted for the region's development was abused by the ruling class. The lack of additional jobs, poor road conditions, and weak communication infrastructure are the reasons why the area is still undeveloped[133].

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[131] Ibid

[132] Manoj Kumar Tripathi, "RECENT ETHNIC CONFLICT IN ASSAM" Vol. 75, No. 3 (July - September, 2014) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26575526> accessed 30 June, 2023

[133] Bhupen Sarmah, 'India's North East and the Enigma of the Nation-State' Volume 42, Issue 3 <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0304375418761514?icid=int.sj-abstract.similar-articles.3> accessed   30 June, 2023

Therefore, it may be assumed that the Karbi leaders' power struggles may have contributed to the bloodshed that followed the political decentralization. The decentralized institutions' political incentives were obtained through the use of violence. "Elite rivalry between Congress and non-Congress organizations demonstrates how the leadership of the Karbis and between the Karbi and non-Karbi elites utilized these institutions to benefit themselves. The need for more autonomy and a larger financial power share was just the apparent result of such competitions. Elites made an effort to exert pressure on the government by using violence against the other communities. Even opposition parties accused the current administration of being to fault for Karbi Anglong's violence in many different periods due to their political affiliations and election-related goals"[134]. Different political parties' ethnic elites engaged in political rivalry in an effort to portray themselves as the genuine protectors of their communities. Political party leaders at the national, regional, and sub-regional levels attempted to portray themselves as able to accommodate the demands of the Karbi Anglong district's hill people. "The desire for a separate state and a separate autonomous state served as a rallying point to protect the Karbi community's identity. A gulf between the local communities was created as a result of elites' attempts to mobilize the populace on the basis of identity"[135]. Karbi Anglong witnessed struggle for election rewards among the heads of several political parties throughout the process. "In order to gain the support of the community for their cause and to get political support for upcoming elections, emerging political parties like PAPA and JACAS

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[134]   Manoj Kumar Tripathi, "RECENT ETHNIC CONFLICT IN ASSAM" Vol. 75, No. 3 (July - September, 2014) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26575526> accessed 30 June, 2023

[135] Ibid

utilized the ethnic card"[136]. Conflict between the ethnic groups occurred in the decentralized region as a result of polarized politics among the groups, which bred distrust and suspicion. The "KAAC also suffered intra-elite competition for electoral incentives, which may have led to the July 2013 violence"[137].

The Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council was governed by ASDC, which was supported by CPI (M-L), until 2001. INC became a powerful party in the hill district once more as a result of the ideological differences that separated the two political parties and caused their relationship to break down. The Congress party controlled seats on the assembly and district councils in 2001. The "ASDC candidate lost to Birensing Engti, a candidate for the Congress, in the 2004 Lok Sabha election. The ASDC's recurrent splits caused the people in the area to lose trust in them"[138]. A combined anti-Congress effort in the hill districts was attempted in 2006 by ASDC (Progressive) and ASDC (Haliram)[139]. The Congress constituted the KAAC with 21 elected members in the 2007 KAAC election. "Four ASDC members eventually joined the Congress party. The 2012 KAAC election was held under strict security since certain Congress candidates were intimidated by KPLT members. Just before the election, 264 of the 555 voting sites were designated as sensitive, 98 as extremely sensitive, and 36 as hyper-sensitive.

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[136] Ibid

[137] Bhupen Sarmah, 'India's North East and the Enigma of the Nation-State' Volume 42, Issue 3 <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0304375418761514?icid=int.sj-abstract.similar-articles.3> accessed 30 June, 2023

[138] R. N. Prasad, 'Sixth Schedule and Working of the District Councils in North-Eastern States' October-December, 2004, Volume 6 No. 2 <http://www.asthabharati.org/Dia_Oct04/R.N.Pras.htm> accessed 30 June, 2023

[139] Ibid

Finally, 150 people vied for the council's 26 seats"[140]. "On December 29, 2011, several Congress workers demolished the election office of an independent candidate called Bajong Tisso in the Bithung seat, resulting in violence in the Karbi Anglong district[141].

"Election rivalry has been fierce not just between members of the same community but also between the elites of the Karbi and elites from other communities. In order to oppose the Karbis' proposal for a separate state for the ethnic Karbi people, the Okarbi Suraksha Manch was established in 2011"[142]. The Okarbi Suraksha Manch (OSM) also asked that villages that were not Karbi be excluded from Karbi-dominated communities. "Violence between Karbis and Biharis occurred in Kheroni, and there was fighting between the Karbis and Adivasis in Bokajan. Other communities alleged that these incidents were the product of the KSA's politicization of ethnic differences for political advantage. Karbi student organizations sought to continue their long-standing demands for an independent state and to resist OSM's proposal that non-Karbi communities be excluded from the KAAC"[143].

The "General Secretary of the group, Niranjan Karmakar, is in charge of the Bokajan District Demand Committee (BDDC), which is linked to Okarbi Suraksha

[140] Prabin Kalita, 'The Times of India : 340 DHD (J) militants surrender' Oct 2, 2009 <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/5081532.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst>   accessed 30 June, 2023

[141] Ibid

[142] Prabin Kalita, 'The Times of India : 340 DHD (J) militants surrender' Oct 2, 2009 <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/5081532.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst>   accessed 30 June, 2023

[143] Ibid

Manch"[144]. On July 25, 2011, BDDC was created. This group's goal was to oppose the UPDS requirements. The organisation orchestrated a number of rallies, and memos requesting Bokajan's exclusion from KAAC and recognition as a separate district were sent to the state administration. Bokajan is made up of 696 settlements, more over 400 of which have populations who aren't Karbi. The dominance of Karbis over the political leadership of KAAC is resented by the non-Karbis. They contend that the area has seen fewer development projects. "Political leaders from non-Karbi communities leveraged ethnic differences to mobilize their constituencies. This has resulted to distrust and violence in the region between Karbis and non-Karbis"[145]. This trend is comparable to BTAD following political decentralization. "Different communities sought their rights in Karbi Anglong as well, in a decentralized area where elites profited by mobilizing groups to demand their rights, which in the long run has led in resort to violence between disputing parties"[146].

"The political parties INC, BJP, ASDC, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), and independent candidates participated in the 2001 KAAC elections. The INC, BJP, ASDC (H), ASDC (J), Karbi Anglong Peoples Party (KAPP), CPI (ML), and several independent candidates ran in the council elections in 2007. In the 2012 council election, Karbi ethnic political parties banded together to form PAPA in order to drive the Congress political party out of the Karbi Anglong district. The Peoples' Alliance for Peace Agreement (PAPA) Party, a coalition of 53 political

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[144] Ibid

[145] R. N. Prasad, 'Sixth Schedule and Working of the District Councils in North-Eastern States' October-December, 2004, Volume 6 No. 2 <http://www.asthabharati.org/Dia_Oct04/R.N.Pras.htm> accessed 30 June, 2023

[146] Ibid

parties, and other opposition parties engaged in fierce rivalry, which helped the Indian National Congress win the election"[147]. The "varying election pattern in Karbi Anglong demonstrates the fierce rivalry that exists between the political parties for the support of the ethnic leaders on a political level"[148].

One must go back to 1985 to understand the recent violence in 2013. Since 1985, the ASDC has been advocating for Karbi Anglong statehood. The leaders of the movement, however, were unable to reach an agreement. "In 2013, the unrest destroyed 62 government buildings and other assets owned by various organizations"[149]. "It was not the act of a single party, but of many parties, including Congress, ASDC, CPI-ML, and others, that contributed to the violence"[150]. Various organizations used violence to put pressure on the national and state governments to grant Karbis sovereignty. Respondents claimed that all parties and organizations are motivated by personal interests. While the Congress sought to destroy the records including unaudited accounts, others attempted to exert pressure on the governments to increase the council's authority or raise it to the status of an autonomous state so that elites might gain control over Karbi

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[147] Ibid

[148] Bhupen Sarmah, 'India's North East and the Enigma of the Nation-State' Volume 42, Issue 3 <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0304375418761514?icid=int.sj-abstract.similar-articles.3> accessed 30 June, 2023

[149] R. N. Prasad, 'Sixth Schedule and Working of the District Councils in North-Eastern States' October-December, 2004, Volume 6 No. 2 <http://www.asthabharati.org/Dia_Oct04/R.N.Pras.htm> accessed 30 June, 2023

[150] Manoj Kumar Tripathi, "RECENT ETHNIC CONFLICT IN ASSAM" Vol. 75, No. 3 (July - September, 2014) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26575526> accessed 30 June, 2023

Anglong's political system. In other words, Karbi Anglong violence is the outcome of political rivalry between some factions over the interests of various political leaders in the region.

4.1.2.4. RESOURCES AND CONFLICT BETWEEN THE ETHNIC GROUPS

It has been noted that competing for limited resources contributes to conflict between the ethnic groups. Resources were plentiful in Karbi Anglong. Government funding flooded into the area and was plentiful. The issue of how the government spends its money and how that relates to corruption in the Karbi Anglong hill area has been discussed elsewhere. In BTAD, a similar phenomena occurs. Dimasa and Karbis, as well as Kukis and Karbis, engaged in violent conflict for political reasons to seize control of the available resources in terms of government funds. "Tensions between the Karbis and Khasis emerged in 2005 over a boundary dispute between Meghalaya and Karbi Anglong"[151]. The "media played a significant role in spreading rumours and publishing incendiary articles to further exacerbate the turbulence surrounding the boundary dispute between Karbi Anglong and Meghalaya. Furthermore, allegations surfaced in September 2005 that Kuki community members had been slain by Karbi terrorists, sparking violent

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[151] Manoj Kumar Tripathi, 'RECENT ETHNIC CONFLICT IN ASSAM' Vol. 75, No. 3 (July - September, 2014) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26575526> accessed 30 June, 2023

conflicts between the two ethnic groups"[152]. Torturing of Dimasas in the Karbi Anglong area provoked violence between the Karbi and Dimasa communities. In addition to these events, Karbis (elites) desired to maintain the community's dominance in the region, while other communities wished to maintain their independence from the rule of KAAC. There was conflict between the ethnic communities residing in the Karbi Anglong area as a result of competing claims to land and control of the resources.[153]

To clarify, "the founding of ASDC in 1986 was a move made against the Congress party in order to obtain control over resources and development initiatives"[154]. ASDC gained 22 of the 26 seats in the 1989 election, with the intention of gaining more decentralization. However, the UPDF was mostly responsible for the violence against Hamren's Hindi-speaking populace in June 2000. These sorts of targeted violence also occurred in 2001, 2002, and 2003. Another element that contributed to the violence in 2002-2003 was a disagreement over corporate management and the removal of tribe people from their property. "According to the Mikir Hill District (Transfer of Land) Act of 1959, no land may be sold or transferred to non-tribes or between non-tribes"[155]. Forest regions, marshes, and cultivable land are all included under the jurisdiction. Land was mobilised by ethnic political parties and political elites, adding to carnage. "In 2004, Karbi terrorists assassinated six Kuki farmers who farmed ginger and

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[152] Ibid

[153] Sushil Kumar Sharma, "Karbi Insurgency in Assam: The Way Forward" June 20, 2016 <https://idsa.in/policybrief/karbi-insurgency-in-assam_sksharma_200116> accessed 30 June, 2023

[154] Y.K. Shrestha, "No Land right to non-Karbi in Karbi Anglong: Will apply to people already residing there as well" Aug 7, 2007 <https://assamtimes.org/node/290> accessed 30 June, 2023

[155] Ibid

refused to pay taxes to extremist organisations. In retaliation, Kuki terrorists attacked three Karbi villages, murdering around thirty farmers. Land ownership conflicts and the illegal transfer of lands to adjoining villages exacerbated the situation"[156]. The main ethnic group (Karbi), according to respondents, exploits newly arrived non-Karbi groups by reclaiming lands from other communities.

Competition for resources like land was a major driving force behind the bloodshed that occurred between the Karbis and the Rengma Nagas." Conflicts over the marking of the border between Karbi Anglong and Nagaland as well as disputes over other resources, including as services, products, and facilities, as well as forest resources, in the border areas of the Karbi Anglong district, led to violence. While NSCN (I-M) sought to take control of the two hill districts of Assam, KPLT sought to establish its domination over Rengma Naga territories. Because to the KPLT's desire for a "Karbi State and the NSCN's desire for a Greater Nagalim, the Rengma Nagas in Karbi Anglong's hill area became victims of two parties"[157]. To entirely rule the lands, ethnic elites politicized the land problem, driving other people away from the hill district and setting the stage for additional strife in Karbi Anglong's decentralized districts.

"One of the largest challenges is getting land, but corruption is also said to be the main problem in the region. Misappropriated development funds were used to fund terrorists working for the "Autonomous State." Even if the council is against the statehood movement, indirect funding for insurgencies is done in the

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[156] Ibid

[157] Vijaita Singh, "Rengma Nagas demand autonomous district council" June 08, 2021 <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/rengma-nagas-demand-autonomous-district-council/article34763177.ece> accessed 30 June, 2023

area"[158]. The communities that made up the autonomous council, on the other hand, were more hostile and wary of one another, which fueled organized violence in support of the local political elite.

Decentralization sparked violent retaliation in Karbi Anglong, according to the earlier part. Decentralization in Karbi Anglong provoked violent reactions, according to the portion that came before it. Elite rivalry and violence dominated during the 1990s. In Karbi Anglong, there was less conflict between the various ethnic groups until the 1990s. In the Dima Hasao area, similar responses were also noted. The dispute between ethnic groups in Assam's Dima Hasao District Autonomous Council is the subject of the following section.

4.1.3. DIMA HASAO AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL

"North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council was the previous name for the Dima Hasao Autonomous Council. The Sixth Schedule of India's constitution, which entered into force in 1952, guided the administration of the autonomous district council. The Sixth Schedule was created to protect native tribes from plains people's domination"[159]. In undivided Assam, District Councils were created to protect the hill tribes. The "United Mikir and Cachar Hills of Assam, which promoted tribal self-government as a distinctive administrative organization in Northeast India's hill regions, established the first District Council"[160]. As a consequence, "on April 29, 1952, the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council was

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[158] Ibid

[159] Manoj Kumar Tripathi, 'RECENT ETHNIC CONFLICT IN ASSAM' Vol. 75, No. 3 (July - September, 2014) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26575526> accessed 30 June, 2023

[160] Ibid

created, consisting of 12 elected and 4 nominated members. The council was given more administrative responsibility as a result of administrative reforms made during the creation of Meghalaya in 1969–1970"[161]. The Sixth Schedule was passed to give a few tribes living in the defined territory the ability to organise an autonomous region or territorial council and exercise some degree of administrative control. But in 1986, people of the hill area started to ask for more autonomy since they didn't like the power that had been given to them. To satisfy the needs of the indigenous communities, the council was given 30 departments in 1996. Demands from various communities continue to clash. A full map of the Dima Hasao is presented below:

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[161] Ibid
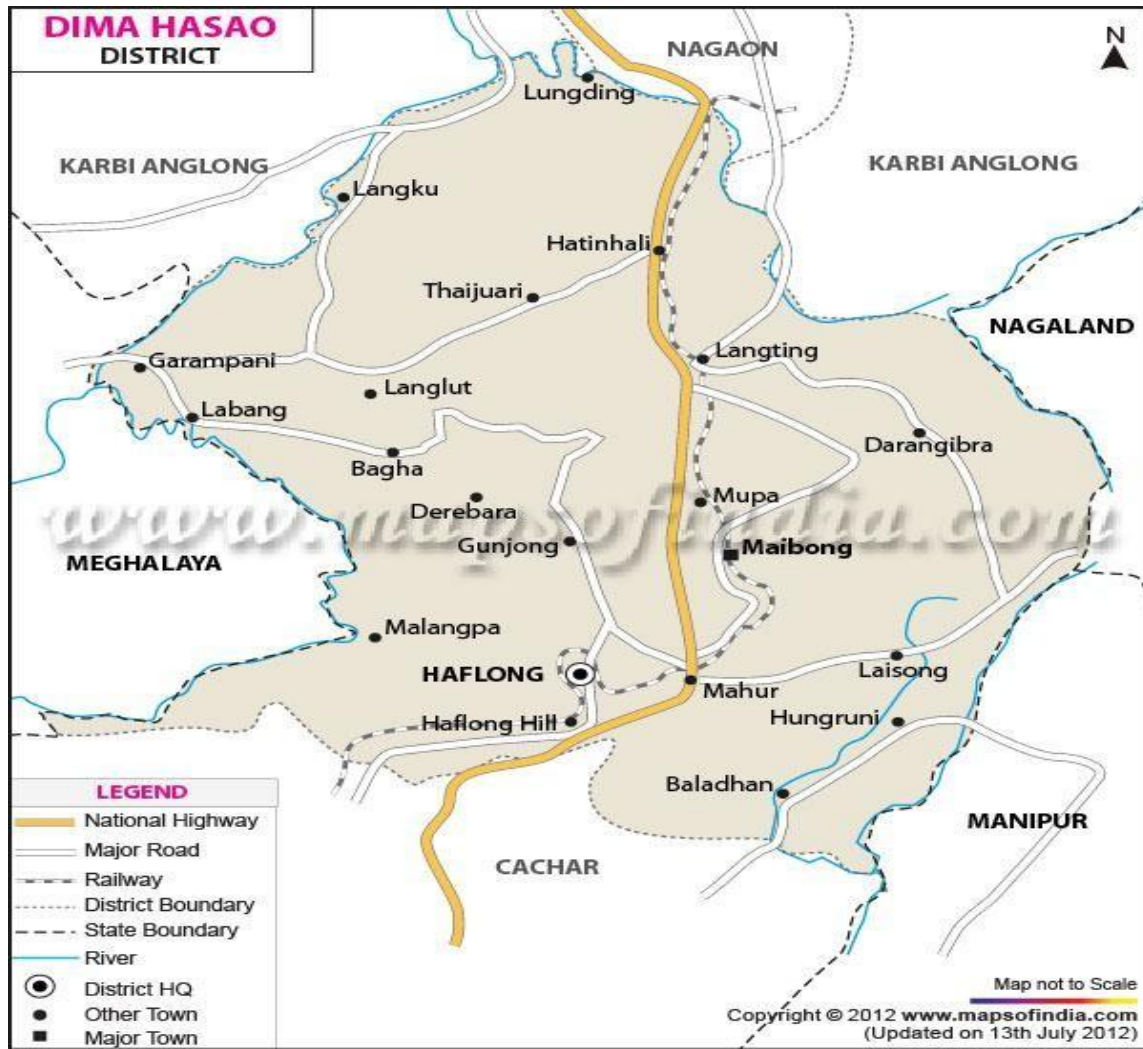
Source : Office of Dima Hasao Autonomous Council, Haflong[162]

Several ethnic groups living in Dima Hasao have experienced violent occurrences as a result of competing interests and goals. In a nutshell, "the politicisation of Dimasa identity took place in the 1970s and 1980s, and as a result of these events, student activity increased, helping to shape radical politics in Dima

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[162] <Htps://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/assam/districts/northcacharhills.htm> accessed on 30 May 2023

Hasao"[163]. At that time, militant organisations established in the area were responsible for the bulk of violent incidents. "Following the devolution of more authority to the council, inter-group violence emerged in the area. Beginning in 2002, there was an upsurge in inter-group violence in the decentralised districts of Dima Hasao between the Dimasas and the Hmars, followed by that between the Karbis and the Dimasas in 2005, and finally between the Dimasas and the Zeme Naga in 2009"[164]. Non-Dimasa respondents said that Dimasas tried to expel 'other' communities from the Dima Hasao area. Violence in the decentralised zones was fostered by a fear of non-Dimasas and social unrest. DHD, a militant organisation from the Dimasa community, took part in the fighting in the autonomous council region. Thus, the fundamental questions are raised: Why did Dima Hasao's political decentralisation prove to be ineffective? Why did political decentralisation in the Dima Hasao areas promote violent conduct rather than prevent conflict? The next part discusses the "electoral contest as one of the primary causes that may have precipitated ethnic violence in Dima Hasao"[165].

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[163] Rakhee Naiding, "Being Dimasa: Caught in the Revolving Door of Identities" April 9, 2021 <https://www.dalitweb.org/?p=4119> accessed 30 June, 2023

[164] Ibid

[165] Ibid

4.1.3.1. ELECTORAL COMPETETIVENESS AND CONFLICT BETWEEN THE ETHNIC GROUPS

Politics in the Dima Hasao District Autonomous Council was significantly influenced by the incentives provided by elections to political elites. As ethnic tensions in the area began to rise and political elites' aspirations grew, violence broke out in the Dima Hasao Autonomous Council (DHAC). The Dimasas, along with Karbi Anglong, have long desired their own Autonomous State. In contrast, "some ethnic organizations in Dima Hasao have advocated for the separation of Dima Hasao and the creation of autonomous entities for additional tribal groups living within the council boundaries. A number of IPF leaders claimed that the Dimasa people were organising for the benefit of their community when the IPF was established to oppose the Dimasa people's actions"[166]. Non-Dimasas claimed that other groups had social, political, and economic disadvantages.

"There hasn't been much political representation for the other ethnic groups in the Dima Hasao council"[167]. The insufficient political representation of the minority ethnic populations was one of the factors that led to the creation of the IPF. IPF's role in Dima Hasao is to represent the concerns of these minority ethnic populations. The "Dimasa Students' Union (DSU) countered that the demands of the IPF are only driven by the political objectives of the leaders. Political objectives, such as gaining a ticket for the elections, drove them to lead such

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[166] Bidhan Barman, "Assertion of Dimasa Identity: A Case Study of Assam" Volume 19, Issue 1, Ver. V (Jan. 2014) <https://www.iosrjournals.org/iosr-jhss/papers/Vol19-issue1/Version-5/E019154549.pdf> accessed 30 June,2023

[167] Ibid

operations against the Dimasas rather than the general development of the minority ethnic populations"[168]. This is similar to how BTAD operates.

"The main political parties involved in Dima Hasao since the 1950s are the Indian National Congress (INC), BJP, CPI (M-L), Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC), and Assam Gana Parishad (AGP). In 1985, the People's Democratic Front (PDF) was established there"[169]. The viewpoint of PDF is leftist. In 1987, ASDC replaced PDF as the name. The "Karbi Anglong and NC Hills Autonomous Councils first received additional autonomy in response to ASDC's demands, and subsequently an autonomous state inside Assam. ASDC split into two factions in 2000, though—ASDC (United), led by Haliram Terang, and ASDC (Progressive), led by Jayanta Rongpi"[170]. The ASDC-led effort to create an autonomous state faltered following the 1995 agreement with the federal and state administrations. However, "in 2004, DHD was split into two parties, one led by Dilip Nunisa and the other by Jewel Gorlosa. The organisation lead by Jewel was later dubbed The Black Widows"[171]. Violence was common in Dima Hasao, and Black Widow was usually involved. Prior to the arrival of these rebel organizations, the Dimaraji Demand Revival Committee and the All Assam Dimasa Students'

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[168] Bismee Taskin and Karishma Hasnat, "13 parties are fighting Assam elections — who they are, and how state has voted in the past" 19 March, 2021 <https://theprint.in/theprint-essential/13-parties-are-fighting-assam-elections-who-they-are-and-how-state-has-voted-in-the-past/624183/#google_vignette> accessed 30 June,2023

[169] Ibid

[170] Ibid

[171] Ramesh Menon, "Karbi tribals demand autonomous state within Assam" Dec 19, 2013 <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/indiascope/story/19870915-karbi-tribals-demand-autonomous-state-within-assam-799302-1987-09-14> accessed 30 June, 2023

Union conducted an unarmed battle and used less disruptive protest methods. In the 1990s, conflict between militant organizations resulted in carnage. The council members had a friendly connection with DHD-J (Jewal) in order to defeat DHD-D (Dilip). "Gorlosa turned to violence as a strategy of surviving and asserting himself in the valley. Attacks were directed against the state police, elected officials, and other ethnic groups residing in the decentralized zone. In Dima Hasao, the ASDC was subsequently renamed the Hill State Democratic Party (HSDP). The HSDP advocated for greater autonomy and statehood in the hill district. ASDC was in charge of the government from 1996 to 2001, but Congress finally took authority"[172]. As a result, the HSDP said that the victory of the Congress had a negative impact on socioeconomic progress, as well as increased violence and polarised politics in the hill region.

"After previously opposing the Assam government's desire to change the name of North Cachar Hills to Dima Hasao in 2011, the IPF became a strong political opposition in Dima Hasao politics"[173] As a result, violence occurred in Dima Hasao. As a result, "the worry of losing ethnic identity in the hill area has become a concern among non-Dimasa groups. Second, the leaders of each faction blamed each other, instigating carnage in Dima Hasao"[174]. Civilians are the victims of such violence committed by elites for personal benefit. Thus, ethnic conflict in such places might be considered politically motivated. The student organizations also functioned as a political platform for future council elections. Several student

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[172] Swapnaneel Bhattacharjee, "Groups oppose IPF's demand to bifurcate Assam's Dima Hasao district" 22 April 2022 <https://www.eastmojo.com/assam/2022/04/22/groups-oppose-ipfs-demand-to-bifurcate-assams-dima-hasao-district/> accessed 2 July, 2023

[173] Ibid

[174] Ibid

leaders went on to become future political leaders, either joining municipal politics or vying for state Assembly seats.

4.1.3.2. RESOURCE COMPETITION AND CONFLICT

Competition for resources, as well as the election contest, was a major factor of violence that took place in Dima Hasao. The territorial demand expressed by various ethnic organizations overlapped. The "National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) (I-M) has also claimed territory in Dima Hasao in order to form a united Nagalim country. These claims coexist with those made by the DHD for Dimaraji, the UPDS for a Karbi State, and the Kuki Revolutionary Army (KRA) for a Kuki Regional Council"[175]. "To achieve the Dimasas' aspirations, the main Dimasa faction claimed an autonomous state. The Kuki, Naga, Hmar, and other minority communities wanted the hill district divided into two areas so that non-Dimasa communities could have their own autonomous structures in accordance with clause 3 of Article 244(2) of the Sixth Schedule to the Indian Constitution, despite the dominance of the Dimasas in the hill district"[176]. Over time, conflicting requests from many organizations caused issues for the Dima Hasao Autonomous Council. The IPF demanded the creation of a distinct autonomous entity because it claimed that non-Dimasa communities are denied basic rights and subjected to unjust treatment by the majority Dimasa community.

In response, bandhs were called, and violence among the local populace ensued. In an assault on Gaijen village near Sontilla on December 16, 2011, 16

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[175] Loreni Tsanglao, "NSCN demands for a unified Nagalim, stands by the principle of one people one nation" Aug 27, 2022 <https://www.indiatodayne.in/nagaland/story/nscn-demands-unified-nagalim-stands-principle-one-people-one-nation-440250-2022-08-26> accessed 2 July, 2023

[176] Ibid

structures in a Dimasa communal hamlet were destroyed by fire. The planned agreement between the Government and the DHD was severely assaulted by the Hills Tiger Force (HTF). In the disaster, both lives and goods were lost. Similar incidents happened in reaction to the demand that Dima Hasao be split into two. "Tensions arose at the end of February 2014 when the North Cachar Hills Indigenous Students Forum (NCHISF) sought the division of Dima Hasao and issued a call for a 100-hour bandh. Violence and altercations with the police occurred during the bandh, resulting in 15 injuries at the Mahur train station"[177].

"Competition among elites of various ethnic groups and among common people whose primary source of income and livelihood is dependent on agricultural land was sparked by the issue of tribal land division, occupation, and alienation as well as competing demands for land made by various ethnic groups"[178]. Elites from Dimasa and non-Dimasa groups have been fighting over territory and natural resources in Dima Hasao. In the decentralized districts of Dima Hasao, ethnic violence was aggravated by the elites of the contending ethnic groups' struggle for resources and their desires for the same piece of land. In addition to land and other resources important to employment, education has boosted competitiveness. These elements working together have sparked communal mobilization.

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[177] Swapnaneel Bhattacharjee, 'Groups oppose IPF's demand to bifurcate Assam's Dima Hasao district' 22 April 2022 <https://www.eastmojo.com/assam/2022/04/22/groups-oppose-ipfs-demand-to-bifurcate-assams-dima-hasao-district/> accessed 2 July, 2023

[178] Ibid

CHAPTER 5 - CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In conclusion, the topic, "Political decentralization and ethnic conflict in Assam's Sixth Schedule Area" is an important and complex research topic and has been examined through a review of the literature. The research on this subject highlights the complex relationship between political decentralization, conflict between the ethnic groups, and the implementation of the Sixth Schedule in Assam. It is clear that the Sixth Schedule's implementation of autonomous districts and regional councils has not totally succeeded in eliminating ethnic tensions in the area. Instead, rivalry among the elites of various ethnic groups for control and resources has increased tensions and hampered efforts to resolve conflicts. Researchers and decision-makers may help improve our understanding of conflict dynamics and advance the development of practical conflict resolution techniques in Assam's sixth schedule regions by implementing the recommendations listed below.

Suggestions :

The findings of the literature review offer a number of recommendations for further study and policy consideration. The dynamics and underlying causes of ethnic conflicts in the sixth schedule territories need to be better understood, to start with. This includes a deeper exploration of historical grievances, identity politics, and socio-economic factors that contribute to conflict.

Second, greater attention should be given to the effective implementation of the Sixth Schedule provisions. This involves ensuring equitable representation and meaningful participation of all ethnic groups in the regional councils, as well as addressing issues of resource allocation and governance capacity.

Third, efforts should be made to promote inter-ethnic dialogue and reconciliation processes. This could involve initiatives that foster trust, understanding, and cooperation among different ethnic communities, such as community-based reconciliation programmes and cultural exchanges.

Furthermore, it is critical to understand the limitations and problems of political decentralization as a stand-alone solution to ethnic conflicts. Complementary measures should be incorporated into conflict resolution tactics, such as inclusive government frameworks, economic development programmes, and social justice efforts.

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