

The Assam Rifles and India's North-East frontier policy

Harrison Akins

To cite this article: Harrison Akins (2020) The Assam Rifles and India's North-East frontier policy, *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 31:6, 1373-1394, DOI: [10.1080/09592318.2020.1778213](https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2020.1778213)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2020.1778213>



Published online: 07 Aug 2020.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 43



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



The Assam Rifles and India's North-East frontier policy

Harrison Akins

Independent Scholar

ABSTRACT

The Assam Rifles, the oldest paramilitary group in India, was formed as a defensive force to protect tea estates from tribal raiding. Following independence, the Indian government reversed British policy in the North-East frontier to extend administrative control over tribal areas that were largely neglected under colonial rule. In aid of this policy change, the government shifted the role of the Assam Rifles to an offensive counterinsurgency force. Based on primary sources, this analysis helps to demonstrate how post-colonial states co-opt colonial institutions to reflect new policies and the use of coercive force by paramilitary groups in the state-making process.

ARTICLE HISTORY Received 4 May 2020; Accepted 27 May 2020

KEYWORDS India; Assam; counterinsurgency; post-colonialism; intra-state conflict

Introduction

The Assam Rifles is the oldest paramilitary organization in India whose formation dates to 1835 in the northeastern region of Assam.¹ Following independence from British colonial rule in 1947, the Indian government relied upon the Assam Rifles to extend government control into the 'ungoverned' tribal areas of the North-East frontier.² It dealt with violent challenges to state authority as an offensive counterinsurgency force throughout the Northeastern region and other parts of India, though its deployment was not legally restricted to Assam. Braj Kumar Nehru, the nephew of India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru and the Governor of Assam from 1968–1973, wrote that in the North-East region with

[l]arge parts of its territory ... peopled by tribes who have never been part of the Indian mainstream and who were, under British rule, deliberately kept apart from the rest of the country ... The consequence has been a totally insufficient

CONTACT Harrison Akins  harrisonakins@gmail.com  1001 McClung Tower, Knoxville, TN 37996-0410

This article has been corrected with minor changes. These changes do not impact the academic content of the article.

© 2020 Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

integration of the tribes with the rest of the Indian community, giving rise to dissatisfaction of various kinds which have, in some parts culminated in insurgencies and insurrections. One of the instruments used for handling this situation and for spreading the administration into hitherto unadministered areas has been that fine body of men known as the Assam Rifles.³

The Assam Rifles' core role, however, has not always been as an offensive force. During British rule, it primarily served in a defensive role under command of the civil government, primarily guarding against tribal raids and helping to protect law and order. While it temporarily shouldered more offensive duties during World War I and II while the military was occupied with the war effort, the colonial government typically left offensive operations and punitive expeditions against tribal groups to regular military forces. What explains this changing role for the Assam Rifles in the northeastern region of Assam?

The Assam Rifles' role, as this paper argues, shifted to align with the reversal in the North-East frontier policy of the newly independent Indian government. Prior to independence, the British Indian government was content to leave the tribal areas on both the North-West and North-East frontiers largely ungoverned and respecting tribes' internal autonomy so long as they did not threaten British interests.⁴ Following independence in 1947, Pakistan maintained this colonial approach among the Pashtun tribes in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) on the North-West frontier. The Pakistani political elite were concerned with the Pashtun tribes of the border region challenging the newly created state with potential backing from Afghanistan, which rejected the legitimacy of the international border established in 1893 and laid claim to the Pashtun areas of northern Pakistan. The Pakistani government was content to keep the political status quo of the region intact, including maintaining the existing role of paramilitary forces within FATA, as a means of winning the support of local tribal leaders known as *maliks*.⁵

On the North-East frontier, on the other hand, India reversed British policy, concentrating on integrating the hill tribes of the periphery into the Indian state and extending direct administrative control over the region. The Assam Rifles were one of the government's foremost tools in supporting this goal, with their shifting role a reflection of the shift in India's approach to the North-East frontier. Officials were hesitant to occupy the military with domestic operations given the reduction in military resources, especially in the North-East frontier, and the external threats from Pakistan and China which increasingly occupied military forces. Moreover, officials saw that the Assam Rifles as a local force operating under the civil government would have greater legitimacy among the hill tribesmen. Today, the Assam Rifles is one of a number of paramilitary organizations operating under civil authorities and which often fulfill similar roles in various regions of India. These include the Border Security Force (founded 1965), the Central Industrial Security Force (founded 1969), the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (founded 1962),

National Security Guard (founded 1986), and Sashastra Seema Bal (founded 1963). In 1990, the Indian army also established the Rashtriya Rifles as a specialized counterinsurgency force for deployment in Jammu and Kashmir.⁶ As the oldest paramilitary organization within India, the focus on the Assam Rifles helps to demonstrate the shift away from the British colonial government's approach to the North-East frontier following independence.

Scholars have examined how non-military security forces, including paramilitary forces and pro-government militias, are used as coercive tools of the state inside and outside of civil conflict to bolster state authority, especially when there are strategic or capacity issues limiting the use of regular military forces, and support the legitimacy of counterinsurgency efforts.⁷ An analysis of the Assam Rifles in the context of India's North-East frontier policy adds to this discussion by demonstrating how post-colonial governments co-opted and changed colonial institutions to fit the purposes of post-colonial governments as well as expanding on the role of paramilitary forces as a part of the nation-building process.⁸ This paper's argument relies on primary sources from the British colonial and Indian governments – including private and public letters, notes, government reports, field reports and telegrams, meeting minutes, and policy proposals – primarily located within the National Archives of India, in addition to relying on relevant secondary literature. These sources help to uncover officials' motivations as well as debates within the government surrounding the use of the Assam Rifles in the context of India's North-East frontier policy. This is not meant to be a comprehensive analysis of the region's history or its various insurgencies. It, rather, is meant to highlight the changing role of the Assam Rifles contextualized by applicable political developments and government policies during British colonial rule and following Indian independence.

British India's North-East frontier

In the 18th century, the interest of the East India Company (the erstwhile power in India at the time) in Assam spiked with the discovery of its vast tea forests and the promise of high profits from its export-focused tea plantations. British India annexed Assam following the first Anglo-Burmese War,⁹ and began successfully exporting tea to the United Kingdom by the late 1830s. The development of the tea economy resulted in the large-scale influx of migrant labor, especially from neighboring Bengal, to provide cheap labor for the large tea plantations as well as other economic sectors such as oil and construction. By 1901, according to the Census of India, almost 13% of Assam's population was born outside of the province.¹⁰ Such population movements served as a key point of controversy and conflict within Assam over the next century and a half, especially beginning in the 1970s with the



Figure 1. The North-East region of India.^a

^aWikimedia.org, accessed at: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/90/Northeast_india.png

emergence of the anti-immigrant Assam Movement led by the All Assam Students' Union.¹¹

Many tribal groups living in the hill tracts bordering Assam's settled plantation areas resented the resulting seizure of local land and various road building projects to extend British influence in the region.¹² Aided by the difficulty of their terrain, these tribal communities had long lived outside of direct control of political rulers and protected their autonomy within their territory. This led to regular violence against the British and their economic interests in the region, especially the Naga tribes as government officials and Naga chiefs struggled for control over land used for *jhum* cultivation.¹³ The first military encounter between British forces and the Naga tribes, for instance, occurred in 1832 when a British military expedition was attempting to open a road through the Assam frontier. In February 1843, several Singpho chiefs banded together to attack British troops stationed in the region in the hopes of recovering ancestral lands occupied by tea growers. After British forces of the Assam Light Infantry defeated this uprising, Singpho fighters stated to their captors, 'We shall not go without the lands being restored to us and you shall have an opportunity of burning down our villages as we have made up our minds to give trouble – you shall have enough of it.'¹⁴ The

British eventually shifted its tea production to the more settled valleys of Upper Assam under pressure from the continual and costly raiding of British settlements by hill tribes.

Throughout the 19th century, the British military conducted a series of punitive expeditions against the hill tribes but were largely unsuccessful in pacifying the region. In 1873 under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation Act, the British government administratively separated Assam from Bengal and established the Inner Line Regulation. Under this regulation, the hill tribes were cordoned off from territory under direct British control and British subjects were unable to travel into the region without an Inner Line Permit, limiting their contact with outsiders and relying on indirect rule through village headmen. The region ultimately was of little interest to government officials given its low potential to generate any significant revenue with the maintenance of law and order as the local administration's sole priority. The government left Christian missionary groups the responsibility of providing education and healthcare within the Hill Tracts rather than expending government resources.¹⁵ By the early 1880s, the British government's policy for engaging with the hill tribes was 'one of absolute non-interference with transfrontier tribes and their feuds, so long as they leave British subjects alone, and are careful not to raid across our border.'¹⁶

The Assam Rifles in British India

As the British military reduced its presence in the northeastern region following the first Anglo-Burmese war, Assam's civil government raised the first paramilitary group under its authority in 1835, the Cachar Levy in Nowgang District, as a cheaper alternative to military deployments. This was a 750-member force largely consisting of local Bengalis tasked primarily to guard the frontier and protect British estates, villages, and tea gardens from tribal raiding. In 1838, the Jorhat Militia recruited from local Shan similarly was formed to man the Sibsagar border with Naga territory. During the 1860s, this group was absorbed with the Cachar Levy and expanded to form the Frontier Police to defend the frontier border from raiding.¹⁷ When larger-scale violence erupted in the region, such as the 1861 Synteng Rebellion and extensive raiding in 1871 by the Lushai tribes against British tea gardens, Frontier Police also provided support to military operations against the offending tribal groups.¹⁸

The Frontier Police was re-organized as the Military Police Battalions under the Assam Police Frontier Regulation of 1882 and Assam Military Police Regulation of 1890. The force, with an increase in manpower, now consisted of four battalions assigned separately to the Cachar, Lakhimpur, Garo Hills, and Naga Hills areas. Starting in 1884, military officers were sent on deputation to the Frontier Military Police to serve as unit commanders yet the force

remained under control of the civil government. As the former Deputy Inspector General of the Military Police wrote in the early 20th century, 'To incorporate the [Assam Rifles] into the Regular Army would not only obliterate its *raison d'être*, but would deprive the Civil Power of the province, surrounded as it practically is by wild tribes of varying degrees of turbulence, of its best protection.'¹⁹

The re-organized Military Police Battalions' primary role was the preservation of law and order such as handling 'rioting and disorder'; providing security for surveys and exploration, road extensions and other infrastructure projects; aid to civil authorities during natural disasters; and continuing its defensive actions along the border while largely leaving offensive campaigns to the regular military.²⁰ The primary advantage of using this force for minor disturbances, according to an 1892 report from the office of the Chief Commissioner of Assam, was 'a considerable saving in expenditure as compared with what a military expedition would have cost.'²¹ The military was deployed when disturbances became greater than what the Military Police could handle.

The Military Police continued to provide logistical support to military operations.²² Their duties were 'to act as scouts, keep open communications, collect information, and furnish baggage and various other guards.'²³ As the former British Deputy Inspector General of the Assam Rifles described in the early 20th century, 'Military Police Battalions are essentially the eye and not the hand of the executive, which work falls to Regular troops on serious matter arising.'²⁴ However in 1917, when the Indian Army was occupied overseas with World War I, British authorities relied on the paramilitary force to participate in offensive campaigns against Kuki clans in Manipur who rebelled against British intrusions into their territory.²⁵ In November 1917, the Military Police Battalions were re-named the Assam Rifles in recognition of its members' service in various theaters of World War I. With the large influx of men following demobilization of military units at the war's conclusion, the force also raised an additional battalion for service within Assam, bringing the total number of battalions to five. At this time, recruitment to the force also was standardized to Gurkhas (70%), Garhwalis and Kumaonis (20%), and Jaruas, Lushais, Nagas, and Kukis (10%).²⁶

Over the next two decades, the Assam Rifles continued its efforts 'in aid of the civil authority' amid the riots, strikes, and civil disobedience of the Indian independence movement.²⁷ With the additional battalion formed at the conclusion of World War I and resulting increase in manpower, there were a handful of occasions when the Assam Rifles dispatched units outside of Assam to assist in civil disturbances, such as in 1924 when over 500 men were dispatched to Madras (present-day Chennai) for five months after its government applied for assistance in stopping a local rebellion.²⁸ The same year, the Assam Rifles became affiliated as a reinforcement force with the Gurkha

Regimental Groups of the Indian Army which was not intended to change its status as a defensive force under the authority of and for the aid of the civil government.

With Japan's entrance into World War II in 1941 and resulting invasion of Burma, there now emerged the threat of an impending Japanese invasion of India. The Assam Rifles became an integral part of the British war effort on the North-East frontier out of necessity as this was 'an area where virtually no regular troops were located' and the Assam Rifles possessed 'intimate knowledge of the terrain and the people of the frontier and trans-border tracts.'²⁹ To challenge the Japanese advance, the British War Office established the 'V' Force as a guerilla and reconnaissance force with the Assam Rifles as its 'fighting element.' As part of this arrangement, the Assam Rifles were gradually placed under the command of the Indian Army's IV Corps. According to the British War Office's official history of World World II, General Archibald Wavell, the British commander-in-chief in India,

decided to organize a force from the hill people along the 600 miles of India's eastern frontier to undertake guerilla operations against the Japanese lines of communications, should they pass through the areas ... The organization, raising, arming, and training of this force, which became known as "V" Force, began in April 1942 with the help of the Assam Government. It was built up on the foundation of platoons loaned from the Assam Rifles ... It was planned that "V" Force should be organized into a headquarters and six groups, one to each of the six operational areas stretching along the frontier, each group consisting of a small headquarters, four platoons of Assam Rifles and eventually up to 1,000 enrolled tribesmen. The force was to be self-supporting and live on the country.³⁰

Under official instructions from IV Corps, the Assam Rifles also served as 'advisors to the Operational Commanders on peculiarly "Guerilla" matters and as liaison between them and Force "V".'³¹ The Assam Rifles, as part of 'V' Force, were integral to guerilla, reconnaissance, and regular military operations against the Japanese army in western Burma.³²

Following Japan's surrender, there was much debate about the role of the Assam Rifles – whether it should be fully transferred to military command as members of the regular army; continue to serve as a paramilitary force linked with the Indian army's Assam Regiment (a move favored by the Inspector General of Police in Assam); or revert to a military police force under civil authority and in a purely defensive role. In August 1944, military headquarters in New Delhi pushed back against the notion of paramilitary forces continuing as part of the regular army after the war, writing that 'quasi-military forces of the nature of the Assam Rifles should in future be classified as Police, and it would follow that officers for the force would no longer be forthcoming from the Army.'³³ The Assam government similarly advocated for the Assam Rifles to revert

to its pre-war status as an appendage of the civil administration to aid its efforts in engaging with and controlling the tribal population, as the current military officers dispatched to the force 'often do not pretend to take the slightest interest in the country and its inhabitants.'³⁴ The Adviser for Tribal Affairs to the Assam Governor likewise stated in an August 1944 intelligence report, 'The Assam Rifles performed their duties most adequately but it is impossible to resist a feeling that the militarisation of the force, inevitable though it is at the present time, does not increase its suitability for the duties it has to perform on the North East Frontier ... It is to be hoped that after the war the force will again become more of a Frontier Constabulary, with officers capable of rendering very real general assistance to the Political Officers.'³⁵

The Foreign Secretary of the Indian Government Olaf Caroe, on the other hand, recommended that a section of the Assam Rifles should be backed by the central government and continue to play a 'strategic role' among the border tribes on the North-East frontier reflective of its 'guerilla and intelligence character' held during the war, similar to the role of the Scouts and other paramilitary forces among the Pashtun tribes in the North-West Frontier Province.³⁶ The remainder of the Assam Rifles would be relegated to serving as a provincial armed police force under the authority of the Assam government. However, this debate about the post-war status of the Assam Rifles was quickly overtaken by the turbulent events of Partition and left unresolved at Indian independence.

India's North-East frontier policy

At independence in 1947, India inherited from British colonial rule a dizzying array of princely states, frontier agencies, tribal districts, and other political structures within its national borders. These internal administrative divisions helped to solidify regional identities, leaving the Indian government the challenge of politically integrating these disparate parts into a cohesive Indian national identity.³⁷ The political integration of these constituent parts was of paramount importance given the ambition of India's political leadership, particularly Jawaharlal Nehru, to emerge as a global power given its geographic size, population, and resources. In addition, India's government often conflated external challenges from their interstate rivals of Pakistan and China with internal turmoil, understanding that domestic divisions which drain resources and occupy the government's attention weaken a nation in the face of a potential two-front war. Many political elites also argued that two centuries of British dominance was only possible given India's lack of internal cohesion, which must be remedied as an early political goal of the government.³⁸ Nehru in particular opposed the British government's communalist-based policies,

which he saw as a 'disruptive and degrading force' interfering with the unity of the Indian nation.³⁹ In a letter dated 1 November 1951, Nehru wrote to India's Chief Ministers:

the most dangerous development today is that of communalism and separatism ... The fact is that the partition and its consequences, while it largely pushed out Muslim communalism and sent it to Pakistan, where it flourished exceedingly, also resulted in encouraging Hindu and Sikh communalism in India and many other separatist tendencies ... This narrow-minded upsurge spread the spirit of separatism in various forms throughout the country and imperiled the national unity which it had been the aim of the Congress to build up and which it had largely succeeded in doing ... If separatist and sectarian ideas increase, they make it difficult to tackle the principle problem. If chaotic conditions exist in some parts of the country, then the energy of the nation is largely absorbed in dealing with them, and other matters, however important, become secondary. Therefore, it is of primary importance to scotch and try to put an end to these communal and separatist tendencies in order to go ahead with the primary problem of India's economic ills.⁴⁰

For the Assam region, Partition physically separated it from India, now situated precariously between East Pakistan and Burma and connected with the remainder of the country by a narrow strip of land known as the Siliguri Corridor. With the region's geographic isolation combined with the rising political movements around local identities, the government's concerns for separatist tendencies among the region's inhabitants, especially the tribal communities, became central to its North-East frontier policy. Moreover, Nehru reversed the colonial government's *laissez-faire* approach to the tribal areas, which remained chronically underdeveloped as a result of British negligence. The Indian government now sought to extend and increase the state's administrative control over the region.

In 1947, the Ministry of External Affairs introduced a four-year plan to gradually extend government authority into the Naga Hills tribal area which 'has remained hitherto practically unadministered ... it did not form a part of the province of Assam and, what is more important, was never remunerative because taxes were never levied there.'⁴¹ With the government concerned with the potential for 'the despatch of punitive expeditions which are always expensive' into the region, the extension of administrative control was necessary to halt 'local warfare in this area ... improve their standards of living (now barbarously low) and increase the productiveness of land ... Finally, the Govt. of Burma have already intimated their intention to extend administration to the tribal areas on their side of the border which makes it necessary for us to take similar action to ensure that the boundary between India and Burma contains no No-man's land of jungle tribes which may be a source of constant trouble to both.'⁴² The Ministry added that 'with the transfer of power, the question of securing our eastern Frontier where China

has open designs and in which Burma is not disinterested, is a matter of considerable moment.⁴³ A 1947 note for the Indian Cabinet further stated:

The earliest contacts with the tribes were established with a view to preventing the incessant raiding of the plains in which the tribesmen indulged, an object which was finally secured. Thereafter a policy of non-intervention was followed ... It is against that background, of virgin territory with no communications beyond very rough foot-paths and inhabited by tribesmen to whom the modern world is almost unknown, that the plan under consideration requires to be placed ... it is, rather, a plan for the gradual extension into the Tribal Areas of a light form of administration coupled with beneficent activities which, it is hoped will enable the tribes inhabiting these Areas to develop along their own lines and gradually raise their status to something comparable to that in other parts of India, a natural and inevitable sequence to the establishment of factual control.⁴⁴

In April 1948, the central government approved expenditures for a broader five-year plan to extend administrative control and increase development in the North-East frontier's tribal areas.⁴⁵ The Indian government, however, maintained the Inner Line Regulation limiting access to outsiders as a measure to protect the culture of the hill tribes and avoid a potential point of conflict on the frontier. Nehru explained in an October 1952 letter, 'The first problem we have to face there is to inspire them with confidence and to make them feel at one with India ... This can only be done by allowing them to retain their own cultural traits and habits and leaving them to develop along their own lines without any compulsion from outside ... Any conception that India is ruling them and that they are ruled, or that the customs and habits with which they are unfamiliar are going to be imposed upon them, will alienate them and make our frontier problems more difficult.'⁴⁶

A number of leaders among the hill tribes, however, resented this new encroachment of the state, fearing it would threaten their local cultural and political autonomy. In the years leading to independence, there was a push for increased political representation for the hill tribes with political protections in place, including cessations of immigration into their territory.⁴⁷ In June 1946, for instance, the Naga National Council (NNC) submitted a four-point memorandum to a British Cabinet Mission advocating for political autonomy within an independent India.⁴⁸ Unsatisfied with Nehru's response to these conditions, the NNC submitted a request directly to the Viceroy of India Lord Mountbatten to establish a Naga interim government for ten years. After ten years, the Naga would have the right to choose their own government and political status. This request did not go anywhere but eventually led to the the June 1947 Hydari Agreement, signed between the first Governor of Assam Akbar Hydari and representatives of various Naga hill tribes in order to protect tribal

autonomy. In 1946, the Mizo Union also was formed to advocate for the political rights of the Mizo people and for the Lushai Hills to join the state of Assam, with the organization consisting of 20,000 members by the following year.⁴⁹

These agreements and advocacy efforts did little to resolve the conflict between the Indian center and the northeastern periphery. The Indian government continued the economic exploitation of the region's many resources. This included removing many local barriers to outsiders to invest in the region's economy and acquire resource rights to export Assam's raw materials to other parts of the country for processing and manufacturing, often with few links to the local economy in Assam. For the tribal areas, the Indian government also often framed its interactions with the hill tribes through a security lens seeing the region's inhabitants as susceptible to separatist tendencies.⁵⁰ In a 30 October 1952 letter, Nehru explained:

Another fact to be remembered is that all these tribes and other people in these areas were almost completely cut off from the rest of India during British rule ... Thus they never experienced a sensation of being in a country called India and they were hardly influenced by the struggle for freedom or other movements in India. Their chief experience of outsiders was that of British officers and Christian missionaries who generally tried to make them anti-Indian. As Indian independence gradually approached and it became obvious that British rule was coming to an end in India, some of these British officers and Christian missionaries induced them to think in terms of independence. This had some effect on some sections of the Nagas.⁵¹

The Assam Rifles after Indian independence

While the end of World War II, the Assam Rifles initially reverted to their pre-war defensive role. Following India's independence, the Assam Rifles gradually adopted a new role as an offensive, counterinsurgency force. Government officials saw the potential of the Assam Rifles due to its participation in World War II as a guerilla force and relied on it to support the Indian government's new North-East frontier policy and extension of civil administration. There was a growing recognition among government officials of the need for an alternative counterinsurgency force to handle internal security issues given the reduction in military resources on the North-East frontier and concerns that local inhabitants would perceive military deployments as illegitimate intrusions into their territory. On 14 June 1947, Nehru wrote a telegram to Governor Hydari stating:

General Staff consider it highly improbable that there will be any external threat to north east frontier during next 10 years. As regards internal security, military resources are being reduced and Army will not be able to assist civil power to

the extent to which provincial governments have hitherto been accustomed. General Staff therefore favour increase in strength of civil forces available to provincial Government and would be prepared to assist in arming them. But there could be no question of such forces forming part of regular Army.⁵²

Governor Hydari shortly replied,

I do not intend Assam Rifles forming part of regular Army . . . I have noted view of General Staff regarding improbability of external threat during next 10 years but consider never the less that it would be advantageous to the Central Government and the regular Army to have on its eastern frontier such trained auxiliaries possessing knowledge of country and its language. The Assam Rifles would be exclusively under the Central Government with primary role in tribal areas and only if important occasion arises for the Governor at the request of provincial Government to call up units of this force in aid of the civil power.⁵³

In preparation for the Assam Rifles' new role, the government administratively separated it from the police force under Assam's Home Department and created the position of Inspector General of the Assam Rifles as head of the independent force under the Ministry of External Affairs, and, beginning in 1948, deputed an Army officer to fill this role.⁵⁴

In the Ministry of External Affairs 1947 plans to introduce a regular administrative structure into the Naga Hills, it recognized the necessity of the Assam Rifles, arguing, 'The presence of the administrative staff and of the Assam Rifles will itself be conducive to a decrease in lawless activity of every kind, and this after all is the first essential.'⁵⁵ Intelligence reports at the time noted, 'The relationship between the personnel of the Assam Rifles and the tribesmen continued to be excellent everywhere.'⁵⁶ This assessment would later prove to be overly optimistic as a number of tribal communities protested the Assam Rifles' counterinsurgency operations and resulting abuses against civilians, especially after implementation of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act of 1958.⁵⁷ In the Naga Hills, the use of the Assam Rifles would mirror efforts elsewhere in the region – 'the Assam Rifles have penetrated into what was hitherto almost unknown territory and expensive schemes of development are being introduced in the neighbouring areas. To keep pace with these developments, the [Local Administration] have now put forth a modest proposal to confer the benefits of peace and medical attention on the warlike Nagas.'⁵⁸

With the growing worry over communist influence in the region and the resulting challenge to state authority, the Assam Rifles' were deployed to counter this internal threat in the North-East. The Assam Rifles' first anti-communist operation was in March 1950 in Kamrup District, leading to the arrests of several prominent leaders of the communist unrest. This was followed up with anti-communist patrols, raids on hide-outs, and searches for communist leaders in Manipur and Lushai Hills. In May 1950, two platoons launched a punitive campaign against villages in the Naga Hills in response to

raids. During a 6 July 1950 conversation between the Chief Commissioner of Manipur and Secretary of the Ministry of States V.P. Menon, it was agreed that 'although the Assam Rifles should not be used for normal day-to-day duties connected with law and order, the communist menace in Manipur was in the nature of an emergency and the Assam Rifles should be available for apprehending communists, carrying out raids and patrolling the communist-affected areas.'⁵⁹ In the following year, with an increased concern for communist influence following China's invasion of Tibet, the Assam Rifles were likewise deployed to Tripura to counter communist efforts among the tribal population. These operations lasted a period of eight months with 20 armed encounters with communist insurgents. In justifying the use of the Assam Rifles for anti-communist operations, the Governor of Assam argued, 'The geography of Tripura, with its poor communications, necessitates the most careful handling of its hill people, as, once trouble starts, the Administration will experience the very greatest difficulty in bringing the situation back under control. It is necessary, therefore, to move in these matters with the utmost caution.'⁶⁰

The North and North-Eastern Border Defence Committee, also known as the Himmatsinhji Committee after its chairman Deputy Defense Minister Major General Kumar Himmatsinhji, was appointed 1 December 1950 to survey various security challenges facing India, particularly with the emerging threat from the expansion of Chinese military control in Tibet and the ongoing problems with Pakistan. Its first report focusing on the North-East frontier, released in 1951, argued that it was necessary to integrate tribal populations within India and extend the writ of the state within border regions largely absent of any civil administrative structures or security forces. This was a means of dissuading the expansion of Chinese influence into India. In regard to the role of the Assam Rifles, the Committee stated:

In our opinion, the Assam Rifles are not in a position to defend the frontier against mass aggression and the word "Security" instead of "Defence" would better define their duty ... It is our opinion that both an expansion and a concentration and redeployment of the Assam Rifles are necessary for more effective occupation of the border area. The Force has built up a reputation among the tribesmen and is acceptable to them; and we consider that it should enlarge its contacts with the people by constant and extensive patrolling and support the civil administration by its presence.⁶¹

Following the submission of this report, the Assam government, under direction from the central government, took several actions with the Assam Rifles in line with the Committee's recommendations. It established new Assam Rifles' checkpoints in the Siang Valley along the McMahon Line. The Assam Rifles also marched into Tawang tract to support a new civil administration in this border area that had historically seen the presence of Tibetans, including tax officials of the Tibetan government. This action was meant to

push Tibetans from the area which could serve as an excuse for a Chinese invasion and exert Indian control over the region and its tribal communities. As reported in June 1956 by the Advisor for Tribal Affairs for the North-East Frontier Agency which bordered Assam to the north, the new administration in Tawang faced a number of challenges, including the majority of the officials not being familiar with the local culture and requiring interpreters to speak to the local population, material influence from China, and continued underdevelopment of the region.⁶²

During such operations, the Assam Rifles continued to clash with local hill tribesmen angry over perceived government intrusion into their territory. In October 1953 at Achingmori, for example, Tagin tribesmen attacked the encampment of an Assam Rifles platoon, killing most of its members and taking a handful of hostages. In response, a three-column force of the Assam Rifles with support of the Indian air force marched into the region for Operation Mop, a punitive campaign against the Tagin tribes and recovery of the hostages. Under the authority of Assam's political administration, the government directed the force to practice restraint and avoid widespread abuses against the tribal population, including avoiding the practice of burning villages so often utilized by the British, and sought to contain this operation within the political goals of India's North-East frontier policy.

The Assam Rifles as a counterinsurgency force

By late 1954, generalized unrest escalated into an anti-state insurgency in the Naga Hills. In their new role as a security, rather than defensive, force in the region, the Assam Rifles launched counterinsurgency operations that involved raids on insurgent hide-outs; pitched battles with insurgents that led to the burning of two villages; political outreach efforts to area villages leading to several insurgents surrendering and many others handed over by local tribal communities; and consistent patrolling in the region to flush out insurgents in the surrounding hills of Tuensang. As the Naga insurgency escalated over the next year, the Indian government deployed army units to the area and in March 1956 placed counterinsurgency operations under military command, including the Assam Rifles. In the same month, Naga insurgents led by Angami Zapu Phizo established a 'Naga Federal Government' with its own army, the Naga Home Guards, after which insurgent activity increased precipitously, including raids on tea villages and government buildings as well as violence against civilians in local villages.

To increase offensive capabilities, the government raised additional battalions with increased manpower within the Assam Rifles to shoulder increased responsibility for counterinsurgency operations, especially with the regular army occupied in Kashmir and other regions of India. In January 1959, the government established a centralized Training Center to increase the

capacity and efficiency of the force, whereas previously each individual battalion was responsible for its own training. The Indian government also declared the Naga Hills and Tuensang Area to be a 'disturbed area' under the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958. Among other rights, this law authorized officers and non-commissioned officers of the military, as well as the Assam Rifles, to use deadly force 'if he is of opinion it is necessary so to do for the maintenance of public order' as well as arrest individuals and search any premises for the purposes of arrest without a warrant. The Act further provided them protection from any prosecution due to actions authorized under this law.⁶³ In 1962, the Assam Rifles Act was also amended to empower members of the force to perform police duties. This was due to the fact that in the frontier areas in which it operated 'there are no regular police forces, so that it falls on the members of the Assam Rifles to search, arrest or take into custody persons suspected of having committed cognizable offenses.'⁶⁴ The extension of police powers to Assam Rifles was part of their counterinsurgency duties rather than to be used in routine matters of law and order. According to an October 1960 note from the Chief Commissioner of Manipur to the Ministry of External Affairs, the Assam Rifles' police powers 'would not be used for investigation of crime but were necessary for searching and arresting hostile Nagas.'⁶⁵

On 1 July 1963, there was a general amnesty for Nagas that came into effect as part of a ceasefire in the region. Its purpose was 'to give the villages an opportunity to persuade underground elements to give up their anti-state and anti-social activities, surrender and take advantage of the rehabilitation facilities offered under the amnesty.'⁶⁶ While 164 Naga insurgents surrendered between July 1 and 20 August 1963, the offer of amnesty, according to a secret note by the Home Ministry, was not favorably received by the Naga forces with insurgent attacks continuing.⁶⁷ As a further measure to resolve the violence, the state of Nagaland was created in December 1963, though a number of insurgents continued their struggle. On 1 August 1965, authority over the Assam Rifles, along with NEFA, was transferred from the Ministry of External Affairs to the Ministry of Home Affairs. In 1967, the Assam Rifles, in conjunction with the military, began interdiction efforts to stop the smuggling of weapons across the border from Burma, East Pakistan, and China into India to aid Naga rebels. The Assam Rifles also kept up offensive operations to maintain pressure on the insurgents and in 1971 with regular military units occupied with the war in East Pakistan, responsibility for counter-insurgency operations lay almost entirely with the Assam Rifles. Violence was drastically reduced following the inauguration of the Shillong Peace Accord of 1975.

In early 1966, the Mizo National Front also launched an insurgency against the government through a series of raids against administrative centers in Mizoram and captured several police stations and paramilitary outposts in a quest to gain independence. On 2 March 1966, the Assam government

declared the Mizo area a 'disturbed area' under the Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Powers Act, 1958. The army quickly deployed forces into Mizoram with support from the Assam Rifles. The battalions of the Assam Rifles were given sectors of responsibility within which they conducted patrols, ambushes, and raids against insurgent hide-outs. They also played a leading role in 'combing and patrolling operations' during which insurgents were chased out of areas with a 20-kilometer radius.⁶⁸ In addition to offensive counterinsurgency operations, the Assam Rifles also engaged in outreach and reconciliation efforts with locals normally carried out by the civil administration: 'demanding, drawing, and issuing rations; accounting for civil supplies and maintaining other administrative records; hygiene in the villages; running of schools; control of security passes; and a number of other chores unconnected with military operations.'⁶⁹ Violence picked up in Mizoram in 1974 with a final peace accord signed by MNF in 1986 which the government subsequently forming Mizoram as a separate state.

Conclusion

In ensuing decades, various insurgencies continued to break out throughout India's northeastern region, including continued problems with a faction of the Naga National Council that rebranded itself the National Socialist Council of Nagaland and advocated for Naga independence; a separatist insurgency among the Bodo people that lasted into the early 2000 s; and violent anti-immigrant movements in Assam and Tripura.⁷⁰ Throughout this period, the Assam Rifles remained engaged in counterinsurgency operations. This included deployments outside of northeastern India, including participation in counterinsurgency operations in Jammu and Kashmir. In 2006, the Assam Rifles Act legally enshrined the force's counterinsurgency role reflecting its actions over the previous 60 years. The 2006 law stated, 'There shall be an armed force of the Union called the Assam Rifles for ensuring the security of the borders of India, to carry out counter insurgency operations in the specified areas and to act in aid of civil authorities for the maintenance of law and order and the matters connected therewith.'⁷¹

This analysis helps to demonstrate two trends within India. The first is an example of how post-colonial states co-opt and change colonial institutions following independence in order to reflect new policies. The British colonial government established the Assam Rifles as a defensive force to provide protection against tribal raids of tea estates along the North-East frontier. As demonstrated through archival sources, it was not meant to be an offensive force that conducted punitive expeditions in place of the military. However, following independence, the Indian government had limited the military's domestic operations due to issues of capacity and concerns with legitimacy among tribal communities. The government, therefore, shifted the

role of the Assam Rifles to support India's new North-East frontier policy to extend administrative control into the tribal periphery and serve as an offensive counterinsurgency force. Secondly, this analysis demonstrates the role of coercive force by paramilitary groups as a key part of the state-making process, especially in regard to extending the administrative control of post-colonial states into tribal peripheries left largely ungoverned by colonial authorities.

Notes

1. Palit, *Sentinels of the North-East*, 1984; and Shakespear, *History of the Assam Rifles*, 1929.
2. British India's northeastern frontier of Assam is now divided between seven different Indian states: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura.
3. Palit, *Sentinels of the North-East*, 1984, 5.
4. Naseemullah and Staniland, "Indirect Rule and Varieties of Governance," 2016; Pathak, "Tribal Politics in the Assam: 1933–1947," 2010; and Tripodi, *Edge of Empire*, 2011.
5. Akins, "Tribal Militias and Political Legitimacy in British India and Pakistan," 2019; and Khan, "Pukhtun Ethnic Nationalism: From Separatism to Integrationism," 2010.
6. The Rashtriya Rifles, like the Assam Rifles, are used in counterinsurgency operations. However, the Rashtriya Rifles is not a paramilitary organization. It is a specialized military unit under military command and the authority of the Ministry of Defense.
7. Ahram, *Proxy Warriors*, 2011; Biberman, *Gambling with Violence*, 2019; Carey, Mitchell, and Lowe, "States, the Security Sector, and the Monopoly of Violence," 2013; French, *The British Way in Counter-Insurgency, 1945–1967*, 2011; Scheipers, "Irregular Auxiliaries after 1945," 2017; and Schneckener, "Militias and the Politics of Legitimacy," 2017.
8. Mathur, "The State and the Use of Coercive Power in India," 1992; and Routray, "India's internal wars," 2013.
9. Lower Assam was annexed in 1826 and Upper Assam annexed in 1838.
10. Allen, *Census of India*, 1902, 33.
11. Pisharoty, *Assam*, 2019.
12. Ziipao, "Roads, tribes, and identity in Northeast India," 2020.
13. Das, "Understanding Margins, State Power, Space and Territoriality in the Naga Hills," 2014.
14. Gott, *Britain's Empire*, 2011, 330.
15. Baruah, *India against itself*, 1999; and Eaton, "Conversion to Christianity among the Nagas, 1876–1971," 1984.
16. "Policy to be Pursued in Dealing with Trans-Frontier Naga Tribes," 1886, 14.
17. Shakespear, *History of the Assam Rifles*, 1929, 8.
18. *Ibid.*, 49, 67–68.
19. *Ibid.*, 246.
20. *Ibid.*, 142, 188–189; Palit *Sentinels of the North-East*, 1984, 98.

21. "Mr. McCabe's Report on the Outbreak Amongst the Eastern Lushai Tribes in March 1892," 1892, 4.
22. "Kohima affairs. Murder of Mr. G.H. Damant, Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills. Punitive Expedition against the Nagas," 1880.
23. Shakespear, *History of the Assam Rifles*, 1929, 72.
24. Shakespear, *History of Upper Assam, Upper Burma and North-Eastern Frontier*, 1914, 250.
25. Guite, "Colonial violence and its "Small Wars,"" 2019; and "Report on the operations undertaken in connection with the disturbances on the Assam-Burma Frontier during the season 1917-18," 1919.
26. Banerjea, *Central Police Organisations, Part 2*, 2005, 185.
27. "Instructions of Provincial Government For the Maintenance of Law and Order During the Threatened Railway Strike," 1946, 84; and Palit, *Sentinels of the North-East*, 1984, 85.
28. Palit, *Sentinels of the North-East*, 84-85; Shakespear, *History of the Assam Rifles*, 1929, 251-2.
29. Palit, *Sentinels of the North-East*, 1984, 101.
30. Kelly, *History of the Second World War*, 1958, 192.
31. Palit, *Sentinels of the North-East*, 1984, 112.
32. *Ibid.*, 115-64; Pau, "Behind the enemy line: British-led guerilla operations in the Indo-Burma frontier during the Second World War," 2019.
33. Palit, *Sentinels of the North-East*, 1984, 166.
34. "A brief general report on the North East Frontier Agency for the period from 23 October 1943 to 30 June 1944," 1944, 5.
35. *Ibid.*, 4-5.
36. Palit, *Sentinels of the North-East*, 1984, 166-167.
37. Menon, *The Story of the Integration of Indian States*, 1956.
38. Mishtry, "A Theoretical and Empirical Assessment of India as an Emerging World Power," 2004; Parekh, "Nehru and the Philosophy of India," 1991; Thomas, *Indian Security Policy*, 1986.
39. Khosla, *Letters for a Nation*, 2014, 53.
40. *Ibid.*, 54-55.
41. "Extension of regular administration to the Naga Hills Tribal Area," 1947, 1, 6.
42. *Ibid.*, 6-7.
43. *Ibid.*, 27.
44. "Summary for Cabinet: Development of the North East Tribal Areas," 1947, 2-3.
45. "Extension of regular administration to the Naga Hills Tribal Area," 1947, 76.
46. Khosla, *Letters for a Nation*, 59.
47. Sharma, *Empire's Garden*, 2011, 221-2.
48. Lintner, *Great Game East*, 2016, 61.
49. "Representation from association and individuals re: tribal excluded and partias excluded Areas," 1947, 41.
50. Patgiri and Hazarika, "Locating Northeast in India's Neighbourhood Policy," 2016.
51. Khosla, *Letters for a Nation*, 2014, 57-58.
52. Palit, *Sentinels of the North-East*, 1984, 171.
53. *Ibid.*
54. In 1979, the position of Inspector General was upgraded to Director-General, Assam Rifles and occupied by a Lieutenant General from the army.
55. "Extension of regular administration to the Naga Hills Tribal Area," 1947, 22.

56. "Annual Report on the Assam Tribal Areas for the year ending the 30 June 1947," 1947, 6.
57. Ningthouja, "Violence and Terror Under AFSPA 1958," 55–68.
58. "Extension of regular administration to the Naga Hills Tribal Area," 1947, 6.
59. "Use of Assam Rifles to deal with communists in Manipur," 1950, 4.
60. "Communists menace in Tripura and their interference with the construction of the Agartala-Assam Road," 1951, 7.
61. Palit, *Sentinels of the North-East*, 1984, 190.
62. "Dr. Elwin notes on his visit to Bomdila and Tawang," 1956.
63. "The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Regulation, 1958, Appendix A," 1958, 1–2.
64. "Police powers to the Assam Rifles personnel under the Assam Rifles Act, 1941," 1961, 7.
65. *Ibid.*, 15.
66. "Amnesty declared for Naga Hostiles," 1963, 1.
67. *Ibid.*, 1–2, 15.
68. Palit, *Sentinels of the North-East*, 1984, 268–9.
69. *Ibid.*, 309.
70. Cline, "The Insurgency Environment in Northeast India," 2006.
71. The Assam Rifles Act, 2006, 4.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributor

Harrison Akins received his PhD in political science, with concentrations in international relations and public policy, from the University of Tennessee. He is formerly an Ibn Khaldun Chair Research Fellow at American University's School of International Service. His research interests include intra-state conflict, terrorism, South Asian politics, and U.S. foreign policy.

Bibliography

- "Mr. McCabe's Report on the Outbreak Amongst the Eastern Lushai Tribes in March 1892." *File No. Pros. Nos. 42-46*. Foreign Department, Government of India, December 1892. National Archives of India, PR_000005003429.
- Ahram, Ariel I. *Proxy Warriors: The Rise and Fall of State-Sponsored Militias*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011.
- Akins, Harrison. "Tribal Militias and Political Legitimacy in British India and Pakistan." *Asian Security* (2019): 1–19. doi:[10.1080/14799855.2019.1672662](https://doi.org/10.1080/14799855.2019.1672662).
- Allen, B.C. *Census of India, 1901. Volume IV. Assam. Part 1. Report*. Shillong: Assam Secretariat Printing Office, 1902.
- "Amnesty Declared for Naga Hostiles." *File No. Nil/102(5)/63*. Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, 1963. National Archives of India, PR_000004008707.
- "Annual Report on the Assam Tribal Areas for the Year Ending the 30th June 1947." *File No. 84-NRF/47*. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 1947. National Archives of India, PR_000005003233.

- "The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Regulation, 1958, Appendix A." *File No. 1 (29)/NEFA/59*. Department of External Affairs, Government of India, 1958. National Archives of India, PR_000004008699.
- The Assam Rifles Act. 2006. Act No. 47 of 2006, November 3, 2006. https://indiacode.nic.in/handle/123456789/2037?view_type=browse&sam_handle=123456789/1362
- Banerjea, D. *Central Police Organisations, Part 2*. Kolkata: Allied Publishers, 2005.
- Baruah, Sanjib. *India against Itself: Assam and the Politics of Nationality*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999.
- Biberman, Yelena. *Gambling with Violence: State Outsourcing of Violence in Pakistan and India*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- "A Brief General Report on the North East Frontier Agency for the Period from October 23rd 1943 to June 30th 1944." *File No. 243-C.A./44*. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 1944. National Archives of India, PR_000005003221.
- Carey, Sabine C., Neil J. Mitchell, and Will Lowe. "States, the Security Sector, and the Monopoly of Violence: A New Database on Pro-Government Militias." *Journal of Peace Research* 50, no. 2 (2013): 249–258. doi:10.1177/0022343312464881.
- Cline, Lawrence E. "The Insurgency Environment in Northeast India." *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 17, no. 2 (2006): 126–147. doi:10.1080/09592310600562894.
- "Communists Menace in Tripura and Their Interference with the Construction of the Agartala-Assam Road." *File No. 12 (1)-P/51*. Ministry of States, Government of India, 1951. National Archives of India, PR_000005014107.
- Das, Debojyoti. "Understanding Margins, State Power, Space and Territoriality in the Naga Hills." *Journal of Borderland Studies* 29, no. 1 (2014): 63–80. doi:10.1080/08865655.2014.892693.
- "Dr. Elwin Notes on His Visit to Bomdila and Tawang." *File No. 4 (5)-NEFA/56*. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 1956. National Archives of India, PR_000005003519.
- Eaton, Richard M. "Conversion to Christianity among the Nagas, 1876-1971." *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 21, no. 1 (1984): 1–44. doi:10.1177/001946468402100101.
- "Extension of Regular Administration to the Naga Hills Tribal Area." *File No. 71-NEF/47*. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 1947. National Archives of India, PR_000005003232.
- French, David. *The British Way in Counter-Insurgency, 1945–1967*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Gott, Richard. *Britain's Empire: Resistance, Repression and Revolt*. London: Verso, 2011.
- Guite, Jangkhomang. "Colonial Violence and Its 'Small Wars': Fighting the Kuki 'Guerillas' during the Great War in Northeast India, 1917-1919." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 30, no. 2 (2019): 447–478. doi:10.1080/09592318.2018.1546369.
- "Instructions of Provincial Government for the Maintenance of Law and Order during the Threatened Railway Strike." *File No. HOME_POLITICAL_I_1946_NA_F-21-19*. Home Department, Government of India, 1946. National Archives of India, PR_000003017390.
- "Issue of Directions to the Governor of Assam to Discharge All Functions in regard to the Administration of the Tribal Areas in the Province of Assam." *File No. 546-X*. Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, 1935. National Archives of India, PR_000005003205.
- Kelly, Major, and General S. Wooburn. *History of the Second World War, the War against Japan Volume II*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1958.

- Khan, Adeel. "Pukhtun Ethnic Nationalism: From Separatism to Integrationism." *Asian Ethnicity* 4, no. 1 (2010): 67–83. doi:[10.1080/14631360301650](https://doi.org/10.1080/14631360301650).
- Khosla, Madhav, ed. *Letters for a Nation: From Jawaharlal Nehru to His Chief Ministers, 1947-1963*. Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2014.
- "Kohima Affairs. Murder of Mr. G.H. Damant, Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills. Punitive Expedition against the Nagas." *File No. 249/61*. Foreign Department, Government of India, February 1880. National Archives of India, PR_000004008109.
- Lintner, Bertil. *Great Game East: India, China, and the Struggle for Asia's Most Volatile Frontier*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015.
- Mathur, Kuldeep. "The State and the Use of Coercive Power in India." *Asian Survey* 32, no. 4 (1992): 337–349. doi:[10.2307/2645150](https://doi.org/10.2307/2645150).
- Menon, V.P. *The Story of the Integration of Indian States*. New York: Macmillan, 1956.
- Mishtry, Dinshaw. "A Theoretical and Empirical Assessment of India as an Emerging World Power." *India Review* 3, no. 1 (2004): 64–87. doi:[10.1080/14736480490443003](https://doi.org/10.1080/14736480490443003).
- Naseemullah, Adnan, and Paul Staniland. "Indirect Rule and Varieties of Governance." *Governance* 29, no. 1 (2016): 13–30. doi:[10.1111/gove.12129](https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12129).
- Ningthouja, Malem. "Violence and Terror under AFSPA 1958 and the People's Movement against It." In *Northeast India: A Reader*, edited by Bhagat Oinam and Dhiren A. Sadokpam, 50–64. Abingdon: Routledge, 2018.
- Palit, D.K. *Sentinels of the North-East: The Assam Rifles*. New Delhi: Palit & Palit, 1984.
- Parekh, Bhikhu. "Nehru and the Philosophy of India." *Economic and Political Weekly* 26, no. 1/2 (1991): 35–48.
- Patgiri, Rubul, and Objia Borah Hazarika. "Locating Northeast in India's Neighbourhood Policy: Transnational Solutions to the Problems of a Periphery." *India Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (2016): 235–249. doi:[10.1177/0974928416654353](https://doi.org/10.1177/0974928416654353).
- Pathak, Suryasikha. 2010. "Tribal Politics in the Assam: 1933-1947," *Economic and Political Weekly*, March 6.
- Pau, Pum Khan. "Behind the Enemy Line: British-led Guerilla Operations in the Indo-Burma Frontier during the Second World War." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 30, no. 2 (2019): 307–334. doi:[10.1080/09592318.2018.1546368](https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2018.1546368).
- Pisharoty, Sangeeta Barooah. *Assam: The Accord, The Discord*. Gurgaon: Penguin Random House India, 2019.
- "Police Powers to the Assam Rifles Personnel under the Assam Rifles Act, 1941." *File No. 1 (29)NEFA/59*. Department of External Affairs, Government of India, April 1961. National Archives of India, PR_000004008699.
- "Policy to Be Pursued in Dealing with Trans-frontier Naga Tribes." *File No. 14-25*. Foreign Department, Government of India, March 1886. National Archives of India, PR_000004008149.
- "Report on the Operations Undertaken in Connection with the Disturbances on the Assam-Burma Frontier during the Season 1917-18." *File No. Proceedings Nos. 23-30*. Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, June 1919. National Archives of India, PR_000005001784.
- "Representation from Association and Individuals Re: Tribal Excluded and Partias Excluded Areas." *File No. CA27/COM/47*. Constituent Assembly, Government of India, 1947. National Archives of India, PR_000004009721.
- Routray, Bibhu Prasad. "India's Internal Wars: Counterinsurgency Role of Central Police Forces." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 24, no. 4 (2013): 648–668. doi:[10.1080/09592318.2013.857937](https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2013.857937).
- Scheipers, Sibylle. "Irregular Auxiliaries after 1945." *International History Review* 39, no. 1 (2017): 14–29. doi:[10.1080/07075332.2016.1179206](https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2016.1179206).

- Schneckener, Ulrich. "Militias and the Politics of Legitimacy." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 28, no. 4–5 (2017): 799–816. doi:[10.1080/09592318.2017.1322334](https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2017.1322334).
- Shakespeare, L.W. *History of Upper Assam, Upper Burmah and North-Eastern Frontier*. London: Macmilland and Co, 1914.
- Shakespeare, L.W. *History of the Assam Rifles*. London: Macmillan and Co, 1929.
- Sharma, Jayeeta. *Empire's Garden: Assam and the Making of India*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011.
- "Summary for Cabinet: Development of the North East Tribal Areas." *File No. 15 (11)-NEF/47*. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 1947. National Archives of India, PR_000005003230.
- Thomas, R.G.C. *Indian Security Policy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986.
- Tripodi, Christian. *Edge of Empire: The British Political Officer and Tribal Administration on the North-West Frontier, 1877–1947*. London: Routledge, 2011.
- "Use of Assam Rifles to Deal with Communists in Manipur." *File No. 10 (15)-P/50*. Ministry of States, Government of India, 1950. National Archives of India, PR_000005014101.
- Ziipao, Raile Rocky. "Roads, Tribes, and Identity in Northeast India." *Asian Ethnicity* 21, no. 1 (2020): 1–21. doi:[10.1080/14631369.2018.1495058](https://doi.org/10.1080/14631369.2018.1495058).