

## ABSTRACT

This study examines the complex relationship between identity politics and insurgency in Assam, a state that has long been at the heart of Northeast India's political turbulence. It explores how the questions of belonging, recognition, and cultural survival have repeatedly shaped movements that extend far beyond struggles over law and order. Assam's trajectory, deeply influenced by colonial policies of migration and classification, was further complicated after independence when attempts at homogenisation, like the Official Language Act of 1960, created new layers of alienation among diverse communities, and this unresolved tension gradually hardened into demands for autonomy, statehood, or even sovereignty. From the Assam Movement of 1979–1985, which culminated in the Assam Accord yet failed to heal deeper grievances, to the rise of insurgent organisations such as the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), identity has served both as a rallying point and a fault line, enabling mobilisation while also creating divisions that fragmented the very idea of an “Assamese” nationality.

The research argues that insurgency in Assam is not merely the product of underdevelopment or centre–periphery tensions but a political language of exclusion, one that arises when groups feel that their histories, cultures, and voices are being erased or ignored, and thus insurgency becomes both a protest against the state and a contest among communities within Assam itself. It draws on historical analysis, field interviews, archival records, and discourse analysis, while engaging with theories of recognition, constructivism, and postcolonial state formation to understand how identity-based exclusion has fuelled conflict. Moreover, it reviews state responses, from peace accords to counterinsurgency measures and shows how these have only partially succeeded in

addressing grievances, since the persistence of migration debates, NRC-CAA controversies, and competing ethnic claims keeps the landscape unsettled.

The study not only fills a gap in scholarship but also highlights the urgent need for inclusive governance, regional autonomy, and democratic recognition, arguing that without addressing the fundamental issues of identity and belonging, peace in Assam will remain fragile and incomplete.