



Locating development trajectories in North-Eastern States of India

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Abstract

At the eve of independence, it was a daunting task before Nehru to frame a suitable policy of governance for the North-Eastern states hitherto separated from the colonial administrative mainstream. With the continuous pursuance of protective and proactive role by the government of India, the growth scenario of the North-Eastern states has turned out to be near satisfactory. The per-capita income has been on the rise at a moderate rate, income inequality and inter-states disparities are also declining. However, the worrying factor is that growth is discernible where government intervenes as principal economic actor. Size of labour market has failed to respond positively due to absence of credible manufacturing sector, limited volume of trade and commerce, transport and communication and banking and insurance. To add further, most of the North-Eastern states have demonstrated very poor fiscal condition despite having enhancing central assistances over time. It is found that the 'Look East' policy will become the engine of growth and transform the economy North East is illusive in nature and devoid of economic rationale. Alternatively, forging a durable relationship with Bangladesh and bringing time bound solution to immigration problem and water disputes, the road, railways and water transport system through Bangladesh can become much more cost effective and beneficial for the development of economy and to create employment opportunities for North-Eastern states.

Keywords: Economic Growth; North-Eastern States; Income Equality; Labour Market; Fiscal Condition; Look East Policy

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1. Introduction

The eastern frontiers of North-East of India are connected to the East of the mainland India via a narrow corridor called 'chicken's neck' which is squeezed between Nepal and Bangladesh. 98 per cent of the North-Eastern region's border is bound by India's international neighbours, namely China in North, Bangladesh in South-West, Bhutan in North-West and Myanmar in East. This makes this region strategically very important for the country (NEDFi Databank).



Figure 1. North Eastern States of India (Source: National Atlas & Thematic Mapping Organisation, Department of Science & Technology, Government of India [url: <http://www.natmo.gov.in/>])

According to Census of India, 2011 the population of the North-Eastern region of India stands at 45.48 million and accounts for 7.9 per cent total land space of the country. It consists of eight States, namely Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim¹ and Tripura (ibid.). Among these eight States, four - specifically Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Arunachal Pradesh - have tribal population² in majority. However, many scholars find it difficult to consider the region as a compact unit and be termed as North-East (Misra, 2000; Hussain, 2004).

The article attempts to highlight the major development-related issues concerning the North-Eastern states of India. The first section includes the introduction and research issues which are to be addressed in this paper. The second section includes a brief political history of the region and analyses the different strategies adopted by the Indian State to realise development. The third section, the principal part of the study, explores the pattern of growth and development that the North-Eastern states have experienced in the last three decades, and whether income inequality among the North-Eastern states has been increasing with the rise in growth (if any) over time. The study has further attempted to identify the underlying forces of the growth for all the North-Eastern states. In other words, which sectors of the economy are propelling the growth in a given fiscal condition? The paper attempts to find plausible answer to the question whether the 'Look East' Policy can change the present economic scenario of the North-Eastern states? Section four strives to understand the validity of the causal relationship between economic condition and the rise in social conflicts based on identity, ethnicity and cultural specificity in the North-Eastern states of India. In concluding section, an attempt has been made to provide certain alternative measures to refurbish the development of the North East.

2. Political history and policy interventions for North-Eastern States

2.1. Political history: A synoptic view

Protracted colonial rule left behind a very hybrid and unusual territorial structure India on the eve of independence in 1947. The country had to experience partition, communal riots, and also deal with the messy inheritance of a few self governing territories in parts of North-East India and group of princely states with their apprehensions and unwillingness to join in Indian Union (Bhambhri, 2008:52-56).

Since the colonial rule had followed a policy of 'separatism' / 'distinct and isolated administrative areas' to govern the North-Eastern areas, it became a daunting task before the Nehru-led government to frame a suitable policy of governance for these secluded North-Eastern states, which were completely separated

¹ Sikkim became an Indian State in 1975 was put under 'special category state'. Prior to that Sikkim was under the monarchic rule. In 2003, the state of Sikkim became a part of North-East Council.

² According to Census 2011, the percentage of scheduled tribe population stands at 64.2 per cent for Arunachal Pradesh, 85.2 per cent for Meghalaya, 94.5 per cent for Mizoram, 89.1 per cent for Nagaland, 32.3 per cent for Manipur, 31.1 per cent for Tripura, 20.6 per cent for Sikkim and 12.4 per cent for Assam respectively. The all India percentage stands at 8.2 per cent.

from mainstream British India. The North-East region³ (Mackenzie, 1884; Guha, 1977:73) is inhabited by people having diverse ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious and geographical affiliations, often contentious with extreme diversity. As observed by B. G. Verghese (2004: 208), the North-East region is 'another India, the most diverse part of a most diverse country, very different, relatively little known and certainly not too well understood, once a coy but now turbulent and in transition within the Indian transition.' In addition, near absence of cultural and political assimilation of the tribes of North East with mainland India and the limited impact of Indian freedom struggle on tribal dominated North-Eastern states had made the situation more complicated (Chandra et.al, 2008: 142). The separation of Burma from India in 1937 and the partition of India in 1947 had accentuated the geo-political and economic isolation of this region. In fact, due to the partition of India, the region lost its water, road and railway connectivity through erstwhile East Pakistan. The Chinese occupancy of Tibet and closure of the border with Burma further crippled the economic and political well-being of the region (Verghese, 2001).

2.2. Policy interventions for the development of North-Eastern States of India

All the North-Eastern states are treated as 'special category states'⁴ which receive substantial financial and non-financial support from the Central Government. The special category status is decided by the National Development Council (NDC) on the recommendation of the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission has laid down certain criteria⁵ for receiving the status of special category state. It is further assumed by the Planning Commission that special category states have low resource base and are not in a position to mobilise resources for their developmental needs irrespective of their per capita income. In fact, as and when new states were created by carving out of Assam, or by giving statehood to erstwhile union territories of India, except Goa all were given special category status (Bhattacharjee, 2014:48).

As special category states, all the North-Eastern states currently⁶ receive 90 per cent of their plan assistance as grants and the remaining 10 per cent as loans, while it is 30:70 for non-Special category states. Special

³ During British rule, Alexander Mackenzie in his book 'History of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal', in 1884, was possibly the first one to use the term 'North-East Frontier' to identify Assam including the adjoining hill areas and princely state of Manipur and Tripura. Between late 1890 and beginning of 1900, proposal was mooted by the British rulers to merge Assam with East Bengal and conceived the region as the 'North Eastern Province. During colonial rule, Assam was referred as the Northeastern Frontier of Bengal. rulers to merge Assam with East Bengal and conceived the region as the 'North Eastern Province. During colonial rule, Assam was referred as the Northeastern Frontier of Bengal.

⁴ Assam and Nagaland were accorded special category status in 1969, Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura in 1972 when they were created, Sikkim in 1975 and Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram in 1987.

⁵ Note submitted by the adviser, Financial Resource Division, Planning Commission dated 16.11.2006 to the member (AS) and Deputy Chairman of the Commission. Also stated in Rajya Sabha in response to unstarred Question No 1614 dated 03.12.2009. The criteria as laid down are respectively (i) hilly and difficult terrain; (ii) low population density and/ or sizeable share of tribal population; (iii) strategic location along borders with neighbouring countries; (iv) economic and infrastructural backwardness and (v) non-viable nature of state-finances.

⁶ Central assistance was provided to special category states as 90 per cent grant and 10 per cent loan from the beginning of the Fourth Five-Year Plan except Assam and Jammu and Kashmir which were covered under the pattern of central assistance of of 30 per cent grant and 70 per cent loan as in the case of non-special category states; the 10 per cent and 90 per cent formula was applied only

Category States receive preferential treatment in the distribution of normal central assistance from state plans and they would have been in a disadvantageous position had Gadgil formula⁷ applied to them. The Gadgil formula puts higher weightage to population, whereas all the North-Eastern states are having low population. From the total central assistance available for State plans, funds are earmarked for externally aided projects and special area programmes and special constitutional provisions within the state boundaries (Chakrabarti and Chakraborty, 2010: 547-559).

In addition, for the economic and social development of North-Eastern states, North-Eastern Council was constituted in 1971 by the act of parliament of India. The North-Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd. was established in 1995 and in 2001, the Union Government set up the Department of Development of North-Eastern Region and upgraded to a Ministry in 2004 as DoNER or Ministry of Development of North-Eastern Region (<http://www.mdoner.gov.in/>). This Ministry looks after the development requirement of this region and also advocates its special needs to other Ministries of Government of India as well as to policy makers. At least ten autonomous councils under sixth schedule⁸ of the Indian Constitution were created to strengthen the process of independent regional self-governance and socio-economic development. Inner-line permit (introduced by the British government during colonial era) has still been continuing so that tribal dominated region remains insulated from the in-migration of people from outside the region. The policies of industrial licensing, concessional finance and investment subsidy, growth centres, as well as freight equalization of some major industrial input have also been used to promote economic development. The National Committee on the Development of Backward Areas commissioned by Planning Commission in 1981 has identified three types of fundamental backwardness in the region viz. areas of tribal concentration, hill areas and chronically flood affected areas. The whole of the North-East has been categorized as an industrially backward zone.

Despite achievement of double-digit growth rates for North-Eastern states which is continued to be higher than national average (Chakrabarti, 2010: 103-107) consecutively for the last two decades. On the contrary, the demands for separate statehood movements or various kinds of territorial/regional autonomy

in respect of the hilly areas of Assam and Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir. This was extended to the entire area of these two states by a decision of National Development Council in October 1990 only (Bhattacharjee, op cit:56).

⁷ In 1969, D. R. Gadgil, the then Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission developed the formula for the distribution of Central assistance to states where in 60 per cent of funds will be transferred based on population, 10 per cent on the basis of per capita income only to the states below the national average, 10 per cent on the basis of tax effort in relation to per capita income, 10 per cent on account of continuing major irrigation and power schemes and rest 10 per cent on consideration of the special problems of the states.

⁸ The Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution makes special provisions for the administration of what were then 'The Tribal Areas of Assam'. In the colonial period, those areas were mostly protected enclaves, where tribal peoples could supposedly pursue their 'Customary Practices' including kinship and clan-based rules of land allocation including kinship and clan. They were called 'backward tracts', later replaced by the term 'Excluded Areas' because they were excluded from the operation of laws applicable in the rest of British controlled India. The Sixth Schedule provides for autonomous regions within those districts with elected councils with powers to regulate customary law, to administer justice in limited cases and to determine the occupation or use of land and the regulation of shifting cultivation.

movements based on identity, ethnicity, and cultural specificity coexist. In many occasions, such movements tend to be violent.

General expectation is that with the liberal presence of the Indian state, the North-Eastern region of India would be placed at high economic growth path, growth would be self-sustaining and self-regenerating in nature, industrial activities should expand, central funding should make the investment-multiplier operative, income and employment opportunities would expand and quality of life should improve. For strengthening and expanding LPG (liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation) led economic linkages of the region with the rest of India and rest of the world, North East has been identified as focal point of 'Look East' policy pursued by the government of India. In the process, North-Eastern region would get economically, politically, culturally and socially integrated with rest of India and beyond.

3. Growth and development scenarios of North-Eastern States

3.1. Comparative analysis of growth rates of North-Eastern States of India

Compound annual rate of growth (CAGR) of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) and per-capita GSDP have been calculated for North -Eastern states and Table 1 provides the growth trend of GSDP from 1980-81 to 2008-09. It is to be mentioned that 1980-81 was the base year for GSDP at constant prices for the period between 1980-81 and 1993-94, while for 1993-94 to 1998-99, 1993-94 was used as base year and for 1999 to 2004, the base year was 1999. Finally for 2004-05 and period on wards, 2004-05 was taken as base year. The overall GSDP growth rates have shown a fair degree of variation. While some states have witnessed rapid and phenomenal growth, the rest lagged behind the all-India growth rate. The notable feature is that between 1980 and 1990, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura achieved growth rate higher than the national average while Assam, Manipur and Meghalaya achieved a growth rate which was less than the national average. However, since 1990 to till date all the North-Eastern states achieved double digit growth and growth rates for North-Eastern states continued to be higher than national average. What are the underlying forces behind this double-digit growth for all the North-Eastern states? Now most of the North-Eastern states have low initial values of GSDP and as a result minor increase in absolute figures is generating a high value of GSDP growth in percentage term. Second, Central investments in power, electricity, oil and gas and other infrastructure development are also contributing indirectly to pull up the growth rate. Third, unlike rest of India, the government employment did not shrink in the North-Eastern states (both in absolute and percentage terms) and that possibly contributing to the growth of tertiary sector as well as the overall growth rates. These arguments may further be substantiated when sectoral contributions towards the GSDP will be considered. It is to be noted that the standard deviation is continuously decreasing (from 4.6 in the eighties to 3 in the nineties and fall again to 2.3) over the decades and this implies that growth rates of North-Eastern state as well as India have been converging along the trend, which reflects indeed a healthy signal.

3.2. Per capita SDP growth rates of North-Eastern States of India

Growth rate of per capita SDP (having narrowness of these indicators, notwithstanding) and descriptive statistics like coefficient of variation (or CV) of the CAGR of per-capita SDP have been used to validate the

positive or negative impact of economic growth on well being of population. The growth of per capita SDP for eight states along with India average is presented in Table 1. In the 1980s, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura recorded the lowest per capita SDP growth at 2 percent as against these, the all-India growth rate was 3.4 percent. Performance of Nagaland is particularly noteworthy, as the growth rate has jumped from a moderate 4 percent in the 1980s to 18 percent in the 1990s. In the last decade, the disparity range (as indicated by the fall in coefficient of variations of growth of per capita SDP) was reduced for individual states but overall growth of per-capita income had started declining form 1990s, however, national average had increased to 6 percent in the 2000-2009 against 4 percent in the 1990s.

While the standard of living (in terms of rise in per capita income) improved faster in 1990s in comparison to 1980s in most states, the trend reversed in last decade except Meghalaya. The main reason for this could be the comparatively higher growth of population in these states⁹. In Assam, the per capita growth rate declined in spite of a high SDP growth in 2000-2009.

3.3. Disparities in Per Capita Income

The general trend that emerges for India is such that convergent growth rates have not translated into equalising income across states (Ahluwalia, 2011, Bakshi et al. 2015). North-Eastern states revealed reversal of the all-India trend. In fact, coefficient of variation of per-capita Net State Domestic Product (NSDP) had been declining consistently during 1990-2000 and 2000-2009.

Table 1. Compound Growth Rates (in percent) of GSDP at Constant prices over three decades in North-Eastern States of India

States	CAGR of GSDP			CAGR of Per-capita SDP		
	1980-90	1990-2000	2000-2009	1980-1990	1990-2000	2000-2009
Arunachal Pradesh	8	17	13	5	15	12
Assam	4	18	15	2	16	13
Manipur	5	20	13	2	17	11
Meghalaya	5	23	13	2	8	12
Mizoram	18	17	10	14	14	7
Nagaland	8	24	16	4	18	10
Sikkim	11	16	14	8	13	13
Tripura	6	21	17	2	19	16
India	5.6	6.03	7	3.4	4	6
Mean	8.1	19.5	13.9	4.9	15.0	11.8
S.D	4.6	3.0	2.2	4.3	3.5	2.6
CV	56.4	15.3	15.6	87.3	23.1	22.2

Source: Calculated from GSDP figures at constant prices, Central Statistical Organisation, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India www.mospi.gov.in

⁹ Between 1980-81 and 1990-91, the population of North-Eastern states together grew at an average rate of more than 2 per cent per annum. Immigration from Bangladesh and Myanmar is partly responsible for high population growth in this region.

Table 2. Model Summary and Parameter Estimates

Dependent Variable: Average Growth of NSDP (at Constant Price) between 2000-2001 to 2009-2010

Independent variable : PCI in 2000(Log Scale)

Equation	Model Summary					Parameter Estimates	
	R Square	F	df1	df2	Sig.	Constant	b1
Linear	.037	.231	1	6	.648	28.283	-3.913

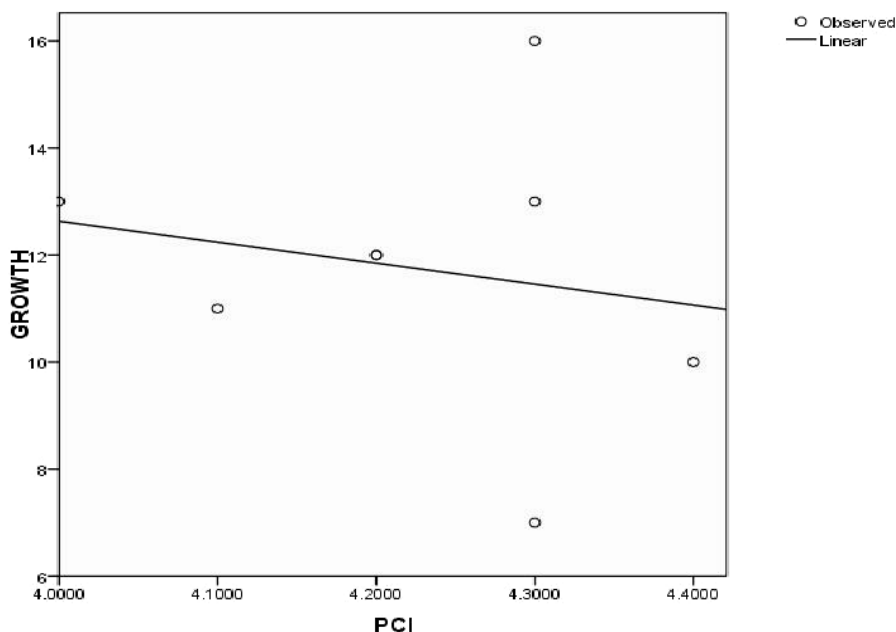


Figure 2. Relation between Growth of NSDP (2000-2009) at constant Price and Per Capita Income of 2000 (Log Scale)

3.4. Acceleration and deceleration of growth of GSDP

Neither compound annual growth rates (CAGR), nor the exponential form of growth curve can suggest any acceleration or deceleration in the growth rates over time. To overcome this problem log-quadratic form is proved to be convenient. It can be written in the following form

$$\ln Y_t = a + bt + ct^2 + u_t$$

where $\ln Y_t$ = Log value of GSDP (Gross State Domestic Product at Constant Prices), a = Constant term, t = time (in years), t^2 = Time square, u_t = error term such that $u_t \sim IND(0, \sigma^2)$.

If estimated value of c assumes significantly (t-ratio is used as test statistics) positive value then we can have accelerating growth rate and in case of significantly negative value of c , it will imply deceleration of growth (Reddy, 1978:806-812). The incorporation time squared on the right hand side of the above equation,

may give rise to problem of multicollinearity. This is avoided by the normalization of time in mean deviation form, that is, by setting $t = 0$ at the mid-point of the series and this allows the time (t) and its square (t^2) to become orthogonal (Boyce, op. cit.: 262, 278). As it is further pointed out by Boyce that the normalization of time affects only the estimate of b (coefficient of t), the estimate of c (coefficient of t^2) remains unaffected with respect to the normalization (ibid. 278).

Table 3. Ranking based on Exponential Growth Rates¹⁰ and Acceleration/Deceleration of Growth rates in North-Eastern States of India

States	Exp. Growth 1980-1990	Rank	Exp. Growth 1990-2000	Rank	Exp. Growth 2000-2009	Rank	Instability Coefficient (c)	Growth pattern
Arunachal Pradesh	8.2	3	15.7	7	15.9	4	0.002 (4.82)*	Acceleration
Assam	3.5	8	16.3	6	16.3	3	0.004 (6.22)*	Acceleration
Manipur	5.1	5	21.2	3	15.8	5	0.008 (1.0)	Acceleration
Nagaland	7.6	4	27.8	1	16.5	2	0.003 (4.18)*	Acceleration
Meghalaya	4.9	7	25.6	2	15.2	7	-0.002 (-8.95)*	Deceleration
Mizoram	20.8	1	16.8	5	9.8	8	0.003 (0.7)	Acceleration
Tripura	5.4	6	14.2	8	18.3	1	0.005 (7.6)*	Acceleration
Sikkim	11.8	2	17.9	4	15.6	6	-0.005 (-0.89)	Deceleration

Source: Calculated from GSDP figures at constant prices, Central Statistical Organisation, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India www.mospi.gov.in

Notes: T stats of instability coefficients are shown in parenthesis / *Significant at 1% level

The resulting log-quadratic estimates are presented in Table 3. From Table 3, it is clear that Mizoram experienced the highest growth rate in the first decade, Meghalaya remained at top during 1990s and Tripura achieved the highest growth in the last decade (2000-09). For all the North-Eastern states, growth

¹⁰ Exponential form of growth curve can be written as $Y_t = ae^{bt}v_t$, This can be transformed linearly as follows $\ln Y_t = a + bt + u_t$, where $Y_t =$ Output, $a =$ Constant term, $t =$ time (in years), $u_t = \ln v_t =$ error term such that $\ln v_t \sim IND(0, \sigma^2)$. By deducting 1 from the antilog of the estimates of the coefficient of b and multiplying it by 100 we shall calculate growth rate. Or, Growth rate = (antilog of estimated $b - 1) * 100$.

rates have increased in the decade of nineties (1990-2000) in comparison to decade of eighties (1980-90). A marginal decline has been observed for few states. Overall deceleration of growth was observed for the state of Meghalaya and Sikkim (statistically insignificant). Except Sikkim and Manipur, acceleration or deceleration of growth rates of SDP are found to be statistically significant for rest of the North-Eastern states.

A comparison of the position of states in terms of exponential rate of growth of aggregate SDP (in constant prices) in three periods, 1980-90, 1990-2000 and 2000-2009, shows a perceptible change in the rankings of the states over time (Table 3). States like Mizoram and Sikkim were ranked highest for the period 1980-1990, reached at bottom of ranking table in the period 2000 to 2009. Tripura and Assam witnessed remarkable transformation since 1980s. They ranked sixth and eighth position in 1980-90 and made huge improvements and ranked 1st and 3rd in the last decade (2000-2009).

In terms of both SDP and SDP growth, all North-Eastern states except Mizoram have shown accelerated growth during the 1990s. Many states like Nagaland, Manipur, and Meghalaya have moved up the ladder to reach above or near the all-states average SDP growth. At the same time, deceleration in the growth of high-income state like Mizoram and Sikkim stands out. It should be noted that in the decade of eighties and nineties Mizoram experienced highest per capita SDP growth among all the North-Eastern states but growth rates of SDP consistently declined.

3.5. Growth rates and shares of primary, secondary and tertiary sectors

We may now look at the growth of sub-sectors in order to gain more understanding of the sectoral performance (Table 4). Sectoral growth rates are compared with SDP growth rates to identify the sectors which are propelling growth in each decade. Simultaneously, lagging and leading sub-sectors, within the sectors (primary, secondary and tertiary) have been identified to measure the intra-sectoral variations in growth. It may be seen that except for a few states, the share of primary sector has continuously been falling from about one-half in the early 1980s to one third or one-fourth in 2000-2009. In states, such as Sikkim and Tripura, the share of primary sector in SDP has come down to around 25 or 20 percent by the end of 2009. The drastic reduction in the contribution of primary sector in these states (by 20 to 25 percentage point) during this period is partly compensated by the rise in income from secondary sector and partly by the increase in income from tertiary sector. In Assam, where the primary sector has also performed quite well, the share of primary sector in SDP declined more moderately, by about 12 percent. In the states of Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Tripura and Sikkim, the share of the primary sector has declined significantly in last two decades. In Arunachal Pradesh, for instance, the share of primary sector, which was nearly 50 percent in SDP in the early 1980s, has now come down to about 30 percent in the late 2000-2009. Even though primary sector for all the North-Eastern states has registered a double digit growth since 1990s, a falling share is worrisome because more than 60 per cent of the people are deriving their livelihood from agriculture. This implies fall in per-capita income from agriculture and allied activities. This is also hinting towards marginalisation and casualisation of agricultural workers. This phenomenon is true not only for the North-Eastern states but it is also happening in rest of the Indian states. In Nagaland, an agriculturally backward state, the share of primary sector has increased marginally due to a slower growth of non-

agricultural sector. From table 4, it can be seen that share of secondary sector in Nagaland has remained static consecutively in three decades starting from 1980s. Similar scenario has been observed for Meghalaya also.

Coming to the secondary sector, for the period as a whole (1980 to 2009), the sector recorded a slightly higher rate of growth in 1990s in comparison to 1980s, but average growth rate of secondary sector remained lower than tertiary sector. In the recent decade (2000-09) the growth rate of the secondary sector not only declined sharply but even became much lower than the growth rate of the tertiary sector. Thus, in the nineties, economy of North-East region was driven by the high growth of the secondary sector while in the twenty-first century it was pulled down by a low growth rate of secondary sector. This was the general pattern of development, especially in the East Asia. In China, for instance, the secondary sector now contributes almost 50 percent of GDP. However, in India, at the aggregate level, and also at the regional level and sub-regional level, the tertiary sector became the largest contributor even before the secondary sector predominate the economy (Bahtacharya & Mitra, 1990:2445-50). If share of manufacturing declines and services increases at the initial phase of development then economic growth may be of growth retarding type (Barua and Bandopadhyay, 2005:239-274).

Manipur and Sikkim are the only exceptions where the secondary sector has increased and occupied more than 10 percent share in SDP in 1990-2009. In no other states, the share of secondary sector has increased above 10 percent. In Nagaland and Meghalaya, the share of the secondary sector has remained stable around 20 percent for the last two decades. In Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, the two other industrial states, the share has risen marginally in the last two decades. Surprisingly, secondary sector in Tripura, one of the backward states in North-East region, grew quite rapidly between 1990 and 2009. As a result, the share of the secondary sector in Tripura increased from 13 percent in 1990-91 to about 24 percent in 2000-09.

During 1980 to 2009, tertiary sector has recorded high rate of growth. In the eighties, the pattern growth rate of tertiary sector for the individual States remained similar to secondary sector. However, secondary sector failed to maintain the growth rate achieved in 90s and became sluggish in 2000-2009. Unlike primary and secondary sectors, tertiary sector maintained high growth rates in all three decades (except for States like Manipur and Nagaland) and propelled the overall growth of the economy. However, this needs to be confirmed by examining the sub-sectoral growth rates as well.

It has also been noted that the tertiary, rather than the industry, has become the engine of growth in the last two decades. The tertiary sector has recorded the fastest growth in most of the North-Eastern states, both before and after the reforms. In most states, the share of the tertiary sector now exceeds 50 percent of SDP. During the last two decades, the tertiary sector has grown notably for Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim. With the exception of Nagaland and Meghalaya, the tertiary sector now accounts for almost 60 percent of SDP and thus the tertiary, rather than the secondary, sector has become the engine of growth in most states.

From the foregoing analysis, the general impression that emerges that North-Eastern states are experiencing high rate of growth and since 1990s, the growth was initially propelled by secondary sector and latter by tertiary sector and therefore, the economy of this region is on steady growth path. But this over

optimism disappears when we look at the major contributors of primary¹¹, secondary¹² and tertiary sector¹³. From Table 5 it is evident that for all the North-Eastern states agriculture is adding most of the income to the primary sector.

Table 4. Sectoral Share and Compound Annual Growth Rates of SDP (1980-2009) in North-Eastern States of India

STATES	ORIGIN OF INDUSTRY	SECTORAL SHARES (Average)			SECTORAL GROWTH (CAGR)		
		1980-90	1990-00	2000-09	1980-90	1990-00	2000-09
ARUNACHAL PRADESH	PRIMARY	48.7	38.1	31.4	8	15	16
	SECONDARY	19.5	24.2	27.4	8	16	22
	TERTIARY	31.7	37.6	41.2	8	22	18
ASSAM	PRIMARY	50.1	47.2	38.1	3	19	9
	SECONDARY	15.3	16.2	16.3	4	20	14
	TERTIARY	34.6	36.6	45.6	5	18	18
MIZORAM	PRIMARY	31.9	30.8	19.7	20	13	2
	SECONDARY	17.7	16.1	15.8	18	14	19
	TERTIARY	50.5	53.1	64.5	18	20	11
MANIPUR	PRIMARY	43.4	35.7	27.7	2	17	13
	SECONDARY	12.9	15.3	25.7	7	26	20
	TERTIARY	43.7	49	46.6	8	19	14
NAGALAND	PRIMARY	30.5	28.2	31	7	25	14
	SECONDARY	14.6	14	14.6	13	12	16
	TERTIARY	54.9	57.8	54.3	7	29	16
MEGHALAYA	PRIMARY	33.8	30.3	29.8	3	23	14
	SECONDARY	19.3	17	18.1	3	21	22
	TERTIARY	47	52.7	52.2	7	22	19
TRIPURA	PRIMARY	47.9	40.7	25.3	3	17	19
	SECONDARY	10.6	10.1	21.7	4	25	15
	TERTIARY	41.5	49.2	53	9	22	17
SIKKIM	PRIMARY	47.4	37.8	20.1	10	8	11
	SECONDARY	19.6	17.5	30.1	12	17	16
	TERTIARY	33	44.7	49.9	12	21	15

Source: Central Statistical Organisation, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India www.mospi.gov.in

¹¹ Primary sector consists of agriculture, forestry and logging, fishing and mining and quarrying.

¹² The secondary sector consists of manufacturing (registered and unregistered together), construction and electricity, gas and water supply.

¹³ Transport (railways and transport by other means), storage and communication, trade, hotels and restaurant, banking and insurance, public administration and other services together constitute the tertiary sector.

In secondary sector, where most of the States have shown high growth rate and high contribution to the GSDP at current prices, except Assam, much of the contribution to GSDP is coming from construction alone (more than 60 per cent) where the role of Government is strongly felt (Table 6). In contrast, the share of manufacturing, the backbone of secondary sector and indicator for industrialisation is hovering around 2 to 5 per cent. Only Assam is the exception because Assam has a certain degree of manufacturing base and oil and natural gas do generate income for secondary sector. Unlike other North-Eastern states a fair degree of expansion of private sector has also taken place in Assam. This shows the absence of private sector in secondary activities and limited expansion of industrial activities among the North-Eastern States. Similarly, for tertiary sector, 50 to 60 per cent contribution is coming from public administration which broadly covers the services of the state government administration and other services (Table 7). Again, other services includes activities pertaining to educational, medical and veterinary, research and scientific, sanitary, recreational, rest of the services, international and extra territorial bodies and lottery services. Therefore, bulk of the income generated under 'other services' are primarily coming from government and quasi-government employment. This implies that the high share of tertiary sector to GSDP is also arising out of government employment and more precisely, where the Government is playing the direct role.

Table 5. Major Sectoral Shares of State Domestic Product under Primary Sector at Current Prices in North-Eastern States of India

States	Agricultural Shares			Primary Shares		
	1980-90	1990-00	2000-09	1980-90	1990-00	2000-09
Arunachal Pradesh	34.2	28.6	24.8	48.7	38.1	31.4
Assam	34.0	35.7	27.4	50.1	47.2	38.1
Manipur	39.8	30.6	23.6	43.4	35.7	27.7
Meghalaya	28.9	22.5	20.3	33.8	33.3	29.8
Mizoram	23.0	25.9	17.5	31.9	30.8	19.7
Nagaland	23.6	23.9	27.0	30.5	28.2	31.0
Sikkim	46.5	36.3	18.6	47.4	37.8	20.1
Tripura	38.6	33.5	21.2	47.9	40.7	25.3

Source: Calculated from the GSDP data at current prices, Central Statistical Organisation, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India www.mospi.gov.in

In addition, Barring Assam, own tax-revenue collection as a percentage of GSDP is abysmally low for the North-Eastern States. Therefore, the development process is solely depending on Central assistance as grant-in-aid. Any reduction (though it is most unlikely) in central assistance will make the economy of this region more vulnerable. Private sector has not been grown and as a result all these States have failed to create an economy outside agriculture and most of these States are still dependent on primitive agricultural methods.

The economic structure and development pattern of the North-Eastern states of India observed in last three decades are not only the outcome of post-colonial policies of Government of India but colonial era and change in political boundaries of India during independence do have considerable impact on the changing

structure of labour market and economy of North-Eastern states. During the British rule the cross-border trades received momentum with the breakthrough of tea and crude oil (Sarmah, 2015: 245). But its impact was very negligible and reasons were: 'i. the tea plantation was developed into enclave production without having any linkage with the hinterland' (Barua, 2007); ii. the wage policy pursued by the planters backed by the colonial authority was such that the wage rates in the tea gardens were much lower than what could be earned when employed by the railways and public works department or in agriculture (Dasgupta, 1986: PE-2); iii. appropriation of land by the agents of the company without any compensation being paid to the owners of land; iv. the railway network passing through jungles connecting the tea plantation to the river/sea port and thereby leading the entire hinterland in the outskirts which prevented internal market formation; iv. lack of technological changes in agriculture (Barua, op cit).

Table 6. Major Sectoral Shares of State Domestic Product under Secondary Sector at Current Prices in North-Eastern States of India

States	Manufacture			Construction			Secondary		
	1980-90	1990-00	2000-09	1980-90	1990-00	2000-09	1980-90	1990-00	2000-09
Arunachal Pradesh	5.7	4	2.7	13.9	18.1	19.3	19.5	24.2	27.2
Assam	9.5	9	9.8	4.6	5.5	4.9	15.3	16.2	16.3
Manipur	5.7	3.9	6.7	6.3	8.3	16	12.9	15.3	25.7
Meghalaya	3.6	3.6	3.8	12.1	10.2	11.3	19.3	17	18.1
Mizoram	3.8	4.5	1.5	14.8	11.2	11.6	17.7	16.1	15.8
Nagaland	2.4	3.1	1.6	12.6	9.6	11.8	14.6	14	14.6
Sikkim	6	3.7	3.1	13.3	12.4	21.9	19.6	17.5	30.1
Tripura	5.6	3.2	3	4.9	6.8	16.2	10.6	10.1	21.7

Source: Calculated from the GSDP data at current prices, Central Statistical Organisation, www.mospi.gov.in

With India's freedom and partition, the traditional transportation routes- rail, road, and river, linking the Chittagong and Calcutta ports became unavailable and alternative routes of communication had become dearer. For example, in post-partition period, the road distance between Calcutta and Agartala had turned to be about 2000 km. In pre-partition period, bulk of commodities were transferred from Calcutta by ship along the coast to Chittagong port (distance is around 582 km) and shipment time was 24 hours, subsequently a 100 km journey could bring the commodities to Agartala (Banerjee et al. 1999: 2551).

However, policies followed in post-independence period have added macro economic imbalances to the region. Most available funds are being taken for payment of salaries to burgeoning government employees, there is little available for investment in development. Absence of manufacturing and large-scale trading activities has made multiplier inoperative and the India's North East continues to be the net importer of goods and services. Outflow of funds also takes place through the low credit-deposit ratios of bank branches (Nathan, 2005:2488). Poor intra-state, inter-state and intra country connectivity have further crippled the

mobility of labour, goods and services and allowed the size of economy to remain small. This has direct bearing on labour market and employment. In addition, continuance of 'Inner Line Permit' has restricted the movement of labour to North East and as a result, bounded labour market became a reality over time.

Table 7. Major Sectoral Shares of State Domestic Product under Tertiary Sector at Current Price in North-Eastern States of India

States	Public Administration			Other Services			Tertiary Sector		
	1980-90	1990-00	2000-09	1980-90	1990-00	2000-09	1980-90	1990-00	2000-09
Arunachal Pradesh	9.8	11.4	15.7	8.5	13.8	11.6	31.7	37.6	41.3
Assam	3.9	6.2	6.5	8	8.9	11.6	34.7	36.6	45.5
Manipur	12.1	13.9	14.7	11.1	11.8	12.2	43.8	49	46.6
Meghalaya	14.4	14.3	13.5	8.4	9.3	8.2	47	52.7	52.2
Mizoram	16	16.4	19.8	11.3	11.8	12	15.5	53.1	64.4
Nagaland	19.1	17.7	13.2	12.6	12.7	8.1	54.9	57.8	54.3
Sikkim	9.8	13.5	16.7	7.6	12.2	14.9	33	44.7	49.9
Tripura	10.7	14.5	14	10.1	17	14.9	41.5	49.2	53

Source: Calculated from the GSDP data at current prices, Central Statistical Organisation, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India www.mospi.gov.in

During the liberalisation era (post-1990s), India shunned the policy of 'import substitution' and adopted a policy of export led-growth to overcome with India's sluggish growth performances under protectionist and all pervasive government policy regimes. This gave birth to India's 'Look East' policy, which is admixture of foreign and free-trade policy. Internal security concern in North Eastern states which has strong international linkages also played a catalytic role to formulate 'Look East' policy. To counter the growing economic political and military influences of China, India on the one hand, tries to develop cohesive relationships with East Asian and South East Asian countries including Myanmar and on the other, tries to improve trade balance with these countries. North East has been identified as the ideal buffer zone bridging South East Asia both for internal security purpose and to ensure development in that region. This new development paradigm in a way was the result of the failure of the 'old development paradigm" where the major thrust of development policy as articulated by various packages of development under the aegis of successive Prime Ministers since Deve Gauda was to pump in as much money as possible for the development of this region (Barua, op cit.). However, 'Look East' policy will become the engine of growth and transform the economy North East is illusive in nature and devoid of economic rationale. As pointed out by Barua (2007), the good and services traded between India and East and South East Asian countries, no array of goods that are being produced in North East those can realise comparative advantage. Transportation cost will abnormally escalate if goods have to be traded from India through North-East India to South East Asia because of the distance and uneven topography and it will prove to be economically unviable. As a result,

India's entire trade with this region is still depending on maritime transport. Undoubtedly, the "gate way" can never be an efficient entry pot for the exporters located in the hinterland.

Alternatively, forging a durable relationship with Bangladesh and bringing time bound solution to immigration problem and water disputes, the road, railways and water transport system through Bangladesh can become much more cost effective and beneficial for the development of economy and to create employment opportunities for North-Eastern states vis-à-vis Bangladesh. As a matter of fact, bulk of the goods and services can be traded from Calcutta to along the coast to Chittogong port in Bangladesh, and thereafter through Bangladesh railroad, those goods can be brought to Akhaura (around 100 km), adjacent to Agartola and can be transported to various parts of North- Eastern states. This shall substantially reduce the cost of intra-country trade with North Eastern region of India. Revival of riverine traffic between Calcutta and Assam through Sundarban and Bangladesh may be another feasible solution to facilitate trade in North East. This will help the entire subregion to grow. Oranges and pineapples from Meghalaya, ginger, tea, paat and mugaa silk from Assam may be exported to Bangladesh and from there to West Asia and Europe (Banerjee et al. op cit. : 2551).

3.6. Fiscal condition of the North-Eastern States

While discussing the finances of the North-Eastern States, it has to be kept in mind that many of these States were created only to fulfil the ethnic, political and cultural aspirations of the people. During the reorganization of the North-Eastern states, a pertinent criterion was ignored that the territory in question must have revenue resources to fulfil its administrative as well as non developmental expenditure. It was thought that with their existing potentials in agricultural areas, hydro-electrical power, and natural oil resources; these states would be able to achieve financial viability after getting help and protection from the central government in the initial years. From the Table 8 and Figure 2 it is evident that except Assam, most of the revenues for North-Eastern states are coming as central assistance which they receive by virtue of being special category states. However, this monetary assistance has failed to generate multiplier effect because own-tax revenue as percentage of total revenue receipts for all the North-Eastern states (except Assam) has remained abysmally low.

Decades passed since independence but the economies of these regions are still suffering and neither the Central Planners nor the State governments have the ideas when these states would be financially viable. After huge assistance from the part of Union government, the state governments have failed to raise internal resources to meet up their non-developmental expenditure. There has been a tendency to multiply administrative units and employees beyond reasonable requirements and their main task is to find ways to utilize the central funds. The fiscal stress has seriously constrained many of the States' ability to discharge the primary responsibility of developing social and economic infrastructure. According to the Reserve Bank of India analysis, many factors are responsible for wide fiscal gap of these states that includes growing interest burden, increasing pension liabilities, large administrative expenditures, losses incurred by Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) etc. The situation of North-East appears complicated when they are compared to

all India level and additional factors such as little scope of internal mobilization of resources and large public service employment have turned the situation worst.

Table 8. Own Tax Revenue as percentage of Total Revenue Receipts of the North-Eastern States of India

States/Year	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Arunachal Pradesh	2.15	2.85	6.40	2.77	3.34	3.29	3.13	3.41	3.66	4.15
Assam	25.37	26.45	6.01	25.27	27.36	26.83	25.48	21.92	22.96	36.24
Manipur	4.70	4.33	4.91	4.81	4.67	3.95	4.25	4.20	4.39	5.04
Meghalaya	15.12	11.75	11.24	12.70	13.44	14.46	14.23	13.07	13.14	12.89
Mizoram	1.74	2.20	2.73	2.47	2.64	3.33	3.43	3.53	3.57	3.63
Nagaland	3.69	4.14	4.60	2.90	4.26	4.65	4.29	4.38	4.08	4.35
Sikkim	7.58	10.15	5.09	8.05	6.18	7.50	8.18	7.33	7.46	6.87
Tripura	7.67	8.49	9.74	10.22	9.30	9.79	10.47	10.02	10.85	11.97

Source: Calculated from data of State Budget (various years), Reserve Bank of India, www.rbi.org.in, CAG State Audit Reports

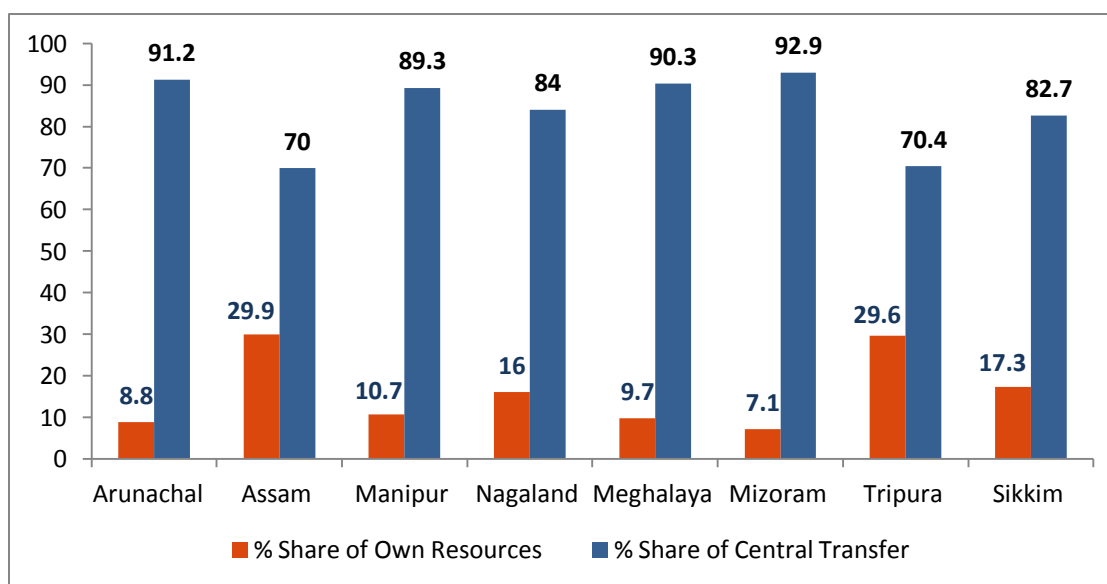


Figure 2. Composition of Revenue Receipts: (NE States) BE 2013 - 14 (in percentage)
(Source: Calculated from data of State Budget (various years), Reserve Bank of India, www.rbi.org.in, CAG State Audit Reports)

4. Economy- society interface

It is quite evident from foregoing analysis that North-Eastern region has been showing improvement on economic front. Economic growth is getting better off and inequality has also been reduced. Economic

development so achieved in last three decades have failed to reduce the ethnic, cultural, social and political cleavages among the North-Eastern states as well as between North-Eastern states and rest of India. There may not be any straight empirical results either to corroborate or to refute the existence of these cleavages. As matter of facts, we failed to correlate qualitative variables like ethnicity, identity with economic growth. As a result, there have been constraints to build up a working model of economics based on identity, ethnicity, culture or language. Market tries to play a homogenising role because everyone should receive wage according to their marginal productivity and therefore, ideally caste, creed, religion, identity and ethnicity should get diluted once every one shall become part of market and everyone shall become a wage earner. But market also increases income inequality across the communities, across the ethnic groups, across the linguistic or cultural groups. The presence or absence of market may have an implicit or explicit role either to fuel or to abate these types of movements, which requires a through probe. In case of North-Eastern states, size and presence of market are small and labour force has little space in the small-sized market.

Alternatively, major economic space has been occupied by the government but government failed to accommodate a large section of labour force. In addition, it has also been anticipated that funds disbursed by the central government, in many cases, give birth of group of elite parasites consisting of bureaucrats, politicians, contractors and insurgent groups. They assume to work in connivance and create shadow deterrent for proper use of funds for all round development of every section of the society. The brewing frustration of common masses is often being culminated into intra-tribes, inter-language; inter-religion; intra and inter-regional conflicts.

In many cases, state buys or earns a short-run peace in lieu of 'positive discrimination for a particular group' and by providing more funds to that particular region from the state. In most of the cases, neither the funds percolate down within that particular group nor they get empowered economically, politically nor socially who hit the street in bulk in search of separate identity or ethnicity. 'Economic backwardness' or achieving high economic growth hardly justifies these movements because economic affluence may accentuate identity or ethnicity based movement.

5. Conclusion

Findings of the study unravel few glaring inconsistencies that the North-Eastern states have experienced over last three decades. If we look at growth scenario of the North-Eastern states, the picture is not so gloomy contrary to the general claim that the region is neglected, insulated and marginalised. Per-capita income grew at a moderate rate and income inequality declined. However, the concerning factor is that growth is only visible where the Indian state played the role of principal economic agent. The total absence of manufacturing industries run by private sector and absence of credible alternatives to economy outside agriculture have been the signals indicating that the Central's funds as different forms of development assistances have ultimately failed to create multiplier effects in the economy and the corresponding resilience issue of the economy has been called in question. Declining income from agricultural sector and corresponding rise of population engaged in agriculture is indicative of marginalisation of rural workforce. Another revelation is that most of the North-Eastern states have remained net importer of food and non-food

items. As a result economy of the region has failed to become self-sustaining and self-regenerating in nature. Economic integration sought under a decentralised development model has failed to keep the promise of bringing equitable development across the North-Eastern states. The issues of equitable justice, right of self-determination, autonomy, cultural and linguistic identities and such other issues have acted as harbinger of ethnic and sub-regional assertions, dissents, and militancy, which occasionally surfaced out at different times in different sub-spaces of the North Eastern region. The central development grants do not have any positive trickle-down effect at the grass root and at the primary sector of the economy. Important inherent limitations such as physical non-proximity, difficult hilly terrain, and lack of developed communication have been the major hindrances to realise the development programmes. Along with such hindrances, the long protracted insurgency issues in most of the North-Eastern States have become the major bottlenecks pejorative to forge economic, social and cultural development. Resultantly, size of labour market remained small, closed and bounded.

In fact, the 'Look East' policy has failed to move beyond academic exercises and has failed to bring about any credible ground level changes in North East. Finally, occasional use of coercive forces, doling out of funds, and providing autonomy without accountability are the ad-hoc measures often used by the state to settle the unsettled socio-cultural and politico-economic issues rooted in the Indian soil cemented on the notion of abortive post-colonial Indian nationhood. This paper reaffirms the fact that the Indian state has failed to fulfil the expectation of the economy of the North East. Resultantly, the grand Indian nation state would certainly suffer from hyper-paranoia if not a thorough overhauling of the policy on the North East is properly addressed.

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