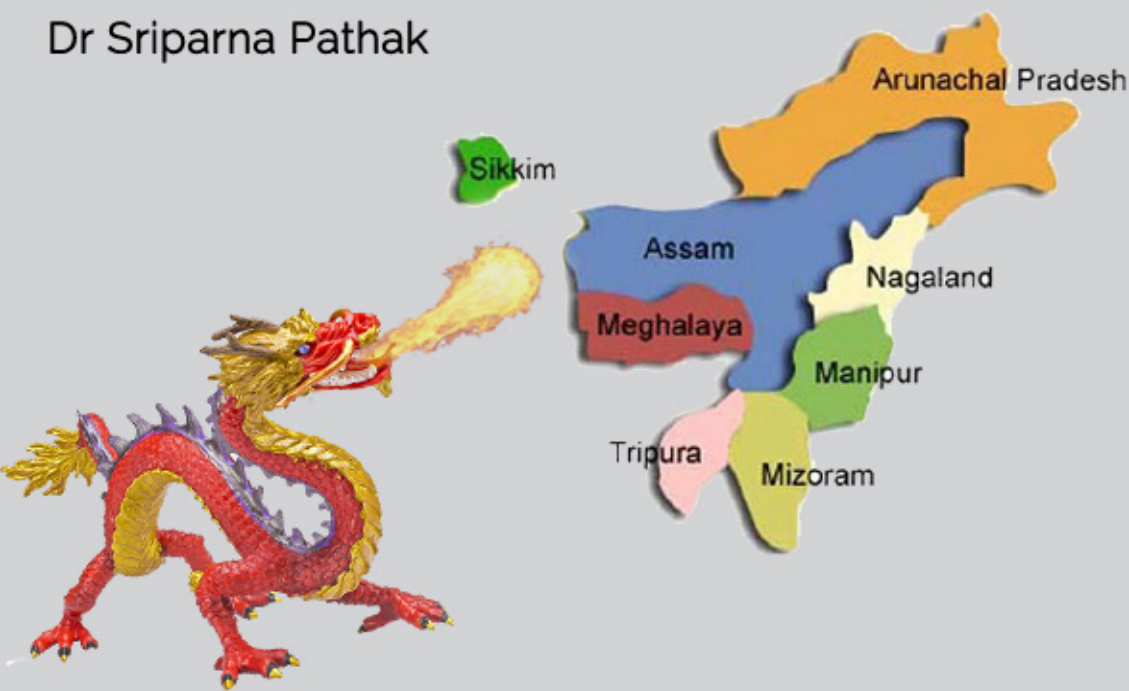


The Chinese Hand behind Terrorism in **Northeast India**

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The Chinese Hand behind Terrorism in Northeast India

Introduction

Terrorism, a nontraditional security threat has come to occupy centerstage in 21st century international relations, as the lines between how non-state actors and state actors use it have become increasingly blurred. India and China, the two leaders of the Asian century in international relations also understand the gravity of the threat and have their own stances to dealing with it. India and China relations, often called a mixture of conflict and cooperation, have since 2020 owing to China's unilateral aggression at India's borders amidst a pandemic with origins in China; become tilted heavily in favour of conflict. Among the various cracks in the bilateral relationship one fissure which largely remains a hush-hush affair in bilateral discussions is that of terrorism. As the conflict simmers on between the two Asian giants, the possibilities of the usage of non-conventional tools to tilt the conflict in one's favour increases. The usage of the tool of terrorism or insurgency by China against India becomes a credible threat, yet it remains an arena which lacks discussion at the academic or diplomatic levels.

The two have often spoken about cooperation in the realm of anti-terrorism, and an instance of this from 2021 is that of the decision to hold the Pabbi Anti-Terror exercises in 2021. India, China and other members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) announced that the exercise would be held this year, and

this decision was taken at the 36th meeting of the Regional Anti-Terror Structure (RATS) held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan on March 18 (Press Trust of India, 2021)¹.

The RATS has often been lauded as being among the most successful of the SCO's substructures, coordinating efforts through information sharing, the capture of terrorists, and anti-terrorist military exercises. However, the focus largely has been on what China calls the three evils and even a Chinese cognizance of jihadist terrorism emanating from India's western periphery at the level of the RATS or that of the SCO is a faraway dream. On the contrary there have been several instances when China has shielded its iron brother Pakistan from getting criticised at the international level for its sponsorship of terrorism. An instance is from September 2020, when China staunchly defended Pakistan's record in fighting terrorism, saying its all-weather ally has made "tremendous efforts and sacrifices", countering calls by India and the US that Islamabad must ensure that its territory is not used for terror activities (Patranobis, 2020)². China has in the past stepped in on many instances to block the listing of Pakistani terrorists at the UNSC sanctions committee. China in 2019 and 2020 raised the Kashmir issue at the UNSC on at least three occasions, calling for discussions in the wake of India's dilution of Article 370, reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir and revocation of special status.

Pakistan, meanwhile, has lobbied for China's support amid increasing criticism from western countries over Xinjiang. In fact, earlier this year, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan even defended China's maltreatment of Uyghur Muslims in concentration camps! (Mahbubani, 2020)³ Last year, Pakistan also made a joint statement on behalf of 55 countries at the UN "opposing interference in China's internal affairs under the pretext of Hong Kong." (Xinhua, 2020)⁴ Clearly for China, the issue of terrorism is nothing but a tool which it can comfortably use to reward countries like Pakistan or irk countries like the US or India. But before getting into how China uses terrorism as a tool to subvert not just economic development but human progress overall, it becomes pertinent to understand what exactly the term terrorism means for China. In this context it becomes pertinent to take a brief look at what China calls the 'Three Evils'.

China's Three Evils

The Three Evils or *Sangu Shili* refers to the forces of separatism, extremism and terrorism. In June 2017, President Xi Jinping at the Astana Summit of the SCO stated that the fight against the three evil forces- “terrorism, separatism and extremism” is a long and arduous task (Xinhua, 2017)⁵. The three evils as a concept hold meaning in the context of China's western provinces. China's western provinces- namely Xinjiang and Tibet are resource rich provinces, which China seeks to harness for fuelling its own economic development. The three evils to be precise are the forces of splittism (separatism), terrorism and extremism and these are meant to refer to Xinjiang's aspirations to be a separate country. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) perceives each of the Three Evils as interrelated phenomena driving constant instability in Xinjiang. In fact, the SCO, which came into existence as the Shanghai Five began with meetings on improving frontier security. Frontier security becomes tantamount for the CCP in its fight against the three evils. After all the boundary disputes between Beijing and the post-Soviet Republics were resolved by the turn of the new century, the focus of the SCO shifted to combating the forces of terrorism, secessionism and extremism in Eurasia. China was and is the focal point driving discussions in the SCO, which is why the emphasis on the three evils finds space in SCO over decades. To deal with the scourge of terrorism, China utilised the SCO as an important vehicle and promoted international cooperation with the members to tackle it. However, the approach changes completely when it comes to address state sponsored terrorism from Pakistan against India.

China was the only member in the 15 nation UNSC to put a hold on India's application to list Pakistani terror group JeM chief and Pathankot terror attack mastermind Masood Azhar as a designated terrorist by the UN. The listing of Azhar on the 1267 sanctions list would subject him to an asset freeze and travel ban.

While the issue of Chinese support to Pakistani aided terrorism against India is more well known, a largely unknown arena of China's abetment to terrorism

is that of its support to insurgency in Northeast India. A very recent example of this is from June last year when the National Investigation Agency (NIA) filed a charge sheet against NSCN (IM) leader Alemla Jamir in a terror funding case. Jamir's case has a China linkage.

Jamir is so called a cabinet minister in the National Social Council of Nagaland (Isak Muivah) (NSCN-IM) and the spouse of former Naga army chief Phunting Shimrang who crossed over to Yunnan, China in 2019 with two other associates (Ahuja, 2019)⁶. He is wanted by the NIA in another case of crime. Jamir was arrested with articles that were to further fuel insurgency in the region and had Chinese footprints all over the articles. Another example is from 2011 when Wang Qing, a Chinese spy who disguised herself as a TV reporter was arrested and deported after she visited the NSCN (IM) headquarters in Nagaland. Qing was a spy for the People's Security Bureau, which is China's intelligence agency. She, back then had a four hour long closed door meeting with Thuingaleng Muivahato-kilonsar, the leader supreme of the NSCN (IM). She entered Nagaland's Dimapur without the mandatory restricted area permit (Gupta, 2011)⁷.

A year further back- in 2010, Anthony Shimray- the commander in chief of the NSCN (IM) was arrested for gun running. He had strong connections with Chinese agencies and had confessed that Muivah had written a letter to senior Chinese intelligence officers to appoint Kholose Swu Sumi as the permanent representative of the NSCN (IM) in China (Roy, 2020)⁸. Sumi is a member of the outfit, belonging to the Sema tribe (Asian Warrior, 2015)⁹. Muivah till then had been to China three times and he has always been cunning enough to play the China card against New Delhi. As such, China's proxy wars in Northeast India range from this sort of abetment to terrorists to other forms including money and arms support.

International Cooperation in Tackling Terrorism in Northeast India

The vast geographic region of Northeast India is characterised by large scale conflicts which are related to the geography and multiple ethnic composition

of the region. Since India's independence, over 100 groups in the region have used terrorism as a tool. These groups either seek independence or autonomy. Counter intelligence has been a challenge given the geographical terrain and the vast international borders. At least four out of the five countries that Northeast India shares borders with, have known to have been sanctuaries for criminals and terrorist groups. With differing levels of security, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Myanmar and China share over 4500 miles of international boundaries with India. Nearly all the terror groups operating out of Northeast India have international camps that provide them with sanctuary, training and external support. Borders are porous or semi porous and lack clear demarcation. The existence of similar cultures, similar ethnic groups on both sides make cross border absorption and assimilation easy.

As part of its counter terrorism exercises, India has had either joint patrolling or operations with the help of its international counterparts. India and its willing neighbours have also shared intelligence to address various forms of terrorism. Examples include border agreements between India and Myanmar to address drug trafficking. In 1995, Operation Golden Bird was launched by the two sides which tracked down and executed a rebel column which had picked up a big consignment of weapons at Wayakaung beach, south of Chittagong and Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh (Dahiya, 2016)¹⁰. The consignment was moved through the jungles of Mizoram. The two sides in 2006 also conducted joint military operations inside Myanmar's territory to flush out militants of NSCN (Khaplang) (Press Trust of India, 2015)¹¹. The decision for the operations was taken in return for transfer of military equipment from India to Myanmar.

In 2013, Delhi Police arrested Abdul Krim Tunda, who was then in the list of India's top 20 wanted terrorists. He had been the mastermind behind over 40 bombings in India. He was arrested from the Banwasa-Mehendarnagar border with Nepal (Biswas, 2013)¹². Shortly after, the Indian police also arrested the co-founder of Indian Mujahideen- Yasin Bhatkal who was responsible for several bombings that had claimed over a hundred lives. He was arrested from Pokahara in Nepal where he was living in the guise of a Unani doctor (Observer Research

Foundation, 2013)¹³. The arrests were facilitated by Nepali intelligence and the police.

In 2015 India announced an agreement to increase presence of the Bhutanese military on the border. With Bhutan, India also conducted a counter terrorism exercise. In 2003, Operation All Clear was conducted inside Bhutan to eliminate militant groups from Northeast India based in South Bhutan (Ghosh, 2015)¹⁴. These included 30 militant camps of the United Liberation Frontiers of Assam (ULFA), National Democratic Frontier of Bodoland and Kamptapur Liberation Organisation (KLO). As stated by the Indian Army Chief then, General N. C. Vij, 650 militants had been neutralised- either killed or captured during the operation. (Chandramohan, 2009)¹⁵

In the context of dealing with the ULFA, the various forms of border cooperation with Bangladesh deserve a mention. In 2017, the two sides resolved to accelerate anti-terror cooperation as PM Narendra Modi called the spread of radicalism a grave threat not just to the two countries but also to the entire region (Press Trust of India, 2017)¹⁶. In 2016, India and Bangladesh had also decided to enhance cooperation to tackle terrorism during the India- Bangladesh Home Ministers' Dialogue. The bilateral extradition treaty was also amended in order to facilitate faster exchange of wanted terrorists and criminals. In 2010 itself Bangladesh handed over the United National Liberation Front (UNLF) chief Sanayaima of Manipur to India (Bhaumik, 2010)¹⁷.

However, these forms of cooperation India has with four of its five neighbours stand in stark contrast when compared with the lack of cooperation with the fifth neighbour- China. Such form of cooperation in tackling terrorism is rarely to be found between India and China. In November 2015, the two sides had issued a joint statement on internal security and marked out new areas for cooperation in the realm of counter terrorism, exchange of information on terror groups and increasing communication on security related matters (Patranobis, 2015)¹⁸. However, given China's dubious stances on terrorism not much has been achieved in this realm.

Since Xi Jinping took over as the President of the country, he has often spoken of ways to create a safer world. During the SCO Summit in Astana in 2017 he had even talked of how destabilising factors and uncertainties are on the rise. He had stated that China was willing to world together with all parties to build a common home of security, stability, development and prosperity (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of People's Republic of China, 2017)¹⁹. At the level of the UN, in 2017 he urged all countries to build a world of common security meant for all and had added that a country cannot have security while others are in turmoil because threats facing other countries may haunt it also. He went on to state that when neighbours are in trouble, instead of tightening one's own fences, one should extend a helping hand to others (*Ibid*).

Yet, as had been correctly stated by India's then Foreign Secretary, Dr. S. Jaishankar at the first India-China Think Tanks' Forum held in New Delhi in 2016, there is no effective cooperation mechanism between India and China to tackle terrorism. In contrast to Xi's statements at the UN regarding lending a helping hand to neighbours when they are faced with terrorism, instead of tightening one's own fences, China has not just been tightening its own fences, but aiding and abetting terrorism. An example of this was the constant blocking of India's attempts at the UN to list Masood Azhar in the 1267 committee which, as stated earlier, would have frozen his assets and international travel. Beyond directly supporting Pakistan's state sponsored terrorism by shielding terrorists such as Masood Azhar at the level of the UN, China has also tacitly aided terrorism in Northeast India over a long duration since India's independence in 1947.

Chinese Support to Terrorism in Northeast India

China's aid and abetment of insurgent groups in Northeast India is at least 50 years old and as stated by Rajeev Bhattacharya in 2020 for an article in *The Quint*, it has gone through several changes and phases (Bhattacharya, 2020)²⁰. In fact, it has been one of the prime reasons as to why insurgency has been sustained in the region for decades. China's direct support to separatist outfits in Northeast India began when a batch of the Naga National Council (NNC) led by Thuingaleng

Muivah and Thinoselie M Keyho reached Yunnan in southwestern China after trekking for over three months in 1966-67 (*Ibid*).

Mizo rebels from the Mizo National Front (MNF) followed soon enough, and then there was a squad of 18 functionaries from the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in Manipur who trained for long durations in Tibet. China provided military assistance to the MNF between 1972 and 1974. (University of Central Arkansas)²¹ In the 1980s China used the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) in Myanmar to train the Manipur PLA (Sarangthe, 2020)²². The KIA also trained many batches of the ULFA. The training facilities in Kachin areas were closed in 1989 only after a pact was drawn between KIA and India's Intelligence wing Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW).

NSCN (IM) made a deal with China for weapons consignment in 1994, which was offloaded on the sea in Bangladesh's Cox Bazar (Bhaumik, 2020)²³. This finds mention in the book *Insurgent Frontiers* by BSF Director General EN Rammohan. Paresh Baruah clinched a similar deal which was also delivered at Cox's Bazar a year later.

In 1997, personnel of the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) received information about a weaponry consignment while working on a project in Bhutan's Haa Valley along its borders with China. The consignment was meant for the ULFA. New Delhi informed the Royal Government of Bhutan and Paresh Baruah who was then in Thimpu dropped the plan (Bhattacharya, 2020)²⁴. The illicit flow of Chinese arms to India, including to Maoists, was confirmed by the then Home Secretary G.K. Pillai in 2010 (Karmakar, 2009)²⁵.

In 2009, NSCN (I-M) co-founder Isak Chishi Swu, who died in 2016 had made a quiet trip to Beijing in as late as 2009 (*Inside NE*, 2020)²⁶. Anthony Shimray during interrogation had stated that in December 2009, the NSCN-IM had been offered the purchase of surface to air missiles by Chinese agents working for Chinese intelligence agencies. The price was stated at USD 1 million, which the NSCN (IM) could not raise, as a result of which the deal did not go through

(European Foundation for South Asian Studies, 2020)²⁷.

While the deal with the NSCN (IM) in 2009 did not go through due to paucity of funds, arrested ULFA leaders have also revealed that Chinese actors were behind the supply of 10 truckloads of arms to ULFA, All Tripura Tiger Force and the PLA in Manipur in 2004 (*Ibid*). In 2010, the arrest and interrogation of Anthony Shimray- a senior militant of the NSCN (IM) revealed that two Chinese arms companies were to be paid USD 1 million for weapons' supply to insurgents in India's northeast via ships from China's port city of Dalian. From Dalian they were to reach India via the land corridor in North Myanmar in October 2010 (Gupta, 2020)²⁸.

In 2011, two officials of a Chinese intelligence agency stayed for a week at ULFA's camp in Myanmar's Taga, and they interacted with leaders from other groups (Bhattacharya, 2020)²⁹. By then ULFA'S Paresh Baruah was already living in Yunnan. This was not possible without the knowledge of higher authorities in China.

The more recent cases of this support include incidents from post 2010 onwards. In 2015, a combined guerrillas' squad ambushed and killed at least 18 army personnel in Manipur, which has been one of the worst attacks in the recent past (Roy, 2015)³⁰. The attacks took place only a few days after an alliance of the outfits called the United Liberation Front of Western South East Asia (UNLFWSEA) was formed in Myanmar. The UNLFWSEA is a united front of armed insurgent groups in India formed by the ULFA, the NSCN, the KLO and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (Songbijit) (NDFB Songbijit). The attack on the army personnel in Manipur in 2015 used rocket propeller grenades (RPGs) and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Not only was this the first time that RPGs were used by any insurgency group in the Northeast, but it also was the first time in 20 years that an attack of such magnitude was carried out against the Indian Army. The UNLFWSEA had also carried out attacks in Nagaland which martyred seven jawans of Assam Rifles (Ahuja, 2018)³¹. 90 percent of the weapons the group has are from China.

In 2017, two discrete events took place with a common linkage in terms of ammunition and training. The SF-10 or the Police and Special Forces had an encounter with the Garo National Liberation Army (GNLF) in West Khasi Hills, which left two cadres dead. A Chinese rifle and one SBML were recovered. The second incident from 2017 was the busting of an illegal gun manufacturing unit in Manipur. Guns were recovered from the unit along with 97 demand letters of the terrorist revolutionary army along with a few more intriguing articles (Press Trust of India, 2017)³². In 2017, Phunting Shimrang of the NSCN (IM) in an interview with *The Week* had confessed that the group did seek China's assistance to provoke a response from India (Ahuja, 2017)³³.

As aptly put forth by Bertil Lintner in his book "China's India War", Chinese influence on India's northeast is immense. He writes that China has not ceased to support the rebels in the Northeast, and these groups buy weapons on what is euphemistically called the black market in China³⁴. Even though the support from China is vehemently denied by China, fact remains that it has a sway over insurgent outfits in Northeast- so much so that during the ongoing standoff between the armies of India and China at the borders, the state-run *Global Times* had warned that China could aid and support insurgents in northeast India (Long, 2020)³⁵. The confidence reflected in the *Global Times* article in making the statement regarding fuelling insurgency in India, is only possible when actual control over the groups exists. The article also admits that insurgent groups from India's Northeast had approached China for assistance. It goes on to mention that the groups have established a close connection with the armed forces in Northern Myanmar. The armed forces imply the rebel groups sponsored by China such as the United Wa State Army. Clearly, the knowledge of the groups is deep in China and it knows how and when to use these groups to further harass India.

2020, Shadows of an ongoing Crisis and Greater Chinese Support to Terrorism in NE India

Under shadows of an ongoing crisis in Ladakh and continuously deteriorating India-China relations owing to China's ever increasing military and diplomatic

aggression, the threat of Beijing's support for India's North-eastern secessionists becomes grave. Last year, India protested to Beijing for supporting Paresh Baruah, who for decades has been operating from Yunnan, with interim travels and stay-ins in Myanmar's Saigon district (Thakuria, 2020)³⁶. A joint attack in Manipur's Chandel district last year in July, by the Manipur Naga People's Front (MNPF), the Revolutionary People's Front (RPF) and ULFA-I led to the martyring of four Assam Rifles personnel and injured many more (The Sentinel, 2020)³⁷. This set the bells of Chinese support to insurgents in India ringing, triggering the complaint to Beijing. The availability of Chinese made arms positions such groups to take advantage of the ongoing India-China conflict.

Besides Baruah, there are other rebel insurgent leaders who have shelter in China, and these include Hangshi Tangkhul, the self-styled defence minister of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah), NSCN (I-M) and T R Calvin, NSCN (I-M)'s chief arms procurer (Paliwal, 2020)³⁸. Operating out of Yunnan, these insurgents maintain contacts with their cadres through social media platforms and fake email addresses. India's National Investigation Agency (NIA) had filed a charge sheet in 2011 against Tangkhul for masterminding a criminal conspiracy to procure arms and ammunition illegally (India Today, 2015)³⁹. Burmese rebels helped Tangkhul strike a deal worth USD 1.2 million for small arms including rifles, grenades, pistols, launchers and machine guns. The arms were to be loaded from China's Beihai port at the Gulf of Tonkin in the South China Sea, transferred into small fishing trawlers in the high seas near Cox's Bazaar in Bangladesh, and smuggled into India from there (Paliwal, 2020)⁴⁰.

The patronage received by these rebels from China is so strong that last year in 2020, ULFA (I) published a video supporting China on the Eastern Ladakh crisis (ULFA, 2020)⁴¹. The armed insurgent group unilaterally blamed India for all border conflicts with China including the aggression by People's Liberation Army in 1962. On various occasions, Baruah has extended support to the Chinese narrative on various issues. An example of this was when Nobel Laureate Dalai Lama was visiting Tawang, Baruah and his associates issued several statements

requesting the Dalai Lama to not make any anti-China statement from the soil of Assam. He added that China has never been an enemy to Assam and that the Chinese would only help North-eastern people once they get separated from India. Baruah even appealed to the locals to avoid supporting any movement for a free Tibet (Thakuria, 2020)⁴²! New Delhi has time and again provided details of Baruah to the Chinese side for action, as he continues to nurture militancy within Indian borders from his Chinese hideouts. Nevertheless, there has been no action from the Chinese side.

The Union Home Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in an affidavit before the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Tribunal in Guwahati officially attested for the first time in October 2020, that the Paresh Baruah led faction of the ULFA is carrying out its activities from China (The Sentinel, 2020)⁴³.

Phunting Shimrang, the chief of NSCN (IM) had reached out to Baruah before he and his associates crossed over to Ruili- the same place where Baruah is currently in. Baruah confirmed to the media in Northeast that Shimrang was in China (*Ibid.*).

In 2019, a seizure of Rs. 72 lakhs in cash was made from Alemla Jamir- the wife of Phunting Shimrang. During the investigation it was uncovered that the money was art of a big criminal conspiracy related to channelling of extorted sums of money from business professionals in Nagaland and neighbouring states, for the purposes of furthering the terror activities of the NSCN (IM). Other articles recovered were prohibited ammunition, documents pertaining to modus operandi on extortion by NSCN (IM), satellite phone and documents connected with land deals (Ahuja, 2020)⁴⁴. Another accused, Masasasong, has been charge sheeted under various sections of the unlawful activities prevention act, Indian Penal Code and arms act (*Ibid.*).

In September last year, Indian border guards intercepted a large cache of weapons meant for Indian insurgent groups along the India- Myanmar border and arrested three suspected gun runners (Sen, 2020)⁴⁵. The arresting officials stated

that the Arakan Army was supplying arms to insurgents in India. Myanmar had designated the Arakan Army as a terrorist organisation in early 2020. The Arakan Army received Chinese support to protect investments such as gas pipelines and roads in an economic corridor stretching from the Sittwe port to Kunming in Yunnan. China also has been helping Indian rebels with logistics and weapons including hideouts along the India- Myanmar border (*Ibid.*).

Conclusion

China continues denying the fact that it sells weapons to insurgents targeting India and states that it sells weapons commercially in the world market and has no control over who buys its weapons. The Chinese Foreign Ministry stated “China has always taken a prudent and responsible attitude towards arms exports... We only conduct military trade in cooperation with sovereign states and do not sell arms to non-state actors.” (Sen, 2020)⁴⁶ However, as stated previously, several militants from India have sought and received refuge in China so the Chinese claims regarding weapons sale is difficult to buy. Also, the threat issued by Global Times in the article warning India of dire consequences including China reviving support to insurgents in India goes against the claims made in the Foreign Ministry’s statement. In 2020, increased activities along the Myanmar border sparked concerns in New Delhi, and India moved several battalions of its army along the Myanmar border after a soldier was killed in an ambush in October. (Sen, 2020)⁴⁷

There is documented evidence of China’s historical support for insurgent groups operating in Assam, Manipur and Nagaland. Zoramthanga once a dreaded militant from Mizoram, stated in his autobiography in the Mizo language as to how China and Pakistan provided support to the insurgency in Mizoram. Zoramthanga stated how cadres from the Mizo National Front (MNF) were mixed with commandoes from East Pakistan and were once captured by Lieutenant General JS Arora but later all escaped into the jungle, to escape to East Pakistan through Rangoon and through the Arakan forest; how they met Bhutto and how they started to talk about peace with the Government of India

in foreign countries. He also mentioned about how he and MNF insurgents had gone to China and met Premier Zhou Enlai, Mao Zedong and Lin Biao along with other Chinese leaders. (Lahkar, 2018)⁴⁸

In recent years, China's support to insurgents operating in the Northeast has reduced substantially as compared to the period up to the 1990s. However, the fact remains that it does provide refuge and despite all its claims, the weapons used by the insurgents are Chinese made, and state-run media has warned India of how China can rake up insurgency all over again in the Northeast. On June 23 last year, a large consignment of Chinese made weapons was confiscated in the Mae Sot district on the Thai side of the Myanmar Thailand border. As stated by the European Foundation for South Asian Studies in a commentary, the attempts to infuse a large volume of Chinese weapons into Myanmar where the NSCN (IM) is known to have a considerable presence, and from there into India's Northeast preceded the NSCN (IM)'s deadlock with the Indian government over the peace talks. The timing of the arrival of the consignment of weapons indicates that it was meant for the NSCN (IM), and the Chinese attempt was to bolster the outfit's armed wing, in order to instil confidence in the group to derail the peace talks with India. (European Foundation for South Asian Studies, 2020)⁴⁹

The success of the Indian government in getting the rebels to the negotiating table is another reason for the backfoot that most insurgent groups are on currently. However, the lure of money and weapons from China is something that can change things to India's detriment. As the rivalry between India and China continues to get heated along the border and in other realms such as trade and investment, strategic accommodation of each other becomes increasingly difficult. In such conditions, non-conventional and covert operations are like to form the toolkit of Beijing. India needs to step up its defence before the damage caused by China becomes too great to ameliorate.

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