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**How does India build in its border states? A case study of statebuilding in the NEFA region( 1950-1970)**

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## Introduction

*“ ...Of course we want schools and hospitals and dispensaries and roads but to stop there is a rather dead way of looking at things. What we ought to do is develop a sense of oneness with those people, a sense of unity and understanding. That involves a psychological approach.”*

*Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Lushai Hills*

In a speech at Lushai Hills, Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru made the above statement about the condition of North East India. Nehru was cognizant that integrating the Northeast into India required serious efforts, not just in administrative state building but also nation building. Infrastructural development was not enough, nation building would require meaningful cultural integration.

India's North-east emerged as a frontier region in British colonial discourse and is often referred to as a British construct in the scholarly literature (Bhaumik, 4). The British tried to colonize these areas— which to them were vast tracts of unmanageable lands and tribes. As they firmly became entrenched in Assam, they began to explore areas further out. These tribes mounted resistance against the British and even as the colonial state expanded, the British soon realized the futility of the exercise. As a result, they promulgated the Inner Line Regulations in 1873 which marked the end of the revenue administration after which the tribal people were left to manage their own affairs. Bhaumik notes that the Inner Line was given the difficult task of providing a territorial frame to the capital. The communities residing beyond the Inner line were seen to be part of a different time regime (Bhaumik, 7).

North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) or erstwhile Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland had similar beginnings when it came to India's approach to statebuilding in the area . In this paper, I will study India's approach to statebuilding in the area in the 1950s and 1960s. Both states then belonged to the NEFA, a relic of British era administration. However, as India attempted to establish sovereignty after independence, the Naga Hills (a region then part of the larger state of Assam) coupled with the Tuensang Tract in NEFA, were combined to form the state of Nagaland in 1963. Arunachal Pradesh, meanwhile, was first declared a union territory in 1972, and attained statehood in 1987. Both states were granted special protections in the constitution under Article 371. Included in part XXI and XXII of the Constitution of India, the article grants temporary, transitional and special provisions to some states and territories in the country. Article 371(A) specifically deals with Nagaland, and mentions that the Parliament cannot legislate on matters that are related to the cultural and religious practices of the Nagas in order to protect their tribes. Article 371(H) deals with Arunachal Pradesh and gives special powers to the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh to deal with matters of law and order.

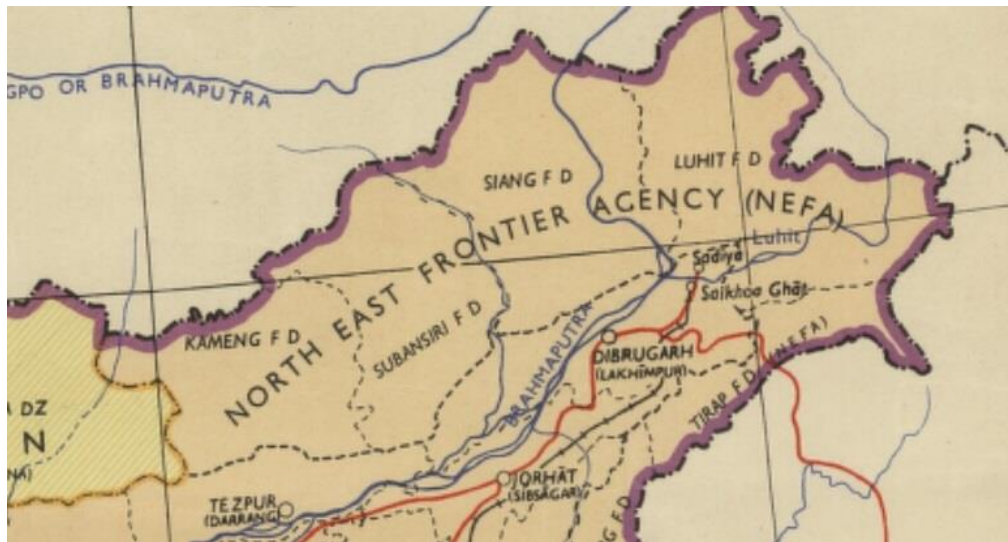
Both states have similar ethnic compositions. In fact, the northeast of NEFA has many Naga tribes that share similarities with those in Nagaland. Despite this, NEFA has mostly been peaceful (Baruah, 38). The Indian state faced little resistance from the local people when they made inroads into the area — in fact, the infrastructure and development seemed to have enabled a better quality of life in the state (Bhaumik, 235). Participation in the state elections remains decent; people continue to accept the authority of the Indian state, and insurgent violence remains low.

In this respect, the federal government has been somewhat successful in maintaining a stable relationship with NEFA. Baruah terms this 'cosmetic federalism'; which meant that the

new regional order was federal only in a cosmetic sense and the central government had control over important powers such as monitoring security and political decisions in the state (Baruah, 39). This did not work for Nagaland which has seen one of the world's most protracted civil wars. Insurgents in Nagaland continue to demand their right to self governance and denounce the authority of the Indian state by replicating state-like features in the way they function and structure themselves (Chakrabarti,1).

In order to combat this, the state has attempted to fund developmental and infrastructure projects in the area. But development in Nagaland has been sparse at best, even as welfare schemes have taken root in NEFA (Bhaumik, 236). Hence, we see that despite similar beginnings, Nagaland has been unable to integrate with the Indian mainland in the way that Arunachal has. Post statehood too, India followed a similar policy towards both the states, but was unable to integrate the Nagas fully into the mainland; meanwhile Arunachal Pradesh has had relatively few internal problems even though it is a disputed territory between India and China.

In the Northeast, India's strategies have differed greatly. The state building apparatus is not consistent and changes with variation in terms of the involvement of international actors as well as other domestic factors such as nationalist ethnic groups. In this paper I will use the cases of NEFA (North-east Frontier Agency), the erstwhile Arunachal Pradesh, and Nagaland to argue that India approaches statebuilding differently in both cases. Even though both had similar interactions with the British colonial state, the priorities of the newly independent India shifted as it started to secure its borders. The postcolonial state building process and the accompanying violence shifted the statebuilding and national integration outcomes of both the states drastically.



## Methods

In this paper I will study in depth the cases of the NEFA region (areas that are now Arunachal Pradesh) and Nagaland. Statehood in the Northeast is a convoluted affair. India has a strong center and weak federal powers, but because the area remained contested for so long, the provision of statehood was followed with suspicion and fear. In some cases India used the constitution as a way of ensuring their own legal mandate over the area. Despite this, both the case studies represent different strategies of the Indian state when it came to statebuilding in the area. The British had been unable to reach the area in a way that would have made it easier for the mainland to utilize the existing administrative state, which meant that India had to start from scratch in an area that they knew little about. To understand more about the nature of statebuilding in the area I look at the years between 1950-1970. These two decades present an interesting time in the history of postcolonial independent India. In a bid to consolidate its international boundaries it resorts to a different set of strategies for each area. This results in varying degrees of integration both in terms of accepted nationhood as well as the ease with which the state is able to build. Post the 1970s, politics in the Northeast became complicated— even though the outcomes of statebuilding that I offer in this paper remain consistent till present day. Political reorganization meant that there are more states that continue to resist India and the area sees high levels of insurgent violence

Existing literature looks at the relationships between India- China and the way in which India has approached the Naga insurgency, but there is no work that consolidates India's approach to statebuilding in the area. There is a gap in the literature that looks at the set of strategies that India adopted and how those lead to varying outcomes. Especially when it came to everyday statemaking projects such as road building and provision of welfare schemes.

I will study these by looking at several different sources. My main focus has been to synthesize the literature on the area and understand how India has approached the larger project of statebuilding in the North East. I look closely at Nehru's policies, the colonial state in the region as well as the infrastructure building projects that the state conducted post the 1962 India-China War. I have also closely looked at the Henderson Brooks report as well some primary research by scholars in the north east . These will help construct an account of the events at the time.

I offer two possible outcomes for statebuilding given a set of general pre conditions. The first is that in internationally disputed or significant territories the state will be able to build effectively. This becomes relevant when the other state is also staking a competitive claim in the area. The second is that in areas where the post colonial state is looking to expand, and there is some level of pre-existing mobilization along ethnic lines, the state will struggle to build. They will be met with resistance and even if the state manages to build in the area, it would be colored with the violence of a colonizing power. These two variations in statebuilding can give us greater insight into the statebuilding project of postcolonial states.

There are however some limitations to the project. Because of the scope of the project I have been unable to look at more case studies where these factors play an important role in the statebuilding project. Even within India, postcolonial state building was complicated by some major uprisings and insurgencies– some that the state was able to quash and some that go on till today. An expansive and more general theory would be able to generate a more comprehensive account of the other insurgencies in India but also cases from around the world. Therefore this theory explains the theory of statebuilding in India's borders in the immediate postcolonial time but may differ as we include more exigencies.

## Theory

### *Defining Statebuilding*

Statebuilding and nation building are often conflated with one another. However in practice even if both may occur simultaneously they are rarely constitutive of each other. Zoe Butt in a review essay mentions, “some authors use the terms interchangeably, some with completely different meanings. In general, most people use ‘state-building’ to refer to interventionist strategies to restore and rebuild the institutions and apparatus of the state, for example the bureaucracy. In contrast, ‘nation-building’ also refers to the creation of a cultural identity that relates to the particular territory of the state”(Butt,3). In a review essay, Juan J Linz argues that although statebuilding and nation building have been looked at as similar processes, they are distinctive in nature. They may have certain overlaps but they rarely occur simultaneously and thus can be labeled as two distinct categories . According to Linz, the state building process goes on for several centuries before the idea of a nation takes root within the people(Linz, 356).

Max Weber first highlighted in *Politics as a Vocation* where he defines the state as a ‘human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.’ Sociologist Charles Tilly, compares state making to racketeering. He argues that the war making machinery is extractive and the racketeers that are able to establish monopoly over violence would establish governance (Tilly, 351). However, statemaking is not as linear as establishing monopoly over the security apparatus.

However statebuilding can look differently when the populations exist at the periphery of the state and as James Scott argues in his book *The Art of not being governed* that ‘only the



modern state, in both its colonial and its independent guises, has had the resources to realize a project of rule that was a mere glint in the eye of its pre colonial ancestor: namely to bring non-state spaces and people to heel.' He goes on to argue that the projects of administrative, economic and cultural standardization are hardwired into the architecture of the modern state itself. These are used to render populations 'legible' and to extend the statemaking into areas that have not experienced the state in the same static sense that those under rule have seen. Scott comes from a long tradition of writers who go on to write about the ways in which state making, especially in its infrastructural capacity, became associated with nation making and coaxing populations into becoming parts of the state apparatus.

This becomes an even more tedious exercise then to situate statemaking in the context of borderlands. These are contested or uncontested spaces where the population lives influx. In a review paper by Braun et al, they note that the study of borderlands has seen a sharp growth, and that it has opened up more interesting avenues of analysis. For instance, the fixed nature of borders is often contested when borderlands are studied as the fluidity of identification and study can change the way governance is carried out in the area. Closeness to the border can amplify instances of violence but it also has an impact on the way in which the communities identify with national identities and other such constructs.

Statebuilding thus can be defined *as a set of interventionist strategies that are targeted towards the building or rebuilding of the regulatory apparatus of the state, for example the bureaucracy.* These then allow the state to function in the area and provide some level of services— whether it is welfare schemes or to ensure that they can maintain a monopoly over violence. This can look different when the population is averse to the establishment of the state.

Statebuilding, although different from nation building, can often constitute processes that promote both activities together.

### *Explanations for Differing outcomes in statebuilding*

In her book *Statebuilding by Imposition*, Reo Matsuzaki argues that statebuilding by imposition can look rather different and, at its core, often represents a dilemma. In the initial stages of the expansion of the state, the regulatory scope is often received with fear and suspicion but what eases the process is the presence of administrative intermediaries as everyday enforcers of rules and regulations within the locality. However this can look differently when state building is undertaken by way of imposition. In other words, “when construction of a strong and modern state is pursued amid widespread opposition by local communities *and* their leaders– the very individuals whose support rulers need to establish modern political institutions are themselves opposed to the endeavor”(Matsuzaki, 26). This begs the question, what impacts statebuilding in borderlands? Statebuilding can look differently in different places and often can be faced with resistance when it is imposed. What happens when there is the existence of pre-existing ethnic or national solidarity and the state attempts to move in?

The efficacy of statebuilding can change if there is preexisting mobilization along ethnic lines. Kanchan Chandra defines an ethnic identity as “a subset of identity categories in which eligibility for membership is determined by attributes associated with, or believed to be associated with, descent (described here simply as descent-based attributes)”(Chandra, 398). Varshney, drawing from Horowitz, fills this definition. He defines it as, “ethnicity as a term designates a sense of collective belonging, which could be based on common descent, language, history, culture, race or religion (or some combination of these)”(Varshney, 277). He further

goes on to distinguish between a nation and an ethnicity impressing upon the congruency of the political and national unit and thus drawing from Gellner. What this essentially means is that when ethnicity and statehood are brought together, they define a nation. For Gellner the concept of nationalism is civic in its form. To participate and associate with a community whilst acknowledging that your national identity is greater than all other loyalties you may hold, seems most important to him (Gellner,1983). In such a case a presence of a group that is mobilized along ethnic lines and demanding nationhood would affect statebuilding in a radical way.

The process of post colonial state making is one of mimicry and mimesis, thus the violence that the state experienced, it continues to inflict on more vulnerable populations in order to build states more effectively (Bhabha 2012; Fanon 1963). The Indian state, especially in the early stages of independence, inflicted violence upon vulnerable populations in order to secure its own interests and increase border control. Migdal argues that all throughout the postcolonial world there emerged strong states with weak state apparatus' and strong societies. But what this led to was also that certain groups where statebuilding was imposed, strengthened societal relationships even if the state apparatus itself was weak.

These expansionist state policies were met with increased resistance. Baruah highlights the logic of developmentalism is that the place is considered 'underdeveloped' and the idea of developing has connotations that define the population discursively(Baruah 30). He further notes that India however has used the scaffolding of developmentalism in order to nationalize frontier spaces. Nation building can constitute a more discursive and dynamic process of statebuilding. Both can occur simultaneously and therefore the resistance to one can be characterized for the other. For instance the attempts of the state to build infrastructure can be looked at as a direct

attack on the identity building process of the state— in this case statebuilding is not devoid of nation building because then it looks at the integration of the population in all ways possible.

The outcomes of such a case would look different from an area that does not have a cohesive ethnic identity and national aspirations. In the latter case, statebuilding could potentially be done alongside nation building in order to not only ‘assimilate’ populations but to also secure borders. Even as we draw a sharp distinction between state and nation building these often become blurry when met with a post colonial state that still has to consolidate territorial power whilst generating myth making that is required for the nation to subsist as a consistent identity. These processes can often be characterized by violence and perceived threat to the established order of the area. Ethnic markers of mobilization can be used to generate resistance against the project of the state.

Thus, it prevents the rise of administrative intermediaries that would have otherwise normalized the state through everyday interactions with the people. This lack of effort from the state, when the only purpose of statebuilding is to secure borders especially when the country on the other side of the border is not particularly a threat, hinders the effectiveness of the state building project. It can also generate long sustained civil wars as the people continue to be stuck in the cycle of viewing the state as violent and therefore resist, if not violently, then symbolically the overtures of state and nation building. Therefore pre-existing mobilization on the basis of ethnic identities can prevent the state from conducting effective statebuilding. The administrative intermediaries that they would have otherwise utilized in the process of integration and increasing the everyday interactions of the state, turn against that very apparatus. Sometimes it can lead to violent outcomes, and sometimes local leaders can command larger authority. As

such, this means that statebuilding can look differently especially in borderlands where there is a semblance of pre-existing mobilization

H1- *In cases of pre-existing mobilization along ethnic lines, statebuilding will be resisted*

This however is an incomplete picture. In the case of statebuilding in borderlands, another key concern is the presence of internationally salient borders. Realist theories are aware of the intimate link between borders and the security of the state. John Herz argues that for centuries nation states viewed their sovereignty through the lens of territoriality and that there is an area that is surrounded by a 'wall of defensibility' (Starr, 3). Borders become an important part not only in the creation of the physical boundaries of a nation state but also essential to maintaining the myth of the nation. Many borderlands thus often governed by strategies not just targeted at the population but also in general to securitize the state. Here I want to define internationally volatile borders as those *borders where the state perceives the threat of future violence or incursion into contested territory*. For instance the McMahon line (India and China) and the Line of Control (India and Pakistan) are considered as internationally volatile borders. India does not seem to care much about borders such as the Nagaland border with Myanmar and therefore their policy in the area looks very different.

In her book *Shadow States* Reardon argues that much of the statebuilding conducted in the Himalayas by India was 'competitive statebuilding'. They saw China as a politically salient neighbor and were therefore pushed towards state building initiatives in order to secure their border (Reardon, 22). Enze Han in his book *Asymmetrical Neighbors*, argues that 'we should treat state building as an interactive process between domestic politics in one state and the

international dimension that relates to its neighbors'. He argues that the process of statebuilding is dependent on the power relations between the two states. They provide a dyad where they theorize that the nature of power symmetry between the neighboring states influences the decision making process during state building along border regions. However they make the argument that statebuilding is affected by a multiplicity of cases such as ethnic composition of borderlands, the nature of the international relationship between the two neighbors and the relationship that the state has with the ethnic group involved. Managing the threat to violence has always been a central concern of international development and security(Han 32).

In a paper by Beeher, he argues that the process of statebuilding along border regions especially in postcolonial states was extractive and coercive. It conducted statebuilding and national integration as simultaneous processes (Beeher, 8).In this case the process became even more complicated when the significance of the border was accounted for. For instance, with an internationally significant border the state would be pressed to conduct statebuilding in the area since there is pressure from the other state too. Both of them would aim to stake a claim on the region because of the expansionist nature of the states themselves. This expansionism places the society receiving the statebuilding in an interesting position of agency. The state cannot be violent and extractive because the preferences of the populations can shift as they witness or experience some sort of violence– making them susceptible to shifting allegiances. Therefore for effective statebuilding the state has to resort to a delicate balance of statebuilding as well as securitization.

*H2: Where there is an internationally significant border and no pre-existing mobilization along ethnic lines, state building would be more effective.*

Thus statebuilding in India's borders is a complicated multi pronged process. The state's foremost priority is to secure its young and often shifting borders— especially in the Himalayas. India also treats statebuilding differently in regions where there is an internationally significant border. This will become salient in the case of NEFA and Nagaland where both states started off rather similarly but soon diverged. In what was considered a top down state, India works very differently in borderlands where they seem to care more about securitization and where the issue is generated by a stronger power on the other side of the border. This shifts and changes when the state is met with resistance from nationalized ethnic groups which aspire to set up their own nation.

## **Case Studies**

### **Arunachal Pradesh**

At the time of India's independence, the area now called Arunachal Pradesh was known as the North East Frontier Area or NEFA. During the colonial period, this area was part of Assam. Post independence while it remained a part of Assam, control was taken away from the elected state government and given to the Governor of Assam who acted as the Agent of the Indian government. Until the 1960s, when Assam was divided— Arunachal Pradesh and several other states that now constitute the North East were a part of Assam. NEFA was expected to remain a part of Assam, but under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, they made special provisions for the administration of the 'tribal areas' of Assam. The Sixth Schedule provides for autonomous districts and elected tribal councils with powers to regulate customary law. But, as Baruah notes, areas that had been left unadministered during the British colonial

rule— which included Arunachal Pradesh and parts of Nagaland were considered to be not quite ready for these institutions. (ref) Thus, the administration was carried out by Delhi with the Governor of Assam. In addition to this the 19th century legislation of the Inner line restricted entry of outsiders (foreigners and indians) into the area. This isolated NEFA even further.

Savitri G Burman, in her work, refers to NEFA as the ‘Hidden land.’ She goes on to describe the pristine beauty, but also highlights the difficult terrain (Burman, 344). She wrote in the backdrop of the 1962 Indo-China war, where China made significant inroads into the NEFA region and India, caught off guard, faced a humiliating defeat. Burman also mentions that if it hadn’t been for the ‘recent developments’ in the region, the place would have remained untouched for the time being (ibid). In other words if the 1962 war had not occurred the state of development in the area would have remained low. Nehru’s stated policy for the region was one of non-interference. In a dispatch in the Times of India from 31st August 1955, from a conference at Dibrugarh, he said NEFA presented an interesting problem. He goes on to say that a large part of NEFA remains unadministered and people are at varying degrees of development. He recognizes that it is always difficult to deal with ‘primitive people’ (ibid). However, he acknowledged that even if it is difficult, the NEFA region must be dealt with, and these people cannot be left alone for too long (Times of India, 1951). In the same article, when asked about the clashes in the Tuensang Tract— where the Assam Rifles were sent in to deal with ‘violent extremists’ he mentions that these were not part of the NEFA but were instead incited by people in the Naga Hills.

The history of Arunachal Pradesh has been one of positive integration for Delhi. Nation building has been more or less successful in the region. In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, Arunachal Pradesh saw the highest voter turnout of over 82% (Anshuman 2019). Other markers



of nation building include the usage of Hindi in official correspondence in the state. The language of debate in the state legislative assembly is Hindi. Despite the disputed status of the state, where Beijing has insisted time and again that the state is part of South Tibet, it remains amply clear that the state is almost fully integrated into the Indian mainland (Chandra).

There are many reasons for this disputed status of Arunachal Pradesh but scholars seem to agree that the 1962 Sino-India war became fertile ground for India to ramp up state building efforts in the area. Sanjib Baruah in his book *Durable Disorder* argues that even as the discourse of development made its way to Arunachal Pradesh it became a major part of the Indian policy vis-a-vis the area. National security driven processes have led to the creation of a special regional dispensation of small and financially dependent states that are formally autonomous units of India's federal system (Baruah 35). He further goes on to argue that the process of development is often a discursive exercise of knowledge production. To identify which populations need development is in itself a political choice. Baruah believes that infrastructure development in Arunachal Pradesh was an act of nationalizing the frontier space. In 1962, NEFA was at the forefront of the war. The Chinese army made deep incursions into the Indian territory before withdrawing and thus India faced a humiliating defeat. Prime Minister Nehru's policy of isolation towards the area— which was a product of the British colonial practice was completely discredited. The war with China exposed India's vulnerabilities in not just NEFA but also in other regions of Assam. Poor road connectivity in the early and late 1950s became more pronounced as the insurgency in Nagaland intensified. The Indian state had been unable to build in the area till the late 1950s and all of what had been built was to service the troops. The political reorganization of the area was also done in order to prevent the civil war spilling over.

The Tuensang district was separated from NEFA in 1957 and combined with the Naga Hills district (Rechard, 2016).

However as Rechard notes further, “Indian state-making had seemingly found its pace over the course of the 1950s. By January 1959, NEFA counted sixty-one administrative centers. Indian authorities had also completed the first motorable road between a Frontier Division headquarters (Bomdila) and the rest of the world”(Rechad, 2016).She further notes even as a crisis brewed in Tibet in the late 1950s, India was not so dissimilar in its own state building project. Like the People’s republic of China the territorial ambitions of the Indian state too were fashioned after its foreign predecessors. Even though the British administration had been sparse in the region the Indian state utilized its colonial apparatus to maintain control over the region. This meant that the area despite it being on a critical border for India was left mostly undisturbed and untapped. Both PRC and India valued the importance of transport and road building in the area and it was the former that was able to more effectively realize that as an outcome however, because of the lack of engineers and infrastructure to build– the labor had to be exported. This created resentment among local people who then shifted allegiances towards the Indian state. Rechard also noted that India's NEFA philosophy, “also influenced this by prioritizing the retention of a pristine tribal-ness, promoting cottage industry rather than industrialisation or mining. In short, the Indian state was comparatively weaker and less extractive”(Rechard, 2016).

## **Nagaland**

The case of Nagaland is a little different. Naga national identity had been around for a while and the incursions of the Indian state only intensified the national identity. Naga nationalism has been a constant force that has consistently defined the way in which the people

view themselves in relation to the mainland. It was not simply a postcolonial construct— in fact the demands for Naga national identity can be traced back to the British colonial period when the state making project first made its mark on the people. Before India's independence the Naga national identity had already started gaining impetus in the area. It dates back to 1881 when the British first annexed the hills to control the strategic trade routes in India's northeast and into Burma(Thakker et al). The first sign of Naga resistance began in 1918 when the Naga club was formed(Bhaumik, 10). Naga spokespersons had articulated their concerns as early as 1929 when they had approached the Simon Commission with an ask that they be 'left alone just like the ancient times'(Wouters, 7). They even highlighted the concerns they had with respect to the treatment meted out to them by the British.

While the British had maintained a policy of non-interference with the entire region, their state building project nevertheless left a violent mark on their history. The region had already been separated from Assam by an inner line— thus marking their separation from the mainland (IWIGA, 40). Towards the end of the British colonial rule they began negotiations with the Naga National Council, the successor of the Naga Club and reached a Nine point agreement. The agreement affirmed the Naga demand ' to develop themselves according to their freely expressed wishes is recognized'(Thakker et al). However a disagreement emerged on whether it could be extended further for a ten year period. The nascent government in India denied that request; for them the state building project relied heavily on the consolidation of all the states that refused to join the union. This gave birth to a decades long civil war that still continues to plague the state. It is one of the longest standing civil wars in India and saw violence as recently as 2021 when the Indian armed forces shot down 14 civilians in the state (Human rights watch).

In 1946, the Naga National Council was set up under the leadership of Angami Phizo and they announced Nagaland an independent state on 14th August 1947. The NNC resolved to consolidate Nagaland as a sovereign territory and in 1951 they even conducted a referendum in which 99 percent of the people voted for sovereignty. In March 1952, Phizo formed the underground Nagaland Federal Government and the Naga Federal Army. The Indian Government sent in the army to crush the insurgency and in 1958 they enacted the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) (Thakker et al). Angami Phizo was declared the President and soon after became the face of the movement.

What followed was a period of intense armed combat between the Indian state forces and the NNC. The Naga Hills, earlier a district in Assam, was upgraded to a State in 1963, with the Tuensang Tract as a part of it (It was earlier a part of the NEFA). It was followed by failed peace talks between Delhi and the Naga insurgents which led to an escalation in violence. In 1975, the government signed the Shillong Accord with a part of the NNC and members of the NFG which effectively meant that they would give up arms. A group of about 140 members led by Thuingaleng Muivah, at that time in China, refused to accept the Shillong Accord and formed the National Socialist Council of Nagaland in 1980. Muivah also had Isak Chisi Swu and S S Khaplang with him. In 1988, the NSCN split into NSCN (IM) and NSCN (K) after a violent clash. The NSCN(IM) came to be seen as the 'mother of all insurgencies' in the region. The Government of India then signed a ceasefire agreement with NSCN(IM) in 1997 and later with the NSCN(K) in 2001. There was an intense rise in militancy in the early nineties but the ceasefire led to an observable decrease in the violence. However the conflict still rages on, as the NSCN(IM) makes a case for a sovereign Greater Nagalim with its own flag and national anthem (Kashyap et al).

Even as Nagaland became one of the most long standing civil wars in the country, the Indian state did not leave any stone unturned when it came to making inroads into the state. The rough terrain and the unreachability of the state made it hard for Delhi to build infrastructure— an important part of the nationalizing effort undertaken by the Indian government. In a discussion on the Parliament floor, Nehru insists that the NEFA region is a ‘special’ region that deserves special treatment (Wouters, 125). He pushes for the creation of Nagaland as a separate state within the country— albeit with special status. On 1st December 1963, the President of India and philosopher Dr S Radhakrishnan flew to Kohima to inaugurate the new state of Nagaland. In an excerpt from his speech he mentions:

“...The resources of Nagaland, limited as they are, will have to be developed to the fullest extent and yet there may be need for Central assistance for purposes of development and administration. I am sure this assistance will be available for the Naga people in full measure ...” (Wouters, 127)

The speech paved a new way of restructuring life in Nagaland and also for the resurgence of insurgent violence. The NNC immediately rejected the new state’s legitimacy to govern and reiterated its demand for independence and stepped up resistance. Wouters argues that this proclamation of statehood had a dual impact on the people of Nagaland. One because of the proclamation the state witnessed heightened levels of violence. The insurgents stepped up their resistance and so did the Indian army. The advent of the state is then colored because of the experiences of the violence that the people continue to remember and associate with the state. The second is however, the flooding of developmental aid and infrastructure meant that there were opportunities for the people of Nagaland. This brought in more money and growth for the people living there and enabled upward social mobility for the people there (Wouters, 128).

Nagaland then witnessed some of the most violent counterinsurgency strategies in the beginning of the war. Nandini Sundar talks about internment strategies used by the Indian army in the northeast and Nagaland, where entire villages were moved by the Indian state in order to root out insurgents(Sundar,4). In another interview by Wouters, the interviewee notes that, “...Delhi only sent us bullets and problems. So many Jawans came into our lands, raping our women, beating our elders, and killing many. Those days Nagaland was like an open-air prison. Many bad things happened. In my village the Indian Army also did terrible things.”(Wouters, 168)

Development in Nagaland has been viewed through the lens of security. India's counterinsurgency strategy in the area revolved around negotiation with tribal leaders and chiefs to secure the surrender of the guerilla fighters and by strengthening the electoral system by pumping in a huge amount of money into Nagaland aimed at securing the loyalty of the emerging Naga political class (Bhaumik 2007, 10). Bethany Lacina in her paper *The Problem of Political Stability in Northeast India* notes that the emergence of the political elite in states in the northeast was because of a policy that Delhi followed. These pockets of what she calls ‘localized autocracies’ kept political power in the hands of those that were committed to Delhi. They were often corrupt and allowed to function on their own terms as long as the violence from insurgents was kept down (Lacina 1000).

Local legitimacy and governance is a contested issue in Nagaland as noted by the then Development Commissioner that the state is ‘viewed to be a temporary arrangement pending final settlement.’(Wouters, 130). This transitional nature of the authority was visible in the way the residents of Phuguwmi and Noksen treated the influx of capital and infrastructure in the state. Even as the general livelihood of the population improved they still viewed this as an insertion

from outside — something that was separate from Naga identity. This meant that their view of the state was an entity they *profit from* and not *belong to*. This complicated the dynamics of local governance and made legitimacy a fraught concept. By the time the Naga State had been incorporated, the people had begun to view the postcolonial state as an apparatus of violence and oppression. It was hard to reverse that as the insurgency gained momentum.

As this was happening, the influx of capital in the state gave rise to a new set of elites. In many of the interviews that Wouters conducts he notes that people would mention that getting access to these funds was not hard, and people would often want to get tenders for such projects because it would pocketing most of it. The rise of corruption saw what he terms as the ‘moral economy of state resources’. A complicated relationship began to emerge between the state and the people of Nagaland. The Naga elites would siphon off money that was meant for the benefit of the population— insinuating that corruption was directly linked to the state (Wouters 140). Subir Bhaumik in his book *Troubled Periphery* notes that the general consensus has been that the rebellions in the north east have been because of the region's economic backwardness. However, Delhi has been pumping in a huge quantum of funds which have not translated into the development of infrastructure. A report called The Vision 2020 document prepared by the Department of Development of North Eastern Region (DONER) admits that the region as a whole is lagging behind the entire country in terms of development indicators (Bhaumik, 231). Thus in the case of Nagaland, developmental efforts had an almost opposite effect. The state was unable to nationalize the space and instead managed to incite more insurgent violence.

## Discussion

Thus India followed differing policies in the area when it came to NEFA and Nagaland. The 1960s proved to be particularly instructive in this as it was against the backdrop of the 1962 war that India's new policy of extending the institutions of the state all the way into international borders came into focus. They wanted to nationalize the frontier space and thus India began a developmentalist path in the region (Baruah, 39). While Baruah argues that developmentalism acted as a way for the state to secure its own security interests, he forgets to pay deeper attention towards the way in which development also acted as a simultaneous process of nation building in an area where the India state did not have enough presence. However the process of integration of the NEFA region was not so straightforward. Berenice Guyot-Rechard in her book *Shadow States* mentions that the politics between India and China have been studied through high politics and the communities that have been directly affected by the outcomes of that have often been ignored. In her book she looks at the situation from the ground up and offers a novel way of looking at the reasons why the tensions between the two countries flared up. She explores the interaction of India's attempt to entrench itself in the Himalayas and China's interests in Tibet. This led to the emergence of 'competitive statebuilding' in the region (Rechard, 5).

Rechard in her book looks at a complicated set of circumstances. The incorporation of NEFA was not as straightforward as labeling India a coercive state looking to render the region legible. The Nehruvian state in the earlier years was often understood as a top-down machinery however their approach towards NEFA was characterized by accommodation, acceptance, and even invitation. She further argues that under some circumstances a *certain kind* of state is welcomed. For instance she mentions that the people of NEFA had to deal with both the Chinese



and the Indian state but the presence of the Indian state to them seemed more *malleable*. In other words they imagined a life of more agency under the Indian state(Rechard 28).

This was contingent on the internal dynamics of the state and the relationships that people and tribes had with each other– in this case Tibet became an important factor. Nehru’s approach to Tibet remains a vast issue, but for our purposes, it is important to note that India had adopted a sympathetic attitude towards the Tibetans. The situation worsened when in 1959 the Dalai Lama (the spiritual leader of Tibet) fled from Lhasa to Dharamsala. Nehru misread the situation and banked on the fact that there would be no full scale Chinese aggression on India’s borders but he was soon proven wrong (Patil, 288). People in NEFA would also witness the continued violence in Tibet at the hands of the PRC. This proved to be a positive outcome for India, since India did not have the resources to allocate to the area at that time. The Assam Rifles that were known for their brutal treatment of Naga insurgents were rarely seen in the area as most of them were moved to posts in Nagaland to combat the growing insurgency. Therefore NEFA did not witness any overt violence from the Indian state in the area(Rechard 2016 ).

China had also started road building projects in the entire Himalayan Frontier with particular focus on Aksai Chin. In the Henderson Brooks report which was a set of classified documents, India had been aware of the Chinese incursions into the Indian territory and were taking special cognizance of the opening up of more vehicular routes on the Western Command. The border dispute had become the single largest factor in the India and China’s regressing relationship. In fact there was a difference in the topography of the region in India and that in Tibet– the Indian side received heavy rainfall throughout the year while the Tibetan side was cold and bare and received light rainfall. In fact as Prakash notes in his paper, India had not even established a Border Development Road in 1960 and post that it took longer to establish the

infrastructure along the border (Prakash,8). India through this period remained ambivalent towards the Chinese. In a paper by Patil, he argues that even though Nehru was aware of the Chinese threat, the Indian government pivoted most of their attention towards Pakistan. Even the defense budget that should have been allocated towards the securing of the north-eastern border was reduced in the year 1960-61(Patil, 291).

Mirza Zulfiqar Rahman in his paper asserts that it was the 1962 war that pushed India to take notice of the Northeast as a significant area (Rahman 61). Although the war did not escalate beyond a border war, India noticed that the lacking infrastructure in the area impeded the movement of its own troops. Even then, India viewed infrastructure in Arunachal Pradesh as a means to an end — for them, the area was important from a security point of view more than anything else. Therefore, the roads that were built were meant to service the movement of troops.

Statebuilding in Arunachal Pradesh, Rahman notes, has changed over time. The roads built during the 1962 war, which were targeted only for ‘cosmetic development’ served to meet India’s troop deployment needs. He further notes, “India clearly lagged behind China as the latter made rapid strides in building a comprehensive access infrastructure all along the critical border areas.”(Rahman, 12)

Misra in his work notes that road building had an important impact on the way in which tribal populations in Arunachal Pradesh were arranged. It had three impacts. Firstly, the roads were arranged in a north-south direction connecting the borders with China to the plains of Assam, which meant that to visit one district headquarters from another, people in Arunachal Pradesh had to travel a long distance through Assam. Second, these roads became so significant that settlement patterns in the uplands under-went significant changes. Old sites for villages shifted to newer sites near the roads. This led to the creation of ‘multiclans, multi tribe

villages with several implications for control and management of community resources, including land and forests. Third, in the construction of roads local people were employed as contractors, which not only cemented the relationship between the locals and the administration but also played a catalytic role in creating a local contractor class' (Misra, 151).

The state building effort thus happened simultaneously with nation building. As India maintained a softer approach towards NEFA they continued to also introduce the state as a way to compete with the Chinese incursions. Berenice Guyot-Rechard in her paper on nation building in the north east argues that processes that are often associated with state building in the conventional sense can generate national sentiment. She mentions that we must see, "Indian state's developmental ambitions as an instrument of nation-building. In North-East India at least, state-making and nation-building have not historically gone together, and developmentalism was a big factor in this rupture. (Rechard, 23)" Rechard notes that the Indian state had its work cut out. Expansion was difficult and fraught because the terrain eluded any sort of penetration. The borders remained incredibly porous and several patches of unexplored areas existed.

In this situation, expansion was dependent on the *capacity* of the frontier officers to exert their authority and reach in, in benevolent terms with respect to state-led development and cultural protection. Thus, parallel to administrative expansion the state saw a flurry of welfare schemes on the frontier — from the introduction of wet rice cultivation to the building of schools, hospitals, and dispensaries (Rechard, 25). Welfare schemes allowed the state to entrench into the state in a way that had previously eluded them. Even as the Nehru-Elwin philosophy had disappointed the state when it came to security matters, it remained relevant when welfare schemes had to be established. The state worked with local political actors and people to develop policies and schemes and ways of disbursement that worked better for them. Council elders,

village headmen, and local traders were relied upon to solicit information and administer justice. As the developmental state gathered pace some of these strongmen and the younger educated tribal members were absorbed into the local administration by being appointed as village workers (Rechar, 26). This gave impetus to the associated process of nation building where India came to be viewed through the provision of public goods and services; and therefore the administrative state began to root itself deeper in the state through the trappings of infrastructural development. In this case, both state building and nation building happened simultaneously. In other words, the presence of China on the other side of the border as well as the lack of mobilization from the state meant that India found it easier to entrench and build in the area. Which is to say that there was no resistance to statebuilding in a way that would have hampered the project.

However the case of Nagaland differed slightly. The emergence of Naga identity in the earlier stages of the British colonial state building also sealed the fate of the state. Naga concerns had begun to take shape as early as 1918 when the formation of the idea of Naga identity came into focus. Wouters mentions that even though the insistence of the Naga identity is that it came from within, the logics of the same remain deeply rooted in the British colonial state and the fact that cohesive identity building had to be done in order to mount a resistance against colonizing powers (Wouters, 45). The nationalism is loosely built and constructed around the similarity of experience and not as a more deeply rooted matter of affect. But it still remains a force of unison and thus gave impetus to the resistance where integration into the Indian state meant losing sovereignty and control over their lands and bowing down to a legal regime.

It did not help that even when the Indian state did extend developmental aid, those were colored by the experiences of violence that the Nagas had already faced. In such a situation it

became harder for the state to rebuild its authority in the area in any meaningful way. This was not the case for Arunachal Pradesh. British era policies such as the Inner Line Regulations kept the populations hidden from the view of the state. Their tribalism was seen as a complement to the state and not as an impediment. Thus, a common national identity did not develop and the tribes remained isolated not only from the state but also from each other. This separation helped Nehru maintain the philosophy of isolationism with respect to the tribes in the area, and only when the strategic importance of NEFA came to the forefront was any tangible infrastructural integration taken into account.

Bhaumik notes that the political reorganization of the region was designed to pacify ethnic unrest but it seemed to have an almost opposite effect as it intensified cohesive national identities and made the populations suspicious of the complicated legal regime that accompanied this reorganization. Another important factor was that for India the international border with Nagaland was not as significant as Arunachal Pradesh was. Vibha Joshi in her paper argues that unlike India's western border that was formed after much political upheaval, the eastern one is said to be more speculative. She goes on to say that "In recent years the Myanmar junta has helped the government of India by destroying the camps of two Naga nationalist groups on their side of the border. This tacit understanding between India and Myanmar is perhaps the basis for the government of India's diplomatic silence on issues of democracy in Myanmar... Compared to India's northwestern border with Pakistan, which has been in national and international focus since 1947, the northeastern border with Myanmar has received only intermittent attention"(Joshi, 166). This relative calm and coordination on that border meant that India did not have to worry about the insistence of competitive state building — in fact Nagaland for them

became a domestic issue which could be dealt with force. India could then focus its attention towards keeping violence down, development becoming a secondary factor.

Thus the theory of statebuilding can be encapsulated in this table:

	Pre existing Mobilization along ethnic lines	Internationally volatile borders	Response to State building
Nagaland	Yes	No	Resistance(Civil War)
NEFA(later Arunachal Pradesh)	No	Yes	State building translated into nation building

### **Conclusion**

This paper looked at statebuilding in NEFA and Nagaland in the 1950s and 1960s. It argues that India had drastically differing outcomes in both cases because it treated and prioritized both cases differently. In the case of NEFA, India was concerned about the Chinese state on the other side of the border. This led to a process of competitive statebuilding between the two states.

NEFA witnessed the brutality and violence of PRC in neighboring Tibet whereas military

intervention by the Indian state had remained low in the region. India had focussed most of its focus onto the brewing insurgency in Nagaland just across the Tuensang tract. This lack of presence of the state as well as the non-ability to dedicate resources in order to extract value from the area portrayed the Indian state as more malleable as opposed to China. This helped the Indians who were then able to use the British era administration in order to govern the area. Their NEFA philosophy which left the state to deal with its own problems proved to be a success in the long run even though it failed in its immediate purpose since they were unable to predict the Chinese incursions in 1962.

The treatment was however different when it came to Nagaland, where the mobilization along ethnic lines had begun in the early 1920s. The Naga national identity lent itself as a forceful movement of resistance against the Indian state. This volatile resistance to statebuilding was met with an extractive and violent state that only looked towards what it viewed as a domestic issue. This treatment of the Naga insurgency sealed the fate of the Indian state which was then continually met with resistance. Thus they were ineffective in building a state in the region because of pre-existing mobilization along ethnic lines.

Further research on this could test this theory with more cases of insurgency both within India's borders as well as other postcolonial states. Other versions of this theory could also look at the relevance of political party mobilization as well as local level leaders and their involvement in high politics.

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