© Volume 2, Issue 10, October 2026 | JATIR
e-ISSN: 2839-5786, p-ISSN: 3139-8464

Conflict Resolution and Peace-Building in Northeast India: Pathways to Inclusive Sustainable, And Participatory Development for Viksit Bharat 2047

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***Abstract*—Northeast India is one of the most culturally, ethnically, linguistically, and ecologically diverse regions of India and occupies a strategically significant position because of its international borders and connections with South and Southeast Asia. At the same time, the region has experienced prolonged insurgency, ethnic tensions, demands for autonomy, identity-based mobilization, resource disputes, displacement, and institutional challenges. These conditions have affected social cohesion, public trust, and the inclusiveness of development. This article examines conflict resolution and peace-building in Northeast India in the context of India's long-term vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. Drawing on conflict transformation, participatory peace-building, restorative justice, and positive peace, it critically considers major peace initiatives and negotiated settlements, including the Mizo Accord, Shillong Accord, Bodo peace processes, the NSCN (IM) Framework Agreement, the Karbi Anglong Agreement, and the Tripura Peace Agreement. The paper argues that durable peace cannot be secured merely through the cessation of armed violence or the signing of political agreements. It requires meaningful political inclusion, accountable governance, socio-economic opportunity, cultural recognition, justice, reconciliation, and sustained participation by affected communities. The continuing crisis in Manipur further demonstrates the consequences of delayed intervention, fragile inter-community trust, contested identity, and inadequate reconciliation mechanisms. The paper proposes an integrated framework connecting peace-building with participatory governance, institutional strengthening, youth and women's engagement, restorative processes, sustainable livelihoods, cultural preservation, responsible security governance, and cross-border cooperation. It concludes that peace should be treated as a continuous social and institutional process rather than a single political settlement. Such an approach can help transform Northeast India from a region frequently described through the lens of conflict into a region of resilience, cooperation, innovation, and inclusive development, thereby contributing substantially to the aspirations of Viksit Bharat 2047.**

***Index Terms*—conflict resolution; peace-building; Northeast India; conflict transformation; participatory governance; restorative justice; ethnic relations; Manipur; Viksit Bharat 2047; sustainable development**

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1.Context of the Study

Northeast India comprises eight states—Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura—and shares international boundaries with Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Myanmar, and Nepal. Its geographical position, ecological richness, cultural diversity, and proximity to neighboring countries give the region substantial strategic and developmental significance. However, its modern political history has also been shaped by questions of identity, ethnicity, autonomy, land, resource distribution, political representation, and the relationship between local communities and the state.

1.2.Conflict and Development

Conflict in the Northeast cannot be understood exclusively as a security problem. Prolonged violence has interacted with poverty, unemployment, displacement, weak institutional capacity, uneven development, and contested political identities. Conflict disrupts education, investment, public services, mobility, and social relationships, while development deficits can reinforce perceptions of exclusion. Peace-building and development should therefore be treated as mutually reinforcing processes.

1.3.Viksit Bharat 2047 and the Northeast

The national aspiration of Viksit Bharat 2047 provides an opportunity to reconsider the place of the Northeast within India's long-term development trajectory. A developed India requires not only economic growth but also social cohesion, constitutional inclusion, institutional trust, human security, and equitable participation. The Northeast has substantial potential in biodiversity-based livelihoods, tourism, education, entrepreneurship, border trade, connectivity, agriculture, renewable energy, and cultural industries. Realizing this potential requires peace, dignity, security, and meaningful community participation.

1.4.Purpose and Central Argument

This article argues that durable peace in Northeast India requires a shift from predominantly settlement-oriented approaches toward comprehensive and participatory peace-building. Political agreements remain important, but they must be accompanied by effective implementation, responsive governance, justice, reconciliation, livelihood opportunities, and sustained community engagement. Peace should therefore be understood not simply as the absence of armed conflict, but as the presence of institutions and relationships capable of managing differences constructively.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

2.1.Persistence of Recurring Conflict

Despite decades of negotiations, constitutional arrangements, autonomous councils, development programmes, and peace accords, conflict continues to recur in parts of Northeast India. This recurrence suggests that formal settlements do not automatically resolve the structural and relational causes of conflict.

2.2.Implementation and Trust Deficits

A major challenge is the gap between political commitments and their implementation. When agreements are delayed, selectively implemented, or interpreted differently by stakeholders, public confidence declines. Fragile trust can make communities vulnerable to mobilization around fear, identity, insecurity, and perceived injustice.

2.3.Inclusion and Representation

Questions concerning who participates in negotiations and who benefits from development remain central. Women, young people, civil society organizations, traditional institutions, displaced persons, and smaller ethnic communities may have limited influence in formal peace processes. Peace agreements that do not adequately reflect affected communities risk producing incomplete or fragile outcomes.

2.4.Developmental and Institutional Inequalities

Economic opportunity, quality education, health services, employment, and institutional accountability remain uneven. Where communities perceive development as unequal or disconnected from local priorities, programmes may fail to strengthen social cohesion. The problem is therefore not merely the absence of development, but the absence of inclusive, participatory, and locally responsive development.

III. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1.Aim

The principal aim of this study is to examine conflict resolution and peace-building in Northeast India and propose a participatory and sustainable framework that connects peace, governance, social justice, and development with the aspirations of Viksit Bharat 2047.

3.2.Objectives

(1). To examine the historical and contemporary evolution of conflict and peace processes in Northeast India.

(2) To assess the contributions and limitations of major peace accords, autonomy arrangements, and reconciliation initiatives.

(3) To identify structural, institutional, socio-economic, and relational barriers to durable peace.
(4) To examine how conflict transformation, participatory peace-building, restorative justice, and positive peace can inform regional policy.
(5) To propose practical pathways for inclusive peace-building that support sustainable development and national integration.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

4.1.Primary Research Question

How can conflict resolution and peace-building in Northeast India be strengthened to produce inclusive, sustainable, and participatory development in the context of Viksit Bharat 2047?

4.2.Secondary Research Questions

(1) What lessons can be drawn from major peace accords and negotiated settlements in the Northeast?
(2) Why do some peace agreements produce only partial or fragile outcomes?
(3) What structural and institutional conditions continue to reproduce conflict?
(4) How can local communities, women, youth, civil society, and traditional institutions participate more meaningfully in peace-building?
(5) How can peace-building and regional development be integrated into a long-term policy framework?

V. METHODOLOGY

5.1.Research Design

The study adopts a qualitative and analytical research design based primarily on secondary sources. It does not claim to provide a statistical measurement of conflict trends; rather, it interprets major peace processes, governance arrangements, and conflict dynamics through established peace and conflict theories.

5.2.Documentary Analysis

Government publications, peace accords, policy documents, scholarly literature, institutional reports, and relevant research materials are considered to identify patterns in conflict resolution, governance, implementation, and reconciliation.

5.3.Theoretical Framework

Four complementary concepts guide the analysis: conflict transformation, participatory peace-building, restorative justice, and positive peace. Conflict transformation draws attention to relationships and structures that generate violence. Participatory peace-building emphasizes the agency of affected communities. Restorative justice focuses on acknowledgement,

accountability, healing, and restoration. Positive peace extends analysis beyond the cessation of violence to justice, equality, dignity, and functioning social institutions.

5.4.Case-Based Analysis

Selected peace processes are examined comparatively, with particular attention to the Mizo, Naga, Bodo, Karbi, and Tripura contexts. The Manipur conflict is considered as a contemporary case illustrating the consequences of unresolved grievances and fragile inter-community relationships.

5.5.Scope and Limitation

Because the study is based on documentary and analytical methods, it does not substitute for field-based ethnographic or survey research. The findings should therefore be understood as an analytical framework that can support future empirical studies involving affected communities.

VI. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

6.1.Conflict Transformation

Conflict transformation moves beyond managing or terminating violence and asks how unjust relationships, institutions, narratives, and structures can be changed. This perspective is particularly relevant in the Northeast because identity-based conflicts often involve historical grievances, unequal political representation, land and resource questions, and mistrust that cannot be resolved through security measures alone.

6.2.Positive Peace

The distinction between negative and positive peace is essential. Negative peace refers broadly to the absence or reduction of direct violence, whereas positive peace concerns justice, equality, social inclusion, and institutions capable of resolving disputes peacefully. A peace process that stops armed confrontation but leaves structural exclusion untouched may therefore remain vulnerable.

6.3.Participatory Peace-Building

Peace-building becomes more sustainable when affected communities are treated as participants rather than passive beneficiaries. Participation should extend beyond consultation to meaningful roles in decision-making, monitoring, implementation, and evaluation. Women, youth, traditional leaders, religious communities, civil society, and local organizations can contribute knowledge and social legitimacy that formal institutions may not possess.

6.4.Restorative Justice and Reconciliation

Restorative approaches recognize that conflict produces relational and psychological wounds as well as material losses. Truth-telling, acknowledgement of harm, accountability, reparative

measures, memorialization, and community dialogue can help rebuild relationships. Such mechanisms must be context-sensitive and should not be imposed without local ownership.

6.5.Localized and Responsive Governance

Institutions are more likely to generate trust when they are accessible, accountable, culturally sensitive, and responsive to local priorities. Autonomous councils and traditional institutions can contribute to conflict management, but their effectiveness depends on clear authority, adequate resources, constitutional compatibility, transparency, and protection of minority rights.

VII. HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PEACE PROCESSES

7.1.The Mizo Accord, 1986

The Mizo Accord is widely regarded as an important example of a negotiated political settlement in India's Northeast. It created a pathway from armed insurgency to constitutional politics and was followed by Mizoram attaining full statehood. Its broader lesson is that durable settlement can emerge when political dialogue, constitutional accommodation, reintegration, and development are pursued together.

7.2.The Shillong Accord, 1975

The Shillong Accord represented an attempt to address the Naga conflict through negotiated settlement. However, disagreements over its terms contributed to further fragmentation within Naga political movements. The case demonstrates that agreements require broad legitimacy and cannot be considered comprehensive when significant stakeholders remain outside the settlement process.

7.3.The NSCN (IM) Framework Agreement, 2015

The 2015 Framework Agreement represented an important stage in the long-running Naga peace process. It demonstrated the continuing importance of political dialogue, while the prolonged negotiations also illustrate the complexity of reconciling multiple identities, territorial expectations, constitutional arrangements, and the interests of different Naga groups and neighboring communities.

7.4.The Bodo Peace Processes

The Bodo peace processes of 1993, 2003, and 2020 illustrate repeated efforts to address political representation, cultural identity, territorial administration, and development. Their experience suggests that institutional arrangements require sustained implementation and inclusive engagement to prevent renewed competition over territory and political power.

7.5.Karbi Anglong and Tripura Agreements

The Karbi Anglong Agreement of 2021 and the Tripura Peace Agreement of 2024 represent

more recent attempts to combine political settlement, rehabilitation, development, and social accommodation. Their long-term significance depends on implementation, institutional capacity, monitoring, and the inclusion of communities beyond the principal signatories.

7.6.Comparative Lesson

Across these processes, one broad pattern emerges: peace agreements are necessary but insufficient. Their effectiveness depends on political legitimacy, implementation capacity, inclusive participation, institutional accountability, and tangible improvements in everyday life.

VIII. MAJOR CHALLENGES TO SUSTAINABLE PEACE

8.1.Ethnic Identity, Land, and Autonomy

Identity is not inherently a source of conflict; it becomes conflictual when communities perceive their identity, land, political voice, or cultural future to be threatened. Competing claims over territory and institutional authority can deepen insecurity. Sustainable peace therefore requires mechanisms for negotiating difference without forcing communities to abandon legitimate cultural aspirations.

8.2.Governance Deficits and Implementation Gaps

Administrative weakness, corruption, delays, inadequate monitoring, and limited institutional capacity can undermine peace agreements. The credibility of a settlement is measured not only by the text of an agreement but also by what communities experience after its signing.

8.3.Socio-Economic Exclusion

Unemployment, inadequate health services, educational inequality, and limited livelihood opportunities can reinforce grievances. Development programmes should therefore be designed around local participation and measurable social outcomes rather than infrastructure alone.

8.4.Inter-Ethnic Tensions

Inter-community tensions may persist even after insurgent violence declines. Competition over land, political representation, migration, administrative boundaries, and access to resources can generate new forms of conflict. Peace-building must address relationships among communities, not only relations between armed groups and the state.

8.5.Human Rights, Security, and Militarization

Security institutions play an important role in protecting lives and public order, especially during periods of violence. At the same time, allegations of human rights violations can undermine public trust. A sustainable security framework requires accountability, proportionality, transparency, civilian oversight, and appropriate human-rights training.

8.6.Cross-Border Dynamics

The international borders of the Northeast create both security challenges and opportunities. Insurgent networks, illegal trafficking, migration pressures, and geopolitical competition complicate local peace processes. At the same time, lawful cross-border trade, cultural exchange, tourism, and regional connectivity can contribute to peace and shared prosperity.

IX. THE MANIPUR CONFLICT: A CASE REFLECTION

9.1.Conflict Dynamics

The Manipur crisis demonstrates the fragility of inter-community relations when questions of land, political representation, identity, security, and historical grievance converge. The scale and duration of violence underline the limitations of approaches that focus primarily on immediate security management without sufficiently addressing underlying relationships and grievances.

9.2.Early Warning and Prevention

Peace-building requires stronger local early-warning systems capable of identifying hate speech, misinformation, inflammatory mobilization, displacement risks, and escalating community tensions. Early intervention is generally less costly—socially, economically, and institutionally—than responding after violence has become widespread.

9.3.Responsible Media and Information Integrity

In situations of communal conflict, misinformation can intensify fear and retaliation. Ethical journalism, verification mechanisms, media literacy, and responsible digital communication are therefore important components of peace-building. Information integrity should be treated as part of conflict prevention rather than as an issue separate from security.

9.4.Justice and Reconciliation

Accountability and reconciliation must proceed together. Credible investigation of alleged violations, protection of victims, fair legal processes, and community-level dialogue can help restore confidence. Reconciliation should not mean forgetting harm; rather, it should create conditions in which truth, justice, responsibility, and coexistence can be pursued.

9.5.Lessons for the Region

The Manipur experience reinforces the importance of timely political intervention, inclusive dialogue, impartial institutions, protection of vulnerable communities, responsible communication, and long-term reconciliation. These lessons are relevant to other parts of Northeast India where unresolved grievances could develop into renewed conflict.

X. TOWARDS A PARTICIPATORY PEACE-BUILDING MODEL

10.1. From Settlement to Transformation

Peace policy should move from a settlement-centred model toward a transformation-centred model. A settlement ends or reduces a particular confrontation; transformation seeks to change the conditions and relationships that make recurring violence possible.

10.2. Community Ownership

Local communities should participate in defining priorities, monitoring agreements, and evaluating outcomes. Community ownership can increase legitimacy and reduce the distance between formal policy and everyday realities.

10.3. Women and Youth as Peace Actors

Women and young people should not be treated merely as vulnerable groups or beneficiaries. They are important peace actors with knowledge of community relationships, education, communication, culture, and social mobilization. Dedicated platforms for their participation can broaden the social foundation of peace processes.

10.4. Faith Communities and Civil Society

Churches, religious organizations, educational institutions, civil society organizations, and community-based groups can contribute to dialogue, counselling, trauma support, youth formation, reconciliation, and humanitarian response. Their role should complement—not replace—constitutional institutions and professional peace processes.

10.5. Traditional Institutions and Local Councils

Traditional institutions can provide culturally grounded mechanisms for dialogue and dispute settlement. Their role should be strengthened where appropriate while ensuring constitutional rights, gender inclusion, minority protection, and accountability.

10.6. Peace-Linked Development

Development planning should include peace indicators. Employment generation, education, healthcare, infrastructure, entrepreneurship, tourism, and environmental programmes can contribute to peace when benefits are equitably distributed and communities participate in planning and monitoring.

XI. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1. Inclusive Peace Negotiations

Future negotiations should involve all relevant stakeholders, including affected communities, women, youth, civil society, traditional institutions, and groups that may not be direct signatories

but are affected by the outcome.

11.2. Independent Implementation and Monitoring

Peace agreements should contain clear timelines, measurable commitments, responsible institutions, public reporting mechanisms, and independent monitoring arrangements. Implementation should be periodically reviewed in consultation with affected communities.

11.3. Strengthening Autonomous Institutions

Autonomous councils and local governance institutions should receive adequate administrative capacity, predictable finances, technical support, and clearly defined responsibilities. Institutional empowerment should be accompanied by transparency and accountability.

11.4. Justice and Reconciliation Mechanisms

Context-sensitive truth-telling, restorative dialogue, reparative measures, and reconciliation mechanisms should be considered in areas affected by prolonged violence. Such mechanisms should be credible, inclusive, victim-sensitive, and consistent with constitutional and legal principles.

11.5. Economic Empowerment and Livelihood Security

Peace-building should be linked with employment, entrepreneurship, rural enterprises, sustainable agriculture, eco-tourism, skill development, digital opportunities, and green industries. Economic programmes should priorities vulnerable and conflict-affected communities.

11.6. Cultural and Linguistic Preservation

Indigenous languages, oral histories, traditional knowledge, customary practices, and cultural expressions should be protected and revitalized. Cultural recognition can strengthen dignity and belonging while contributing to India's broader pluralistic identity.

11.7. Security Sector Reform

Security institutions should receive continuing training in human rights, community engagement, conflict sensitivity, and civilian protection. Accountability mechanisms should be strengthened so that security and public trust are not treated as competing objectives.

11.8. Cross-Border Cooperation

India's relationships with neighboring countries should support both security cooperation and legitimate economic and cultural exchange. Border communities should be recognized as stakeholders in regional connectivity and peace.

11.9. Education for Peace

Schools, colleges, universities, theological institutions, and professional training centres can integrate peace education, constitutional values, conflict resolution, digital literacy, and inter-cultural learning. Educating young people for dialogue is an investment in long-term peace.

11.10. A Northeast Peace and Development Framework

A dedicated participatory framework could bring together peace-building, governance, livelihood, cultural preservation, environmental sustainability, youth development, and regional connectivity. Such a framework could be periodically assessed against measurable social and peace indicators leading toward 2047.

XII. DISCUSSION

12.1. Peace as a Development Condition

Peace and development should not be treated as separate policy sectors. Conflict reduces investment, disrupts education and health services, increases displacement, and weakens institutions. Conversely, inclusive development can reduce some structural conditions associated with conflict. The relationship is therefore reciprocal.

12.2. From Diversity Management to Diversity Partnership

Northeast India should not be approached merely as a region whose diversity needs to be managed. Its diversity can be understood as an asset for cultural diplomacy, tourism, creative industries, education, ecological conservation, and regional connectivity. A partnership approach places communities at the centre of development.

12.3. From Beneficiaries to Co-Creators

The language of development matters. Communities should not be understood only as beneficiaries of state programmes; they should be recognised as co-creators of peace and development. Participatory institutions can transform public programmes from externally designed interventions into locally owned initiatives.

12.4. Measuring Sustainable Peace

Peace should be evaluated using indicators that include reduction in violence, public trust, implementation of agreements, access to justice, participation of women and youth, employment, educational access, health outcomes, inter-community cooperation, and satisfaction with local governance. Such indicators can provide a more meaningful assessment than counting peace agreements alone.

XIII. CONCLUSION

13.1. Concluding Argument

Northeast India stands at an important juncture. The region's future cannot be secured through episodic peace agreements or security responses alone. Sustainable peace requires a comprehensive approach that addresses political representation, cultural dignity, justice, institutional trust, economic opportunity, and relationships between communities.

13.2. Contribution to Viksit Bharat 2047

The vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 offers an opportunity to place the Northeast at the centre of India's development narrative. The region's strategic location, biodiversity, human capital, cultural richness, and connections with Southeast and South Asia can become major strengths when supported by peace and accountable governance.

13.3. Final Reflection

Peace-building is a continuous process rather than a single event. It requires patient dialogue, institutional responsibility, community participation, reconciliation, and equitable development. When diversity is transformed into partnership, autonomy into responsible empowerment, and borders into opportunities for lawful cooperation, Northeast India can contribute significantly to a peaceful, inclusive, and developed India. The journey toward Viksit Bharat 2047 will therefore be stronger when the Northeast is not merely included in the national vision but recognized as one of its essential partners.

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Mr. Chandilson A. Sangma serves as the College Chaplain at Union Christian College, affiliated with North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU). His academic and pastoral interests include peace-building, youth formation, ethical leadership, pastoral care, community development, and socio-cultural harmony in Northeast India. His engagement brings together theological reflection, social-scientific perspectives, educational ministry, and grassroots community concerns. His work seeks to contribute to the formation of resilient, compassionate, inclusive, and responsible communities.

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