

# THREATS AND CHALLENGES OF HUMAN SECURITY OF BODO PEOPLE WITH REFERENCE TO THE ETHNIC CONFLICT IN BODOLAND TERRITORIAL COUNCIL

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*Abstract : Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) formed in the year 2003 under the sixth scheduled of the Constitution of India with four districts- Kokrajhar, Udalguri, Chirang and Baksa within the state of Assam. The council was created to fulfill the economic and political aspirations of the people basically to safeguard the identity of the Bodos. The region has witnessed and experienced several kinds of violence, ethnic conflicts, armed rebellion and movement for Separate State Bodoland; the BTC was also a fruit of long struggle of movement for Bodoland. The history of ethnic conflict in the area is one of the major threats of human security and that brings chaos among all sections of the society. The people of the region due to its violent character through ethnic conflict lives in fear psychosis, thus the threat of the lives of human cannot be ignored. The paper therefore will highlight the human insecurity through ethnic conflict in the region and basically will focus the people's response of their safety in the areas.*

**Key Words: Bodo, BTC, Ethnic, Conflict, Human Security.**

## 1. Introduction

The issues of human security all over the world can be witnessed the existence of violence, intra state- conflict, violations of human rights corruption etc. Similarly, the South Asia is also one of the worst human insecurity nations characterized by higher degree of both want and fear. The existence of threats to the security of human generated by violent conflict, violation of democratic human rights, misgovernance, corruption, crime, terrorism, gender violence, human trafficking etc. which remains a constant source of fear. Thus, the history of human civilization across the globe has witnessed the issues of human security. Considering all of the above, the similar threats also cannot be ignored the region of Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC). The region therefore, has a series of ethnic conflicts and can also be considered as the epicenter of the ethnic conflict, as a result several lives of individual, families rendered homeless and many have lost their life. Thus the concept of human security is very relevant in today's world to understand the insecurity and threats of the lives of all individuals.

The human security is the concepts which define the individual concern that implies security of all human and community from all forms of violence. The human security speaks about the security for the people, rather than the state (Acharya, 2014). The United Nations Commission on Human Security defines 'Human Security as the protection of the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and fulfillment'.

Therefore, ethnic violence causes serious threats of human security which enhance fear to the several lives of the people of the region of Bodoland Territorial Council. The safety of the individual therefore remains a great concern for the people in the area. The paper therefore will analyze the people's safety and insecurities in the region.

## 2. Brief Profile Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC)

The Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) also known as Bodoland Territorial Area District was formed on 10<sup>th</sup> of February, 2003 with it does headquarter at Kokrajhar. The Council was created to end the violent arms struggle of Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) and to bring peace and development by looking the aspiration of the people. It was created under the sixth scheduled of the Indian Constitution in accordance with Article 244 (2), as per the MoS between the Government of Assam, Indian Government of India and Bodo Liberation Tiger (BLT) to fulfill economic, political aspiration and to prevent land rights, socio cultural and basically the ethnic identity of Bodos. BTC is located in the foothills of Bhutan with an area of 8970 Sq. Km. with four adjoining districts- Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri. The region is inhabited by indigenous people Bodo speaking people and also other groups- Assamese, Bengalis, Rabha, Rajbongshi etc.

## 3. Who are the Bodos?

The generic name 'Bodo' was first applied by Hodgson (Hodgson, 1980) In generic connotation, 'the Bodos are a race of the Mongolian people who are described to be the inhabitants of a country north of the Himalayas and West of China. This land is known as Bod. The word Bod is supposed to mean a homeland. It is also said that there were many parts of the country known as Hor bod, Kur Bod etc (Nath, 1978). The inhabitants of Bod country are known as the Bodo-Ficha or Bodocha or Bodosa (Bodo

means land and Fichā or Chā means children, hence children of the Bod country). In course of time they come to be known as simply Boddō-Bodō-Borō (Brahma, 1989).

Linguistically the Bodos include a large group of people who are speakers of the Tibeto-Burman speeches of the North and East Bengal, Assam and Burma. They are the Bodos or Boros of the Brahmaputra valley (op.cit. p-i). S.Endle says, “the origin of the Kachari race is still very largely a matter of conjecture and inference, in the absence of anything entitled to be regarded as authentic history. As remarked above, in feature and general appearance they approximate very closely to the Mangolian type and this would seem to point to Tibet and China as the original home of the race.” The Bodos are numerically and sociologically one of the most important tribes of North Eastern India, particularly Assam. While they spread all over the plains of lower Assam and contiguous areas of north Bengal, they have intimate family ties with many other tribes living in other parts of Assam and also in Tripura (Brahma, 1989). The Bodos are the oldest inhabitants of Assam. According to the historians, the Bodos are a race of the Mongolian people who are described to be the inhabitants of a country north of the Himalayas and west of China. With the passes of time they migrated to the Brahmaputra valley and lived there till 3<sup>rd</sup> century, during that time, they were known as Dimasas meaning there by the children of Great River (Narzary, 2010). The Bodos are the oldest inhabitants of Assam and are part of the greater Bodo-Kachari ethno-linguistic group and the tribe is mainly concentrated in BTC region-Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri.

#### 4. The Concept of Human Security

The origin of the concept of human security can be traced to the publication of the *Human Development Report*, 1994 published by the *United Nations Development Programme* (UNDP) in 1994. Human Security can be said to have two main aspects. It means, first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression. And second, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life—whether in homes, in jobs or in communities. Such threats can exist at all levels of national income and development (UNDP, 1994). The Report identifies the scope of human security with seven specific elements:

- Economic Security—an assured basic income for individuals (e.g., freedom from poverty).
- Food Security—ensuring all peoples at all times have both physical and economic access to basic food.
- Health Security—access to health care and protection from diseases and unhealthy lifestyles.
- Environmental Security—protecting people from short and long term ravages of nature, man-made threats in nature, and deterioration of the natural environment.
- Personal Security—protecting people from physical violence, whether from the state or external states, from violent individuals and sub-state factors, from domestic abuse, and from predatory adults.
- Community Security—protecting people from loss of traditional relationship and values and from sectarian and ethnic violence.
- Political Security—ensuring that people live in a society that honours their basic human rights and ensuring the freedoms of individuals and groups from government attempts to exercise control over ideas and information

Today the above listed elements specified by UNDP’s 1994 definition remains the most widely cited term, although many definitions have been provided by different members in their own interest on the concept of human security. According to the government of Japan, the concept of human security is “comprehensively covers all the measures that threaten human survival, daily life, and dignity—for e.g., environmental degradation, violations of human rights, transnational organized crime, illicit drugs, refugees, poverty, anti-personnel, landmines and infectious diseases such as AIDS—and strengthens efforts to confront these threats (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1999). The Canada state has also promoted restrictive definition of human security as “freedom from pervasive threats to people’s rights, safety or lives.” (Axworthy, 1997).

Therefore, the human security presents the preservation and protection of the life of every individual, “Human Security is not a concern with weapons. It is concern with human dignity. In the last analyst, it is a child who did not die, a disease that did not spread, an ethnic tension that did not explode, a dissident who has not silenced, a human spirit that was not crushed” (Haq, 1995). Thus the objective of human security is to safeguard the “vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfillment.” (Commission on Human Security, 2003).

But today, the global world has been challenging different forms of human security threats especially to the developing nations with various dynamic threats unlike limited access to health, food facilities, low poverty, illiteracy etc. The similar threats also relevant in India and the study area—Bodoland Territorial Council, several forms of violent like communal conflict, the separate state movement sometimes turn violent act, enables to insecurity in the region.

#### 5. Understanding the concept of ethnicity and ethnic conflict

Ethnicity refers to the cultural traits which share language, religion or national region by a group of people and which people inherit status based on the society in which one lives. To define ethnicity, Max Weber stated that “we shall call ‘ethnic groups’ those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descendant because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration; this belief must be important for the propagation of group formation; conversely, it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists” (Swaldberg, 2005). Ethnicity therefore, is a broad category that incorporates race, religion, language, cultural tradition, common history and often shares genetic heritage.

Ethnic conflict is a conflict between two or more ethnic groups, when the threat exists to their identity and culture, the conflict arises. The sources of threat may be economic, political, social or religious etc. The recent decades has witnessed several forms of

violent situation due to ethnic conflicts. Ethnic conflict is one of the major threats to global peace and security and accompanied gross violations of human rights.

## 6. Objectives

The basic objectives of the study are:

- i. To identify different threats to human security in the violence affected areas of BTAD
- ii. To find out the challenges of human security in the study area.
- iii. To find out certain ways to solve the problems of human insecurity due to ethnic conflict.

## 7. Methodology

The study is based on both primary and secondary source-information gathered from different books, journals, newspaper, websites etc. The primary source has been gathered information through field survey basically in the Kokrajhar District of Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC). Therefore, the study area of this study is Kokrajhar District of BTC.

## 8. Ethnic conflict in BTAD

The Bodoland Territorial Area District is predominantly inhabited by Bodo tribal people and other various communities like – Muslims, Santhal, RajBongshi, Assamese, Rabha etc. The region has experienced many ethnic conflicts, out of which the 2014 ethnic clash between Bodo and Santhal communities is one of the most examples, the conflict which took many lives of several people, including children. The region has been affected severely by ethnic clashes in different phases – prior to the formation of BTC Accord in 2003, Bodos and illegal immigrants Muslims clashes resulted in 1993, where many people are affected. As per official record 3658 families or about 18,000 people were affected (Talukdar, 2012). Thereafter, in 1996 and 1998 another conflict took place between Bodos and Adivasis in the region. The 1996 clashes claimed 198 lives and about 42214 families are displaced and forced to shelter in 61 relief camps and the 1998 conflict has displaced more than 80000 people. Therefore, this triggered serious humanitarian crises as most of the affected people stayed in the relief camps for over a decade. After the formation BTC the communal violence broke out at 2008 between illegal immigrants and Bodos in Udalguri district where later on spread to all BTC districts –Kokrajhar, Chirang where many people fled for shelter in various relief camps. Once again in 2012 clashes took place between Bodos and Muslims in BTC region consisting at all districts. Since 20 July 2012, the riots had claimed about 90 lives as on 31 August 2012 and displaced over 400000 people (Asian Centre for Human Rights, 2012). Again another conflict broke out on 2014 December between Bodo-Santhal which took several people lives including children and for which this type of violent act led to poverty and deprivation and thus brings insecurities in the region.

Therefore, it is to understand that the transitional history of the region remains very painful, and it is to be noted that people live in fear and insecure due to its series of conflict witnessed by the people of the region. Thus the threats of human security arouses due to its violent activities from both the community at which people live in fear psychosis. The concept of human security at which can be viewed as the people-centered security regardless of caste, age, gender or ethnic groups and further includes protection of all individuals and communities from all forms of violence. But the history of the region has a series of threats of human security because of the ethnic conflict, and accordingly thus remains the challenges of human security of the region.

## 9. Threats and Challenges of Human Security of Bodo People in BTAD

The history of BTAD region has witnessed several forms of violent activities in the form of ethnic conflict, where people are seen suffering from fear psychosis. The ruthless violence of the region has rendered many people homeless and casualties, therefore the human security has threatened in the region seriously from different phases of its history of ethnic conflict.

**Table-1: Showing responses on people's safety in their locality.**

Sl.No.	Response Received	Frequency	Percentage
1	Safe	45	22.5 %
2	Somewhat Safe	60	30%
3	Not at all safe	95	47.5%
Total		200	100%

Source: Field Survey

The data on Table-1 reveals that 95(47.5%) out of 200 respondents does not feel safe their locality, 60(30%) opted for somewhat safe and only 45(22.5%) feel safe their area. The reason for not feeling safe in their locality is basically due to its violent nature of ethnic conflict in different phases of history in the region.

**Table-2: Showing responses on a reason of feeling insecure in their locality.**

Sl.No	Response Received	Frequency	Percentage
1	For the presence of armed group	14	7%
2	For the presence of police/military force	5	2.5%
3	Fear of riot/ethnic clash	117	58.5%
4	Other reason	64	32%
Total		200	100 %

Source: Field Survey

Table No. 2 reveals that 117(58.5%) out of 200 respondents fear for riot in future, thus feels insecure in their region, 14(7%) feels insecure due to presence of armed forces and 5(2.5%) feels insecure because of the presence of military forces and 64(32%) feels insecure because of other reason. Thus from the above data it can come to conclusion that the people feels insecure mostly of the fear of further ethnic clashing.

**Table-3: Showing responses on women's safety or not in their locality.**

Sl.No.	Response Received	Frequency	Percentage
1	Safe	29	14.5%
2	Somewhat safe	41	20.5%
3	Somewhat unsafe	82	41%
4	Very unsafe	48	24%
Total		200	100%

Source: Field Survey

The data shown in Table 3 shows that mostly around 41 % women's feel somewhat unsafe due to ethnic clashing followed by unsafe and only 14.5 % people feel safe from the above respondents and 20.5% people feel somewhat safe. Therefore, from the above table it can agree that a woman feels insecure due to its violent nature of ethnic conflict.

**Table 4: Showing Response for militant's group disturbances in the area.**

Sl.No.	Response Received	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	45	22.5%
2	No	98	49%
3	Don't know	57	28.5%
Total		200	100%

Source: Field Survey

The above Table 4 reveals that the 22.5% out of 200 respondents people feels insecure due to the presence of militants violent character, 28.5% are not aware or they does not want to give their opinion regarding the presence of militants in their region. 49% agreed there is no disturbance due to militant. Though the data shows that most respondents response with 'No' whereas the disturbances act of militants is not free from the region.

Thus, from the above data it is evident that due to series of ethnic conflict in the region the people feels insecure in their locality, as the people of the area has witnessed several violence and further the economic, social threats exist. Therefore, the study disclosed the root cause of human security threats of the region.

## 10. Conclusion

The condition is the region is not good due to the ethnic clashing and has affected several lives of the individual and hence the human beings cannot live with dignity. Several acts of violence as witnessed in the region are a threat and challenges of human security and individuals. It is therefore, witnessed that the civil rights guaranteed by the Constitution of India has been violated. Such kind of threats does not only affect the region but it may pose a serious threat to the nation security also.

Accordingly, it is utmost important to frame policies and make effort to reduce the ethnic violence of the region and bring positive aspects for the welfare of the people in the region and to remove the fear factor for permanent peace. The Government in the Central, State and the Local are both responsible for bringing permanent peace settlement in the region, the displaced people during ethnic conflict must be free from fear psychosis and have the confident of living in their area happily. The Government, Organizations –students, NGO's should try to create the environment of brotherhood rather than living state of suspicion. The illegal migration issues in the region must be resolved at an early, which is also the root cause of conflict. The separate statehood movement called Bodoland have to resolved as early as possible, further the government must have a spirit and to take appropriate steps for solving armed extremists problem of the region for permanent peace through permanent solution talks. As the human security concept deals with the life of dignity to every human beings, so it is most important to bring the region safe from all kinds of harms.

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