



## Confronting the State: ULFA's Quest for Sovereignty (SAGE Studies on India's North East)

By Nani Gopal Mahanta

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**Confronting the State: ULFA's Quest for Sovereignty** examines the complex nuances and dynamics that make ULFA (United Liberation Front of Assam) a formidable insurgent group in India. It argues that to understand the phenomenon of insurgency, one has to understand the genesis of conflict between the Indian State and the state of Assam right from the very inception of the nation-state.

The author claims that the ideological and identity issues between India and Assam have remained unresolved, and ULFA is a manifestation of that unresolved crisis. He explains that ULFA represents a mindset, a suppressed voice, which is deeply engrained in Assam's psyche. The declining support base of ULFA is not to be seen in its numerical strength; it represents the unmet aspirations of the tribal and ethnic groups of Assam.

The book tries to go beyond a ULFA-centric solution and dwells upon the issues of illegal migration, human development and the need for the protection of a composite society in Assam. It also deals with the 2012 (July-September) violent conflict in Bodoland over the issue of illegal migration and quest for a homogenous homeland. It tries to bring forward a framework of durable solution to the illegal migration issue in the state by contesting the existing discourse.

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**Confronting the State: ULFA's Quest for Sovereignty (SAGE Studies on India's North East) By Nani Gopal Mahanta Bibliography**

- Rank: #3642081 in eBooks
- Published on: 2013-04-11
- Released on: 2013-04-11
- Format: Kindle eBook



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Review

**In Confronting the State**, Nani Gopal Mahanta examines the complex nuances and dynamics that made Ulfa a formidable insurgent group and exposes its notorious aspects. The book is another wake-up call as it dwells on the dicey demographic shifts which have by now affected at least eleven districts of Assam and caused communal tension off and on and riots as recently as mid 2012.

(The Asian Age 2013-05-08)

Enriched by use of variety of sources, primary data, interviews, local narratives etc...extensive use of literary narratives is very commendable...opens up new avenues for serious political debates in Assam on nationality question in general and ULFA issue in Particular.

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## **About the Author**

Nani Gopal Mahanta is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science and Coordinator of Peace and Conflict Studies at Gauhati University, Assam, India. A former Rotary World Peace Fellow at the University of California, Berkeley (2002-04), he has published widely and has been a Visiting Fellow at the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), Norway. Currently, Mahanta is the President of North East India Political Science Association (NEIPSA).

Mahanta is a regular contributor to various national and regional newspapers and journals on the contemporary conflict issues in India's North East. They include Economic and Political Weekly, Socialist Perspective, India Today, The Hindustan Times, The Telegraph, The Assam Tribune, Amar Asom and Dainik Pratidin. He is also one of the most popular television commentators in the region. Currently the editor of Journal of Political Science, he has also co-edited a book entitled Conflict Dynamics in North East India: The Shifting Terrain (with Dilip Gogoi), published in February 2012.

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#### **Ann Reiter:**

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