

## **Political Opportunity Structure and Environmentalism in North-East India**

Annu Yudik & Satyapriya Rout

Since last two decades the North-East Region of India witnessed many environmental movements with similar goals and forms of mobilization that challenged government policies and actions. Many of them achieved their goal or objective whereas others' failed. This paper is an attempt to understand the factors that determined the success and failure of those protest movement by employing rich detail of the four case studies from the region to make a systematic comparison. This paper employs qualitative case analysis based on primary and secondary sources.

**Keywords:** Environmental Movement, North-East Region of India, Political Opportunity Structure.

### **Introduction**

North-East India consist of eight states - Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim. It is called seven sisters and one brother (Sikkim). The region has diverse ethnic communities with vibrant culture. Due to its geographical location (Himalayan ranges), the region has serene and pristine nature with rich biodiversity and is a home to endemic and endangered flora and fauna. It is drained by many rivers and rivulets originating from Himalayan glaciers in the north and the hills of outer Himalayan range in the south. The region is also rich in minerals resources like petroleum, natural gas, limestone, coal uranium etc, which had remained mostly untapped.

Since Independence, the region has witnessed many political movements like secessionist movement, insurgency, ethnic identity; land rights etc and is known as one of the disturbed region of the country. However, by the early 1990's the subsidence of political movement gradually took place. Indeed a new form of movement swept

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across the region with different objectives and forms of mobilization; and the conflicts reached to high intensity. The reason for the emergence of this new form of movement can be seen in the light of changes that took place in the region in aspects of social, economic and political.

In the past few decades the region has experienced rapid population growth, industrialization, urbanization, developmental changes resulting in huge restraint on natural resources as well as on environment; affecting the existence and survival of the people as well as ecosystem. This became a serious concern for the environmental activists and the general public that lead to environmentalism in the region. Environmentalism is best understood as, “all forms of collective behaviour that, both in discourse and practice aim at correcting destructive forms of relationship between human action and its natural environment, in opposition to the prevailing structural and institutional logic” (Castells 2010:170). The environmentalism that we witnessed in the region reflects people’s consciousness of the threats to livelihood and environment and their attempt for conservation, preservation and protection of fragile ecology, vibrant culture and self- sufficient economic system. Such consciousness had mobilized the people against the destructive developmental projects and destructive economic activism. Their action has challenged the policies of the government and had established a mode of people’s participation in the policy making. Each of the movements has almost similar goals and forms of mobilization though different strategies may have been adopted; and each of them has had different impacts/ outcome.

Therefore, this paper is an attempt to examine why some of those movements succeed, whereas others failed. The study adopts the political opportunity structure (POS) model from the social movement scholarship; and situates those environmental movements in the larger political structure of opportunities and constraints. Details of four case of environmental movement from the region have been taken and systematic comparison has been constructed. The sources have been basically collected through, interview, newspaper and journals.

Accordingly, the paper proceeds in following steps. The first is the brief discussion of conceptual aspects of environmental movement and political opportunity theory. Second part, is the discussion of those four environmental movements. The third part is the most substantial one where the paper attempts to analyse the outcome of the movement and the influence of Political opportunity structure.

### **Conceptual Aspects**

Since, the present paper deals with popular mobilization concerning environment, it is appropriate that we engage with conceptual aspects of social movement in general and environmental movement in particular; and at the same time specify the analytical approach that is adopted for the study.

Social movement, as it is popularly known in academia, came into existence with the building up of nation-states and evolved into a conventional instrument of pressing claims (Tilly, 1984). Despite the difficulty of finding a consensual definition of social movements, most of the scholars while defining the concept, emphasise the

collective identity of protestors, institutional and non-institutional tactics used, and continuous dynamic inter-action with mainstream politics and culture (Diani, 1992). In his attempt to provide concise meanings to the concept, Tarrow defines social movement as “Collective Challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities” (1998:4).

If it is difficult to give a precise definition of social movements, which “include phenomena as diverse as climates of opinion at one extreme to formally organized pressure groups and political parties at the other” (Rootes 1997:319); it is perhaps more difficult to conceptualize environment movements where actions deemed environmental not only varies in terms of degree, but also cut across “parallel forms of collective action in the field of ethnicity, gender, regional autonomy, labour, human rights and nuclear disarmament” (Dwivedi 2001:12). Reliance on social movement literature often becomes problematic to conceptualize the contemporary environmental movements. Based upon the larger scholarship on social movements, environmental movement can be best conceptualized as collective action shared by environmental concerns. They may include public, political and organizational actions of resistance as well as reconstructions concerning environmental change, degradation and destruction. Rather than adopting a much restrictive definition, contemporary environmental movements can be best conceptualized as institutional and non-institutional networks, which include “individuals and groups who have no organizational affiliation, organizations of varying degree of formality and even parties, and which are engaged in collective action motivated by shared environmental concerns, but that the forms and intensity of both action and concern may vary considerably from place to place and from time to time” (Rootes 1997:326).

The present paper attempts to understand the factors that facilitate the outcome of environment movements. Therefore, the study adopts the political opportunity structure (POS) model from the social movement scholarship. Tarrow defines political opportunities as “consistent, but not necessarily formal or permanent, dimensions of political environment that provides incentives for collective action by affecting people’s expectations for success or failure” (1998:76-77). Political opportunity structure (POS) model posits that the political opportunity structure determines the emergence, mobilization, forms of action, expansion and the outcome of the social movement (McAdam, 1982, Smelser, 1962, Tilly, 1977, Tarrow 1988, Diani and Porta 1999 ). According to McAdam, “The openness or closeness of the political system (access to state), shifting ruling alignments, the political stability or instability, the presence or absence of elite allies, cleavages among elites and the state’s capacity and propensity of repression have huge influential in mobilization and strategies of the movement” (1996: 27).

Similarly, constraints for a movement could arise from the growth of counter campaign, repression by the state, and policy making arrangements that generates problems of representation (Tarrow 1998). The political repressions decrease the chance of realization of the collective action as repression often affects the mobilization by disrupting its internal communications and forbidding it to assemble ; but if the political conditions is favourable then it facilitates the social movement. POS model

considers that the group though may have sufficient resource cannot exert power and meet their demands if there is no conducive political environment. Therefore, Political opportunity structure determines the variation in mobilization, influence the strategies and impact of the movement.

#### **Four Cases of Environmental Movement From the North East Region**

The four environmental protest movements each from Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura has been taken into consideration to discover the factors that determine the success of the movement. Those four movements had similar goals i.e. the protection and conservation of nature. The goals also cut across in various issues such as fight for rights over resources (land, water, and forest) and fight for preservation of culture and traditions. Each of them emerged in similar political regime and had similar opponents i.e. the state government.

##### *Anti-Gumti Dam Movement, Tripura*

Tripura is the smallest state among the North-Eastern states with an area of 10,039 sq.km. Geographically, the state is mostly hilly and number of rivers and rivulets originate from the hills that flow into Surma Valley in Bangladesh. The state lies within the Indo-Malaya eco-zone with rich biodiversity and is inhabited by diverse ethnic Tribes and Bengali communities. Once a tribal dominated place, Tripura witnessed ethnic conflict between Bengali and Tribal communities due to tribal land alienation. The political turmoil of 1970 in Bangladesh has forced many Hindu Bengalis to cross border and to take refuge in this small state. This huge influx of immigrants outnumbered the tribal population leading to marginalization of tribal communities and land alienation in their own ancestral land. This situation caused ethnic tension and strife between the communities for a long time leading to emergence of insurgency in the state. The feeling of injustice and marginalization towards the tribes was further accentuated with the commission of Gumti Hydro Power Project over Gumti River at Thirthmukh in 1974.<sup>1</sup>

Though it was a small project with 8.5 MW yet it caused exasperation among the tribes as they were already experiencing marginalization and land alienation. The dam displaced thousands of tribal due to submergence of valley. Huge arable land and houses of tribes in the Raima Valley were submerged. The submerged area was one of the most fertile lands where wet paddy cultivation was done by the tribes. The displaced tribes were not compensated as they failed to provide land holding records and during 1970's there was no rehabilitation policy. This lead to poverty and landlessness among the project affected people and was one of the reasons for youth joining the insurgency. The displaced tribes moved to the hilly areas in upper catchment of the dam and started practicing Jhum (Shifting) cultivation which proved to be more disastrous to the ecology. Thus, the dam project destroyed the very self-sufficient tribal economy and the fragile ecology of the Raima valley. Once known for lush greens, Raima Valley turned into Valley of tears. The Congress government turned

blind eye to the plight of the tribal peasants who were cultivating and inhabiting the valley in order to generate electricity for the state.

The inconsiderate and incredulous acts of the government however prompt protest in Raima Valley. More than 40,000 tribal people mostly belonging to Reang Tribe who were directly affected by the project protested in 1976 lead by Tripura Upajati Juva Samiti (TUJS).<sup>2</sup> Later, Tripura Rajaer Upajati Ganamukti Parishad<sup>3</sup> (Tripura State Tribal People's Liberation Council) joined the movement. TUJS together with Communist Party of India (Marxist) and Communist Party of India formed a joint action committee to protest against the force displacement. The people came out in streets to protest against the project. Within four years of commissioning of dam, the state witness four major ethnic conflicts due to tribal resentment provoked by displacement of dam (Bahumik 2007). But the protest was crushed by the ruling congress government who was determined with hydro-power development. And for many years no voice rose against the dam.

However, in May 2007 the protest against the dam got revived. The fall of water level in the reservoir and emergence of submerged land generated hope among the impoverished displaced tribe of getting back their land. The deforestation in the upper catchment area due to shifting cultivation and heavy logging by timber smugglers caused heavy siltation in the reservoir. The heavy deforestation also decreased the forest cover thus affecting the rainfall in the region. As a result, the water level in the dam decreased and project failed to generate power due insufficient water. And due to low water level earlier submerged land masses emerged from the reservoir.

Indigenous Nationalist Party of Tripura (INPT)<sup>4</sup> leading the present movement with the support of Gana Mukti Parishad wants the Gumti dam to be scrapped to "undo a historical injustice" against the indigenous tribes people of Tripura and land be redistributed among the displaced and landless tribal people (Ibid). People rallied to the reservoir site and gathered on the emerging land. They demanded that the state should scrap the dam immediately and redistribute the original land back to them. However, the protesters were chased away by the state police force. In spite of government warning the people who lost their land – landless peasants and indigenous communities (Reang Tribe) rushed down the valley to occupy land. They built huts as sign of land occupation but those huts were demolished by the police forces (Down to Earth 2007).

The communist party that supported the tribal demand in the early stage, now refused to acknowledge it after coming to power and it continued to carry forward the earlier government's policy. The communist government refused to decommission the dam. In fact the government recently formed an expert committee to study the dam for its renewal. The Chief Minister Manik Sarkar said, "*Hydel power is still cheaper; much cheaper than power from plants run by natural gas*" (Ibid). The Government also said that it will not allow any people to settle down on the emerging lands from the reservoir. In deed considering the unviability of the project, the government has decided to convert the islands in the Reservoir into tourist spots as many migratory birds flock to this dam site (Telegraph September 6, 2012). By this act it seems that the state government is unlikely to scrap the dam.

#### *Anti-Dibang Multipurpose Project in Arunachal Pradesh*

Arunachal Pradesh is the largest states in the North-East region inhabited by many

tribal communities having different culture and traditions. The state is rich in biodiversity and is a niche of many endemic and endangered species and is drained by many rivers originating from snow-clad Mountains with huge hydro power potential. Arunachal Pradesh known as the peaceful state in the North-East region has witnessed many public protest in recent years. The protest was mainly against the upcoming mega hydro-power projects in politically strategic, culturally sensitive, highly fragile ecology and seismically active region. In 2001 the Central Electrical Authority of India (CEA) ranked Arunachal Pradesh with highest hydropower potential in the country and Arunachal Pradesh was tagged as the “Future Power House of India”. The pushes for development of hydropower were initiated immediately and by 2010 Arunachal Pradesh government signed several MOU with private and public hydropower developers. As many as 168 hydropower dam with a total capacity of 40, 1405 MW was expected to be constructed in the state. Out of 168 proposed dams in the state, 17 of them are proposed on Dibang River and its Tributaries. Among the 17 upcoming hydro projects in Dibang river basin, the Dibang Multipurpose Project is the biggest with a capacity of 2,880 MW.

Dibang Multipurpose Project (hydropower cum flood moderation scheme) with a capacity of 2,880 MW has been proposed on Dibang River at Munli Village in Lower Dibang Valley District of Arunachal Pradesh. The foundation stone of the project was laid down on January 31, 2008 by Former Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh but the construction of the project is yet to begin. The dam has been under intense opposition by the Idu- Mishmi Tribes (Local Tribal communities) and from the downstream state Assam due to its adverse environmental and livelihood impacts. The opposition is led by All Idu Mshmi Students Union (AIMSU), Idu-Mishmi Cultural and Literary Society (IMCLS). Dam Affected Citizens Committee was formed in New Anaya village to mobilize the villagers. In the downstream the opposition is led by All Assam Student Union.

It is said that a vast forest area of 4,577.84 hectares of forest which is mostly community forest and agricultural land would be submerged by the project. But the locals expressed serious concern of demographic imbalance in the Dibang Valley. The locals’ fears that the project would led to huge influx of outsiders for dam construction work. This is in fact a serious issue because Idu- Mishmi Tribes has a population of only around 12000 according to 2001 census whereas the NHPC would require workforce of around 5800 labours and technical staffs (Mimi 2013). The project is said to affect the Dibru Saikhowa national park in downstream Assam which is home of various flora and fauna. There is also a fear of dam breakdown as the region is seismically active zone. The downstream communities fear of flood which would be caused by the release of water from the dam. In that case the downstream agriculture, property, live and environment would be destroyed. The downstream places that are likely to be affected are Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, including Majuli Island. The issues of serious discrepancies in public hearing, environment impact assessment reports and transparency of about dam structure has been raised by the people. Both National Hydro Power Corporation Limited (NHPC) and Arunachal Pradesh Government have been accused of violation of democratic

governance in securing the clearance for the project.

On August 18, 2011 the Arunachal Pradesh government submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) (vide Letter FOR.10-44/Cons./2003/Vol-I/312-16) seeking diversion of 5,056.5 hectares of forest land (Dharmadhikary 2008). Public hearings were conducted on March 11, 2013 at New Anaya village and people raised the issues of dam impacts but no conclusive decision would be taken at the hearing. Therefore the Dam Affected Citizen Committee (DACC) of New Anaya expressed strong resentment. On July 12, 2013 the Forest Action Committee turns down the proposal of the government of Arunachal Pradesh on the grounds that the project would have adverse impact on the forest land which is a major source of livelihood for the tribal population. However, on February 13, 2014 the state government submits a revised proposal (Letter No. FOR.10/Cor./2003/Vol-IV/287) to the MoEF, seeking diversion of 4,577.84 hectares of forest land and on September 22, 2014 the FAC clears the proposal (Ibid). Subsequently, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate change (MOEF&CC) vide its Order dated May 19, 2015 has accorded environmental clearance for Dibang Multipurpose project (2880 MW) subject to certain conditions stated in the aforesaid order (Riba 2016). The Ministry has ordered for impact assessment study to be carried out for downstream areas. However, people are still protesting against the project and the order of MOEF&CC.

#### *Anti-Lower Subansiri Hydro-Electric Project Assam*

Assam is the second largest state in terms of land and most populous state in the North-East region. The state is known for oil, tea, silk and wildlife and is drained by mighty Brahmaputra River and its tributaries. The state has fertile alluvial plain and it the rice producer of the region. Agriculture and the fishing are the main source of livelihood of the people. But recently, the commissioning of hundreds dam in the upper riparian state Arunachal Pradesh has raised become an issue of intense debate in Assam. The Lower Subansiri hydro-Electric Project constructed by National Hydro Power Corporation Limited (NHPC) with the capacity of 2000 MW is the first biggest hydro power project to be constructed in the country. It was commissioned in the year 2000 on Subansiri River in Arunachal Pradesh-Assam Border. The dam construction started in 2003 and was due to be completed in 2010. This dam has been under intense opposition by the communities from Assam. Due to this dam construction has be halted since 2011.

The movement was started way back in 2005 by People's Movement for Subansiri and Brahmaputra Valley (PMSBV) joined by Takam Mising Porin Kebang (TMPK), All Assam Student Union (AASU) Krishti Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS), Asom Jativadi Yuva Chatra Parishad (AJYCP) and People's Movement for Subansiri and Brahmaputra Valley (PMSBV). The movement was supported by organizations from the state and from across the region such as Citizens Rights of Arunachal Pradesh, Siang Peoples' Forum, Kalpavriish Environmental Action Group (NGO) and National Alliance For People's Movement, River Basin Friends etc.

The main concern is the impact on the environment and livelihood in downstream. However, the livelihood issue became main cause of mobilization of the movement

in the Subansiri valley. The damming of Subansiri River would limit the flow of water and would trap the sediments which are vital for fertilizing downstream plains and would affect the agriculture of the people. The alteration of the water flow is said to have impact on the wetland which is a traditional fishing ground and the groundwater domain in downstream areas. The Alteration of the river would also affect the river ecology creating an obstacle to the movement of migratory fish species and reduce their access to spawning and rearing grounds thus reducing fish population. This would have direct consequences on the fishing activities of the communities. The dam is said to submerge huge land of fragile tale wildlife sanctuary. The site of the dam is also an issue of concerned as the tunnelling and building of dam is done in geologically fragile and seismically active region which may cause future disaster. The organizations held rallies and demonstration at the project site and nearby towns. Many local communities especially the Mising Tribe joined the movement. Mising are indigenous tribe inhabiting the Subansiri valley and they would be affected directly by the project. Many student communities and general public also supported the movement. The protestors blocked the National Highway 52 to prevent the movement vehicles carrying construction material to project site. The state responded the movement with repressive forces. Many protestors were arrested during the road blockage programme. However, the state could not suppress the movement and finally called the organizations for talk.

On December 8, 2006 tripartite talk was held between the State Government, NHPC and organizations spearheading the movements (TMPK, AASU, KMSS, and PMSBV). As the outcome of the talk expert committee was formed to carry out downstream impact assessment study and the project was to be held till the expert report is published. The NHPC also agreed to undertake the recommendation of the expert once the report is out. On June, 28, 2010 expert report was made public. The report pointed out that the dam was not only a threat to Subansiri valley but to whole downstream of Brahmaputra Valley. The report also gave recommendations to NHPC regarding the safety of the dam.

The release of the report generated a panic among the people of Assam and sense of outrage across the state. This led to an expansion of movement across the state and now the movement was no longer confined to towns and villages in Subansiri valley but to whole state. There were protest and demonstrations at Gerukamukh and in state capital Dispur. There road blockage and burning down of vehicle carrying material to the project site. Many farmer and fishermen from Brahmaputra Valley supported and intensely participated in the movement as their livelihood was to be directly or either indirectly affected by the dam project. Many student organizations, community organization from across the state and elites supported the movement. AJYCP formed "Alliance against Lower Subansir Hydro-Electric Project" with the coalition of more than 24 local organizations from across the state representing the various communities. The political parties such as BJP, CPI and Assam Gana Prishad (State political party) supported the movement. In fact the dam issue became an intense debate in the State Assembly. The police forces were deployed to control the chaos but it resulted into intense confrontation between the police force and the public



which led to arrest of many protestors. As the result of intense protest activities the construction was halt on Dec 2011. Subsequently, by December 2012, NHPC set up an independent dam design review panel in order to facilitate the progress of the project and stated that it would look into the recommendation of the experts report.

### ***Movement against the Rat-hole Coal Mining, Meghalaya***

Meghalaya known as “abode of clouds” is notably rich in biodiversity and 70 percent of the state is under forest cover. The state is rich in minerals like coal, uranium, limestone etc. Coal is extensively mined in the state especially in west Jaintia Hills and is booming economic activities for the locals and source of revenue for the state. The mining activities brought wealth to the people as the individual families owned the coal field and it provided employment to the local people as well as people from neighbouring state like Assam. Due to mining activities, transportation sector also generated employment opportunities. The mining has become a source of livelihood for the locals but simultaneously is harming the environment.

The concern of impacts of coal mining was first raised by Impulse, a local Non-Governmental Organization. Impulse demanded that the mining activities should be shut down. They found that the mining are done in traditional and unscientific way called rat hole mining. In this mining process large cranes are used to dig pits into the hill to reach the coal seam. Then Labourers go down to the pit and dig horizontal holes on the side of the pits to dig out the coal. The labourers carry the coal up through bamboo staircase or sometimes cranes are used. The mines lacked safety gears. The caves collapse frequently and pits filled with poisonous gas. Small children are mostly used to crawl into the rat-hole tunnel to dig out the coals.

In the year 2004 O.P Singh and Sumerlin Swer, Centre for environmental studies of North Eastern Hills University of Shillong did a research project financed by G.P Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development, Almora on the impact of coal mining in Jaintia hills on the surrounding areas. They found out that rat-hole mining activity in the Jaintia hills has catastrophic impact on the surrounding water quality, denudation of forest affecting the fragile ecosystem and soil degradation. They also posit that the frequent movement of trucks and other vehicles for coal transportation has caused ecological and environmental damage to the surrounding areas. Thus, the mining activities in jaintia hill is causing air, water and soil pollution. H.H Mohrmen, an environmental activist in Jowai, Meghalaya also raised concerns about the deteriorating environment in the state. According to him, in the late 1980s the locals living in the downstream of Myntdu River reported about the incidences of fish dying in the mountain streams. Toxic water pumped out from the mines or rain water mixed with mounds of extracted coal flows into the stream which is highly acidic. Meghalaya State Pollution Control Board in its 2012 report cited that causes of acidity of the rivers and streams are from the mines. In December 2014, the people from neighbouring Bangladesh voiced that Lukha River and Myntdu River flowing to Bangladesh from Meghalaya had turned blue due to the high acid content in the water.

Based on the study conducted by the Sumerlin and Singh, All Dimasa Students Union and the Dima Hazao District Committee from neighbouring Assam piled a

petition in National Green Tribunal (NGT) against the mining in Jaintia Hills. Their main concern was that the mining activities were affecting the water quality in the Dima Hazao district as the contaminated rivers and stream merged with Kupli River which flows through Meghalaya to Dima Hazao district of Assam. The contaminated water also caused damage to the crop fields rendering it unsuitable for cultivation and killing the aquatic life. Acting on the petition filed by Dimasa Students and on the report of Swer and Singh On April 17, 2014 NGT ordered the state government to suspend the mining and transportation of coal in the entire state and directed the government to submit a comprehensive report for the purpose of promoting scientific and permissible mining in the state.

However, Local communities raised voice against the order of NGT, as the ban affected their livelihood. Movement for Indigenous Peoples' Rights and Livelihood-Meghalaya (MIPRL), The Hima Nongstoin Coal Traders' and Producers' Association (HNCTPA) in West Khasi Hills District, Nongal Dobu Coal Truck Owners Association (NDCTOA), Hynniewtrep Achik National Movement (HANM) and the public protested against the order of NGT ban demanding withdrawal of that order (Das, 2014). MIPRL organized rallies in Shillong attended by thousand people from the coal mining areas with playcard reading, *"No NGT in Meghalaya, It's a Sixth Schedule area"*, *"The NGT is hurt because fishes are dying, but it is blind when people are dying due to the ban"*. *"Is aquatic life in rivers more precious than human lives for the NGT"* and *"We demand our rights to life"* (Lyndoh, 2014). The protest was also carried out various towns and villages of East Jaintia hills district. In some places the protest turned violent as they faced direct confrontation with police. At Mookhep village in East Jaintia Hills on September 14, 2014 two villagers were killed and seven others injured in police firing. The NGT order was also opposed by various local organizations including political parties on the ground that it had affected livelihood of thousands of people.

#### **Analysis: Why and How Some Movement Succeeded?**

For the purpose of this paper, the success of the movement has been analyzed on two aspects. Firstly based on the degree of mobilization and secondly on impact of the movement. The degree of the mobilization (i.e. high and low) has been characterized by taking into account the number of participation of people and organizations involved in the movement activity and diffusion of the movement. The impact of the movement has been characterized on procedural and substantive gain. Procedural gain mean opening channel for participation to social movement activists in political decision making and substantive gain means changes in policy by the state in response to the social movement. For better understanding of the success of the movement a table has been made to show the degree of mobilization and impact of the social movement.

From Table 1 we can conclude that the movement against the Gumti-dam in Tripura has high mobilization but still failed to meet their demands, whereas the movement against Lower Subansiri Hydroelectric Project had high mobilization but it had low procedural gain which was the main causes for high mobilization. The high mobilization later propelled high substantive gain. Conversely, the movement against

Table 1. Show degree of mobilization and the impact of the movement

<i>Social Movements</i>	<i>Mobilization</i>	<i>Procedural and Substantive gain</i>
1. Anti-Gumti Dam Movement	High	Low Procedural and Low Substantive gain
2. Anti-Dibang Multipurpose Project Movement	Low	High Procedural and Low Substantive gain
3. Anti-Lower Subansiri Hydro-electric Project Movement	High	Low Procedural and Low Substantive gain
4. Anti-Rat Hole Mining Movement	Low	High Procedural and Low Substantive gain

the Rat-Hole Mining in Meghalaya was successful with high procedural and high substantive gain in spite of low mobilization whereas the movement against the Dibang Multipurpose Project had low mobilization with no substantive gain in spite of some significant procedural gain. Thus, there is a state-specific variation in the mobilization and outcome of the movement. So, here arises the main question of the paper; why some of the movements were successful. It is this that we now turn to the attributes of political opportunity structure that has made some movements more successful.

To analyse the influence of attributes of political opportunity structure in the success of the movement we looked into the degree of political input (close and open) and political output structure (weak and strong). According to Kitschelt (1986), political input structure is said to be open if the social movement actors have access to the public space and political decision making process and said to be close if they lack access. He also defined the weak political output structure and strong political output structure. In case of weak political output structure, the state lack capacity to impose their policies and actions. Here, state is responsive and inclusive as it accommodates the demand of the movement in the policy-making. Whereas, in case of strong political output structure the state have high capacity in imposing their actions and policies. Here, state is non-responsive and exclusive as it neglects the demands of the movement and do not accommodate it in the policy-making. Combining the openness and closeness of the political input structure with weak and strong political output structure we arrived at four different settings for each state and shows how each state responded to the movement.

Table 2. Show the Political input structure and Political output structure

Social Movements	Political Inputs Structure	Political Outputs Structure
1. Anti-Gumti Dam Movement	Close	Strong
2. Anti-Dibang Multipurpose Project Movement	Open	Strong
3. Anti- Lower Subansiri Hydro-electric Project Movement	Close	Weak
4. Anti-Rat Hole Mining Movement	Open	Weak

Generally, it is ascertained that open political input structure will have weak political output structure and the movement will have procedural and substantive gains. That is, procedural and substantive gains are co-varying with openness of political structure. If political regime is open then it will accept open channel for participation to the protesters and will accept and recognize their demand as legitimate. This is presented in Anti-Rat hole mining case. Conversely, close political input structure will have strong political output structure with no procedural and substantive gains. This is presented in Anti-Gumti Dam case.

However, there is also a situation of intermediary. Firstly, though there is open political input structure but political output structure is strong with no procedural and substantive gain. In case of Anti- Dibang Multipurpose Project the input was open. The activist had access to the political sphere through public hearing process organized by the state. But the output was close. There was no recognition of the demands. In deed recently, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change gave green signal to the project.

And secondly, though political input structure is close the movement was significant in bringing procedural and substantive gains. In case of Anti- lower Subansiri Hydroelectric Project, the input was close initially but later the government organized a talk with the activities. As a result of this, new experts committee was formed to carry out environmental impact assessment and socio-economic impact assessment for downstream and till the reports were out the project construction was halt. Technical solution for dam safety was recommended by the expert committee to the constructing authority which was accepted. So, here the output political structure was open with significant procedural and substantive impacts. Hence, there is a situation of close-strong, open-strong, close-weak and open- strong. Such situation is caused by variation in set of attributes of political opportunity structure.

Attributes of political opportunity structure such as strategies of the state towards the social movement activists facilitate or repress the mobilization. The state adopts two strategies in response to the movement i.e integrative or inclusive (facilitative, cooperative and assimilative) or exclusive (repressive and confrontative). If the government is oriented towards the reform then the government will adopt integrative strategies but if not then it will adopt exclusive strategies. The Inclusive strategies tend to pre-empt the protest and mobilization whereas on the other hand exclusive strategies tend to raise or repress the level of mobilization. Such contrasting situation is visible in the cases of anti-rat hole mining and anti-gumti dam.

In anti-rat hole mining, state adopted integrative strategies, where the activists had access to the political system formally as a result there degree of mobilisation was low. Only, Impulse (NGO), All Dimasa Student Union and Dima Hazao District Committee raised voice about the destructive impacts of the mining activities in the Jaintia Hills. There was no protest activities organized or carried out against the mining though destructive impacts of mining on the land, water, air were felt across the state in Assam and Bangladesh.

In contrary, in Anti-Gumti dam the state adopted exclusive strategies with strong repression. Such non-access to the political system and ignorance of demands of the

people confronted the activists with repression. This prompted more anger leading to high mobilization, where more than 40,000 thousand tribal people who were displaced by the project participated in the movement in 1976. Many tribes from the state also supported the displaced communities. In 2007 the displaced and landless tribal people participated in the movement. The movement was led by Tripura Upajati Juba Samiti (TUJS) and supported by Communist Party of India (Marxist) and Communist Party of India. In the year 2007 the movement was led by Indigenous National Party of Tripura (INPT, a political party formed by collaboration of Indigenous people's Front of Tripura and Tripura Upajati Juva Samiti) and supported by Communist Gana Mukti Parishad. However, though the movement gained support from the other tribes across the state yet the movement activities (the events or protest) were confined at the project site.

Anti- Dibang Multipurpose project and Anti-Lower Subaniri Hydroelectric project represents intermediate case. In case of Anti-Dibang Multipurpose Project, though mobilization was low yet the people were given chances of public hearing and decision making process. Only few villages of Idu- Mishmi tribe were involved and it was confined to project site. The district is a home of many tribes but only one tribe seems to voice against the impacts of dam. The protest was led by Idu-Mishmi Student Union (IDSU) and Idu- Mishmi Cultural and Literary Society (IDCLS). All Assam Student Union (AASU) also rose concerned about the negative impacts of project to the downstream areas in Assam; however there were no strong protest or movement activities by them either.

In case of Anti- subansiri hydroelectric project, there was high mobilization. People from all background were involved in the movement such as indigenous tribe, farmers, fishermen, students, elites, scientific communities, students, political parties and the common people. The organizations from within the Assam, across the region and nation came in support of the movement. The movement was widespread as it engulfed whole state. As a result, the state government invited the leaders of the organization for talks and some of the demands were accepted by the government. The case of Anti-Lower Subansiri Hydro-electric project reveals that when state changes its strategies (allowing access to the political system and interaction with the activists) then it restrain the activists from engaging in further protest activity.

The study also shows that in spite of open political input structure the political output structure was strong the led to failure of the movement and whereas, in spite of close political input structure the political out structure was weak leading to success of the movement. This was because output structure is determined by the configuration of state political government. If the state government is solely formed by one majority party then there is chance of close political input structure and strong political output structure. In this situation the state will be strongly determined in their policy implementation. But if state government is formed by coalition and those coalition parties are in favour of activists then the input will be open and output will be weak. It is also clear that if the protest movements have strong backing of the opponent political parties of the state, then the demands of the movement are more likely to be assimilated. Therefore, the ally of political parties with the activists is important in determining the political input and output structure.

This is true for both the cases of Anti-Lower Subansiri Hydro-electric Project and Anti-Rat Hole Mining. In Anti- Lower Subansiri Dam movement opponent political parties supported the movement as a result the state government was compelled to call the activists for the talk. In case of Anti-rat hole mining, the Judiciary was in support of the demand. Whereas, in case of Anti- Dibang Multipurpose Project and Anti-Gumti dam the state government was formed single majority political party and opponent political parties on other hand gave little consideration to the demand.

The political opportunity structure affects the strategies adopted by the activists to meet their demand. When the political structure is open then the activists are likely to adopt assimilative strategies through conventional legal and political actions as political system were accessible. The case is represented in Anti-mining case and Anti-Dibang case. In contrast, when political structure is close then the activists are likely to adopt confrontational and disruptive strategies. This is represented in Anti-Gumti case and Anti-Subansiri Case. The study also reveals that there is relationship between the strategies adopted by the activists and the impact of the movement. For example, due to high intensity of violent activities the Assam government agreed to hear the demands of the Anti-Subansiri activists.

Combining the strong and weak state with exclusive and integrative strategies we arrive at distinct general setting for dealing with social movement activists.

Table 3. show the comparison of four movements

Social Movements	POS and Impacts
1. Anti-Gumti Dam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close political input structure and Strong political output structure</li> <li>• Exclusive strategies by the government</li> <li>• High mobilization</li> <li>• Confrontal strategies by activists</li> <li>• No procedural impact</li> <li>• No substantive impact</li> <li>• Repressive</li> </ul>
2. Anti-Dibang Multipurpose Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open input and close output</li> <li>• Inclusive strategies by the government</li> <li>• Low mobilization</li> <li>• No confrontational strategies by activists</li> <li>• Significant procedural impact</li> <li>• No substantive impact</li> <li>• No repression</li> </ul>
3. Anti-Lower Subansiri hydro-electric project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close input and weak output</li> <li>• Both exclusive and Inclusive strategies by govt.</li> <li>• High mobilization</li> <li>• Confrontational strategies by the activists</li> <li>• High procedural impact</li> <li>• Significant substantive impact</li> </ul>

4. Anti- Rat Hole Mining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open input and weak output</li> <li>• Assimilative strategies by government</li> <li>• Low mobilization</li> <li>• High procedural impacts</li> <li>• High Substantive impacts</li> <li>• No repression</li> </ul>
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### Conclusion

In this paper we have tried to prove the notion that the political opportunity structure has impact on the success and failure of the social movement through comparison of the four cases. In the light of our discussion it thus, looks clear that the success of the movement is likely to vary within the same national political regime due to different characteristics of political opportunity structure at the state level. The general characteristic of state level political opportunities structure such as the degree of open or closeness of the local level political system, prevailing of political allies and absence or presence of strong political repression explains why the outcome of the movement varies from state to state. The presence or absence of political ally leads to different outcome of defending or revising the policies. In situation where political input structures were open and assimilative both procedural and substantive gains were achieved. Here the political output structure was weak. Conversely, in case of close political input structure with exclusive strategies the political output structure was strong with the movement having least change of achieving both procedural and substantive changes. But some time the open input had strong output and close input had weak output. The comparison of four environmental movements also shows that the degree of mobilization and strategies adopted by the activist are also determined by the political opportunity structure. Thus, by analysing the empirical cases the paper suggest that local opportunities are important in analysing the social movement as it strongly conditions the movement's success.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> <https://ejatlas.org/conflict/gumti-hydroelectric-project-tripura-india>

<sup>2</sup> Tripura Upajati Juva Samiti (TUJS) was a socio-cultural non political association formed in 1967 by the Borok Indigenous people of Tripura with the aim of strengthening the socio- cultural and religious bonds between the Borok communities in the state. Borok includes whole Tripuri tribes. By 1978, TUJS contested election in state assembly and won seats. It was a political party during 1967-2001 until its split into Tripura Volunteer Force (later known as Tripura National Volunteer Force)

<sup>3</sup> Tripura Rajaer Upajati Ganmukti Parishad mostly known as GanaMukti Parishad is a left wing movement working for the tribal people of Tripura. It was formed somewhere about 1940s.

<sup>4</sup> Indigenous National Party of Tripura is a political party in Tripura which was formed in 2002 by unifying Indigenous people's Front of Tripura and Tripura Upajati Juva Samiti

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