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The Killing Fields of Assam: The Myth and Reality of Its Muslim Immigration

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Abstract

The Indian state of Assam has been in turmoil since the 1970s over the issue of illegal immigration from Bangladesh. This has, frequently, manifest itself in attacks on its Bengali-speaking Muslims who are accused of taking advantage of the porous, 267 kilometres long, border between Assam and Bangladesh to enter the state and occupy land belonging to the native population. Moreover, through a rapid increase in their numbers, they are viewed as diluting and debasing traditional Assamese Hindu culture through the instrument of a foreign language (*Bengali*) and an alien religion (Islam). However, the issue of immigration into Assam raises several questions. First, what is the scale of the problem? Then, what is the division of immigrants between Hindu and Muslim? Lastly, how many illegal migrants are there in the state? This paper attempts to answer these questions by applying community-specific reproduction rates to the Muslim and non-Muslim parts of Assam's population and then comparing the derived numbers with the actual number of Muslims and non-Muslims in the state. It then evaluates the contribution of Assam's immigrants to its polity and its economy.

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vk.borooah@ulster.ac.uk. I am grateful to Ashwani Saith and Kunal Sen for commenting on an earlier version of this paper though, needless to say, I am solely responsible for its deficiencies. This paper is dedicated to the memory of my father, Dev Kant Borooah (1914-1996), who strove to uphold the dignity of Muslims in Assam.

Everyone is entitled to their own opinion but not to their own facts.
Daniel Patrick Moynihan

1. Introduction

It is commonplace that, in the wake of large-scale migration into a region, conflict between the native population and immigrants often follows. Whether in Britain, Germany, France, the USA, Sri Lanka, Burma, Malaysia, or South Africa, large-scale migration, by disturbing the equilibrium of the native population, has resulted in conflict: immigrants make claims on scarce economic resources; they acquire political influence, and their alien culture threatens the existing “way of life” (Dancygier, 2010). All these tendencies are aggravated when, as sometimes happens, immigrants do better than the native population in exploiting available opportunities and, consequently, enjoy greater economic success compared to their hosts. The Indian state of Assam encapsulates all these features and, in particular, the fact that migrants into Assam, over the past 100 years and more, have carved for themselves a better life than that enjoyed by the native Assamese (Weiner, 1978); they have acquired political influence; and, through language and religion, disturbed the cultural equilibrium of the Assamese-speaking, Hindu natives. This paper addresses the issue of migration - and, in particular, Muslim migration - into Assam.

Connected to the parent country by a narrow land corridor, and largely separated from it by Bangladesh (see map, below), India’s eastern state of Assam - covering an area of 78,500 square kilometres with a population of just over 31 million¹ - is dominated by the mighty Brahmaputra river. The Brahmaputra Valley has two main geographical features: the floodplain that is home to the vast majority of Assamese and the *Karbi* hills populated by the *Karbi* people (Shrivastava and Heinen, 2005). The state is home to myriad ethnic groups, represented by a plethora of armed groups who offer to “liberate” them from the hegemony of their “oppressors” – sometimes perceived as the Indian government, sometimes the state government, and sometimes just other ethnic groups. In consequence of the undercurrent of hostility between the various subgroups in Assam – engendered by a zero-sum competition for land and resources - life in the state is regularly punctuated by ethnic violence: *Karbis* clash with *Kukis*, the *Dimasa* with the *Zeme*, *Rabhas* with *Garo*, *Bodos* with *Santhals*.²

Overshadowing these ethnic clashes, however, is the fact that, in the past 25 years or so, Assam has spawned some of the most egregious incidents of anti-immigrant violence in South Asia directed mainly, though not exclusively, against Bengali Muslims.³ Most recently, at the end of July 2012, *Bodo* tribesmen began a wave of killing of Bengali Muslims, and arson attacks on their homes in which, by August 2012, over 80 people had been killed (mostly Muslim, but some *Bodos*), with almost half a million persons, from nearly 400 villages, sheltering in refugee camps (*The Economist* August 24, 2012).

In earlier incidents, clashes between *Bodos* and Bengali Muslims in August-October 2008 resulted in 70 deaths with over 100,000 people made homeless; in July 1994, assaults on Bengali Muslims in Barpeta district resulted in 100 deaths (most of them Muslim); and in October 1993, 50

¹ Respectively, 2.4% and 2.6% of India’s area and population.

² See Samudra Gupta Kashyap, “The Assam Tangle”, *The Indian Express*, August 26, 2012.

³ Other immigrants have not escaped the fury of the native Assamese: in the 1960s there was violence against Bengali Hindus consequent upon Bengali being proposed, along with Assamese, as an official language of the state and, in November 2003, 30 persons were killed, in and around the town of Tinsukia in upper Assam, as a result of violence against immigrants from Bihar. <http://www.rediff.com/news/2003/nov/20assam4.htm> retrieved 9 September 2012.

people were killed in Bongaigaon district in clashes between *Bodos* and Bengali Muslims.⁴ The most egregious act of violence occurred on 14 February 1983 when a large group of armed men from the *Lalung* tribe in Assam raided fourteen villages, in close proximity to each other, in the district of Nagaon in Assam and killed over four thousand persons – men, women, and children – most of whom were Bengali Muslims. This was the infamous Nellie massacre, so named after one of the affected villages, in the aftermath of which nearly a quarter of a million were made homeless and thousands fled the state (Weiner, 1983).⁵

The ostensible reason for attacks against Bengali Muslims is invariant: they are accused of being illegal immigrants who, taking advantage of the porous, 267 kilometres long border between Assam and Bangladesh, entered the state and occupied land belonging to the native population. Moreover, through a rapid increase in their numbers, they are seen as diluting and debasing traditional Assamese Hindu culture through the instrument of a foreign language (Bengali) and an alien religion (Islam). The political counterpart to these acts of violence is demands by political parties for the detection and expulsion of foreigners. The social unrest and the political events in Assam which culminated in the signing of the Assam Accord of 1985 are comprehensively described in Weiner (1983), Baruah (1994), and Gosselink (1994).⁶

However, the accord, which signalled official recognition of the fact that Assam had an “immigration problem”, raised more questions than it answered. First, what was the scale of the problem? How many immigrants – perhaps from other parts of India (Bengali speakers from West Bengal, Hindi speakers from Bihar), perhaps from other countries (Nepal, Bangladesh) – were there in Assam? Second, what was the division of immigrants between Hindu and Muslim? Third, of the total number of immigrants, how many were *illegal* immigrants as defined in the accord?

In order to address the question of scale, the usual method is to subtract from the population of Assam, at any given Census date (say, 1961), an estimate of what the population of Assam *would have been* if its population (from the previous Census, 1951) had grown at the all-India rate. The difference then represents the number of migrants into Assam between the two Census dates, in this case, 1951 and 1961. Using this method, Weiner (1983) calculated that, over the period 1901-1981, Assam received 10.4 million immigrants: its population increased from 3.3 million in 1901 to 19.9 million in 1981 against a 1981 predicted level of 9.5 million, *if its population had grown at all-India rates between 1901 and 1981*. Using this method, Nath and Nath (2009) estimated that 4.6 million persons migrated into Assam in the 100 years between 1901 and 2001.

Two features characterise these separate estimates. First, Weiner’s (1983) figure of 10.4 million immigrants between 1901 and 1981 differs wildly from Nath and Nath’s (2009) estimate of 4.6 million immigrants between 1901 and 2001. This suggests that at least one (or, perhaps, both) of these sets of authors is mistaken in their calculations. Second, and more importantly, both sets of

⁴ <http://www.firstpost.com/india/a-timeline-of-bodo-muslim-violence-in-assam-391475.html> retrieved on 9 September 2012.

⁵ The other villages were: Alisingha, Khulapathar, Basundhari, Bugduba Beel, Bugduba Habi, Borjola, Butuni, Indurmari, Mati Parbat, Muladhari, Mati Parbat no. 8, Silbheta, Borburi.

⁶ According to this accord: immigrants who arrived before January 1, 1966 were to be regarded as Indian citizens; immigrants who arrived between January 1 1966 and March 25, 1971 could remain in the country but would have their names removed from the electoral roll and would have to register themselves with the appropriate district offices but, after a period of 10 years from registration, their right to vote would be restored; immigrants who arrived after March 25 1971 would be deported.

authors are mistaken in their methodology since neither takes account of the fact that the religious composition of the populations of Assam and of India differ greatly.

In 1951, one in four persons in Assam was Muslim compared to less than one in ten in India. In 2001, 31% of Assam's population was Muslim compared to only 13% of India's population. Indeed, according to the 2001 Census, after Jammu and Kashmir – two-thirds of whose population was Muslim – Assam had the second highest concentration of Muslims (31%), followed by West Bengal and Kerala (25%). Because Muslims have a higher growth rate than non-Muslims - for reasons discussed *inter alia* in Borooah (2004) and Borooah and Iyer (2005) - the population of an area with a high proportion of Muslims will, on purely reproductive grounds, grow faster compared to an area in which Muslims comprise a small part of the population. Therefore, applying all-India rates of growth to Assam will certainly *understate* the reproductive population of the state and, by corollary, *overstate* the number of migrants into it.

The first aim of this paper is to correct the errors noted in the preceding observation. It is to produce estimates of the “reproductive” population of Assam taking into account the large presence of Muslims in the state and, by deducting this from the actual population, to obtain more reliable estimates of the number of migrants into Assam. Since it does this for every decade since 1951 (except for 1981 when a Census could not be conducted in Assam), it is capable of providing estimates of “illegal” (that is post-1971 entry) migration into Assam.

Since the methodology underpinning the analysis is capable of breaking down the figures for total immigration into Assam into a Muslim and a non-Muslim component, the paper provides estimates of migration by religion. This is important because, in the face of difficulty in identifying *illegal* immigrants from Bangladesh – the *bête noire* of Hindu nationalist social and political discourse – all Bengali Muslims in Assam have become convenient proxies for illegal Bangladeshi immigrants; they are often collectively labelled “Muslim immigrants” even though they might have been settled in Assam for generations. Consequently, what is overtly billed as an economic issue – a struggle over land and livelihood between indigenous people and people who are in the state *illegally* – covertly morphs into a communal issue predicated upon an economic and cultural struggle with the “other”, regardless of the legitimacy of the “other's” presence in Assam.⁷ As a leading Indian magazine expressed it: “What angers Muslims is the ignominy of being labelled ‘illegal’” and, quoting a well-known Muslim actress in Assam, “It is a dangerous trend to call the entire Muslim community illegal”.⁸ By providing period-by-period estimates of Muslim migration into Assam this study provides a dispassionate perspective to such inflamed and emotive issues.

2. The Analysis

Table 1 sets out the basic data obtained from successive censuses with the starting and end points being, respectively, 1951 and 2011. Although the Indian Census has not, as yet, released information on the religious composition of the population in 2011, we have extrapolated the 2001 figures to estimate the number of Muslims and non-Muslims living in Assam in 2011. The methodology underlying the extrapolation is detailed in an Appendix to this paper.

⁷ Thus, a leading Indian newspaper expressed the view that “the high growth rate of Muslims, compared to the growth rate of the Hindu population has led to the fear that Assam would be overrun by Muslims who migrate from Bangladesh and skew the demographics of the state” (Rema Nagarajan, “Assam's unrest all about numbers?”, *The Times of India*, October 7, 2008.

⁸ S. Prasannarajan, “Land and Loathing on the Brahmaputra”, *India Today*, September 17, 2012.

An important point about the information about this table is that, belying the current *angst* in Assam about Muslim migration into Assam, even sixty years ago (that is, in 1951) nearly one in four persons in Assam were Muslim. The Muslim migration to Assam occurred *circa* 1914 when “Bengali Muslims moved into the Brahmaputra valley from East Bengal...they reclaimed thousands of acres of land, cleared vast tracts of dense jungle along the south bank of the Brahmaputra, and occupied flooded lowlands all along the river” (Weiner, 1983, p. 283).

A further wave of Muslim migration into Assam occurred in the 1930s and 1940s when the state government was controlled by Bengali Muslims: Syed Muhammad Saadulla was Chief Minister from April 1937 to September 1938, then again from November 1939 to December 1941 and, finally, from August 1942 to February 1946. During this latter period, under the “Grow More Food Programme”, immigrants from East Bengal were offered opportunities to settle in Assam by the Saadulla ministry opening up wasteland and grazing reserves in the Nowgong, Darang, and Kamrup districts to Muslim settlers (Misra, 2012). As a consequence of these two waves of migration from East Bengal, the proportion of Muslims in Assam’s population increased from 16% in 1911 to 25% in 1951. The Muslim share in Assam’s population remained steady at one-fourth in the 20 year period between 1951 and 1971 but, thereafter, it rose to 28% in 1991, to 31% in 2001, and, on our extrapolated estimate, to 32% in 2011. It is this increase that is ascribed to illegal migration and is the font of apocalyptic warnings about the future of Assam. Call this the “illegal migration” hypothesis.⁹

However, consider an alternative hypothesis. The fact that the Muslim population remained steady, as a proportion of Assam’s population, between 1951 and 1971 was because the Muslim and non-Muslim parts of the population grew at roughly the same rate: as Table 2 shows, the Assam’s Muslim and non-Muslim populations both grew by 182% in this 20 year period.¹⁰ Given that the natural reproductive rate for Muslims is higher than that for non-Muslims this suggests that between 1951 and 1971 there was migration into Assam *but by non-Muslims*. Similarly, the fact that the Muslim population, as a proportion of Assam’s population, increased between 1971 and 2001 was because the Muslim part of the population grew faster than the non-Muslim part: as Table 2 shows, in this 20 year period, Assam’s Muslim population increased by 77.41% but its non-Muslim populations by only 45.4%. If by 1971, the non-Hindu migration into Assam of 1951-1971 had ceased (and, indeed, had begun to reverse itself with substantial emigration of non-Hindus from Assam) then the rise in the proportion of Muslims in Assam’s population could be explained by the proclivity of Muslims to have larger families. Call this the “reproductive” hypothesis. Needless to say, the “illegal migration” and the “reproductive” hypotheses need not be - and, typically, are not - mutually exclusive. Indeed, the major purpose of this paper is to disentangle these two hypotheses by estimating, for each Census period, how much of the change in the Muslim and non-Muslim parts of Assam’s population was due, respectively, to migration and reproduction.

The starting point of the analysis was to estimate what the size of the Muslim and non-Muslim populations of Assam *would have been* if, starting from 1951, these had expanded at the corresponding growth rates of their all-India counterparts. These are shown in, respectively, columns 1 and 2 of Table 3, with the size of the actual populations shown parenthetically below the predicted values. So, column 1 of Table shows that:

⁹ Illegal because, under the terms of the Assam Accord of 1985, discussed earlier, all post-1971 migrants from Bangladesh to Assam were illegal.

¹⁰ For Muslims: from 1,982 thousand in 1951 to 3,592 thousand in 1971; for non-Muslims: from 6,047 thousand in 1951 to 11,033 in 1971.

- A. Applying the rates of growth for Muslims in India (shown in Table 2), the Muslim population of Assam would have grown by 31.46% (or 2.77% annually) from its 1951 level of 1,982 thousand to reach 2,605 thousand in 1961.
- B. Between 1961 and 1971, the Muslim population of Assam would have grown by 30.62% (or 2.71% annually) from its 1961 *predicted value* of 2,605 thousand to reach a *predicted* 3,403 thousand in 1971.
- C. Between 1971 and 1991, the Muslim population of Assam would have grown by 66.95% (or 2.6% annually) from its 1971 *predicted value* of 3,403 thousand to reach a *predicted* 5,681 thousand in 1991.
- D. And so on, till the 2011 *predicted value* of 9,790 thousand for the number of Muslims in Assam.

The results of an identical exercise for non-Muslims are shown in column 2 of Table 3.¹¹ The numbers under Column 3 are obtained as the sum of columns 1 and 2. They show what the total population of Assam *would have been* if the Muslim and non-Muslim parts had grown at their corresponding all-India rates.

It is important to emphasise that 1951 is being used as the base for these predictive exercises. Relative to that base, we compute the “excess supply” of Muslims and non-Muslims at each census date, the “excess supply” being defined as the difference between the *actual* numbers of Muslims /non-Muslims in Assam in a particular year and the *predicted* numbers for that year if the Muslim and non-Muslim populations had grown from their 1951 levels at their *respective* Indian growth rates. By definition, the excess supply of Muslims and of non-Muslims in 1951 was zero.

The excess supply represents a *stock* at a point in time (the Census date). The *change* in the excess supply between two census dates is the net *inflow/outflow* of Muslims and non-Muslims to/from Assam *between* two census periods. We refer to this net inflow/outflow (that is, the *change* in the excess supply) as *immigration/emigration*.¹² The precise relation between the observed and the simulated populations that is needed to generate immigration/emigration is set out in the Appendix 2 to this paper.

1. We estimate that in 1961, there was an excess of 137,000 Muslims (column 4) and 804,000 non-Muslims [column 5] totalling an excess of 941,000 persons [column 6]. So, between 1951 and 1961, there was a net *inflow* into Assam of 941,000 persons [column 9] of which 137,000 [column 7] (15%) were Muslim and 804,000 [column 8] (85%) were non-Muslim.
2. Between 1961 and 1971, we estimate that that there was a net *inflow* of 1,233 thousand persons into Assam [column 9] of which 52,000 [column 7] (4%) were Muslim and 1,181 thousand [column 8] (89%) were non-Muslim.

¹¹ That is, applying the rates of growth for non-Muslims in India (also shown in Table 2), the non-Muslim population of Assam would have grown by 20.56% (or 1.89% annually) from its 1951 level of 6,047 thousand to reach 7,291 thousand in 1961. Between 1961 and 1971, the non-Muslim population of Assam would have grown by 24.1% (or 2.18% annually) from its 1961 *predicted value* of 7,291 thousand to reach a *predicted* 9,048 thousand in 1971. Between 1971 and 1991, the non-Muslim population of Assam would have grown by 52.83% (or 2.14% annually) from its 1971 *predicted value* of 9,048 thousand to reach a *predicted* 13,828 thousand in 1991. And so on, till the 2011 *predicted value* of 19,210 thousand for the number of non-Muslims in Assam.

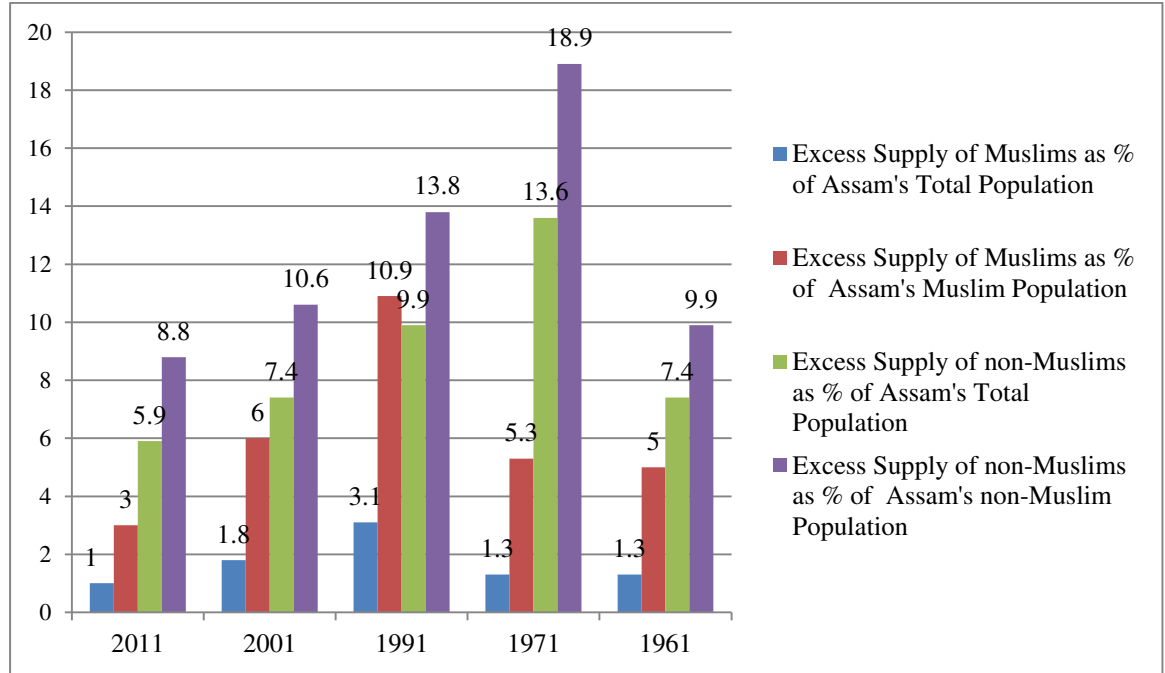
¹²This is based on the critical assumption that the natural reproductive rate in Assam is the same as that in India.

3. In the most contentious period, 1971-91, our estimate is that there was a net *inflow* of 730,000 persons into Assam from outside the state [column 9] and, of these, 502,000 [column 7] (69%) were Muslim and 228,000 [column 8] (31%) were non-Muslim.¹³
4. Between 1991 and 2001, our estimate is that there was a net *outflow* of 452,000 persons from Assam [column 9] and, of these, 209,000 [column 7] (47%) were Muslim and 243,000 [column 8] (53%) were non-Muslim.
5. Between 2001 and 2011, our estimate is that there was a net *outflow* of 283,000 persons [column 9] from Assam and, of these, 168,000 [column 7] (59%) were Muslim and 115,000 [column 8] (41%) were non-Muslim.
6. In 2011, there were 2,169 thousand “excess persons” in Assam meaning the difference between Assam’s population in 2011 (31,169 thousand) and what Assam’s total population *would have been* in 2011 if the Muslim and non-Muslim populations of Assam in 1951 had been rolled forward at their respective all-India rates (29,001 thousand). Of these 2,169 thousand excess persons, 314,000 (14%) were Muslim and 1,855 thousand (86%) were non-Muslim

A perennial concern of non-Muslim Assamese is that immigration from Bangladesh is causing an alarming rise in the proportion of Muslims in the state’s population. The results shown in Table 3 can go some way to allaying such anxieties. By extrapolation, we estimate that in 2011 there were 10,104 thousand Muslims in Assam and they comprised 32.4% of Assam’s population of 31,169 thousand persons. Of these, 9,790 thousand Muslims were the result of natural reproduction (calculated by assuming that Assam’s Muslim population grew at the all-India rate for Muslims) and these comprised 31.4% of Assam’s population. So the “excess supply” of Muslims in Assam in 2011 was 314,000, or 1% of the total population of Assam and 3% of the total number of Muslims in Assam. Similarly, the excess supply of non-Muslims in Assam in 2011 was 1,855 thousand: 5.9% of Assam’s total population and 8.8% of Assam’s non-Muslim population. Figure 1, below, shows the “excess supply” of Muslims and non-Muslims in Assam as a percentage of Assam’s total population and as a percentage of the relevant part of the population. This shows that the “excess supply” of Muslims fell from a peak of 3.1% of the population in 1991 to 1% of the population in 2011.

¹³ This finding is consistent with the parallel fact that, according to the Bangladesh census, the number of Hindus in Bangladesh fell by 3.9 million between 1971 and 1981 and by another 3.6 million between 1981 and 1989 (Sinha, 1998).

Figure 1: Excess Supply of Muslims and non-Muslims in Assam: 1961-2011



Excess supply is defined as the total number less the number predicted if the relevant parts of the population (Muslim and non-Muslim) grew at their corresponding all-India rates.

We can compare the results from our methodology (results shown in columns 1-6 of Table 3) with the simpler methodology of Weiner (1983) and Nath and Nath (2009), discussed above, in which migration into Assam was computed as the difference between Assam's actual population size and what its (total) population *would have been* if it had grown at the *overall* all-India rate. Column 10 of Table 3 shows the predicted values under this calculation. The excess supply of persons in Assam is obtained by subtracting the actual population sizes from their predicted values and is shown in column 11 of Table 3. The changes to the excess supply (immigration/emigration) are shown in column 12 of Table 3. These figures show that, between 1951 and 2011, an estimated 4,260 thousand persons entered Assam from outside the state. By considering growth in the Muslim and non-Muslim parts separately we showed that this number was more likely to be 2,169 thousand. In other words, ignoring the fact that the Muslim and non-Muslim populations grow at different rates added 2,091 thousand to the number of migrants into Assam.

3. Illegal Immigrants

So how many *illegal* immigrants were there in Assam in 2011? Our estimates in Table 3 show that *between 1971 and 2011*, net migration into Assam was virtually zero: 730,000 persons entered Assam in the 20 years between 1971 and 1991 [502,000 Muslim and 228,000 non-Muslim] but there was a net outflow of 452,000 between 1991 and 2001 [209,000 Muslim and 243,000 non-Muslim] and a further net outflow of 283,000 between 2001 and 2011 [168,000 Muslim and 115,000 non-Muslim] leaving a net outflow between 1971 and 2011 of just 5,000.

If we break this down by religion, between 1971 and 2011, there was net *inflow* of 125,000 Muslims into Assam and a net *outflow* of 130,000 non-Muslims out of Assam. However, we cannot quantify the legality or illegality of migrants from these figures because we have no idea these immigrants came from. If they came from other parts of India, or if they entered from other countries with valid papers and were not overstaying, they were obviously legal migrants. Consequently, in line with other studies, we cannot quantify the amount of illegal migration into Assam except under

certain specific scenarios. We present two extreme scenarios for quantifying the amount of illegal Muslim immigrants in Assam:

1. Every Muslim immigrant to Assam between 1971 and 2001 (502,000) *entered through Bangladesh, without valid papers*¹⁴ and *settled in Assam* (without moving on elsewhere). The outflow of Muslims from Assam that occurred between 1991 and 2011 (377,000) *was entirely that of legally settled Muslims*. Then, *under this set of assumptions*, there were 502,000 *illegal* Muslim immigrants in Assam in 2011. Note that, by virtue of our assumptions, we estimate this as the *maximum* number of illegal Muslim immigrants in Assam. This maximum comprises 5% of Assam's Muslim population of 10,104 thousand in 2011, and less than 2% of the State's population of 31,169 thousand in 2011.
2. Every Muslim immigrant to Assam between 1971 and 2001 (502,000) *entered through Bangladesh, without valid papers*. However, the outflow of Muslims from Assam (perhaps to other parts of India) that occurred between 1991 and 2011 (377,000) *was entirely that of illegally settled Muslims* who, using Assam as a staging-post, simply moved on elsewhere. Then, *under this set of assumptions*, that would leave 125,000 *illegal* Muslim immigrants in Assam. Note that, by virtue of our assumptions, we estimate this as the *minimum* number of illegal Muslim immigrants in Assam. This minimum comprises 1.2% of Assam's Muslim population of 10,104 thousand in 2011, and less than 0.5% of the State's population of 31,169 thousand in 2011.

So, on our estimates between 502,000 (maximum) – 1 in 20 Muslims in Assam - and 125,000 (minimum) – 1 in 100 Muslims in Assam – are illegal immigrants. To put the matter in perspective, in the 27 years between August 15, 1985 and April 30, 2012, 54,500 persons have been declared as “foreigners” from Bangladesh by the various Tribunals in Assam that adjudicate on these matters. Of these 54,500 persons, 12,782 entered Assam between 1966 and 1971 and, so, under the terms of the Assam Accord are eligible to stay in India: after a period of electoral disenfranchisement for 10 years from the date of registration they would be treated as Indian citizens. So, in this 27 year period, 41,718 persons were identified as illegal immigrants who could, in principle, be deported.¹⁵ Although many Assamese Hindus and Hindu nationalists in India interpret the smallness of this number as a failure of administrative will to detect and deport, it may be small precisely because there are not that many illegal Muslim immigrants living in Assam. Yet, the Assam government recently asked the Indian Home Ministry to set up 64 additional tribunals (from the current 36 tribunals) to detect and deport illegal immigrants living in Assam.¹⁶

4. Immigrants and the Economic and Political Life of Assam

Economics

The history of immigration into Assam shows that migrants came to the state to do jobs that the indigenous population either did not wish to, or could not, do. The first wave of migration followed the British annexation of Assam in 1826: labour from the tribal regions of Bihar was imported to work the tea gardens because the native cultivators, who owned their own land, were

¹⁴ Or they overstayed their visa entitlement.

¹⁵ Figures placed before the Assam Assembly by the Border Areas Development Minister in July 2012.

¹⁶ Amitabh Sinha, “500 Illegal Migrants Have Returned to Bangladesh”, *The Indian Express*, Thursday September 13, 2012 (posted online at 2:22 hrs).

unwilling to do so (Weiner, 1983). The second wave occurred when the British dismantled the administrative service of the *Ahom* kings and imported Bengali Hindus to run the administration and take positions as clerks, judges, revenue collectors because the native Assamese did not have the skills to fill such positions. So much so that, “by the beginning of the 20th century, practically all of Assam’s doctors, lawyers, teachers, and journalists were migrant *Bengali Hindus*[emphasis added]” (Gosselink, 1994). The British were persuaded by their Bengali administrators that Assamese was but a dialect of Bengali with the consequence that, much to the chagrin of the native Assamese, Bengali was established as the sole official language of Assam and remained so till 1947 when Assamese was also elevated to this status (Gosselink, 1994).

The third and fourth waves of migration to Assam were of *Bengali Muslims* from East Bengal, the first group of immigrants arriving around 1914, and continuing to flow into Assam for the next 30 years, followed by a second tranche of Muslims migrating in 1942 with the encouragement of the Muslim League government headed by Saadulla. These last two waves involved farmers who migrated to take advantage of available land and, in response to this inflow, the proportion of Muslims in Assam’s population increased from 16% in 1911, to 23% in 1931, to 25% in 1951. As the Census Superintendent in Assam observed in 1931: “Where there is waste land, thither flock the Mymensinghis¹⁷. In fact, the way they have seized upon the vacant areas in Assam seems almost uncanny. Without fuss, without tumult, without undue trouble to the district revenue staff, a population which must amount to over half a million has transported itself from Bengal into the Assam Valley in the last twenty five years”. The point is that this occupation occurred in 1931, when East Bengal was a part of undivided India, not in 1971.

In this section, we evaluate the economic contribution of these immigrant farmers who came to Assam in the first half of the 20th century from East Bengal. For example, immigrants may bring a set of skills which are superior to that of the native population: for example, in building canals (Awasthi *et. al.* 2004). Or they may be more versatile and adaptable than local residents: for example, tradition might require harvesting to coincide with a festival while scientifically it would be better to harvest at physiological maturity; or, tradition might prefer long-duration varieties and, therefore, mono-cropping while, scientifically, short-duration varieties and, therefore, multi-cropping might be a better option (Arunachalam, 2001). One way of establishing the relative abilities of immigrants against natives is to compare their respective productivities in performing a specific task. In an innovative study, Shrivastava and Heinen (2005) compared the productivities of immigrants and native Assamese in respect of “home gardens”.

As they note, in rural northeast India, home gardens are a ubiquitous part of the family home, used to grow vegetables both for home consumption and the market: bamboo, betel nut, varieties of tubers (*dhekiya sag*), and various plants with a sour taste (like *au tenga*, *nal tenga*, *bab tenga*, and *kordoi tenga*), which are an important part of Assamese cuisine, are all common features of home gardens in Assam. Shrivastava and Heinen (2005) compared the output of home gardens of residents and immigrants for 590 respondents (334 of whom were residents and 256 were first generation immigrants) living in 37 villages (14 in Naogaon district and 25 in Golaghat district) along the southern periphery (40 km long × 2 km wide) of the *Kaziranga* game reserve. They found that gardens of residents were larger than those of immigrants (0.27 compared to 0.18 hectares) but that yields per hectare were much higher for immigrants’ gardens compared to residents’ gardens: immigrants harvested, on average, 4,826 kg/hectare compared to residents’ harvest of 1,107 kg per

¹⁷ From the Mymensingh district in East Bengal from where most of the immigrants came.

hectare. Thus, the productivity of home gardens was four times greater for immigrants compared to residents.

In general, migrants from East Bengal introduced better techniques of cultivation in Assam, greater crop variety (including a number of vegetables hitherto unknown in Assam), and multiple cropping, the last of which was not practiced in Assam till the arrival of the immigrants (Weiner, 1978; Madhab, 2006). Moreover, immigrants settled on all available land, even on land previously thought uncultivable like the *chars* (sandbars) of the Brahmaputra (Goswami, 2007). During the colonial days, *Bodos* and other tribal communities – practicing, as they did, *jhoom* (“slash and burn”) methods of cultivation - had an aversion to acquiring permanent tenure over land. The Muslim immigrants introduced settled cultivation with permanent tenure over land (Misra (2012). In consequence of all these innovative practices, Assam had a surplus of rice production by 1947 (Bhaumik, 2003).

Politics

In his seminal book, Hirschman (1970) argued that consumers, faced with a drop in the quality of a product they were using, would communicate their dissatisfaction in either of two ways: they would complain and, thereby, seek improvement or they would leave and seek a better product elsewhere. Hirschman referred to the first way as “voice” and to the second as “exit”. From 1950 onwards, for nearly 25 years, the Congress party in Assam - as, indeed, the Congress party in India - operated as a “big tent” accommodating under its roof a wide variety of minority interests. By so doing, it was able to stitch together a winning coalition of voters, from a variety of minority groups, to remain in power uninterruptedly from 1950 till the 1977 General Election. This winning coalition, as implemented in Assam, is today referred to (pejoratively) as the “*Ali* [Muslim], *Coolie* [tea garden workers from Bihar], *Bangali*” strategy of electoral victory. But those who mock this strategy either miss or ignore three points.

First, successful politics is often about putting together a winning coalition of supporters, then getting one’s supporters to register as voters, and finally getting them to turn out to cast their ballots. Barack Obama would not be President of the USA today without his winning coalition of Black, Hispanic, female, and young supporters who turned out in droves to outvote Mitt Romney’s single constituency of white, working class, male voters. Any politician who is oblivious of the power of coalition politics, of voter registration, and of voter turnout is doomed to a long spell out of office.

Second, this strategy *harnessed* the existing stock of “immigrant” workers in Assam whether they were agriculturalist Muslims (*Ali*), worked on tea gardens (*Coolie*), or did white collar jobs (*Bangali*). It did not seek to add to this stock by *encouraging* immigration. What is often forgotten is that the large scale migration of Muslims into Assam from erstwhile East Bengal took place *circa* 1914 and then *circa* 1942. By 1951, one in four persons in Assam was Muslim and this share of Muslims in Assam’s population remained unchanged in the 20 year period between 1951 and 1971. It was this vote bank that the Congress in Assam exploited but whose size it did not seek to increase. The contemporary analogy is that Obama harnessed the existing Hispanic vote in the USA without attempting to encourage fresh supplies of Mexicans to wade across the Rio Grande. At the same time, it was only natural that Hispanics in the USA did not vote for a Presidential candidate who questioned their legality and urged them to “self-deport”.

Third, the Congress party in Assam provided a forum for myriad minority groups to air their grievances (and often to resolve them) through discussion, negotiation, horse trading, and every other

form of engagement, *short of violence*. In the language of Hirschman (1970), the Congress Party gave minority groups in Assam a “voice”. In so doing, it provided a vivid example of Winston Churchill’s famous dictum: “it is better to jaw-jaw than to war-war”. So, however much one might deride the *Ali-Coolie-Bangali* strategy today, its outcomes for Assam’s minorities were infinitely preferable to the violence that entered Assam’s soul after the Congress Party’s “big tent” was dismantled.

The 1971 war with Bangladesh, the influx of refugees that followed in its wake, and the subsequent student campaign, which began in 1979, against illegal immigration into Assam culminated in the formation of a non-Congress government in 1983. This brought to an end the partnership of minority interests engineered by the Congress. Thereafter, minority groups in Assam ventilated their grievances through Hirschman’s (1970) medium of “exit”: they left the shelter of the Congress tent to set up their own political dwellings. Muslims, who are now estranged from the present Congress government in Assam, established their party, the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), in 2005 and, in the 2011 elections to the Assam Assembly, won 18 seats (in the 126 seat Assembly) to emerge as the main opposition to the Congress government.

Governance and government in Assam has fragmented as different ethnic groups have been awarded their own Territorial Councils. Most prominent of these is the Bodoland Territorial Council, formed in February 2003, which governs the Bodoland Territorial Autonomous District comprising the four districts of Kokrajhar, Baksa, Udalguri and Chirang, covering an area of 27,100 square kilometers (or 35% of Assam’s area). This was awarded to the *Bodo* tribe - which, according to the 2001 Census, had 1,296 thousand members (or 5.3% of Assam’s population) – in exchange for the *Bodoland* Liberation Tigers Force surrendering their arms and dropping their demand for a separate state for *Bodos*. The leader of the Tigers was promptly appointed Chief Executive of the Bodoland Territorial Council. In addition to the *Bodos*, there are territorial autonomous district councils for the *Karbis* and the *Dimasas*.¹⁸ Compounding this fragmentation, 18 Development Councils for other ethnic communities were established March 1, 2011.¹⁹ The result is that today Assam is “a state with several smaller states in it.”²⁰

5. The position of *Ahomiyas* in Assam

Most ominously, the position of native Assamese Hindus (the *Ahomiyas*) is itself threatened by the alienation of Muslims and Assam’s fragmentation along tribal lines. Consider the fact that, as Table 4 shows, the number of “Assamese speakers” (that is, those claiming Assamese as their mother tongue) increased by only 53,000 between the 1991 and 2001 Censuses: from 12,958 thousand in 1991 (when Assamese speakers comprised 57.8% of Assam’s population) to 13,011 thousand in 2001 (when Assamese speakers were reduced to only 48.4% of Assam’s population). So where did all the Assamese speakers go? The answer is that throughout the Censuses from 1951 to 1991 several non-*Ahomiya* persons – in particular Bengali-speaking Muslims – often declared their mother tongue as Assamese. For example, Weiner (1978, 1983) makes the point that Bengali Muslims, as supporters of the *Ahomiya*-dominated government in Assam, often claimed Assamese as their mother tongue and, also, accepted the use of Assamese, rather than Bengali, as the medium of instruction in schools. For similar reasons, *Bodo*-speakers might have claimed Assamese, rather than *Bodo*, as their mother

¹⁸ Autonomous regions have varying degrees of independence from the machinery of state government. They receive a block grant from the state government which they can spend as they fit. These autonomous regions are established under the 6th schedule of the Indian Constitution.

¹⁹ Mattak, Moran, Chutia, Koch-Rajbangshi, Singpho, Sema, Tangsha, Tai Phake, Tai Khamiang, Tai Turung, Tai Khamti, Tai-Ahom, Tai Aiton, Sadharan Jati.

²⁰ Samudra Gupta Kashyap, “The Assam Tangle”, *The Indian Express*, August 26 2012.

tongue. On our estimate, of the 12,958 thousand Assamese speakers in Assam in 1991, 1,593 thousand (or 12%) were non-*Ahomiyas*.

In the decade since 1991, however, Muslim alienation and tribal fragmentation have meant that non-*Ahomiyas* have begun to declare their native language, rather than Assamese, as their mother tongue. This tendency is mirrored in a rise in the proportion of Bengali speakers (that is, those claiming Bengali as their mother tongue) in Assam from 21.7% in 1991 (4,857 thousand) to 27.5% (7,343 thousand) in 2001 – an unprecedented rise of 5.8 percentage points in just 10 years. After abstracting from the natural increase in Bengali speakers, our estimate is that 58% (or 1,440 thousand persons) of the total increase of 2,486 thousand Bengali speakers, over the 1991-2001 period, was due to Bengali speakers switching their declared mother tongue from Assamese to Bengali. Similarly, on our estimate, 118,000 *Bodo* speakers switched their declared mother tongue from Assamese to *Bodo* and 155,000 persons switched their declared mother tongue from Assamese to other languages indigenous to Assam (*inter alia Santali, Dimasa, Karbi, Deori, Rabha, Mishing, and Lalung*). So, all in all, it would appear that, since 1991, non-*Ahomiyas* have lost their desire to identify with the Assamese language. This leaves *Ahomiyas* - along with a few, stray non-*Ahomiyas* - as the only persons in Assam claiming Assamese as their mother tongue. This, in consequence, as the 2001 Census for Assam shows, has reduced “Assamese speakers” to a minority within the state.

5. Conclusions

This study focused largely on the migration of *Muslims* to Assam – both legal (pre- March 1971) and illegal (post- March 1971). Needless to say, there is the wider problem of illegal immigration into Assam, regardless of whether the immigrant was Muslim or non-Muslim. As we have estimated, between 1971 and 1991, 228,000 *non-Muslims* migrated to Assam and, of these, a certain proportion were assuredly illegal (for example, Hindus from Bangladesh). Indeed, the Hindu minority in Bangladesh has often been the victim of Bangladesh’s concept of itself as an Islamic state which was particularly intense during the Ershad regime of the 1980s when Islam was declared the state religion (Hussain, 1997). Particularly affected were the *Namasudra*, low-caste Hindu peasants and fishermen of Bangladesh who constituted the bulk of Hindu migration from Bangladesh (Samaddar, 1999). In general, the *Enemy (Vested) Property Law* (which came into effect in 1965 when Bangladesh was East Pakistan but which was continued with even after Bangladesh’s independence in 1971), under which the state could confiscate the property of persons deemed to be “enemies of the state”, was used to evict the Hindu peasantry from their lands (Samaddar, 1999).

However, attitudes in India towards Muslim and Hindu migrants from Bangladesh are often markedly different. According to Gillan (2002), the *Bharatiya Janata Party* (the *BJP*, which is one of India’s two national parties, the Indian National Congress being the other) draws a distinction between Hindu immigrants from Bangladesh, whom it regards as “legitimate refugees”, and Muslim immigrants whom it views as “infiltrators”. Indeed, the *BJP* is inclined to view illegal immigration from Bangladesh entirely as an “infiltration” issue designed to destabilise Assam (and, by corollary, India).²¹ Viewed in this light, *illegal* immigrants from Bangladesh (many of whom are Hindu) metamorphose into *illegal* Bengali Muslim immigrants who, in turn, morph into Bengali Muslims.

²¹ See Gillan (2002) for a discussion of the *BJP*’s contrasting attitudes towards Hindu and Muslim immigrants from Bangladesh.

The result of these mutations is that *all* Bengali Muslims – many of whom might have been settled in Assam for over a century – suffer the indignity of constantly having to prove their *bona fides*.²²

The most egregious example of their ill-treatment lies in the fact that none of the 400,000 Bengali-speaking Muslims, who in July-September 2012 are living in 200 “relief camps”, after having been burnt out of their homes, are being allowed to return to their villages until their papers have been checked and the legality of their residence established. The irony is that on a “shoot first, ask questions later” basis, 400,000 Bengali Muslims, many (perhaps most) of whom are Indian citizens, lost their homes and possessions in arson attacks, were then herded into camps, and where they then had to establish their *bona fides* as legal residents! In the United States, Arizona’s harsh anti-Hispanic (“show me your papers”) law - under which police officers can check the immigration status of anyone they stop, arrest, or detain on another basis, if they have “reasonable suspicion” that the person is an illegal resident - has attracted universal condemnation as a violation of human rights. But, what is happening in the relief camps in Assam today makes Arizona’s human rights abuses look like a picnic: Bengali Muslims are in these camps because they have been victims of assault and arson; now, in these camps, they have to suffer the humiliation of being viewed as foreigners, allowed to return to their destroyed properties and to resume their shattered lives only if they can prove otherwise.²³

So where does Assam go from here? There is an adage which says that if you find yourself in a hole, you should stop digging. For the past 40 years, the people of Assam have been shovelling furiously with three implements. First and foremost, the old Congress practices of fostering unity in diversity, of settlement through negotiation, and an outward show of civility between opposing groups have given way – at tremendous cost to Assam and its people - to a policy of fragmentation, isolation, and confrontation under the aegis of which communication is only through the barrel of a gun or from the blast of a bomb. Second, the call to “detect and deport”, which constitutes the substantive part of political rhetoric in Assam and India, with respect to illegal immigration, is an empty slogan: detection is difficult (not least because there are not that many illegal immigrants to detect) and, without the cooperation of Bangladesh – which is steadfastly withheld – deportation is impossible. Third, the hopes placed on preventing immigration from Bangladesh, by fencing the 267 kilometre border with Bangladesh, are likely to be disappointed: the border is almost impossible to seal, not least because 119 kilometres of the border are riverine and, of this riverine tract, 44 kilometres are impossible to fence. Even the U.S. Border Patrol, with its superior manpower and technology, finds it difficult to seal the border between the USA and Mexico in spite of the fact that there is a 30 foot steel fence running along much of it.²⁴

The irony is that, with Bangladesh’s growing prosperity relative to Assam, migration into Assam will be self-correcting as its attraction as a migratory destination dulls. In the meantime,

²² The Indian Foreigners’ Act of 1946 defines a foreigner as a person who is not an Indian and, if a person’s nationality is in doubt, places the onus on the person concerned to prove his/her nationality. The Illegal Migration (Detection by Tribunal) Act of 198, applicable only to Assam, was designed to protect minorities from police harassment and placed the burden of proof on those accusing a person of being a foreigner. This Act was struck down by the Indian Supreme Court in 2005 as being unconstitutional (see Fernandes, 2005 on this subject).

²³ See Amitabh Sinha, “500 Illegal Migrants Have Returned to Bangladesh”, *The Indian Express*, Thursday September 13, 2012 (posted online at 2:22 hrs). According to this news report, “during the first stage of verification, about 12,000 families – translating to about 90,000 people – living in these camps produced documents to establish they were genuine residents of the state” with 500 suspected illegal immigrants (just over 0.5% of the 90,000 individuals) having returned to Bangladesh fearing detection.

²⁴ The *Guardian*, 20 July 2010.

Hindu nationalists in India, along with large sections of Assam's population, have whipped themselves up into frenzy over the issue of illegal immigrants which, placed alongside matters relating to Assam's economic underdevelopment, is relatively trivial. Juxtaposed with the shrill voice of discord and division that echoes through the Brahmaputra valley today, perhaps the inclusive tone of the "*Ali, Coolie, Bangali*" policy was not so bad after all?

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Appendix 1

Method of Extrapolation to obtain the Religious Composition of the 2011 Population

Let P_{11} , M_{11} and N_{11} represent for 2011, respectively, the total population, the Muslim population, and the non-Muslim population where the latter two values are unknown and have to be estimated. Let P_{01} , M_{01} and N_{01} represent the corresponding values for 2001 where all these values are known (from the 2001 Census). Now the growth rate, g_{11} , in the total population between the 2001 and 2011 Censuses is:

$$g_{11} = \frac{P_{11}}{P_{01}} = \frac{M_{11} + N_{11}}{P_{01}} = \frac{M_{11}}{M_{01}} \frac{M_{01}}{P_{01}} + \frac{N_{11}}{N_{01}} \frac{N_{01}}{P_{01}} = g_{11}^M \rho_{01} + g_{11}^N (1 - \rho_{01}) \quad (1)$$

Where: g_{11}^M and g_{11}^N are, respectively, the growth rates of the Muslim and non-Muslim populations between 2001 and 2011 and ρ_{01} is the proportion of Muslims in the 2001 population. Now in equation (1):

1. Replace the growth rates g_{11}^M and g_{11}^N by the Muslim and non-Muslim growth rates between 1991 and 2001, g_{01}^M and g_{01}^N
2. Multiply equation (1) by a scalar constant θ to obtain:

$$g_{11} = \theta [g_{01}^M \rho_{01} + g_{01}^N (1 - \rho_{01})] \Rightarrow \theta = \frac{g_{11}}{g_{01}^M \rho_{01} + g_{01}^N (1 - \rho_{01})} \quad (2)$$

Since all the values in equation (1) are known, the value of θ can be computed. Now define the extrapolated growth rates $\hat{g}_{11}^M = \theta \times g_{01}^M$ and $\hat{g}_{11}^N = \theta \times g_{01}^N$ and use these to obtain the extrapolated populations of Muslims and non-Muslims in 2001:

$$\hat{M}_{11} = M_{01}(1 + \hat{g}_{11}^M) \text{ and } \hat{N}_{11} = N_{01}(1 + \hat{g}_{11}^N) \quad (3)$$

Finally note that the extrapolated growth rates \hat{g}_{11}^M and \hat{g}_{11}^N are consistent with the observed overall growth of total population between 2001 and 2011, g_{11} , because inserting the extrapolated growth rates in equation (1) will yield the observed value of g_{11} .

Appendix 2

Relation between actual and predicted population to generate immigration/emigration

Suppose the actual and simulated population of Muslims in 1971 and 1991 in Assam were, respectively: P_{71}^M and S_{71}^M and P_{91}^M and S_{91}^M . Then the excess supply of Muslims on the 1971 and 1991 Census dates was, respectively: $E_{71}^M = P_{71}^M - S_{71}^M$ and $E_{91}^M = P_{91}^M - S_{91}^M$. The *change* in the excess supply *between* 1971 and 1991 is:

$$\Delta E_{71-91}^M = E_{91}^M - E_{71}^M = (P_{91}^M - S_{91}^M) - (P_{71}^M - S_{71}^M) = (P_{91}^M - P_{71}^M) - (S_{91}^M - S_{71}^M) \quad (4)$$

Where this change represents immigration into Assam if $\Delta E_{71-91}^M > 0$ and emigration out of Assam if $\Delta E_{71-91}^M < 0$. The condition for zero inflow is:

$$\Delta E_{71-91}^M = (P_{91}^M - P_{71}^M) - (S_{91}^M - S_{71}^M) = 0 \Rightarrow P_{91}^M - P_{71}^M = (1 + g^I)S_{71}^M - S_{71}^M = g_I^M S_{71}^M \quad (5)$$

where: g_I^M is the growth of Muslims between 1971 and 1991 in India as a whole. The last expression in equation (5) can be written as:

$$\frac{P_{91}^M - P_{71}^M}{P_{71}^M} = g_A^M = g_I^M \frac{S_{71}^M}{P_{71}^M} \quad (6)$$

where: g_A^M is the growth of Muslims between 1971 and 1991 in Assam. So, for zero immigration/emigration, the growth rate of Muslims in Assam should be equal to the growth rate of Muslims in India, adjusted for the ratio of the simulated to the actual population.

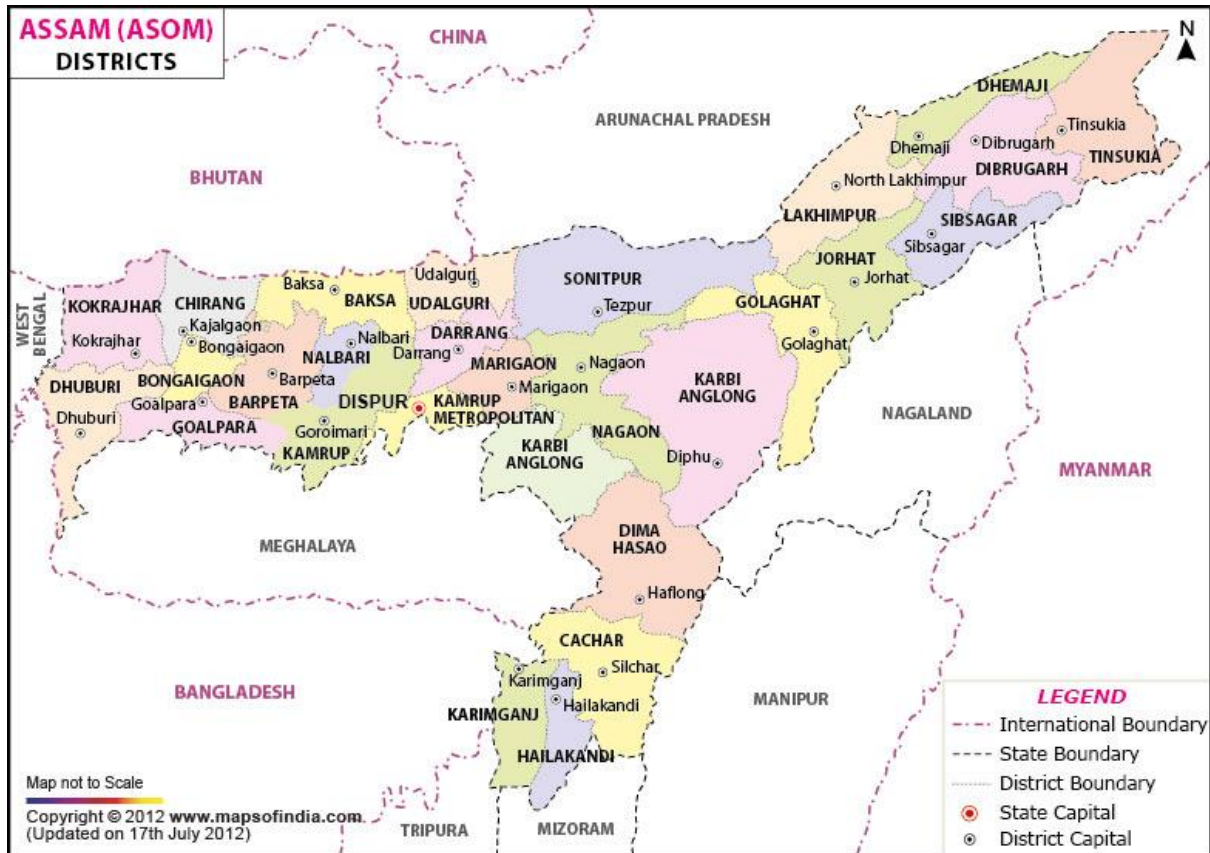


Table 1: The Populations of Assam and India*

| | Total Population (thousands) | | Muslim Population (thousands) | | Non-Muslim Population (thousands) | | Proportion of Muslims ⁺ | |
|-------------|---------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------------|----------------|---|------------------|------------------------------------|-------------|
| | Assam | India | Assam | India | Assam | India | Assam | India |
| 1951 | 8,029 | 361,088 | 1,982 | 35,784 | 6,047 | 325,304 | 24.68 | 9.91 |
| 1961 | 10,837 | 439,235 | 2,742 | 47,042 | 8,095 | 392,192 | 25.30 | 10.71 |
| 1971 | 14,625 | 548,160 | 3,592 | 61,449 | 11,033 | 486,711 | 24.56 | 11.21 |
| 1991 | 22,414 | 846,421 | 6,372 | 102,586 | 16,041 | 743,834 | 28.43 | 12.21 |
| 2001 | 26,656 | 1,028,737 | 8,127 | 138,057 | 18,529 | 890,681 | 30.91 | 13.42 |
| 2011 | 31,169 | 1,210,193 | <i>10,104</i> | <i>176,799</i> | <i>21,065</i> | <i>1,033,394</i> | <i>32.40</i> | <i>17.1</i> |

* Because of civil unrest, there was no census conducted in Assam in 1981.

⁺ The Indian Census has not released the 2011 figures on the religious composition of the population. The figures shown in Table 1 for 2011, for Muslims and non-Muslims, are extrapolated figures

Source for Total Population: Office of the Registrar General of India, Ministry of Home Affairs

Source for Proportion of Muslims in Population and derived Muslim and non-Muslim populations: Nath and Nath (2009)

Table 2: Population Growth Rates between Censuses in Assam and India (%)

| | Total Population | | Muslim Population | | Non-Muslim Population | |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| | Assam | India | Assam | India | Assam | India |
| 1951-1961 | 34.98 [3.04] | 21.64 [1.98] | 38.36 [3.30] | 31.46 [2.77] | 33.86 [2.96] | 20.56 [1.89] |
| 1961-1971 | 34.95 [3.04] | 24.80 [2.24] | 31.00 [2.74] | 30.62 [2.71] | 36.29 [3.14] | 24.10 [2.18] |
| 1971-1991 | 53.26 [2.16] | 54.4 [2.20] | 77.41 [2.91] | 66.95 [2.60] | 45.40 [1.89] | 52.83 [2.14] |
| 1991-2001 | 18.93 [1.75] | 21.54 [1.97] | 27.54 [2.46] | 34.58 [3.01] | 15.50 [1.45] | 19.74 [1.82] |
| 2001-2011 | 16.93 [1.58] | 17.64 [1.64] | <i>24.32</i> [2.20] | <i>28.06</i> [2.50] | <i>13.69</i> [1.29] | <i>16.02</i> [1.50] |
| 1951-2001 | 232.00 [2.43] | 184.90 [2.12] | 310.15 [2.86] | 285.81 [2.73] | 206.39 [2.25] | 173.80 [2.03] |
| 1951-2011 | 288.21 [2.29] | 235.15 [2.04] | <i>409.90</i> [2.76] | <i>394.06</i> [2.70] | <i>248.33</i> [2.11] | <i>217.67</i> [1.95] |

Figures in [] represent annualised growth rates.

Formula for computing the annualised growth rate: Suppose the population growth rate between two censuses, N years apart, is G%; then the annualised growth rate $g = [(1+G/100)^{1/N} - 1] \times 100$.

Figures in italics are extrapolated figures.

Table 3: Assam's Population, Simulated at "Indian" Growth Rates (Thousands)

| | 1 Simulated Muslim Population at Census date | 2 Simulated non-Muslim Population at Census date | 3 Simulated Population at Census date | 4 Excess Supply of Muslims in Assam at Census date | 5 Excess Supply of non- Muslims in Assam at Census date | 6 Total Excess Supply at Census date | 7 Change in Excess Supply of Muslims between Census dates | 8 Change in Excess Supply of non- Muslims between Census dates | 9 Change in Excess Supply of all persons between Census dates | 10 Simulated Population at Census date: A | 11 Excess Supply (A) at Census date | 12 Change in Excess Supply between Census dates |
|----------------------------------|--|--|---|---|---|--|--|---|--|---|--|---|
| 1951 | 1,982 | 6,047 | 8,029 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - | - | - | 8,029 | - | - |
| 1961 | 2605 (2,742) | 7,291 (8,095) | 9896 (10,837) | 137 | 804 | 941 | 137 | 804 | 941 | 9,767 (10,837) | 1,070 | 1,070 |
| 1971 | 3403 (3,592) | 9,048 (11,033) | 12,451 (14,625) | 189 | 1,985 | 2,174 | 52 | 1,181 | 1,233 | 12,189 (14,625) | 2,436 | 1,366 |
| 1991 | 5681 (6,372) | 13,828 (16,041) | 19,509 (22,414) | 691 | 2,213 | 2,904 | 502 | 228 | 730 | 18,821 (22,414) | 3,593 | 1,157 |
| 2001 | 7,645 (8,127) | 16,559 (18,529) | 24,203 (26,656) | 482 | 1,970 | 2,452 | -209 | -243 | -452 | 22,875 (26,656) | 3,781 | 188 |
| 2011 | 9,790 (10,104) | 19,210 (21,065) | 29,001 (31,169) | 314 | 1,855 | 2,169 | -168 | -115 | -283 | 26,909 (31,169) | 4,260 | 479 |
| Total Migration: 1951-2011 | | | | | | | 314 | 1,855 | 2,169 | | | 4,260 |

Notes to Table 3:

Figures in parentheses are actual population values in thousands

Column 1: Assam's *Muslim* population is assumed to grow at the rate at which the Indian *Muslim* population grew over the period, starting from its 1951 value

Column 2: Assam's *non-Muslim* population is assumed to grow the rate at which the Indian *non-Muslim* population grew over the period, starting from its 1951 value.

Column 3: Is obtained as the sum of column 1 and column 2.

Column 4: The "excess supply" of Muslim in Assam is the difference between the actual values in column 3 (reported parenthetically) and the simulated values in the same column.

Column 5: The "excess supply" of non-Muslim in Assam is the difference between the actual values in column 4 (reported parenthetically) and the simulated values in the same column.

Column 6: The "excess supply" of all persons in Assam is the difference between the actual values in column 3 (reported parenthetically) and the simulated values in the same column.

Column 7, 8, and 9: The change in excess supply is the difference between the excess supplies in two successive census periods (shown in, respectively, columns 4,5, and 6).

Column 10: Assam's population, *in its entirety*, is assumed to grow at the rate at which the Indian population, *in its entirety*, grew over the period, starting from its 1951 value.

Column 11: The "excess supply" of all persons in Assam (A) is the difference between the actual values in column 10 (reported parenthetically) and the simulated values in the same column.

Column 12: The change in excess supply is the difference between the excess supplies in two successive census periods (shown in column 11)

Table 4: Languages Spoken in Assam as Declared Mother Tongue (Thousands)

| | 1951 | 1961 | 1971 | 1991 | 2001 |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|
| Assamese | 4,971 (61.9) | 6,784 (62.6) | 8,905 (60.9) | 12,958 (57.8) | 13,011 (48.8) |
| Bengali | 1,717 (21.4) | 2,061 (19.0) | 2,882 (19.7) | 4,857 (21.7) | 7,343 (27.5) |
| Bodo | 166 (2.1) | 280 (2.6) | 534 (3.7) | 1,185 (5.3) | 1,296 (4.9) |
| Hindi | 334 (4.2) | 552 (5.1) | 792 (5.4) | 1,031 (4.6) | 1,570 (5.9) |
| Other languages | 841 (10.5) | 1,160 (10.7) | 1,512 (10.3) | 2,383 (10.6) | 3,436 (12.9) |
| Total Population | 8,029 | 10,837 | 14,625 | 22,414 | 26,656 |