

“Hills, Homeland, and Identity: The Karbi Struggle for Recognition in Assam’s Political Landscape”

Harakanta Payeng

Ph.D. Research Scholar, Banaras Hindu University

Mail: harapolsc@bhu.ac.in

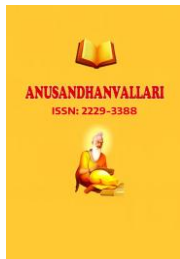
Abstract: The Karbi people, one of the largest tribal groups in Assam’s hill districts, have been central to the politics of identity and autonomy in Northeast India. Their collective struggle has roots in colonial rule, post-independence reorganization, and development policies that often left hill communities marginalized. The assertion of Karbi identity is deeply connected to demands for homeland, recognition, and equitable development. This article traces the evolution of Karbi political movements, beginning with the creation of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) and extending to ongoing campaigns for full statehood. It underscores how uneven development, insurgent activities, and complex inter-ethnic dynamics have shaped their political aspirations. The Karbi demand for autonomy highlights not only concerns over socio-economic neglect but also the pursuit of dignity and self-determination within a multi-ethnic context. Using historical records, government reports, and scholarly insights, the study situates the Karbi movement within larger debates on federalism, multiculturalism, and democratic accommodation in India. While constitutional provisions promise autonomy, lived realities often reflect marginalization. The Karbi experience thus illustrates the broader tensions between recognition and governance in diverse societies, revealing how local struggles are tied to wider questions of justice, identity, and national integration.

Keywords: Karbi, Autonomous, Hills, Identity, Northeast, Ethnicity.

Introduction

The politics of identity and recognition in Northeast India are deeply intertwined with questions of ethnicity, autonomy, and development. Among the region’s many indigenous groups, the Karbi people, one of the largest hill tribes of Assam, have consistently struggled to assert their political and cultural distinctiveness. Their demand for recognition stems from a history of marginalization, uneven development policies, and contestations over land, homeland, and belonging. The Karbi experience is not isolated but reflects broader patterns of ethnic assertion across India’s Northeast, where autonomy movements and struggles for self-determination have significantly shaped the political landscape (Misra, 2014). The Karbi homeland is primarily concentrated in the districts of Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong, previously part of the Mikir Hills, a region that was granted special administrative status under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. Despite this institutional framework, Karbi political movements have long expressed dissatisfaction with the functioning of autonomy arrangements, often demanding greater powers or even full statehood (Bhattacharjee, 2016). These demands highlight the gap between constitutional promises and lived realities.

In addition to autonomy politics, the Karbi struggle reflects wider socio-economic concerns. The region has historically lagged in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and employment opportunities compared to the plains of Assam (Hazarika, 1994). This underdevelopment has often been linked to perceptions of neglect by the state government, reinforcing ethnic consciousness and mobilization around identity (Baruah, 2015). Furthermore, insurgency and political violence—particularly during the 1990s and early 2000s—have added layers of



complexity to the Karbi question, simultaneously pushing the community toward armed assertion and peace negotiations (Goswami, 2012).

The Karbi case offers critical insights into the intersections of ethnicity, development, and autonomy. Unlike some other groups in Northeast India whose movements are defined solely by separatist aspirations, the Karbi struggle has oscillated between demands for enhanced autonomy and calls for deeper integration with the Indian state—albeit on terms that ensure dignity and recognition. Examining this trajectory allows us to engage with larger debates on multiculturalism, recognition, and federalism in India. This article, therefore, explores the Karbi struggle for recognition within Assam’s political landscape. It interrogates how identity, homeland, and development have become intertwined in shaping Karbi politics. By drawing on both historical and contemporary sources, the study situates the Karbi experience within broader theoretical debates and seeks to contribute to understanding how marginalized communities negotiate their place within multi-ethnic polities.

Objectives

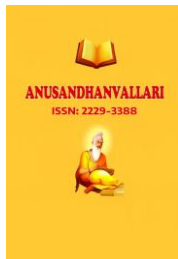
1. To trace the historical evolution of Karbi identity and examine how state policies, development dynamics, and marginalization have shaped their political aspirations.
2. To analyze the Karbi autonomy movements—including demands for self-rule, insurgency, and peace processes—while assessing the role of governance reforms in Karbi Anglong.
3. To situate the Karbi struggle within broader theoretical debates on recognition, ethnicity, and multiculturalism, and to evaluate its implications for Assam and Northeast India’s political future.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach based exclusively on secondary data to explore Karbi identity politics within Assam and the broader Northeast region. It draws on scholarly books, journal articles, and research papers that examine ethnicity, autonomy, and political movements in the area. The analysis prioritizes interpretive methods to understand the socio-political dynamics influencing the Karbi struggle for recognition and self-governance. By engaging with secondary literature, the study situates the Karbi experience in comparison with other hill communities in Northeast India, identifying shared challenges of marginalization as well as the distinctiveness of Karbi political trajectories. The qualitative analysis focuses on interpreting historical developments, government policies, and political mobilizations documented in existing research, avoiding quantitative measures. This interpretive methodology enables a nuanced understanding of how identity, autonomy, and development intersect in Karbi Anglong, revealing the complex interplay between constitutional provisions, ethnic assertion, and governance. The study contributes to broader discussions on managing ethnic diversity and autonomy in multi-ethnic democracies, emphasizing the importance of recognition and inclusive political accommodation in Northeast India.

Historical Context of Karbi Identity

The Karbi people, one of the largest indigenous groups of Assam, occupy a crucial place in the understanding of identity politics and autonomy struggles in Northeast India. Their history reflects how migration patterns, colonial policies, and post-colonial state formation shaped their distinct identity. Traditionally referred to as “Mikirs” in colonial records, they are part of the Tibeto-Burman linguistic family. Oral traditions trace their origin to the Himalayan region, from where they migrated into present-day Assam and Meghalaya (The question of development has remained central to the political consciousness of the Karbi people, as their hill districts in Assam continue to experience uneven growth and long-standing structural neglect compared to the plains. While autonomy under the Sixth Schedule was intended to empower indigenous communities, the Karbi case demonstrates that constitutional safeguards alone cannot resolve deeper inequalities. Instead, the struggle over



development has become inseparable from the politics of identity, with economic deprivation feeding grievances and driving mobilization for autonomy.

Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong, carved out of the earlier Mikir Hills, form one of the largest hill regions in Assam inhabited by the majority alongside groups such as Dimasas, Rengma Nagas, Kukis, and Assamese settlers. Despite rich natural resources, the districts continue to lag behind the state average in literacy, with notable gender gaps. Agriculture, especially shifting cultivation and terrace farming, remains the backbone of the economy, complemented by small-scale horticulture. However, underemployment, inadequate healthcare, poor infrastructure, and limited educational opportunities have constrained long-term social and economic mobility (Nongkynrih, 2002).

The roots of this underdevelopment can be traced to colonial administrative policies that classified the region as an “Excluded Area” under the 1935 Government of India Act. This deliberate isolation restricted governance, investment, and infrastructure development (Baruah, 1999). After independence, Assam’s plains benefited from investments in industries like tea and oil, while hill districts like Karbi Anglong remained peripheral to mainstream economic growth (Hazarika, 1994). Though the Sixth Schedule sought to institutionalize tribal autonomy through the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), restrictions on financial powers and dependence on the state government led to bureaucratic inefficiencies and underfunded projects. Many Karbis came to view their economic deprivation as a direct consequence of political subordination.

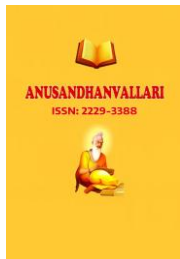
Migration has further complicated development in the hills. Increased settlement by outsiders—both tribal and non-tribal—has generated tensions over land and resource ownership. Although the Sixth Schedule guaranteed land protection for tribal groups, weak enforcement has enabled illegal acquisition and displacement of Karbi cultivators (Teron, 2008). At the same time, resource wealth, including forests and minerals, has been exploited largely by external actors, often through illegal logging and mining, leaving local communities with little benefit (Baruah, 2015). These conditions have reinforced perceptions of exploitation and deepened demands for more direct control over resources.

The framing of underdevelopment as systemic neglect has become a powerful political discourse in Karbi Anglong. Both student organizations and insurgent groups articulate economic backwardness as clear evidence of discrimination by the Assamese state, often linking development to dignity and recognition (Goswami, 2012). This has made autonomy, or even aspirations for a separate state, central to Karbi demands. Yet, contradictions remain. While local autonomy is celebrated as a means to self-determination, the KAAC has itself been criticized for corruption, nepotism, and inefficiency, with development funds often failing to translate into tangible outcomes (Bhattacharjee, 2016). In this sense, underdevelopment is attributed not only to the neglect of the state government but also to structural failures within local institutions.

Finally, development politics in Karbi Anglong intersect directly with inter-ethnic relations. Competing claims over land, resources, and opportunities have frequently sparked tensions between the Karbis and other groups such as the Dimasas, Kukis, and Nepali settlers (Misra, 2014). Development projects in road construction, mining, or agriculture often exacerbate such tensions, emphasizing that development in multi-ethnic societies is never neutral but embedded in power struggles. For the Karbis, therefore, the demand for equitable development remains tied to both identity and recognition, reflecting broader dilemmas of governance and inclusion in Northeast India.

The Demand for Autonomy and Political Recognition

The Karbi struggle for recognition has consistently revolved around demands for autonomy, reflecting their aspiration for dignity, cultural preservation, and control over resources. Although the formation of the Mikir Hills District Council in 1951, later renamed the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), was a milestone under the Sixth Schedule, its autonomy remained largely symbolic. The Assam government retained control over



finances and key administrative subjects, leaving the council dependent and undermining its effectiveness (Bhattacharjee, 2016). This gap between constitutional promise and lived reality became a central grievance that shaped Karbi politics.

By the 1970s and 1980s, disenchantment with limited autonomy generated mass mobilizations led by organizations such as the Karbi Students' Association (KSA) and the Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC). These groups argued that only an autonomous state under Article 244(A) could address structural neglect and guarantee meaningful self-governance (Dutta, 2000). The ASDC gained electoral influence in the 1990s, but later internal divisions weakened its momentum (Baruah, 2015). Calls for a separate "Karbi State" or "Autonomous State of Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao" have since re-emerged, drawing legitimacy from the unimplemented Article 244(A) and framing statehood as essential for securing a Karbi homeland (Misra, 2014; Weiner, 1983).

Alongside constitutional movements, insurgent groups such as the United People's Democratic Solidarity (UPDS) and Karbi People's Liberation Tigers (KPLT) also pressed for autonomy through armed struggle. While their violent strategies were contentious, their core demands echoed broader calls for recognition, control over resources, and relief from neglect (Goswami, 2012). Peace agreements, including the 2011 UPDS accord with state and central governments, brought some concessions but left the larger statehood demand unresolved.

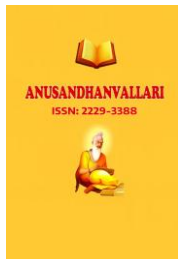
The Karbi movement parallels other successful autonomy struggles in the Northeast, such as those leading to the creation of Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Mizoram. Yet, unlike these states, Karbi Anglong's quest has faltered due to its smaller population, weaker bargaining leverage, and internal splits (Baruah, 2020). Despite these constraints, the demand for autonomy has endured because it represents more than institutional power: it is fundamentally tied to recognition as a distinct people. This dual pursuit—seeking integration into India through constitutional statehood while resisting assimilation into Assamese identity—captures the paradox of Karbi politics, where struggles over development converge with quests for homeland and cultural survival.

Identity Politics in Assam's Hills

The Karbi struggle for recognition is deeply connected to the broader politics of identity in Assam, where multiple ethnic groups have contested cultural space and political autonomy since independence. The rise of Assamese nationalism, particularly after the 1960s language policies, was seen as an attempt to impose cultural homogeneity. For the Karbis, such policies reinforced fears of assimilation, prompting them to assert their distinctiveness through language, oral traditions, and festivals such as Rongker and Chojun, which became central to cultural resistance (Teron, 2008).

Language and culture have been particularly important markers of identity. Efforts to institutionalize the Karbi language in schools, led by bodies such as Karbi Lammet Amei, underscored the demand for cultural preservation, while the Karbi Youth Festival emerged as both a cultural celebration and a political platform (Singh, 2005). Yet identity politics in Karbi Anglong unfolds in a multi-ethnic context where Dimasa, Kuki, Rengma Naga, Nepali, and Assamese communities also compete for land, resources, and political space. Periodic conflicts—such as Karbi-Dimasa clashes in 2005—demonstrate the fragility of inter-ethnic relations, although temporary alliances, such as joint demands for autonomy under Article 244(A), have occasionally emerged (Misra, 2014).

The Karbi notion of homeland has further anchored identity claims, with Karbi Anglong viewed as a sacred space tied to myths, ecological practices, and cultural memory (Teron, 2008). However, this claim remains contested by overlapping aspirations of other groups, complicating the assertion of exclusive territorial sovereignty (Baruah, 2020). Youth movements have introduced new dynamics, blending traditional identity politics with global concerns like climate change, gender, and digital mobilization, using social media to project Karbi voices beyond Assam.



At the same time, identity politics has had contradictory effects. While it has empowered Karbis by resisting assimilation and reinforcing self-recognition, it has also deepened inter-community rivalries and been co-opted by elites to consolidate political influence, often sidelining issues such as poverty and unemployment (Bhattacharjee, 2016). The Karbi case thus highlights both the potential of ethnic assertion as a vehicle for recognition and its risks in fragmenting solidarity across communities in the pursuit of justice and development.

Insurgency, Conflict, and Peace Processes

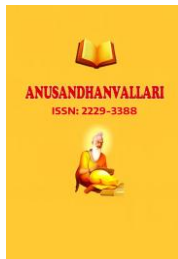
The trajectory of Karbi politics took a radical turn in the late twentieth century with the rise of armed insurgency, reflecting the frustrations of communities who felt that constitutional avenues had failed to guarantee meaningful autonomy. Chronic underdevelopment, limited powers under the Sixth Schedule, and perceived neglect by the Assam government created fertile conditions for militancy. Groups such as the United People's Democratic Solidarity (UPDS) and the Karbi Longri North Cachar Hills Liberation Front (KLNLF) emerged in the late 1980s and 1990s, framing their struggles around self-determination and demands for a separate state under Article 244(A). While factions differed in their objectives—with the UPDS seeking an autonomous state with the Dimasas and others like the KLNLF aspiring for complete sovereignty—they drew legitimacy from narratives of defending Karbi culture, land, and resources from outsiders (Bhattacharjee, 2016).

The escalation of armed struggle led to cycles of violence, marked by extortion, kidnappings, and clashes with security forces. Civilians often bore the brunt, caught between insurgents' demands for support and military surveillance. Inter-ethnic tensions further fueled the conflict, as seen in the 2005 Karbi-Dimasa violence, in which over ninety people were killed and thousands displaced. Insurgent groups exploited these rivalries, intensifying mutual distrust (Goswami, 2012). The state's response combined military action with peace overtures, reflecting a recognition that counter-insurgency alone could not quell grievances. While militarization resulted in human rights concerns, including arbitrary detentions, negotiations opened pathways for dialogue (Baruah, 2020).

The most notable outcome of such efforts was the 2011 tripartite agreement between the UPDS, the Government of India, and the Government of Assam, which expanded the powers of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, offered greater financial resources, and promised developmental initiatives (Singh, 2012). Although significant, many Karbi organizations dismissed the accord as insufficient, arguing that it failed to address the central demand for a separate state. Nonetheless, it facilitated the rehabilitation of militants and reduced direct violence in the region. A further milestone came with the 2021 Karbi Peace Agreement between the Indian and Assam governments and six insurgent groups, including KLNLF factions. The pact pledged ₹1,000 crore for development, greater devolution to KAAC, and reintegration measures for more than a thousand militants (Government of India, 2021). Celebrated as a step toward stability, it also brought former insurgent leaders into mainstream politics. Yet, doubts remain about its durability. Critics contend that without addressing issues like land rights, equitable development, and inclusive governance, the peace achieved may prove fragile (Bhattacharjee, 2022).

Despite these accords, challenges endure. The demand for an "Autonomous State" continues to be raised, underlining dissatisfaction with incremental concessions. Reintegration of former militants has been uneven, with limited employment prospects hindering their transition. Moreover, inter-ethnic tensions persist in the multi-ethnic context of Karbi Anglong, where fears of domination by Karbi elites unsettle other communities. Insurgency among the Karbis thus exemplifies how identity politics radicalizes when institutional mechanisms fail to deliver recognition. While peace processes have brought relative calm, the deeper political question remains unresolved: whether Karbi aspirations can be met through strengthened autonomy or whether the demand for statehood within India's federal framework will continue to drive mobilization.

Autonomy Movements and Constitutional Provisions



The Karbi struggle for recognition has consistently revolved around questions of autonomy and self-rule, reflecting both cultural aspirations and constitutional possibilities. While identity provides the emotional foundation, mechanisms like the Sixth Schedule and Article 244(A) have shaped the movement's political trajectory. The Sixth Schedule, introduced in 1950, created Autonomous District Councils, including the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), to grant tribal communities authority over land, culture, and local governance. Yet in practice, KAAC's autonomy has been constrained by continued financial dependence on the Assam government and restrictions over critical sectors such as policing, law and order, and large-scale development projects. For many Karbis, the council became a symbol of administrative tokenism rather than substantive empowerment, reinforcing frustration with structural dependency (Misra, 2014).

Dissatisfaction with the limitations of the Sixth Schedule fueled the demand for an "Autonomous State" under Article 244(A) of the Constitution, which allows for the creation of such a state within Assam. From the 1970s onward, movements led by the Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC) mobilized around this provision, even winning legislative and parliamentary seats by linking grassroots grievances to questions of governance and resource control (Kumar, 2004). While Karbi leaders viewed an Autonomous State as the only way to ensure genuine political and financial autonomy, successive governments resisted the demand, fearing it could trigger further fragmentation of Assam's territorial and political integrity (Dash, et.al. 2012).

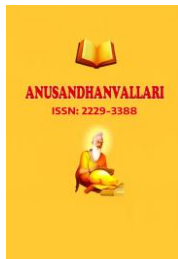
This tension between constitutional safeguards and political realities has been a defining feature of Karbi politics. Though the Constitution grants protections for tribal identity, their implementation has been undermined by bureaucratic control and uneven allocation of resources (Baruah, 2020). For example, projects involving land and resource management have frequently been undertaken by the Assam government with minimal input from KAAC, undermining the spirit of autonomy. These unresolved tensions have shaped electoral politics in Karbi Anglong, where all political actors—from local groups such as the ASDC and PDCK to national parties like the Congress and BJP—must position themselves around promises of autonomy and development if they want to gain legitimacy (Misra, 2014).

Underlying these developments is the broader hill-versus-plains dynamic in Assam. From the Karbi perspective, their movement represents resistance to domination by the Assamese plain's elite, while plains-based leaders argue that too much devolution risks destabilizing Assam as a whole (Gohain, 2017). This conflict has made it difficult to achieve consensus on structural reforms or the granting of full-fledged statehood. Instead, peace accords such as the 2011 UPDS agreement and the 2021 Karbi Peace Accord have provided incremental concessions, expanding KAAC's powers and financial support without addressing the core aspiration of an Autonomous State under Article 244(A). While celebrated as steps toward peace, such accords are often criticized by Karbi activists as symbolic recognition without genuine empowerment (Bhattacharjee, 2022).

At its core, the Karbi movement for autonomy is about much more than administrative adjustments. For the Karbis, self-rule represents cultural survival and the right to govern their distinct identity, language, and traditions. Constitutional discussions around the Sixth Schedule and Article 244(A) thus embody a larger struggle: the assertion of belonging within India while resisting assimilation into Assamese nationalism, highlighting the complexity of identity politics in Assam's hills (Teron, 2008).

Development, Governance, and Challenges in Karbi Anglong

The daily lives of the Karbi people in Karbi Anglong are deeply affected by persistent governance and development challenges despite decades of political mobilization and constitutional provisions for self-rule. This paradox highlights how, despite ongoing autonomy movements, the district continues to struggle with poverty, inadequate infrastructure, corruption, and uneven resource distribution, complicating the Karbi quest for recognition and raising doubts about autonomy's effectiveness as a pathway to development (Saikia, 2018).



Karbi Anglong ranks among Assam's less developed districts, characterized by deficient roads, unreliable electricity, limited healthcare, and poor educational infrastructure. Geographic isolation due to its hilly terrain exacerbates these challenges, but systemic neglect from state governments has played a significant role in perpetuating marginalization. Data indicate that literacy rates remain below the state average, and healthcare access is insufficient, reinforcing cycles of poverty (Choudhury, 2017).

Although the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) was created under the Sixth Schedule to enable more localized development planning, its success has been limited. Critics point to restricted financial resources, bureaucratic inefficiency, and corruption as significant obstacles. Development funds are often mismanaged or remain unutilized, and public trust is undermined by perceptions of factionalism among local leaders, impeding meaningful progress (Rai, 2019).

Competition over resources, particularly land which holds cultural and economic significance, remains contentious. The decline of traditional jhum cultivation due to population pressures and policies favoring settled agriculture has heightened tensions. Additionally, migrants from surrounding plains settling in the hills exacerbate resource conflicts, with many Karbis perceiving development efforts such as mining and forestry projects to favor outsiders at their expense (Deka, 2016).

Governance challenges intensify these issues, as accusations of corruption and clientelism pervade both local and state institutions, leading to uneven distribution of development benefits. This lack of institutional accountability leaves many Karbi villagers disillusioned with both autonomous and mainstream governance structures (Kalita, 2015).

Education presents a complex picture: while access to schools and higher education has expanded, quality remains poor due to insufficient infrastructure and staff shortages. Consequently, many Karbi youth migrate to urban centers for better opportunities, gaining exposure but often weakening their ties to local culture and politics. Nevertheless, student organizations actively promote education as a means to preserve Karbi identity alongside socio-economic advancement (Thakur, 2018).

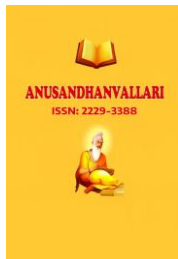
Gender remains a critical but under-addressed factor. Although Karbi women traditionally play vital roles in agriculture and community life, modern development initiatives have largely neglected their specific needs, including maternal health, employment, and political participation. Persistent patriarchal norms limit women's representation in leadership, perpetuating gender disparities within the community (Sarma, 2017).

Healthcare infrastructure is inadequate, with under-resourced rural clinics and limited access contributing to high malnutrition and infant mortality rates. Many rely on costly private healthcare options in urban areas, exacerbating economic vulnerabilities and deepening the rural-urban divide (Bora, 2019).

While peace agreements in 2011 and 2021 promised financial packages and enhanced powers for the KAAC, their impact has been inconsistent. Implementation gaps, fund misallocation, and corruption have hampered development efforts, highlighting that financial commitments alone cannot resolve entrenched governance problems (Hazarika, 2022).

Development is highly politicized in Karbi Anglong, with leaders leveraging promises of infrastructure and jobs to secure electoral support, often at the expense of addressing systemic issues. This "vote-bank" approach intertwines development with identity politics, framing underdevelopment as evidence of neglect by Assam's state government and legitimizing demands for greater autonomy (Pathak, 2016).

This context creates a paradox wherein identity politics fuels autonomy movements but fails to deliver equitable development. Continued poverty and governance deficits sometimes spark renewed protests or armed conflict, underscoring the urgent need to rethink autonomy frameworks. Balancing cultural recognition with effective



governance and inclusive growth is essential to breaking this cycle and achieving substantive progress for the Karbi people (Dutta & Das, 2018).

Conclusion

The Karbi struggle in Assam exemplifies the complex interplay of identity, autonomy, and development in Northeast India's politics. Rooted in a strong sense of cultural distinctiveness and territorial belonging, Karbi politics has evolved through phases of early mobilization, constitutional demands under the Sixth Schedule and Article 244(A), armed insurgency, peace agreements, and ongoing efforts for socio-economic progress. For the Karbis, identity has been both a form of resistance against assimilation into Assamese nationalism and a political tool to assert their distinct status within the state.

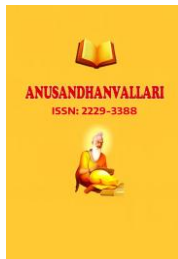
Although constitutional provisions provided a framework for self-governance, they fell short of fulfilling the Karbis' aspirations, prompting demands for broader autonomy. While peace accords in 2011 and 2021 introduced incremental gains, they stopped short of addressing core demands, maintaining structural limitations. The shift from insurgency to negotiated peace illustrates how radicalized identity politics can compel state engagement but at considerable social costs.

Despite these efforts, Karbi Anglong continues to face persistent underdevelopment, weakened by corruption, governance deficits, and unequal resource distribution. This development gap fuels continuing dissatisfaction and sustains calls for greater autonomy or statehood. Moreover, the district's multi-ethnic composition complicates claims to homeland and autonomy, as competing groups vie for recognition, underscoring the need for inclusive governance over exclusivist identity assertions.

Overall, the Karbi case underscores both the power and limits of identity politics: while essential for recognition, identity must be complemented by accountable institutions, equitable development, and participation across communities. For Assam and India, this experience highlights the challenges of managing ethnic diversity in democratic federalism. Durable peace and progress will require moving beyond piecemeal arrangements toward a reimagined autonomy that balances cultural identity with development, social justice, and inter-group harmony. The Karbis' demand represents a quest not just for political recognition but for dignity and self-determination, raising broader questions about India's federal system's capacity to accommodate such aspirations without recurring conflict. The Karbi identity and homeland will remain pivotal to Assam's political future.

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