**Summary On:**

**(k) Strangers no more by Sanjoy Hazarika**

In the book “Strangers no more” the author flags the issues and concerns of the damage that AFSPA has wrought over the years, the problem of underage miners and ecological damage in Meghalaya, dams and environmental destruction in Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim, and also the have to address post-conflict trauma in Mizoram, Assam, Nagaland.

The AFSPA remains Hazarika’s major concern and which appears within the book throughout. The author provides us an insider account of his experiences at the Justice Reddy Committee to review AFSPA, 1958 where he was member. He’s clearly upset with the govt that had failed and did not repeal the Act because the Committee had recommended. But hazarika feels proud in his own contribution to the Committee’s decision to recommend the repeal of the Act. Hazarika quoted MK Narayanan, the then National Security Adviser as complaining: “When we picked Reddy, we thought he was a ‘safe’ judge. General V Raghavan would represent the army’s interests; Dr Nakade was a friend of the Home Minister and PP Shrivastav was a home ministry person.Sanjoy Hazarika was in a minority.How were we to know that he would turn everyone to his side? Now, we are stuck with a report we can’t implement.”

This remark illustrated Delhi’s cynical strategy in managing the unrest within the Northeast through the past decades.

But the repeal of the AFSPA by itself are going to be no heal. The system of immunity has become so well established that the law’s repeal may mean nothing quite a symbolic gesture. Incidentally, the Manipur valley, which saw the foremost most dramatic protests against AFSPA, has been out of the Act’s purview since 2004 a fact that the author doesn’t mention anywhere and is unclear if this makes any difference to things.

The author also gives a account of his role as a go-between within the 1990s to facilitate the peace talks between Indian Government and the only NSCN(IM). Hazarika also recollects the story of the Mizo insurgency through painful personal experiences. Hazarika isn’t any admirer of the MNF leader Laldenga who comes off as self-serving, cowardly and unsure of himself of what he wants throughout. Hazarika suggests that Laldenga wasn’t initially serious about independence plus his taking up arms and has more to try and do with settling scores with the Mizo Union, whose leaders had allegedly thrown him out of his clerk’s position within the district council for fudging accounts.

In the end, Hazarika argues for the Indian government to apologize for the deep wounds inflicted during the Naga and Mizo insurgencies. He mourn the justice and closure that also evade the victims of the Nellie massacre and such other killings. He stresses the requirement for rectifying and says amongst the groups that it’s precisely the internal fight and it will only bring chaos to the state’s control.

Hazarika could be a conscientious and sensitive writer who feels deeply about these issues. But his concerns are too many and scattered. The prose is twisty, moralistic in tone and tends to jump from one topic to an unrelated topic.

In the process, this book becomes a similitude of the region. It so determinedly tries to describe: promising and alluring, yet perplexing and disjointed.