



Research Article

NORTHEAST INDIA'S ARMED NAGA MOVEMENT: FROM CEASE FIRE TO FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

Aheibam Koireng Singh¹, Sukhdeba Sharma Hanjabam² and Homen Thangjam³

¹Centre for Manipur Studies (CMS), Manipur University

²Dept. of Political Science, Indira Gandhi National Tribal University-Regional Campus Manipur

³Dept. of Social Work, Indira Gandhi National Tribal University-Regional Campus Manipur

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ABSTRACT

The armed political movement of the Nagas, has traversed a long way. One remarkable achievement was that it could forge a political unity of identity among various tribes speaking a thousand tongues inhabiting different realms of territorial spaces in different states of India and different regions in Myanmar, practicing different ways of lives. If the solution comes in a package of secrecy as it is happening at the moment, compounding not only confusion but also the fear psychosis of the people of Manipur, the solution is bound to create more problem than peace. For instance, some sections of Nagas in Manipur are celebrating while the Nagas of Nagaland are sceptic that the agreement should not come out as a compromise. Similarly, the political class and the general public are worried that it should not disturb Manipur's Integrity.

The 'historic' framework agreement of between the Government of India (GoI) and National Socialist Council of Nagalim – Isak Muivah (NSCN-IM) is presented in such a manner that it has the answer to the aspirations or 'sentiments' of the NSCN-IM as well as the people of Manipur. It has been rejected by most of the Naga Political Groups (NPGs), based in Nagaland. The Nagas of Nagaland remain indecisive as the agreement is concealed so far. Sanjoy Hazarika question why what's the need for secrecy, if it is historic. However, a cursory peek into the earlier claims and trajectories as well as the currently secretive yet unfolding dynamics of the framework agreement as narrated by the "participants" seems to be telling an altogether different story. In this sense, instead of bringing about lasting peace, the so called "historic" agreement is likely to burn down 'sentiments' of both the Manipuri Nagas and Manipur into ashes. The basic issue staring into our face is whether GoI, as a signatory of the framework agreement, has been able to kill two birds with a single shot. In other words, has GoI been able to dissuade NSCN-IM to give up its claim for "Nagalim" or Greater Nagaland thereby make the party abandon its demand for inclusion of the 4(four) hill districts of Manipur into the pan-Naga politico-administrative structure. Further, in reaching such an historic agreement, has the GoI been able to tranquil the edgy Manipur's historic demand for territorial integrity, and thus, respect its history.

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INTRODUCTION

The armed political movement of the Nagas, as different from the popular form of politics informed by electoral democracy, has traversed a long way. The path has been thorny but sweet and full of discovery. Along the way it left innumerable milestones, which are the stuffs of legend and history, and created many a friends as well as foes. One remarkable achievement was that it could forge a political unity of identity among various tribes speaking a thousand tongues inhabiting different realms of territorial spaces in different states of India

and different regions in Myanmar, practicing different ways of lives. This happened amongst diverse tribes who once upon a time, before the arrival of Christianity, communicated through the language of headhunting and the tribes who fiercely remained loyal to their own clans known by independent names.

On Identity

The identity assertion and expansionism of the Nagas is the major source of conflict in Northeast India. It is more relevant if we examine the development of the Naga as a political creed. The mission for the cultural identity has been a non-starter even today with each community prioritising their own culture and identity. A cultural project of Manipuri Nagas such

**Corresponding author: Aheibam Koireng Singh*

Centre for Manipur Studies (CMS), Manipur University

as 'Lui-Ngai-Ni' (Seed Sowing Festival of Manipur Nagas) still remains as a tokenistic calendar programme.

The political project includes two compulsory component of religion (Christianity) and Naganess or Nagaisation and in that religion plays a key role to spread the political identity in Manipur. The debate of 'Old Kuki' or 'Naga' is yet to be addressed. However, those communities that could accept the religion but not the identity have been the victim of the political project. Thus the project of political identity has its foundation on blood and tears.

In the case of Manipur, Naga identity is largely a post-independence (*sic.* India's) phenomenon while the Naga Hills was a pre-independence one particularly after the formation of Naga Club. The present Naga tribes of Manipur did not know the term Naga as late as 1940's, Shimray stated. He recorded his boyhood experience when he and his father were called Naga by a retreating Japanese troop during World War II. He and his father were struck with wonder when the Major of the Japanese troop who entered their house. They told the Japanese troop that they were Tangkhuls and not Naga. The formation of NSCN-IM under the leadership of a Manipuri Tangkhul and later on a Manipuri Naga Th. Muivah strengthened the Nagaisation process in Manipur. So they developed a narrative of history as a strategy to stake claim in the movement so as to satisfy their emerging political needs.

Subsequently, with the abating of the NSCN-IM's clout, the political project of Naga identity is also waning as the formation of political identity was based rather on coercion than on consensus. It is interesting to note the message for KUT 2015 delivered by PS Haokip, President of KNO. In his message, the Nagas of Northeast have been included within the Kuki fold. According to him, If Kachin and Kuki are blood brothers, logically the fold to which SS Khaplang belongs, i.e. Heimi, Naowa, Lainow, Makury, and Para with whom we share a common culture, customs and traditions are a part of Kuki-Kachin group, and not a part of the disparate Naga groups. Sharing similar traits, Konyaks, Phom, Khimnungan and Yimchunger in the state of Nagaland are our blood brothers, including all the Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh and Bodo, Karbi, Kachari and Mishing people in Assam. Pu HC Ngurdawla of Tripura has stated that half the population of the Ranglong Kuki people migrated from Tripura to the Peren district in Nagaland, NC Hills in Assam and Tamenglong district in Manipur, where they are called Zeliangrong, comprising Zeimi, Liangmei, and Rongmei. It is rather strange that all these groups are one and the same people. However, we did not know this reality for such a long time until the mystery and truth was revealed through the faithful servants of God.

Similarly, communities under Naga fold have been fluctuating. What is more revealing is what Isak Chisi Swu stated about the Naga identity. He stated, Our existence as a nation has been recognised in the international community from January 23, 1993, under the leadership of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim, as we became a member of the Unrepresented Nations and People's Organisation. Yet, to remain ignorant of our own nationhood, origin and identity is deplorable. There is a sense of urgency for every Naga to know his and her own identity as a people. I feel it is important to know this. I am constrained to fill this vacuum by sharing these following stories of our origin and migration in a nutshell, and attempt to

provide some authentic knowledge of our story as a people in a simple and practical way, and to the best of my memory.

So the story of "Unique History of Nagas" is just a political response of the Government of India (GoI). If demanded, the GoI may also declare the 'Unique History of Manipuri Nagas' as well. There is no pint in claiming a nation based on the declaration of the GoI as they will not have any hesitation to declare any communities in India demanding the same.

Territorial Aspirations

Aspirations for territorial expansion of the Naga political movement first came to notice in the 9th point agreement signed between the representatives of Dominion of India and NNC in 1947. The agreement on boundaries (No 6) mentioned, among others, "To bring under one unified administrative unit as far as possible all Nagas". However, the agreement could not be implemented. But, it was quite clear to the NNC leadership at that point of time that there was no Nagas in Manipur as the tribes were known only by their community names. Further, the historical relation of Angamis with the Kingdom of Manipur strengthened their position that their territorial aspiration was towards Assam. It is recorded that since time immemorial Angamis on a regular basis received education in the Manipur Palace. In return the Manipuris could freely pass through the Angami territory for trade and commerce. In times of need, Meitei King sent soldiers to protect them on occasion such as when there were raids against the Angamis by other tribes. Thus, they always maintained a good relation. It was also reflected in the Expedition of the Naga Hill by the Manipur Kings with British. Oral accounts of the Angami elders reveal that the Angami villages were deliberately left untouched by the Meitei King but instead attacked other tribal villages during the expedition.

Likewise, drawing strength from such historical legacy and relationship, AZ Phizo visited Manipur with a proposal to initiate a collective movement against India. This happened in the initial days of the NNC and he met MK Priyobrata and other tribal elders. But as the proposal could not concretise and receive consensus, it was decided to have separate movement but support each other. In the text of Dr Arambam Lokendra, Angami Zapu Phizo, in his urge to secure more support for his peoples' struggles was learnt to have visited Imphal, and met the Manipur Chief Minister Maharaj Kumar Priyobarta, to discuss the possibility of a common endeavour to fight against the Indian state. Stephen Angkang, an elderly Tangkhul, told me of the anguish of Phizo in the Manipur peoples' response, their inability to fraternize with the precious cause.

Thus, on the part of the NNC leadership, as far as territorial aspiration was concerned Manipur was never in their cartographic imagination. It is evident in the 14-point statement of NNC on the "Historical Facts of the Nagas" The statement asserted the existence of 'Free Nagaland' and the preparedness of not yielding its sovereign independence to any other state at any point of time. In this document the claim of NNC, only the Naga Hills was mentioned, and Manipur was nowhere found.

As a result, their territorial claim extended towards Assam. In case of Assam, it has been explicitly documented as "Area transferred out of Naga territory to Assam and now claimed by the Nagas". So the territorial claim of Manipur is a recent

development. What is more unfounded is that the claim for Manipuri territory is based on History of Naga Hills and on selectively unofficial records of British as the Manipuri Naga are always with the Kingdom of Manipur at different capacity, be with administration or Constitution making, etc.

Table no 1 Interim Government of Manipur Constituted on the 14th of August, 1947

SL No	Name	Position	Community
1	M.K. Priyobrata Singh	Chief Minister	Meitei
2	Rajkumar Bhubonsana Singh	Minister	Meitei
3	S. Krishnamohon Singh	Minister	Meitei
4	T.C. Tiangkham.	Minister	Kuki-Chin
5	R. Khathing	Minister	Naga
6	K. Gouro Singh	Minister	Meitei
7	Md. Basiruddin Ahmed.	Minister	Meitei Pangal

It is natural for any movement to put forward their aspirations. However, putting claims based on concocted or borrowed history of other or similar groups will only disturb the movement in the long run. This is the case of the Naga movement in Manipur. The experiences of a movement that was confined in the Naga Hills was later on used as a legitimate ground to extend the movement in Manipur by the Manipuri Nagas. This has projected the movement of Naga Hills as an expansionist movement or land grabbing movement. For instance, while the Nagas of the Naga Hills struggled for their claims, the Manipuri Nagas are busy engaging with the Kings administration, interim period and later with Manipur State.

Table No 2 Constitution Making Committee of Manipur State Constitution Act 1947

SL.No	Name	Position	Community
1	F.F. Pearson (P.M.S.D.)	Chairman	British
2	S. Somorendra Singh	Darbar Representatives	Meitei
3	Md. Kazi Waliullah	Darbar Representatives	Meitei Pangal
4	L.M. Ibugohal Singh	Chief Court	Meitei
5	S. Bijoy Singh	Jiribam Representatives	Meitei
6	A. Ibotombi Singh (alias Minaketon)	non-official	Meitei
7	H. Dwijamani Dey Sharma	Valley representatives	Meitei
8	Dr. L. Leiren Singh	Valley representatives	Meitei
9	L. Jogeswar Singh	Valley representatives	Meitei
10	S. Krishnamohon Singh	Valley representatives	Meitei
11	Mera Jatra	Valley representatives	Meitei
12	Daiho	Hills representatives	Naga
13	Thangkhopao Kipgen	Hills representatives	Kuki-Chin
14	T.C Tiangkham	Hills representative	Kuki-Chin
15	Teba Kilong	Hills representatives	Khulmi
16	R. Suisa	Hills representatives	Naga

Note: The constitution of the Constitution Making Committee was announced by the Maharaja on 10th March 1947. The Committee finalized the framing of the Constitution and adopted it on 26 July 1947

So the recent territorial claim of Manipur NSCN-IM has few takers amongst the Nagas in Manipur. Left with no other alternatives, they have even tried in electoral politics by fielding its own candidates indirectly and later directly, but peoples' disapproval remains the same. It is at this stage the UNC initiated the demand for Alternative arrangement through a Naga Peoples' Convention on July 1, 2010 at Senapati district, Manipur. One of the main resolution was to sever all political ties with Government of Manipur and declaring the ADC election as 'null & void' and filling up the vacuum thereby created because of the severing of ties with an alternative arrangement. However, it was a failure in the initiation itself as none of the member of UNC respected the resolution. Likewise their families who are working with the Government of Manipur also had not responded to the issues.

The reason for failures of any initiatives of NSCN-IM concerning the Manipuri Nagas could be because of its emphasis on ill-informed or one-sided international consultant's reports. Most of the consultants are alien and insensitive to the issue of the region and are interested in delivering their assignment, irrespective of the consequences. In one such report, it even outlines the strategies of their activities.

"The option of demanding a separate administrative unit exclusively for the tribals of Manipur is the most viable short term as well as long term strategy. That it will dilute the greater cause is a complete misgiving for the following reasons: a) Nagaland State had been already created. The emotional barrier we have today between the Nagas of Nagaland and other Nagas is due to this artificial boundary. Adding another Administrative State for Nagas will only help bridge the gulf between the brethren of these two states. This will be enumerated at the later stage. b) This movement will be solely at the public/ civilian level. c) Any political struggle process involves short term measures which will uplift the overall condition of the people. For example, during the Indian freedom struggle, several Acts were passed at the behest of INC to bring reforms within the colonial structure to ameliorate the political, social and economic lives of people although the ultimate is independence. The political reforms introduced did not in any case dilute the ultimate goal of the struggle. In fact, it concretizes the ultimate goal and therefore, laid the very foundation of Independent India".

The report further adds that "Creating a separate political entity for the Nagas of South will, therefore, go a long way in the process of integration process for the following reason:

1. Having a territorial entity of our own will raise the bargaining power with our brothers in Nagaland. It will not be a move for integration of Naga territory of Manipur with the territory of Nagaland but integration of two entities-an amalgamation.
2. This will clear the constitutional hurdle of having consent of the States concerned for merger to create a bigger one political entity. It will be then that the sincerity of Nagas from Nagaland will be tested.

Strategy: As much as scoring goal is not a matter of one long shoot from one goal post to another, there is a need to have several steps if needs be to achieving this goal. For one should be fully prepared for a long drawn battle.

1. Demand for separate Hill Education Board.
2. Demand for separate Hill University.
3. Demand for separate Land Revenue and Forest Act for the hill areas.
4. And, ultimately, demand for separate union territory/ State
5. It should have an inclusive approach.

It is important to note that right from the inception of this process other non-Naga tribes should be taken into confidence. It will be suicidal on our part to commit the same mistake of the early 1990s".

We have witnessed these movements failing one after another in the last few years. But it has created intra and inter-community confusion and tension among the communities of Manipur. The ethnic divide reached such a height that even the former Chief Minister of Nagaland Neiphiu Rio called the

Chief Minister of Manipur O Ibobi as the “one of the biggest enemies of the Nagas.” The first and the second demand was witnessed by the public but the third demand was mostly done through official channel as it is one of the demand of NSCN-IM based in Manipur. The fourth movement was initiated under the banner of Alternative Arrangement. When they try to be inclusive and extended their proposal to Chin-Kuki-Mizos particularly the KNO, they try to outwit each other as they understand each other’s logic for the proposal.

As part of the inclusive process KNO proposed for land sharing to NSCN-IM through a MoU. However, it was reported that the MoU could not be signed as they don’t agree with the proposal. The proposed MoU states:

The Hill areas, presently demarcated as Churachandpur and Chandel Districts of Manipur, the autonomous Sadar Hills Region of Senapati district and all Kuki villages in Ukhrul, Senapati and Tamenglong Districts contiguous to Chandel, Sadar Hills and Churachandpur belong to the Kuki people and shall form a Kuki state. Likewise, the Hill areas presently demarcated as Ukhrul and Tamenglong Districts of Manipur, the areas in Senapati District other than the Sadar Hills Autonomous region, and all Naga villages in Sadar Hills region of Senapati, Chandel and Churachandpur Districts contiguous to Ukhrul, Tamenglong and Senapati other than Sadar Hills belong to the Naga peoples and shall be integrated into greater Nagalim.

The Kuki villages in the interiors of Ukhrul, Tamenglong and areas of Senapati district other than the Autonomous District Region of Sadar hills shall remain within greater Nagalim, and the Naga Government shall endeavour to protect, promote and develop these villages and the people with equality, a spirit of fraternity and fairness. The Naga villages in the interiors of Sadar Hills Autonomous Region in Senapati District, Chandel and Churachandpur Districts shall remain within Kuki state, and the Kuki Government shall endeavour to protect, promote and develop these villages and the people with equality, a spirit of fraternity and fairness.

Demands

The demand for the Nagas during NNC was only the sovereignty of the Naga Hills. This was the only and core demand. However, with the formation of NSCN and later NSCN-IM, the demands multiplied with fluctuating priority and intensity. The Manipuri Naga of NSCN-IM has constructed the Naga territory with no foundation and merely on painting/drawing/cartography. Many of them are not even aware that there are other communities in these areas. This was the root cause of ethnic conflict in Manipur.

Even after NSCN-IM have entered into political dialogue with the GoI, leadership of the outfit maintains that their demand includes sovereignty, integration of Naga inhabited areas and creation of a Cultural Council. This is in contrast to the documents that are circulated by the NSCN-IM for public consumption or official information.

The situation has reached such a level that it is more about bargaining than a process for honourable settlement. For instance, according to NNC, the demands of NSCN-IM were 31 in number. NNC observed that “Mுவிவ and Isak deviated from the Naga national stand ever since 1980, they had submitted a 31-Point Competencies Proposal to the GoI in 2001, demanding autonomy within the Indian Union and

integration of some contiguous Naga areas into one administrative entity. This is simply a modified form of Suisa’s proposal and not different from that of 16-Point Agreement of 1960 signed between the GoI and the so-called Naga People’s Convention (NPC)”. On the other hand, NSCN-K reported that the claims of NSCN-IM were 33 in total. Besides the leaked negotiation file of GOI and NSCN-IM presents a different picture covering 26 points. In this, the focus was on prioritising entitlements to the Tangkhuls of Manipur. In addition, Imphal Times, a Imphal based Newspaper and also a face book page of Naga by Blood reveals that there are 50 points for discussion and 18 points for the Naga New Government.

However, the GoI has ruled out sovereignty and integration of contiguous Naga areas to hammer out a solution to the more than 60-year-old Indo-Naga political problem. It has reportedly offered greater autonomy to Nagas living in states outside Nagaland, an arrangement that has been opposed by non-Naga organisations in Manipur. In the statement of PM Manmohan Singh, “Whatever is possible will be possible even after 100 years but whatever is not possible will not be possible even after 100 years,” This has been communicated by Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio, after meeting PM on April 2012. This has initiated the silent demand of the Manipuri Nagas of NSCN-IM to the GoI to settle their case as they are quite aware that the GOI has now succeeded in separating Manipur and Nagaland for giving separate solutions. NSCN-IM with the help of RN Ravi is lobbying with the Government of Manipur to create a space for honourable exit as the Manipuri Nagas has and will have no place in Nagaland. This was revealed during interactions with public intellectuals of Manipur and RN Ravi at the Prime Minister Office, New Delhi and also in Manipur. The public intellectual were invited by the RN Ravi to comment on the development of Manipuri Nagas and also to find a way out to honourably resolve the issue. Similar concern for the Manipuri Nagas was also shared to the leaders of AMUCO, UCM, and Committee of Civil Society Kangleipak (CCSK) which were invited by RN Ravi to share their concern on the framework agreement or Naga peace accord.

Intervention by Elected Representatives

The elected representatives in Manipur particularly the cohorts of NSCN-IM have so far not created an enemy in Manipur politics. They are able to play the game of politics with the tune of the situation. For instance, when the Manipur State was in transition from Monarchy to Democracy, the tribal particularly Naga representatives (elected and nominated) participated in the Manipur’s nation building by involving in different capacities including Constitution Making, and later on as Cabinet Ministers, Speakers and Advisors, etc.

Table No 3 First Government of Manipur

SL No	Name	Position	Community
1	M.K Priyobrata Singh	Chief Minister	Meitei
2	Dr. N. Leiren Singh	Minister	Meitei
3	A. Ibungotomcha Singh	Minister	Meitei
4	A. Gourabidhu Singh	Minister	Meitei
5	Md. Alimuddin	Minister	Meitei Pangal
6	R. Khathing	Minister	Naga
7	Teba Killong	Minister	Khulmi
8	T.C. Tiangkham	Speaker	Kuki-Chin
9	T. Bokul	Deputy Speaker	Meitei

Note: All of them except the Chief Minister were popularly elected MLAs

Even when the State was degraded to the status of a Part C State, the tribals particularly Nagas were elected to the Parliament as Manipur people representative. The Nagas have represented as member of Lok Sabha (Outer) continuously from 1952 till 1967 and out of the 19 representatives elected so far; nine of them belong to the Nagas. What is interesting is that the first three (1952-57-62) representatives are from Ukhrul district, Manipur and belong to Tangkhul Naga. Besides, there were no instances that the Nagas have not contested in any election of Manipur.

Table No 4 Lok Sabha (Outer) Representatives from Manipur (1952-2014)

Sl No	Year	Name	Community
1	1952-	Rishang Keishing	Naga
2	1957-	Rungsung Suisa	Naga
3	1962-	Rishang Keishing	Naga
4	1967-	Paokai Haokip	Kuki-Chin
5	1971-	Paokai Haokip	Kuki-Chin
6	1977-	Yangmaso Shaiza	Naga
7	1980-	N. Gouzagin	Kuki-Chin
8	1984-	Meijinlung Kamson	Naga
9	1989-	Meijinlung Kamson	Naga
10	1991-	Meijinlung Kamson	Naga
11	1996-	Meijinlung Kamson	Naga
12	1998-	Kim Gangte	Kuki-Chin
13	1999-	Holkhomang Haokip	Kuki-Chin
14	2004-	Mani Charenamei	Naga
15	2009-	Thangso Baite	Kuki-Chin
16	2014-	Thangso Baite	Kuki-Chin

Source: Compiled by Authors from Lok Sabha website

However, after NSCN-IM gained power in the hill areas of Manipur, they started dictating their mandates to the elected representatives (sic. Nagas) and they supported the movement openly by submitting memorandums to the GoI. But as their hold weakened, we find the withdrawal of elected Naga leaders from the movement. This is enough to indicate that their force is insignificant. It is at this stage that the Muivah in consultation with NPF leader Rio attempted to expand their political parties in Manipur under the banner of NPF by amending the constitution of NPF which was limited to Nagaland. However, they could not make much influence. For instance, NPF candidates were defeated even in the home constituency of Th. Muivah. This is in addition to the resolution taken by the Nagaland Legislative Assembly. For instance, the 9th Session of the 12th Nagaland Legislative Assembly unanimously resolved and reiterated the earlier resolutions of the Nagaland Legislative Assembly dated December 12, 1964, August 28, 1970, September 16, 1994 and December 18, 2003, demanding integration of all contiguous Naga inhabited areas under one administrative umbrella, and to urge the GoI to fulfil the same. The Manipur Legislative Assembly also had taken resolution to safeguard the territorial integrity of Manipur. The latest resolution taken by the Manipur Legislative Assembly was on 31st August, 2015. Similar resolutions were also taken earlier. The 2002 resolution is reproduced to indicate the content and intention of the resolutions.

“Whereas, the present Territorial boundaries of the erstwhile princely state of Manipur is continued to be maintained without being challenged by any authority even after the merger of the State of Manipur with the Union of India under the Merger Agreement dated 21st September, 1949 and even after the State of Manipur became a Part C State under the Union of India with effect from 23rd January, 1959. Such

territorial boundaries of the State of Manipur continued to be protected under the provisions of the Territorial Council Act, 1950, Union Territories Act, 1963 and under the provisions of North Eastern Areas (Re-organization) Act, 1971, in which Manipur attained Statehood in 1972.

And Whereas, the Manipur Legislative Assembly in its Resolutions passed on 24th March 1995, 14th March 1997, 17th July 1998, 17th December 1998 and 22nd March 2001 resolved unanimously to protect the Territorial Integrity of Manipur that existed at the time of merger of the State of Manipur with the Union of India, while urging upon the Union of India to take all necessary actions for protecting the Territorial Integrity of Manipur.

This House, therefore, in its sitting specially held on this 12th day of June, 2002, while unanimously reiterating the earlier resolutions to maintain the Territorial Integrity of the State of Manipur, resolves to urge upon the GoI to make suitable amendments of Article 3 of the Constitution of India or to insert appropriate provisions in the constitution of India for protecting the Territorial Integrity of the State of Manipur and pending the aforesaid amendments and incorporation, the GoI be urged upon to assure the People of Manipur on the floor of the Parliament that the Territorial Integrity of Manipur will not be disturbed at any cost.”

The resolution taken by the Nagaland Legislative Assembly was taken as a continuation of the 9th point agreement signed between GoI and NNC, where the territorial aspiration or contiguous Naga inhabited areas was in relation to Assam only. However, with the formation of NSCN-IM, the resolution was misinterpreted under the influence of Th Muivah so as to include the territorial aspiration on Manipur. This becomes inevitable as the NSCN-IM led Manipuri Nagas is well aware of the fact that they are considered outsider and therefore could never create a space for themselves in Nagaland.

The resolutions of Nagaland Legislative Assembly may not be considered seriously by the Nagas of Nagaland, Manipuri Nagas as in spite of the numerous resolutions in the last few decades, the government of Nagaland is recognising only the 16 tribes of Nagaland and are not ready to give any recognition to the Nagas which they claims as Nagas in other areas or territory outside the present state of Nagaland. We are well aware of the controversy while recognising to the Rongmei tribe as they don't consider Rongmei as tribes of Nagaland. Similarly, the process of recognition of Mao was blocked by the tribes of Nagaland particularly the NTC.

Besides the issue of Rongmei recognition, the other issues that shake the state of Nagaland is that of glorifying Rani Gaidingliu as the spiritual leader of Nagaland. The process was opposed by Nagas of Nagaland particularly NTC, Nagaland Baptist Church Council and Angami Public Organisation.

The interesting part in the resolutions of Manipur Legislative Assembly is that the Manipuri Nagas which submit memorandums to GoI in support of NSCN-IM at different points of time is now part of taking resolutions to safeguard the territorial integrity of Manipur. Many of the present former MLAs, MPs and sitting Naga MLAs are off and on to the issue to survive their political career. The latest being the resolution passed by All Political Parties held on 17th August, 2015 at the Chief Minister's secretariat.

Manoeuvring of Electoral Politics

Holding election in the region is a symbol of entry of Indian system and participating in it is taken as a defacto symbol of acceptance of the Indian system. It is with this mindset that elections in the Naga Hills were boycotted by NNC. It was not the case of Manipuri Nagas as they are elected to the Parliament. The first and the second Lok Sabha of Outer Manipur were represented by Tangkhul Nagas of Ukhrul District, Manipur. However, with the formation of NSCN-IM, they denounced the Indian election. For instance, NSCN-IM boycotted the 12th Lok Sabha Election in Manipur in 1997 calling it as an act of imposition by the Indian State. On February 10, 1998, the outfit expressed appreciation and gratitude to its frontal organizations consisting of the Naga Hoho, United Naga Council (UNC), Naga People's Movement for Human Rights, Naga Students' Federation, Naga Mother Associations, Naga Village Chiefs' Federation, Concerned Citizens Forum, Naga GB Federations and Church leaders, etc. for endorsing their wish and in asserting the national rights of the Naga people by keeping away from the elections. Subsequently, as a follow up to their line of thinking (i.e. calling the Indian elections as impositions), the 7th Manipur Assembly Election in 2000 and the 13th Lok Sabha Election in 2002 held in the state of Manipur were also boycotted.

However, in contradiction to their earlier stand, the Manipuri Nagas (particularly those who opposed the Indian elections) started to participate in the Indian elections with the support of NSCN-IM through UNC by forcing a Naga People Mandate. UNC appeals to elect only those candidates with no party affiliations and who endorses the NPC Declaration and the 4(four) objectives to work in unity with his/her other fellow Naga representatives elected in the same manner. The objectives are - to fulfil the aspiration for unification, of all Naga homeland; to mobilize the peoples' fullest support of the ongoing Indo-Naga political dialogue for an honourable solution; to provide leadership to society in nation building; and to promote the common interest of all ethnic communities in the state. Instead of directly involving in the elections, NSCN-IM contended to be the king makers in Nagaland and in some areas of Manipur. However, the Naga People Mandate was defeated and later NPF was given the role to strengthen the electoral process in Manipur. It is simply a search for opportunity and to create a platform to prepare exit (force or otherwise) from Nagaland which is now becoming a reality.

Reported Atrocities

It is in this process that atrocities are inevitably perpetrated as the underpinnings of the NSCN-IM are based on coercion. What is unfortunate is that many of cases of involuntary disappearance went unreported. However, the incidents continue to circulate in the community through word of mouth as tragic stories. The ethnic cleansing of 1992-98 is enough to illustrate the atrocities committed by NSCN-IM. Kuki Inpi, Manipur observed that the more than 900 innocent Kukis plus other ethnic groups were slaughtered and 360 Kukis villages were uprooting during the ethnic cleansing. The worst and most disturbing is the massacre of 13 September which is observed as a Black Day by the Kukis. TS Gantge observes:

“The ethnic cleansing of the Kukis by NSCN-IM saw one of its worst manifestations on September 13, 1993 when 103 unarmed Kukis were intercepted by a combine group of NSCN-IM and Naga Lim Guard near Tamei village in the

Tamenglong District of Manipur and were later butchered in cold blooded after tying their hands”.

As per the report of the Government of Manipur, Deputy Chief Minister of Manipur Gaikhangam informed the Manipur Legislative Assembly that NSCN-IM has committed 400 serious crimes in the state during 14 years of peace talks with the union government. Similarly, RN Ravi before his assignment as interlocutor observed that over 1,800 Nagas have been killed in some 3,000 fratricidal clashes since the beginning of the ‘ceasefire’ from the year 1997 to 2013. He further added that it is contrary with the violence during the 17 years preceding the ‘ceasefire’ (1980-96) that took a toll of some 940 Naga lives in 1,125 clashes mostly with the security forces. Similarly, the Tangkhul society has been under siege since the split of NSCN into the Khaplang and the Isak-Muivah factions in 1988. It becomes inevitable for Muivah to keep the Tangkhul society under siege in order to achieve its project in Manipur and thus, committed the highest number of crimes against its own people, and killed the maximum number of Tangkhuls during “peace time”. One of the most memorable political assassinations committed by the Naga rebels was the killing of Yangmaso Shaiza in January 1984 simply because late Shaiza, the first Tangkhul Chief Minister of Manipur stood for the territorial integrity of Manipur. And unlike Th Muivah, the former CM worked towards bringing unity among all communities. People fondly remember the secular Shaiza. When the NSCN-IM killed him, the larger Tangkhul society was a mute spectator. Many other Tangkhuls were eliminated from a mere drug addict to an official of the Government or a business man. The outlawed Manipur Naga People's Front (MNPF) had alleged that Ngalangzar Malue was the 11th victim of the crime carried out with the directives of the “Western Tangkhul NSCN-IM leaders” during the ceasefire period. Out of the eleven victims, seven were Tangkhuls and none happened to be a Western Tangkhul.

Similar stories of atrocities are also reported in Nagaland. NNC have documented 1614 victims of NSCN-IM out of which 300 were killed after their cease -fire of 1997. The list of victims so far collected were only from eleven regions of Nagaland i.e., Khiamniungan, Zeliangrong, Yimchunger, Lotha, Chakhesang Angami, Tangkhul, Sema, Shepoumaramth, Ao Regions and from Kuki Tribal Union. Since it is an incomplete list, they observed that more list are to be collected from Sema, Tangkhul, Ao and Lotha regions and from the Kuki tribal Union. They further ass that the list of victims are yet to be collected from nine regions i.e., Konyak, Phom, Chang, Sangtam, Rengma, Pochury, Amamch, Heimi and Lainong Regions. It was reported that more than five hundred innocent villagers were killed by them in Lainong Region.

However, justice is a far cry for the victims. If the present peace process with NSCN-IM does not consider the issue of justice and reconciliation similar to that of Truth and Reconciliation Commission with locally adapted version, then may not be a process to bring peace.

Maps

Territorial aspirations and claims find manifestations in the form of maps. A simple look into these maps by the aspiring parties give ample evidences of one's political imagination and in the process, the maps become self-explanatory. Many have posed the question: Can cartographical drawings precede

sovereignty? This happened during the pogrom by NCSN-IM in Manipur in 1992 and subsequent years and also during the massive unrest in Manipur when the “cease-fire agreement” was extended without territorial limits.

Figure 2: Proposed map of Nagalim aspired by the NSCN(IM) led Nagas



Source: <http://www.nagalim.nl/naga/index-2.html>, assessed on 4 July 2011.

One finds the rigorous attempts to put forward demands through maps in the 1990s. For instance, maps of Nagalim drawn by NSCN-IM began to be available only in memorandums submitted by their frontal organizations and in books written by those in their cohort. So, in spite of the internalisation of the movement, they rely solely on their invented map as they could not locate or find any evidence anywhere in the world including Naga Hills or areas that they claim as Nagalim. This is vividly reflected in the Bedrock of Naga Society.

“We continue to claim we were an independent nation till the British conquered us. Did we have a boundary for our nation? As late as the 1940's, when British rule was almost over, large parts of today's Nagaland did not even exist on their maps. Instead of showing villages the maps showed large blank white spaces with the words “Unadministered and Unsurveyed”. Did we have a ruler or a Government? The writ of a village chief did not extend beyond his village. Did we have a capital city where the Government sat? The British Deputy Commissioner sat in Kohima out of convenience. Was this the capital of the independent Naga nation that we claim existed before the British? Did we have a currency or a coinage like other kingdoms or nations? We lived on barter till the British introduced the rupee. Did we have armed forces to defend our nation? Did we have common laws, rules and regulations for our nation as a whole? Did we have an administrative apparatus to look after the welfare of the people? Did we have roads that linked the nation? The answer to all these are obviously in the negative. These questions cannot be ignored, especially by those who are educated and claim to be the intelligentsia of our society. Let us face the reality that existed. Let us not distort history and let us not fool ourselves any more. The plain fact is that we never existed as an

independent, unified nation at any time in our history. Yes, each village existed independently, but is that the equivalent of a Naga Nation? Even the names Naga or Angami or Ao or Sema or Chang were unknown to us. We called people of different tribes by other names. We led a primitive and brutish life in our villages, uncivilized and unlettered. The word of Christ was unknown and unheard of. Life beyond the village boundaries was unknown. Justice was rough and summary. Diseases went unchecked. Slavery was common. People lived and died without ever leaving their villages. We had no idea of the concept of a nation or independence or nationhood. Is it right to make these tall claims that we were an independent nation before the British conquered us? At least, let us be honest about our ancestry and our history. We Nagas always prefer honesty to falsehood, however painful the truth may be”.

Just as Isak Chisi Swu saw the necessity of developing a Naga identity to gain legitimacy of the Naga cause, the inevitability of possessing a map became significant so as to garner support through this vision as well as gain legitimacy in the international community. However, the attempt so far has been futile not only from the perspective of competing visions in the forms of maps [*sic*. Kukiland as demanded by Kuki National Front and Zalengam as espoused by Kuki National Army) but because such maps were juxtaposed against the international boundary of Manipur which has evolved over the years and that have gained creditable international recognition.

Failure to gain legitimacy in terms of lobbying as imprinted in their imagined maps compelled them to enter into negotiations and peace talks with the Indian State.

CONCLUSION

Naga issue and the Manipur issue are highly emotionally charged sentiments. If the solution comes in a package of secrecy as it is happening at the moment, compounding not only confusion but also the fear psychosis of the people of Manipur, the solution is bound to create more problem than peace. The issue has the potential to disturb the ethnic relations in Manipur and Nagaland. For instance, some sections of Nagas in Manipur are celebrating while the Nagas of Nagaland are sceptic that the agreement should not come out as a compromise. Similarly, the political class and the general public are worried that it should not disturb Manipur's Integrity. The apprehension in Manipur is valid as the same government (BJP) has tried its hand earlier and was responsible for the mayhem on June 18, 2001 and the following months.

The ‘historic’ framework agreement of between the GoI and NSCN-IM is presented in such a manner that it has the answer to the aspirations or ‘sentiments’ of the NSCN-IM as well as the people of Manipur. It has been rejected by most of the Naga Political Groups (NPGs), based in Nagaland. The Nagas of Nagaland remain indecisive as the agreement is concealed so far. Sanjoy Hazarika question why what's the need for secrecy, if it is historic. However, a cursory peek into the earlier claims and trajectories as well as the currently secretive yet unfolding dynamics of the framework agreement as narrated by the “participants” seems to be telling an altogether different story. In this sense, instead of bringing about lasting peace, the so called “historic” agreement is likely to burn down ‘sentiments’ of both the Manipuri Nagas and

Manipur into ashes. The basic issue staring into our face is whether GoI, as a signatory of the framework agreement, has been able to kill two birds with a single shot. In other words, has GoI been able to dissuade NSCM-IM to give up its claim for "Nagalim" or Greater Nagaland thereby make the party abandon its demand for inclusion of the 4(four) hill districts of Manipur into the pan-Naga politico-administrative structure. Further, in reaching such an historic agreement, has the GoI been able to tranquil the edgy Manipur's historic demand for territorial integrity, and thus, respect its history.

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