

**NAGAS POLITICAL VIOLENCE: TOWARDS A  
SOLUTION**

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All the assistance and help received during the course of investigation have been duly acknowledged by her.

I recommend this thesis to be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

  
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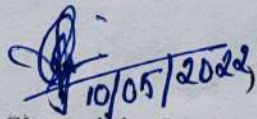
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I, Dr. Shonreiphy Longvah, hereby declare that the research work embodied in the thesis titled "**Nagas Political Violence: Towards a Solution**" submitted to the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi in affiliation with the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies and management, School of Social Sciences, Sikkim University, Gangtok for the award of Post-Doctoral degree, is my original work. This thesis has not been submitted for any other degree of the University or any other University.

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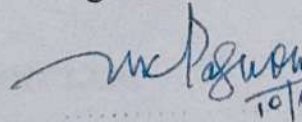
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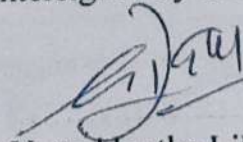
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- Dr. Shonreiphy Longvah

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## Chapter I

### Introduction: An overview of Nagas political violence

Always, the narration of Nagas political violence has to begin with the British colonial era in the erstwhile Naga Hills<sup>1</sup>, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, for, it was in that era that the Nagas came together as one national group and expressed their desire in the form of political violence to be free from any “external control” – first the British and after their departure, from the alleged “colonialism” of India. Indeed, the Nagas were the “first to resist to any form of outsider’s rule both in the British and post-British era of independent India,” stated Fernandes and Borgohain (2017, 16). Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation (hereinafter UNPO) also stated: “The Nagas’ history is one of colonization, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the British, and then by India, who inherited the territory from the British colonial power” (Jaiswal, 7 August 2020).

In the absence of any written agreements, part of the present day concept of Nagalim<sup>2</sup> was brought under the suzerainty of the British for a few decades (1880-1947) through oral understanding. During this period, the relationship between the Nagas and the Britishers had been more of a “host and a guest,” the Nagas enjoying utmost freedom in conducting their daily affairs. One may question why the Nagas readily accepted the British suzerainty? The common rationale behind this was that the Britishers engineered their reign by having fully acknowledged the primacy of customary law to the Nagas and therefore, hardly interfered with issues related to tradition, culture and custom of the Nagas. It is vastly recorded that

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<sup>1</sup> The Naga Hills, created in 1866 by the British colonialists, was just a small portion of the otherwise “Naga country,” claimed to be of roughly 120,000 sq. km, then made up of various “village republics.” At present, the Naga Hills along with the Tuensang area – famous for not being a part of the British suzerainty and called by the Nagas as “free Naga territory” – made up the Nagaland State with an area of 16,579 sq. km, created on 1<sup>st</sup> December, 1963, as one of the smallest states of the Indian Union.

<sup>2</sup> Nagalim literally means the land of the Nagas both in India and Myanmar. The term denotes the disintegration of the otherwise compact Naga territory because of the drawing and redrawing of international border first “by the Indo-Myanmar border, and its further fragmentation, within India, by the political boundaries of four states (Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh)” (Wouters 2018, 12).

under the British administration over the “Naga country,”<sup>3</sup> the Nagas were given great leeway with minimal interference in carrying out their daily life affairs, except in certain areas where the British had to prove their ultimate supremacy. For instance, head-hunting was tabooed and Nagas were also strictly controlled to prevent the otherwise unstoppable raids on the British subjects at the foothills of the “Naga country” and neighbouring area of Assam. They administer the Naga populace with the help of the Nagas, for instance through village chiefs or *Dobashis* (Naga interpreters); thus, this comes to bore “no direct weight of alien rule” on the Nagas. Indeed, the British rule did not in any way seriously affect the basic social structure of the Nagas; it remained traditional in character and content. The colonial administration recognized the traditional authority of a Naga village chief as an effective means of administration at the village level.

The British colonialism that spans for more than three hundred years, covering six continents and perhaps vaunted as “superior” than other contemporary colonialism of other European countries, inculcated and established “institutional transplantation” in its colonies (Daniels, Trebilcock and Carson 2010, 115-28). Such transplantation was also successfully carried out in India. By the time the British finally left the Indian subcontinent in 1947, after administering it for over two hundred years, the newly independent India had already imbibed a lot of its administrative skills, most particularly, the political skill of handling diverse opposing views against the wishes and dreams of the independent India. Akin to that of the British, the political skill of dividing and ruling, controlling and manipulating the recalcitrant group of people, was successfully employed against the Nagas by the newly formed Indian Government. Indeed, New Delhi had so well adapted to the complexity of the

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<sup>3</sup> The term “Naga country” was the common parlance of the British administrators as well as the British anthropologists to describe the geographical area inhabited by the Naga people. The term is also used by the Nagas themselves. For instance, a few Naga delegates including A.Z. Phizo and T. Sakhrie when they met Mahatma Gandhi in Delhi on 19<sup>th</sup> July, 1947, addressed themselves as Nagas coming from a “country in the Northeast frontier of India” (Nuh 2002, 45). As evident, from time to time, the term is also used by Naga writers as well their “nation workers.”

Naga political violence that today they have shifted from divide and rule to “define and rule” the Nagas, stated Longchari<sup>4</sup>. It has somewhat become the habit of the Indian Government to adopt what Bhaumik calls a “tribe-by-tribe approach” to address what the Naga National Council (hereinafter NNC) construed as a pan-Naga problem (Das 2007, 29). After a successful internal division predominantly based on tribe’s identity, defining the Nagas not just on this identity but on several other factors such as factional identity, love for money and power, vested political interests, etc. has stubbornly engendered weakness in the Naga political movement. “The whole exercise was intended to fragment and thereby decimate what was regarded as a comprehensive agenda of self-determination,” stated Das (2007, 29-30).

Colonialism of the “Naga country,” however, drew very little attention to be studied as a separate case study. In fact, rendered as banal story of colonialism, the case of the Nagas is generally assumed as the “internal” crisis of India. But, only with the British transfer of power to India in 1947 did the Naga people’s affair become directly related with the independent India. Thence on, various efforts, at first peaceful but later goaded to take up arms, were being undertaken by the Nagas to make India and the world understand that Nagas cannot be forced to become Indians and their land to be merged with the Indian Union. The Naga political struggle remain peaceful from 1918-1954 (Mawon 2015, 81-82). Perhaps, it is worth mentioning that the Nagas aspiration for independence started way back in the British colonial era, to be precise in 1918 when the Naga Club was formed and when in 1929 it submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission seeking for independence of the Nagas as a colonised people (Nuh 2002, 36). Petitions, memoranda and various other efforts were laid down before the British administrators for them to grant independence to

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<sup>4</sup> The author had a personal discussion with Akum Longchari, publisher of the *Morung Express* and a member of the Forum for Naga Reconciliation (FNR) who discussed at length about the Naga issue during the VERITAS Lecture II event, held on March 4, 2020, which was an annual program organized by the Department of Political Science, St. Joseph University, Nagaland.

the Nagas before they depart from India. Such efforts, however, received only cold-shoulder from the British administrators. The cogency of the Nagas failed to receive a fair deliberation and treatment rendering the Nagas to state that the “British are to be blamed for the current woes of the Nagas.” Nuh (2002, 41) opined that the lack of cogency of the British on the Naga case was perhaps because the Nagas rejected the “Crown Colony”<sup>5</sup> policy mooted by Sir Robert Reid and later revised by Sir Reginald Coupland in the 1940s (see also Vashum 2000, 66). This perhaps piqued the British pride so much so that on the eve of its departure from the Indian sub-continent, all its colonies, “Pakistan, Nepal, Burma and Sri Lanka,” were granted independence but deliberately ignored the “wishes of the Nagas” (Nuh 2002, 42).

By 1880, the British had colonized 30 per cent of the Naga country, comprising what became known the Naga Hills (IWGIA 1986). Interestingly, prior to 1880, although Nagas resisted the British force vehemently, once this force became settled, their relationship improved, rendering it unnecessary for both the parties to continue with the hostility. Considering the British as benign and understanding, the Nagas peacefully made known their aspiration to them to live a life of independence, free from any external control. Therefore, the expressed desire of the Nagas back then could not strictly be described a political violence, fetching only a tangential connection with the present day understanding of political violence, the concept that shall be discussed in the succeeding chapter. The antecedent tangential connection however became directly connected with the concept of political violence in the mid of 1950s when the Naga Hills became inundated with Indian armed forces. Indeed, by that time, the Nagas’ political violence had become the Indian Government’s main bugbear.

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<sup>5</sup> The Crown Colony would comprise all non-Indian hill people occupying the Naga Hills, the North east Frontier Areas (NEFA) and the hill areas in upper Burma (Myanmar). The logic behind suggesting such policy was that according to Sir Robert Reid, these peoples “cannot be left to Indian political leaders with neither knowledge, interest nor feeling for the areas (Nuh 2002, 41-42; Vashum 2000, 66).

The Nagas political violence, popularly called as the movement for independence or external self-determination, also expressed as “the struggle against genocide,” had claimed and destroyed thousands of life, accounted the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA 1986). Militarization of the Naga Hills started post March 30, 1953, after the failed meeting of the Nagas with Indian and Burmese Prime Ministers, Jawaharlal Nehru and U. Nu (Nuh 2002, 57-60). On that meeting, recorded as fateful, the Nagas upon learning that they would not be given a chance to express their opinion, rather they must simply stay put and listen to what Nehru had to say, they walked out of the meeting premise, some even “smacking their buttocks.” Nehru never found the courage to forgive and forget such humiliation in front of U. Nu and send the “Assam Rifles.” “So if we look back, the Nagas did not begin the hostility... It was actually done by the Indian state, the so called leader of a great democratic country Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru,” stated Tapan Bose (2021, 1:45:45). By the early 1955, “10,000 Nagas had been beaten and tortured out of which 1562 were women with 709 of them below the age of 20 years” (NNC’s record, cited in Nuh 2002, 61). And within 8 years (1954 - 1962) after the movement turned violent, “over 100,000 Naga citizens have been killed by the Indian Armed Forces,” stated NNC (cited in Lotha 2016, 102). As per the Indian Government’s report, within less than a decade (1956-1964), “1,400 Nagas were killed as against 162 in the Indian army,” accounted Maxwell (Cited in Gray 1986, 57). The “scorched-earth method” was applied against them by the Indian armed forces without impunity. Indeed, so fierce was the oppression of the Indian Government that many at that juncture feared the Nagas would become an “extinct race” (IWGIA 1986, 132).

The spirit of independence was firmly implanted in the minds of the Nagas right from the British colonial period. Gray (1986, 43-44) pointed out that the implantation of such spirit could be credited to many factors like Christianity, western education, “hostility shown by

the anthropological administrators to Christianity,” British recruitment of “4000 Nagas” in the first World War to fight for the Allied force in France, and subsequently all these evidently led to the setting of the ebullient goal of Naga independence before the Simon Commission. The determinedly set idea of Naga independence and the Indian Government’s fiendish annoyance to such term ultimately led to two denouements: first, it paved the way for well organized and structured Naga political violence; and secondly, it opened the way for India to rain down her rage over the Nagas by flooding the tiny “Naga country” with locusts of Indian army. Subsequently, the bestial behaviour of the Indian Army undoubtedly led to serious human rights violation of the Nagas.

The crux of the Nagas political violence is to gain “recognition” from the Indian Government of the “Naga people’s right to freely and responsibly (exercise) their self-determination” (Longchari 2016, 5). On similar note, Nuh also explained that the Naga movement has always been a movement for “recognition of their inalienable rights to sovereignty and independence” (2002, 36). With much profundity, they reiterated that their movement has never been a question of “demand.” Rather, it has been motivated and molded by seeking “recognition” of the right to self-determination of a people that has historically, politically, culturally, socially, and religiously, never been a part of India. Undoubtedly, such was the climax till 1997, but in the post of this year, the kaleidoscope of inter-group and inter-tribe rivalries and factionalism seem to have overshadowed their antecedent commitment to the cause of the Nagas as a nation. The study found that clannish and tribal commitments indeed seem to have replaced the nationalist commitment and very bizarrely even the nation workers have been reduced to pseudo nationalists.

Politically, economically, socially, culturally, and religiously, the Naga society today seems to have reached a saturation point. It can be construed that militarization of “Nagalim” by India was situated indeed not only as the commencement of Nagas political violence but



also of such saturated point. The common parlance among the Nagas is that so long as the political violence remains protracted and unresolved, the economic, socio-cultural, and religious stagnancy cannot be dodged as well. The Nagas political violence definitely does have social and economic implications. Perhaps for this reason, Wouters (2018) explores that today it would be more meaningful to understand Naga political violence from social and economic perspectives which certainly had overwhelmed the “political conflict.” This study, however, is oriented towards the notion as argued by Mawon (2015, 83) that “political issue has to be solved politically and not through economic packages.”

The 1950s could be considered the acme of Nagas political violence, where Nagas from every nook and corner inexorably supported the violent movement for independence launched by the NNC, the lone Naga nationalist group at that time, against the Indian Government. The exploits, sacrifices, bravery and commitment of the NNC for the Naga cause which were indeed apocryphal and real, won them plaudits from their populace. However, as compared to the time when NNC enjoyed undisputed support to today where peoples’ support is disputed and distributed among the various Naga nationalist groups, the Nagas political violence has become a farrago. The protracted nature of the movement combined with the issues of tribalism, clannish-ism, factionalism, greed for money and the political gimmick of the Indian Government to divide and rule the Nagas, nay, to “define and rule” has in fact, effectively reduced the dream of the Nagas to freely determine their self in the future course into a mere grandiose scheme.

Practically speaking, as one viable means of ending the protracted Naga political violence, the Forum for Naga Reconciliation (hereinafter FNR) was formed in 2008 and thence exclusively concentrating on ending inter-group rivalries and the violence of factionalism. But for creative resolution of the Naga political violence, external turmoil with the Indian Government needs to be addressed with urgency as well. Perhaps with this intention, the

Naga Framework Agreement (FA) was inked in 2015 and the ongoing “Indo-Naga” political negotiation is now looking at this agreement as the foundation that would help erect a new and creative structure of the “Indo-Naga” future relationships. Delineating the mentioned complex ventures, the undertaken research attempts to transcribe a way forward of the ongoing Nagas political violence that might lead to its amiable resolution.

### **Dual versions vis-à-vis the history of Naga political violence**

The “Indo-Naga” political conflict started in 1947 when the Nagas expressed their nationhood by declaring their independence on 14<sup>th</sup> August, a day prior to that of India’s independence and this expression turned violent in the early 1950s with the establishment of a huge cantonment of Indian Army which was set loose in the erstwhile Naga Hills and the adjoining Naga areas. Naga political violence possesses a fascinating history with clear dual versions which are pendulumlike, that is, both these versions swing freely back and forth under the influence of their asserted historical rights. For instance, under this influence, the Nagas assert their “country” is being “occupied” by external force, most particularly, India; looting them of their “sovereignty and independence” and thus resisting the latter for restoration of their violated rights (IWGIA 1986, 127). To them, they were once “a free people” who are now resisting the encroachment of their freedom by the countries in their “frontiers” that is, India and Myanmar (Lotha 2016, 2). But this perspective was not just bluntly rejected but also cruelly handled by New Delhi, sparking the long-drawn and still inconclusive Naga political violence. Evidently, the Indian Government has never looked at the Naga issue from the angle of Naga forming a separate nation or a separate country. Y. D. Gundevia in the 1960s stated: “All we are trying to persuade you to realize is that we are really not two nations living side by side. That is not our way of looking at the problem” (cited in Means and Means 1966, 300).

The fight between the Naga army and the Indian army has been caricatured by Sir Charles Pawsey as the “elephant and the mouse” fight (cited in Longchari 2016, 221), prompting Longchari to observe that “just in the same way that the mouse cannot defeat the elephant, the elephant, too, cannot defeat the mouse.” The anticlimax of the two versions can be constructed further through the reading of the following statement of a Naga nationalist:

People only seem to hear the Indian version which says that Nagaland is asking for independence and the Nagas are a secessionist movement. The fact is that we are not asking for Independence – we are already independent. We are an occupied nation and we want the Indian army to withdraw so that we can become independent again.

(IWGIA 1986, 72)

Apparently, Nagas political violence is not the “demand” for independence as popularly understood, rather, a movement that seeks to “reinstate” their independent status. “We are defending our independence; we are not asking India to give us Independence,” is the popular logic of the Nagas (Lotha 2016, 3). Indeed, Nagas desire for recognition of their independence did not began with India’s Independence. This expression was the primary rationale of the Nagas’ memorandum to the Simon Commission 10 January, 1929, that “emphatically pointed out the obvious desire of the Nagas for the restoration of their independence that the British had snatched from them” (Yonuo 1974, 133, cited in Lotha 2016, 16).

At the extreme end of the pole, the constant stand of New Delhi in “occupying” Nagalim is that the Naga Hills was under the domain of British colonialism at some point of time and therefore after they vacate the Indian sub-continent, the Naga Hills must be rightfully “inherited” by India. Inheriting all the territories earlier belonged to British India is considered the logical way by New Delhi, construed Young (Cited in Longchari 2016, 220). “According to the Indian state, Nagaland is a colonial legacy just as any other state in India because under the Independence Act of India 1947, the British transferred sovereign power

over the British Indian territories to India,” stated Lotha (2016, 2 & 13). Imperturbably sticking with the inheritance policy, New Delhi high handedly tackled the Naga issue. Apparently, thus, India implies it has *uti possidetis* right to inherit the Naga territory. In fact, this *uti possidetis* is one of the categories often emphasized by earlier colonial countries in Latin America, Asia, and Africa, while justifying their claims to territory before the International Court of Justice (Sumner 2004, 1779 -1790). *Uti possidetis* “is a doctrine under which newly independent states inherit the pre-independence administrative boundaries set by the former colonial power” (ibid, 1790).

For the Nagas, this inheritance was not carried out appropriately. In other words, consensus of the Nagas, considered as the lineament of such process, was not taken into consideration and this piqued the pride of the Nagas. In fact, their territories were first drawn and divided by the British solely for administrative convenience and without understanding the culture and the ethos of the Naga people. Consequently, this led to the disintegration of the otherwise compact Naga territory and currently placing them under various administrative set-ups. The *uti possidetis* principle later applied by the Indian state further disintegrated the Naga territory. Today, the Nagas are found in four states of India (Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh) and in the Kachin state and Sagaing sub-division of Myanmar and they are also entangled with various border disputes with their neighbouring states. The problem facing the Nagas is however not novel; contrariwise, it can be expected in areas where the principle of *uti possidetis* is practiced. Since the colonial administrators had the habit of drawing maps without consulting the local inhabitants, who had a clear concept of their boundary, therefore, this created a lot of vague borders, consequently leading to many border disputes (Sumner 2004, 1791).

The chronicle of the Nagas, indeed, their ensuing historical and political events is a direct challenge to the *uti possidetis* claim made by India. The Nagas reiterated that they were

once a distinct and independent group of people “accidentally” forced to become a part of India which otherwise had “no valid historical claim over the Nagas” (Longchari 2016, 220-23). A gimmick of “Machiavellian politics” had helped India to establish its reign of terror over the Nagas, said Haksar (Cited in Longchari 2016, 241). It is thus evident that to express their stand, Nagas had firmly formed their “political identity.” Helfont (2015) argues that this is the lineament of any post-colonial independence movements for “if one does not have a political identity that is different than the ruling empire, why be independent?”

While analyzing political radicalization and political violence in Palestine, Demetriou (2012, 392) propounded that radical ideas lead to radical politics and eventually to violence. The radical politics often claimed by the Nagas that they are “Indians only by accident” leads directly to political violence admittedly directed against the Indian state. Perhaps, it would not be wrong to put forward that such radical politics of the Nagas exacted a similar in degree radical politics of the Indian state to subjugate the Nagas. In fact, the adopted radical politics of self-determination is primarily responsible for exhausting any possible means of resolving the given violence for a lengthened time.

Based on the historical dimension of belonging to a different nation group, distinct from the Indian nation, the Nagas commonly termed their movement as a “national movement.” Theirs is a movement mandated by people through a plebiscite on 16<sup>th</sup> May 1951, asserted the Nagas. For instance, the Western Angami Public Organization (hereinafter WAPO) declared that Naga movement is unique historically, as it upholds the principle of the Naga Plebiscite, “the only mandated stand of Nagas till date” (*Nagaland Post* 6 July 2017). Keyho (2017), President of the NNC, expressed: “It (the Plebiscite) conveys a strong twin-message: the spirit and aspirations of the Naga people and the resentment against the forceful occupation by India and Myanmar and the territorial division without the

knowledge and consent of the Nagas.” Drawing its strength from the plebiscite, Nagas considered India as a foreign country, a colonial master who, akin to the British earlier, had trespassed into their land. The immediate result of the Nagas’ aspiration for self-determination not only led to a warlike situation between the Nagas and the Government of India but also blatantly violated human rights of the Nagas.

Indeed, Nagas’ movement for self-determination was consequently followed by the deployment of hundreds of thousands of Indian troops in Nagalim. For instance, back in the early 1950s, nearly two divisions of the Army and thirty-five battalions of Assam Rifles or Armed Police were reported to be in operation in the Naga areas, rendering one Indian armed personnel for every adult Naga male (Shimray 2005, 69). The resultant consequence was ransacking property, burning down villages and granaries, deliberate starvation, torture, rape, slaughtering of Naga men, women, and children, and displaying their corpses as a message to the Naga nationalists, village grouping and moving people into, what were de facto, concentration camps (Luithui and Haksar 1984, 26-37; Shimray 2005, 68-72). These human rights violations though it succeeded in terrorizing the Naga people could not however abate the Naga nationalism movement. It, no doubt, made Nagalim to become a colonial state of India (Ao 2006, 392). But, instead of rendering the movement weak, it rather propelled unrelenting patriotism. One may mention that such human rights violation had considerably reduced since the signing of the cease-fire agreement between the Isak-Muivah headed National Socialist Council of Nagalim (hereinafter NSCN) and the Indian Government on August 1, 1997; although Indian troops remain stationed without decreasing in number. Undoubtedly, the given cease-fire agreement minimally reduced the offensive incidents between the Naga insurgents and the Indian state but this, however, does not necessarily imply that violence has ceased in Nagalim. In fact, the cease-fire and the ensuing “Indo-Naga” peace negotiations have escalated fragmentation among the Nagas,



thereby, intensifying different typology of violence generated by factionalism (Kolas 2011, 784). According to the South Asia Terrorism Portal's (SATP) statistics, prior to the 1997 cease-fire, the fatalities of the Indian security forces was about 15%, but post-1997 it was sharply reduced to only 3.3%, yet Naga civilians and the militants continue to suffer casualties from insurgency-related Naga political violence (ibid, 782).

The onslaught of Indian state over Nagalim led to a violent destruction of human life, properties, psychological trauma, etc. The cost of Indo-Naga conflict when measured in terms of lost of lives was immense. Whereas, the Indian Government and some Indian media houses limit it to 25,000 to 30,000 deaths; Nagas claimed that some 200,000 to 300,000 have sacrificed for their political cause (Welman 2011, 6). Apparently, there is a huge discrepancy between the two figures and this discrepancy has not been empirically tested so far. On this regard, Horam (1974, 1226) pointed out that the sum-total of human sufferings because of the Nagas' aspiration for freedom has never been fully recorded by the Indian state. Or, for that matter the Naga insurgent groups or any other Naga groups, do not seem to possess the detailed record either.

"Today's politics is tomorrow's history." Recently, while searching for a way to resolve the long running issue of Naga political violence, the Framework Agreement (FA) was signed in 2015 with NSCN's Chairman Isak Chishi Swu, General Secretary Th. Muivah and the then Interlocutor of the Indian Government to the Naga peace talks, R. N. Ravi, as the main "authors" (Ambrocia, 11 August 2020). This research attempts to analyze this agreement and deconstruct the capacity of the FA to resolve the protracted "Indo-Naga" political issue.

### **Statement of research problem**

When the British troops first encountered some Naga tribes in 1832, they were resisted violently by, what they saw as, "ferocious hill-people." Nagas resisted them because they encroached into their homeland without permission (Longvah 2017, 125). The same

resistance was meted out against the Indian state when it claimed to have rightly inherited the Naga territory (read as Nagalim) bequeathed to India in 1947 by the British colonialism. Nagas question this claim by arguing that the British could subjugate and effectuate their administration only on 30 per cent of Nagalim – an approximate total of 100,000 to 120,000 square kilometers – and the remaining 70 per cent were left untouched, commonly referred to by the Naga nationalists as “free Naga territory” or “free Nagalim” (see Shimray 2005, 31; Iralu 2005, 190). However, this “free Nagalim” lost its freedom with India’s independence from the British’s grips. By the 1950s, the bifurcation of Nagalim between India and Myanmar became well-marked. In fact, with a “colonizing attitude,” the Indian state usurped the entire Nagalim towards its side by massively employing its military troops. This, indeed, was the beginning of the long-winding “Indo-Naga” political conflict. Nagas rejected the authority of the Indian state as insidious, immoral, illegitimate, imposing and exploitative. Simply put, for the Nagas, India is an “occupying colonialist.” The rejection was concretely shaped because of the germination of Naga nationalism, the movement for Naga national independence largely impacted by the advent of Christianity, introduction of western education, acquaintance with Indian leaders before the independence of India, and also the involvement of the Nagas in the two World Wars, among others. Nagas were extremely unsatisfied with what they perceived as the British colonialist’s hasty, insensitive and myopic arrangement of dumping the Nagas to the newly independent India who till then had no geographical, cultural, historical or emotional interaction among them. The polarity between the Nagas and India was strikingly brought out by Sir Robert Neil Reid when he remarked: “They (Nagas) are not Indian in any sense of the word, neither in origin, nor in language, nor in appearance, nor in habits, nor in outlook, and it is only by historical accident that they have been tacked to an Indian province” (cited in Hussain 1996, 15-16). This remark ensuingly became the cornerstone of

the Nagas' struggle for self-determination, which means Nagas themselves would determine their own political, administrative, cultural and socio-economic affairs, the domains considered solely theirs till the political and partially the administrative (this had only to do with the external affairs) domains were snatched by British India in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Over time, the Nagas had also lost not only their politico-administrative domain but also their economic domain to the "chicanery" of sovereign independent India. Nonetheless, vestigial traces of their earlier socio-cultural activities are still found, with the modern generation trying to revive their attenuated cultures and traditions, forsaken by their forefathers with their conversion to Christianity. Therefore, in a way, we can read their self-determination movement as a struggle to "reclaim" their lost domains.

Gert (2009, 66) propounds that violence occur when there is an unwanted intentional act of killing, causing pain, disabling, deprivation of freedom or opportunity and deprivation of pleasure. By and large, political violence erupted in Nagalim because of these indicators of violence allegedly committed by the Indian state. There has been allegation against the Indian state of employing a systemic or careful planning of killings or elimination of the Naga "nationalists or freedom fighters;" grave degree of pain has been afflicted to vanquish the Naga people's struggle; various state sponsored methods have been used to incapacitate the freedom struggle; and the victimized Naga groups have been deprived of an all-round well-being for many decades, among others. In fact, the case of the Nagas had been tacitly categorized at some point or the other as "chasing fantasies" by the Indian state; the fantasy that can be annihilated by treating it as a mere "law and order" problem. However, after many years of failed attempts of wiping out Naga nationalists and along with it the spirit of nationalism, the Indian state admits that Naga self-determination conundrum cannot be annihilated by military tactics alone and thus, of late, it has opted for political solution (Manchanda and Bose 2015, 62).

Another important factor in understanding political violence in Nagalim is that of realizing “honourable, acceptable and inclusive” resolution to the long-drawn “Indo-Naga” conflict. What should constitute this particular package of resolution is a difficult problem on which Naga and Indian leaders simply cannot afford any impetuous decision. This apparently is a herculean task as proven by the protracted ongoing “Indo-Naga” peace process since 1997. At least from the side of the Indian state, as pointed out by R.N. Ravi (the then Government of India’s interlocutor for Naga peace talks), this package could be realized by including and accommodating every Naga groups that has “a constructive orientation to the peace process” (*Nagaland Post* 9 July 2017). Indeed, for it to become a reality, he held a consultative meeting from 6-8 July, 2017, with at least 30 Naga civil society organizations. In it, Ravi commented the rationality in adopting a constructive approach particularly by all the Naga political groups and be a part of the peace process (*ibid.*). To make the peace process more inclusive, ardent efforts were also made by Ravi to bring other Naga political groups on board and towards the end of 2017, he managed to bring together six Naga political factions under the umbrella, Working Committee of the Naga National Political Groups (NNPG). Ravi signed a peace agreement called “Agreed Position” (AP) with this group on November 17, 2017 and since then, NNPG has become another important stakeholder in the “Indo-Naga” political parleys.

“Inclusive settlement” predominantly occupied the voice of all the Naga civil society organizations, the common Naga people and also the Nagaland state government. There can be no “imaginative and innovative solution” unless all the Naga political groups are involved in the peace negotiations (Sandham 2017). A solution to be hammered out of the ongoing peace process should be inclusive, they reiterated continually. The given stalwart emphasis on inclusiveness is to avoid a piece-meal solution that has historically proven a

costly plunder to the Nagas. Indicating that the past history of piece-meal settlements<sup>6</sup> only fragmented and made the Naga enmity of each other, WAPO declared that “whosoever harbors (piece-meal settlement) shall be held exclusively responsible if any bloodshed takes place out of the consequences of such half-baked factional settlement” (*The Morung Express*, 6 July 2017). But the challenge remains as to how and why should NSCN bring on board the other factions in the ongoing “Indo-Naga” peace process who in their eye have been viewed as “spoilers”?

Manchanda and Bose pointed out that today “the collective leadership (NSCN-IM)” is accused by other Naga political factions of “surrendering sovereignty and integration” of the Nagas (2015, 68). On such note of accusation, therefore, redefining the concept of sovereignty in terms of “shared-sovereignty” and specifying whether the issue of physical integration of the Nagas is covered by the FA constitutes another big challenge of this research.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study primarily focuses on two objectives:

Firstly, to discuss Nagas political violence, a movement that primarily exerts the right to self-determination and the consequent extreme methods adopted by the Indian Government to counter it; and

Secondly, to analyze the growing anticipation (presumably accelerated by the signing of the Naga Framework Agreement on August 3, 2015) that the given long-standing Naga political violence is finally towards a solution.

### **Research Hypotheses**

The given research tested a few hypotheses and these include:

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<sup>6</sup> The 1960 Sixteen Point Agreement and the 1975 Shillong Accord signed between the Nagas and the Indian state resulted to a piece-meal settlement which had viciously divided the Nagas.

- H1: *The use of repressive techniques to silence the voice of the Nagas tainted the legitimacy image portrayed by the Indian state.* The study found that even after 74 years of being a part of the Indian Union, Nagas continue to reiterate an uneasy union, a lack of confidence that India would strive for honourable and respectable solution. 66% of the respondents shared that they are, in fact, not satisfied with the strategies adopted by the Indian government to solve the protracted “Indo-Naga” political conflict. Detail study of this hypothesis could be found in Chapter IV.
- H2: *Socio-economic developments may sway the Nagas to give up their long-drawn aspiration of political independence.* Another observation is that the Naga political conflict has created many money and power lovers in all categories of their society. This Christian society today is “bankrupt with corruption.” Many shared that the so called “ferocious Nagas” became spineless in front of the might of money. Detail study of this hypothesis could also be found in Chapter IV.
- H3: *The recently signed 2015 Framework Agreement would settle the protracted political violence that has ravaged Nagalim for many decades.* On this hypothesis, opinions are divided. Some confidently narrated that it has the capacity to settle the Naga issue, provided the agreement focuses more on “practicality instead of theoretical correctness.” A time has come for the Nagas to redefine their concept of sovereignty; necessitating a shift in their perspective from complete sovereignty to “shared sovereignty.” However, searching for practical compromise is also the reason why many fears that NSCN might have surrendered to the pressure of the Indian government, compelling them to give up their right to external self-determination and territorial integration of all the contiguous Naga inhabited areas and ipso facto, it is doubtful that the Framework Agreement would settle the protracted Naga political violence. Chapter III, IV and V deal with this hypothesis.



H4: *Factionalism within the Naga society can easily destroy the mantle of peace and harmony (although, as of now, it's just a semblance of both) woven by the "Indo-Naga" peace process that began in 1997.* Many narrated that factionalism is like a "cancer" that is fast spreading in every sectors of the Naga society and the cancerous growth has only intensified with the signing of the "Indo-Naga" ceasefire agreement in 1997. Today it has become a powerful negative force, so powerful that it seems to have persistently unraveled the spirit of Naga nationalism, making enmity of each other and placing them beyond any repairable conditions. Besides factionalism, there are also other negative forces and the interplay of all these forces has created a condition where finding durable, just, respectable, inclusive and honourable solution has been reduced to utopianic idea. Chapter IV of this study deals with the negative forces acting against the smooth implementation of the 2015 Framework Agreement.

### **Methodology**

The study was both descriptive and analytical in nature, and data for the study were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include manifestoes, memoranda, petitions, pamphlets, personal diaries and handbooks, resolutions of the Naga civil societies and available records of Naga nationalist groups. Efforts were made to supplement the data through unstructured/open-ended interview with the office bearers of Naga insurgent groups. In addition, leaders of major Naga civil societies were interviewed for the purpose of primary data collection. Using purposive sampling method, 117 Naga respondents, particularly those who are politically educated, from Dimapur District, Nagaland were handed a questionnaire. There are fourteen Naga tribes in the state of Nagaland but for this study, 16-17 politically educated individuals from seven tribes (altogether 117 respondents); namely, Ao, Angami, Chakhesang, Lotha, Konyak, Rengma and Sumi were selected. The primary data collected were subjected to a qualitative analysis

to understand whether or not Nagas political violence is finally towards a creative logical conclusion. Can it deliver 'honourable, acceptable and inclusive settlement? Or, will it only intensify in-fighting and divisions among the Nagas?

The difficulty of this methodology is relying largely on the perceived cooperation from all the above-mentioned variables in releasing authentic information. Therefore, the study also largely relied on open sources or information available in the public domain. Relevant information was also collected from reliable social media sources, the South Asian Terrorism Portal (SATP), and also the Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses (IDSA). Secondary sources include books, journals, thesis and dissertations, letters, magazines and newspapers.

### **Overview of Literature**

A study on the theme of political violence comes within the broad spectrum of violence which again forms an integral part of peace and conflict related issues. Quite a number of studies have been carried out on Naga political violence, giving insights about the difficulties and possibilities of achieving peaceful resolution of the given conflict.

This study has tried to locate itself with the workable concept of violence, political violence, self-determination, and shared sovereignty.

On violence there exist numerous writings though it still escapes universal understanding. Dewey (2009) contends that violence is the destructive, wasteful use of force or power. By arguing that a state does not have a right to command obedience from the subjects, Wolff (2009) defines violence as the illegitimate or unauthorized use of force by those who are generally accepted as the legitimate authorities in the territory. One of the works of Holmes (2009) discusses the importance of ethics and morality for purposeful human life, and how this purpose is destroyed by violence which is the paradigmatic way of mistreating persons involving harming or killing people and destroying things they value. Violence of any type

diminishes human prospects and destroys the fabric of humanity (Litke 2009). Gert (2009) emphasizes that justification of violence depends upon the concept of reason and that all rational men would publicly advocate some violence if they believe that more evil is being prevented by violence than by obeying the moral rules.

Critiquing Garver's analysis of violence, Betz (1977) expressed there is problem in considering psychological violence the same as physical violence deserving "the same stringent penalties." There are wrongs, crimes, evildoers undoubtedly but all of them need not necessarily be categorized as violent. There is no psychological or covert violence in that all violence is "overt or physical." Supporting Dewey, Betz pointed out that violence is definitely a kind of force, the notion rejected by Garver, and force has three 'conceptions: power or energy, coercive force, and violence' (1977, 342).

Traditionally speaking, political violence is started first by the state and non-state actors only resort to political violence as reactive measures to state's oppression, opined Richards (1999). The author by analyzing the context of political violence in Africa discussed at length that breaking such tradition, there is "new political violence" in that such violence is launched not because of state's oppression but because of the "weakness" and subsequently "collapse" of the state.

Yough (1981) elucidates that although there is no single theory of political violence, yet most prominent theories of political violence focus on certain socio-economic and political conditions that bring about various strains in the society. The notion that political violence as a concept suffers from general vagueness because of inclusion of wide range of disparate factors and because of difficulty in identifying violence that is specifically "political" as distinct from other types of violence is promoted by Mars (1975). Political violence has a political purpose involving the use of violent means against prevailing state and repressive state's retaliation against the recalcitrant (Hill 1997). Muller (1985) contends that at least

since Aristotle, social philosophers have speculated that economic inequality rather than the low level of economic development is a fundamental cause of political violence and revolution. Demetriou (2012) examines that radical ideas lead to radical politics and eventually to political violence especially in Palestine, Ireland and Cyprus. Many scholars identify terrorism as an act of political violence against the state. For instance, Cook (2003) analyzes that legitimacy plays a central role in conflicts between states and terrorist organizations because in such conflicts each side contests the other's legitimacy theory.

The concept of self-determination is one among the most complex concepts. What precisely is the meaning of self-determination? What are the types of self-determination? How is the principle of self-determination defined by international law? Who are the bearers of self-determination? Or, how it is related with the right to secede? All these complex queries are discussed by many scholars including Feith and Smith (1995), Eze and Okeke (2013), Panzironi (2006), Young (2008), Coulter (2010), Galtung (2000), Mueller (2012), Buchanan (1997), Brilmayer (1991) and Hana (1999), among others.

In the age of globalization and in the face of various waves of modernity, the concept of sovereignty has been contested, seemingly trying to bring out the relevance of shared sovereignty concept. While many argued that the concept though time-tested would continue to occupy a central position in both national and international affairs, still many have glided their argument towards the attenuating relevance of the concept of sovereignty with the on-set of globalization. This supposed transition is aptly pictured by Bartelson (2006). Advancing such notion, Maihold (2016) maintains that the onslaught of many factors has wane the relevance of the concept of Westphalian sovereignty and promoted shared sovereignty accentuating that sovereignty is divisible and not absolute. Similarly, Laible (2008) argues that the entry of the concept of regional and global integration has compromised the age-old sovereignty concept. Rudolf and Rudolf (2010) equalize shared-

sovereignty with “negotiated sovereignty” and posit that such an idea is detested by the early modern state theorists who ardently vouched for the theory of “absolutism and monopoly sovereignty.” Staniland (2012) discusses the idea of shared sovereignty from the lens of both the state and insurgents staking claims over a contested area on determining “who rules, how much, and in what ways.”

The Nagas’ struggle that reportedly began in 1918 has been speculated under various names but hardly “political violence.” This is perhaps because they do not consider themselves as the initiator of violence: “violence was started by the Indian state and not by the Nagas.” They adopted violent method only as the last reactionary resort when peaceful methods were rendered meaningless by the Indian state’s brutality. Works of Ao (2002), Aosenba (2001), Baruah (2003), Biswas and Thomas (2006), Chadda (2006), Chandrika (2004, 2008), Chasie (1999), Farrell (2004), Franke (2009), Gautam (2003), Haksar and Luithui (1995), M. Horam (1988), R. Horam (1998), Iralu (2000), Lasuh (2002), Longchar (2011), Longchari (2016), Lotha (2013, 2016), Manchanda and Bose (2011), Mawon (2014, 2017, 2019), Means and Means (1966), Nuh (2001), Atai Shimray (2005), U. A. Shimray (2007), Srikanth and Thomas (2005, 2006), Thomas (2016), Udayon (2003), Verghese (2004), Vashum (2000, 2001), Wouters (2018), and Zhimomi (2004), among others, give account of Nagas political violence for self-determination.

On the area of Naga issue, the researcher had undertaken few works. Her doctoral thesis (2015) discourses the role of political parties especially the Naga Peoples’ Front (NPF), civil societies, Naga armed groups and the Government of India in paving the Naga political violence towards a solution. Longvah (2019) discusses that Nagas’ political violence is a movement that primarily exerts Nagas right to self-determination, for long concentrating on external self-determination but recently, shifting towards “shared-sovereignty model”, and this movement invited adoption of extreme methods by the Indian government. She argues

that massive Christian conversions, though not the sole reason, was a major catalyst of the rise of Naga nationalism; a movement for self-determination firmly grounded on the principle that Naga themselves would determine their own political, administrative, cultural and socio-economic affairs (Longvah 2017). Arguably, she also discusses that if peace culture is permeated in the Naga society, it can open a window of hope to progress the otherwise protracted Naga peace process (Longvah 2014). The notion that India can leverage her soft power image by efficiently and creatively addressing the various prevailing domestic issues like the Naga conflict is also discussed (Longvah 2016). The researcher (2014) situates that the long-drawn political violence in Nagalim had potentially disturbed peaceful atmosphere in Northeast in specific and India in general, tarnishing the image of India as the world's largest democracy.

Many written literatures bespoke the Naga insurgent as the “mother of all insurgents” in the Northeast. It subsequently trained many other insurgent groups, creating havoc in the region. Thus, although solving the Naga issue may not be the panacea for all other insurgent related problems, yet, predominantly, for real peace and development to anchor in the Northeast, the Naga issue needs to be addressed with creative political maturity.

### **Relevance of the Study and Proposed Outputs**

Since Naga insurgency is famously considered the “mother of all insurgents” in the Northeast, therefore, it appears logically sound and relevant to conduct an in-depth research on it. Definitely, solving the Naga issue would not be the panacea for all other insurgent related problems; yet, predominantly, for real peace and development to anchor in the Northeast, it must start with the Naga issue that needs to be addressed with creative political maturity. At least two things can be anticipated by resolving Nagas' political violence: first, some form of peace and stability can settle in Northeast; second, it can catalyze India's Act



East Policy since Nagaland along with other Northeastern states is considered the “gateway to the East.”

The Naga political issue is a complex one involving many contesting stakeholders. The aftermath of the Naga Framework Agreement apparently blew in the wind of positivity prompting many to anticipate that the long-standing Naga conundrum is perhaps finally ending. Yet again, a nervous attitude has been expressed from various corners regarding the inclusive nature of the agreement. This is a matter of ongoing sensation and there are insufficient literatures on it. Therefore, it is worth analyzing empirically. The anticipated as well as proposed outcomes of this research is to familiarize the Naga hoi polloi as well other sections in India engaged in violent conflict scenario, the significance of embracing and employing peaceful negotiation in settling an imbroglio.

## Chapter II

### Conceptualizing and contextualizing political violence

Violence, a complex concept that has eluded simple and single comprehension, is at the least, accepted as ubiquitous in nature. Controlling “violence in all of the people all the time” has not been possible in the history of mankind, stated McNeil (1966, 150). Discouraging that its influence can be felt “physically and psychologically,” Galtung (1969) classified violence into “intended and non-intended violence, latent and manifest violence, and direct and structural violence.” Indeed, so broad is the area of violence that where ever there is a form of human relationship and interaction, violence is said to be present or at least felt. Longchari (2016, 3) discussed at length that violence can be “numbing,” possessing the power to render one to be insensible to human “dignity, human-worth and creates conditions which induce complacency and makes you believe that the existing structural violence and injustice are normal and tolerable.” Violence nullifies human rationality reducing one to behave like an animal guided by “instinct alone,” discussed Lansing (1981, 69-71).

Emphasizing, therefore, on the contextual understanding of violence, this study singularly focuses on the political violence of the Naga nationalists, often read as directed against the perceived “invidious and harmful” Indian state’s hegemony. Contextually, political violence is an act of aggression attempted by armed insurgent groups as a “just” means of righting the wrong committed by its host state. It is almost always a wild or turbulent conduct, often resulting into a pattern of injuries, harm and destruction particularly against the insurgent group and its civilians. The study, therefore, predominantly discusses the Nagas political violence – a movement that primarily exerts the right to self-determination – and the consequent extreme methods, often vindicated as a nemesis, adopted by the Indian state to counter the said movement. Digging further and deeper on the exerted right to self

determination of the Nagas, the study learnt that such exertion is germane to the complicated discussion of the political integration of the Nagas situated in four Northeastern states of India and in the Kachin state and Sagaing sub-division of Myanmar. Originally, by political integration, the Nagas meant to create a sovereign independent state of their own. This idea pushes the Nagas to strongly resist the wave of Indian national political integration, carried out effectively through combined techniques of “carrot and stick policy”; through the ardent exploit of “hard and soft power.” The issue of political integration indeed is strongly connected with the Nagas’ long drawn aspiration for political freedom.

Walter (1964a, 252) remarked that mankind’s “history is full of techniques introduced by rulers to manage the conditions of confrontation” from the “subordinate” groups. The strategy to achieve political freedom brought the Nagas to hostile confrontation with the counter-techniques adopted by New Delhi, overwhelming their history with events of brutality and ignominy. This confrontation, often read as an audacious resistance of the Nagas against the “integrationist logic” of the Indian state is the stark truth that engenders the Naga political violence in the early 1950s. Such political violence “may be countered by persuasion; by rewards and “buying off” leaders of the opposition; by negotiation, bargaining, and exchanging advantages; and by forms of coercion short of violence,” stated Walter (ibid, 252-53). Combination of both hard and soft way of responding to political violence has been simultaneously or alternatively applied against the Naga people.

### **Conceptualizing violence**

Understanding the concept of violence is a complex phenomenon with no universally accepted theory to anyone’s credit. The term is contextual and circumstantial connoting many matters: violent injury, killing, words, behaviour, cataclysms, struggle, culture, policy, etc. Violence indeed has “distinct space/time connotation,” stated Riches (1991,

288). Gronow and Hilppo (1970, 311) were of the view that violence cannot be grasped in full meaning “unless one takes into account the community in which the concept is used.” Bufacchi (2009, 1) pointed out that “research on violence is one of the fastest growing industries in the social sciences with each discipline trying to monopolize specific areas of violence according to some unwritten but widely accepted rule of partition.” For Litke (2009, 296-99), violence which diminishes human prospects systematically is intriguing in the sense that although it is universally condemned yet is found everywhere. Wolff considered violence as an “illegitimate or unauthorized use of force to effect decisions against the will or desire of others” (2009, 55). Menon (2009, 16) pontificated that “at the most obvious level, violence is associated with physical coercion and injury” involving destruction of both private and state owned property. Acts of violence, thus, is mostly visible because it indicates practical application. Furthermore, Arendt pointed out that “violence... does not depend on numbers or opinions, but on implements, and the implements of violence... like all other tools, increase and multiply human strength” (1969, 53).

It is the intention of this study to argue that violence can best be analyzed and understood contextually. Understandably, therefore, the typologies of violence can be numerous – “Intentional and non-intentional violence, authorized and un-authorized violence, overt and covert violence, personal and institutional violence, direct and indirect violence, cultural violence, structural violence, intended and non-intended violence, latent and manifest violence, and direct violence, etc.” (Pontara 1978; Betz 1977; Galtung 1969). In this hardly exhaustible list, Riches (1991, 293-95) also included “witchcraft and sorcery” as violence, “mental violence,” “ritual violence: violence in festivals and in games,” “violence where the victim is not fully human: violence towards very young infants, fetuses, animals and inanimate objects,” etc. In a comprehensive way, Walter (1964b, 354) also considered

violence from the aspect of “destructive harm” which “include not only physical assaults that cause damage to the person, but also magic, sorcery, and the many techniques of inflicting harm by mental or emotional means.”

Of the existing various typologies of violence, argued many that some types cannot be considered as violence per se. Pontara (1978, 19-20), for instance, is of the view that the adequate way of understanding the concept of violence is for it to be confined as “a method of struggle” in order to achieve certain goals and any other forms of violence like “structural violence” that is outside this confinement should not be considered as violence. For Garver, “violence is the violating of personal rights” which again is categorized into two – associated to “the body of the person” and “his dignity” (Cited in Betz 1977, 340). Betz (1977, 341) however offers criticism to this definition of violence as “just too broad” for “if violence is whatever violates a person and his rights of body, dignity, or autonomy, then lying to or about another, embezzling, locking one out of his house, insulting, and gossiping are all violent acts.” Critiquing Garver’s analysis of violence, Betz expressed there is problem in considering psychological violence the same as physical violence, deserving “the same stringent penalties.” This means that there are wrongs, crimes, evildoers undoubtedly but all of them need not necessarily be categorized as violent. There is no psychological or covert violence in that all violence is “overt or physical,” argued Betz (1977, 341-42). Violence is “physical force defeating ends and (human) rights” (ibid, 343). Very frequently, the concept of violence dwells together with that of power. Indeed, scholars, academicians, political commentators often tend to link the concept of violence with that of power, often arguing that one is prior to the other and vice-versa and for others such priority however is not absolute for “sometimes power needs violence to maintain itself” (Peeters 2008, 169). There is a universal agreement that “violence and other kinds of force are perennially associated with the exercise of power,” explained Walter (1964b, 355).

In fact, Arendt was of the view that “violence is nothing more than the most flagrant manifestation of power” (1969, 34). “All politics is a struggle for power; the ultimate kind of power is violence,” said C. Wright Mills (cited in Arendt 1969, 34). Dewey opines that the “constructive use of power” is a case “when it is exercised to assure the means which are needed for the successful realization of ends” (cited in Betz, 343). We can infer from here that power even when expressed violently if it is for the “successful realization of ends” is considered constructive. Read thus, violence is seen as an extension of power; nay, the “ultimate manifestation” of power (Peeters 2008, 172). “It is only a means related to the unlimited exercise of power and the pleasure taken in it, that it aims merely at assuring the absolute domination of one group over the rest of society” (Henaff and Schehr 1998, 13-14). On the nexus between violence and power, Arendt aptly commented: “Violence can always destroy power; out of the barrel of a gun grows the most effective command, resulting in the most instant and perfect obedience. What never can grow out of it is power” (1969, 53).

Just as the concept of violence often dwells with the concept of power, likewise, these two concepts are most prominently adopted and applied in the field of politics. “Violence and politics are mutually exclusive,” but they are “ambiguously related,” argued Agamben, Fabbri and Fay (2009, 104). In fact, violence denotes and connotes a “political concept,” applied to realize certain “political goals” by a particular society (Gronow and Hilppo 1970, 313-14). The mutual exclusivity and the ambiguous relation between politics and violence can be understood from the context of Naga political violence. Initially, the Naga movement for self-determination was countered by New Delhi as a mere law and order problem. But, perhaps because of the influence of political negotiation that started in 1997 between New Delhi and the NSCN, in the early 2000s their movement came to be addressed as “political problem requiring political solution.” Both soft persuasion (peaceful

negotiation) and hard persuasion (violent tactics) were applied against the Nagas, indicating that their political violence was launched against New Delhi in order to realize certain political end – the Nagas right to external self-determination. Since the late 1990s, the hard persuasion tactic has been principally avoided, thus, today the Naga movement became treated as a political conundrum. “To be political was to accept the principle that everything should be decided by the word and by persuasion, rather than by force or by violence,” stated Agamben, Fabbri and Fay (2009, 104).

On the concept of violence, two strong waves of opinion exist – those who justify and glorify violence particularly if it is adopted for the right cause and those who impugn it to possess any constructiveness. The holder of the latter opinion views violence as an ossified concept that always involves negative destruction and suffering of one form or the other. Indeed, discourse on this concept predominantly revolves around this debate. For instance, Arent, who stood very firmly against the “glorification” of violence despite the goodness of cause and for achieving any so called just goals, rejected the discourse and teaching of Jean-Paul Sartre and Franz Fanon for “glorifying” violence, emphasizing that violence “prepares would-be leaders and followers only for totalitarianism” (cited in Hutcheon, 1996). Acts of violence is “immoral” and the “use of violence in the conduct of conflict lessens the chances of reaching compromise and reconciliation and is therefore seldom conducive to stable settlements” (Pontara 1978, 20-21).

From ethics perspective, “violence is the cause behind an unwanted, bad, wrong or unjust outcome,” enunciated Gronow and Hilppo (1970, 312). Relatedly, “*Bestialitade* is synonymous to violence,” analyzed Lansing (1981, 68). Contradictorily, Menon (2009, 16) stated that violence when used for “self defense,” particularly, by “the weak against the strong,” is often argued as possessing “moral justness.” Arguing that acts of violence are indefensible for they are a “catalogue of excuses for destruction of one’s fellow man,”

McNeil (1966, 155-56) pointed out some popular viewpoints held by “apology for human violence” which are as follows:

In defense of violence, man has insisted that he was provoked beyond all human endurance; he has stated that he was not responsible by reason of insanity; he has pointed out that he acted only in self-defense; he has claimed that honor and manhood required violent response; he has maintained that he never intended to produce the outcome that occurred; he has said that what he did was for the ultimate good of society; and he has felt, if not said, that his actions were inescapably necessary given the situation in which he found himself.

Because of the overwhelming negative connotations, many argue that violence is always destructive by nature. In one way or the other, violence destroys a living or non-living things and thus the use of violence to achieve certain aim is termed non-justifiable. Yet, there are also groups of people who endorse and propagate the idea that violence too can play a constructive role. Bufacchi (2009, 65) while commenting on Wolff remarked that although in politics the use of violence (if it connotes “unjustified use of force”) can never be justified, yet, if the state resorted to “unjustified use of force,” then “it is always permissible to use violence in politics to respond to violence.” Believing that the use of violence can bring about constructive social, economic, political and cultural change and development, its use as a means is often justified by the insurgents or revolutionaries and ipso facto many wars and violent conflicts are given reasonable support. Chandhoke (2012, 70) while examining the Maoist political violence that aims to “secure justice and equal treatment” for those degraded categories of people rendered so by the Indian caste system argued that violence could often be used as a means to “break the shackles” of injustice. Such a line of violence is seemed to be accepted by the Nagas in justifying their self-determination struggle.



Walter (1964a, 253) while explaining the legitimate use of violence “as a necessary means of control and punishment” during the slavery system in America, elaborated that violence “was used not only to punish acts of disobedience and resistance but also to sap the potential for disobedience in advance, and break the power to resist.” Any rational person should be against violence but not at any price, argued Peeters (2008). He further elaborated that violence is carried out on the note that ends justifies the means, thus, as long as it serves the purpose, violent act can be vindicated (Peeters 2008, 181). On similar note, Agamben, Fabbri and Fay (2009, 107) also enunciated that violence is justified when it is used as “the means to a just end.” Chandhoke argued that violence when used as a means to “break the shackles” of injustice to secure justice is justifiable (2012, 70).

For Weber, “all governments – whether democratic or not – rest ultimately on the threat of violence against the people” (cited in Hutcheon 1996). In other words, any form of government has the power to commit violence. Indeed, for effective political struggle, some degree of violence is always involved and required. “A certain amount of so-called violence is inevitable and useful in readjusting patterns of rights,” argued Betz (1977, 344). Even Mahatma Gandhi, the crusader for peace and non-violence, acknowledged that “strictly speaking, no activity and no industry is possible without a certain amount of violence, no matter how little” (cited in Pontara 1978, 29). Arendt also acknowledged that the efficacious use of violence particularly political violence is necessary to counter “radical evil” but this must be adopted only as the last resort (cited in Peeters 2008, 187-189). Violence, whether glorified or vilified, always seem to fall short of the true meaning of lasting peace. “Violence is force, power or energy gone wrong,” argued Dewey (cited in Betz 1977, 342). Wherever there is wrong, peace is obfuscated.

Allegedly the Indian Government is entitled with “legitimate authority” over the Nagas. Walter (1964, 351) suggested under such authority, “Obedience is usually voluntary and

resistance minimal.” But the Nagas political orientation and behaviour is marked by complete negation of the legitimacy claim of New Delhi. They question the logic of “legitimate authority,” violently expressing that what they experience in the hand of New Delhi is rather abusive power than “legitimate authority.” Abusive power in fact is the contextual understanding of the concept of violence. Bestiality is visible when abusive power is let loose. Lansing elaborated that bestiality, in fact, is the other name of violence (1981, 68). Read on this note, the bestial behaviour of Indian security forces violated the rights of the Nagas to live a free self-determined life necessitating and goading them to take up violent arms to counter the afflicted “radical evils” on them.

It is reiterated in this study that the term “violence” is restricted to “political violence” which again would restrict to violence committed for political cause, for example like the Naga people’s movement for external self-determination.

### **Conceptualizing political violence**

Political violence is referred to as “warfare” by Arendt, who predicted that the concept will live on “as long as there is the presence of the struggle for national independence, namely, freedom from foreign rule, and the sovereignty of the state, namely, the claim to unchecked and unlimited power in foreign affairs” (Arendt 1969, 5). On the origination of the concept of political violence, Kershaw (2005, 116) opined that political violence in its “extreme” form is a “disastrous outcome of the First World War, with subsequent state collapse and political instability, often linked to disputed territory in ethnically mixed areas where ethnicity was the basis of nationality.” In fact, the term “extreme” often forms the prefix of political violence which is complicatedly intertwined with past history of hurts, humiliation and injustice. Taylor (2002, 474), for instance, while studying the political violence in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, observed that political violence erupts when past conflicts are not settled effectively. Khan used the term “political killers” for those involved in

political violence to address the various problems of “poverty, unemployment, reduced opportunities for social mobility and military authoritarianism, especially brutal police practices and repeated military crackdown” (2007, 2435-436).

In the realm of politics, political violence is commonly considered an act of aggression attempted by armed insurgent groups as a means of righting the wrong committed by its host state. It is a wild or turbulent conduct, resulting in injuries, harm and destruction. It implies that violence is undertaken by insurgents for political purpose against prevailing government (White 1993, 575). Hill (1997, 108) postulates that for the violence to be “political” the primary aim is to gain or retain control of legal and political institutions, to express an ideology, to gain or assert a perceived right, etc. Political violence occurs when at least non-negligible parts of the population contest the legitimacy of the colonial regime or its status quo (Demetriou 2012, 393). Legitimacy of the state is said to be derived from the authority it possessed which gives the state the right to command and, correlatively, the right to be obeyed (Wolff 2009, 52).

Simply put, political violence is violence committed for political reasons and political ends. Pontara (1978, 19-20) pointed out that political violence is a “method of struggle” to achieve certain political goals. It always does have “political motives,” stated Clutterbuck (1987, 377). Implying that political violence in its briefest term means political struggle for political reason(s), Pedahzur, Hasisi and Brichta (2000, 18-24), on political violence in Israel observed that “violent action is both a customary way of voicing political interests as well as a means to obtain resources.” To theoretically explain political violence in Israel context, they pinned to “relative deprivation,” “delegitimation” and “mistrust” – first, “a group’s route to violence begins with dissatisfaction and frustration with present conditions and the group’s belief that it is entitled to more rights or resources than it presently possesses”; second, deprivation combined with “delegitimation,” that is, “diminution of

state institutional credibility and the consequent breakdown of a government's legitimacy in the eyes of the civilian," cause political violence; third, "delegitimation" leads to "mistrust of government institutions." Relatedly, Sprinzak defined delegitimation "as political behaviour consequent to the lack of recognition of a certain ruling system as being either correct or just" (cited in Pedahzur, Hasisi and Brichta 2000, 19).

Muller (1985, 47) also recognizes "relative deprivation," "income inequality" and "regime repressiveness" as sources of political violence, arguing notwithstanding that regime repressiveness sanction deadlier political violence than the rest. In the Naga case, such "regime repressiveness" solicited armed political struggle for external self-determination. Indeed, political violence is armed struggle by a group against the dominant power or regime to address and realize political socio-economic goals, threatening the stability of any regime (Chandhoke 2012; Muller and Weede 1990). Traditionally, political violence is considered to have launched first by the state, indeed, "a prerogative of the state," and non-state actors only react or revolt against state's oppression (Richards 1999, 433).

For some like Cook (2003, 108), political violence is not independent of the subject of "legitimacy," inducing therefore, the need to examine the meaning of "legitimacy." In political violence between a state and a dissident group, the legitimacy claim is always contested with each party trying to portray the rightness of their claim and delegitimizing that of the rival's (Ibid, 109). Habermas concluded that legitimacy must be acquired through "discussion and debate" and this must have rationality at its base (cited in Cook 2003, 115-116). Henaff and Schehr (1998, 10) consider political violence as a "revolutionary terror" which indeed is a "virtuous terror" for it does not "thirst for power" nor take "pleasure in killing"; "it is presented as violence that is politically legitimate because it is morally necessary." But Cook (2003, 109) argued that the term legitimacy is derogatory for "whoever is stuck with the label is also assumed to lack legitimacy."

Chandhoke (2012, 69-70) while studying the issue of Maoism in India – the movement that propelled the strongest political violence in mainland India for safeguarding the rights and lands of the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Caste communities – raises a pertinent question, “is political violence always wrong?” Admitting there is no definite answer Chandhoke pointed out that “any moral evaluation of (political) violence will have to take into account both the context and the objective of violence.” Regardless of the debate regarding the rightness and wrongness of using political violence as a means of achieving certain political goals, one undisputed fact is its relatedness with flagrant abuse of human rights, more so for the affected group of people marked hostile by the state. The obvious face of political violence is “suicide bombing, racial violence, gang warfare, the raping and looting and killing of minority (or marginal) communities, a great deal of this surely occurs because governments do not have the political will to prevent it,” wrote Pandey (2004, 1012). Elaborating further, Pandey blamed the state for committing “the unashamed political violence of our times” (ibid.).

Akin to the concept of violence discussed earlier, the concept of political violence is also arguably connected with the struggle for power. Contestation for and against the exercise of power often forms the common denominator of most political violence. Singh (1976, 58-59) explained that “all philosophers and theories implicitly or explicitly appear to acknowledge the existence of power as an essential attribute of political activity.” Meticulously, Walter enthused about the diverse effects that the experience of power could generate. It can be “inspiring, wholesome, tolerable, or oppressive, depending on the circumstances. It may release creative energy, heightening vitality, it may destroy motivation, generating a pall of depression, or it may stimulate conflict and rebellion” (Walter 1964, 353). In fact, “power politics” that is, the politics of “dominance and submission,” mostly played after establishing a territoriality so as to properly “control and

regulate violence” (McNeil 1966, 150-151) demands careful planning. Such politics are often played aiming for certain political dividend and this indeed constitute the essential feature of political violence. Pontara (1978, 19-20) pointed out that political violence could be considered as a “method of struggle” to achieve certain political goals.

Oppenheim explained that the concept of power is hardly limited to “acts of control,” covering “the ability to influence, to restrain, or to punish” (cited in Walter 1964, 351). This concept of power is accomplished in various strata of human society – individual, social, national and international strata – touching diverse roles and aims of such stratum but all commonly converging to the point of ability to do something with intelligence. And the concept of power has an immortal link with the equally complex concept of force, whose popular understanding as per Oxford dictionary is the use of “violent physical action to obtain something,” or it talks about somebody or something with power or influence or authority. Generally, the term force “include any agency that compels someone to do something that he does not want to do,” enthused Walter, who further explained that violence which is a form of force is “perennially associated with the exercise of power” (1964b, 353). In short, there is a nexus among concepts of power, force and violence and this nexus is unambiguously brought out by Singh in his statement: “Power is an end in itself, force is a means to sustain power and violence is force in action” (1976, 60).

### **Political violence in the Naga context**

The kind of political violence launched by the Nagas has been considered “unique” at least in the Indian sub-continent. But, what marks the uniqueness when it bore much resemblance with the political violence of her neighbouring communities like the Meitei, Kuki, Dimasa, Mizo, Bodos, Tripuri, etc? For this “imagined community” (the term borrowed from Anderson 1983), they are a nation who was never subjugated by any foreign powers, except the British for few decades, and unlike other communities, they were made

a part of the Indian Union neither by “consent nor by conquest.” They are a group of people who categorically enjoyed special treatment even during the British era. Das (2007, 22) pointed out: “British policy toward the tribal groups in general and the Nagas in particular was inspired by the imperative of exercising minimum interference in the pattern of life of the Naga tribes and keeping outsiders from entering the tribal areas.”

At the outset, the desire to possess power so that “their land could be guided by her (their) own ideas and ideals and ruled by her (their) own people,” (Yonuo 1974, 162) indeed, is what is to be understood as Naga political violence. Power that takes away the Nagas’ freedom was first exercised against them by the British colonialists and ipso facto there was “war” between them. According to Yonuo (1974, 166), the “Anglo-Naga” war reportedly went on for fifty years, that is, from 1839-1889, after which 30 per cent of the Naga areas were conquered and ruled by the British (Shimray 2005, 31; Iralu 2005, 190). With the independence of India, such power having “inherited” from the British India was used to politically integrate the Nagas to the Indian Union, allegedly read by the Nagas as an act of unhealthy and chauvinistic exercise of power by the Indian Government. Their political violence is a resistance movement directly challenging the integrationist logic of the Indian state, asserted the Nagas. And the counter strategy to such resistance has been first and foremost, violent military response. Relatedly, Walter pointed out that “reactions to resistance are more frequently violent than acts of resistance” (1964b, 254). Violent responses only inspire newer and more fervent resistance. But “no system of terror, despite its enormous horror and devastation has proved to be entirely effective,” concluded Walter (ibid, 257).

Nagas regarded that their “country” was unwillingly made a part of the Indian Union through violent means of “terrorism” of the Indian armed forces. The technique, “Kill one, frighten 10, 000,” undoubtedly the essence of terrorism (Clutterbuck 1987, 377), was used

against the Nagas. But governments across the globe have been the greatest user of this technique, discussed Clutterbuck (ibid, 377). And violent inhuman acts of the government often triggered political violence, argued Hibbs (see Muller and Weede 1990, 626). Such argument holds water in the Naga context as well. Naga political violence indeed is a struggle responding to New Delhi's terrorizing but well calculated actions. Muller and Weede (1990, 625) propounded that whoever engages in "a rational action theory of political violence" does so after rational deliberation on the larger effectiveness of the same than on addressing the issue with "peaceful strategies" and people just do not engage in political violence without this calculation.

Up till 1956, Nagas trod the path of peace in expressing their political rights and aspiration. However, goaded beyond endurance by the continual indifferent attitude and hubris of the Indian Government and the inundation of their land with Indian Army, the Nagas at last turned towards violence as an alternate path to fight for their right to self-determination. Ultimately, on March 1956 they formed the Federal Government of Nagaland (FGN) with the Naga Federal Army as its military wing and started thus their political violence at full scale which was rooted and guided by the principle: "The right of the Nagas to develop themselves according to their freely expressed wishes." They argue that this principle and right of the Nagas was "recognized" by the Indian Government when the Hydari Agreement or the Nine Points Agreement was signed on June 27, 1947 and it, in fact, also became the preamble of the said agreement (Nuh 2002, 43). However, this agreement was abrogated by the Indian Government in 1951 and the Nagas continued their peaceful struggle for "recognition" of their independence<sup>7</sup>, the *raison d'être* of their political

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<sup>77</sup> The Nagas popularly argued that they were colonized none by any foreign power except the British for a period of roughly seven to eight decades and that too they could colonized only "thirty per cent" of their country. When the British left the Indian sub-continent, their "snatched away independence" must therefore be recognized and reinstated. But their plea fell on deaf ears and they suddenly became integrated with the Union of India. Since then, they became engaged in external self-determination movement; trying to reason with New Delhi of their independent status and per se recognition of such status.



movement, asserted they, and conducted the Naga Plebiscite on May 16, 1951. Apparently this plebiscite was to ascertain the opinion of the Nagas regarding two things: whether to seek for independence or to join the Indian Union, on which 99.9% was said to have stood for the former.

Relying on violent means to achieve their political goal, a revolution was already underway by the mid 1950s. But, unlike other armed revolution, their main aim is not to “overthrow state power” which as elaborated by Menon consists one main aim of Maoist revolution in India (2009, 17). Namrata Goswami (2015) stated that the Naga struggle is “a demonstration of the Nagas’ pride and dignity as a people.” Theirs is a political movement for self-determination, of which the use of violence was justified based on the logic: “Government of India first used violence against us and so we took up arms not just to retaliate but more importantly for defense of our people and land.”

According to Kershaw (2005, 111), “Violence stimulated by political motives or intentions” in a wide sense can take place “within, between, by or against states.” The roots of violence, further argued Kershaw (ibid.), “lie deeper than the war itself,” with foundation in “social and political protest (against) decadent (state).” The extreme atrocities committed by the Indian state left the Nagas in a situation of the undemocratic “reign of terror” of the Indian Army from whom Nagas found it hard to escape. In the eyes of the Nagas, India was looked at as an “oppressive, repressive and occupying authoritarian state,” and thus the launched political violence, also popularly referred to as “revolutionary violence” was justified by them. They seem to subscribe the idea of Kershaw (2005, 112), who stated that in “authoritarian states,” “revolutionary violence” or political violence became the best alternative to address social and political issue, rendering the doctrine of ends justifying the means to hold true.

The exegesis of Naga political violence is under varied headings – insurgency movement, a movement for self-determination, a movement of “opportunism” (“to take control of a state by force”), a protracted movement that gives “no opportunity to India” for conflict resolution, etc. (Chadha 2005, 28). Most writings on Naga political violence particularly from the Indian state’s perspectives have the tendency to project it as a movement launched by the minority section of the Nagas against the wishes of the majority and ipso facto, a “law and order” problem that could be corrected by full scale enforcement of the Indian armed forces. Thus, in the process, they end up glorifying the efforts of the Indian armed forces although their “bestial acts” have left the majority of the Nagas horrified and thereby pulling them more towards the political movement. Chadha (2005, 31, 287-88), for instance, glorifies “the might of the Indian Army” for its role in tackling the Nagas in the 1950s, the era considered as the “darkest and the bloodiest” in the history of the Nagas. However, a priori study of the Naga issue also points to another narration. It is a people’s movement, survived and sustained even after scorched-earth method had been wantonly exercised. Mao had theorized that “the decisive factor in armed struggle is not weapons, but people who are convinced of the rightness of a cause” (cited in Chandhoke 2012, 71). The Nagas as a people seem to have this unflinching conviction and they narrated that this had indeed enabled them to defy all the atrocious methods adopted by the Indian Government. A strong assertion of the Nagas is that “they are Indians only by accident and not by choice or blood.” Their connection with the Indian state that has subsequently viewed their movement for self-determination as an insurgency or militancy or secessionism started only in the late 1940s, but their movement for independence had already taken proper shape with the formation of the Naga Club in 1918.

At the early phase of Naga political violence circa 1950s and 1960s, media reports were banned if not highly censored, disempowering the people outside the Naga territory, to be

sensitized with the issue and the hardships faced by them. Those were the times when the Government of India banned journalists and outsiders from entering Nagalim (Lotha 2016, 103). In fact, foreign visitors could enter Nagalim only after “careful scrutiny to ascertain that neither their interest nor their purposes are of a political nature” (Means and Means, 1966, 291). Such rigidity is perhaps one reason why most of the people even from “mainland India” and the world have scanty knowledge about the Nagas’ struggle and most knowledge assumed to be possessed by the knowledgeable are also found to be spurious, mostly fed by the “biased and censored media reporting.”

According to Snyder and Kelly (1977, 106), the term “media bias” means “the selection of news, i.e., differential completeness of reporting across classes of events”; “distortion in the content of news, including inaccurate reporting and unbalanced interpretation of events.” It was reported that at the zenith of their political violence, Nagalim faced a total lockdown from the outside world including the Indian mainland. Thus, it became hard to understand that media biasness and ignorance of the world about the Naga issue had absolutely no dealings with the Indian state. All in all, a lot of unhealthy memories, which are extremely hard to erase, were being created. However, such memories of terror were being created and re-created not only by the Indian armed forces but also by their own once comrade and brethren with the rise of factionalism and fratricidal killings. Evidently, the Nagas have been experiencing violence, phases after phase.

Very aptly, Henaff and Schehr (1998, 12) stated: “Terror (violent actions) begins when the exchange of arguments, which is at first the recognition of the existence of the other, ceases and when the one with power decides what is true and false and who has the right to speak.” While dealing with the Nagas, initially, adoption of soft methods like arguments, negotiation, dialogue, etc. was the least concern of New Delhi who saw more aptnesses in utilizing unrestrained power against the Nagas. It was said that this piqued the pride and

dignity of the Nagas who had always thought themselves as different – historically, racially, physically, culturally, linguistically, traditionally and religiously – from the Indian state. Thus, through political violence they assert that since time immemorial they were “slaves to none” and in their history, “no enemy ever conquered the Nagas, except the British who conquered and occupied portions of Naga territory from 1879 to 1947,” circulated the NNC (cited in Das 2007, 22). In essence, their political violence revolves around recognition and restoration of their lost independence, seized first by the British and then the Indian state. Thus, asserted by many respondents, theirs is a struggle for restoration of self-respect as a distinct group of people with distinctive political history of being a free and independent people. This assertion found relevance in the statement of Chandhoke: “In societies where some groups experience nothing but violence in their lives, political violence might be a necessary precondition of the recovery of self-respect” (2012, 70).

The usage of power, force and violence has embroiled the Nagas in stubborn conflict with New Delhi and this has subsequently led to the destruction of human lives, property, psychological health, rendering the Nagas as alienated as ever from New Delhi. In gist, the Naga political violence is an independence-induced conflict that adopted guerilla warfare technique and it has been categorized as low-intensity conflict (hereinafter LIC). Simply put, any conflict is LIC if fatalities were well over 100 but less than 1,000 annually and various conflicts across the Northeast India comes under this category (Das 2007, 1). The term low-intensity conflict was used first in the late 1970s by the US national security community to define “a political-military confrontation short of conventional war between either contending states or a group/movement and a state” (Shultz 1991, 125). Yoshio (2002, 56) defined low intensity conflict as “a new type of war between a sub-state and a state,” with the intention either to overthrow or replace the central government or to attain independence and “establish a new state.” Shultz (1991, 121-22) included various forms of

unconventional conflict like “revolutionary insurgent warfare and counterinsurgency, guerrilla wars, civil wars, separatist movements, communal violence, insurrection, coups d’état, and terrorism, insurgency, ethnic violence” within this term. Yoshio (2002, 70) argued that “political conflict” which can be interpreted as the “total war” is the essence of LIC in that it sought for solution by using every available means – “politics, economy, welfare, intelligence, justice and military means.” This concept of LIC is of substance in defining and understanding the Naga political violence.

### **Understanding self-determination in Naga context**

The concept of self-determination is revolutionary in a fundamental sense, given that its application usually implies radical change, as any group that succeeds in applying the concept of self-determination has found a way to determine its own destiny (Knight 1985, 252). Indeed, the right to self-determination is widely considered a universal right of the peoples, and it is recognized and guaranteed by the United Nations through its various declarations. In the longer run, the term “self-determination” is translated differently by different people based on their specific context. It is at times understood as possessing the right to secede and at other times as possessing the right to decide on almost all affairs sans right to secession.

Most commonly, assertion for self-determination can lead to two outcomes: independent state and “autonomous self-rule” (Young 2008, 12). Galtung (2000, 194) termed the former as “higher level” self-determination and the latter “lower level” self-determination. He continued by stating that a nation has the right to secede from a violent state that does not take the issue of human rights into account but at times self-determination of a nation is limited to autonomy short of independence (ibid, 205). Thus, self-determination is a paradoxical idea that negates universal interpretations. The first outcome would ultimately affect group(s) of people who are outside the category of “self” and would involve

alteration of territorial jurisdiction. This is exactly what happened when Israel state was established. The Palestinians and other Arabs who are not parts of the Jewish-self were the worst affected group; the independent Jewish nation was established forcing the non-Jewish to forfeit their territory. In the words of Caldwell (2012, 20):

The founding of the State of Israel created a homeland for the estimated 650,000 Jews who had immigrated by 1948, but at the same time it displaced Arabs who had lived in Palestine for generations; this underlying tension contributed to ongoing conflict between Arab countries and Israel.

The second type of outcome may or may not be exerted with the same degree of aggressiveness as the first. A primary difference between the two revolves around the ownership of greater or lesser level of power. Contradictory to the first, the second type mostly does not claim for separate independent state, they simply aspire for greater autonomy. Such movement commonly happens in federalism set-up when the federating governments are dissatisfied with the delegation of autonomy by the central government.

Although self-determination is still an “evolving concept,” yet two things are clear, first, there are external and internal self-determination, the latter applying to groups within existing states (Coulter 2010, 7; Panzironi 2006, 80); second, “self-determination is limited by the principle of territorial integrity and, therefore, must be exercised within the existing states” (Coulter 2010). The UN Resolution 1514 (XV) of 1960 that “the people of every state have the right to self-determination...opened the flood gate of nationalistic movements and campaigns which paid off by the grant of independence to the colonized states and allowing the indigenous people to form and run their own governments and autochthonous administrative machinery in motion as a display of the power of self-determination” (Eze and Okeke 2013, 145). In practice, however, the international law does not permit peoples the right to secede from their host state in the post-decolonization era. Yet, many groups of people across the world continue to strive for the same and some succeeded in securing “*de*

*facto* secession” (ibid, 153). Indeed, despite the supposed limitations and ambiguity of the international law on self-determination, colonial and indigenous peoples still struggle for independence because it is considered the fundamental right of the affected people.

On the theme of self-determination, the UN’s provisions of granting “peoples” of the world with the right to self-determination, is very commonly emphasized and referred. The said provisions, although comprehensively include personal and collective self-determination, internal and external self-determination, it becomes fuzzy when it comes to defining who can avail what type of self-determination. Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) stated: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.” According to Shimray (13 August 2020), all categories of self-determination are embedded in this article for it has sovereignty as its essence. Although the principle of self-determination is enshrined under Article 1 and 55 of the UN Charter, re-adopted further in various other covenants and declarations, yet, the UN has been highly selective, “according this right only to the peoples in recognized colonial territories,” that is, those colonial territories in “Western European colonialism,” and prohibiting it to “such claims from groups within independent states” (Feith and Smith 1995, 144). “The U.N. position thus had been that whereas it is legitimate for peoples subjected to colonial rule to seek self-determination (i.e., the so-called salt water theory or external domination), it is not legitimate for people who form a minority within a national territory to seek self-determination, whether on their own initiative or with help from any outside power, for that would “dismember or impair, totally or in part” the existing state,” explained Knight (1985, 259).

Further, Knight (ibid, 269) predicted that the issue of self-determination that often is caused by the consciousness of “politically motivated group-territorial identity,” would “remain as

a dominant force for decades, perhaps for centuries to come.” Nagas too is a politically motivated group of people with the history of the longest-running struggle for self-determination in Asia and perhaps across the world. Starting the 1950s, their right to exercise self-determination was expressed through engagement in political violence. However, this right has constantly been denied to them by the Indian government on the ground that the Naga issue is “domestic in character,” and therefore, Nagas’ aspiration for external self-determination is “unfounded.” Often read as a very-lofty aspiration but the Nagas are committed for external/ “national self-determination,” which according to Lenin (1947, cited in Knight 1985, 254) is “the political separation of nations from alien national bodies to form their own national states.” The case of the Nagas’ self-determination is not very simple to explain in the sense that the Naga has always constructed their movement on the logic that they were directly under British colonial rule for few decades wherein their territory was administered differently from the rest of the British India territories under the theme “excluded areas” and when the Britishers left, their territory became colonized or occupied by the newly independent India. Thus, under no circumstances, they form a part of British India and neither independent India, and ipso facto, till 1975, their issue was considered the external affairs of India. In the process of “Indo-Naga” conflict scenario, the infamous Shillong Accord was signed in 1975 and post this year, the Indian Government unilaterally ‘transferred’ the Naga issue from external to domestic affairs of India.

In order to maintain and promote international peace and security, the UN laid down the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs of its members, thereby ambiguously disallowing “a people to freely determine their political status in relation to becoming an independent nation” (Eze and Okeke 2013, 145-46). The Indian state in dealing with the Nagas self-determination assertion has been strictly adhering to the Westphalian principle. Preserving the territorial integrity and hegemonic authority became the foremost priority for



the Indian state, whereas, “the urge for freedom from India became the sharpest point of mobilization for the Nagas” (Biswas 2008, 172-73). The Nagas who are “preoccupied” with political freedom often accused the Indian state for maintaining a double-standard on the question of self-determination issue. In their opinion, “India has not allowed any discussion on any international forum on the right to self-determination within its borders. However, India is vociferous in supporting the right to self-determination of those nationalities, which are living within the borders of those States with whom India has political differences” (GPRN 2001, 2). By this, they specifically refer to New Delhi’s support to the Tibetan’s right to self-determination vis-à-vis China’s domination. Most recently, India also supported the self-determination of Baluch in Pakistan. Keeping in mind Tibet as a nation and a people, Jawaharlal Nehru on December 7, 1950 remarked that no country has a right to “talk about its sovereignty or suzerainty over an area outside its own immediate range” and thus no “legal or constitutional arrangements” can substitute the will of the affected people (ibid, 3). On a similar note, Rajendra Prasad also said that “Freedom is the most sacred boon. It has to be protected by all means – violent or non-violent. Therefore, Tibet has to be liberated from the iron grip of China and handed over to the Tibetans” (ibid.). Ironically, these Indian leaders viewed the Naga situation vis-à-vis self-determination movement differently, even though Nagas are a “nation and a people” as much as the Tibetans and the Baluchs are. Arguably, even if the Indian state by adhering to the principle of internal law vis-à-vis self determination contests the rights of Nagas to secede as an indigenous people, the given claim of the Nagas as a colonial people under the same law is legitimate and therefore principally speaking India cannot outrightly reject it as invalid one.

Mueller while discussing Allen Buchanan’s *Remedial Right Only Theory* argued that the theory supports the notion that under exceptional circumstances, “minority groups should be entitled to a right to unilaterally secede” (2012, 184). Citing the works of Dietrich, Moore,

Pavkovic, Buchanan and Norman, Mueller (2012, 286-87) attempted to identify morally legitimate reasons for unilateral secession and came up with three theories: *choice theory* – “any group of individuals, located on a defined territory, has the right to secede and form a new state if this is the expressed desire of the majority of the entity’s members”; *remedial right theory* – “understand secession as a right to resistance and defence against injustices committed against a group by the encompassing state”; and *national self-determination or ascriptive theory* – secession is justified not because of the “will of the majority” but because the entity striving to “secede can be classified as a nation.” The first two were clubbed as “primary right theories based on individual rights’ and the third was classified as theory based on ‘collective rights” (ibid.). Nagas’ story is partly a combination of all the three above-mentioned theories with an addition that theirs is a story advertently boosted by “collective will of the people.”

The struggle for self-determination, is often ignited by desire for recognition of a group of people’s “distinctiveness” as an indigenous people who “want to keep whatever territory that was left to them and to regain land taken from them so as to have an adequate land base to support their existence as distinct peoples”; they want their cultures, languages, social and legal institutions respected and recognized; they want “their right to physical existence and the right to preserve a separate identity” (Opekokew 1982, 7; cited in Knight 1985, 267). All along, Nagas claim that they are not simply an indigenous people but they are also unquestionably a “nation.” In fact, their political violence for self-determination is grounded on these two ideas – indigeneity and nationality – that they are an indigenous people who are trying to establish a nation distinct from that of the Indian nation. They assert that the Nagas qualify for the category of “peoples” as applied by the United Nations for those groups with the right to secede from foreign or colonial occupation.

Perhaps, it would not be an exaggeration to state that the Indian Government was and is aware of the reality that Nagas are a people of distinct ethnic group. In August 1946, Jawaharlal Nehru remarked that Nagas “should have as much freedom and autonomy as possible so that they can live their own lives according to their own customs and desires” (cited in Elwin 1961, 45). The distinctness of the Nagas was also perhaps the reason that prompted the British colonialists to come up with the Crown Colony<sup>8</sup> policy, although it was rejected by the Nagas as their demand was complete sovereignty (Biswas 2008, 166). Nuh (2006, 136) pointed out that this character was perfectly understood and recognized by Nehru, who on August 19, 1946 remarked: “The Tribal Areas (Nagalim) are defined as being those long frontiers of India which are neither part of India nor Burma (Myanmar), or under any foreign power.” Further, in the pre 1975, the Naga issue was handled by the Ministry of External Affairs of India and this coupled with the “nomenclature *Indo-Naga* gave formal recognition to the *international* status of the Naga movement,” argued Manchanda and Bose (2015, 63). In recent years, the GoI headed by Atal Bihari Vajpayee, through the Amsterdam Joint Communiqué of July 11, 2002, officially recognized the “uniqueness of Naga history, culture and political situation.” But the two parties have different perceptions on the meaning of “uniqueness.” Contrary to the GoI’s perception of relegating “the issue of Naga uniqueness as rhetorical and sought to equate it with any other states”; by this, the Nagas meant they are definitely a people with no historical link whatsoever with India and therefore they have the right to self-determination, an arrangement outside the Indian constitutional framework (ibid. 65). With much boldness and virility, Nagas defied the dominance of the Indian state by expressing that they constitute a nation distinct from the Indian nation. They designated their self-determination movement as the movement for sovereign independent nation. However, the Indian state

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<sup>8</sup> In the early 1940s, the British schemed to create a British colony for the ethnic groups like the Nagas who were neither Indian nor Burmese, under Sir Reginald Coupland (Biswas 2008, 166).

would not accept such movement of “secessionism,” and forcefully termed it as a mere “domestic law and order” problem thereby inhibiting any outside interference. Though this tag of mere “law and order” problem was corrected and the Naga self-determination movement is now considered a political problem needing creative political solution.

Naga as a people assert that they have the right to self-determination both as a “colonized people” as well as an “indigenous people.” In other sense, Nagas are not just people; they are colonized-indigenous people. Indeed, based on their indigeneity, the NSCN headed by Isak Chishi Swu and Th. Muivah succeeded in internationalizing the Naga issue and became a member of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) on January 23, 1993. “(The) principle of the equal right of self-determination of all peoples and the need to protect all minorities, is enshrined in the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation Covenant” (Eze and Okeke 2013, 163). Their membership to UNPO was subsequently followed by the Nagas entry into the Working Group of Indigenous Populations (WGIPs) representing its case in its 15<sup>th</sup> session in 1997 (Manchanda and Bose 2015, 63).

Panzironi (2006, 13) opined that the struggle for self-determination, indeed for sovereignty, emerges as one predominant concern of international law only because of the exertion of colonial influence over the indigenous people. Thus, in extreme cases, indigenous people have the right to secede. In this regard, the 1995 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is considered the most comprehensive statement acknowledging that “indigenous peoples are equal to all other peoples” (ibid, 53-55). In 2007, the said declaration was freshly adopted by the UN, crystallizing “a new right for indigenous peoples as distinct peoples within states” and reaffirming the indigenous peoples with “the right of self-determination” contained in common Article 1 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (Coulter 2010, 1). The Working Group while preparing the draft for American Declaration on the Rights of

Indigenous Peoples has defined “indigenous people” as: “they were neither ethnic minorities nor racial minorities nor population... They defined themselves as peoples, or collectives, autonomous entities, with age-old languages, whose organization, shaped by lands, waters, forests, and other natural resources, afforded them a special world view and a unique social structure” (Panzironi 2006, 67). In essence, indigenous people were independent until the intrusion of colonial forces into their lifeworlds and therefore they ought to have the right to secede. The nature of colonial forces may change into domestic or external forces (based on this the fate of the indigenous people are decided whether or not they possess the right to secede), but the indigeneity of indigenous people remains constant. The ontology of indigenous people surpasses that of colonial forces.

Vashum (2000, 6) observed that for the Nagas the concept of self-determination is dynamic in nature. Thus, today, from complete sovereignty they are shifting to shared sovereignty. In 1947, when the British colonialists thought they had satisfactorily wrapped up their colonial imprints in the Indian sub-continent, they failed to tie the loose ends of the Nagas’ assertion for self-determination, the temperament which they were clearly aware of. For instance, Sir Andrew Clow, in early 1947, “informed the Indian Constituent Assembly that the Naga Tribal areas and the Tirap Frontier Tract were both technically and for practical purposes outside British India, for there was no statutory boundary between them and the adjoining districts of the province” (Syiemlieh 1996, 31). On the status of the Naga people, Clow also wrote that ‘the statutory Naga Hills tribal area is completely independent and at liberty to negotiate on its own terms—or bid for time’ (ibid, 30). Sir Robert Neil Reid by pointing out that the Government of India Act, 1935 had not devolve deserved power to the hill people (of which Nagas forms an integral part) and therefore the future of these people cannot be “left to Indian political leaders with neither knowledge, interest nor feelings for these areas” (ibid, 26). Further, of the hill people of Northeast, Reid also said that “they are not Indian in

any sense of the word, neither in origin, nor in language, nor in appearance, nor in habits, nor in outlook, and it is only by historical accident that they have been tacked to an Indian province” (cited in Hussain 1996, 15-16). Reid’s remarks in particular became the foundational shibboleth of the Nagas’ political violence for self-determination.

Undoubtedly, Nagas occupy a contiguously compact area since the distant past. During the British colonial era, the Naga areas were designated and administered as “excluded area.” Elwin (1961, 36) defined “excluded area” as “an enclave or a definite tract of country inhabited by a compact tribal population.” Nagas wanted a future for this area freely determined by themselves. Unfortunately, as pointed out by Syiemlieh (1996, 33), their future came to be decided by New Delhi. And this has been the underlying cause of the conundrum of Nagas’ assertion for self-determination. Indeed, Nagas’ struggle for self-determination is persistently situated on the aspiration to be the “master” of their own destiny. Further, their struggle subsumes a territorial issue. One irrefutable historical fact of the Nagas is that they had signed no agreement of accession or capitulation with the British India, Indian state, or Myanmar for that matter. Thus, the bifurcation and inclusion of their territory under different states is more of an annexation or forceful union through the deployment of locusts of Indian security and armed forces. This is a testament of the Indian state’s hegemonic attitude to subdue the Nagas militarily<sup>9</sup> without even attempting to allay their fears and apprehension of being overwhelmed and dominated by the Indian culture (Nag 1999, 30), and their single aim has been to usurp the Naga territory.

Naga self-determination conundrum with the asserted right to secede cannot be simply wished away as a mere law and order domestic problem of India. Right from the beginning,

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<sup>9</sup> In the words of Nag (1999, 30): “Army was sent to tackle the Naga tribals...(this) indicated that the Indian State was merely interested in absorption of these areas and establishes its authority over them. In doing so, it did not mind resorting to its military and dispensing with democratic values and principles.” A nearly two divisions of the army and thirty-five battalions of Assam Rifles or Armed Police were reported to be in operation in the Naga areas, deploying one Indian armed personnel for every adult Naga male (Shimray 2005, 69).

Nagas have been portraying their movement as otherwise, and have been internationalizing their issue with the hope of inviting United Nations intervention (Nag 1999, 181). For the given reason, they even sent a telegram to the UN highlighting their declaration of August 14, 1947, as Naga Independence Day. Decades later, through gaining access to the UNPO and WGIP and exercising the influence of these international organizations, Isak Chishi Swu – on the political struggle of the Nagas – addressed the UN Commission on Human Rights in 1998 (Manchanda and Bose 2015, 63). Efforts to sensitize and invite UN’s attention on the Naga issue are still ongoing. For instance, on the 74<sup>th</sup> Naga Independence Day commemoration speech, 2020, the Naga Hoho President, H.K. Zhimomi stated that through “God given knowledge,” their leaders declared 14<sup>th</sup> August as the Independence Day in 1947 and they have the right to defend this “God given land.” The Naga Hoho “appeals the United Nations to call upon the Indian and Myanmar governments to resolve the Naga issue.”

The heat generated by Nagas’ political violence for self-determination scalded not just the Nagas but also the Indian government, prompting then Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao to opt for a political solution. The following section deals with the 1997 ceasefire agreement between the Indian government and the NSCN, which indeed was considered the outcome of the political initiative of Rao.

### **Impact of the 1997 “Indo-Naga” ceasefire agreement**

On July 25, 1997, in search for peace and normalcy in Nagalim, the Central Government of India and the NSCN signed the second ceasefire agreement in the history of Naga political movement. The said agreement became effected from August 1, 1997 and thence on, agreeing to stop rampant fighting that has spread all over Nagalim. Regarding the territorial implementation of this ceasefire agreement, the then Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, on June 14, 2001, stated: “Wherever there is fighting, there is ceasefire. Ceasefire

is everywhere” (Muivah 2020). Such concept of “ceasefire without territorial limit”; however, was revoked because of strong opposition from the neighbouring Meitei community of Manipur state.

Not to be read as eulogizing NSCN but this organization is perhaps the strongest, the most popular and the most organized political group not only in the northeast but even in the entire Indian sub-continent. In fact, this was also the group reached out by P. V. Narasimha for political dialogues, stating: “We have invited you for political talks because the people are with you the issue is with you and you have proved yourselves” (ibid.). A sizeable population of their personnel even works internationally mostly to harness international support. Garnering international support, indeed, seems to form the topmost “foreign policy” of the NSCN. Indeed, their *Alee Command* focuses on “forging friendship with other international ‘revolutionary groups’ or ethnic nationalist movements” (Shimray 2005, 285). Since long NSCN has been insisting on involving a Dutch non-governmental organization called Kreddha (meaning “to place trust”) as a third party facilitator. This organization is headed by Michael C. Van Walt Praag, former General Secretary of Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO). Kreddha’s link with the NSCN and its support for the Naga right to “self-determination” is well-known (Singh 2007, 823). Recently, on August, 2020, UNPO passed a “resolution supporting a peaceful solution to the Indo-Naga issue which is just, long-lasting, honourable and acceptable to both the sides” (Jaiswal 7 August 2020). It also urged the international community to “appeal to India to fulfill its commitments in the Framework Agreement on the Indo-Naga issue; to repeal acts such as the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act and the Disturbed Area Act which overly militarize the situation facing the Naga people” (ibid.). Today, they have as many as “42 international bodies” supporting their cause, stated Signe Leth, Senior Advisor of Women and Land Rights, Asia. Galina Angarova, representative of Buriat indigenous people of



Russia on her speech commemorating the 74<sup>th</sup> Naga Independence Day, August 14, 2020, also shared that Nagas serve as an “inspiration to the indigenous peoples in their movement for self-determination.” Secretary General of Asia Indigenous People’s Pact (AIPP), Gam Shimray also stated that Naga issue “represents a cry for justice.” The Nagas’ struggle serves as the “biggest contribution to South Asian history,” stated Vijayan MJ, General Secretary, Pakistan-India Peoples’ Forum for Peace and Democracy (PIFPD). Some other prominent international bodies supporting the ongoing ‘Indo-Naga’ peace process are – International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), Baptist World Alliance (BWA), KWIA (Flemish Supporting Group for Indigenous Affairs), Justice and Peace Centre, South Boston, International Human Rights Association of American Minorities (IHRAAM), Asian Cultural Forum on Development (ACFOD), Minority Right Group (MRG), Naga Vigil Group (London), Society for Threatened Peoples, etc. (Shimray 2005, 285-92).

NSCN could draw wide international support because it has strong support base from a sizeable Naga hoi polloi. No institution could survive without this support because it empowers the institution and “they petrify and decay as soon as the living power of the peoples ceases to uphold them,” stated Arendt (1969, 40). Continually emphasizing that “sovereignty lies with the people,” the organization has been reiterating the point that their movement is a people’s movement. Despite the profession of such lofty goal, the organization seems to be indifferent of the fact that unending ceasefires and political negotiations has created a situation where “internal cohesion of the Naga nationalist movement” is being affected, largely contributing to “fragmentation and factional fighting” (Kolas 2011, 784).

Undoubtedly, Nagas welcomed and supported the ceasefire agreement so as to sigh a relief from violent “Indo-Naga” conflict. But, in the post ceasefire period, subsequent factional fighting and rampant corruption within the “underground” organizations continue to haunt

the peace gravitating Naga people and this compelled them to estrange themselves from the so called “Naga national movement.” In their eyes, many leaders of this movement have become “un-disciplined” and “untrustworthy,” not anymore engaging themselves in national cause but in amassing personal wealth. The attenuation of public support to the movement is still in the downtrend even in the post Framework Agreement period. Wouters (2018, 107) illustrated that the post 1997 ceasefire period has attracted many pseudo-nationalists who joined the Naga political movement for accumulating “personal rewards” and thus this category will have “low-commitment” to the “future political rewards.” In short, the uptrend in the growth of pseudo-nationalists caused the downtrend in public sympathy.

Each time, a ceasefire agreement was signed between the Indian government and the Nagas, it seems to heighten internal divisions among the Nagas, managed to distance a sizeable number of the Naga population from their “national movement” and give time to the Indian government to come up with skillful strategies not just to practice delay tactics but also to attenuate the spirit of “nationalism” from the Nagas. This is so because ceasefire is a “part of the dynamics of conflict” and not just a simple strategy “to end violence and allow more substantive negotiations to begin,” stated Kolas (2011, 781). The 1997 ceasefire agreement kept on extending for certain specified period till 2007 when an “indefinite ceasefire” agreement was signed between the Indian Government and the NSCN. Kolas analyzed that such agreement has however attenuated the leveraging power of the NSCN. In his words: “With the signing of an indefinite ceasefire in 2007 the key parties to negotiations, NSCN-IM and the government, have both lost an incentive to actively pursue a political settlement. Having given up all operations against security forces, NSCN-IM leaders have also lost some of their leverage in the negotiations” (ibid, 782). He further stated that it has created a

situation in Nagalim where “the benefits of never-ending negotiations and perpetual ceasefires seem to outweigh the potential advantages of a settlement by treaty” (ibid.).

With the ceasefire, the age old position of the Indian government as the “common enemy” of the Nagas occupied a backstage and serious issue of internal divisions, hatred and killings took the stage, indicating that their sense of patriotism surged by the spirit of nationalism is apparently waning. According to the comments of various Naga movement commentators, public’s support to the movement seems to have significantly waned in the post 1997 ceasefire period. After the 1997 ceasefire agreement, there has been a gradual decrease in the fatalities of Indian security forces but an up-trend of fatalities of the Naga “undergrounds” is visible. Till 2002, as per the database of the Institute of Conflict Management, the death caused by “Indo-Naga” conflict easily crosses 100 per year and post this year, the casualties has been less than 100 (Singh 2007, 816 & 821). In short, “Indo-Naga” conflict fatality rate is decreasing and being replaced by factionalism related fatalities. Factionalism indeed has set the curtain of a political apocalypse for the Nagas. Today, this has caused “more wars” among the Naga “than the war with Indian state under the banner of Nagas’ cry for sovereignty,” stated the Naga Hoho (cited in Lotha 2016, 51-52).

Initially, the ceasefire agreement to stop violent conflict seemed to promise lasting peace to the Nagas. In the words of Chakravarty (19 July 2020), “For over two decades, this ceasefire had been the only guarantee of peace. It was an imperfect, unquiet peace but it paved the way for political dialogue.” However, the cessation of gunfights apparently has brought about only a semblance of peace. The real sense of peace, i.e., ending organized violence of any measure, promotion of harmony and tranquility accompanied by guaranteed justice, “enjoyment of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms” that would lead to cooperation, and development and solidarity in the society has so far not been taken place in

the context of the Nagas. Realization of true and lasting peace has been hampered by various negative forces, as shall be discussed in Chapter IV. All these forces, in the post-ceasefire period have become proactive, creating a perilous atmosphere. On top of this, ineffectiveness of the 1997 ceasefire agreement in providing a promising result even after more than 24 years of political negotiation has really tested the patience and confidence the Naga populace has with the NSCN.

Apparently, the cessation of violence has also rendered NSCN – the organization that earned fame and respect of other insurgent groups as the most “organized and fierce” group – weak and lack with strategy to retaliate to the violence of Indian Army. In this period of ceasefire, there have been many instances of violent harassment and killings of not just the NSCN cadres but also their families. Relatedly, Maj Gen Retd, Ashok Mehta (1 August 2020) remarked that “using the NIA or other coercive measures against an old warhorse (Th. Muivah) and his group will not work.” Perhaps, for the ongoing political negotiation’s sake, the NSCN has not retaliated even once. The silence, however, has been interpreted as the lack of power, compelling even some NSCN officers to speak out loud against their own leaders. This silence or inaction is also slowly causing a rift between the Civil Wing and the Army Wing of the NSCN, commented one political analyst. One can observe a “silent crack” in this so called robust organization. A lot of water has flowed under the bridge of the Naga political movement but all along the tide of this movement appears to be under the control of the Indian Government. There have been incessant hostile activities from the Indian armed forces and such activities were less frequent at the initial stage of the ceasefire period but steadily increased within these few years. Such hostile schemes of the Indian Government continue cultivating conflict within the NSCN. Indeed, the ceasefire agreement appears a mere moratorium to pulverize the morale of the Naga nationalists. It can thus be considered a tactic of attrition.

Contemporary ceasefire has also led to the situation of corruption in Nagalim by colluding between “overground” and “underground” leaders. In the words of Kolas (2011, 791): “The license offered to militants entering a ceasefire makes it easier for them to forge alliances with other ‘overground’ actors and stakeholders, including politicians, civil servants, and law enforcement agencies. This creates conditions for systematic collusion between legitimate political elites and militant actors.” Simultaneously with the overground leaders, many “underground” leaders have turned amassment of individual wealth as their new profession. “They are living as though they have achieved independence,” stated one respondent. For the love and lust of money, taking bribe by individual officials but in the name of an organization, has become a routine practice. Accepting bribe has numbed their sensibility and many judgments rendered by them are thus twisted. In reality, for many commoners, corruption of the “underground” officials is one of the topmost reasons for their alienation from the “collective” movement. Fed up with corrupt practices, many respondents opinionated that abrogation of the ongoing ceasefire, would perhaps, serve better not only for the entire Naga populace but also for the underground cadres themselves because the 1997 ceasefire agreement has turned many man and woman of integrity in the pre-ceasefire period into corrupted persons. As per one narration, in one of the closed meeting among few officials of the NSCN along with its General Secretary Th. Muivah, the latter hinting on the accrument of wealth by his officials, sarcastically advised one official present at the meeting to take off bricks from his house and fight with it against the Indian Army in case of abrogation of the ceasefire agreement.

Arendt (1969, 65) pointed out that “hypocrisy (is) the vice of all vices.” Today, Naga people are choked by the miasma of corruption, audaciously and hypocritically carried out in the name of their political cause, approved and supported fervently by majority Nagas at one point of time. The longitudinal growth of corruption had heightened factionalism and

tribalism and other vices, which all together have indeed hampered the broader Naga political movement for independence from moving forward. Wouters (2018, 86) argues that the 1997 ceasefire agreement marked not only the downfall of the Naga political movement but also the “continuation of conflict and contestation by other forms and means.”

Indeed, in the post-ceasefire period, social injustices have been intensified. For instance, in the name of “Naga nationalism” the Naga political groups have been collecting “taxes” from the common people, engaged in extortion, eliminated their opponents, and have been flexing muscle power mostly to achieve their vested interests. Many Nagas see such activities as social injustice meted out against them by their own people. The term “taxation” in the Naga context leans closer towards “extortion,” and this is one primary factor that allowed R.N. Ravi, the Governor of Nagaland state to audaciously used derogatory terms like “armed gangs” while referring to Naga political groups. This statement has not only “tainted” the image of Ravi as the interlocutor of the Indian Government on the Naga peace process, it also compelled the NSCN to demand for his replacement. It may be mentioned that Action Committee against Unabated Taxation (ACAUT) was also formed to address the issue of “unabated taxation.” Because of “illegal taxation” and other law and order problems in the Naga Hills, the Naga political groups have now experienced a reduced popularity in the present context. Based on the data collected from the field, about 70% of the total public respondents opine that they no longer are sympathetic to the Naga political groups as they were in the pre-ceasefire period.

The spirit of Naga nationalism was strongly felt after its consciousness in the entire Naga inhabited territories and this spirit was universally moved forward in the initial decades of the Naga national movement. Though uneasy, the movement was possible because there was some sort of balancing between tribalistic feeling and nationalism. But post 1997 ceasefire period, factionalism apparently has undone this balancing. Thus, if the Nagas

sought for true peace, re-balancing of such feelings must return and they must work for it though at the time of this study, the chances for success appear slim.

The 1997 ceasefire agreement has generated much negative outcomes but it also had led to some important developments. Subir Bhaumik (2020), journalist, author and Editorial Director of the *Eastern Link*, believes that the 1997 ceasefire, as a matter of fact, created “a course correctional opportunity for the Indian state to slowly bring itself back to the path of an authentic federation.” Indeed, Naga issue is no longer considered the law and order issue of India but a “political issue,” meaning, “Solution cannot be sought basing on the Indian Constitution,” explained Muivah (2013). Their history is different from the rest of the other people in India and ipso facto “unique” because Nagas “never decided” to become a part of the Indian Union when it was constitutionally formed in 1950. The uniqueness of Naga history was apparently recognized by Indian Prime Ministers like P.V. Narasimha Rao, H. D. Deve Gowda, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh who admitted: “We have understood the fact that your history is unique and therefore, we have to seek solution basing on the uniqueness of Naga history”(Muivah 2013). With a goal set to find “political solution,” the already signed ceasefire agreement was based on three conditions: firstly, the peace parley will be without condition; secondly, it will be at the highest prime ministerial level; and thirdly, the talk will be held outside India, in third countries<sup>10</sup>. Kraibo Chawang (2018) narrated that by recognizing the unique history and situation of the Nagas, the Indian Government also recognized that they are two separate entities and base upon this recognition, military solution is ruled out.

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<sup>10</sup> The ceasefire conditions, “Indo-Naga” peace talks will be held outside India and in any third countries was later on changed when Isak Chishi Swu and Thuingaleng Muivah accepted India’s invitation for peace talk in India. Apparently, in order to hasten the peace process, the invitation was accepted. But the unending nature of the peace process made the NSCN leadership regret the decision. V.S. Atem in a personal interview in 2018 stated: “With that invitation, the Indian government seems to have deceived us, indicating that they have no shortage of excuses. They are dragging on the issue under many pretexts. But for how long will Nagas be patient? Ceasefire is not the end, if it cannot solve the problem, then we will not hesitate to go back to the jungle and take up arms and fight again.”

### **The cost of Naga political violence**

The price of Naga political violence has been heavy. It indeed has taken a heavy toll particularly on the lives of the Nagas. It has destroyed not just human life and property but also handicapped the overall health of the Naga society, the impact of which is still borne even by the 21<sup>st</sup> century Nagas. Unfortunately, till date, no proper documentation of the cost of Naga political violence is available in the public domain. Despite grave situation created, resulting to innumerable deaths and destruction, the Naga political violence is yet to find a place in the assessment of the cost of violent conflicts by the UPSALLA, SIPRI, SATP, IDSA and other national, international or individual databases. In their studies, these databases often clubbed all the Northeastern states together. For instance, in the study conducted by Monty G. Marshall for *Center for Systemic Peace* (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall 2011, 68) on the effect of violent conflict particularly on human lives, in India, the ethnic war particularly the “Assam separatists” war that started in 1952 had resulted to 25,000 deaths. It must be pointed out that during this period, when we say Assam we were referring to present day Northeast India which at present comprised of eight states out of which Nagaland was the first state created in 1963 as a full-fledged state of the Indian Union. And at that time, the Nagas were the only ethnic group of people fighting against the Indian state for political self-determination in the so-called “Assam province.” Reportedly, there is a huge gap with regard to the cost of Naga political violence, especially the cost when calculated in terms of the lost of human live alone. The Nagas recorded it to some 200,000 to 300,000 whereas from the Indian side, 25,000 to 30,000, designating that there is no concrete data on Naga political violence induced deaths and destruction to date. The number of those Nagas who have lost their life since 1956 is approximated to 100,000 as per the record of the Human Rights Expert United Nations Liaison International Committee for Indigenous Peoples of the America (Nyberg 2021, 57:18).



According to the Naga nationalists, the above statistics of the Indian side is highly understated. And the understatement was to “conceal their act of gross human rights violation of the Nagas.” Take the Oinam incident<sup>11</sup>, for instance, narrated Ningkhan Shimray, the C-in-C of the NSCN. There is not a single record on the Indian side regarding the killings, sexual molestation, torture, etc. related to this incident. On separate occasions, many Naga villages were burnt down several times. Indeed, during the heydays of the NNC in the Naga movement, in Zunheboto district alone, there were about 40,000 death and all these are not in the record of the Indian state, stated Shimray. The Indian state records only those who were arrested and those casualties of the Indian jawans who were killed by the guerilla ambush of the Naga insurgents. Their record is mostly based on “official encounter”; deliberately ignoring the cost of life particularly of the Naga civilians who were victims of “fake encounters” and who succumbed to the torture and harassment of the Indian Army. For instances, Shimray’s elder brother, Atai Shimray, a PhD in Political Science from North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU) and author of the book “Let Freedom Ring: Story of Naga Nationalism,” was tortured by the Indian Army, mistaking him for his younger brother. He succumbed to the injury and later died. There are enormous similar such incidents. According to the testimony of Lathong Kemp (2021, 4:45), one of the four women from Sendenyu village, Rengma region, who wove the first Naga National Flag, when news reached the Indian Army that A.Z. Phizo had stayed at her father’s house, who happened to be the village’s chieftain, her father Kemsheri was captured and tortured. Consequently, he did not live long and died shortly after that. Further, Shimray recounted

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<sup>11</sup> Oinam village is a Poumai Naga village in Senapati district of the Northeastern state of Manipur. In 1987, the Assam Rifles launched the *Operation Bluebird* as retaliation against the attack of the NSCN on the Assam Rifles post situated at this village. This counter-insurgency operation lasted for three months, involving ‘large-scale human rights violation, including forcing two pregnant women to give birth to their babies in full view of the Jawans; death due to torture or starvation of 27 persons including several babies; rape and sexual abuse of several women, including minors; burning and dismantling of more than 100 homes; dismantling of schools and churches; forced labour on a large scale,’ stated Nandita Haksar, a lawyer and a human rights activist. The Naga People’s Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) in October 1987 filed a case before the Guahati High Court but the case is still pending (Nandita Haksar, *Manipur Killings, 1987: Charges against Assam Rifles* disposed of – though evidence has gone missing, July 16, 2019, Scroll-in, accessed on 22/01/2021).

that many were killed in “concentration camps” but there is no record of “concentration camps” in the Indian Army data.

The after-effects, following the signing of the 1975 Shillong Accord, when the Naga nationalists became clearly divided into “Accordists” and “Non-Accordists,” was that the former “under the instigation of the Indian government was sent to terminate Uncle Muivah and Lt. Chairman Isak Chishi Swu,” because they had vehemently opposed the Accord, narrated another Naga Student Federation leader. The coup-de-tat staged by the accordists on 30<sup>th</sup> August 1978, “in connivance with the Assam Rifles” also killed many Non-Accordists. Furthermore, a combined force of the Accordists-Indian-Burmese Army attacked the Non-Accordists NSCN at Langnok, situated at Tuensang Area in Eastern Nagaland, on September 27, 1980, that managed to kill many Non-Accordists including Khasui Longvah (Chaplee Kilonser of the NSCN), Commander-in-Chief, GSO and other high ranking Naga Army officers. In this incident, which became commemorated as the *Naga National Agony Day* every year by the NSCN, reportedly, the number of death of the Tangkhuls alone were around 200, Semas around 200 – 300.

The cost of human life of the Naga political violence is indeed “uncountable” if calculated in terms of those who went missing because of their support for the Naga political cause and those families who were silently terminated. It may be recounted that every Naga has a family or a kith or kin directly involved in the cause. Does the Indian state have the record of Miss Rose or Miss Luingamla, asked another respondent? “It will not have recorded because it is a shame for them.” Rose Ningshen from Kumram village, Ukhrul District in Manipur, committed suicide two days after she was allegedly raped by Border Security Force (BSF) officers on March 4, 1974. The BSF had visited the village in search of the Naga insurgents and to this day, justice to Rose’s family is still awaited. In a separate incident, Luingamla Muinao of Ngainga village, Ukhrul District, Manipur, “was killed on

January 24, 1986 inside her home by the Indian paramilitary personnel” while carrying out “routine combing operation on the eve of the Indian Republic Day.” “On 24<sup>th</sup> Jan., 1986, late Miss Luingamla was weaving all alone. Capt. Mandhir Singh, the then Phungyar Commander of Ngainga, accompanied by Lieut. Sanjiv Dubey, Mahar Regt. Post Commander of Ngainga, attempted to molest and violate her maiden chastity. As she resisted with all her might and valour Capt. Mandhir Singh pulled out his pistol and shot her in cold blood,” (Naga By Blood 2015).

When the Indian record on the cost of life was limited to 25,000 to 30,000, “they were counting only the death of the Indian Army. They were not counting the death in our side” (Shimray 2018). To justify this statement, a respondent narrated an ugly incident that took place in the Naga Hills in 1960. On the 13<sup>th</sup> Naga Independence day, 14<sup>th</sup> August 1960, the Assam Rifle out-posts at Thuda (Phor village) in Pochury area, Nagaland was attacked by the Naga Army. In retaliation this area was attacked by the Indian Army for weeks. According to the record of the Naga Army, at least minimum 200 Indian Army were killed but the retaliation of the Indian Army also claimed the lives of many Nagas, especially the inhabitants of Pochury area. This was a fight involving utilization of sophisticated weapons by both the sides. Jet fighters and Dakota plane were used by the Indian state and Naga Army already had a “2 inch mortar rocket from China,” implying that the Nagas were also well equipped. This fight which Gavin Young, a British journalist, termed it as “Indo-Naga War” writing that there is an “unknown war” going on in Nagaland, was not recorded by the Indian state, allegedly, the reason being “too shameful to admit their lost and therefore, hushed up the whole incident by saying that there had been just 2 to 3 casualties,” narrated one NSCN leader. This was the incident that received fame at least in the Naga parlance when the Indian Dakota aircraft – a military transport aircraft – that was trying to “drop relief materials and ammunitions to the besieged Indian Army post was shot down by the

Naga Army on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the siege and crash landed at Zathsii, a paddy field of Meluri village” (Pochury Hoho Kohima 5 September 2011). The Naga Army captured all the 9 airmen including Flt. Lt. A. S. Singh and this invited a heavy Indian Army operation in Pochury area. Apparently, the mercy shown to the captured Indian airmen was not reciprocated by the Indian side in that many captured Naga Army were all killed. “All the captured airmen were later released through the Red Cross, unharmed and un-tortured” but the rage of the Indian Army rained down on the people inhabiting this area. According to the report of the Pochury Hoho Kohima, several villagers from various villages in this area were tortured and beaten to death, one was even “buried alive after severe beating,” many were decapitated, villages were burnt down and the survivors, mostly women and children were stranded in the deep jungle for “two and half years.” Today, the people of Pochury observed 6<sup>th</sup> September as the “*Black Day*” in memory of all those who had suffered and laid down their lives for the greater glory and freedom of the Nagas’ (ibid.). The stranded Pochury people were rescued by the Naga Army and brought to their camp at Sathi in Burma (Myanmar) and according to the report of Gavin Young, the whole stranded population were reduced to just ‘thirty people’ (ibid.). This “unknown war” in Nagaland remains classified information till Gavin Young disclosed to the world the war when he published the picture of the shot down Indian Aircraft Dakota DC-3, HJ233 with a team of Naga Army guarding it (Naga By Blood 2017). Shortly, after this publication, the 1964 “Indo-Naga” ceasefire agreement was signed. The “bloody war” that started in Phor village and which eventually spread to the whole Pochury area remains hidden from the world because “it was a hidden war,” recounted the C-in-C of NSCN. He further stated that the cost of life of the Naga political violence as recorded by the Indian side is “highly understated” but on the Nagas’ part, it is not “overstated.” According to his knowledge, the casualty of the Tangkhul tribe alone is roughly about 10,000. What about the Sumis,

Angamis and other tribes? It may be mentioned that the term “Naga” houses more than 60 tribes and almost every Naga has family, friends and relatives involved in the movement.

### **Conclusion**

Nagas’ struggle for self-determination is persistently situated on the aspiration to be the “master” of their own destiny. In this aspiration, freedom is the shibboleth. Indeed, how to attain freedom that would be desirable to all sections of the Naga society has been a complex issue that has exhausted various efforts. Over time, the question as to what do the Nagas really meant by freedom has also arisen. The given reality across the globe is that no organization, state, or country, is completely free in a true sense of the term. Today, Nagas’ perspective of freedom is facing a paradigm shift; earlier they were looking for freedom within the concept of complete sovereignty but in the post 2015 Framework Agreement, within the concept of “shared-sovereignty.” They are now critically interrogating whether their freedom lies with their determined complete sovereignty stance or the newly deliberated shared sovereignty stance.

Until the signing of the Framework Agreement on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August in 2015, by self-determination, Nagas meant complete sovereignty or freedom. Their quest for sovereignty is grounded on their argument that they form a distinct nation, a distinct group of people, inhabiting a compact territory and thus aspiring to establish an independent state. Reckoning complete sovereignty as their inalienable right, Nagas determinedly struggle for the restoration and recognition of their freedom and for which thousands of lives have been willfully sacrificed with the sanguine hope that the future Naga generations would get to live free. It appears that their cause is strongly grounded on the rationale that Nagas are not “commodities to be transferred and inherited among the powerful by virtue of their physical strengths” (Vashum 2000, 7).

The succeeding chapter will focus on the signed 2015 Framework Agreement (FA).

## Chapter III

### Deconstructing the 2015 Framework Agreement (FA)

The Naga political violence elicited numerous overt and covert negative responses from the Central Government, even compelling it to engage in “chicanery politics” to win over the Nagas. In the process, the government also managed to draw deep cleavage within the Nagas themselves. Some influential Naga leaders who initially started their political career by fighting for the Naga people’s rights but later transformed themselves into fighting against the rights they once fought for, became potent weapon of the Union Government. These transformed Naga leaders became determined to get rid of the so called “Naga nationalist” or “Naga freedom fighter.” For instance, S.C. Jamir, reportedly by making use of the power vested to him as the Chief Minister of Nagaland state, determinedly strategized and acted to “eliminate” the NSCN through his “Peace Offensive Operation” (UT Desk 5 January 2021). Allegedly, for this operation, the centre granted him “Rs. 103 crores” and also provided him with sophisticated weapon, namely, the Ak-47, apparently “meant for modernization of Nagaland state police force,” but 100 of which was handed to the NSCN-K for materializing his operation, asserted the Tenyemi National Workers Forum (ibid.). However, aside the negative responses, the Indian Government have also undertaken the peaceful course of accord making, the most recent of such course being the 2015 Framework Agreement (hereinafter FA).

In the Indian sub-continent, of all the existing cases of political violence, the Naga issue perhaps is the only one that has been officially negotiated at the Prime Minister level, “without pre-condition(s)” and initially “outside India in a third country.” And ipso facto, several rounds of peaceful political negotiation were held in different cities around the world including Paris (France), New York (USA), The Hague (Netherlands), Bangkok and Chiangmai (Thailand), Zurich and Geneva (Switzerland), Osaka (Japan), Kuala-Lumpur

(Malaysia), Vienna (Austria), and Milan (Italy) with several Indian Prime Ministers including P.V. Narasimha Rao, Deve Gowda, A.B. Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh. The recent FA signed on August 3, 2015, could be considered the fruit of such political negotiations. In the year 2010, the Government of India (hereinafter GoI) through its interlocutor R.S. Pandey officially proposed the principle of “shared-sovereignty” to act as the base for future peace negotiations. Th. Muivah, the *Ato Kilonser* (Prime Minister) of the Government of the People’s Republic of Nagalim (GPRN) and also the chief interlocutor of the NSCN stated that the FA indeed was the “subsequent outcome” of such move of the Indian Government.

Allegedly, the FA was an agreement signed by two separate entities or in what Das (2018, 40) termed as on the basis of the “spirit of equality.” Through this agreement, the GoI recognizes two things: “inclusive peaceful coexistence of the two entities sharing sovereign power,” and “sovereignty of the Nagas,” stated Muivah (2020). Scholarship on Naga political violence – popularly referred to as “the mother of all insurgency movements” in Northeast India, having well developed connection with several national and international insurgent groups and their cause well-spread internationally – indicates that it revolves around Nagas’ aspiration for freedom and the demand for recognition and acknowledgment of the same from the Indian Government. In this movement, the “age-old truism” of insurgencies and counterinsurgencies as discoursed by Perry and Gordon (2008, 1-6), holds valid, that is, “the insurgents and the government are competing for the loyalty of the people; ...if the insurgents are cut off from support of the people, the insurgency will ultimately collapse; and if the insurgents obtain sanctuary and support from nearby nations the challenge of counterinsurgency is greatly increased.”

Freedom/ independence or free/ independent living, has been the spirit of the Nagas and over time the desire for restoration of this spirit has become their political struggle that has

triggered, in the usage of Das (2007), the “longest running” insurgency movement perhaps in the entire world. Nagas maintained that their aspiration for freedom did not begin with the independence of the Indian sub-continent in 1947, its story dated far back to 1879-80 when “the Nagas disastrously fought against the British a war of independence, inspired by the phantom of freedom” (Yonuo 1948: xii). In a much advanced narration, Lotha (2016, 1) likened the “hornbill spirit” to that of the “spirit of Naga nationalism”<sup>12</sup>, and wrote that for the Nagas, the hornbill spirit “inspired freedom and the prospect of seeing the world from a different, higher vantage point.” “For the Naga (people), the desire of freedom and self-rule was intrinsic to their tribal ethos,” asserted Fernandes and Borgohain (2017, 13-14). And this free-spirited nature was also the guiding force in running their ancient “village-states” which many scholars likened it to those of the “Greek city-states” and thus evidenced a “fairly well-developed culture” of the Naga people, the kind of culture where “democracy in its purest form existed’ (Yonuo 1974, x, 167). A.Z. Phizo in 1966 in one of his private letters stated: “The function of democracy (pure democracy) in Nagaland is not by the rule of majority but it is by consent of the whole” (cited in Means and Means 1966, 295). Indeed, the free-spirited nature was the main source behind the invention of Naga nation identity that subsequently took a dogmatic approach on their right to self-determination which directly contradicted with another dogma – New Delhi’s security and integrationist logic. In fact, till today, there has been a lack of resources to reconcile the two starkly parallel dogmas – the Nagas sticking to complete independence from the Union of India and New Delhi offering maximum autonomy short of complete independence. Apparently, New Delhi believes they could uphold the Nagas’ aspiration and at the same time, fit the Naga dogma into their own dogma. Though not free from the eye of skeptics about the chances of

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<sup>12</sup> By Naga nationalism, Lotha explained “the Naga people’s affirmation of itself as a distinct nation with its own unique history, culture and ethnicity that lives both inside and outside the designated geopolitical borders of India” (2016, 1-2).



the FA becoming an honourable solution, it at least focuses to work on these dogmatic differences and resolve the protracted Naga political violence.

In his speech on the 74<sup>th</sup> Naga Independence Day on 14 August 2020, Th. Muivah maintained that his team has been negotiating with the Indian Government “from the position of (their) unique history. The Indian negotiators acknowledged that the Nagas have the history of sovereign independence. They are also well informed of the historical fact that the Nagas have neither been a party to the Union of India nor to that of Burma.” Ngaihte (2014, 27) expressed that the idea of recognition of the uniqueness of Naga history and situation “gives way to the argument that innovative, out-of-the-ordinary or out-of-the-Constitution solutions may have to be worked out to redress the crisis. Unique problems will invariably require unique solutions.” What is so unique about Naga history is that it is based on the ideology of being “colonial free, i.e., free from British and Indian history,” argued Lotha (2016, 47). In the words of Das (2018, 40): “Unlike past treaties, the framework-agreement acknowledges the unique history and culture of the Nagas and promise to restore pride and prestige of the Nagas within a confederacy to be characterized by the shared sovereignty.” It not only re-acknowledges the uniqueness of Naga history, culture and political situation, but also acknowledges that the “Indo-Naga” relationship is that of a “relationship of equals” (Lotha 2016, 291). Simply put, it lays the foundation for all future negotiations toward resolving the Naga political violence.

Analyses on the much celebrated agreement however resulted that there could be no fixed interpretation of the agreement; meaning, new interpretations could be created each time in the act of reading this agreement. This, perhaps, is particularly because the agreement is still only a skeletal framework upon which further political negotiation for resolution of the “Indo-Naga” conundrum would be based. Therefore, the deconstruction of the agreement in this study should not be considered fixed as well.

## **Principles of the Framework Agreement**

The title itself suggested that the agreement should be considered purely as a frame or a guideline on which base an amiable and honourable resolution of the long drawn “Indo-Naga” political conflict would be put together. The NSCN stated that the FA forms “the basis for final settlement of Naga issue” (Ambrocia 11 August 2020). It is the “frame for constructing future Naga-India relations,” stated Lotha (2016, 291). In fact, the FA ended with this sentence: “The two sides agreed that within this framework agreement, details and execution plan will be worked out and implemented shortly.” Subsequently, the primary focus has been on the issues of “shared sovereignty, a common Naga identity, merging all the Naga inhabited areas, and a Pan-Naga body embodying the unique Naga history,” argued Fernandes and Borgohain (2017, 69).

The Naga issue has been occupying a record high on the centre’s list of security priorities. The FA, therefore, also read: “While the GoI, in expression of the understanding, recognized the unique history and position of the Nagas, the NSCN understood and appreciated the intricacies of the Indian system. With such understanding and with due appreciation of the imperatives of the contemporary realities and regard for future vision, both sides have agreed to reach an agreement that will end the violent confrontation once and for all and will usher in comprehensive progress in consonance with the genius of the Naga people.”

According to the analysis of Lotha (2016, 291), “the Agreement contains four guiding principles: 1. Nagas will honor Indian Constitution, 2. India recognizes the unique Naga history and culture and respects Naga people’s aspiration, 3. Relationship of equals and thus shared sovereignty, 4. No physical integration of Naga areas at this point in time; a proposed creation of a Pan-Naga Hoho.” Anthony Shimray (2018), the C-in-C of NSCN contradicted Lotha on his fourth principle by stating his own principles of the agreement:

“(i) the Government of India recognizes the uniqueness of Naga history and political situation; (ii) that their struggle for independence is legitimate; (iii) that the aspiration of the Nagas for integration, that is, to exist under one administrative unit, is not just an aspiration but a legitimate right of the Nagas; and (iv) that sovereignty lies with the Naga people.” The meaning of the last principle, explained Shimray (*ibid.*), is that the Naga movement is not confined to the state of Nagaland alone, or for that matter to the Nagas in India alone, rather, it also covers the Nagas in Myanmar. In other words, “sovereignty lies with the people and not with the land. The Nagas are sovereign wherever they are and this has been recognized by the GoI,” stated Shimray. These four principles would thus act as the blueprint upon which final solution would be drawn from. Through this agreement, for the first time in a long time, the Indian Government allegedly accepted that there cannot be a final solution if these four principles are ignored. He, however, added that it is not simply enough to recognize the above-mentioned points; the GoI must also implement the recognition.

In the FA, “shared-sovereignty” and its concept was indeed the focus of attention but also of debate. This was a newly ventured concept particularly for the Nagas that forms the essence of the principles of the agreement. According to Naga Studies Group (cited in Das 2018, 43), the shared-sovereignty model consists of the following points: “(i) An Independent Constitution, with defined co-federal relationship with India; (ii) Defense – A joint defense for the security of both countries. A ‘no-war’ policy would be declared in Nagalim territory. India would take the lead in handling the External Affairs matters that do not directly affect the Nagas; (iii) Police and Judicial matters – the creation of local police and judicial system; (iv) Immigration – The Restricted Area Permit would be repealed so that Nagas and Indians can freely travel between both nations and the world; (v) Currency – use of the Indian currency; (vi) Trade – A joint Economic Development Council of India and Nagalim would

be formed to promote trade, investment and joint ventures; (vii) Natural Resources – Nagas will own completely; (viii) Separate Flag; (ix) Permanent UN Representative; and (x) Joint Foreign Affairs.”

### **Naga people’s confidence on the Framework Agreement**

When the “Indo-Naga” FA was inked, many Nagas celebrated, some could not even believe what they saw in the television that shows the signing of the agreement and with a controlled happy emotion asked: “could this be real?” They so much wanted this agreement to be real and more importantly, they wish for it to withstand any sabotaging force. Hopefully, a happy ending is near for the Nagas, they declared. A young Rongmei local pastor, for instance, exhorted his young church members and families not to be discouraged anymore by the many difficulties around them and concentrate more on what they are doing, particularly their studies, for solution to their long drawn political movement is finally towards the end. Many villages in the Naga Hills also lit up with simple-minded happiness, nay, with feverish activities to convey the good news to others who may still be in dark about it. In the FA, those politically uneducated section including young children, naively and mistakenly even celebrated that the “Nagas have attained independence.” The politically educated section were however more cautious. The agreement is noteworthy but would it be another disappointment for the Nagas, asked they. Many doubt that signing political agreements, most particularly peace agreements, had somewhat become a pattern, indeed, a fiendish plan of New Delhi to delay the process of creatively addressing their long drawn political movement for independence. Very aptly, Longchari discussed that “the Indian State has used the language of peace agreements to strengthen its grip over the Nagas” (2016, 232).

Nagas political violence, the idea of possessing power over their own affairs, cannot be simply ignored as an anodyne idea, for this expression has reached even the table of UN,

UNPO and other such international forums. The vortex of this political struggle is that the Nagas have every right to possess those entities, like separate parliament (*Tatar Hoho*), constitution (*Yehzabo*), flag, national anthem, national army, etc., required to define the distinctness of their movement, which in fact, was already recognized by the Indian government in 2002. Denying these rights and subjecting the Nagas to all forms of human rights violations such as ransacking property, burning down villages and granaries, deliberate starvation, torture, rape, murder, village grouping and moving people into, what were *de facto*, concentration camps (Shimray 2005, 68-72; Luithui and Haksar 1984, 26-37, cited in Longvah 2017, 144-45), goaded the Nagas to justify violence as a just means. There was “village grouping” system to subdue and control the Nagas and “grouping of villages is nothing but undeclared jail,” stated Jamir (2019). Hannah Arendt, a noted political philosopher who strongly critiqued totalitarianism, aptly argued that under certain dark circumstances like “concentration camps, torture, famine, ... violence – acting without argument or speech and without counting the consequences – is the only way to set the scales of justice right again” (1969, 63-64). The point to be noted is that the FA could be considered the basis on which correct judgment to the man-made “Indo-Naga” political conflict is made.

Reiterated time and again by the Nagas is that they and the Indian Government are two separate entities since time immemorial, the point reflected strongly in the shared-sovereignty concept. Isak Chishi Swu, then Chairman of the NSCN stated in 2016 that “with a view to solving Indo-Naga political problem both the parties agreed to share sovereign power for enduring and peaceful existence of the two entities” (*The Sangai Express*, 1 March 2016, cited in Das 2016, 42). When India was dreaming for independence, at a far away distance, the tiny Nagalim was also aspiring for the same. For example, Lotha opined that in the pre-independence period, both the leaders of the Indian

National Congress and the Naga National Council had similar objective and also shared a future vision: “gaining independence from British colonial rule”; “the eventual establishment of two separate countries” (2016, 78-79). Indeed, the FA seems to have admitted that Nagas and India are “two separate entities.” For instance, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the day of signing this agreement stated: “The Naga problem has taken so long to resolve because we did not understand each other... There were not many like Mahatma Gandhi who loved the Naga people and was sensitive to their sentiments... Today’s agreement is a shining example of what we can achieve when we deal with each other in a spirit of equality and respect, trust and confidence... Today, we mark not merely the end of a problem but the beginning of a new future. We will not only try to heal wounds and resolve problems, but also be your partner as you restore your pride and prestige” (*IBN Live*, cited in Longvah 2016, 43). But in 2019, Modi self-contradicted when his government, negating the principles behind the terms like “spirit of equality, respect, trust and confidence,” “beginning of new future,” and “partner,” bluntly said Nagas cannot have their separate flag and constitution causing much hullabaloo in Nagalim. For the Nagas, flag and constitution are held as a “legitimate right ...” and without these, there can be no honourable or peaceful solution, stated Veino (2019).

### **Merging of the two “dogmas” in the FA**

As mentioned briefly in Chapter I, the two “dogmas” – the Indian Government’s absolute stand of not granting complete sovereignty to the Nagas and the latter not willing to negotiate for any alternative that is short of complete independence – that cannot be synergized had been ruling the “Indo-Naga” political conflict for quite long. Until the FA, both the parties were not willing to make room for what the then Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh termed as “out-of-the-box solutions” (see Das 2007, 1). In its stead, a solution trying to fit in to their respective dogmas has been proposed several times but

evidently all these efforts failed to resolve the issue. Perhaps, this time, seeing the prudence in mutual practical compromise, or perhaps, for humanity and peace sake, a solution beyond these dogmas has been sought through the FA.

Indeed, the interplay of the two dogmas – Nagas unwavering adherence to their claim for independence and the equally continuous denial by the Indian Government for safeguarding its frontier particularly from the threat of China and for upholding its integrationist logic – had protracted the Naga issue. Table 1 highlights the dogmatic reasons that have led to the stalemated nature in the “Indo-Naga” peace process. The primary dogma revolves around the issue of Nagas’ movement for their right to self-determination, nay for their right to external self-determination. This created the longest road to “Indo-Naga” conflict with no exit point at sight. Indeed, for external self-determination, the Nagas had bluntly rejected any alternatives, no matter how practical, offered by the Indian Government. However, things look different today with the FA in the picture. In it, Nagas seem to have shifted their stance from “complete sovereignty” to “shared-sovereignty.”

Table 1: Dogmatic reasons responsible for deadlock nature of the “Indo-Naga” political conflict

	<b>Standpoint of Naga Insurgent Groups</b>	<b>Standpoint of Government of India</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
1	Assertion for external self-determination as the birthright of the Nagas.	Safeguarding national integrity and security is the topmost priority, and the demand of the Nagas acts as a threat to it.	Deadlock
2	Rejection of greater autonomy or any other arrangements within the	Offering greater autonomy in the form of 6 <sup>th</sup> Schedule; any solution should be within the	Deadlock

	Constitution of India.	Constitution of India.	
3	Transformed their demand from ‘complete sovereignty’ to ‘special federal relation’ with the Government of India.	Although proposed the principle of ‘shared-sovereignty,’ it has the problem of adherence for fear of provoking similar attempt from other neighbouring communities.	Deadlock
4	Not ready or willing to stoop lower than the “special federal relation” or “shared-sovereignty.”	Expects the Nagas to submit to the terms laid down by the Government of India.	Existence of difference of ideas and the continuation of political negotiation to find solution.

*Source:* These are information gathered, analyzed and compiled out of the field work report conducted in 2018 for this study.

### **Shared-sovereignty: Nothing ventured, nothing gain?**

Lassa Oppenheim expressed: “There exists perhaps no conception the meaning of which is more controversial than that of sovereignty” (cited in Zaum 2007, 27). Apparently, the complexity in arriving at a single understanding of sovereignty is because of its association with host of entities like “territory, population, autonomy, authority, control, and recognition” (ibid, 28). Nagas’ sovereignty struggle is an assertion of all these entities as “rightfully and justly theirs” thereby charging India and Myanmar as occupying forces encroaching on all these claimed entities. Embedded in the concept of authority is a voluntary compliance which arose out of a sense of obligation from accepting the authority’s control as legitimate (ibid, 30). A sizeable Nagas neither accept nor recognize



the authority and legitimacy of the occupying forces, but considered these as acts of imposition upon them.

However, on the issue of “complete sovereignty,” a practical question often asked not only by the Nagas but also the non-Nagas is: will the Nagas be able to manage “complete sovereignty” if at all attained? Nagas’ aspiration for “complete sovereignty” has been going on right from the time of British colonialism. It, however, received imprudent response from the British government and similar response was adopted later by the independent Indian state as well on the ground that Nagas do not possess adequate resources to run a modern sovereign nation-state. Undoubtedly, the British government noted the distinctness in race, culture, religion, and social practices between the Nagas and the Indians but when it comes to Nagas’ demand for “complete sovereignty,” they felt that “the Nagas still lacked the requisite qualifications for a separate state”; they had “neither population nor the resources that a modern state should need to sustain its sovereignty” (Yonuo 1974, xiii, 141; also see Lotha 2016, 17-18). Such response was read by Nagas as belittling their hard-working culture that has sustained them since time immemorial. For instance, on being said that Nagas do not have the right resources to exist as an independent state, one Naga Student’s Federation leader replied, didn’t all civilizations of the world started with agriculture? They were, in the words of Yonuo (1974, 19), “enterprising cultivators,” they were also fast learners and thus with some help they can work on their capability to develop as an independent state. On their self-sustaining lifestyle, Yonuo (ibid.) elaborated: “Agriculture and animal husbandry have been the basic occupations of the Nagas since the time immemorial. Such economic pursuits have cause them to live in thousands of villages scattered at the hill tops, but near the rivers or streams flowing out of springs... The Nagas including the educated ones do the agricultural manual labour as a noble profession right from childhood without any slight odium.” In a simplistic manner, they thought the business

of complete sovereignty could be managed by adjusting this culture with the changing time and asking for help from their neighbours as well as the world till they could stand on their own feet. Nagas consistently argue that they had been living a self sustaining life from ancient times till the arrival of the British and therefore, by working on their hard working culture and improving and adding more to it not just to survive the change of time but to meet the needs as demanded by the change, they could exist as a sovereign nation. However, Nagas lifeworlds in the post British period marked by socio-economic underdevelopment indicates an anticlimax to this argument. In other words, their penchant for complete sovereignty could not be matched practically by their so called “hard working culture.” Today, in the face of modernity, they hardly have enough resources to sustain themselves and thus, they end up depending heavily on the Indian Government for resources and it has now become a very old open secret that pumping of resources has been craftily exploited by the GoI in bringing the Nagas under its thumb. This reality perhaps prompted a prominent Nagaland Pradesh Congress Committee (NPCC) leader to narrate that “even if sovereignty is given to the Nagas, they cannot handle the sovereignty business yet.” The resources granted by the Indian government effectively created what Lotha termed as “pro-India Nagas” (2016, 41).

In the age of globalization and in the face of various waves of modernity, the concept of sovereignty has been contested. While many argued that the concept though time-tested would continue to occupy a central position in both national and international affairs, still many have glided their argument toward the attenuating relevance of the concept of sovereignty in Austinian sense with the on-set of globalization. This supposed transition is aptly pictured by Bartelson (2006, 466) who argued that, of late, sovereignty hardly remains the singular domain of the state with its jurisdiction “divided and shared among state and non-state actors at all levels of governance depending on the issue or problem at hand.”

Michael Keating noted: “Sovereignty is said to be ebbing away, but new sovereignty claims are being made all the time” (cited in Bartelson 2006, 470). Perhaps, the normative approach of sovereignty as an indispensable and indivisible factor in recognizing the independent status of a state will remain unaltered, but for practicality and peaceful resolution of conflicts, states have come to compromise on this matter by agreeing to share its sovereignty, and more and more sovereignty movements, in fact, seem to be settling for a shared kind of sovereignty. For instances, the settling of the Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan cases in China, the Northern Ireland conflict, and the East Timor independence, among others, are some happenings vis-à-vis shared sovereignty.

In the search for a creative resolution to sovereignty conundrum, there is a rising assumption that shared sovereignty might serve the purpose for the Naga people. Globally, the principle of shared sovereignty has gained momentum predominantly with the on-set of globalization and the formation of the European Union (EU). Advancing such notion, Maihold (2016, 41) maintains that the onslaught of many factors has wane the relevance of the concept of Westphalian sovereignty in that “sovereignty has always been divisible and the norm of indivisibility has been a veil meant to conceal real power relations.” “While capturing an independent state was once the means to claim full sovereignty over a specified territory, this is no longer possible in a world where state sovereignty has been compromised by regional and global integration,” stated Laible (2008, 10). By using the term “post-sovereign” to describe the transforming nature of conventional sovereignty, he further posited: “Instead of claiming the monopoly on sovereignty, states in the contemporary global order, and most significantly in the EU, ‘must share their prerogatives with supra-state, sub-state and trans-state systems’” (ibid.).

Indeed, the idea of shared sovereignty indicates a compromise and a creative solution. Rudolf and Rudolf (2010, 555-65) equalize the given idea with “negotiated sovereignty”

and posit that such an idea is detested by the early modern state theorists who ardently vouched for the theory of “absolutism and monopoly sovereignty.” They studied shared sovereignty from the lens of federalism or federal relationship. Further, they observe by taking the example of “India’s pluralist state and federal system and of the EU’s multi-layered governance and commitment to ‘subsidiarity’ that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century shared sovereignty may be a better way to deal with sovereignty questions” (ibid.).

The EU has set the stage for shared sovereignty by emphasizing less on maintaining rigid state boundaries and more on the “political and economic futures of citizens,” rendering a borderless Europe and making less relevant the fight for creating new borders (Laible 2008, 1). The otherwise nationalist movements in Wales, Catalonia, the Basque territory, Flanders, and Northern Ireland, among others, with a determination to make their nation strong have finally decided to share their sovereignty with the EU (ibid, 2). For practically realizable political and economic developments of the Nagas, their demand for complete sovereignty seems to be slewing its course toward the direction of shared-sovereignty, perhaps emulating from the current happenings across the globe.

Staniland (2012, 246-48) discusses the idea of shared-sovereignty from the lens of both the state and insurgents staking claims over a contested area on determining “who rules, how much, and in what ways.” Shared sovereignty is a method of finding and thinking “out-of-the-box” solution to the “Indo-Naga” conflict. It is a scheme that sought mutual benefits; is a sign of real commitment to finding practicable solution and is not a sign of capitulation. “This (shared sovereignty) is a negotiated form of political order in which the insurgent organizations retains autonomy and standing structures of coercive capability. The state has not shattered its foe but instead the two sides have arranged a clear division of influence and authority that satisfies both in the pursuit of mutual gains” (ibid.).

There are various cases of shared-sovereignty – “federations (vertically shared sovereignty), condominiums (horizontally shared sovereignty) and sovereignty shared with international institutions” (Maihold 2016, 41). In the Naga context, shared sovereignty schemed under the FA is towards the line of “special federal relations” wherein the Indian state and Naga divide their areas of authority. Rational construction behind the usage of the term “special” is that the federal kind of relations Nagas would have with the Indian state is presumably in a higher level with the kind maintained by the other federating Indian states with the Centre. On this scheme, the NSCN remarked that the “relationship between Indians and Nagas will be based on sharing of sovereign powers to provide a new relationship and peaceful coexistence between the two entities” (Dholabhai 2015). The “Indo-Naga” political relationship would be characterized by a status higher than that enjoyed by rest of the federating states in the Indian Union, alleged one Naga leader. Ngaihte (2014, 26) pointed out that “there is nothing under the present federal structure in India in which the Naga demands of special status can fit.” Das (2018, 40 & 42) used the term “confederacy” and “asymmetric federalism” to explain this relationship. Evidently, the two parties are trying to work out a *modus vivendi* that lies somewhere between pure federation and confederation vis-à-vis India’s political system.

In the Naga context, the idea of “shared sovereignty” was first proposed in 2010 by R.S. Pandey, the then interlocutor of the Indian Government to the Naga peace process, during the premiership of Manmohan Singh. Pandey in the “non-paper” proposal stated the possibilities for “co-existence of the two entities (India and Nagas) and shared-sovereignty of the two entities (India and Nagas)” (Muivah 2020). Although the shared-sovereignty concept gained widespread popularity with the signing of the FA, its idea, in relation to the unique situation of the Naga people, was professed even by the British India Government. For instance, Sir Andrew Clow, then Governor of Assam, stated in February 1947, that

...a few of the Nagas had spoken of setting themselves up as a separate nation. But, it was not practicable for any Naga people or even for all of them, to form a separate state, or even a separate province, if they did that, they would always remain poor and backward; their needs in respect of education, communication, and health could not be met, and they would even lose some of inadequate service they are now enjoying. He therefore advised that they should aim at reaching an accommodation with the people of the plains of Assam which would be of mutual benefit to both... He continued to say that the people of Nagaland should think not only of what they could secure; they should think also of what they could give; the hill peoples of Assam had long experience in pure democracy; they understood that democracy did not mean, as some supposed, the rule of the majority, but the rule of the people as a whole; and the Naga people could contribute to the maintenance of democracy in India; they could have a share in the Government of their own land, and as education developed, the Naga people ultimately would make a valuable contribution to the Government as a whole (Yonuo 1974, 169-70).

Christian missionaries were often blamed harshly for inciting the independence movement of the Nagas and therefore they were removed from Nagalim. It is worth mentioning that some of their suggestions were in line with today's "shared-sovereignty" model. For instance, P.F. Adams, in September 1947 stated:

...What do the Nagas really want? What they really want is, I think to protect their land so that others shall not come and take it; the right to govern themselves according to their own customs; to be assured that peace and order will be maintained so that men, women and children can move about freely without fear; to see that their children are well fed, well-clothed and well educated; to see that others do not exploit them; and that the Nagas shall develop their own resources. These and other similar things are, I feel, what are really wanted. Words like "Independence" and "autonomy" do not mean anything unless they secure these basic things. The villages in the trans-frontier are more or less independent, but they are very poor, often hungry, their children die of disease because

there are no hospitals or medicine, their men, women, and children never know when they may be killed by men from another village – of what use is independence to them. Is there one village in Kohima or Mokokchung that would be willing to change places with trans-frontier village? (Yonuo 1974, 314).

The above statements indicate that without political consciousness of meeting people's basic rights and needs, the word "independence" does not hold much meaning. When people enter the phase of advanced civilization, the word however came to hold an enlightened meaning, for by then; people have gain prudence and discern the meaning of true liberty, and the socio-politico and economic rights that they must possess by the degree of being a human being. True freedom must dwell together with advanced economy and stable polity with respect for others welfare, interests and rights.

The idea of shared-sovereignty was also there in the initial stage of the Naga movement during the leadership of the NNC. For instance, the then Secretary of NNC, T. Aliba Imti said while addressing a public meeting at Kohima on 6 December 1946, that the Nagas "shall enjoy homeland in our country, but on broader issues be connected with India" (ibid, 164-65). The model was also evidently hinted even in the 1960s, particularly in the talk between Indira Gandhi and Suisa Rungtung, one of the Naga delegates in the 1960s peace negotiation, "an eccentric and opinionated" person, "a friend of Phizo and a former Congress member of Indian parliament from Manipur," described Yonuo (ibid, 290). This model, back then, popularly known as the "Suisa proposal" or "federal-relationship model," was however, rejected by the NNC on the ground that it promises just "three quarters" of what the Nagas aspire for and per se fell short of complete independence. Indeed, the proposal earned Suisa a severe criticism particularly from the Naga political groups including the NSCN, who for long aspire for nothing less than complete independence. The proposal failed to materialize for it was too advanced for the "politically young Nagas" to understand the farsightedness inherent in the proposal. Had the Naga leaders of those days

saw political prudence in the Suisa proposal, then perhaps, today, they might even have attained the status of complete independence, lamented one NSF leader. Today, such a viewpoint has gained popularity among a sizeable politically educated Naga population.

Indira Gandhi apparently agreed to Suisa's proposal, for in her understanding, the proposal would allow the Nagas to enjoy complete autonomy – indeed, “a Bhutan-like protectorate status” was offered to the Nagas (Das 2007, 28) – within the Indian Union which need not necessarily be bound by the Indian Constitution (Yonuo 1974, 290). This in other words means, the “Constitution could be amended in a way to obtain a solution to the Naga problem” (Das 2007, 28). But the talk was terminated before Indira Gandhi could explain the meaning of “complete autonomy, and how this was to be translated into practice” (Yonuo 1974, 290).

Decades after being considered a political taboo, today the NSCN, though not a carbon-copy but very closely similar, has adopted the line of Suisa's proposal. The current proposed shared-sovereignty model hinted the points indicated in the Suisa proposal that focused on points like having a common defense, foreign policy, and common currency. Lack of understanding of the proposal coupled with jealousy was the main reason behind the rejection of the proposal back then, shared one prominent NSCN leader. He continued: “There was also too much tribalism. They (then NNC leaders) didn't want to give credit to the Tangkhuls to resolve the issue which they themselves couldn't resolve.” Reportedly, however, the FA promises lesser than the Suisa's proposal for it seems to have excluded territorial integration of the Naga inhabited areas (in fact provisioned by the Indian Constitution, particularly the 13<sup>th</sup> point of the Sixteen Point Agreement, 1963), which was not an issue back in the “Indira-Suisa's” political parleys. By rejecting Suisa's proposal, they missed the chance to resolve the Naga issue by a whisker, lamented many Nagas today. They were not conscientious enough about the validity and the practicality of the proposal.



From among the then Naga leaders, if at least somebody had backed up the proposal, the destiny of the Naga people certainly would have taken different course, they would have been much more advanced politically, financially and the happiness index would have been quite impressive by now.

Of late, it has become visible that more and more Nagas appear to have come to term federal relations, in line with Suisa's proposal, as a more practical and desirable solution rather than to stick on to complete sovereignty. Many younger Naga generations hold that in the present globalized and liberalized world, complete sovereignty may not be the best option that would lead them toward the path of lasting peace. According to Hushkha Yepthomi (2013), "Even if sovereignty is given to us (Nagas), it would be a very difficult task to carry on the sovereignty business." On similar note, Imtikumzuk Longkumer (2013) also held the opinion that, "In the present context, it would be impossible to achieve sovereignty. Naga people are still dependent on the Government of India economically even after more than 50 years of statehood. To become a sovereign state, we should be economically independent first." Today, many people express their disappointment over the failures of the Naga leaders to view any other alternatives that could have averted the present chaotic situation in Nagalim. Yepthomi, the then Working President of NPF in a personal interview remarked, "Stubbornness of the Naga leaders to understand the future consequences, failures to take advantage of the political will of the then Prime Minister of India Indira Gandhi to solve the Naga problem who told the Naga Federal Government delegation 'you take everything from me but not sovereignty' to which the Naga leaders replied 'we will not take everything from you but sovereignty', has led to the lost of many good opportunities." If the Government of India cannot offer us sovereignty than there is nothing to negotiate about was the earlier mindset of the Naga leaders. Naga people have

failed to discuss the things we should take from the Government of India if sovereignty appears not possible at that time, further stated Yephthomi (2013).

Shared-sovereignty model today has thus come to occupy a primary position upon which future peace negotiations would be based. V.S. Atem in a personal discussion in 2018 narrated that this model was influenced and inspired by various such practiced shared-sovereignty model across the world like China and Hong Kong, China and Taiwan, etc. but hugely by the European Union (EU). In consonance with Atem, Lotha (2016, 293-94) also expressed that it is drawn from the EU model and shared-sovereignty model indeed is often adopted to resolve serious conflict as evidenced by “the relationship between the republic of China and Hong Kong,...the United States and Puerto Rico, France and Morocco, ...New Zealand and the Cook Island and Niue.” Of the mentioned relationships of shared-sovereignty, Lotha found the New Zealand and the Cook Island and Niue the closest to the “Indo-Naga” context. In his words:

Cook Islands and Niue nationals are citizens of New Zealand and enjoy all the benefits of being New Zealanders, but New Zealand citizens are neither Cook Islanders nor Niue nationals. Similarly, Nagas already have status as citizens of India but could also be designated and differentiated from other Indian citizens as Naga nationals... Similar to the arrangement between the Cook Islands and New Zealand, India would have specifically determined competencies for defense and foreign affairs to be exercised in consultation with the Nagas on issues related specifically to Naga interests. (Lotha 2016, 294)

In short, the terms like “co-existence” and “shared-sovereignty” – the keywords in the FA – admit dealings between two entities and not a single entity, stated Muivah (2020). As such, Nagas argue they have the right to own separate flag, constitution, passports, UN representative, land *patta* or record of rights as owner of the land, etc. But, in the end of 2019, there was a loud cacophony on these claims – the Government of India arguing

against this, particularly on the issue of separate flag and constitution – so loud that it nearly brought the 24 year old “Indo-Naga” peace process to an end (Bhushan 2020).

Prideful but the Nagas have always considered themselves as separate from India and this definitely has prolonged the resolution of Naga political violence for the opposite view was also clearly justified and held by the Indian Government. For instance, Khugato Sukhai in a letter to Indira Gandhi on August 5, 1966, stated: “Yet in this present fast-moving age, no nation or country, big or small, can now dream of having a completely isolated life from its neighbours and rest of the world. Thus, political prudence tells us that it will be of the greatest benefit for both Indian and Nagas that they should have the most friendly relations through understanding for all time to come...that a friendly relationship may be established in the best interests of both countries” (Yonuo 1974, 289).

Through the model of shared-sovereignty, the Indian Government and the Nagas sought to enter a new phase of relationship. They opted for shared-sovereignty while exploring for practicality at the same time honourable solution to the Naga political violence. This is considered as an alternative that promises a “win-win” situation for both the parties. Basing on the uniqueness of their history, Nagas claim for complete sovereignty may be principally correct but it has practicality problem. India is one of the rising giants of Asia, its power is well recognized by the world, and thus Nagas cannot afford to be separated from India “as of now” for without leaning to India, Nagalim will face a “total collapse.” “At this juncture, no country of the world has officially recognized our existence as an independent country; therefore, we will need the support and help of India for our own growth and development, until we could fully stand independently on our own feet,” shared one Naga political leader. On the practicality of shard-sovereignty as a model that bespeaks the principle of “mutual respect and understanding,” Shimray (2018) narrates that in certain areas like defense, foreign affairs, communication, currency, and export and import, where India’s and Naga’s

interests could be harmed, they will share sovereignty. For instance, Nagas will not have completely independent foreign policy vis-à-vis countries like China, Pakistan, Bangladesh or even the United States of America, because it involves India's security interest. Relatedly, although both the parties will have joint-defense system, yet India could set-up their defense system in the Naga areas only after getting permission from the master of the land who, in turn, would lease out the land. The currency of India would be used in banking and other economic activities. Though Nagas would have their own banks, yet, this will be operated through the Reserve Bank of India. India does not allow Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in certain areas, but the Nagas would have sovereign right to invite FDI. Regarding finance, Nagas would have their offices all over the world which would be operated as socio-cultural visa without interference from the GoI.

Suggested in the name itself, shared-sovereignty model promises "highest form of autonomy without independence" (Fernandes and Borgohain 2017, 70). Read on this line, it hints "independence and self-determination within" the Indian Union for the Nagas. The quoted words in the preceding sentence are borrowed from the 1975 Dene Declaration vis-à-vis a kind of self-government granted to the native peoples in northern Quebec by the Canadian government (cited in Knight 1985, 268). In fact, when this model is not just read but more importantly applied as "an effort to go towards alternatives that do not compromise their identity and self-respect but help them to deal as equals with what were till now perceived as adversaries" (Fernandes and Borgohain, 2017: 82), there could be practical compromise. Das (2008, 42) argued that the NSCN had accepted the alternative for shared-sovereignty after sincerely acknowledging "the Indian government's difficulty and were convinced that the Indian Parliament cannot discuss something against its own Constitution, to settle the Naga issue." However, NSCN reiterates that shared-sovereignty should be interpreted as Nagas exercising their sovereignty within the ambit of the Indian

Constitution or for that matter the Indian Union. Th. Muivah (2020), on the meaning of shared-sovereignty said: “The Nagas will co-exist with India sharing sovereign powers as agreed in the FA and defined in the competencies. But they will not merge with India.”

The NSCN holds the opinion that “for the time being” it would settle for shared-sovereignty because it reflects the principle of solving the “Indo-Naga” conflict amicably and it would also “safeguard the present and the future of the Nagas” (GPRN 2017). The phraseology “for the time being” or “as of now” refers that currently Nagas would have to agree with the shared-sovereignty arrangement. It also implies that the outcome of the FA cannot be considered as a final solution to the Nagas’ aspiration for complete sovereignty. Embedded in it seems to be a persistent process to their aspiration for sovereignty, wherein, in the future they may possibly hold a referendum at an opportune time to decide on the Naga sovereignty like the case of the Quebecois<sup>13</sup> in Canada or the Scottish<sup>14</sup> in the United Kingdom.

What are the possible factors that could have prompted the Naga leaders to change their stance from complete sovereignty to shared-sovereignty? All along, saved Mahatma Gandhi, Nagas have accused Indian leaders of not possessing a political will to resolve the lingering Naga self-determination issue. Gandhi had reportedly envisaged for peaceful co-existence and cooperation between India and Nagalim. In 1947, he remarked: “Give Nagaland to India, and I will give India to Nagaland” (cited in Ao 2006, 387). Perhaps, today, NSCN perceived a part of Gandhi in Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India. In 1960, A.Z. Phizo stated: “Nagas must know what India wants and India must know what the Nagas deserve and make a settlement” (ibid.). Perhaps, scaling for “win-win” outcome

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<sup>13</sup> In Canada, their Constitution provides that ‘if a referendum in favor of secession is taken, and the majority of Quebecois vote to secede, the rest of Canada would have an obligation to negotiate constitutional changes with the Quebec government to respond to the Quebecois desire to secede’ (Hana 1999, 220).

<sup>14</sup> The Scottish right to become an independent country is a right legitimized by the British Parliament. The latest of the Scottish referendum was held on September 18, 2014, wherein, over 53% of the Scottish population voted against Scotland becoming a sovereign country.

might have prompted the change in the stance. Isak Chishi Swu, the then President of NSCN, remarked: “If India is prepared to understand our rights, we are prepared to come to her as close as possible” (ibid, 387). Perhaps, shared-sovereignty is what the NSCN meant by coming as close as possible in order to resolve the long drawn Naga imbroglio.

Evidently, another factor is economic development. NSCN insists that the shared sovereignty arrangement would create practically more positive and “larger opportunities” for the future prosperity of the Nagas (*The Morung Express* 3 June 2017). On this, NSCN remarked:

At this juncture, when the Nagas are economically so poor and unsustainable, it will be wise to partner with India for larger economic growths, infrastructural and all round developments of Nagalim. To provide the road map towards a developed bright future along with India will create larger opportunities especially for the younger Naga generations. The acceptance to have shared sovereignty will surely take the Nagas much further forward along with the advancement pace of great India which is rapidly becoming one of the economic superpowers of the world (*The Morung Express* 2 June 2017).

Further, one possible factor for the change in their stance could be to end bloodsheds in Nagalim and sought for peaceful political solution and honourable and acceptable political settlement with the Government of India based on the unique history and situation of the Nagas – the responsibility claimed to have been entrusted to the NSCN by the Naga people (*The Morung Express* 9 June 2017). Taking the cue that sustainable and just peace might perhaps lay in coming up with alternative creative solution to their protracted sovereignty aspiration, today, the NSCN leadership is negotiating for shared sovereignty, the almost similar arrangement struck by Suisa Rungsung (a Tangkhul Naga parliamentarian) with Indira Gandhi some 50 years back. As already explained, in the mid-1960s, Suisa came up with an idea of “link relationship between India and Nagaland (Nagalim), wherein the

parties could reach some kind of federal agreement with regard to administration of certain subjects like defense, foreign relations, communications, etc and leave to Nagaland (Nagalim) all other subjects of immediate significance” (Srikanth and Thomas 2006, 362-63).

On shared sovereignty, NSCN remarked: “The GoI had recognized and had accepted the Nagas as a different entity having equal status, meaning, India is not above the Nagas nor Nagas are above India and to live as two different friendly Nations with absolute ownership rights over their own lands and its resources both beneath and above the earth’s surface” (*The Morung Express* 2 June 2017). In fact, the signing of the FA was primed on the final recognition and acceptance by the GoI that “Nagas are not Indians but a different entity with equal status, having separate and distinct identity, with unique history and cultures” (ibid.). Narendra Modi, on the day of signing the FA stated that Naga and Indian state are two separate entities; they are “partners.”

However, in the home ground, the FA has somewhat created hullabaloo particularly in Nagaland state. Since it hinted the possibility of dropping territorial integration of all contiguous Naga areas under one political administrative set-up, the agreement received intense flak from certain Naga groups. For instance, in criticism to the said agreement, six Naga insurgent groups practically functioning in the present Nagaland state was formed as the Working Group of the Naga National Political Groups (NNPG). These Naga political groups affirmatively pronounced that they would not accept any political outcome that is short of integration of Naga areas. In the process, however, it started using terms like “indigenous tribes of Nagaland” state and “mainland Nagas” (*The Morung Express* 8 June 2017); implying the existence of a pure line of division within the Naga family as Nagas of Nagaland state and Nagas of outside Nagaland state, and the “hegemonic” attitude of the former over other sections in Nagalim. But, the question arises who are the “mainland

Nagas”? Is the term appropriate in the context of the Nagas who claim themselves as one nation grounded on the principle of equality? The story of Naga nationalism importantly involves rejection of the creation of Nagaland state as the crafty ploy of the Indian Government to divide and rule the Nagas. Deductively, it appears that the “Working Group” seems to have taken for granted the importance of emotional integration of the people, the factor largely responsible for the birth of Naga nation. Although they seemingly stood for territorial integration, yet its objective seem to have further divided rather than unite the Nagas emotionally. With emotional unity, physical integration is achievable! This group that had stood for territorial integration of the Nagas some few years back today is willing to settle for any agreements dictated by the Indian Government, euphemistically in the name of peaceful settlement of the Naga issue. In doing so, NNPG left both emotional integration and territorial integration undefended.

### **Naga Territorial Council**

Another crucial point of the FA that needs careful scholarship is the scheme to create the Naga Territorial Council (hereinafter NTC). Allegedly, this would be created by demarcating the Nagas wherever they are – Assam, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, or Nagaland – by the virtue of their history and not by the virtue of the administrative system they are in. The proposed scheme however is silent about the fate of the Nagas in Myanmar. As popularly discoursed and found in the public domain, demarcation of the Naga people based on their unique history can again be of two types – the first talk about territorial integration of all the Naga inhabited areas; secondly, cultural integration of the Nagas irrespective of where they are physically situated. Time and again, the Indian Government has clarified that the FA does not cover the first type of integration and is working for the second type under the heading Naga Territorial Council. Perhaps for political prudence and recognition of the essentiality of peaceful co-existence, the proposed NTC allegedly might



have excluded the territorial integration of all the contiguous Naga inhabited areas. Critiquing such notion, however, James Hoarah (2021, 21:50), a professor in the Department of Biomedical Engineering, New Jersey Institute of Technology, stated that for actual resolution of the Naga political violence, cultural integration or emotional integration sans territorial integration is “not good enough,” for Nagas have been doing the former type of integration since before and even today and thus they do not need to re-strive for something which is already theirs.

A source stated that after much deliberation, the GoI and the NSCN have somewhat come to a kind of understanding that before physical demarcation takes place, there has to be “politico-cultural integration” first. But the term “politico” suggests that territorial or physical integration is also on the table and not completely overturned, for this has been the political demand of the Nagas. The rationale behind this policy is to reduce tension not only in Nagalim but most particularly in the neighbouring states, commented one Naga leader. There have been various instances where “anti-Naga forces, anti-peace community have tried to sabotage the ongoing ‘Indo-Naga’ peace process,” stated one respondent.

Apparently, NTC is a product of well-calculated policy under which the Naga people would have a single government – in fact, a people’s government formed through a democratic process – the function of which will be allegedly greater than that of any Indian Union states. Practically, NTC would function like a sovereign, having complete authority over the land, judiciary, financial matters and having separate foreign affairs (but it must not be harmful to the Indian state), representative of the Naga people in the United Nations, separate passport, a different land *patta*, among other things, elaborated one source. In short, the Nagas would exist under the umbrella of “Pan-Naga Hoho.” But, isn’t the term “pan” suggests the absence of physical integration? The answer need not necessarily be outright yes or no because the PAN (Presence Across Territories) concept in the Naga

context underlines two interpretations. First, it reflects the existence of a body whose governance will cover all the Naga areas in the Indian side cutting across various state borders. The second interpretation reflects that Nagas from anywhere including Myanmar can avail the services that will be rendered by such to be created pan-body. However, the expression of the latter interpretation though strongly wished and argued for by the Nagas – in particular the NSCN – as their “birthright” is however not reflected in the open discourses. For instance, according to Bhushan (2020), the “Pan-Naga Hoho” would function as a “cultural body” with judicial as well as financial powers covering all the Naga inhabited areas in the Indian sub-continent, however, this might bring division within the Nagas as Nagas of Nagaland state and Southern Nagas (Nagas in the state of Manipur). Bhushan (2020) further stated that in the proposed NTC, “all the Naga tribes, based on their population would be proportionately represented and there might be a place even for non-Naga minorities.”

In NTC, what then would happen to the existing Nagaland State Legislative Assembly? Apparently, when NTC is created, the Nagaland Legislative Assembly would function as a bicameral assembly and it would possibly be renamed as “Tatar Hoho,” “delimiting the constituencies for the State and Central legislatures and increasing the number of MPs from Nagaland and contiguous Naga areas in the Lok Sabha (seven seats) and the Rajya Sabha (five seats), creating a Naga cultural body called the Pan-Naga Hoho, setting up a high court in Nagaland and courts dealing with customary law, recognizing the Naga identity in passports, and defining permanent residents of Nagaland as those resident in Nagaland on or before December 1, 1963 when the state was created and permitting only them to buy or sell property,” writes Bhushan (2019). Since it is meant to function as a cultural body, therefore, the “Pan-Naga Hoho” cannot have executive power, argued Bhushan (2019). Contrariwise, the *Ato Kilonser* of the NSCN Th. Muivah, stated: “There would be Naga integration but

areas that cannot be brought under it would be covered by the ‘Pan-Naga Hoho’, which would be an independent entity, a statutory body with executive authority, separate budget and negotiating power” (*The Telegraph* 26 August 2015, cited in Das 2019, 42).

For implementation of the model of shared sovereignty, the Nagas need a single administrative body – be it political or cultural – to take care of the Nagas’ affairs as comprehensive as possible and this kind of body is visualized in the formation of NTC. But only time will tell whether it promises what Thong (2016, 99) termed as “sensible future” to the Nagas. It needs to be mentioned that at the time of writing this thesis, the shared-sovereignty model, the proposal for creation of NTC, however, remains an inchoate ideas.

### **Separate flag and constitution: The issues of “unique” political identities of the Nagas**

Towards the end of the 2019 calendar, there was a cacophony on the issue of separate flag and constitution for the Nagas. Allegedly, the noise carries deep meaning for it centered on the “unique” political situation of the Nagas wherein flag and constitution are considered their “unique” political identities. Bhushan (2020) analyzes that the cacophony was actually related to the proposed “creation of a supra-state body called the Pan-Naga Hoho.” As discussed earlier, apparently, the idea of the Pan-Naga Hoho is cultural integration, ruling out the much debated, at the same time desired, territorial integration of the Nagas. “It is meant to be a cultural body covering Nagaland and the contiguous Naga-inhabited areas of Manipur, Arunachal and Assam (old Nowgong and Sibsagar districts). The latter would each have a Naga Autonomous Territorial Council with financial powers as well as judicial powers relating to customary law. Both the Pan Naga and the territorial councils would be elected” (Bhushan 2020). On the proposed Pan-Naga Hoho and the Naga Territorial Councils, Th. Muivah in an interview by Karan Thapar for *The Wire* stated that these proposals are “only acceptable as a transitional step. The integration of all Naga areas in Nagalim remains the goal” (Muivah 2020).

“The Naga flag represents the history, identity and sacrifices made – a symbol of its nationhood and solidarity as one people,” asserted *The Rising Naga* (2021). Visibly, Naga people hold their flag dearly and regard it as a God given identity. Roy (2 November 2019) explained that the flag not only symbolizes Nagas’ struggle for self-determination *alias* independence, but also of “their religious faith,” that “helps bind all the different Naga tribes together.” The rationale behind the demand for a separate flag and constitution for the Nagas were raised on the basis of the FA that acknowledges India and Naga as two separate entities, stated H.K. Zhimomi, President of the Naga Hoho (*Outlook India* 24 October 2019). Different from the earlier trodden trajectory, the Indian Government now wishes to take a different path and stated that any solution to the Naga problem will be within the concept of “one flag, one constitution” for India and demonstrating this concept practically, it has abrogated the special status enjoyed earlier by Jammu and Kashmir including separate flag and constitution of its own in August 2019. The argument of the NSCN however is that the precedent of Jammu and Kashmir is not applicable to the Nagas because they have a “unique history – the Nagas were never under the Indians and therefore, the Indian government does not have the right to impose their constitution and flag on the Nagas,” stated Th. Muivah. He further argued that flag and constitution are two “non-negotiable issues” and for these, they “shall continue to stand till the last man standing.” To him, the non-recognition and the non-acceptance of the Nagas right to flag and constitution is equal to treating the Naga people as a “lost people with no history.” Muivah further stated that India recognized the uniqueness of Naga history, recognizing the fact that the Nagas “were never under India either by consent of the people or by conquest of the Indian armed forces.” Thus, any solution without flag and constitution is a negation of the unique character of the Naga history. To this end, Muivah termed the NNPG and any other Naga civil society groups “who don’t bother about flag and constitution as traitors.”

The final conclusion of the long-drawn “Indo-Naga” political negotiation is yet again halted in the name of India’s notion of “one country, one flag, and one constitution.” Though in a different version, but the Indian Government seems to have not moved away from its perpetual stance of no solution for Nagas outside the framework of the Indian Constitution. Thus, in the name of this newly created BJP’s notion, the “Indo-Naga” political negotiation has been pulled back to square one, stated one analyst. But another analyst asked: doesn’t the recognition of the uniqueness of Naga history and situation necessitate unique solution? On the one hand, R.N. Ravi accused the NSCN for adopting “a procrastinating attitude to delay the settlement raising the contentious symbolic issues of separate Naga national flag and constitution on which they are fully aware of the Government of India’s position” (ibid.). He charged the NSCN of prolonging the FA from final settlement by “mischievously” bringing in the issues of separate flag and constitution, by “imputing imaginary contents to it” (*India Today* 20 October 2019). NSCN’s reiteration to separate flag and constitution for the Nagas on the other hand has also been termed by some Nagas as being “insensitive” to the people’s plea for an honorable solution to the Naga issue, and this also led to the defection of sixteen NSCN cadres to the NNPG (*The Economic Times* 28 October 2019). Contention on these issues is the primary reason for not signing the final agreement yet.

While seeking for practical, honorable and unique solution, NSCN apparently has compromised the age old Naga sovereignty question and perhaps, also the territorial integration of all the Naga inhabited areas, including the areas in Myanmar. Compromising approach was taken so as to understand each other’s difficulties and working for solution based on mutual understanding and respect. In the Naga context, such approach was opted when the Indian Government recognized the unique history of the Nagas, who in return also understood the difficulties of India, particularly in relation to its security. Towards the end

of 2019, Nagas were expected to make another compromise – this time on areas pertaining to their political identity of which the Nagas have been flaunting with pride – on having a separate Naga flag and constitution. While the NNPG were willing to sign an agreement sans a separate Naga flag and constitution, the NSCN was not. “If the NSCN-IM accedes to economic and political packages alone, without a separate flag and constitution, it remains to be seen whether it will be seen as a solution, or as a defeat,” stressed Roy (2 November 2019). Any solution sans recognition of Naga flag and constitution cannot be an honorable solution. If Muivah compromises on these dearly hold political identities of the Nagas, he would be “haunted by Suisa’s spirit,” commented Somingam Mawon, a Naga researcher. On the other hand, Th. Muivah stated that “the Nagas will not budge from their own flag and constitution” (Mehta 1 August 2020). The impasse created by this issue coupled with the alleged violation of ceasefire agreement and the subsequent harassment and killings of NSCN, once again, have halted the way to honorable solution and peace in Nagalim. It also marks that “the jubilation of 2015 had worn away, (and) the relationship between the government and the NSCN (IM) had grown visibly strained,” commented Chakravarty (19 July 2020).

According to the Naga People’s Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR), “the constitution and the flag are more than cultural symbols and represent the struggles of the Nagas” (*Ukhrul Times* 7 August 2020). On the issue of Naga flag and constitution, Th. Muivah further stated: “We are not asking for Naga national flag and constitution from the Government of India. Recognize them or not, we have our own flag and constitution. Flag and constitution are ingredients of our recognized sovereign entity and the symbols of Naga nationhood. The Nagas must keep their flag and constitution.” According to Bhushan (13 April 2020), “there are several possible ways of resolving these issues. The Naga flag could, for example, be granted as long as it is flown simultaneously with the tricolor and at the

same height or lower... On the constitution, the NSCN-IM itself has proposed that the final agreement, which the Nagas could call their constitution, could be incorporated in the Indian constitution as “special Naga law” after amending Article 371A.” If both the Indian Government and the NSCN listen to each other to understand and not to find loopholes in each other’s speech – an indication of the conflicting parties engaging in a higher standard of politics – a practical solution could be constructed even of the created state of perplexity on the Naga flag and the constitution.

### **Conclusion**

Over the years, the situation of political violence in Nagalim has changed considerably. Many have now come to hold the opinion that for durable peace and honourable solution to the vexed Naga political issue, Nagas perhaps need a paradigm shift on the concept of complete sovereignty. They feel the need to redefine this dearly hold concept so that Nagas could run together along with the rest of the world. A dogmatic approach on complete sovereignty has hindered the Nagas from effecting what John Paul Lederach termed as “constructive change” as a tool of transforming the conflict.

The negotiations on shared-sovereignty model and the proposed creation of NTC or Pan-Naga Hoho, apparently direct the Nagas toward the future of what Das (2018, 64) described as a “semi-sovereign state.” These alternatives to the issue of complete sovereignty are what seem to form “the collective voice of the Naga civil society, which favors a peaceful and negotiated settlement of the Naga issue,” stated Singh (2014, 828). However, there are certain factors like factionalism, tribalism, greed, unhealthy materialistic mindset, crafty Indian state’s politics and crafty overground Naga leaders’ politics, which defy the logic of a successful peace process. Aptly pointed out by Lotha (2016), these factors could be read as “negative forces,” hindering the realization of “sensible future” for the Nagas. And “corruption” is the key concept that encompasses all these negative forces, indeed, allowing

them to mushroom in today's Naga society. "Corruption is typically seen as a pathology, a fraying at the edges of a system or, at worst, a sign of system failure," stated the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (2014, 3). Corruption has come to be taken for granted among the Nagas; its tentacles reaching every socio-political, economic, cultural and even religious spheres in this self-proclaimed "Nagaland for Christ." The widespread practices of corruption seem to have disturbed the minds of rational thinking Nagas and thus, ACAUT was formed. But, apparently, the primary target of ACAUT was only one section of the Naga society – the "underground" or the "nationalist" group. In order to save "Nagaland for Christ" from the venom of corruption, the fight must be more comprehensive. Valid perhaps to the context of Naga society, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (2014, 19) stated: "No corrupt regime can be reformed or revamped without significant demand and persistent struggle on the part of the local population." In fact, corrupt mind and corrupt practices can also unravel the "Indo-Naga" Framework Agreement. It may be pointed out that the agreement although is commented as historic but it is yet to earn the epithet "epic." The focus of the next chapter would be on the above mentioned "negative forces" that have thus far managed to work up one kind of violent conflict after another in Nagalim.



## Chapter IV

### Forces challenging the Framework Agreement

Naga political violence after passing through every nook and cranny, crest and trough has today reached the point where complete sovereignty or no solution attitude, or “all or nothing” attitude, as put by Lotha (2016, 297), has been re-examined in the form of signing the FA. Undoubtedly, Nagas are a territorial people who still held the concept of conventional sovereignty very dear. The craving of Nagas for complete sovereignty indeed did not start suddenly with the independence of India as has been popularly assumed. In ancient times, they were living in a sovereign village system, each village with well-defined boundary and administrative demarcation, and these “village units were never under the rule of any alien government before the advent of the British colonial rule” and even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century they “still retain their uniqueness and de facto sovereignty,” stated the Naga Hoho (cited in Lotha 2016, 253). The apex body of Naga socio-political organizations, the Naga Hoho, further stated: “The existence of sovereign Naga villages with their own territory, their system and population from time immemorial to this day is the living proof of Naga sovereignty because the Naga nation is made up of sovereign Naga villages” (ibid.). Nagas, thus, trace their desire for complete sovereignty to their ancient village system where sovereign villagers comprised the sovereign village units. In other words, they commonly trace their socio-political identity via their village. Later on, with the advent of the British, Christianity, modern education, etc., the concept of “nation” was introduced to them, and they synergized this new concept with their jealous love and protection for their village and per se, initially, the Nagas became robustly united in the fight for restoration of their lost sovereignty and it was said that no forces were strong enough to break through this unity for some time. However, not long after that, the wave of tribalism and factionalism managed to effectively wound this wall of unity. Coupled with these, Nagas’ weakness to materialism

and the crafty politics of the overground Naga leaders as well as skilful maneuver of the Indian Government of the entire situation apparently thrust a powerful blow to the once united Naga people as a nation.

All along, Nagas professed that their issue should not be simply hushed up as domestic problem of India for never in any part of their history had they anything to do with India. They claim that their “country” never forms a part of India; even during the British colonial period, “Nagaland was not part of India, but under direct British occupation. Hence, India’s independence from Great Britain did not confer upon her sovereignty over Nagaland,” argued Means and Means (1967, 290). “Historically, Naga Homeland had no connection with either India or Burma, it was a land of many tribal democracies,” stated Kichu (17 July 2020). They have been reiterating on this point while trying to garner international support particularly that of the United Nations, whose influences however do not reach domestic issues, arguing that the rule of the Indian government is another form of “imperialism.” They “thought that the cessation of the British rule was a great recoil because it broke one yoke only to impose another upon them and wanted their inalienable sovereignty back along with the most fraternal and cordial relations with India,” stated Yonuo (1974, xv).

The claim of Naga people to complete sovereignty was strong at one point of time because of the sheer fact that they managed to forge unity in the concept of “Naga nation” despite being hailed from different villages, clans and tribes. However, at present, such claim has been reduced to a mere rhetoric, mainly because of disunity among themselves. They mostly blamed the outsiders for their disunity whereas in reality this was also their own doings. Duomai (2019) stated that Nagas have terribly failed to resist to the ploy of outsiders’ dividing them by giving different definitions to the term Nagas as Southern Nagas, Eastern Nagas, Central Nagas, Myanmar Nagas, etc. but this was also made possible with the help of a few educated but opportunist Nagas. Internal divisions became more

intensified definitely with the creation of the Nagaland state in 1963. This along with “the policy of the Indian authorities to present a more acceptable face to the Nagas, the Naga’s desire for ‘peace’ and the political gimmick of the Indian government, altogether whittled the fighting spirit of the Nagas,” wrote Gray (1986, 58).

Contemporarily, the Nagas are in a very complex situation. They are sandwiched between various social vices like tribalism, factionalism, corruption, nepotism, etc. Of all these, fratricidal killings among the Nagas to serve the vested interests of the Naga political groups have become the most serious issue. This has plunged the Nagas into yet another dark phase after the dark period under the “reign” of the Indian Army. They are now fighting against the Government of India for sovereignty, and also among themselves on a factional line. Both the type of fighting, i.e., between the Indian Army and the Naga political groups on one hand, and among the Nagas themselves on the other, is however against the principle of peace. It disturbs the creation of a peaceful environment that is required for a peaceful co-existence and development. Factionalism is the root cause of all internal fighting among the Nagas that has led to the situation of peacelessness in Nagaland. It leads to a sense of insecurity among the Nagas – old and young, poor and rich, or male and female. In fact, factionalism directly or indirectly affects the life of every Nagas. Of late, factional rivalry mainly based on the issue of tribe-ism, leadership crisis and the tussle for power has proven to be a menace that can threaten the current “Indo-Naga” peace process.

Very aptly, Lotha considered tribalism, extortion, bribery, small-mind attitudes, and internal conflicts as “negative forces” which could easily drown any constructive activities (2016, 299). In fact, at the end of 2019, after four years from the inking of the historic “Indo-Naga” Framework Agreement, when people were anxiously waiting for the resolution of the stalemated Naga political issue, Nagalim was once again thrust in the midst of turmoil, this

time ignited not by blatant acts of human rights violation by the Indian security forces but by the crafty politics of the Indian Government and various negative forces that have directly challenged the FA from within the Naga society. These negative forces could only play the role of harmful and ignoble spoilers.

### **Factionalism: The biggest obstacle to the FA?**

Factionalism has changed the face of Naga political movement forever. Indeed, the rise of factionalism has restrained the Nagas from being united as they were in the recent past. In what follows, the study attempts to understand what actually oriented factionalism among the Nagas? Is it due to difference in ideology, lust for power, love for money, or tribalism? Before the grouping of seven Naga factions into “one faction,” that is, the Working Committee of the NNPGs in 2017, Nagas had more than ten factions, all of which assert that they are fighting for the political rights of the Naga people to be sovereign. Read from this context, all the factions seem “politically oriented” with a single political ideology. Yonuo (1974, xix) pointed out that although Naga political factions “targeted the hegemony of certain leaders but they probably did not imply any desire to uproot the independence of the Nagas.” The question now is: if they have a single political ideology, why then are they divided into so many factions? Does this hint the overwhelming presence of proselytes particularly among the so called “national workers” and thus lack of commitment to the professed political ideology? Factionalism is actually undoing the Nagas’ earlier professed goal to construct the future of “One Destination, One People, and One Nation.”<sup>15</sup> Bujra (1973, 133-36) argued that factionalism in the political arena is about “political groupings” undoubtedly but it also is a sign of lack of “ideological commitment.” Indeed, the lack of ideological commitment set the stage for what Ralphe Bunche (2021, 39:47), General

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<sup>15</sup> James Hoarah (2021, 21:50) in a talk commemorating the 75<sup>th</sup> declaration of Naga Independence Day stated that factionalism has become a curse for the Naga political movement, wherein, they had spent so much time, energy and wealth destroying each other. Re-focusing and renewing commitment to the goal of “One Destination, One People, and One Nation” is thus the need of the hour.

secretary of UNPO, termed as “intractable dialogue” which in a way can be interpreted as a game to deny the true existence of the Nagas as a different entity from India. And the longer the Nagas stay in such stage of limbo the more costly and suicidal it will be for their future for it will then negatively affect the psychological wellness of the Naga nation and “in its ability to preserve its culture, to grow and to meet the many challenges of the world today,” further stated Bunche (2021, 39:47).

Beals and Siegal (1966, cited in Bujra 1973, 141) also argued that “factionalism is socially disruptive and leads to a breakdown of cooperative activities within communities.” In the Naga context, it portrays the “wretched stupidity of the leadership,” paralyzing the movement for “a house divided against itself cannot stand,” stated Yonuo (1974, 389). With factionalism, all they could achieve is a crumbling politics and relationships. It, indeed, has left a permanent mark in the history of the Naga movement and almost every literature on the issue make a reference to it, as though, reading of this movement sans the issue of factionalism seems to have become incomplete. Large scale emphasis on this issue is perhaps because, of late, true and honourable peace could only be achieved by addressing not only the larger “Indo-Naga” political violence but also the internal problem of factionalism that has brewed serious animosity and hatred within the Naga family.

As ugly as it is and dislike by the Naga populace, factionalism has been a pathology that co-existed with the Naga political movement since its early period, often stupefying the Naga nationalist leaders. The first tremor of factionalism, though mild, was generated when the “People’s Independence League” (PIL) – the organization that aimed for independence of the Nagas in contradiction to that of the Naga National Council (NNC) which in its formative period insisted for “special autonomy” within India – was split from the NNC

(see Wouters, 2018, 19). Apparently, it was the People's Independence League<sup>16</sup> that declared the Naga Independence on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August, 1997 and not the NNC as commonly assumed (ibid, 19-20). A.Z. Phizo was a member of this organization and apparently it ceased to exist when Phizo was made the fourth president of the NNC in 1950 (ibid.). In essence, this organization had no destructive effect on the limelight and the support rendered by the Naga hoi polloi to the NNC, perhaps, because, its formation was triggered by differences in political goal and not formed with tribe as the basis. This was not so, when in the 1960s, another group defected from the NNC purely on tribe basis. Kughato Sukhai, the then *Ato Kilonser* of the NNC, a Sumi leader, was leading the political peace parleys of the 1960s but he was accused of "failing to achieve any political gains despite prolonged negotiations," leading him to his subsequent resignation. At the same time, Scato Swu, another Sumi leader, was replaced by G. Mhiasiu as the President of the NNC; simultaneously, General Mowu Angami was appointed as the Chief of the Federal Army, ignoring General Zuheto, another senior Sumi leader. All these, along with other problems infuriated the younger brother of Kughato Sukhai, Kaito Sema, who read the above events in the line of tribalism, that is, Sumi versus Angami, and per se revolted against the "Angami leadership" and subsequently the Sumi group formed the Council of the Naga People (CNP) on November 1, 1968; and a day after, its government, the Revolutionary Government of Nagaland (RGN) was formed with Scato Swu as its Prime Minister (see Shimray 2005, 85-88 ). "The change in NNC leadership brought intertribal rivalry between two Naga groups, the Angamis and the Semas, to the fore and resulted in a series of assassinations organized by both sides," stated Das (20017, 28). Shimray (2005, 86) rightly pointed out that this time, "tribalism was getting intertwined with Federal Government set-

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<sup>16</sup> 'Right from the beginning, the NNC was broadly divided into two camps: those in favour of meaningful Naga autonomy within Assam and India and advocates of complete Naga independence,' and on tribe's basis, Nagas came to be associated with either of these camps, stated Wouters (2019, 7). Subsequently, the division led to the creation of the People's Independence League (PIL) of which Kevichusa, Sakhrie and Phizo were part, with headquarters in Khonoma village (Wouters, 2019, 10).

up.” The final blow to the robust NNC was given by the formation of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) in 1980 as a result of serious disagreement regarding the signing of the Shillong Accord (1975) by a few representatives of the NNC. With this, the support base of the NNC was permanently altered. The Angami and Chakhesang tribes remaining loyal to the NNC or the “parent body” while Tangkhul and Sumi tribes with the newly formed NSCN. Indeed, with the formation of NSCN, the Naga people also became clearly divided on tribal-factional lines.

In 1988, NSCN was divided into two factions largely because of internal leadership crisis between Isak and Muivah versus S.S. Khaplang. Since then, the two parties have been in loggerhead with one another. Eventually, the NSCN headed by Isak and Muivah became more prominent and their fights against the GoI for the cause of the Nagas seem to have gained the support of a sizeable number of the Naga masses. But in 2007, the NSCN headed by Isak and Muivah suffered an internal division when Azetho Chophy defected and formed the NSCN (Unification). Likewise, on June 7, 2011, the Khaplang led NSCN suffered a similar fate when Kitovi Zhimomi (General Secretary of the faction) and Khole Konyak (Chief-in-Command of the faction) defected and formed the NSCN (KK). Within a span of a year or two, NSCN-U was merged with NSCN-KK. Further, in March 2015, when Khaplang decided to pull out of the ceasefire agreement with the Indian Government, a group of people from within the group who are in favour of the continuation of the ceasefire, formed the NSCN (Reformation) under the leadership of Y. Wangtin Naga.

The question on how to make the ongoing “Indo-Naga” peace process as inclusive as possible has been one of the most important challenges. In fact, for inclusivity sake, opined Das (2018, 54), “hectic efforts were made between December, 2016 and October 2017 ...to persuade some of the dissenting groups to join the peace parley.” The result was the formation of the Working Committee of the NNPG in October, 2017 by six Naga factions –

NSCN (Unification), NSCN (Reformation), Naga National Council ('Parent Body'), National People's Government of Nagaland of the NNC (Non-Accordist), Naga National Council/Government Democratic Republic of Nagaland and Federal Government of Nagaland (FGN). Two years later in 2019, the Khango Konyak led NSCN (Khango) defected from the Khaplang led NSCN and also joined the NNPG. Thus, NNPG is an umbrella group that houses seven Naga political factions but in praxis, it has established itself as a single faction. In 2020, one new faction led by Niki Sumi further defected from the Khaplang led NSCN. Most recently, Akato Chopy who was the Vice President of NSCN (Reformation) defected and formed his own faction in November 2021. The present political scenario in Nagaland is that, on one hand, Naga political groups are conflicting with the Indian Government for their political independence. On the other hand, they are fighting among themselves in the name of the same cause. Thus, to correct this anomaly and also to mend the torn relationship and make the Nagas united again, the first reconciliation prayer program was organized in October 1984, wherein, several Naga civil organizations and churches of Nagaland prayed for reconciliation between the NNC and the NSCN (IWGIA 1986, 125).

Bujra (1973, 143-44) stated: "No real community exists in a state of perfect political unity, since economic resources of various kinds are always in short supply and competition for control over them is inevitable." Searching for "perfect political unity" is a utopia for, as pointed out by Chan and Man (2012, 145), "it would likely be futile to search for sainthood or compassion in politics." As it is, factionalism, division and betrayal which comprised the mark of any political movements remain valid for the Nagas as well. If these marks, however, go beyond the threshold and overshadowed the actual cause, then it rings the death bell of that particular movement. Many have come to construe that these also form the primary factors in deadening not only the spirit of nationalism among the Nagas but also the



people's support to the movement. Indeed, Naga people are fed up of the madness of factional killings which happen simultaneously with "routine forced taxations, intimidations, (and) extortions" (Lotha 2016, 51). Information obtained from the field is inundated with the comments that there is a compelling need to educate the Nagas of all sections, not just focusing on the deeply factionalized "underground sections" as has been the trend, on the significance of unity for attainment of true and lasting peace. Indeed, today very commonly, the Nagas acknowledge that unity is a *sine qua non* in resolving their political problem with New Delhi. But when asked as to how to bring this unity they seem to be at a loss of words, placing the onus to the "undergrounds," to the Forum for Naga Reconciliation (FNR), to the church, to other tribes, etc. Factionalism within the Naga political groups has a ripple effect on the larger Naga society which now has become deeply divided on tribe's line and the artificial boundaries which apparently were unacceptable to the Nagas because it disintegrated the otherwise compactly inhabiting Nagas into various administrative set-ups have now become a well-defined line of division among them.

In factionalism, the logic – "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" – also became valid. For instance, when General Kaito was allegedly murdered by the "Phizoite at Kohima in August 1968," the "Kaitoists," became an informant for the Indian Government and General Mowu of the FGN was arrested by the Government of India (Yonuo 1974, xx). "Human ambition and rivalry coupled with an ample range of material gains and external influence to trigger attempts at the violent overthrow of rivalry," are also common factors responsible for factionalism, argued Yonuo (1974, xix). Besides these factors, another important reason is "the selfish aim of accruing 'private economic gains' (that) often induced the 'rebels' to take bold risks and thus, they become unruly, often creating a condition for the growth of new factions" (Keen 1998, 24, cited in Wouters 2018, 89).

Initially, factionalism was started to end violence in the Naga Hills and negotiate for peace with the Indian Government. Yonuo (1974, xvii) commented: “Meanwhile, the moderate Nagas, hating violence, believing in the virtues of constitutionalism, democracy and rule of law, confiding in the ability of mass electorate, weaned away from the Federal government headed by its President, Scato Swu, a good natured Sema, and formed a People’s Convention to stop bloodshed in Nagaland.” Factionalism compelled the Naga people to demand from their “national workers” to earn back their trust and support if they wish to survive with dignity. Relatedly, the Naga Hoho stated: “No doubt, any political movement or revolutionary group survived only when there was selfless contribution from the people, and history will never deny that. However, in the context of Naga freedom movement, the national workers must prove that they are worthy of their cause” (cited in Lotha 2016, 52). Factionalism clearly projects disunity and lack of trust among the Naga “undergrounds.” More than 80% respondents of the study stated that disunity and lack of trust are two major hindrances to the path of the ongoing “Indo-Naga” peace process. They expressed that these are the reasons why honourable solution has evaded them thus far. In other words, they held that unity among the several Naga political groups could bring a permanent solution to the Naga political conflict. Thus, they argue in favour of inclusiveness, holding the view that the NSCN must take other factions on board with them in the ongoing political peace parleys. It needs mentioning that inclusivity though is very crucial for successful peace process but if this is achieved through anomalous strategy of New Delhi, for example, R.N. Ravi bringing on board to the political peace parleys, the NNPG, the group which he has created and “nursed” (Mehta 1 August 2020), the peace process is only doom to fail and this is evidenced by the critical face-off between Ravi and the NSCN.

On the issue of taking other Naga political factions on board in the ongoing “Indo-Naga” peace process, NSCN does not sound too willing. “Practically it is very hard to include

other factions in the ongoing political talk. NSCN-K, NSCN-U, NNC, all of them join forces with the GoI and fought against us. Supposing for goodness sake, we allow them in but to what extent can they be trusted?” stated Th. Muivah (2013). V. Horam (2018) also metaphorically narrated: “After more than 83 rounds of talk we have achieved many things. Supposed we include other factions and if they accept whatever have been agreed and discussed so far, then there will be no problem. But if they opposed and said we shall make all together different proposals and agreements, then that will be a big problem. We are already building a house that is in near completion, with only doors and windows left to be fixed. Now if others say we must dismantle the house and build a new one on its place that will be a serious problem. So in what way they can be involved is the problem.” At present, Horam’s narration has somewhat become a reality. NNPG was taken on board by R.N. Ravi and a different agreement (“Agreed Position”) from that of the already signed FA was also signed with them in 2017. Apparently, NNPG is willing to sign an agreement that does not give provision for separate Naga flag and constitution, the entities that described the uniqueness of Naga history and political situation. One respondent alleged that the Indian Government is partly responsible for “creating and nurturing armed Naga groups” that can be used as a tool against other anti-Indian government Naga political groups. In the present, Ravi is accused as the mastermind behind the creation of NNPG at the expense of NSCN. Similar to this, around late 1950s and early 1960s, an armed group made up of Naga youths, called as the “Flying Scouts” was also created and empowered by the Indian Government to “terrorize suspected NNC” (Young, 2020, Facebook). Later on, in Jamir’s “evil design to crush the NSCN,” the Nagaland Youth Liberation Front was formed, stated the Tenyemi National Workers Forum (TNWF) (UT Desk 7 August 2020).

On being asked whether the GoI has anything to do with factionalism among the Nagas, many respondents narrated that it, indeed, is the fruit of the clever scheming of the Indian

Government. Elaborating more specifically, according to them, the 16 Point Agreement, in the early 1960s between the Indian Government and the Naga People's Convention (NPC)<sup>17</sup>, intensified factionalism and the covert involvement of the Government of India was also evidenced by this agreement. The agreement clearly divided the Nagas by placing them under various administrative set-ups. It constructed a wall among the Nagas, dividing them into "pure, un-pure, superior, inferior Nagas." This wall that destroys the closely knitted unity forged by the consciousness of Naga nationhood also forms the predominant reason for brewing up hatred and animosity among the Nagas. Relatedly, the Naga Student's Federation (NSF) in 2000 stated: "The 16 Point Agreement was responsible for deviating [sic.] the Naga nationalism resulting into killing of Nagas by Nagas, extortions, money culture reducing the Nagas to a level of commodities in front of Delhi" (cited in Lotha 2016, 44). One prominent leader of NPF also narrated that "RAW, the Indian Intelligence is very active in this part of the country and they have penetrated into the factions now. So when these people (Naga political groups) are working with them, can we expect to see any unity? RAW called disunity among the Nagas as their success. This is one factor why Naga leaders cannot come together."

Even after the signing of the second "Indo-Naga" ceasefire agreement in 1997, Nagalim is still restive, seemingly disturbed not so much by the yesteryear's "bestial" behaviour of the Indian security forces anymore but by the factional clashes among the Naga political groups. It also kind of territorializes the Naga people's support to the ongoing political struggle. Thus, the image like Southern Nagas supporting the Isak and Muivah led NSCN, Eastern Nagas for the Khaplang led NSCN, Tenyemi of Central Nagas, NNC, etc. became strongly constructed. Most recently, the objective of the NNPG to focus first for the Nagas

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<sup>17</sup> Naga People's Convention (NPC) was an organization formed to act as a mediating body between the Federal Government of Nagaland (FGN) and the Indian Government.

of Nagaland state, the notion with unflinching support of the Nagaland Tribes Council and Gaobura Federation (GBF), further intensified such territorialization.

Factionalism indeed has acted as the biggest obstacle to successful Naga peace process and most recently to the FA. It is protracting the already stretched Naga political issue, adding much to the anxiety of the Naga public. With the aim therefore of removing this bugbear, the FNR since 2008, has been toiling and walking the path of reconciliation, often agreed as “the key towards evolving a common pathway forward” for the Nagas (Longchari 2016, 6). But, perhaps, more than a decade old reconciliation activities have proven a chimera, prompting Wati Aier, one of the most efficient and high profile FNR leaders to admit that what the Nagas need today is a “paradigm shift from unity to cooperation.” “Unity, indeed, is beautiful but it can also be self-defeating” for the Nagas, further stated Aier (2020). Undoubtedly, the issue of factionalism was diagnosed right from the nascent period of the Naga movement but until recently, its divisive and complicated impact was not greatly felt because the spirit of nationalism molded a robust sense of unity among the Nagas. Such unity was primarily forged by the aggressive attitude and behaviour of the Indian government. Today, in the absence of “common political enemy” for the Nagas, decades of enmity within themselves has come to rein the scenario of Naga political violence.

### **Tribalism: The root of factionalism**

When one talks about the origin of the ideology of tribalism, it is particularly European, originated in the jealous interest and curiosity of the British anthropologists in their study of group of people in less advanced countries (Mafeje 1971, 253). Discoursing how tribalism, a foreign ideology, led to “disintegration” of the traditional African societies, Mafeje (ibid, 255) argued that it is also responsible for the “loss of their pristine ‘equilibrium and cohesion,’” degrading the “African ethic.” Thus, the ideology of tribalism came into clash with any existing traditional societies upon which the Europeans laid their foot. This also

holds true for the traditional Naga society, on whom the ideology was introduced by the British ethnographers, who studied the traditional Naga villages on tribe basis predominantly for administrative purpose of the British Crown. A tribe, according to Schapera (1956, cited in Mafeje 1971, 257) is a “separate ‘political communities,’ each claiming exclusive rights to a given territory and managing its affairs independently of external control.” Yet again, the concept of tribe can only be understood contextually; it is “constructed by social actors situated differently in the world,” discussed Layne (1987, 184). Nevertheless, what marks a tribe from other forms of organization is: “territoriality, primitive government through elders and chiefs, and a primitive subsistence economy,” and if a traditional society rose up against any external agency that violates these features, it can be said to exhibit tribalism, stated Mafeje (1971, 257-58).

Gray (1986, 45) defined tribalism as a “word used for the repression against creating larger unities of political organisation.” On a similar note, Layne (1987, 186-87) argued that tribalism could also connote “placing family ties before all other political allegiances and hence...considered to be antithetical to loyalty to the State.” In other words, tribalism gives more predominance to parochial identity rather than broader and larger identity such as nationalism. It emphasizes on “primordial tie” or “primordial attachments” that could have serious threat to any newer construction of ties and attachments (Layne 1987, 193). This holds valid in the Naga context where tribalism, which is being argued here as the root of factionalism, has seriously dislocated the Nagas’ struggle for independence. It is growing like a deadly cancer and its treatment is yet to be discovered. Factionalism effected division on tribe’s line and thus support for it became tribalistic. For instance, the Eastern Nagas particularly the Konyaks are believed to support Khaplang faction; the Southern Nagas particularly the Tangkhuls, the Muivah led NSCN; the Tenyemi, NNC; the Sumi Naga, the NNPG, etc. Again, factionalism is primarily rooted in the jingoistic attitude of Naga

underground leaders, who have come to identify themselves rather more strongly on tribe basis and this apparently has replaced their national identity. Subsequently, tribe identification among the leaders went viral, affecting even the populace, who today pay loyalty to existing factions based on tribal line. And tribalism among the Nagas was further intensified with the formation of Nagaland state, for with it, the fourteen identified Naga tribes of the state propagandized they are “pure Nagas” and the rest outside this small state, “un-pure Nagas,” and thus looked down on them with patronizing attitude, creating further rift among the Nagas. Furthermore, the fourteen Naga tribes of Nagaland are divided further into “backward” and “forward” tribes, wherein, the former alleged they are discriminated against by the latter and thus demanding a state of their own – for instance, the demand for creation of “Frontier Nagaland” spearheaded by the Eastern Naga People Organization (ENPO). The point is that such discrimination again is being carried out on tribe basis. Thus, today, in the name of tribalism, Nagas are pitted against each other even to the extent of killing each other so as to cleanse an area or a state from the influence of a particular tribe. For example, the serving of several “Quit Nagaland” notices and the deliberate massacre of the Tangkhuls in the 1990s by the Nagaland based underground factions with the support of some overground Naga leaders.

Substantially, Longchari (2016, 233) stated that the formation of Nagaland state again “is primarily responsible for promoting tribalism.” Longchari (ibid, 235) further argued that Article 371 (A) that provided for special status of the created Nagaland state was however an imposition “to politically trap the Naga national movement” and that through this, “India was seeking to break the collective Naga identity by creating new territorial based identities, and to demoralize the Naga spirit by allowing a limited Naga population to enjoy these ‘special provisions.’” The creation of the state did more harm than good to the Nagas for

through it “the Indian government (could) exercise ‘indirect rule,’ a policy akin to that disposed by the British against the Nagas,” discoursed Gray (1986, 58).

“In actual practice, however, both the locus and ethos of Naga political organization was vested not in the tribe, but in the prototypical Naga ‘village republics’” (Wouters 2018, 14). Chadha (2005, 289) also stated: “Naga society is village-based, with the village as the hub of all activities, and the cultivation areas spread out over a large expanse around them. Even today, attempts to dislodge Nagas from their villages, despite modernization, may be considered sacrilegious by the people, who are a close-knit society. The Indian government’s policy post-independence, of re-locating the Nagas, was viewed by them as an attempt to impinge on their right to live their age-old way of life.” How has the Nagas ended up being so tribalistic then?

In the distant past in the Naga world, each and every Nagas had exclusive identification with their village, the only place where they exercise their self-determination void of any external domination and can live freely and independently. But the advent of the British and with it the so-called development and modernization, altered their lifeworlds permanently. Like any other colonized people, the Nagas too were named, analyzed, and described by colonial researchers (Smith 2012, cited in Thong 2016, 79). In the academic parlance, the politico-administrative status of the ancient Naga world is conferred the names like “village republics” or “village states” that functioned in the pattern of ancient “Greek city states” (Yonuo 1974; Longchari 2016, 205; Johnson 1986, 12). This status of villages had been looked upon as “the height of civilization” of the Nagas, and perhaps, for this and coupled with the Nagas form of democracy, they were treated uniquely by the British as a people of “cultured nobility” needing only “indirect rule,” elaborated Gray (1986, 46-48). Indeed, so strong was their connection with the village that even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, every Naga (including those living in towns and cities; sophisticated Nagas or the elite sections) not



only traced their root to a village but also retains a permanent citizenship of one or the other village. Modernization and globalization have just entered the Naga's lifeworlds, joining and transforming many villages into towns and many people started migrating to new conurbations and also outside their lifeworlds across oceans, yet, wherever situated they may be, they still identify themselves with a particular village. Such a strong bond of connection with their village, however, came to be replaced with an equally if not stronger ties with their respective tribes today. And it was the British that made this replacement possible when they combined a number of villages and started addressing and treating it into "tribes" (Longchari 2016, 205-206).

Quite naïve of the Naga lifeworlds, the British when they first encountered the Nagas in 1832, gave a jejune account of encountering "some tribes" (Gray 1986, 39). Thence on, categorization of the Nagas on the basis of tribes and not villages commenced and this became more defined when some British ethnographers started studying the Nagas under the headings of tribes. For instance, Woodthorpe remarked: "They (the Nagas) have no generic term for the whole race, nor even for each of the various tribes constituting this race. A Naga, when asked who he is, generally replies that he is of such and such a village, though sometimes a specific name is given to a group of villages" (cited in Gray 1986, 48). Gray argued that the "repressive" or "indirect rule" of the British in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was designed to repress the spirit of Naga nationalism by "encouraging the notion of 'tribal identity'" (ibid, 44-45).

Thong (2016, 78-79) discoursed that it was not only the term "Naga" that was colonially invented and popularized; "the names of the Naga 'tribes' are also colonially imposed." Before the advent of the British, the Nagas identify themselves in reference to their habitat, that is, their villages (Mao 2013, cited in Longvah 2017, 122). The point is, in ancient days, their identification starts and ends with their village and per se the replacement of this with

tribe's name is therefore considered a modern British colonial construction. The invention of the term "Naga" and categorization of people that forms this term into various tribes was done so by the British colonialists to improve their administrative control (Thong 2016, 85). Thus, nomenclature and concepts like "Naga," "tribalism," and "nationalism" came into existence only with the coming of the British into the Naga world. Thence on, the political acumen of the Nagas to understand the idea of nationalism quickly obfuscated their erstwhile identification with their village which was later on came to be clearly defined by tribes' name. Reportedly, today there are roughly more than 60 Naga tribes spread over in four Northeastern states in India and Kachin state and Sagaing subdivision in Myanmar. Colin Johnson (1986, 12) relevantly wrote:

Before the advent of the British, the Nagas lived in permanently established village-states, much like the Greek city states, perched high above the valleys. Separated from each other by the rough terrain and adding to their separation by internecine warfare and feuding, they did not develop a conscious nationalism (tribalism) until much later.

Describing tribalism as a sign of possessing "a very low mentality," Yonuo (1974, x) discussed that this in fact was responsible for making a united Naga nation futile and as such, the era of tribalism "may be called the dark age for the Nagas." Somewhat in consonance to this, Thong (2016, 85) also stated: "Today, 'tribalism' or tribal favoritism among the Nagas is one of the lingering colonial legacies that often divides, demoralizes, and impedes the pursuit of the collective goal... Tribalism, thus, colors everything from education, employment, economic, and development opportunities to politics or the collective identity and aspirations for political emancipation." Tribalism obstinately disallows Nagas to raise their consensual voice and concern. On this, Lotha (2016, 299) commented:

Though different Naga tribes are related to each other ethnically, albeit some closer than others, a narrow tribalism can blind people from looking more closely at their

commonalities in the midst of their unique, and possibly more striking, differences, impeding a focus on achieving and awareness of cohesive identity and shared belonging as a nation that is life giving and fortifying for all. The formation of identity categories such as Tenyimia, Eastern Naga People Organization (ENPO), Central Naga Tribes Council (CNTC) comprising of Ao, Lotha, Sema, and Naga Tribes Council (NTC) can work counter to recognizing the unifying forces, if these groups are not cautious.

In the Naga context, tribalism is a form of reassertion and formation of a tribe's identity, to prove the worth, the power and advance-ness of a particular tribe amidst the common Naga identity that houses heterogeneous tribes. Thong (2016, 77) stated that "among the Nagas, on the one hand, there is a desire to consolidate the corporate identity and, on the other hand, there is a struggle for recognition of identities within the larger collective identity." As it is, the existence of two very big and broad identities, first, the "corporate identity," that is, the Nagas; second, the parochial identity, that is, the respective tribe; has indeed complicated the ongoing Naga political movement. Today, Nagas are pitted against each other for promotion of their tribal interests rather than the interests of the Naga people as a whole.

Initially, although Naga villages were given tribe identification, there was no strong wave of the feeling of tribalism. In other words, Nagas were more enthused by the idea of nationalism or defining themselves as a Naga nation distinct from other nations surrounding them. At that time, tribalism was an effete idea, nay a sleeping dragon numbed by the excitement of nationalism! Today, the sleeping dragon has awoken and creating un-repairable havoc throughout Nagalim; the earlier numbness taken away by the force of factionalism, crafty politics of the overground Naga leaders and the Indian Government, and the Nagas' materialistic mindset. Indisputably, both the national and tribe identity are the construction of the British colonialist and per se they are modern concepts. The essence, however, was that initially they were finely synergized, that is, instead of negatively

reacting to each other, they teamed up for the attainment of what Samir Kumar Das expressed as a “sovereign Naga Homeland.” However, in the post 1997, the disjointed efforts to protect the identity and interests of one’s tribe seem to have overshadowed the earlier unquestioned commitment to Naga “national” cause. Today, each Naga tribe “focused on strengthening its status and standing in relation to other tribes, leaving the Naga nation for what it was, a ‘semblance’” (Horam 1988, 24, cited in Wouters 2018, 100).

During the British colonial period, Nagas could not stop the dissection of their otherwise geographically compact territory for they were yet to be awakened as a single national force. Today, even after the consciousness of their nationalism, they still could not stop the various waves of dissections mainly because their division based on tribalism has become a reality and it is spreading beyond their control. So far, various efforts to end factionalism and bring reconciliation among the existing factions have rendered unproductive. More factions are being created and with these Naga people are compelled to pay multiple taxes/ extortion, this is the popular term used in local parlance, adding to their grievances and peacelessness. Contextually, however, we can infer that factionalism could exist vibrantly because of support from the populace. Tribalism, one of ‘isms’ firmly encrusted in the Naga society today, indeed, the root of factionalism and per se has become the base for factional support that has even the power of rendering the larger nationalism movement to the state of oblivion. Containing tribalism therefore remains the greatest challenge for the Nagas. Many lament, alas, there is no one among the Naga leaders today with the charisma and aptness of A.Z. Phizo to foster and muster unity, cutting across jingoistic tribalism, as one Naga nation! In any political violence, the relation between the insurgent group and the civilian society is metaphorized in Mao Tse Tung’s term to that of “water and fish relationship.” It is not solely the leaders’ fault that tribalism is nearly obfuscating nationalism in today’s context. The study found that public’s irrationality, ignorance and credulous nature, lust for

money and advantages and privileges brought by modernization, have led to slow but gradual cynical disregard for the national cause. Such an excrescence of the Naga society has been skillfully exploited by the Indian state, managing to trap some opportunist overground as well as underground Naga leaders. Today, a miasma of tribalism has reached every nook and corner of Nagalim. Singh (2007, 822) rightly observed that “the Naga society today stands divided with tribal alignments with different groups” and this is going to be a major hurdle in arriving at any workable solution to the protracted “Indo-Naga” conflict. Tribalism indeed is one paramount factor that has attenuated the Naga movement and Nagas are yet to come up with a strategy to counter tribalism, commented many respondents.

However, as argued by Layne (1987, 196), tribalism can co-exist with nationalism if “more localized allegiances and enmities are theoretically subordinated to the demands of larger ones.” At one point of time, Christianity acted as a “detrribalizing and unifying factor” for the Nagas (Young 2020). But today, the powerful concept of Christianity too whimpers at the growing might of tribalism.

### **Love and lust for money**

The era of Naga society today is marked with bribery, corruption, lost of Naga work culture, absolute dependence on the Indian Government for economic development but also for easy money. In the language of Thong (2016, 25) it is the era when “commodification abounds”. Indeed, “the commodification or commercialization of nature and culture that was once unthinkable has become a common practice among the Nagas today,” further stated Thong (ibid).

It was true that Nagas never surrendered to the barrel of guns of the Indian armed forces but when the latter started strafing through money, even the hardcore nationalists seem to be falling one after the other. Prophetically, A.Z. Phizo also stated: “Nagas will never

surrender in the battle field, but many Nagas will fall when money was shot through the barrel of gun.” Nuh narrated, India took “carrot and stick” to the Nagas and the Nagas were able to tackle the stick but “become pathetically addicted to the carrot” (cited by Pimomo 2020). Pimomo also argued that before Nagas became associated with India, they were doing alright economically, socially and politically but in the post of this association, by “India’s design,” Nagas have become economically dependent on India.

Generally speaking, love and lust for money is the primary cause of “corruption,” the term that encompasses varied forms of anomalous and pathological practices. It often turns a person into a pathological liar and opportunist. As per a study conducted by Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (2014, 3-4, 15), corruption has become the “system” of many countries enabling to build a pathological relationship between it and insurgencies and other form of political violence; often providing ground for “corrupt ruling elites (to) deliberately cultivate conflict because of the diverse opportunities for profiteering and wealth transfer that fighting affords.” Larmour and Wolanin (2013, 13-14) discoursed that the concept of corruption, indeed, can be very broad, for it involves: firstly “the conduct of any person that adversely affects the honest and impartial exercise”; secondly, “the misuse of public office” or “the misuse of information gained while performing public office”; and thirdly, “the dishonest or biased use of power or position resulting in one person being advantaged over another.”

For many Naga people, money has become the idol and when this is so, as prophetically mentioned in the Bible, it leads to ruin and destruction of not only the individual but also the society at large. This statement perhaps may sound anecdotal but it seems to have become factual for the Nagas. In an anticlimax nature, though vocally proclaiming themselves to be Christians – even proudly dedicating their land to Christ – the love and lust for money has also not left the Nagas from every walk of life, untouched. Ironically, though

their land is for Christ, yet, at present, there is paucity of rectitude in this land. The love and lust for money, which in the Bible is considered the “root of all kinds of evil,” indeed is threatening to crush the long-drawn Naga political movement to the ground, expressed many concerned Nagas particularly the younger generations. This concern is primarily heightened around October 2019 by the rumor that the NNPG might have compromised the Naga cause for money. Allegedly, some hundred crores were offered to the NNPG to bow down to the terms and dictates of R.N. Ravi.

The weakness of the Nagas for money has been cleverly exploited by the Indian Government since the initial stage of the Naga political violence. The creation of Nagaland State in 1963, for instance, was considered a ploy to silence an influential section of the Nagas by expressing a huge unaccounted and unaudited amount of money to this small state – the creation of which formally disintegrated not only the otherwise compact Naga territory of approximately 120,000 square kilometers, but also created the unquenchable flame of division within the Nagas as “real” and “duplicate” Nagas, on tribal lines and on so many other lines. Such a division has become petrified, indeed ossified! The twin Achilles heel of the Nagas – internal division and the love and lust for money – have become a powerful weapons in the hands of the Indian Government; steadily being used against the Nagas who are yet to come up with the strategy to counter these weapons of their own making, narrated another respondent.

Subtly controlling the Nagas through money power has become one of the clever policies devised by New Delhi, and this policy was given the name, the “smiling policy” (IWGIA 1986, 117-18). Naga political issue has become more vexed and complicated because of the influence of money for when money talks, many Nagas could be easily swayed, thereby easily manipulated; setting the course of Naga polity to various off-the-track directions. Right from the era of NNC till the present era of the NSCN, a trend has been set that when

money talks there is always a twist in the Naga polity. Besides the struggle for power, the love and lust for money indeed was the reason behind the birth of factionalism among the Nagas.

Desire for economic development for the society as a whole is, of course, not anomalous. It, however, could be counted anomalous when such desire is channeled toward individual's growth and development, for this often leads to amassment of wealth illegally, most primarily through corrupt activities. And contextually speaking, corruption cultivates nouveau riche Nagas in the society that at one point of time earns plaudits for its "egalitarian practice and belief." In ancient times, during the village-states system, Nagas "were often egalitarian without extremes of wealth or power, taking into account that any individual did not starve so long as there was food somewhere in the village-states," stated Yonuo (1948, xi). But with the taste of materialism well sipped in, egalitarianism no longer exists in today's Naga society.

Many respondents opinionated that their leaders, both overground and underground, have indulged themselves in the amassment of wealth and such act has become contagious; meaning, the public also are following the leaders' footsteps, not leaving any stone unturned when it comes to seeking for opportunity to make money. In one of his many lectures, the then Chief Minister of Nagaland, S.C. Jamir stated that he "loves interacting with youths" for this is the only section left in Nagaland safe from contamination or corruption. However, rendering Jamir's statement as a mere rhetoric, a youth narrated that they too have become victims of corruption. Most particularly during election, youths' vote are bought with money, sometimes the amount is huge and the narrator himself was offered Rs. 25,000 for his vote in one of Nagaland state legislative assembly elections. In similarity, Yonuo (1974, 398) also narrated that political parties in Nagaland not only "preach false propaganda of the objectives of the parties, (but also) force and bribe the poor villagers to cast vote for the



parties. In this way most of the candidates in the elections spend a huge sum of money and service in the hope that once elected and if one becomes minister, it would mean robbing thousands or lakhs of money from the people in the fashion of service to the people.” In essence, borrowing Thong’s term, corruption “colors everything” (Thong 2016, 85), setting its mark everywhere in the professed land for Christ and corrupt practices indeed is very difficult to unlearn once learned. At present, the rule of corruption is in its zenith and under such circumstance, one can give only gloomy picture for Nagalim if the incorrigible corruption is somehow left un-tackled, narrated another respondent. Tapan Bose also stated, “The (Nagaland) government is virtually bankrupt with corruption” (UT Desk 7 August 2020). Bose even accused that “the massive extortion and taxation happening in the Naga society today is created by the Indian government by empowering various political groups.” Das (2018, 64) also commented: “Corruption is an irony for Nagas that pride itself so much in tradition of honesty. Naga traditional values mixed with Christian principle could have infused a super honest culture but on the contrary, the opposite exists.” The reach of money and greed is very wide and indeed very deep. The individuals, the youths, the organizations, the elders, even the church, could be moved by the power of money. In other words, the numbing effect created by the power of money has deeply penetrated the everyday affairs of the Naga people too and this effect is increasing to a dramatic climax. “Seduction” of the Nagas with huge amount of unaccounted money mostly in the form of development funds pumped into the state of Nagaland is “part of a politically driven policy” of New Delhi in an attempt “to deeply penetrate the Naga highlands and to tie local livelihoods to existing state structures and the political status quo,” elaborated Wouters (2018, 30). This policy could gradually exhaust the Naga political movement for lack of support from the populace. The popular sentiments of the Nagas collected by this study indicate that it would not be hard for them to compromise their political cause for economic development and monetary benefits.

The lust for money is silencing the voice of Naga political movement. Materialism indeed has not only gripped many Nagas but also blinded them to the level that it has become their idol and they have come to “believe that economic development is the solution to all problems” (*Matters India* 15 December 2014). The love and lust for money, nay, easy money, has made the Nagas expert in playing what the IWGIA (1986, 95) termed as the “politics of corruption.” Relatedly, a study was done whether economic package could sway the Nagas to give up their political cause? Of the 116 respondents (See Figure 1 below), although only 24% of them outrightly opted for economic package in place of political cause as against 39% that still hold their political cause as sacrosanct, when this 24% is combined with the other 25% who probably feel the Nagas could sacrifice their political cause for individual wealth and 12% who could not give any clear-cut answer, the percentage that lacks confidence to the more than three decades long Naga political negotiation seems to be getting strong.

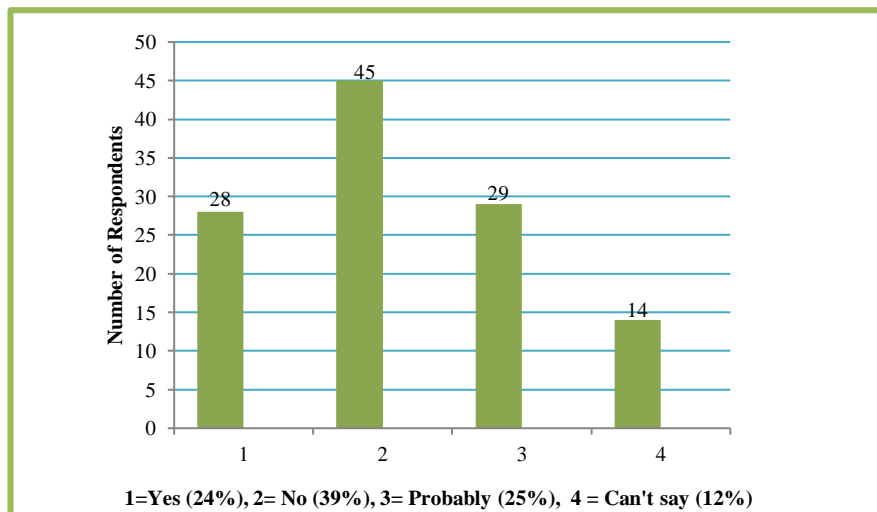


Figure 1: Could economic package make the Nagas give up their political cause?

(Source: This data is the result of the fieldwork conducted among seven Naga tribes in the town of undivided Dimapur in the summer of 2019).

The love and greed for money in fact has also created a very complicated nexus particularly between the overground and the underground leaders, very quickly manufacturing pseudo

Naga leaders who found a stable way of benefitting from the protracted Naga political conflict and per se not very enthusiastic on ending this conflict. This nexus became more properly and comfortably shaped with the 1997 “Indo-Naga” ceasefire agreement which “came to provide both national workers and state functionaries with opportunities to secure material gains in ways enabled by, and dependent on, the continuity of political disorder” (Wouters 2018, 88).

When did “money culture” become the “ruler” of this group of people where “purest form of democracy” was said to be practiced at one point of time and where “egalitarian system” was once the pride of their lifeworlds? A respondent narrated that just some thirty to forty years back, in the Naga villages, the use of key and lock to safeguard their houses and other valuable assets was foreign to them. In the not so distant past, Nagas’ world was marked by a life of a “non-accumulative economic practice” and like the rest of the tribal people in the Northeast, the philosophy of life of the Nagas was that “excessive consumption threatens sustainability and survival”; hence, they strongly belief in “non-accumulative and non-surplus cultural practices,” stated Thong (2016, 20).

“Money culture” or the accumulation of money through illegal means and very quickly and easily as well, started with the large pumping in of central funds to Nagaland state, euphemistically, for developmental activities but in reality to tackle the insurgency and related problems. The desire to get rich quick has struck down the age-old Nagas’ self-reliant economy which was indeed their lifestyle. It has become “a source of evil in Naga society because people are losing the sense of earning money” in the right way (IWGIA 1986, 94). The self-sufficient and self-reliant economy was altogether destroyed by inflow of unaccounted money from the Government of India to the state of Nagaland. Money culture was cultivated and nurtured by New Delhi through its “politics of development,” and such politics also created the so-called Naga elites who “live a life style which is totally

alien to Naga culture” (IWGIA 1986, 94). Such culture, indeed, has “pampered many Nagas to live an easy life” (*Matters India* 15 December 2014). The kind of life that makes the Nagas numb to the value of hard-earned money and makes thrifty habit a joke! Furthermore, this culture is the main factor behind the development of corruption and the emergence of the gap between the rich and the poor in the society where the value of egalitarianism was once the cornerstone of the societal set up. The “affluent Nagas” are also highly indianized – emulating the “Indian way of life. They employ servants, treat people in a deferential manner and even look down on their own villages which is something a traditional Naga would never do. They totally forget the Naga philosophy of equality and brotherhood and even though they talk of “their” village, they will not return there after their education is over” (IWGIA 1986, 109).

The love and lust for money is also directly responsible for the waning of public support to the Naga political movement, who are already overburdened with “taxation” and bias handling of various socio-political, cultural and religious issues by the so-called nationalist leaders. It, indeed, has also manufactured pseudo-nationalist category of people. Their act of indulging extravagantly in harnessing material wealth, nay their splurge on amassing wealth and property from the “national purse” meant for spending on the “national cause” has not only angered and embittered the Naga populace but it has also altogether alienated them from the movement. Parochial mindset, for instance the NNPG’s stance of working “only for Nagas of Nagaland state”, and materialism has become greater than “truth and dignity” in today’s Naga society, observed Wetsah (2019).

### **Crafty politics of Naga overground leaders**

The classification of Naga leaders as overground/moderates and underground/extremists does constantly form a part of the Naga political movement. Despite the categorization, both speak one “common political language” and that is to resolve the long drawn Naga

political movement, also popularly referred to as the movement for “Naga homeland.” In other words, theoretically, though the two groups of leaders seem to have parallel political opinion but in practice, their political opinion converge when it comes to finding a path to resolve the long-drawn Naga political violence; unequivocally proclaiming that “they are all Nagas by blood.” The difference, however, is that the former sought for solution within the framework of the Indian Constitution (in the form of “special autonomy”) and the latter outside the framework of the Indian Constitution also called as the “out-of-the-box solution” (in the form of “complete independence” or “shared-sovereignty”). Subsequently, in 1963, the overground leaders finding it a “political necessity” laid down the criteria for creating the Nagaland state. Jamir (2019), a renowned overground leader stated: “without this state, Nagas would not have come up to today’s level.” Indeed, overground leaders often justify that the creation of Nagaland state within the constitutional framework of India should be read as a political acumen to save the Nagas from the scourge of Indian Army’s atrocities at that juncture and thus it was only a step in acquiring permanent resolution, never meaning to be the “panacea” to the larger Naga political conflict. Overground leaders, particularly those governing the Nagaland state government or those vying for a seat in this government, believe in the “virtues of constitutionalism, democracy and rule of law, confiding in the ability of mass electorate,” so that violence and bloodshed would be ended (Yonuo 1974, xvii). They “saw themselves as protectors, not dissenters, of the Naga cause” (Wouters 2018, 4-5). In fact, in the late 1950s, Scato Swu, the then President of the Federal Government of Nagaland (FGN), turned overground and formed the Naga People’s Convention (NPC) with the hope of ending violence in Nagalim and negotiate for peace which subsequently led to the creation of Nagaland state in 1963 (Yonuo 1974, xvii). Often, they assert that whatever tough decisions they took was for peace and normality sake. Yet, for their role in the creation of Nagaland state, the “underground” section criticized them – a

welter of criticism was also raised by the populace as well – as the “puppet” of New Delhi and likewise their government as a “puppet government” and per se considered a renegade. In gist, the creation of the state was considered a “sell-out” of Nagas’ political right.

Perhaps, at present, when it comes to the overground leaders who lauded the Sixteen Point Agreement of 1960, S.C. Jamir, the then Chief Minister of Nagaland state, who also served as Governor in several Indian states like Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa, and Odisha, forms a typical example. For instance, the Tenyemi National Workers Forum (TNWF) considered him as “one who bloodied Naga history and spit venom to all who are against Naga People’s Convention’s (NPC’s) 16 Points Agreement. (Even now) S.C. Jamir is meddling in Naga issue using the NNPGs to find Naga solution on the basis of the 16 Points Agreement” (UT Desk 5 January 2021). Jamir while discoursing on the topic “Deconstructing the statehood of Nagaland,” in the maiden *VERITAS Lecture*, an annual program organized by the Department of Political Science, St. Joseph University, Dimapur, on March 5, 2019, pointed out that the entire realms in Nagaland – social, political, religious – are contaminated and corrupted, only the youths remain outside this context. To the aspiring young Naga politicians, he advised to “be righteous, honest, brave, hardworking, and their visions should be wider than their elders.” These virtues definitely are in paucity today and only a “revolution” could drastically change the stagnant Naga situation, commented one student after the lecture. Another reacted that overground leaders like S.C. Jamir mostly gave a well calculated political opinion that targets directly as well as indirectly the “underground” group of Nagas; they don’t live their talk! In this talk, Jamir further enthused and exhorted the youths to join him in “killing three types of animal,” in other words, three types of people in the Naga society – “firstly, the apes that symbolizes primitiveness; secondly, the tiger that stands for ferocity and violence; and thirdly, the donkey for fanatic attitude or dogmatism.” According to him, these three animals are apparently taking the

Nagas backward when they should be moving forward. Therefore, their death could only allow the Nagas to move forward, stated Jamir. Questioning the substance in looking backward to the past glories particularly like the exploit of the Nagas in forming the Naga Club, the advantage taken by them even of the scary and devastating World War I & II, glorification of their declared Independence Day, the Naga Plebiscite, the exploit of the NNC, etc, Jamir discoursed that they should think more about facing the future. Incompatibly, the perspectives of the “underground” leaders are to never forget the past glories for they act as a stepping stone to push forward to the future. They consider many overground leaders as already tamed by New Delhi and ipso facto work in its favor. Jamir is also accused of “openly collaborating with the central government in order to destroy the National Socialist Council of Nagalim” by using Khaplang led NSCN faction “leaders like Dally Mungro and Kitovi Zhimomi and their boys like his private army to target NSCN and its public supporter,” stated the TNWF (UT Desk 5 January 2021).

Reportedly, for his anti-Naga nationalist goal, there has been five assassination attempts against S.C. Jamir by the “underground” organizations, particularly, the NSCN headed by Isak and Muivah, the organization that comprises not only sizeable Tangkhul Naga population but also headed by them. In retaliation, the Tangkhul civilians in the state of Nagaland were victimized and many of them were killed in the 1990s in what was alleged as the “policy of vengeance” by Jamir. Allegedly, the attempt of cleansing the state of Nagaland from the Tangkhul tribe was the “master plan” of Jamir who used Khaplang faction as his tool in carrying out the plan, narrated a respondent. But, it has now become an open secret that such nexus between the overground leaders and the “underground” organizations is just the tip of an iceberg. So intertwined are they politically, socially and economically that it has become impossible to untangle them now. Reportedly, opportunist or those driven by money to achieve selfish ambition, from both the overground and the

“underground” categories do not want insurgency to end for they capitalize out of it. Indeed, “insurgency has become a ground for demanding more of central aid,” commented Singh (2007, 827).

“Peace and development” have become the catchwords of the overground leaders. Indeed, “peace for development and development for peace,” forms the political slogan of the Naga People’s Front (NPF) in one of its State Legislative Assembly election campaign. But, can there be a hidden agenda in such a beautiful slogan? Apparently, politicians would say and do anything to come to power and to remain in power. NPF failed to give a fair chance for real peace and development to settle down in Nagaland even after being in power for three consecutive terms. Lately, Neiphiu Rio’s government also allowed itself to become the “puppet” of Indian Government when it meekly adopted Governor R.N. Ravi’s dictation to profile every employee of the state regarding their relations with Naga political groups. It is worth mentioning that every Naga has somebody of their family or relatives directly or indirectly involved in the political movement. Several Naga civil organizations, intellectuals and laymen not only condemned the order but in it, they also saw the avaricious desire of Rio’s government to remain in the seat of power.

In the 1950s and 1960s, during the heydays of Naga political violence, crafty politics of the overground Naga leaders was read as the main obstacle to their “nationalist cause.” This category of Nagas and their role in the Naga movement became highly visible with the formation of the Naga People’s Convention (NPC) and subsequently, the creation of Nagaland state through their efforts. According to Isak Chishi Swu, this visibility was because many of the overground leaders were men “who have been working in the Indian administration,” and mainland India and the world were more frequented with their version of the Naga story, at the expense of the nationalist cause, “because the Indian Government



provides them with means of communication which (were) denied to us (NNC)” (Young 2020).

Crafty overground leaders’ politics also introduced class structure in the Naga society, creating the so-called “political class.” Yonuo (1974, 399) termed this political class as the “living devils” and they, “cluttered with bagatelle tendencies disdain their fellow uneducated ones as rags or inferiors in status and spend their day away in gratification of their own interests, frivolity and sins of other people, keeping their own evils behind, in Leo Tolstoyian sense.”

### **Apathy of Nagaland Nagas on the ongoing “Indo-Naga” political negotiation**

“By using the state of Nagaland and its missionaries, the Government of India has been trying to nullify the Naga (political) rights” and the creation of Nagaland state indeed “has created a long time impact between the Nagas of Nagaland and the Nagas outside Nagaland,” stated Lanusashi Longkumer (2020). Longkumer further stated that “the uneducated Nagas of Nagaland are in a deep crisis thinking that they are the original Nagas.” But, is it possible that such “crisis” could have crossed the boundary of the “uneducated Nagas,” dulling even the sense of the so-called educated Nagas? The notion of “pure and un-pure Nagas,” as it happens, was lying dormant, until actively awakened in Nagaland by Jamir’s policy of separating “chaff and paddy” (UT Desk 5 January 2021).

Upon interacting a group of educated Nagas from Nagaland state, the research found that they are very casual about the Naga issue in general and the ongoing “Indo-Naga” political negotiation in particular. They are least bothered and talked as though it is not their business to be concerned about the larger Naga political movement. Aptly thus, Fernandes and Borgohain (2017, 148) commented that in the state of Nagaland “very few of them expressed support, most of it partial, to the non-state actors in their fight for independence.” They held the opinion that “if the NSCN could arrive at some form of solution that will

benefit the Nagas outside the state of Nagaland, they would be simply happy for them.” It may be mentioned that the Nagas of Nagaland are better off than their brethren elsewhere and they are very quickly disconnecting from the movement for which their forefathers sacrificed their lives just a generation ago. Such aloofness has been described by one Naga writer in a straightforward language: “Unfortunately, some of the Naga tribes who are well ahead than others in enjoying the fruit of India’s independence are backsliding from the Naga national cause. Many educated Nagas of Nagaland do not want to talk about Naga national movement anymore...They seem to be quite satisfied with the ‘provision of India’ that meets their daily basic needs and whoever disturbs this ‘provision’ is condemned.”

Lately, this apathy is further engineered by the then governor of Nagaland state, R.N. Ravi, who by using the “distorted” contents of the FA not only nurtured many groups who are against the ongoing peace process under the leadership of NSCN but also weaned the commoners’ support to the said peace process by constantly using nurtured groups as the mouthpiece of the governor and spreading false propaganda that the “FA doesn’t concern the Nagas of Nagaland state.” Thus, NNPG along with the support of Nagaland Tribes Council and Nagaland Gaonbura Federation decided to focus only for the Nagas of Nagaland state. S.C. Jamir (2019) also stated: “Think about unity among Nagas of Nagaland first and then only think about Nagas in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur.”

### **Crafty politics of the Indian Government**

One long-lasting outcome of crafty politics of the Indian Government is that even after associating itself with the Indian Union for 73 years, Nagas still have not been able to erase in what Means and Means (1966: 297) termed as “animosity and suspicion towards Indians.” History speaks that the Nagas’ desire for self-determination began in the British colonial period which created what is known as “the modern Naga identity that stemmed from the Western colonial experience (and) has continually evolved even more forcefully

with their colonial experience under the Indian nation-state,” argued Thong (2016, 99). Indeed, it was the colonization of Nagas by the Indian state that “thrust the Nagas from village-states into an articulation for a pan-Naga nation-state” (ibid.). And on the Naga issue, the stand of the Government of India has been to search for solution within the framework of its Constitution. Nagas, on the other hand, asserting their right to independence, has been looking for it in the opposite direction, firmly holding that “a constitution drawn by the people who have no knowledge of Nagaland and the Naga people will be quite unsuitable and unacceptable to the Naga people” (Yonuo 1974, 167). Although the Indian Government recognized that the Nagas are a race different from them, whose existence was learned by them only in the late 1940s when India was preparing for Independence from the clutch of British colonialism, time and again, they reiterated that Nagas would not be granted independence, most particularly, for security reason and for the fact that Nagalim could not survive on her own. Relatedly, on 9 July 1966, *The Guardian* wrote:

Indians have been leaning over backwards to find some way of giving the Nagas satisfaction without actually giving them what they want. The Nagas want independence and no diplomatic formula can dress up the solution that falls short of this aim. Conceivably, Indians could move from their flexible position if it were not for the fact that in addition to traditional dislike which any Central Government has for seceding provinces, Nagaland is in their most sensitive border area. Contiguous with Burma and close to East Pakistan and China, the Nagas could hardly have been more unfortunately located. For strategic reasons India is unlikely ever to budge. (Yonuo 1974, 310-11)

The Naga issue became stalemated because of such opposite stance maintained by each party as sacrosanct. Usually in the context of protracted ceasefire like that of the incumbent “Indo-Naga” ceasefire, the state has more advantage over the insurgent group, “if only because the state possess two things insurgent groups usually do not: patience and near

inexhaustible resources,” stated Wouters (2018, 118). In fact, these two things have been cleverly exploited by all the successive Indian governments whether formed by the Congress party or the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). They have been patiently trying to at least portray that they are earnestly seeking for what the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh termed as “out-of-the-box-solutions” and at the same time it has been pumping huge amount of unaccountable money to counter the Naga movement. Thus, it could never run out of resources to finance its patience, nay, it is immortal in this sense. Ngaihte (2014, 26) rightly hinted, “The longer the impasse lingers, the more advantageous the Indian government’s position will be, given the asymmetrical nature of the contest.”

Contrariwise, this could prove lethal for the Naga movement which seems to depend heavily on the charisma of a leader and these leaders are definitely mortal being. Many Nagas silently opine that it appears as though New Delhi is deliberately using “a delay tactics” waiting for the Naga leaders to leave this world one after the other. So, while fighting against the immortal clever political patience and calculation of New Delhi, prominent Naga leaders like Isak Chishi Swu, Khodao Yanthan and S.S. Khaplang are no more today and for how long an octogenarian leader Th. Muivah would survive? New Delhi has all the patience and the resources to wait, Nagas apparently do not. On this topic, the Chief-in-Command of NSCN, Anthony Shimray, stated that “India may be tempted to take advantage of the agedness of Th. Muivah, the chief negotiator; to drag on the peace negotiation, but if the Naga issue is not concluded during the time of Muivah, the consequences could be fatal for both sides.” Relatedly, Bhushan (13 April 2020) also observed that it would be “foolhardy to let the peace talks collapse, for much has already been achieved in resolving the Naga dispute.”

New Delhi since early 2000 had officially recognized the uniqueness of Naga history and their political situation and the subsequent FA was signed basing on this entity. One

indicator of the “unique history and political situation” is the Nagas’ celebration of their Independence Day on 14<sup>th</sup> August; hoisting their own flag which again is governed by their Constitution (*Yehzabo*). In fact, possession of a separate flag and constitution could be read as one distinguishing political entity of the Nagas. If this entity is to be omitted then what marks the uniqueness of the Naga history? Is not the recent impasse between the Narendra Modi led government and the NSCN on Naga flag and constitution defies the whole logic of the “uniqueness of Naga history,” recognized so by the Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 2002? But, toward the end of 2019, the declaration of New Delhi that it would not recognize separate flag and constitution of the Nagas created much protestation among the Nagas. Reacting to New Delhi’s move, Anthony Shimray (2019) commented: “The Indian state has always been crafty, never finding it difficult to betray the agreement they themselves have entered.”

It was in the midst of October 2019 when the military might of India was once again resonated in Nagalim, the kind of might already tested successfully in Jammu & Kashmir few months prior to this. New Delhi showed her muscle power to the earlier fully fledged state of J&K on 6 August 2019, when this was disintegrated, with the help of roughly 10,000 troops, into two union territories – Jammu & Kashmir, and Ladakh. Bhushan stated that flexing her muscle power, the two symbols of political identity – separate flag and constitution – were taken away from Kashmir and similar strategy was also applied against the Nagas (Bhushan 13 April 2020). The 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2019 was set as the deadline “to the NSCN (IM) to fall in line” (ibid) and accepts New Delhi’s dictated solution to the long-drawn Naga issue, or else it would go ahead and signed an agreement with the willing NNPG. However, as pointed out by a military commentator, Major General (Retd), Ashok K. Mehta (1 August 2020), the FA was signed with the NSCN and not the NNPG.

Therefore, without the NSCN, can the Naga issue be really resolved honorably is one important concern for the Government of India to consider deeply.

Once again, Nagas felt hemmed in by the show of muscle power and the military might of New Delhi when the booming sound of jet fighters numbed the ears of Dimapur dwellers for several days. It may be pointed out that Camp Hebron, which is the Headquarter of the NSCN is located in this town – a town popularly known as the commercial-hub of Nagaland state. It was the time when the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) of 1958 was “reactivated” and there was also a threat of bringing in ferocious “border security forces” to Nagaland. A friend of this researcher, whose brother is an IPS officer, also gave advice to stock ration that would last for at least two months. Apparently, the booming sound of India’s might was a strategy to intimidate the NSCN in order for the latter to submit to the mighty whims of New Delhi. “Ravi also resorted to fear psychosis to pressurize the NSCN to submission. He organized military exercises over Naga areas using Indian Air Force’s latest aircrafts, deployed heavy security forces with war tanks, directing all Nagaland state security forces to be in their respective stations with ration stock to last for at least two months and directing all state police Special Branch to identify and locate the NSCN members’ residents” (MIP, NSCN/GPRN 11 August 2020). Such intimidation, indeed, a retrograde step, came after more than two decades of peaceful political negotiation, indicating that the Indian government has been craftily knitting the “Indo-Naga” peace process toward meeting its own imperious end, thus once again shoving aside the point of “mutual understanding and respect” – the key ingredient for any successful peace process – also apparently acknowledged by Prime Minister Narendra Modi while signing the 2015 FA. The crafty politics of the Indian Government nearly ended the 23 years old “Indo-Naga” political negotiation, saved at the nick of time “by the two sides coming to a mutual

formulation on how to proceed on the issue of separate flag and constitution,” commented Bhushan (13 April 2020).

As already discussed in the earlier chapters, of late, a new party, NNPG, allegedly “nursed by R.N. Ravi,” (Mehta 1 August 2020) was taken on board by New Delhi in the ongoing “Indo-Naga” political negotiation. A kind of equal weightage has been given to both the NSCN and the NNPG and simultaneous negotiations were being carried out. This tactic is considered by Bhushan (13 April 2020) as applying the knowledge of “the time-tested formula of divide and rule that Indian agencies have used to manipulate divisions between the Naga groups.” NNPG has been “projected as stakeholders in the peace talks on a par with the largest and active armed group, the NSCN-IM. Now, if the NSCN-IM refuses to come around on the flag and constitution issues, Delhi can threaten it will sign the peace agreement with these groups” (ibid.). It was rumored that NNPG was offered Rs. “500 crores” and allegedly the offer was accepted by drawing few crores as the first installment, to enter into an agreement dictated by the Indian Government. The money from the Government of India was disbursed not because it cares about the Nagas but to “pamper” them so that “they become an instrument for them in crushing” the Naga movement, observed Wetsah (2019). Now the questions being pondered by many are: can it be considered political prudence on the part of the Government of India to lift up the NNPG at the expense of the NSCN? Does this move really have the capacity to resolve the long-drawn Naga issue or is it just a crafty move to intimidate the NSCN and derail the movement? On this note, Veino (2019) hinted that formation of such faction has not only been encouraged but also utilized as an effective tool to “divide and rule” the Nagas. Relatedly, Ngaihte (2014, 26) also observed: “For the Nagas, with all their internal squabbling and divisions, the question is whether they will be able to sustain the momentum for the long term.” The strategy of dividing and then controlling and manipulating the

Nagas is however not a unique characteristic of the Indian Government. Knight (1985, 267) pointed out that any “ruling governments are apt to manipulate and divide the indigenous populations as a means for defusing and deflecting claims.”

Bhaumik (2020) also observed that this “whole business of playing the underground and overground and then various factions in the underground, the tribal factors, playing the territory, is all part of a game, all part of a holistic (Indian) state’s sponsored exercise to actually reduce the (political) negotiations, not for a real appropriate long term settlement.” He further stated that “Nagas have lost out a lot because of division”; disunity among the Nagas in fact “is a brilliant excuse for delaying the whole (political) process. Therefore, until and unless the Indian Government “stops playing this divide and rule game,” there can be no genuine settlement of the Naga political problem.

On being asked whether they are satisfied with the strategies adopted by New Delhi to bring resolution to the protracted Naga issue, a huge majority of the respondents, 66%, responded they are discouraged (See Figure 2). New Delhi right from the very beginning has been throwing her weight around which has not only prolonged but also rendered the Naga movement more complicated, commented one respondent.

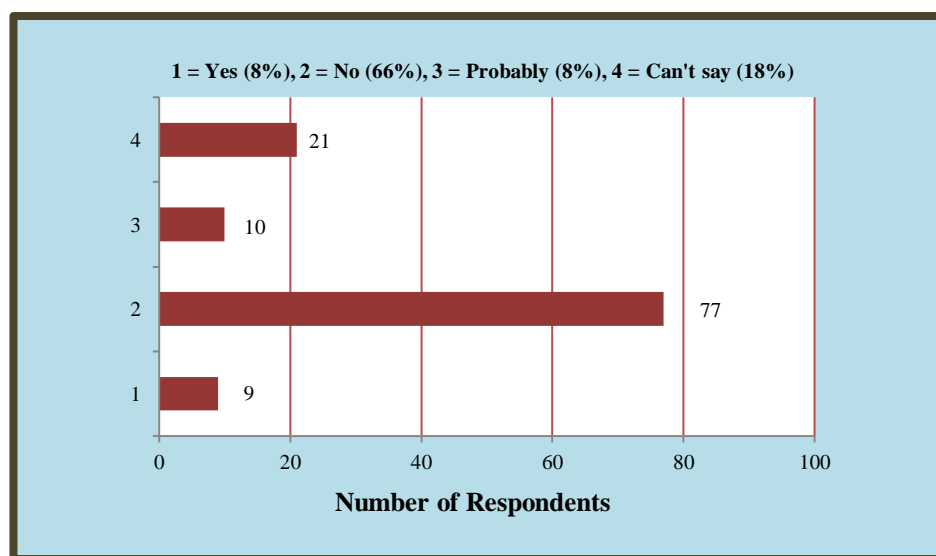


Figure 2: Are you satisfied with the strategies adopted by the Centre to solve the protracted “Indo-Naga” political conflict?



(Source: This data is the result of the fieldwork conducted among seven Naga tribes in the town of undivided Dimapur in the summer of 2019)

The Government of India views the Naga political issue only from the perspective of “security” reason and therefore they appear to neglect their commitment to resolve the Naga issue politically. No doubt, the Vajpayee government back then, described the Naga issue as “a political problem needing a political solution.” However, it has been alleged that “the Naga talks has been treated more as a security issue with the active involvement of the bureaucracy and military and thereby stalling any chances of a political resolution” (Longkumer 18 March 2014). It is also held that resolving the Naga issue does not appear to play any political dividend like the Kashmir or the Telengana issue and therefore no government in New Delhi has so far acted upon seriously on the Naga peace process (ibid.). Many Nagas hold that the Government of India is largely responsible for the protracted Naga political conflict. V.S. Atem (2018) also stated: “There is no good leadership in the Indian government. They have no political courage, nor political will. If they have the will and the courage then it is high time to find a solution already.” Relatedly, Bhushan (6 February 2019) also pointed out the Central Government must partly be “blamed for the delay in Parliament of the final settlement.” Had they taken the confidence of the opposition parties, the neighbouring states of Nagaland, “to convince Parliament of the need for a Naga settlement,” then perhaps unnecessary derailment of the peace process could have been avoided. Neingulo Krome, Secretary General of the Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR), at the 12<sup>th</sup> Session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, United Nations stated that the signed 2015 FA “has not been implemented so far, (because of) some hiccups much to the discredit of India’s insincerity” (*The Quint* 20 July 2019).

One may deduce that the real intention for adoption of crafty politics is perhaps not to produce a “win-win solution” but rather creating and looking for opportunities for a “win-lose solution.” And recently, such politics has been actively played by R.N. Ravi, India’s then interlocutor in the ongoing “Indo-Naga” political negotiations and also the then Governor of Nagaland state in 2020. The ongoing political parley could persist for quite a long period because it was based on the principle that the Naga issue is a political one and ipso facto calling for a political solution. But in July 2020, Ravi bypassed this principle and once again resorted to crafty politics in his efforts to depict the Naga issue as merely a “law and order problem.” Subir Bhaumik hinted that such move of Ravi can be attributed to Narendra Modi’s failure to appoint “political leaders or experienced bureaucrats” unlike his predecessors, to resolve the “huge political problem” of the Nagas (Basumatary 16 July 2020). The Naga issue is a complicated one on which even a seasoned political negotiator could not make further progress from the scratch of the 1997 ceasefire agreement and subsequently the political negotiation. Bhaumik further reminded that “Framework agreements like the one in August 2015 are only signed to pave the way for political settlements, not to handle law and order problems” (cited in Basumatary 16 July 2020). Amidst the derailment of relationship between Ravi and the NSCN, the latter accusing the former as “insincere and deceitful,” “NSCN (IM) questions if PM Modi had assigned a “wrong person” to solve Indo-Naga political issue” (Ambrocia 10 July 2020).

Another reason for playing crafty politics is because the Centre lacks political will to fulfill its promises made to the Nagas. Perhaps, the lack of political will and the genuineness in finding honorable solution is the reason why the Indian government has mostly been vague in their statements. “The problem is that the (Indian) state is talking in two voices...the Home Ministry will speak differently, the PMO will speak differently and the interlocutor will speak in a completely different voice,” stated Kumar Sanjay Singh (2020). For

instance, it promised “‘special federal relationship’ as the basis for a final Naga settlement,” (Basumatary 16 July 2020) but Ravi’s move and impasse revolving around the Naga flag and constitution depict that the Centre is drawing back its promise. “Thus, we need to be careful; Indian Government has the history of betraying agreements,” cautioned Anthony Shimray. Crafty politics in the end only created a trust deficit scenario further lengthening the coil of the “Indo-Naga” peace process. For instance, a final round of talk between the GoI and the NSCN was slated for 7<sup>th</sup> August, 2020, only to be postponed to the later week, perhaps because the latter does not want to negotiate anymore with R.N. Ravi who was accused of playing crafty politics and the NSCN even demanding for his replacement (PTI 9 August 2020). Lately, Ravi called the NSCN an “armed gang” and this has impaired their cordial relationship build up so far. On this, Naga Mother’s Association (NMA) stated: “It is ‘unbecoming’ of the Governor as the Peace Interlocutor of the Naga Peace Talks, to refer to the Naga Political Groups as mere ‘armed gangs’, when a political negotiation for peace is ongoing” (*Morung Express* 9 August 2020). Chanmayo J. Aier asked: “How the Governor will ever parley with Naga political groups again whom he has painted as armed gangs. The vital bridge has been broken and therefore the Nagas are worried” (UT Desk 7 August 2020). The final negotiation would be on the issues like Naga flag, separate constitution for the Nagas and setting up of a “museum or war memorial of the arms and ammunitions of Naga armed rebels at Kohima” (Anand 7 August 2020). Reportedly, separate flag for the Nagas might be recognized and “security sources said that all the terms and conditions for surrender of arms and ammunitions and disbanding the armed rebel group have already been finalized” (ibid.).

Crafty politics also often led to a stalemate. After taking over as the Governor of Nagaland state, Ravi makes an effort to reduce the Naga issue as a mere law and order problem, necessitating the implementation of Article 371A (1) (b) that “provides special

responsibility to the Governor that undermines the elected representatives” (UT Desk 7 August 2020). Perhaps, this is an attempt to repeat the kind of feat against Kashmir in Nagaland as well. Such moves, however, took the Naga issue back to square one, nullifying all the progress made so far after 23 years of political negotiations. Tapan Bose, a human rights defender, stated that “the Governor’s intention to take over day to day function of the state shows the inability of the Indian government to proceed with the peace process” (ibid.). The open volte-face of Ravi after being appointed the Governor of Nagaland earned him criticisms. “He is breaking the hard-earned trust and faith of the people and rendering the 23 years negotiation meaningless by smearing Naga history and also the political groups with whom the Government of India is engaged in a negotiation,” stated the Naga Hoho (PTI 9 August 2020).

Recently played crafty politics of Ravi is a “vitriolic attack on Naga issue,” stated NSCN in a press statement (Ambrocia 11 August 2020). His craftiness prompted NSCN to seek assurance from the Government of India that the “FA is still alive in its original form” and now they want their issue to be “handled by somebody other than RN Ravi, who is sensitive enough to understand and respect what has been achieved during the past 23 years” (ibid.). NSCN also asserted, “It is comprehensible that person who want to turn the clock back the Naga issue by forcibly making it into ‘law and order issue’ cannot be expected to recapture Naga people’s imagination to bring solution that is honorable and acceptable” (MIP, NSCN/GPRN 11 August 2020). It also received fulmination from the Nagas. For instance, the Naga Hoho and the Naga Mothers’ Association (NMA) in a memorandum to the Prime Minister accused Ravi of “threatening” and “hounding” different Naga groups and “functioning in an autocratic manner without any regard and respect for what has been achieved so far” (PTI 9 August 2020). They also expressed resentment at the “profiling of Nagas,” and termed the move to make state government employees issue self declaration of

their relationship with cadres of the Naga political groups as highly objectionable. “This move indicates the total lack of understanding of Naga political history and the movement for self determination, which began decades ago, with the full participation of almost every Naga family,” the NMA stated (*The Morung Express* 9 August 2020).

Ravi accused NSCN of “mischievously” dragging the peace process by “imputing imaginary contents” to the FA (Ambrocia 11 August 2020). Simultaneously, NSCN accused Ravi of “twisting” the FA and “misleading” the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the same when it was informed that NSCN has “agreed for settlement within Indian Federation with special status ...(departing) from their earlier position of ‘with India,’ and not ‘within India’”(MIP, NSCN/GPRN 11 August 2020). NSCN alleged that the agreement is “outside the purview of the Indian Federation/Constitution” (ibid.). Further, Ravi is also accused of deleting the word “new” from the original version of the agreement – “it will provide for an enduring inclusive *new* relationship of peaceful co-existence of the two entities (two sovereign powers)” – and the false version of the FA has been circulated to the 14 Naga tribe leaders, NNPG, Nagaland Tribes Council and Nagaland Gaonbura Federation, managing to even brainwash some of them (ibid.). A “NEW relationship strongly indicates outside the purview of the Indian Constitution. When ‘NEW’ is removed there is room for misinterpreting it as under Indian Constitution” (ibid.).

According to NSCN, Ravi after becoming the Governor even change his tone of speech and started making use of “un-parliamentary language in the official talk” (MIP, NSCN/GPRN 11 August 2020). Regarding whether the FA guarantees future “Indo-Naga” relationship within or outside the purview of the Indian Constitution, Ravi chastised the NSCN negotiating team by stating that “this can be understood even by Class VII students that it means acceptance of the Indian Constitution” (ibid). Reacting to this statement, Paul Pimomo (2020), an English Professor in the Central Washington University stated that

“even class VII students must know that the Naga issue is not a law and order problem.” Ravi even went on to give “unethical deadline” to the NSCN to sign the Naga Agreement on or before October 31, 2019 but “taking unilateral decision on the timeline is never a part of the negotiation,” stated NSCN (MIP, NSCN/GPRN 11 August 2020). The organization did not reveal the FA for long simply to protect the “tacit understanding reached between the two sides not to release to the public domain for security reasons of India” (ibid.). According to Th. Muivah (2020) in an interview to Karan Thapar, “Ravi has thrown (the NSCN) away. All the agreements they entered together are being betrayed. He is not for solution. He is there to suppress us. He is the Governor of Nagaland state who deals with law and order issues and not with politics. But ours is a political issue between the Nagas and India.” To this end, therefore, NSCN called for the replacement of R.N. Ravi as the interlocutor of the Indian Government in the Naga peace negotiation. Perhaps succumbing to the pressure of the NSCN, in September 2021, Akshaya Kumar Mishra was appointed as the new interlocutor for Naga peace talks. In his letter to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, apparently sent on February 25, 2020, Th. Muivah stated that for “honourable political settlement,” the NSCN in 2002 accepted the official invitation of the Indian Government to hold the peace negotiations in India and not in third country. Perhaps, the lack of respect of the Modi government to the steps and decisions of political wisdom of the past Indian leaders compelled Muivah to write to Modi that “in the given circumstances and in order to save the political dialogue, the talks should resume at the highest, i.e., Prime Minister level; without pre-condition; and outside India in a third country. And if our stay in India is no more welcome, all necessary arrangement must be made for us to leave India and the political talks be resumed in a third country.”

## **Conclusion**

Naga society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has reached a saturation point, politically, economically, socially, culturally, and religiously. The growth of incessant internal fighting, tribal jingoism, corruption, nepotism, crafty politics of both Naga overground leaders and Indian government and clannish tendency that has successfully whittled the Naga nationalist movement is, in fact, the fulcrum in rendering and accentuating the saturated point. How do bring in change to such a deeply saturated Naga society has been one great challenge, in fact, the greatest bugbear of the Nagas. Question remains whether amidst various negative forces the FA would be able to thaw the saturation.

Nagalim at present is in the throes of factionalism, tribalism and corruption, and all these have been craftily encouraged by the Government of India and also “opportunist” Naga leaders for one or the other vested interests. It has created much hatred and division among the Nagas, becoming an effective tool of the Indian Government in orchestrating “divide and rule” policy, nay, in the words of Longchari (2020), “define and rule” policy against the Nagas. The orchestrator of such policy often used one group against another group or one tribe against another tribe. In fact, this kind of policy was started first in the 1850s by the British against the Nagas and later on perfectly adopted by the Indian Government in their efforts to subjugate the “rising Nagas” (Yonuo 1974, 72). They are also quickly killing the sense of nationalism among the Nagas that was “awakened” by the advent of British, Nagas’ contact with the outside world, advent of Christianity, etc. With all these factors at work, Nagas apparently have traded and forsaken the God for whom they were building the nation. The existence of these factors indeed negates their professed principle – “Nagaland for Christ.” In short, all the above mentioned forces destructively waylaid the Nagas from pushing in unison their goal to achieve sustainable peace, stability and development.

Many peace practitioners and scholars agree that there can be no concrete monotonous set of solution for all types of conflicts. Some inferred that just like every different type of

diseases need different medication; so also, every conflict needs different set of solutions depending on the history and the nature of that particular conflict. Thus, it would be a political blunder to apply the same tactics of resolving a conflict for all types of conflicts. In other words, what is applicable to one conflict may not necessarily be applicable to the other. There can be no single prototype of solution to all conflicts, but, nonetheless, “every conflict ought to have a solution.” Moreover, every conflict needs a solution at the earliest possible time for the welfare of the people affected by conflict. It is generally held that there is always a way out from the conflicting situation if there is a will and if it is sought earnestly and sincerely. Based on this, many Nagas believe that there ought to be a solution that would help end their location-specific conflict. In the succeeding concluding chapter, the query on whether or not the FA could fulfill the longing of the Naga people for solution and peace is analyzed.



## Chapter V

### **Conclusion: Analyzing viable routes to meaningful peace in Nagalim**

#### **A clarion call for farsightedness**

To this day, Nagas partly blame the British colonialists for their still continuing political violence. Often time, they projected that they could be subjugated only by the British and thirty per cent of their country was under the British rule from 1879 or 1880-1947 (Das 2007; Yonuo 1974, 107). And this subjugation was achieved with difficulty. On this, citing Butler (1855, 171) and Elwin (1961, 147-95), Wouters wrote:

British-Naga encounters were never fought on equal footings: '[Naga warriors] were astounded at perceiving that their wooden shields were no protection against leaden bullets'. Still, Nagas refused to surrender, and it took the British several decades, the loss of many lives, and tremendous expenditure, to subdue Naga villages into notional submission. (2018, 16)

Had the British read the 1929 memorandum by the Nagas farsightedly, then, perhaps the "Indo-Naga" political violence, wherein violence as a necessary evil to subdue the Nagas and the Nagas to respond to such process of political control, could have been avoided? Decades later, India not only "inherited" Nagalim from the colonial power but also the Britishers' lack of farsightedness vis-à-vis the Naga issue. In the Nagas' perspective, their war was read as war against the "injustice" of forcefully integrating them to the Indian Union. In what follows, they came to accept and adopt political violence as inherent in attaining political freedom. The point is, in the process of New Delhi's exploits of taming the Nagas to rid themselves of the idea of political independence, their history became written with overwhelming events of brutality and ignominy, rendering the Nagas to be ever more hostile and alienated with India.

Historically, many agreements have been signed between the Government of India and the Nagas but with the testing of time, all have fallen short of the criterion – farsightedness.

And only time will tell whether the most recently signed FA, in few years, would become a victim or a victor. Farsightedness is also a quality found in paucity among the Naga leaders. The point where Nagas came nearest to resolving its issue honorably was during the 1960s “Indo-Naga” peace process, wherein, Suisa Rungtung, dearly addressed to this day by the Tangkhuls as *Awo* (Uncle) Suisa, parleyed for “federal relationship” between the Nagas and India. But Suisa’s proposal was considered a heresy by the Naga leaders of his time. It took the Naga leaders about half a century to find substance and practicality in his proposal. At present, the NSCN is seemingly parleying for “shared-sovereignty” status. Many narrated that the rejection of Suisa’s proposal is perhaps the costliest blunder committed by the Naga leaders.

For a piecemeal solution to be avoided and application of political prudence to avoid signing an agreement that is bound to fail, “inclusivity” becomes to be understood as the key for successful Naga peace process. On this note, therefore, NNPG, several Naga civil society groups and tribal Hohos were reached out and engaged in the existing peaceful political negotiations. But in 2019, the primary party in the political negotiation was nearly put on the defensive when New Delhi threatened to sign a peace agreement with the NNPG, leaving out the main party, the NSCN. If such agreement with the NNPG is inked, the questions that need to be raised are: will such agreement really solve the Naga political issue? Would it be just a repetition of short-sighted political blunder?

The then interlocutor of the Indian Government to the Naga peace talk who was also the Governor of the state of Nagaland, R.N. Ravi, earned much plaudit, particularly from the Nagas, when the 2015 FA was signed. But this acclamation soon transformed to severe fulmination when he defamed the main party to the peace talk as simply an “armed gang,” involving in law and order issue of “extortion,” implying thus the necessity of reverting back to military solution to the officially recognized political issue of the Nagas. The volte

face of Ravi can be seen as rendering the political wisdom of many Indian Army generals and Indian prime ministers of seeking political solution for political issue a foolhardy decision. For long, the vocal determination of the Nagas for recognition of their aspired independence is heresy to the Indian Government and it, therefore, executed pathological violence against the Naga populace and not just the so called “Naga nationalists.” Nevertheless, in 2002, the Vajpayee Government officially recognized the Nagas’ status, particularly the history of their political movement, as “unique,” thereby, requiring “unique solution.” In fact, this impressive recognition becomes popular at least in academic writings as well as in Naga people’s parlance, and the popularity of such recognition gained further ground when in August 3, 2015, the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi declared the Nagas as “partner” of India (cited in Longvah 2016, 43). The grandeur recognition, however, has not generated the expected resolution of the long running Naga political violence, goading many to deduce that in the ongoing “Indo-Naga” peace process, although purported otherwise, the underbelly of India’s attitude perhaps is still patronizing in nature and not willing to negotiate the Nagas as partners. “India has not adequately demonstrated in spirit her willingness to be an equal partner in the peace process by creating the democratic space for the Naga people to freely express and decide their political future,” explained Longchari (2016, 6).

Flying off at a tangent from securing lasting peace, the ongoing “Indo-Naga” peace process has created a scenario of “no war no peace” or the environment of “ugly stability,” the terms used by Tellis while describing the Indo-Pak imbroglio along the Line of Control [LOC] (cited in Chadha 2005, 26). Any conflict can be mitigated either through violent or non-violent means. However, for effective and enduring peace, conflict must be resolved in a peaceful non-violent means. Mahatma Gandhi always emphasized that “means justifies ends”; good means would lead to good ends. Under no circumstances, bad means would

lead to good ends. In this line, therefore, the notion “ends justifies the means,” i.e., any means (including violent means) can be adopted to meet the ends, will not hold true for realizing meaningful peace in North East region in general and Naga areas in particular. Thus, with this conviction, pausing violent activities, the two conflicting parties have been engaging in peaceful political parleys for more than two decades but amiable end to this path seemingly remain at a distant horizon. Often times, the Nagas accused that the GoI has not been serious enough and lacks “political will” in resolving their issue through political means. Accusations were also hurled against the NSCN for derailing the Naga issue by bringing in subjects like “separate flag and constitution for the Nagas” which according to R.N. Ravi were not part of the FA.

In the post-framework agreement situation, predicting the probable future outcome of the Naga peace process is complicated. Division among the Nagas runs as deep as ever, if not deeper, and the forces working up this division is as powerful as ever, that, it has become extremely difficult for them to unravel it and work together for the well being of the entire Naga society. Indeed, like Means and Means (1966-1967, 312) who stated about the circumstances created by the first Naga peace process in 1964, “Prognostications about the future are hazardous.” Yet, they predicted three results: first, a peace settlement could be reached; second, “the armed truce could be extended and peace talks could continue for some time without a clear resolution of the conflict”; and third, “full-scale hostilities may be resumed with all the horrors of guerrilla terrorism and Draconian counter-insurgency measures” (ibid.). The third prognostic was what marked the aftermath of the first Naga peace process which necessitated the commencement of the second peace process in the form of Shillong Accord, 1975. The third Naga peace process, commenced in 1997 and continuing to this date, led to the signing of the FA. Two years before Ravi brought on board the NNPG (the group he “engineered” or “nursed”) to the ongoing peace process in

2017, the agreement lifted the spirit of the Naga people, for it fills their hearts with the air of hope that their political movement would perhaps be resolved this time. The NNPG supported by Naga civil society groups like Nagaland Tribes Council and NGB Federation read the FA as not beneficial for the Nagas of Nagaland state and apparently, it came out with a separate demand of its own. This move of the NNPG intensified the Naga internal conflict, which in fact is gradually freezing the spirit ignited by the FA, especially in the state of Nagaland. The kind of hurdle to the FA generated by the NNPG definitely is a farsighted calculation of the Indian Government determined to downgrade the intense and passionate feeling of Naga nationalism gradually if not immediately. Such “farsightedness” however only signals a negative attitude, a dark resolute intention that works definitely against the spirit of peaceful and creative resolution of the Naga political violence. To put it simply, this was not the kind of “farsightedness” required for creating an environment of meaningful peace in Nagalim.

### **Complexity over the issue of separate Naga flag and constitution**

Irrespective of the reality of deeply factionalized Naga political movement, the Naga flag is a living symbol that continues to sensitize the Nagas in general of their political cause. According to the living witness account of a 100 years old Nnolo Lorin (2021, 2:42), who was actively involved in the hoisting of the first Naga flag at Parashen, Rengma territory, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1956, A.Z. Phizo pronounced that “Without hoisting the flag, there can be no independence.” The flag, “with a rainbow against the blue sky and star of Bethlehem,” symbolizes the distinctness of the Naga people and acts as an insignia of their faith and their struggle for freedom and peace in Nagalim. When the “uniqueness of the Naga history and political situation” was recognized and accepted by the Indian government in the early 2000s, Naga leadership perhaps might have thought that their flag and constitution undoubtedly define and magnify the nature of “uniqueness” and ipso facto forms the

essential part of the whole “uniqueness” discourse. But this reasoning was “shattered” when towards the end of 2019 a fresh stand-still situation was created following the Indian government’s open declaration of the principle of “one nation, one constitution, one flag” and this principle was forcefully but successfully applied in the former state of Jammu & Kashmir. Apparently, the scope of this principle definitely cannot make room for Nagas’ separate flag and constitution. The Nagas, particularly the NSCN, on the other hand, maintain that any solution sans separate flag and constitution is no solution at all. There, indeed, can be no “honorable solution” without a separate flag and constitution, asserted the NSCN.

What has India got to lose by recognizing the separate flag and constitution of the Naga people? On this question, many respondents opinionated that India has nothing to lose but her ego, political chauvinism and bigotry, for flag and constitution for the Nagas are main characters that tell a story of their long-drawn political movement. Admittedly, many experts on the “Indo-Naga” political issue advanced the notion that the issue of Naga flag and constitution cannot be detached from the logic of “unique history” of the Naga people. When the then Prime Minister recognized the “unique history” of the Nagas, A.B. Vajpayee must have done so after thorough contemplation in understanding the root causes of the Naga political violence in order to work out for “honorable and practical solution.” The ensuing “Indo-Naga” political negotiation was set on the tone of “unique history and political situation requiring unique solution.” Apparently, the Indian Government had no problem focusing on this tone and thus it should have no problem when Nagas voiced that flag and constitution have been the symbolic objects that express their “unique” identity. The close connection of the flag, constitution and “unique history” is hinted in the “shared-sovereignty” model which forms the crux of the “Indo-Naga” framework agreement. This model in fact aims for establishing what Bhaumik termed as “authentic federalism” which

could greatly enhance India's global image. Today, when India's global image is in the making, she cannot afford persistent hostility in her frontier areas.

### **Taking care of India's security problem**

It has always been difficult for the Indian Government to view the Naga issue in any other light than from the security perspective and ipso facto there can be only one version to resolve the issue, that is, solution must be found within the ambit of the Indian constitution. Yonuo (1974, 310-11) stated: "...in addition to traditional dislike which any Central Government has for seceding provinces, Nagaland is in their most sensitive border area. Contiguous with Burma and close to East Pakistan and China, the Nagas could hardly have been more unfortunately located. For strategic reasons India is unlikely ever to budge." For long, the Nagas did not budge either from the aspiration for "complete sovereignty" and thus conceivably the stalemate and the elongated Naga issue. Today, NSCN claimed the recent "shared-sovereignty" conflict resolution model addresses India's persistent trepidation of territorial integrity and security. In it, the NSCN agreed that the Nagas would not separate itself from India but would live together as "two separate entities forging a new relationship of peaceful coexistence." So long as the Nagas and India tread on the principle of mutual respect for each other's right, NSCN hinted that India's security problem would be taken care of. The study found that the question as to how close Nagas can get to India depends on the principle of mutual respect and understanding. But in 2020, when the "Indo-Naga" political dialogue is at the "breaking point" because of the issues of flag and constitution, the tone of Muivah got stern. He explained that "shared-sovereignty" does not mean Nagas will "merge with the Indian Union. We will not accept the Indian Constitution. We will never be part of the Indian Union."

### **Avoiding ill-balanced compromise**

Lack of farsightedness resulted into many ill-balanced compromises in the “Indo-Naga” context. Also called as a lopsided compromise, such compromise could only lead to piecemeal and “zero sum” situation. So far, this has been the fate of the Nagas, who once again, are trying to change this fate with the Framework Agreement as the foundation for all future “Indo-Naga” conflict resolution process. It may be noted that in the “Indo-Naga” dealings, the “win-win” outcome, very often, was simply reduced to a mere euphemistic language – a win-lose outcome in actuality was euphemistically interpreted as a win-win outcome. For instance, in the height of their movement in the late 1950s, some members of the NNC left the organization and formed the Naga People’s Convention (NPC) that entered into the first ever ill-balanced compromise when it proposed and created the Nagaland state in 1963 without the consent of the “underground party”– the party that was directly conflicting with the Indian Government. Initially, NPC was formed with the intention of mediating between the two warring parties but the “mediator” ends up signing an agreement without the real stakeholder, the NNC. One wonders what could have prompted such audacity of the NPC. The act of the NPC actually breached the principle of the mediation mechanism of conflict resolution. Apart from ignoring the norms of a mediator to work with rationality and impartiality for meaningful and sustainable peace, the NPC also audaciously signed the Sixteen Point Agreement, 1960 at the expense of the NNC. In retaliation, the NNC accused NPC of being stupefied by the chicaneries of the Government of India. Yet, to the NPC and the Indian Government, the agreement promises a win-win solution. There will be peace and stability at least in the state of Nagaland that was created through this agreement. The aftermath of this agreement created an entirely anticlimax scenario however. It led to more intense conflict with the “underground” Nagas and the Indian Government and also between the “underground” and the overground Nagas. NPC was the



result of Indian Government's divide and control strategy but such strategy "has done little to isolate the rebels in the long run," stated Das (2007, 54).

Ill-balanced compromise could only be arrived after negating the principle of mutual respect and understanding, pushing meaningful peace and stability to far away corner. Again in 1975, some members of the NNC signed the Shillong Accord which came to be read as the most "inglorious defeat" by the Naga posterity but at that moment, considered a "necessity" to save the Nagas from the ferocity of the Indian armed forces. Notably, the accord was the result of "the government's strategy of holding talks only after militarily weakening the insurgents and forcing them to deposit or surrender their arms" (Das 2017, 53-54).

Das (ibid.) explained the futility of signing an ill-balanced deal. In his words:

It is no use signing an accord either with a body that signs the dotted lines at the point of gun or with one that has hardly any control over the underground rebels. Such accords are bound to fail, and it is better not to sign an accord at all than to sign an accord that is bound to fail. Failed accords always proved costlier than continuing hostilities. Failed peace processes may also be used by rebels as part of their strategy and as an opportunity to regroup, particularly at a time when they are pushed into a corner by government forces and are on the defensive. A failed peace process is essentially a continuation of war – perhaps preparation for war at a more intense level.

Political analyst today has started pointing out that the current "Indo-Naga" peace process also hints ill-balanced compromise if the NSCN leaders do not take precaution to the crafty politics being played by the Indian Government and also the simmering discontentment within its own cadres. For instance, A. Raman, Deputy *Longvibu*/ Chief of the NSCN is being goaded on to critique its own leaders because of the latter's silence and inaction against the Indian Army's continuing harassment and atrocities not only to the NSCN cadres but also to their families.

Moreover, the opposing voice from the NNPG, which is described as an ugly lump that has grown on the Nagas' search for meaningful peace and stability, negates the 24 years old "Indo-Naga" political negotiation. The group was willing to sign any agreement even without the provision for a separate Naga flag and constitution (Saikia 31 October 2019). If such agreement was signed, surely it would have surpassed all other past ill-balanced compromises or piecemeal solutions. What Ravi is trying to achieve through the NNPG is fated for an ill-balanced compromise and therefore, does not promise honourable solution, whatever that means, stated another respondent. What it does promise is another phase of violence. The recent cacophony on separate Naga flag and constitution and Ravi's strategy of sidelining the actual negotiating party, the NSCN, and bringing NNPG to the forefront, only draw closer the 24 year old "Indo-Naga" political dialogue to a dead end. General Mehta (1 August 2020) also remarked, such a strategy "against the world's oldest insurgency will be hara-kiri" for India.

### **A divided house can only fall!**

Arendt (1969, 43) elaborated that the most crucial point in any political issue is "the question of who rules whom?" and power, force and violence are often the adopted means to answer this question. These means were utilized against the Nagas in order to submit to New Delhi, but initially, excited and emboldened by the new found national identity, Nagas unitedly stood against New Delhi, forcing it to admit that the Naga issue is "political," needing "political solution rather than military solution." Such unity, however, could not be maintained for long. In fact, today, the force of division within the Nagas is so strong that journalist and analyst Bertil Lintner remarks that "a united Nagaland is never going to happen" (*Aljazeera* 28 April 2020).

Several generations of the Naga people have lost their youth to two broad types of conflict. Firstly, conflict between the Nagas and the Indian Government or the "inter-group" conflict;

secondly, conflict within the Nagas or the “intra-group” conflict. The former largely occupied the stage from early 1950s till 1997 and the latter co-existed with the former particularly since the signing of the Shillong Accord in 1975 to the present. In fact, at present, the former type of conflict seems to be gradually receding to the backstage, highly overshadowed by a farrago of inexorable internecine feuds. This indicates that “the elder generations had not been wielding the responsibility of ushering in true and lasting peace,” stated one Naga youth. The intra-group conflict has considerably destroyed the house of Naga nationalism and its fruit is still forcefully fed to today’s youth, opined a respondent. Optimistically, however, Longchari (2016, 4) elicited that “the generations that lost its youth to conflict can become the “critical yeast” for imparting values of shared responsibility, nonviolence and dignity.”

The post 1997 ceasefire era reflects not the narration of “noble and selfless motivations of ‘national workers’” but rather their “greediness, intimidation, and internal bickering,” observed Wouters (2018, 2). Initially a modicum of amount was willfully contributed in the form of consented tax to be utilized for the “national cause.” Today, vying for materialistic profit, the pseudo-nationalist Nagas randomly increased the amount of the otherwise consented tax replacing it into forced tax and “extortion” and thus inviting fulmination from the Naga people. Goaded beyond limit by such contamination, the Action Committee Against Unabated Taxation (ACAUT) was formed. The ACAUT “rejected and resented ...the current form and factions of the Naga movement, ...which to their eyes had reduced Naga nationalism to a pretext for national workers to accrue purely private material gains and to fight over interpersonal and intertribal differences” (Wouters 2018, 3-4). They came up with the adage “One Government, One Tax” urging that factionalism must be ceased and factions become united. But the adage that gains widespread popularity has practical problem and per se became an effete idea with the passing of time. Apparently, ACAUT

was controlled by some influential Naga overground leaders who are critical of any moves taken by the NSCN. Naga nationalism today is a divided house – the division running not only among the nationalist groups but also within the Naga civil society groups down to the grassroots level. It comprises of nearly ten Naga nationalist factions and the task of bringing reconciliation among them by the civil society groups has continually proven a failure. Therefore, formation of a new association to address the old issue has been viewed cynically by many others. For instance, *Dreamz Unlimited*, the famous theatre house in Dimapur, Nagaland that tries to address several socio-cultural, economic and political issues cinematically, in a much hilarious manner, in one of its play, depicted the lack of substance in forming new associations to address various stated issues.

On the formation of ACAUT, some respondents construed that ACAUT is an organization formed by little coterie dictated again by another coterie who fished on public sentiments. With prescience, they predicted that the leaders of ACAUT are looking for platform to create a niche for themselves in the state politics. Either their prediction could be counted accurate or a mere coincidence, one retired IAS officer, K.K. Sema, whose audacious decision to speak out against unabated taxation by the Naga “undergrounds” that won him plaudits from a large Naga section, contested in the 2018 Nagaland State Legislative Assembly Election with a Congress party ticket. Despite much popularity, he, however, lost in the election. Analysts pointed out that formation of ACAUT appears to be a strategy of attrition to weaken the influence of one particular “underground” faction, that is, the NSCN. It may be mentioned that K.K. Sema was allegedly hand in glove with the NNPG, an organization that is against the ongoing “Indo-Naga” peace process spearheaded by NSCN. Thus, coming back to the statement “One Government, One Tax,” which government, led by which faction, will have such right to levy taxes for the Naga cause? Uniting all the factions therefore remains a forlorn hope. In this light, Wati Aier, a well known Naga

Church leader, called for a paradigm shift that instead of toiling for unity, Nagas must aim to find a ground for “cooperation.” In fact, even after the efforts of ACAUT to unite all factions into one, NNPG with a schmaltzy aim of working only for the welfare of Nagas of Nagaland state was created. Now the question is: should the Nagas pay their tax based on their factional affiliation or should they by rising above schmaltzy factionalism, pay tax to the groups negotiating for the rights of the Nagas as a whole on the basis of their distinct political history?

Perhaps, the envisioned comprehensive solution in the FA is not so comprehensive in the sense that it is unusually silent regarding the future of the Nagas in Myanmar. Besides the assurances that the solution with the agreement as the foundation and the guideline would apply to every Nagas irrespective of territorial location; and that physical integration is “part and parcel” of the ongoing political dialogue, how exactly the Nagas in Myanmar are included in the agreement is still unknown. Muivah stated that the term “inclusive” as written in the FA – “Inclusive peaceful co-existence of the two entities sharing sovereign power” – means that “all Naga in different administrative units and political camps are to be included in the agreement” (Pisharoty 17 August 2020). It may be mentioned that of the 66 Naga tribes listed by the Naga Hoho, 34 tribes are found in Myanmar and out of these, 9 tribes are found both in India and Myanmar (Lotha 2016, 9-11). The 400,000 Naga populations in Myanmar are in the words of *Aljazeera News*, “much poorer-cousin” of the total 3 million Nagas living in India and they still dream of reuniting with the latter (*Aljazeera* 28 April 2020). Nagas in Myanmar continue to long for a “united Nagaland” and for this cause “many families sacrifice a son” but lately, their cousins “are brainwashed by the Indian government” and thus apparently less supportive to this dream of theirs, stated the Myanmar Nagas (*ibid.*). Perhaps, their issue would only be taken up with the Myanmar Government once the ongoing “Indo-Naga” peace process is concluded, commented one

Naga intellectual. The issue of Nagas in Myanmar perhaps is not considered the jurisdiction of the NSCN. For this matter it was the Khaplang led NSCN that signed the ceasefire agreement with the Myanmar Government in 2012. But in 2019, when the base of this faction in Konyak region of Myanmar was attacked by the *Tatmadaw* (Myanmar Army), allegedly in coordination with the Indian security forces, in the pretext of flushing out the Meitei and other banned insurgent groups of the Northeast, several Naga organizations including the NSCN, NNC (PB), NMA and FNR, expressed “profound solidarity” with the faction (*Nagaland Post* 16 March 2019). The rationale behind this solidarity is that irrespective of their geographical location, “Nagas are one family.”

Sir Charles Pawsey, the then Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills, predicted that internal division will sapped the strength of the Naga movement and thus call forth for unity. In his words: “...and if the Nagas will remain united, they will be able not only to administer themselves in a peaceful atmosphere, but will also be able, through unity, to influence the adjoining areas where strife is prevalent. At all costs, Nagas must remain united. Once division sets in, strength will go...” (cited in Yonuo 1974, 171). Internal division that frequently involves Nagas killing Nagas has become the reality of the Nagas’ movement for political independence today. As long as the Nagas remain hostile to each other, they will be only dancing to the tune played by the Indian Government, lamented another respondent. Nagas must remember that it was the disunity among themselves that enabled the British to conquer them, stated Yonuo (ibid, 383). Disunity has led the Nagas “to accuse one another of what we are yet to achieve and this is sheer foolishness,” stated Niketu Iralu in “18<sup>th</sup> Morung Dialogue,” a webinar hosted by the Naga People’s Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) in 2020.

### **Capacity of the Framework Agreement to resolve the “Indo-Naga” political issue**

Whenever there is a regime change in New Delhi, it effectuated a fresh beginning of political negotiation with the Nagas, instead of starting from where the previous regime had left and accomplished. In other words, a kind of political trend has been set that with the change of regime, the Naga issue was always taken back to square one. However, such thesis is likely to be changed with the FA, for with it, despite the change of regime, political negotiation on the Naga issue would now have to start with this agreement as the base, analyzed Somingam Mawon, a Naga researcher.

Besides their racial, social and cultural distinctness, there is also civilizational gap between the Nagas and India. The latter is defined by “advanced” civilization and the former “primitive.” Earl Winterton, for instance, said: “This (Nagas) is a most interesting ethnological race of people divided by 500 or 1,000 years from the rest of India” (cited in Yonuo 1974, 135). Yet, what is civilization if it does not respect humanity? Perhaps, to act justly with application of farsighted wisdom, Narendra Modi led Bharatiya Janata Party Government decided to ink the FA. But the frequently asked question is – does the agreement possess the capacity to resolve the long drawn Naga political issue?

By being “transitional in intent,” that is, “growing and walking with time and tide,” the agreement aim for comprehensive and not piecemeal solution, stated Lotha (2016, 294-95). Mawon and Longvah also analyzed that the agreement is “the most practicable approach available at hand to end the protracted Indo-Naga political conflict without compromising the security of India and the rights of Naga as a nation” (2019, 75). So long as the Indian government gives up its habit of craftily creating a “piecemeal solution,” sensible solution could be worked out through the agreement.

One notable character observed in the agreement is seeing substance in giving chance to practical compromise. In other words, for honourable resolution of the Naga political issue

both the parties must avoid “short-sighted all or nothing” approaches and the Nagas particularly must be “willing to adapt and discover how and where to fly given whatever the current climates are shown to be,” observed Lotha (2016, 297 & 300). The idea of Robert Federico (2011, 9) in his report on – *The development of Culture of Peace and Non-Violence (1988-2010)* that: “Those who are against moving with the times, against the intervention of new procedures, believe that by conserving the inertia of a situation which has been so beneficial to them, the problems of today and tomorrow will be solved by yesterday’s formulae. But this is not so: for the good of everyone, they must evolve quickly, that is to say, conserve what must be conserved and transform and change what must be changed,” found substance in the Naga context as well. Indeed, both the Naga leaders (“overground” or “underground”) and its masses must prudently study the time they are in and farsightedly reason about the time they will be in, in the next 30-40 years. For, anything can happen within this period and certainly the foreign policies of India and her neighbors would change with the passing of time. What would remain static, however, is the geography; meaning, today’s neighbor will remain tomorrow’s neighbor. Thus, farsighted imagination must be one of India’s armor in countering and balancing aggressive foreign policies of her neighbors and ipso facto, her frontier areas must be stabilized and won over amiably and not by force. In short, the Nagas who are considered the fiercest among the borderland people and their movement that is considered “the mother of all insurgency in India’s northeast,” of which the Indian Government is unable to completely wiped out despite the application of the “scorched-earth” method, must be honorably resolved not just for Naga people’s sake but also for the security of India, indeed its greatest bugbear, with China at the backyard.

Narrating folktales about “the elephant and the ant,” where the tiny ant could humble the mighty elephant, and also about “the toad and the mouse,” who became food for the eagle



while they busily engaged in senseless “bickering,” Lotha called forth for “attentiveness to the folklore wisdom” for comprehensive and honourable resolution of the Naga political violence (2016, 295-300). In his words:

As India continues to emerge as a power on the world stage, it is in its interest to treat its minority indigenous peoples with respect, to engage with them accordingly, and not look down upon them as somehow ‘less than’... Thus far, Nagas’ have generally concluded that he (Prime Minister Narendra Modi) and the Indian government has been overcompromising without delivery and that he needs to ‘walk the talk,’ so to speak, while the Naga leaders need to ‘talk the walk’. ... Just as hornbills can be indicators of a healthy environment, so, too, perhaps can resolutions to the Indo-Naga conflict be harbingers of a healthier Indian state. (Lotha 2016, 296-97)

The FA must also be able to convince Nagas of all sections that the practical compromise that it is treading upon aims for comprehensive solution. As already discoursed, the Naga society is gravely divided today because of the interplay of various “isms.” The stark reality today is that the more educated and economically developed the Nagas became, the more alienated they seem to be from their struggle for independence. A sizeable number of their learned population in the 21<sup>st</sup> century also seems to be “disinterested” with the movement. Likewise, the more advanced the Naga tribes become; the more ostensibly aloof they are from the movement. All in all, for these educated, advanced and economically well-off sections of the Naga society, the movement seemingly does not concern them. As though something “shameful and unrealistic” to talk about in today’s highly advanced generation, a respondent stated that “they would be only happy if some form of arrangement could be made for the Nagas outside the state of Nagaland and accordingly resolve the Naga issue.” Contrariwise, another respondent belonging to “less advanced” section opinionated that the above group of Nagas need to be “re-educated” about the movement. “They talk and act as though the movement doesn’t concern them at all; they are too happy with the benefits they

are receiving from the Indian government that they could even trade it with their endowed freedom,” commented one respondent.

The FA must not be reduced simply to the act of “controlling and regulating violence” between the Indian Government and the NSCN, but it must really strive forward as the foundation of “win-win” solution. Anderson (2005, 344) remarked that “the potential for conflict is almost limitless, and it is impossible to prepare a recipe for resolution that will fit every occasion.” Therefore, the focus of both the parties in the political negotiation should be on mutually true, honourable and respectable solution. For the FA to pave the way to honourable solution, Nagas need to hurl all hatred that has sprung up from tribalistic, clannish and factional division.

The agreement also implies that a great height of understanding has been achieved between the Indian Government and the NSCN. But hurdles still remain and the greatest being how to enforce the recognition given by the Government of India regarding the uniqueness of Naga history and situation, legitimacy of the Naga’s struggle for independence, the legitimate right to integration and sovereignty of the Naga people which is defined as borderless for “sovereignty lies with the Naga people.” Allegedly, the Nagas understood the greatest bugbear of India, that is, her security, by agreeing for “joint-defense.” But again, the practical challenge is the enforcement of such understanding.

For implementation of the negotiated agreement, it must pass through the Indian Parliament so as to obtain necessary support and bring amendment to the Constitution of India. If the agreement is not incorporated in the Constitution of India, it cannot be implemented. Yet, on this point, Th. Muivah, the chief negotiator of the NSCN, was of the opinion that the future of the Nagas cannot be subjected to India’s Parliament. He further questioned: if the Parliament does not approve and therefore fails to bring necessary amendment to the Constitution of India, does this mean the Naga issue would be stranded in the middle? The

talk has been held in the Prime Ministerial level; therefore, even in case of not winning adequate support from the Indian Parliament, there is a need for special structure so as to resolve the issue, stated Anthony Shimray (2018). However, Shimray also pointed out that any accord that will be arrived at in the future must be secured and written in the Indian Constitution. “In the future, with the change of government in the Centre, any accord that is not in written form could be changed because that is the system of the Government of India; they unfortunately have the history of not honoring the agreement made by them,” stated Shimray (ibid.).

Some Naga leaders opine that to thaw the ice of such impasse, “mutual recognition and respect between the two conflicting parties must be there. India may be too great for the Nagas but if the Indian thinks that it is worthwhile to live in peace with the Nagas, then the Naga identity has to be respected and recognised, then only will there be peace in Nagaland” (Atem 2018). Another Naga leader also added that “...solution to the Indo-Naga problem must be based on justice and mutual respect and should be mutually acceptable. Imposed solution will not last for long. For a lasting solution, whatever solution that is worked out between the Government of India and the NSCN must be incorporated in the Indian Constitution. The roadmap may be there but if it is not safeguarded by the Indian Constitution, there is no guarantee of lasting solution,” stated Horam (2018).

At one point of time, particularly during Indira Gandhi’s time, the GoI did offer some other alternative arrangements such as the federal form of relationship also termed as “shared sovereignty” in their effort to settle the Naga political conflict. Such arrangement for a peaceful and lasting settlement to the Naga conflict was brokered by Suisa Rungsung, a parliamentarian and a charismatic Naga leader. However, Naga leaders especially the “underground” overturned the deal on the ground that they would not accept anything short of complete sovereignty. Today, many Nagas lamented the mistake of the Naga leaders of

that time. Many Nagas hold that their leaders of yesteryears should have sealed the deal with “shared sovereignty.” In other words, a sizeable number of the Naga public are of the opinion that unless the Naga leaders develop to think out of the box of sovereignty, the path to lasting peace in Nagalim might enter into another long complicated winding. Mention may be made that toward the end of the first decade of the millennium, GoI came with the proposal that the Naga political issue must be resolved “on the basis of shared-sovereignty,” stated Muivah.

Three factors – the China factor and thus the security factor of India; protection of the territorial integrity of India at all cost in order to avoid another ugly history of partition; and the Nagas’ perpetual desire for independence – have rendered the Naga issue protracted. Relatedly, Thong (2016, 116) raised two questions: “Where do the claims of nation-states to preserve their territorial integrity end? And where do the claims of ethnic minorities to the right of independence or self-rule stop?” So long as the FA does not reflect these questions, the Naga issue will perhaps continue its journey in wilderness. Excepting two common denominators – “common security and common commercial interests” – Nagas and Indians have nothing in common, neither in “history, race, identity, culture, language, geography, political concept and faith,” stated Muivah (2020). Therefore, the focus of the ongoing peace negotiation has been to search for a “meeting point” so that they could “co-exist together as two entities,” further stated Muivah (2020).

### **Some research gap and suggestions for a way forward**

Naga political violence has been ferociously fought claiming many lives from both the sides. But the “ferocious nature” of this violence still remains hidden from the world and the nature itself is also yet to be understood genuinely by the Indian Government. As already pointed out in Chapter II, to date, there is no official documentation on the cost of this violence; no concrete data on the deaths of the Nagas and the Indian Army induced by this

violence is available. Thus, to come up with a proper database to ascertain the cost of Naga political violence remains an important research gap and challenge. Besides this, how and why should the Nagas handle the pressure of internal divisions on the current “Indo-Naga” political dialogue so that they could rise to the occasion, constitute another challenge?

When the Indian Government decided to play the card of crafty politics by “engineering” the birth of new stakeholder to the “Indo-Naga” peace process like the NNPG who is willing to sign a dotted agreement, without including separate flag and constitution as the necessary and compulsory criteria, it indicates that New Delhi is yet to understand or is intentionally ignoring the root cause of the Naga political violence. Hence, it is asserted that the government perhaps is not seeking for solution but derailment, playing the Nagas off each other so that the Nagas altogether will get tired of their age-old struggle and eventually give up. In this sense, further research needs to gravitate toward the intention of New Delhi vis-à-vis resolving the Naga political issue and why flag and constitution for the Nagas comprised the necessary entities in realizing meaningful solution to the “Indo-Naga” political conflict.

One question that needs to be researched further is: will the Nagas as a whole really give up their political dream? It is a well-discoursed topic that Naga political movement today is undoubtedly a divided house with multiple actors narrating and carrying multiple stories of patriotism. But it will be a chimera for the government, no matter how full of resources it may have, to calculate that it will be able to buy off all sections and groups of the Naga people who will be willing to line up for them. Even at the risk of being considered heretic, there will always be some section that remains committed to the political aspiration of the Naga people. In this respect, accusing Nagas in the Indian side of decreasing their patriotic spirit, Nagas in Myanmar are already hinting that they will not give up on their political aspiration. And there is a huge research gap on the political aspiration and views of the

Nagas living Myanmar. The whole discourses on the Naga political movement lopsidedly emphasize the aspiration and views of the Nagas in the Indian side.

The *Bottom Line* News Editor, Nabarun Goswami observed that most recently, in the “Indo-Naga” political dialogue, there has been a stalemate since October 2019. Apparently, to thaw this stalemate, several suggestions have been given. For instances, Xavier Mao (2021, 6:32), a Naga professor in North-Eastern Hill University, suggested that “the Naga flag can be flown alongside the Indian flag and the NSCN-IM can give up on separate constitution and should also give up the ancestral land of all the Naga inhabited areas except Naga dominated areas” for the sake of “democratic freedom” of other communities like the Zomi or the Kuki people “to have their own autonomy” in the areas dominated by them. However, the idea of “democratic freedom of respecting other communities” even at the cost of Nagas’ political rights as a nation is likely to be contested by several Naga tribes. In the situation when the fate of the Nagas in Myanmar are still blurry in the signed FA, the welfare of non-Naga communities living in Naga-inhabited areas in the Indian side is a secondary thing to consider, reacted another respondent. Evidently, Elu Ndang (2021, 10:29), General Secretary of the Naga Hoho stated that “without recognizing the separate flag and constitution, I don’t see any political settlement in it...Nagas have every right to separate flag and constitution.” For P. Biswas (2021, 13:46), forming an “expert group (committee) who have professional knowledge in peacemaking” is the answer to thaw the stalemate for these are the people “who can really find out the ways and means to converging differences.”

A very practical suggestion on the way forward came from Subir Bhaumik, journalist, author and Editorial Director of *Eastern Link*, who spoke in one of the international webinars hosted in 2020 by the Naga Scholar’s Association (NSA) themed “Living in the Present: Nagas in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.” According to him, firstly, the current interlocutor of the

Indian Government, R.N. Ravi needs to be changed. “The Naga leadership has to reach out to the Indian political leadership not interlocutor, not the bureaucrats, not this police officer and seek a clear statement from somebody like the Prime Minister, the Home Minister to recognize that the Naga issue is a political issue.” Indeed, this forms the foremost demand of the NSCN and the Indian Government gave a positive response regarding this issue when in September 2021 R.N. Ravi was replaced by A.K. Mishra, an ex-IB Director. Secondly, “complete ceasefire has to prevail across the region,” i.e., in all the Naga inhabited-areas in the Northeast. Thirdly, “appoint somebody like the equivalent of Rajesh Pilot or somebody as interlocutor, not a policeman.” Apparently, according to Bhaumik, “the negotiating skills” of the current Indian government is “very poor”; “awfully short of negotiating talents.” Thus, for a way forward, the Indian government must “find somebody who can represent politics and not a policeman.”

### **Concluding Remarks**

V.S. Atem, one prominent leader of the NSCN stated: “Time is the essence of everything; even half a second matters in battlefield.” The NSCN in the pre-1997 ceasefire period could win many wars against the Indian Army because of deep and rigorous commitment to this essence, he stated. Yet, lack of progress in the post-ceasefire “Indo-Naga” peace negotiation depicts a weakening of this essence. Relatedly, Paul Pimomo asked: “Have the Nagas come to the half a second moment as expressed by V.S. Atem? If not yet, what are the Nagas waiting for?” The peace negotiations have been dragged on for long 24 years and still with no sign of realistic conclusion perhaps because the focus of the Indian Government has been on managing or containing the Naga issue but not to actually address and understand the root causes and also the local causes of the conflict. And so far, they seem to have managed it very well by pitting one Naga group against another. Indeed, so damaged is their internal relationships that Naga as a nation today seems unable to have a “single national goal,”

commanded and directed by a single organization who has the mandate of all sections of the Naga society. For instance, the NNPG are seeking solution only for the Nagas of Nagaland state while the NSCN is endeavoring for all the Nagas without borders and yet unable to garner support of the Nagaland Tribes Council, the organization allegedly representing the Nagas tribes of Nagaland state and the Gaonbura Federation.

Any conflict needs a specific timeframe for resolution or settlement. Without a timeframe, often a conflict can become stalemated and uncertainty, insecurity and social injustice can become an ever-present reality. Such view seems to hold true in the contemporary Naga peace process. For instance, K.G. Kenye (2013), then Secretary General of Naga People's Front (NPF), on Naga peace process commented, "Any conflict if it is achieved within a reasonable, comprehensible period of time is fine. However, when it stretches beyond the reasonable period of time, it starts breeding negative social activities. Today, we (Nagas) have so many problems of social injustice and all these can be largely attributed to the unresolved political issue." However, the given timeframe need not necessarily be imposed. For instance, October 31, 2019 was set as the deadline for resolution of the "Indo-Naga" imbroglio but the deadline was an imposed one implying that the Indian Government would sign a final agreement even with or without the consent of NSCN, the primary party with whom the GoI had been engaging in political dialogue since 1997. At the end, however, no such agreement was signed. A reference point is that such imposition of deadline could be considered as an act of political shortsightedness that nearly ended the "Indo-Naga" political talks. Political farsightedness calls that "the government cannot afford to squander them away. It needs to return to the language of negotiation, not antagonism," stated Chakravarty (19 July 2020). The popular tag given to Naga political violence as the "most protracted postcolonial struggles"; or "one of the world's oldest continuing armed conflicts" (Wouters 2018, xiii; Baruah 2003, 321) was nearly lifted with the signing of the FA. Prime



Minister Modi, perhaps at the heat of excitement of signing the agreement, a year after his premiership in 2014, also promised to deliver solution to this conflict within “two years.” However, the non-fulfillment of his promise even after six years has reduced it to a mere rhetoric.

Naga political movement has come to such a point that factors which can delay further the achievement of “honorable solution” has become unexhausted. The latest being the Indo-China border conflict that started again in June, 2020 claiming several lives on both sides, which somehow pushed the Naga issue to the backstage by the Government of India in order for India to take care of the direct threat coming from China. Indeed, it was the “China factor” that prompted the Indian Government to read the issue of the Nagas from different light other than their usual rhetoric – law and order problem of India. The ferocity of the Indian Government which indeed was unaccustomed to the Nagas was committed so as to prevent the tiny Naga Hills and the adjoining Naga areas not to become a supporter or for that matter a part of China. In gist, the China factor has been the greatest bugbear of the Indian Government particularly from security perspective and this apprehension is rightly so because it is “no secret that China initially trained and equipped (the) early Naga nationalists,” and in case of failure of the ongoing political negotiation, “there is a possibility of ‘reestablishing’ the Naga mission to China,” observed Mawon and Longvah (2019, 76). It may be mentioned that this mission was a reality even just two decades back. About twenty of such missions were undertaken by the Nagas in the pre-1997 ceasefire period (Lintner, 2016, 348-351, cited in Mawon and Longvah 2019, 79). Apparently, it has been more than 24 years since they stop the China mission but the continual adoption of crafty “delay tactics” by the Indian Government has tempted the Nagas to consider this mission again. For instance, Phungthing Shimrang (one of the most prominent Naga Army

officers of the NSCN) questioned: “Will India wake up only if the Naga army starts doing that (China mission) again?” (cited in Mawon and Longvah 2019, 83).

But one ponders whether the China mission was stopped at all? Towards the end of 2019, when the impasse on separate Naga flag and constitution threatened the longevity of the 1997 ceasefire agreement, reportedly, around 1000 NSCN cadres under the command of Phungthing, Hanshi and Absalom, already managed their way to Yunnan Province in China; “seeking support from China as India hardens stand on Naga deal” (Ahuja 22 November 2019). On July 13, 2020, six NSCN cadres were killed in one of the Naga inhabited areas in Longding district of Arunachal Pradesh, in the operation conducted by Assam Rifles and Arunachal Pradesh Police. And this incident has been allegedly interpreted by the NSCN as a form of “sending message to China” (Parashar 13 July 2020).

A separate flag and constitution for the Nagas form the latest hurdle to the “Indo-Naga” political dialogue. This issue directly connects with the idea of the uniqueness of Naga history and political situation. Without it, what is so unique about the Naga issue that necessitated a prime ministerial level peace talk since 1997? Any solution without it indeed defies the whole logic of “unique” identity of the Nagas as recognized by the Government of India. But with a coercive tone and moving away from the principle of peacebuilding process, the NSCN is being pressured to give in to the viewpoint of the Indian Government on this issue. R. N. Ravi even said that if the NSCN is not willing to compromise on this issue, he would sign the agreement with the willing NNPG and wrap up the Naga political issue even at the cost of bypassing the party with whom the FA was signed and bypassing the commitment to work for a solution with this agreement as the foundation. In the late 2020, Muivah hinted that without Naga national flag and constitution, “logical conclusion” to the Naga political issue is impossible. It is evident that the issue of a separate Naga flag and constitution has become not only the fresh bone of contention between the Indian

government and the NSCN but also a powerful tool in the hands of the Indian Government to play the Nagas off each other. Relatedly, thus, one wonders where the chicaneries of the Government of India will end. Without genuine commitment to work for a meaningful peace and without the love for humanity, the road to peace in Nagalim will only get longer. The perennial chicanery politics of the Indian Government focuses less on the “bigger map” of securing mutually acceptable and honourable solution. Indeed, for such solution, it must detach itself from the age-old colonial tactics of “divide and rule” or “define and rule” which necessitated taking recourse to colonial tactic called “carrot and stick” policy. The “Indo-Naga” political conflict is also a conflict of attrition, wherein, the Nagas are weakened by the perennial divide and rule tactics of the Indian Government. Thus, making the Nagas bleed and limp internally not only prolongs and complicates the issue further but also increased the stakeholders to the incumbent political negotiation. The question in focus is will such tactic however stop the Nagas from fighting for their political rights? Would not this kind of policy simply create another Naga generation alienated from the idea of “Indianness” and start the offensive all over again?

The 24 years old “Indo-Naga” political negotiation which is now on the brink of collapsing was allegedly based on the principle of “logical solution” – the kind of solution that can be applied in practicality – rather than a form of solution with “theoretical correctness.” Theoretically, Nagas have “every right to be completely sovereign” but in today’s interconnected and interdependent world and keeping in mind the political situation of India, the principle of “shared sovereignty” might better serve Nagas’ political, social and economic well-being. To put it simplistically, practical and logistic solution seems to lie with the principle of “shared-sovereignty,” the idea that was in the “Indo-Naga” context first proposed by the Government of India to the NSCN. The NSCN’s well calculated move of forfeiting their age-old stand of theoretically correct quest for complete sovereignty for

practically logical solution must not be lightly taken by the Indian Government, for doing so, will bring to light it's lack of "political will" as has been for decades constantly accused by the Nagas and hence proving the political immaturity of the Indian Government in handling the sensitive and complicated Naga political violence.

## ACRONYMS

ACAUT: Action Committee against Unabated Taxation

ACFOD: Asian Cultural Forum on Development

AFSPA: Armed Forces Special Powers Act

AIPP: Asia Indigenous People's Pact

AP: Agreed Positions

BWA: Baptist World Alliance

CNP: Council of the Naga People

ENPO: Eastern Naga People Organization

EU: European Union

IDSA: Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses

FA: Framework Agreement

FGN: Federal Government of Nagaland

FNR: Forum for Naga Reconciliation

GBF: *Gaonbura* Federation

GPRN: Government of the People's Republic of Nagalim

ICJ: International Court of Justice

IHRAAM: International Human Rights Association of American Minorities

IWGIA: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs

KWIA: Flemish Supporting Group for Indigenous Affairs

LIC: Low-Intensity Conflict

MRG: Minority Right Group

NMA: Naga Mother's Association

NNC: Naga National Council

NNC (PB): Naga National Council (Parent Body)

NNC (NA): Naga National Council (Non-Accordist)

NNPG: Naga National Political Groups

NPC: Naga People's Convention

NPCC: Nagaland Pradesh Congress Committee

NPF: Naga People's Front

NSCN: National Socialist Council of Nagalim

NSCN-IM: National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak-Muivah

NSCN-K: National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang

NSCN-K: National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khango

NSCN-KK: National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Kitovi-Khole

NSCN-R: National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Reformation

NSCN-U: National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Unification

NSF: Naga Student's Federation

NTC: Naga Territorial Council

PIL: People's Independence League

RGN: Revolutionary Government of Nagaland

SATP: South Asia Terrorism Portal

TNWF: *Tenyemi* National Workers Forum

UDHR: Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UNPO: Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation

WAPO: Western Angami Public Organization

WGIPs: Working Group of Indigenous Populations

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