

The Naga National Struggle, 'Framework Agreement' and the Peace Prospects

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Abstract

The signing of the 'Framework Agreement' between the Government of India (GOI) and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isaac-Muivah) on 3 August 2015 that pledges to restore 'pride and prestige' of the Nagas takes place after more than six-and-a-half-decades of violence and militarisation of the Naga society. The Agreement has been signed at a moment when the Naga society is marked by enormous fragmentation from within. While, the GOI through the creation of the state of Nagaland in 1963 and other initiatives created a local ruling class opposed to long-cherished Nagas' demand for sovereignty; on the other hand, the tribes-centric proliferation of various insurgent outfits has created hostilities within the Naga society. The continuance of security apparatuses like Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), 1958 and that of the top-down development paradigm has been in contrast to the social and cultural dynamics of the Naga society. The recent Accord, which has remained silent on those issues, however, has shifted the Naga national discourse from exclusive sovereignty of the Nagas in Nagaland to that of shared sovereignty of the Nagas within the Union of India. While, there have been celebrations of the Accord among the civil society forces in Nagaland spearheaded by Naga *Hoho* who for long have endeavoured to sustain ceasefires between GOI and the insurgent outfits in the state, there have, however, been serious reservations in regard to the efficacy of the Accord to restore peace, harmony and national pride among the Nagas.

Key words: Naga National Council (NNC), National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN), Government of India (GOI), Naga *Hoho*, Phizo, Muivah

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Introduction

Signing of the 'Framework Agreement' between Government of India (GOI) and National Socialist Council of Nagaland led by Isaac and Muivah faction (NSCN-IM) on 3 August 2015 is perceived as a step towards restoration of peace in Nagaland in India, however, without any guarantee that it will bring permanent solution to the Naga national question. The 'Framework Agreement' has been marked by secrecy and suspicion as both the parties have refused to divulge the details of the Agreement. Besides, the much-talked about 'unique history and culture' of the Nagas by the Prime Minister of India on the occasion of signing the Agreement mismatch both with the development paradigm and security apparatuses of the GOI being in operation in Nagaland for decades together. The signing of the Agreement, which has been received positively by most of the civil society outfits in the state steered by Naga *Hoho* is a significant marker of the legitimacy for the Indian state. The more than six-decades-long Naga's struggle for sovereignty was based on the presumed illegitimacy of the Indian state in Nagaland, which was reiterated both by the NNC-sponsored plebiscite in 1951 and mass boycott of the first General Elections in independent India, 1952. Attempts were made from time to time to resolve the 'Naga National' question, which is based on Naga's uncompromising conviction about the unique history and culture of the Nagas that can be protected only through inalienable sovereign rights in the hands of the Nagas themselves. While, through a number of accords and agreements, GOI expressed its willingness to extend maximum autonomy to the Nagas to preserve and protect their unique history and culture; however, the same was rejected by the Naga outfits—both Naga National Council (NNC) as well as National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) in the pretext that autonomy of whatever kind was far short of sovereignty. GOI on its part succeeded in penetrating into the Naga society by creating a local ruling class through the creation of Nagaland as a separate state within the Indian Union in 1963 and also pumping of

huge funds to the state. The Naga society, on the other hand, witnessed fragmentation around tribes and clans, and inter- and intra-factionalism have emerged as regular feature of the Naga national struggle. Not only NSCN emerged from within the womb of NNC as a dissident force, but also NSCN itself got fragmented into two factions subsequently which have proved to be the fierce enemies of each other. In 1997, GOI signed a ceasefire agreement with NSCN (IM) and in 2001, the GOI signed another ceasefire agreement with NSCN (K), but that has not resolved the clashes between these two outfits. It is in such a context that the 'Framework Agreement' has been signed, which has supposed to have marked 'not merely the end of a problem, but the beginning of a new future.' Through the Agreement, GOI has also pledged not only to 'try to heal wounds and resolve problems', but also to be their 'partner' as the Nagas restore their 'pride and prestige' (Modi, 2015, quoted from *Nagaland Post*, August 4). However, it is much under doubt whether such a 'Framework Agreement,' which recognises 'unique history and culture of the Nagas' but does not work out either to bring reconciliation within Naga factions or to do away with the coercive apparatuses like Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), 1958¹ can really restore peace and pride in the Naga Hills.

¹ Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 was imposed by the colonial regime in India in the form of an ordinance to suppress the peoples' upsurge during Quit India Movement in 1942. After Independence when insurgency started in Northeast India, GOI, in the pretext that states in Northeast India has failed to deal with internal disturbances, promulgated the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Ordinance on 22nd May 1958. It was enacted as an Act of GOI in September 1958. Under the Act, the armed forces enjoy extra ordinary power of using force including firing upon even to the extent of causing death for maintenance of public order. The Act has remained an issue of contention in the region and has alleged to violate human rights enormously.

Naga National Struggle and Responses of the Indian State

The potentiality of the 'Framework Agreement' to restore peace in Nagaland needs to be examined by a critical scrutiny of the historical dynamics of growth, evolution and contradictions of Naga national struggle. Naga nationality consciousness is a 20th Century phenomena, which has posed one of the serious challenges to the nation-building process since India's independence on 15 August 1947. On that day, the Nagas too declared its independence under the leadership of A. Z. Phizo—the legendary figure in Naga national struggle. The Naga club formed in 1918 is a precursor in regard to the formation of Naga national consciousness, and the first significant manifestation of the same was evident in the memorandum submitted by Naga Club to the Simon Commission in 1929, which was 'considering political reforms in India to respond to rising Indian anti-colonial mobilization' (Baruah, 2005: 11). Through the memorandum, the Club demanded that 'the Nagas be excluded from the proposed constitutional changes and kept under the direct administration of the British' and also stated: '[y]ou (the British) are the only people who conquered us and when you go we should be as we were' (Misra, 2000: 28). The first official attempt to provide Nagas a separate political entity was the creation of Naga Hills District Tribal Council in 1945 at the initiative of the British Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills district, Charles Pawsey. However, Naga politics took a concrete shape only with the formation of the Naga National Council (NNC) in February 1946, which brought together all individual tribes of the Nagas. There was no unanimity within the NNC in regard to its political demands, that is, whether to go in for autonomy or sovereignty in the initial years. However, with the election of Phizo as the President of NNC in November 1949, the demand for independence gained momentum, although Phizo declared Nagas independence on 15 August 1947 itself. He also very tactfully penetrated into the traditional tribal power

structures of the Nagas to widen the roots and spread of the NNC.

Before India had achieved independence, the NNC's official stand was for autonomy within the Indian Constitution and not secession or sovereignty. On the eve of the declaration of the Cabinet Mission Grouping Proposal,² the NNC in June 1946 demanded autonomy within Assam and opposed both the proposal for a Crown Colony as well as the Grouping Scheme (Misra, 2000: 27). Stating its political position, the General Secretary of NNC, T. Sakhrie in a letter written to Jawaharlal Nehru stated: "(a) the Naga National Council stands for the solidarity of all Naga tribes including those in the un-administered areas; (b) this council strongly protests against the grouping of Assam with Bengal; (c) the Naga Hills should be constitutionally included in autonomous Assam, in a free India, with local autonomy and due safeguards for the interests of Nagas; and (d)

² Cabinet Mission Proposal, 1946 was an attempt to transfer power to India by negotiating with two main political parties i.e. Congress and the Muslim League. However, the Mission failed to bring together both the parties for any agreement and therefore declared its own scheme 'to ensure a speedy setting up of the new constitution'. While considering the Muslim League's claim for an independent and sovereign state of Pakistan to be constituted by six states, including Assam, the Mission looked at the religious composition of those states. Based on the religious figures, it commented that the setting up of a separate sovereign state of Pakistan as claimed by the League would not solve the communal minority problem, as there were non-Muslim majority districts in Punjab and Bengal and in Assam. Accordingly, through its 16 May, 1946 Statement, the Cabinet Mission had put forward its plan under which 'the representatives of the provinces were to divide themselves into three sections - A, B, and C, after preliminary session of the proposed Constituent Assembly was over. Section C was to consist of Bengal and Assam. Each section was to decide its own provincial and group matters. A province was free to opt out of its allotted section only after the first elections under the new constitution was over' (Guha, 2014: 253). This Grouping proposal was vehemently opposed by Assam with the apprehension that under this plan Assam's fate will be decided by a Muslim majority Group. The Group consisted of total 70 members out of which 34 were General and 36 Muslim. However, out of 10 members of Assam 7 were General and 3 Muslim.

the Naga tribes should have a separate electorate” (NNC Resolution 19 June 1946, quoted from Nag, 2009: 49).

Response of Nehru to this letter was not only positive, but also prospective. While Nehru was for greater autonomy for the Nagas, he was opposed to sovereignty and secession of the Nagas from India. The letter, indeed, laid down the political philosophy of the incoming Indian state to the whole Naga issue. It is worth quoting the following portion of the letter written by Nehru.

It is obvious that the Naga territory in eastern Assam is much too small to stand by itself, politically or economically. It lies between two huge countries India and China and part of it consists of rather backward people who require considerable help. When India is independent, as it is bound to be soon, it will not be possible for the British government to hold on the Naga territory. It must form part of India and of Assam with which it has developed much close association. At the same time it is our policy that tribal areas should have as much freedom and autonomy as possible so that they can live their own lives according to their own customs and desires. [...]The whole Naga territory should go together and should be controlled in a large measure by an elected Naga National Council. [...]I agree entirely with your decision that the Naga Hills should constitutionally be included in an autonomous Assam in a free India, with local autonomy and due safeguards for the interest of the Nagas. [...]I see no reason whatever why an extraneous judicial system should be enforced upon the Naga Hills. They should have perfect freedom to continue their village *panchayats*, tribal courts, etc., according to their own wishes. [...]. Certainly, the people of the Naga Hills should not be exploited by others and their right to own and work on the soil should remain

with them... I do not want them to be swamped by people from other parts of the country who might go there to exploit them to their own advantage (Jawaharlal Nehru to Sakhrie, 6 August 1946 quoted from Nag, 2009: 49)

It may be argued that it was in conformity with the spirit of the Nehru's letter that the Naga-Akbar Hydari Accord was signed in June 1947. It was a 9-point Accord signed between the then Governor of Assam, Sir Akbar Hydari and the representatives of the Naga National Council at Kohima after three days of discussion from 26-28 June 1947. It is worth mentioning here that ten tribes participated in this discussion that included the Western Angamis, Eastern Angamis, Kukis, Kacha Nagas (Mzemi), Rengmas, Semas, Lothas, Aos, Sangtams and Changs. Through this Agreement, which was signed for a period of ten years, 'the right of the Nagas to develop themselves according to their freely expressed wishes' was recognised. On judicial matters, the agreement recognised duly constituted 'Naga Courts according to the Naga customary law'. The Accord ensured complete authority of the Council on agriculture. It was also stated in the Accord that 'no laws passed by the Provincial or Central Legislatures, which would materially affect the terms of the agreement or the religious practices shall have legal force in Naga Hills without the consent of the Naga Council.' In other words, Naga Council was accorded a legal and statutory recognition by this Accord.

Article 9 of the Agreement became a point of contention, which was about the Period of Agreement. It reads: '[t]he Governor of Assam as the Agent of the Government of the Indian Union will have a special responsibility for a period of 10 years to ensure the due observance of this agreement; at the end of the period the Naga Council will be asked whether they require the above agreement to be extended for a further period or a new agreement regarding the future of Naga people arrived at.'

Initially, the NNC approved of this Accord. However, it did not take time to surface

dissents within NNC and Article 9 was the most contentious in this regard. It was interpreted by those who opposed the Accord that '[a] Article 9 actually gave the Nagas the right to complete independence, once the interim period of ten years was over. This was not acceptable to Indian Government which insisted that this Article gave the Nagas the right to suggest administrative change within the Indian Union but not that of secession' (Misra, 2000: 33). The faction led by Phizo was opposed to the Accord and their meeting with Gandhi on 19 July 1947 wherein Gandhi said that '[t]he Nagas have every right to become independent.... If you do not wish to join the Union of India, nobody will force you' (Misra, 2000: 33) only reassured Phizo of his conviction of Naga's right to independence. On 15 August 1947, Phizo declared independence of Nagaland. With Phizo's election to the post of President of NNC in November 1949, the demand and enthusiasm for independence gained momentum. Under Phizo's leadership, the 'plebiscite' for Naga independence was organized during May-August 1951 followed by the boycott of General Elections, 1952. With Phizo's tactics of accommodating tribal councils and the chiefs, he could indeed muster overwhelming support of the Nagas on both the occasions (Misra, 2000: 34-35).

Nagas' claim over sovereignty lies in its conviction that they constitute a distinct nationalism. Misra quotes Phizo to understand Nagas' perception of its uniqueness to constitute itself as a nation.

Truly, we are a peculiar people. We are all equals. Men and women have an equal status. We have no caste divisions....no high class or low class of people...We believe in that form of democratic government which permits the rule not of the majority but of the people as a whole. We have no land tax, no wine tax, no water tax. Forests, rivers and woodland belong to the people for their exploitation without paying taxes.... We have no beggars.... And wonders of wonders, we have no jails.

We do not 'arrest' or 'imprison' anybody.... We fear nobody, individually or collectively. We are a healthy people and fear corrupts the health of man.... We talk freely, live freely and fight freely too. We have no inhibitions of any kind.... Wild? Yes ... But free. There is order in this chaos, law in this freedom. If we were to choose a country, it would be my Nagaland, my fair Nagaland - again and again. (Misra, 2000: 47)

Split in NNC occurred on the issue of autonomy versus independence. While Phizo remained steadfast to his demand for sovereignty, his close confidants like T. Sakhrie and Zasokie had left the Council with their differences on the issue. The division within NNC resulted in the 'Sixteen Point Agreement Arrived at Between the Naga Peoples' Convention and the Government of India' in July 1960. It is through this Agreement that a consensus was arrived at to constitute a state in the territories known as Naga Hills Tuensang Area. It was also decided that the state of Nagaland shall be under the Ministry of External Affairs of GOI. A number of concessions were accorded to the state of Nagaland to substantiate the autonomy that was promised by the GOI. Clause 7 of the Agreement reads:

"No Act or Law passed by the Union Parliament affecting the following provisions shall have legal force in the Nagaland unless specifically approved by a majority of vote of the Nagaland Legislative Assembly:

- The Religious or Social Practices of the Nagas.
- Naga Customary Laws and Procedure
- Civil and criminal justice so far as these concern decisions according to Naga customary law. The existing laws relating to administration of civil and criminal justice as provided in the Rules for the Administration of Justice and Police in the Naga Hills district shall continue to be in force.
- The ownership and transfer of land and its resources."

Apart from giving special responsibility to the Governor in regard to law and order situation during the transitional phase, there were special provisions of accommodating both nominated members representing different tribes apart from the elected ones in the state legislature. In case of administering the Tuensang district, the Governor was assigned with special responsibility, and it was stated that it is the regional council of the district, which will elect members to the state legislature from the district. There were also demands for amalgamation of the contiguous areas inhabited by the Nagas to the new state, on which, however, GOI declined to make a commitment. The Constitution (Thirteenth Amendment) Act, 1962, through which the state of Nagaland was created, incorporated the important provisions of the Sixteen Point Agreement, 1960. The state of Nagaland was finally inaugurated in December, 1963.

Formation of the state of Nagaland was followed by the constitution of the Peace Mission so as to negotiate with the underground and restore peace in Nagaland. The Mission was headed by the then Chief Minister of Assam, B.P. Chaliha. The other two members of the Mission were J.P. Narayan and Revd. Michael Scott. The 17-point proposals issued by the Peace Mission on 20th December 1964 were indeed a breakthrough in terms of negotiation between the GOI and the underground. The Mission officially recorded the positions of both the Federal Delegation representing the underground which claimed that 'the Nagas had never been conquered by the Indian Army or ruled by an Indian Government' (Point 5) and therefore, demanded the recognition of Naga's independence and also that of GOI which asserted that 'Nagaland formed an integral part of India before 1947 and that with the transfer of Power to India by the British Parliament; Nagaland became a part of India'(Point 6). The Mission categorically 'agrees and endorses the principle that all subject peoples' have the right to self-determination' (Point 10) and also 'appreciates and understands the desire of the Nagas for self-determination and their urge to

preserve their integrity' (Point 12). At the same time, it draws the attention of the FGN (Federal Government of Nagaland) to the historical circumstances which gave birth to the Indian Union. With its assertion that "...in 1947, when all the diverse people of India, who had been brought under British rule, voluntarily agreed to form Union of India..."(Point 12), the Mission also hinted at un-sustainability of the Nagas demand on exclusive sovereignty.

The Mission Proposals suggested both the parties for serious engagements. '...the NFG could, on their own volition, decide to be a participant in the Union of India and mutually settle the terms and conditions for that purpose. On the other hand, the Government of India could consider to what extent the pattern and structures of the relationship between the Nagaland and the Government of India should be adapted and recast, so as to satisfy the political aspirations of all sections of Naga opinion and to make it possible for the ideals of peace as expressed in the Naga Peace Declaration to be substantially realized' (Point 13). In retrospect, it may be argued that the much proclaimed 'Framework Agreement' of 2015 is far short of what was envisioned in 1964. The Peace Mission's credible success was to sign the first ever Cease-Fire Agreement on 6 September 1964 with Naga Underground which, according to the Mission, has been 'a matter of considerable satisfaction to the Peace Mission, as to all other in Nagaland and in the rest of India, that since firing ceased on 6th September, 1964, for the first time in ten years people in Nagaland are experiencing what normalcy is' (Point 1).

However, the Mission initiatives failed once 'the Federal Group started violating in terms of the stoppage of operations' (White Paper issued by Government of Nagaland, 31 August 1972). It was alleged that the Federal Government sent groups of its cadres to Communist China both for military training and also for modern sophisticated arms. In August 1967, Mr. A.Z. Phizo and his host Advisor Revd. Michael Scott were alleged to have gone to New York to table the Naga case in the United

Nations, which they failed to do so. It may be mentioned that in 1967, the Indian Parliament also enacted 'The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. On 31 August 1972, the Governor of Nagaland suspended the practice of extension of suspension of military operations and declared NNC, NFG and Naga Federal Army (NFA) as unlawful associations within the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act of 1967.

NNC, which declared popular sovereignty in 1956, also adopted a provisional Constitution of the Federal Government called *The Yehzabo of Nagaland* in 1963. After its disillusionment with the peace initiatives, the Constitution was amended in 1968. Divided into twelve parts and having 140 articles, the *Yehzabo* declares that '[t]here shall be but one citizenship throughout Nagaland, that is to say, there shall be no citizenship of the Unit as distinct from that of the Nation' (Article 9). While through the *Yehzabo* the people of Nagaland solemnly acknowledge that 'the sovereignty over this earth and the entire universe belongs to almighty God alone', it, however, recognises that both Christianity and Naga religion as religions of the state. *Yehzabo* of 1968 also proclaims to establish national institutions in Nagaland based on 'the common ideals of democracy, justice, liberty, equality and fraternity among the people composing it.'

The GOI on its own continued with its attempts to bring in peace through tactical manoeuvres by creating divisions within the rank and file of the underground. As a sequence of events on 11 November 1975 'Nagaland Accord: The Shillong Agreement' was signed between the Governor of Assam, L.P. Singh and the representatives of Nagaland's underground organisations. Two significant outcomes of the Agreement were the following:

- The representatives of the underground organization conveyed their decision, of their own volition, to accept, without condition, the Constitution of India.
- It was agreed that the arms, now underground, would be brought out and deposited at appointed places.

It was this Accord, which resulted in the revolt against NNC and the birth of NSCN in 1980. It is to be mentioned here that it was Phizo who 'instilled a sense of nationhood among the Naga people'; who, however, has also been accused of being instrumental towards 'reassertion of tribalism in some of its worst forms in Naga politics by catering primarily to Angami chauvinism and exclusiveness' (Misra, 2000: 49). NSCN, in its Manifesto, 1980 acknowledges the NNC 'as the only authentic political organization of the people of Nagaland' which 'boldly took up the historic national trust, that is, the safeguarding of the right to sovereign existence of Nagaland'. However, NSCN condemns NNC of 'its failure to condemn the treacherous Ministry and the Accord of treason of 1975' and alleges that despite the changes taking place in the world 'the Naga National Council has failed to keep pace with changing conditions. It has not understood the world of Nagaland; it has isolated from the people.' In its Manifesto of 1980, NSCN has unequivocally declared that '[n]othing is more inalienable for a nation, big or small, than her sovereignty'. It also asserts that NSCN stand for 'the unequivocal sovereign right of the Naga people over every inch of Nagaland whatever it may be and admit of no other existence whatsoever'. NSCN proclaims to have stood for 'principle of Peoples' supremacy' and in economic system for 'Socialism'. On religion, NSCN declares that 'Nagaland for Christ' with an assertion that there will be no restriction on individual freedom of religion. In its 1984 statement, NSCN described A.Z. Phizo both 'treacherous' and a 'perishing' force' and calls itself 'vigorously risen forces'.

With the formation of NSCN in 1980, all the initiatives undertaken towards peace whether through the Peace Mission Proposals, 1964 or Shillong Accord, 1975 were proved to be unsustainable. New waves of conflict, clashes and confrontation started. However, the worst was yet to come, and finally it came with the division in NSCN itself into two factions one led by Chairman Isac and General Secretary Muivah (NSCN-IM) and other faction by its Vice

President S.S. Khaplang (NSCN-K). The worst incident took place on 30 April 1988 in which Khaplang faction attacked the General Headquarters of Muivah group and killed around hundred people. This was indeed one of the bloodiest internal clashes in the history of Naga national struggle. This was also the worst form of outburst of the factionalism between the Myanmar Nagas represented by Khaplang and that of Tangkhul Naga represented by Isaac and Muivah. NSCN (IM) accused the Khaplang faction of getting patronage from the Burmese forces in its attack on the NSCN headquarters on 30 April 1988 (Misra, 2000: 54). While Naga-Kuki clash has posed serious threat to NSCN as an apex revolutionary outfit, it is with the initiative of NSCN Khaplang faction that Indo Burma Revolutionary Front (IBRF) was formed in 1992. This outfit now acts as an apex body of many insurgent outfits of Northeast India and as adversary to NSCN (IM). The demand for Greater Nagalim by NSCN (IM) that incorporates substantial parts of Assam and Manipur naturally alienated several leading insurgent groups of Northeast India from its fold. This has also arrested NSCN (IM)'s hegemonic role in northeastern insurgency forcing it to go in a negotiated settlement of the Naga issue (Misra, 2000: 58). It is under such compelling circumstances that NSCN (IM) signed the ceasefire agreement with the GOI in December 1997, which was revised in January 2001. Subsequently, NSCN (Khaplang) also signed a ceasefire agreement for a period of one year in May 2001, which was extended from time to time. However, the negotiation for peace continued primarily with NSCN (IM), which finally culminated in the signing of the 'Framework Agreement' in August 2015.

The Framework Agreement and Prospects of Naga Peace

There has been a marked change in the language of NSCN (IM) in the recent past, particularly after it has signed the 'Framework Agreement'. Whilst it talked about inalienable sovereign rights of the Nagas in its Manifesto, 1980 and described all others who compromised on it as traitors, now NSCN (IM)

insists on 'coexistence' as the only way to resolve the Naga national question. 'Shared sovereignty' emerged as a new language. Understanding the problems of both the sides, that is, that of the GOI and the NSCN (IM) with mutual appreciation also appears to have led towards the signing of the Agreement. 'Self-destruction' is also a new reference point for the NSCN (IM) now and pledges to avoid it so as to bring about solution to the Naga national question. NSCN (IM) is also prepared to avoid a confrontationalist approach and to go in for dialogue and accommodation. These are evident in the words of Muivah in his first public appearance in Dimapur, Nagaland on 12 August 2015 after signing the 'Framework Agreement' (Nagaland Post, 13 August 2015). It is also noteworthy that both the NSCN (IM) and the GOI are mutually saluting each other after signing the Agreement.

Immediately, after signing the 'Framework Agreement', Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered a well-scripted speech where he focused on the unique history of the Nagas as well as the prospects of a new dawn of hope and aspirations for both the Nagas and the country. For him, the Agreement does not only mark 'the end of a problem, but the beginning of a new future'. Through the Agreement, the GOI assures its pledge not only 'to heal wounds and resolve problems' but also to be the partner of the Nagas in their 'pride and prestige'. To the leaders and the people of Nagaland, the Prime Minister had a special message '[y]ou will not only build a bright future for Nagaland, but your talents, traditions and efforts will also contribute to making the nation stronger, more secure, more inclusive and more prosperous. You are also the guardians of our eastern frontiers and our gateway to the world beyond" (Nagaland Post, 4 August 2015). Highlighting the spirit behind the negotiations that resulted in the signing of the Agreement, the Prime Minister also asserted that '[t]oday'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; when we seek to understand concerns and try to address

aspirations; when we leave the path of dispute and take the high road of dialogue. It is a lesson and an inspiration in our troubled world' (Nagaland Post, 4 August 2015). Pouring praise over the culture and the way of life of the people. It makes not only our nation, but also the world a more beautiful place' (Nagaland Post, 4 August 2015).

There is indeed convergence in thinking between the parties. In Muivah's words '...when Indians recognised the rights of the Nagas and Nagas too understood their difficulties, both cannot live totally separated but should coexist through sharing of sovereign power' (Nagaland Post, 13 August 2015). On the aspect of democracy and sovereignty, he said Indians have accepted that the Naga sovereignty would be with the Nagas and sovereignty of India would remain with Indians. He also said 'we must depend on each other. We must admit the mistake of each other and we must forgive each other' (Nagaland Post, 13 August 2015). Interestingly, the leaders of NSCN (IM) now stresses on repenting the mistakes that they committed to be forgiven by God. In Muivah's words, 'Nagas should repent for the mistakes we have made before God only then the grace of Lord will be there'. In his message delivered through Muivah NSCN (I-M) Chairman, Isak Chishi Swu also 'urged the Nagas to repent, seek forgiveness so that God will lead the Nagas and forgive the Nagas in the precious name of ... Lord Jesus Christ'. This is indeed a complete reversal to its pledge in its Manifesto of 1980, wherein NSCN claimed that '[w]e must rule out the illusion of saving Nagaland through peaceful means. It is arms and arms alone that will save our nation and ensure freedom to the people'. This pledge was taken in the name of God by asserting that NSCN stands for 'the faith in God and the salvation of mankind in Jesus, the Christ alone' and declared that Nagaland is for Christ. Now, it is in the name of God, NSCN (IM) is reversing them with its new ideas on 'shared sovereignty', 'co-existence' and 'non-confrontationist accommodation'.

Nagas and its significance for India and the world, Modi pointed out that 'I have travelled to Nagaland on many occasions. I have been deeply impressed by the rich and diverse culture and the unique way of life of the Naga. While there have been both euphoria and celebrations around the 'Framework Agreement', many substantive issues have, however, remained unanswered. Whereas in Nehru's letter of 1946 and also in Peace Missions Proposals of 1960, there was concrete framework of mutual engagements between the GOI and the Nagas for realising substantive autonomy, nothing of this sort has been indicated in the recent Agreement. It has been argued by Goswami (2015) that the Agreement is marked by shift in approach from negotiation to dialogue through which both parties engage themselves for meaningful outcomes without rigidity in demands. But, to have impact in a violence-torn society like the Nagas, the dialogue must address substantive issues. The situation in Nagaland today has serious constraints towards sustainable peace. Two of such constraints are the brutalisation and militarisation of the society by both state and the insurgent groups and a corrupt local ruling class nurtured by Government of India (Editorial, *EPW* 2010). Kikon (2015), one of the close observers of the Naga national question, has pointed out that the 'future of the Framework Agreement is challenging' on account of a couple of factors. Presence of more than half-a-dozen newly formed armed groups, which are active in Naga areas across the region and the factionalism and the routine violence that they are engaged in is the first challenge. Second, the growing voices of dissent from Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh against the Accord on account of NSCN (IM)'s dream of greater Nagalim. Third, the militarist and paternalistic relationship perpetuated by NSCN (IM) over the years (Kikon, 2015). Restoration of peace, pride and prestige in Nagaland will depend on how these critical issues are addressed by both the parties.

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