



IS INDEPENDENT “GREATER NAGALIM” ECONOMICALLY VIABLE AND SUSTAINABLE?

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ABSTRACT

The conglomerate Naga tribes and sub-tribes have been fighting for freedom and motherland during the British rule and in Independent India. They took to arms to this cause in Independent India and have always been that way since. The armed struggle movement have seen many drastic changes in the organization, leadership and demand but the ultimate goal of bringing all the Naga inhabited areas under one administration have stood the test of time. “Nagalim” is a term that denotes the demand for one administration of all the Naga inhabited areas which presently falls under four North-eastern states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland. The demand for Nagalim ranges from greater autonomy to complete independent nation. This paper examines whether it is economical viable and sustainable if the aspiration of an independent nation comes true or if not should it look for some other alternative which may be socially, economically and politically viable in the interest of all stakeholders.

Key Words: Naga Club, NNC, NSCN, NSCN (I-M), NSCN (K), Nagalim, resources, Ceasefire, Framework Agreement

INTRODUCTION:

Nagaland was created as one of the Indian state in 1963. It was carved out of Assam to satisfy one of the long standing demands of the Naga people to be independent and free. One of the reasons could also have been the fallout of the Hydari Agreement and the armed struggle of the Naga insurgent movement.

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How did the Nagas of the present derived this acronym is still a topic of debate and have many theories. Until the arrival of the British and the missionaries, the Naga tribes that we know of today were living an independent, self-sufficient republic village life. The village was ruled by a village chief assisted by the council of elders of all the clans of the village. The villages were self-sufficient and independent. The villagers were known for inter-village wars and head hunting. Head hunting was not without regulations for the head of only enemies was considered worthy and noble.

They were by profession agriculturists for whom land and land ownership was pride and primary objective. They are by nature very protective of their land and territory and therefore protecting that freedom is their duty. History seem to favour that the British and the western Christian missionaries are to a great extend responsible for the unity and the national movement of the Nagas. They had no religion for they worship the natural phenomena but they seem to have embrace Christianity as most of the Nagas today are Christians.

It is not known when the numerous Naga tribes migrated to the present territory which they called home. The different tribes have different stories of the origin of the tribe but the one thing common to all is that they came from somewhere. The tribes seem to share common traditions such as Patriarchal society, practise of boys and girls' dormitory, head hunting, animism, migration etc.

These numerous sub-tribes under the Naga banner spread out presently in India and Myanmar, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur feels that they have been divided to rule, that they have been cheated out of their freedom. The important question that need to be answered is, can they every live together under one leadership which they never had? Could they be better off under the democratic Indian system? Do they have the resources to grow and develop? Were they really denied the right to be together? Is it possible and easy to redraw the borderlines of the Indian state? Can all the insurgent groups claiming to be fighting for the Naga right unite for the sake of the nation or will factionalism become the norm of the day in the Naga community? The fight has over decades have proven the iron will of the people but has it been broken and cracked in the recent passed through selfish motives? Can a divided house stand the test of time?

Objectives:

This paper is a theoretical paper examining the viability of the idea of independent "Nagalim", a homeland where they are free to self determination and rule. This paper is pragmatic in its approach to the reality of economic resources at the exposure of the Nagas, the economic prospects and the challenges that it may encounter as an independent nation. It will explore the possibility of creating another tiny nation out of and in between mighty powerful nations in Asia. It will question the core issue of survival, growth and development

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as a nation for which they have fought gallantly for many decades against all odds and over 3 lakhs have sacrificed their lives. To want is a dream but in need is the reality and the need can only be satisfied by the availability of resources and the possibilities presented by the surrounding through linkages.

Methodology:

This paper is pragmatic and judgemental in its approach based on empirical method, evidences, historical facts and personal observation and experiences.

Naga Independent Movement:

Let history speak for itself and surely let it never be forgotten that the turning point of the advancing Japanese military might in the eastern front of India was the battle of Kohima, Imphal and many other famous battle fronts in the Naga territory. The Nagas fought bravely and gallantly for the Allied forces. They participated in the freedom movement of India. How can this brave hearts that save the mainland India from the advancing might of the Japanese army be forgotten in the study of Indian history?

Well the exposure to the western education, as army corps in France during the First World War, and the freedom movement of India awaken and germinated the seed of freedom in the minds of the few educated Nagas. They formed the Naga club in 1918 and met the Simon commission. A memorandum was submitted to the Simon commission to leave the Naga community out of the Independent India.

The Naga National council was formed in 1946 to further take the cause of the Naga movement under the leadership of Angami Zapu Phizo. The Hydari Agreement signed is the watershed of the Naga freedom movement. Clause No. 09 is the point of contention and upon which the Nagas hinges on besides the fact that they were never subjugated or directly under the British. At this juncture it would not be wrong to mention to mention some of the other factors contributing to the freedom movement:

1. The policy of “Innerline permit” and “excluded area” (A.S. Shimray: 38-39) introduced by the British has a big role to play in the line of thought that the Naga territory was different and separate.
2. The difference in religion.
3. The exposure of the Nagas to Europe in World War I in regard to nationalism.
4. The educated elite few who promoted the idea of being free.
5. Nehru’s policy relating to the Naga movement especially after his experience in Kohima in the presence of the Burmese Prime Minister U Nu.
6. The knowledge and access to arms after the end of World War II.

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7. The strong impression that they have been cheated out of their right to freedom and been subjugated.

Naga Peace talks and Ceasefire:

In the course of the Naga freedom movement there have been a few peace talks and negotiations which have failed to bear the expected result of the movement;

1. The Hydari-Naga Pact 1947:

The Hydari – Naga Agreement was signed on June 28th, 1947 at Kohima which agreements ranging from Judiciary, executive, Agriculture, Legislative, land, taxation, arms act, boundaries, regulations, and period of the agreement. The contentious issue between the Nagas and Indian Government are point No. 6 (boundaries) and No. 9 (period of agreement).

*6. **Boundaries** – That present administrative divisions should be modified so as (1) to bring back into the Naga Hills District all the forests transferred to the Sibsagar and Nowgong Districts in the past, and (2) to bring under one unified administrative unit as far as possible all Nagas. All the areas so included would be within the scope of the present proposed agreement. No areas should be transferred out of the Naga Hills without the consent of the Naga Council.*

*9. **Period of Agreement** – The 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 observance of the agreement, at the end of this 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.*

The boundary issue is the demand of “Nagalim”, all Naga territory in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur and Nagaland under one administration. The Nagas always felt that they have been have been denied this right or that it was differently interpreted and not honoured by the counterpart.

2. The creation of the state of Nagaland

The British first established its Headquarter in Samaguting (Chumukedima) in 1866 to protect the British territory and subjects from the raids of the tribals from the Naga Hills. In 1878 it was moved to the present state capital, Kohima. In 1935, the Simon commission placed the Naga Hills under the “Excluded area” policy. The famous battle of Kohima was fought on April 4 to June 22, 1944 which was a crucial turning point to the advancing Japanese army. Eventually in 1947, the Naga Hills came under the independent India under the cloud of counter independence declared by the Nagas on August 14, 1947. Then to appease the disgruntled and hard core Naga, the Indian government granted statehood to the



Naga Hills on December 1, 1963 with the expectation that the Naga freedom movement would end but history have proven otherwise.

3. The 1966 “Suisa proposal”

In the early 1960s, there was a concerted sincere effort from the “Peace Mission” to initiate and bring long lasting peace and solution to the Indo-Naga relationship. A Naga leader “Uncle Suisa” (Rungsung Suisa) made a proposal in October 1966, it was a proposal of shared responsibilities between India and Nagas in areas of foreign and military affairs, but full Naga sovereignty on internal affairs of the Nagas. The then Prime Minister, Smt. Indira Gandhi and her government considered it positively. This proposal was then presented to Angami Zapu Phizo in London in June 1967 but unfortunately was rejected outright since they wanted nothing less than full independence. Today, the Naga leadership still does not agree with much of the proposal but accepts that it could have been the best lost opportunity.

4. “Shillong Accord” – 1975

After 20 years of serious arm struggle, some of the Naga council leaders agreed to sign peace agreement with the Indian government. Thus, on 11th November, 1975 the infamous “Shillong Accord” was signed in Shillong bringing the curtains down on the freedom movement of the Nagas by accepting the Indian constitution and agreed to lay down arms. This agreement was strongly opposed by the Chinese trained returnees led by Mr. Thuingaleng Muivah, Mr. Isak Swu and Mr. S.S. Khaplang along with 140 other freedom fighters. They eventually formed the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) in 1980 and continued the armed struggle for freedom.

5. 1997 “Ceasefire”

The NSCN (I-M), the largest and the strongest underground Naga group entered into a ceasefire agreement with the government of India on August 1, 1997. This agreement has brought much needed peace and silence of gun in the Naga Hills. Much water has flowed under this agreement and after 80 rounds of negotiations it finally has fruition to the “Framework Agreement” in 2015 under the Prime Ministership of Shri. Narendra Modi. *"This agreement will end the oldest insurgency in the country. It will restore peace and pave the way for prosperity in the North East. It will advance a life of dignity, opportunity and equity for the Naga people, based on their genius and consistent with the uniqueness of the Naga people and their culture and traditions," (PM Modi).*

Prospects and Challenges:

Naga freedom movement is truly the oldest and considered to be legitimate. Innocent lives have been sacrificed, blood have flowed, relationship strained, people have disappeared without a trace and economy has been shaken for a movement, surely it must be worth all the pain and wait. Is it right for someone to simply brush aside the movement as an illusion

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chasing a mirage? Is it true to say “Nagalim” is too small and not viable economically? Is it a well thought out plan or just a demand without examining the ground realities? Is it a case where the “big brother” knows the geopolitical importance of this region that it is not willing to let go? What is the narrative of all this? Historically and culturally the Nagas have the right over their territory and who can question it? The greater relevant issue of discussion should be, Is “Nagalim” economically viable and sustainable?

Let us closely examine the resources available in the Naga territory to answer possibility of Nagalim as an land lock independent country in South East Asia.

1. Profile of Nagalim:

If all the Naga territory were to be brought under one administration as Nagalim then it will be a nation with a total land area of 1,20,000 Sq. Kms. and total population of 4.5 million. It will share international border with China, India and Myanmar. In fact 1643 Kms of international border of India with Myanmar with the exception of Mizoram (1643 - 510 Kms = 1133 Kms) will become part of the Greater Nagalim.

Greater Nagalim include continuous territories inhabited by Nagas in the following districts of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, and Manipur besides territory from Myanmar and Nagaland;

A. Assam:

Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Karbi Anglong, Nagaon, Dima Hasao

B. Arunachal Pradesh:

Diban valley, Lohit, Changlang, Tirap

C. Manipur:

Senapati, Ukhrul, Chandel, Tamenglong

Sl #	Country	Area Sq.Kms	Population (ml.)	Land lock/Sea
1	Greater Nagalim	1,20,000	4,500,000	Land lock
2	Switzerland	41,285	7,952,600	Land lock

3	Bhutan	47,000	672,425	Land lock
4	South Korea	98,480	51,302,044	Sea
5	Japan	377,915	126,434,964	Sea
6	Sri Lanka	65,610	20,064,776	Sea
7	Holland	5488	6,466,735	Sea
106 Countries with less the 4.5 Million				
106 Countries with less than 120000 Sq. Kms				

Source: www.worldometers.info/world-population/population-by-country

www.nationmasters.com/countr-info/stats/Geography/land-area/Sq-km

2. Resources

The Naga territory is at the foothills of the great Himalaya rich in flora and fauna, forests and forest products. The soil is fertile and productive for many agricultural produce and therefore agriculture has always been and will continue to be the backbone of the economy. It receives adequate monsoon rain and the territory is well watered by numerous streams and rivers strong and large enough to generate enough hydro-electricity.

It is also studied and well known that the territory is rich in many mineral resources such as Petroleum, natural gas, Coal, Limestone, Nickel, Cobalt, Chromium, rich deposits of decorative and dimensional stones. In regard to Human resource, the people are hard working, skillful in handloom and handicrafts, innovative and educated. They are very daring, loving, caring and hospitality is second to none.

3. Eco-Cultural Tourism

The mountains and the valley, the rich and diverse flora and fauna, and the diversity of ethnic groups all in one is feast for tourist. The serene blue hills and mountain, the golden valley of grains beckons tourist. The colors and festivities through the year celebrated by the tribes, the beat of the drums, the music, and the dance surely will be a life of another world. The beautiful colors and motifs of the traditional costumes of each tribe that identifies but unites the Nagas surely cannot be found anywhere else. It might be tugged away somewhere in the

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forest and mountains but history tells us that people go in search of serenity, peace and fun. Nagalim in the right political environment will be a tourist hot-spot.

4. International border and linkages

Greater Nagalim will share international border with the two upcoming economic super powers of the world; China and India, and also with resource rich Myanmar. There is no denial that the Nagas by culture and traditions claim to share history with China, and Myanmar. It has long history with India and Naga leaders have always claimed to respect the concerns of India. Surely Nagalim can benefit as an independent nation from the growing economy of China, India and South East Asian nations by formulating and implementing win-win economic policies in the interest of all parties involved.

5. Capital:

As a federal state under the constitution of India, there is very little capital available. The very nature of the people opines that they are more consumerist rather than savers. Without savings, there cannot be capital formation and without capital formation there is no investment. Lack of investment mean there will be weak economy of poverty and unemployment.

History has taught us that no economy in the world began where they are today. The great nation of India was no different. Indian inherited an economy ransacked by the colonizers, poor in all aspects. There were resources but either ransacked or not exploited, dependent on agricultural sector that was not producing enough to support the population. South Korean economy was very similar to India economy to start of with. Today India is claiming to be an economic super power with surplus production of foodgrains and the second fastest growing economy in the world while South Korea is well advanced economy. It is more of where the economies wish to be rather than where it started off. So, coming back to Nagalim, Is it economically backward and weak? Yes. Does it have the capital to invest? No. But are there prospects, possibilities of sustaining and growing as an economy? Yes. Capital can be made avail from the international financial institutions, friendly nations and in a globalised economy with the right policies and environment there will be no shortage of investors.

Challenges:

I see "Greater Nagalim" realistically viable and possible as an independent economy. The location and resources available in its territory is strategic and sufficiently sustainable. The ethnic diversity, the richest of flora and fauna, the natural beauty and the hospitality of the people will surely attract tourism. The natural climate, the rivers and streams can generate enough energy. And most importantly the two economically powerful nations as neighbours will be an additional advantage. The possibilities and potential is huge but there are



pragmatic challenges from the inside which are more difficult to surmount and are like burning the bridges before crossing to the finishing line;

1. The nature and form of government “Nagaland for Christ”

The Nagas have fought for freedom under the banner “Nagaland for Christ” for decades. Christianity and its education have played a vital role in unifying the once upon a time warring villages and tribes but there is an apprehension that this very factor could be the dividing factor in the fight for unity and freedom.

Jesus Christ was a God incarnate as man lived a life of love and acceptance of all regardless of their walk of life. He was not corrupt but just. He loved everyone the same. He paid the price for the freedom of all.

Is Nagaland really for Christ? Then why is there imposition of Sunday keeping especially in terms of trade, commerce and business? Will it be a Socialist Christian nation with communist ideology? Could this not be a deterrent in nation building and the economy of a nation? Shouldn't everyone be encouraged to exercise freedom in the interest of the nation at large? Religion cannot be forced upon, all religion is about love and it should be cultivated truly in love. Our love for our religion should be reflected in the love of others. Freedom of expression and religion will be a great unifying factor.

2. Factionalism and leadership issue

The greatest challenge to the ideal and thought of “Greater Nagalim” is and will be the issue of factionalism and leadership. The Nagas since the beginning of the movement have had great stalwarts of leaders but have also witness the ugly head of factionalism and fued over leadership issue.

We have failed to overcome the ancient nature of village republic and that is the reason why we have too many heads without body and tail. We are still struggling with the issue of “ism”. We have divided ourselves as tribes; superior and inferior tribes. Our freedom fighting organsiations have broken into many pieces due to difference in ideology, leadership and power struggle. We have riddled our walls and pillars with bullet holes of infighting. We have lost leaders, men and women in our power struggle. Unfortunately, the division has been drawn often on tribe lines. We fight and shed blood in the arena while the ones whom we should be up against are watching gleefully and waiting for us to bleed to death. Are we not making their job easier? This, if “Greater Nagalim” comes to a reality will be the greatest challenge unless we truly live up to the banner “Nagaland for Christ” and live together in love.



CONCLUSION:

“Greater Nagalim” is not a dream or an illusion but a reality which is politically, economically viable and sustainable. It is in the hands of the stakeholders in their willingness to give or give up on something which is not rightfully theirs and on those who rightfully claim it but have been denied for long. There is prospects, possibilities and dream long cherished, bloodshed, lives given up and people suffered long enough who should not be drown in the challenge of tribe faultlines. The nation that hold sway on the matter should not just brush aside a burning issue for the last 7 decades as something not possible and the people who need and want it should stick together to the same cause if not it can never be achieved. Both the parties need to introspect and come to a win-win agreement and co-exist peacefully as neighbours or continue to live together as one nation with honor, respect and space. It is sometimes better to be good neighbours then to live under the same roof and fight. The storms will pass but the house that is in unity will stand. Greater Nagalim will become a dream realised only if we learn to unite as Nagas rather divide as tribes.

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