**Greater Nagaland**

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August 02, 2021

The North Eastern States of India are the most volatile and insurgency affected states in India after Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). The region comprises of eight states namely, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Sikkim. The people of the North East belong to the Mongolian, Indo-Burmese and Aryan races.

Each state finds it difficult to identify itself with the mainland, India, and wants to preserve their separate identity. One such state struggling for independence and a sovereign state is Nagaland. The Naga refers to 32 tribes of Indo-Mongoloid origin that have been spread over a number of states. 16 tribes are in Nagaland, 7 in Manipur, 3 in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam and 5 tribes in Myanmar.

88 percent of the population comprises of Christians, 10 percent Hindus and 2 percent are Muslims. The British annexed Assam in 1826 and in 1881, the Naga Hills became part of British India. During the British Raj, Nagaland remained independent and on partition, they wanted to be a sovereign state. In 1946, the Naga National Council (NNC) was formed under a local leader named Zapu Phizo, who declared independence of Nagaland on August 14, 1947. A referendum was conducted in 1951 in which 99 percent supported an independent Nagaland. Gandhi also supported the Nagas and said, “Nagas have every right to be independent. If you do not wish to join the Union of India, nobody will force you to do that”.

[Azerbaijan says Armenia targeted army positions in Nakhchivan](https://nation.com.pk/03-Aug-2021/azerbaijan-says-armenia-targeted-army-positions-in-nakhchivan)

Nagaland was made part of India through a nine point agreement known as Hydari Agreement. The ninth clause of the agreement gives the administration of Nagaland to India for ten years only, after which the future of the region was to be decided in consultation with the Naga National Council. The Nagas’ view is that through this clause nine, it is clear that there was no final settlement of the issue and the region was handed over to India temporarily. Therefore, all options that include freedom are open.

The refusal by India led to an armed underground struggle under Phizo. In 1958, the Indian army was sent to the region to deal with insurgency under the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA). In 1975, the Shillong accord was signed to end insurgency with Phizo but it was rejected by groups under Thingaleng Muivah, Isak Swu and Khaplang. This led to the creation of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN). Its demand was a separate homeland, called a ‘Greater Nagaland’, which would include Nagaland as well as the Naga inhabited areas of Manipur, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Myanmar.

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1988, the NSCN split into NSCN (IM) and NSCN (K). Clashes took place between the two groups and they resulted in numerous causalities. The clashes further resulted in the creation of another group, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Unification), NSCN (U). Much like its predecessor, the demand of this warring faction was a ‘Greater Nagaland’ that included areas inhabited by Nagas in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and also parts of Myanmar.

The Nagaland assembly has time and again unanimously endorsed this demand. Other states are not willing to give even an inch of their land to facilitate it. In 2015, the Framework Agreement was signed with Muivah, the leader of NSCN (IM). Later on, it was reported by NSCN (IM) that the agreement has been changed from its original form by altering it. NSCN (IM) accused the government of India for twisting and misinterpreting the agreement. The agreement was signed in the presence of Prime Minister Modi and NSCN (IM) leader Muivah.

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After signing the agreement PM Modi termed it to be historic and announced the settlement of Nagaland. For Muivah the Framework Agreement recognises the sovereignty of Nagas. In the meantime, the Modi government in 2017 signed another agreement with 7 other armed groups by passing the strong NSCM (IM) under the banner of Naga National Political Groups for negotiations. In his Naga Independence Day speech on August 14, 2020 NSCN (IM) leader Thingaleng Muivah made it clear that the Nagas will never merge with India.

According to the Indian Express, Muivah said that the Nagas have their own flag and constitution and it is up to the government to recognise these as they are the ‘symbols of Naga nationhood’. The entire state of Nagaland has been declared as a disturbed state, therefore Armed Forces Special Power Act is extended on an annual basis. The act has been enforced in North East India since 1958 when the army was sent. There are several accounts of the Indian army committing heinous crimes against the Nagas under the protection of Armed Forces Special Power Act. They are free to arrest any individual on any pretext, can shoot to kill and conduct searches without warrants.

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The people of Nagaland are suspicious of the government of India after the scrapping of Article 370 of Indian constitution which gave a special status to IIOJK. They are afraid that the center is trying to impose its will on them by force. The Naga leaders are adamant that come what may, they would not abandon the demand of the Nagaland flag, constitution, and sovereignty.