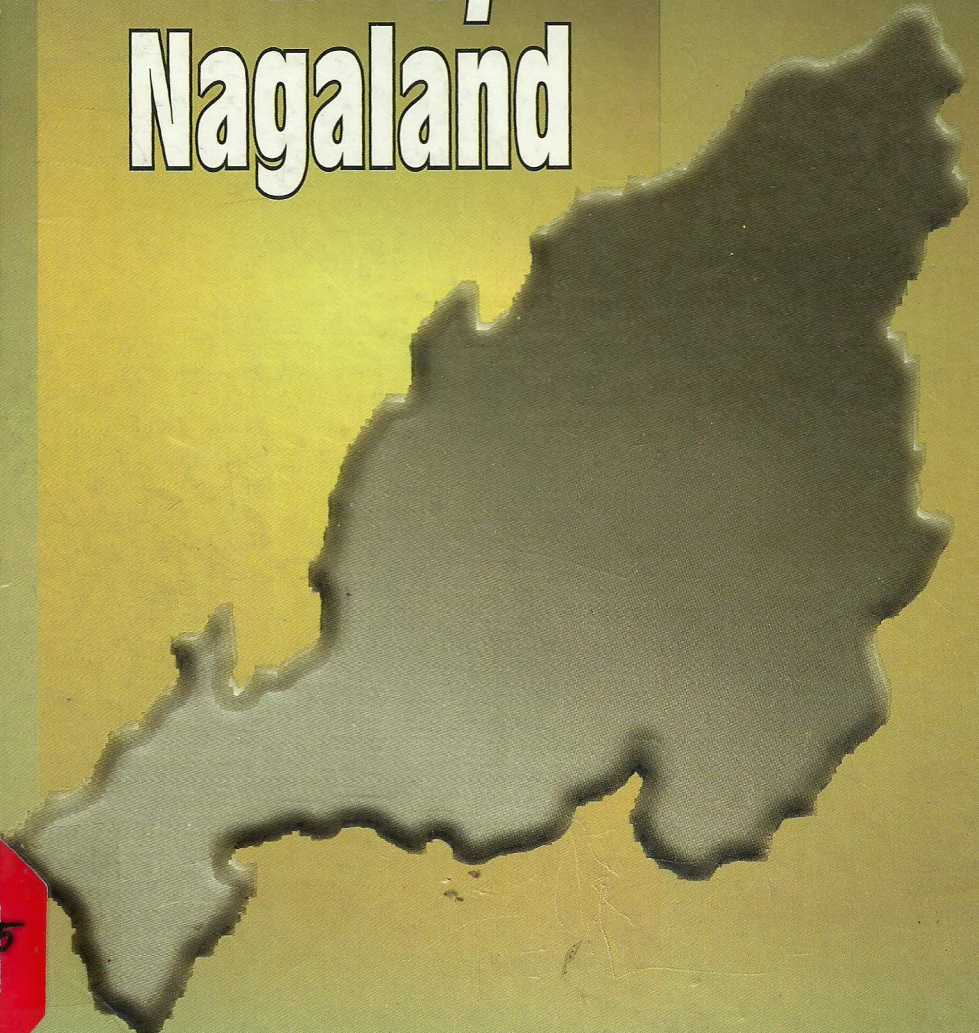


# Politics and Militancy in Nagaland



**Kuhoi K Zhimomi**

## The Book

Most of the problems in politics are essentially dynamic in nature because they deal with ongoing progress of social and political development. A current problem which is still producing its impact on society like politics and militancy in Nagaland demands concentrated attention and careful analysis of data and objectivity in arriving at an intellectual conclusion. The author traces the genesis of insurgency with its theoretical basis, internal challenges leading from Conflict to Conferences. Efforts at Peace Missions and Ceasefire to solve the vexed Naga problem and the emerging political trends form the core of the study. This book highlights the complexity and seriousness of a political phenomenon like the conflict and interaction among contrary forces operating in Nagaland. Politics and Militancy in the state continues to be active. Such a problem which is still in active process cannot be summed up very briefly, nor can dogmatic conclusion be reached. Therefore the author avoids ending his study with dogmatic conclusions which could be proved irrelevant and out of focus by the very fact of change and development, responding to changing condition and factors.

The book presents a clear picture of the origin, the growth and the varying responses with the passage of time of the problem. Consequently, no one-sided or partial dogmatic conclusions are given at the end. The author's intellectual task is to analyse the problem and bring it into close relationship to the facts of current history of the Nagas.

The book will be very useful for the politicians, public leaders, teachers, students and the academicians. It gives an insight into the growth and traces the trend of politics and militancy in the history of Naga freedom movement.

**Contents of this book include :** Nagas and their Past; Theoretical Basis of Militancy and Genesis of Militancy in Nagaland; Militancy at the High Peak; Internal Challenge to Militancy; Peace Mission and Ceasefire; Impact of Militancy on Naga Politics Before Shillong Accord; Shillong Accord and Resumption of Insurgency; Resumption of Peace Process and Emerging Political Trends; Bibliography; Index.

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# POLITICS AND MILITANCY IN NAGALAND



**DR. KUHOI K. ZHIMOMI**

*Foreword by*

**H.K. KHULU**

IAS

Finance Commissioner, Kohima, Nagaland



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## FOREWORD

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Nagaland has been the first to see the emergence of Insurgency in INDIA which has existed as a civilization and socio-cultural entity or idea long before it came a modern nation-state. It was not invented or created by the British but was there in being. In 1947 an old nation was born anew. It is probably the most diverse society in the world and nowhere is this plurality more manifest than in the *North-east* which sees extraordinary co-mingling of races, religions and languages.†

(The Indian genius has been to seek unity in diversity rather than try and cast all its people in a single mould. Hence the patient process of nation-building in the heterogeneous region beyond *Siliguri* which Partition rendered a distinct geopolitical entity with an external perimeter 98 per cent international and only two per cent Indian.)

*Dr. Kuhoi K. Zhimomi* looks at this relatively little known but fascinating part of India in general and Nagaland in particular, which is the only State in the country that was formed through an Agreement, popularly known as the sixteen point Agreement and the problems of ethnicity, governance, insurgency and development that have marked its evolution. Mongoloid India defines a distinctive ethno-cultural region with hoary external historical, cultural and commercial linkages which merit renewal. The hill tracts of the Northeast in general and Nagaland in particular, home to a myriad tribes speaking a babel of tongues, were deliberately isolated as a matter of imperial policy and then relegated by Partition. These factors have no doubt contributed to the lack of knowledge of this richly endowed

and strategically important region on the part of the rest of the country and *vice-versa*. This volume is intended in part to fill that void.

As Dr. Kuhoi K. Zhimomi brings out, Assam which was the parent State was in some ways in the vanguard of India's early industrial modernization and globalization but then turned inward for a variety of reasons. As India now moves into a new era of economic reform and globalization, the *Northeast* too can rediscover opportunity and will find strength in integrating more closely with the national economy and opening out to the dynamic economies of East and Southeast Asia beyond. Development can be a solvent for many of the economic and aspiration problems of the region and give it self-assurance and channelise the energies of its youth from barren violence, insurgency and drugs to more constructive endeavour.

The ethnic-identity issues and political evolution leading to state formation and the creation of sub-state structures is traced and emerging cultural problems analyzed. The whole region is in the process of a complex multi-faceted transition with an inter-play of outsiders, foreigners, sons-of-the-soil and tribal forces that has sometimes produced confrontation, trauma and tragedy.

The Bangladesh factor looms large as it is in many ways part of the larger Eastern Himalayan-Patkai resource region. Were this to be recognized and the mutual inter-dependence of the constituent units correctly perceived, many issues would begin to fall into place in a more harmonized pattern of relationships.

A number of problems have been exposed and possible reforms or lines of solution suggested. There could be other approaches too but none can dispute the need for bold initiatives within a well-considered, long-term, inter-sectoral framework that looks not merely at the nine territorial units involved or the region as a whole but the larger external environmental in a fast-changing world.

The Centre has had an abiding interest in the *Nagaland* not only because of its distinct importance but also because the first insurgency in the country began here. There is also much to learn from India's experience in the *Nagaland* and in

*Dedicated to my beloved parents*

## PREFACE

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Militancy or insurgency in modern perspective has notoriously become a global issue posing serious threat and danger to political stability of a state and causing mental agony, physical torture and economic loss of the people concerned. Insurgency is today being applied to achieve the goal, either justified or unjustified, by creating mass terror among the people and paralyzing a well settled Government. In India problem of insurgency is far more serious, especially in Jammu and Kashmir and also in the states of North-Eastern region. So far as the case of Nagaland is concerned, the state is insurgency-prone area from the very beginning of India's independence. It has caused a widespread fear psychosis among the inhabitants of the state and has taken thousands of human lives. It has also badly affected the economic development of the state and prosperity of the people.

No state of the Indian Republic has experienced so much political upheavals and turmoil as Nagaland and its people have faced. This small hill state has remained the hotbed of armed fighting between the Naga militants and the Indian security forces for more than four decades. The fighting is still going on not only with the Indian security forces but among the factions of the underground Nagas also.

The Naga people never liked outside interference in their internal affairs from the beginning. Independence is not only the habit of the Nagas it is also in their blood. The British people subjugated the Nagas because the Nagas could not face such mighty force. Even before the arrival of the British in their land the Ahoms had tried to subjugate the Nagas, but they hardly succeeded. Knowing the nature of the

Nagas, the British rulers and administrators never tried to interfere in the internal affairs of the Naga people. Rather they made special provisions for Nagas' administration. During the British regime there was no problem of insurgency perhaps due to two factors. Firstly, the British Government kept the Naga Hills out from the general stream of administration and laws, and secondly, the sympathetic as well as helpful attitude and behaviour of the British and the Christian missionaries befriended them. Moreover, the promulgation of the Inner Line Permit Regulation, 1874, also assured the Naga people that there would not be any sort of undue interference in their internal life.

(The Nagas being tribal and living in isolated areas from a long time are separatist by attitude and tribe-prone by faith and behaviour.) Tribalism has remained a dominant factor in the behavioural attitude of the Naga people. Due to lack of their exposure to outside world they have remained doubtful and suspicious about the new ideas. Moreover, the base of the Naga society has been the customary laws and practices which made the Naga people traditional. They do not want to be deprived of their ancient culture and social traditions. Their constant fear has been about the protection of their cultural rights and internal autonomies. That is why sensing that the British would vacate India in near future, the Naga people got disturbed and began to think seriously about their future after the departure of the British from India. This fact is evident from the petitions and memorandums, which the Naga intellectuals produced before the British authorities objecting the incorporation of the Naga Hills in the constitution of free India. (Division of India into two dominions—India and Pakistan disillusioned the Naga people and made them more pertinent to their viewpoint that the Nagas must be provided with separate political set-up. At this very juncture the Naga intellectuals began to think about their political status, which they maintained before the arrival of the British in their land.) In pursuance of such views and thought the Naga intellectuals became more and more active to pressurize the authorities concerned to consider their viewpoints and grant them safe and secured political status without any outside interference. But neither the British

authorities nor the Indian political leaders paid any serious heed to the Nagas' demands. Rather they were incorporated in the Indian constitution simply as an integral part of Assam, which irritated the mind of every Naga. Meanwhile some of the Naga leaders under the leadership of A.Z. Phizo seized the opportunity and appeared with the demand of an independent Nagaland. This group, having the support of every Naga in the beginning, exerted all sorts of pressure tactics including unilateral plebiscite, Non-cooperation movement, movement of boycott, etc., but all in vain because the Government of India was not at all ready to take into account the seriousness of the Naga issue. Rather the Indian political leaders considering the Naga problem nothing more than a problem of law and order, adopted double yardstick policy—the policy of persuasion and the policy of armed-twisting by sending goodwill missions and deploying security forces in Nagaland. Such policy of the Government of India did not help to keep the Naga people under the thumb of military pressure. Rather the Nagas became more adamant and determined to their demand which ultimately resulted in direct armed tussle between the Naga organized militant organizations and the Indian armed forces.

While dealing with the insurgent Nagas the government of India spared nothing to suppress the Naga rebellion. The Indian *jawans* raided the hideouts of the militants, harassed the villagers by burning their granaries, houses, exerting inhuman physical torture and putting them in confinement, but they failed to change the mind of the Nagas to accept the Indian constitution. Rather the policy of India's armed twisting boomeranged. Hundreds of Indian *jawans* were killed and several army and police posts were attacked causing serious damage to both life and properties. This was the spirit of the Naga nationalism, which provided energy and courage to the Naga freedom fighters.

Militant activities in Nagaland irrupted with the formation of the underground People's Sovereign Republic of Free Nagaland in 1953, which was re-termed as the Naga Federal Government (NFG) in 1956. The Government of India, with the intention to meet the challenges posed by the underground Government and Army, imposed several

stringent Acts empowering the army with extra power to deal with the challenges seriously. A battle line was drawn in Nagaland between these two forces where the main victims were the general mass. Peace of the state was totally destabilized and progress of the state came to a standstill position. The Naga militant organization inclined towards the foreign countries like China and Pakistan to obtain material and moral supports, which worsened the situation to a great extent. At this very juncture realization came to both the Government of India and a section of the underground leaders to resolve the issue through negotiations, which ultimately resulted in creation of the Naga Hills Tuensang Area (NHTA), a separate political unit for the Nagas. Once the process began to provide the Naga people a separate political status under the Union Republic of India, it ended after the creation of full-fledged Nagaland state in December, 1963 with certain special social, political and economic autonomies.

Neither the creation of NHTA nor provision for the state of Nagaland stopped militancy in the state. Rather such steps of the Indian Government irritated the underground sections and made them to realize that the Government had applied the policies of divide and rule and appeasement. Thereafter the Naga rebels became inimical to both the Government of India and the Naga leaders who played role in formation of Naga Hills Tuensang Area (NHTA) and creation of Nagaland state. Thus militancy got further push. On the other hand, the Indian Government remained tough and harsh to deal with the problem of insurgency, which totally jeopardised the peace of the state and prosperity of the people. Formation of Peace Mission in 1964 and implementation of cease-fire from 1965 provided the Naga people some relief, no doubt. Various rounds of peace talks even at the Prime Ministerial level could not bring about acceptable solution to the problem. It is all because neither the Government of India nor the underground representatives were ready to budge even a single inch from their viewpoints. The underground people remained strict to the point that the Nagas had been independent from time immemorial and independence was their birth right while the

Government of India denied the Nagas right to self-determination on the ground that it inherited the right to rule over the Nagas from the British.

(Shillong Agreement, which was conducted between the Government of India and the underground representatives in 1975, provided once more a ground for permanent peace in Nagaland, but militancy once more irrupted in the state with the appearance of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) in 1980 which challenging the Shillong Accord resumed the battle for freedom with the Government of India.) The NSCN appeared and spearheaded to fight for the cause on the principle to do or die, but it is unfortunate that this organization, too, met the fate of rivalry among its leaders and division of the body. At a particular stage the Naga Society got itself sectionalized into the different groups at the backdrop of the Naga political issue, viz., the Underground, the Overground and Middleground. Presently there are two major underground organizations—the NSCN (IM) and the NSCN (K), the splinters of the original NSCN, who claim the real inheritor of power on behalf of the Naga people. The worst thing is that both of them keeping aside the main Naga issue are badly indulged in factional fighting and killing of their own people.)

There is also one section of the Naga people who are directly associated with the democratic political processes of the state under the provisions of the Indian constitution, who prefer *status quo* in political status of Nagaland. Working of democratic processes in Nagaland where the state and people have gone to elections several times and power among the various political parties have been exchanged democratically reveals the fact that the people in Nagaland are more inclined towards the present set of party politics. It is a truth that despite continuance of militancy, the Naga people secured its separate political identity having their own Legislature, Executive and other political institutions within the constitutional framework of India.) Elections are conducted in Nagaland peacefully where percentage of people's participation is greater than that of any other part of India. The Naga people have their own representatives in the Indian Parliament. There has been growth of political parties,

national as well as regional. The Naga electorate has been exercising their right to franchise despite threats imposed upon them by the underground people.

(The NSCN (IM) under the leadership of Muivah and Isak Swu has been articulating the voice of Naga nationalism since its formation in 1980. It emerged as the most radical section of the Naga underground freedom movement, but the unfortunate part of the NSCN is that it got split in 1988. A new faction, namely, NSCN (K) under the leadership of Khapleng appeared. In 1990, after the death of A.Z. Phizo, the section of the NNC which had rejected the Shillong Accord, split into two factions—one led by Adino Phizo, the daughter of A.Z. Phizo and the other by Khudao, a life long associate of Phizo. Moreover, the Government of India, marking the anti-national activities of these underground sections, banned them since 1991 under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.)

(The Indian security forces have become a part of life in Nagaland since the beginning of insurgency in Nagaland. The present Naga generation has been born and brought up in a near warlike situation. There is no family in Nagaland which has not been affected by underground activities or by the activities of the Indian security forces. The security forces are visible everywhere in Nagaland. Their presence in each nook and corner, along roads, atop buildings, throughout day and night, creates fear in the mind of the Nagas. Direct armed clashes between the Indian *jawans* and the Naga militants and also between the Naga militants of the NSCN (IM) and NSCN (K) spare no civilians whatsoever come within their firing range. Despite continuance of peace talks, no solution is in the sight so far. This has made the people disappointed and desperate.)

Thus, the Naga issue has become very complex.) The present work, which is the modified version of my doctoral thesis, is an exercise to present (an analytical account of the Naga political history where both the moderate and extremist Naga leaders have been playing different roles. The basic objectives of the work are to examine the political events of the state even before the creation of the state of Nagaland and also the circumstances in which political events appeared

and developed till today. Efforts have also been applied to examine the factors involved in political affairs of the Nagas and progress of state politics despite the movement of insurgency. I have also tried to examine the impact of Naga militant movement on the Naga politics and on the Naga people. A short critical description has also been made related to emerging trends in Naga politics. While analyzing and interpreting the facts my approach has always been objective throughout.

KUHOI K. ZHIMOMI

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This book is a modest attempt to analyse Politics and Militancy in Nagaland. With due apology for whatever omission and error the book may carry, I am solely responsible for the opinion expressed. I shall with open mind accept constructive criticism, suggestions, comments and in redefining the contents and concepts of the book. I shall gladly rectify the errors and misquoting, if any.

I am thankful to my well-wishers who inspired me to write this book. I cannot leave without acknowledging those scholars, writers, press media, the patriots and Naga political activists who were the source of my material for writing and completing this book. Their names are mentioned throughout my analyses and in the bibliography. I have also quoted and referred their names without their permission for which I tender my due apologies.

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KUHOI K. ZHIMOMI

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He is the youngest son of Late Kuhoto Sema who served as the Head Interpreter at Kohima during the Pre-Independence and Post-Independence period (1925-1949).

He is the brother of late Kughato Sukhai, the then Ato Kilonser (Prime Minister), Federal Govt. of Nagaland and late Gen. Kaito Sukhai, Commander-in-Chief, Naga Army, FGN.

His research interest on Naga political movement springs from his engrossed involvement with it from his formative years as a boy besides hailing from a family which spearheaded the Naga political movement for freedom.

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