

# Super Power Politics and Growth of Insurgency in Eastern Arunachal Pradesh\*

**Dr Narayan Singh Rao\*\***

## **Introduction**

Arunachal Pradesh<sup>1</sup>, located in the eastern most corner of India, is a strategically important state of the Indian Union. Measuring 83,743 kms, it has a population of 10,91,117 people,<sup>2</sup> which comprise Kshatriya clans<sup>3</sup>; namely, the Adi, the Aka, the Apatani, the Bangni, the Khampati, the Mishimi, the Monpa, the Nyashi, the Wancho etc.<sup>4</sup>

## **Historical Facts – Countering China’s Claim**

The scholars are of the opinion, that Arunachal Pradesh was covered by the waters of the great Tethys Sea in the cretaceous period. The formation of Himalayas brought the present Arunachal on map of the Indian sub continent.<sup>5</sup> Post Mahabharata, a large number of defeated Kshatriyas migrated to Southeast Asia, through the passes of Arunachal Pradesh. Thus, Hindu culture reached the eastern world via Arunachal Pradesh. Ramayana suggests that Sugriva, King of Kishkindha, deputed a Vanara general Vineet to search for Sita in the hills of Arunachal Pradesh. Ramayana also mentions the Kingdom of Pragjyotishpur ruled by Narakasur who exercised sway over the territory from Bihar to Southern China.<sup>6</sup>

Narakasur’s son Bhagdatta was placed by Lord Krishna on the throne of Pragjyotishpur.<sup>7</sup> Subsequently, Lord Krishna moved up to Merugiri Mountain and Tibet. Lord Krishna in Northeast India, rescued Anirudha, his grandson from the captivity of Aka Chief called Banasur.<sup>8</sup> Lord Krishna killed Banasur and placed Kumbhand on the throne of Shonitpur Kingdom. Kumbhand’s grandson, king Bhaluka laid foundation of Bhalukapong fort in the Aka Hills (Kameng district) near Balipara. Many tribes of Arunachal Pradesh consider King Bhaluka their great ancestor and hold him in high esteem.<sup>9</sup>

The Mahabharata also informs us about Pandava brothers journey to Arunachal Pradesh and marriage of Bhima with Hidimbha, of Dimapur.<sup>10</sup> Lord Krishna married Rukmini, the daughter of King Bhishmak of Vidarbha (Lohitya Kingdom) in Arunachal Pradesh.<sup>11</sup> As a part of Digvijaya campaign, Arjuna and Bhima moved with their army in Arunachal Pradesh and established diplomatic relations with tribal Chieftains of this state.<sup>12</sup> The tribal Chiefs of Arunachal participated in the Mahabharata War and played a crucial role in the outcome of the war.<sup>13</sup> Interaction between the rulers of Arunachal and Assam was highly significant in olden times.<sup>14</sup> The Ahom rulers established diplomatic relationship with all the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. Ahom King Pratap Singha granted cultivable land to the tribal Chieftains and permission to collect Posa tax.

They exercised political control on entire territory of the present Arunachal Pradesh. Clearly, Arunachal Pradesh has always remained an integral part of India. China’s claim on parts of Arunachal Pradesh is fictitious and baseless.<sup>15</sup> Consequent to the fall of Ahom Kingdom and Anglo-Burmese War, the British occupied entire Northeast India in 1826. The British Government established its headquarters at Sadiya in 1835. In 1882 the post of an Assistant political officer was created. Jacks Francis Needham (1882-1905) and Noel Williamson (1905-1911) explored the entire territory up to Tibet and Myanmar border.<sup>16</sup> Regular administrative machinery was organised in this state after the Anglo-Adi war of 1912-13. This process continued upto 1987 when Arunachal attained full fledged statehood.<sup>17</sup>

## **Designs of Great Britain, America, China and Pakistan**

The British administrators seemed to have political designs in mind, if at all India became independent. These included (a) creation of a Crown’s colony, (b) merger of this region with tribal areas of Burma, (c) constituting a Union or federation of Hill States under the British Crown. However, due to one reason or the other none of these plans could be put in motion.<sup>18</sup>

America, in league with European countries, too worked out several plans to destabilise India. America was very keen to acquire a foothold in the Northeast India, Myanmar and South China so as to keep a close vigil on the countries which were friendly to Russia.<sup>19</sup> After World War II, the office of strategic services (OSS), (later on known as CIA),

considered Northeast India, South China and Myanmar strategically the most important base of overt and covert military operations in the area. The top CIA officials passed through this region, from 1950s onwards. These included, Desmond Fitzgerald and Richard Stilwell. Several American secret agents moved from Yunnan in China and entered Arunachal Pradesh for their overt and covert missions.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, China and Pakistan have been engaged in training and arming of terrorist organisations. In 1950's, Pakistan's Army Chief General Ayub Khan identified north east India as a second and one of the most durable theatres of proxy war against India. Nagas were armed and trained by Pakistan and China to such an extent, that they could fight against India, for more than half a century. After 1962 war, Chinese Army provided armed support to launch struggle against the Indian Union. The nexus between China and Pakistan in their anti India activities through terrorist organisations operating in this region, is an issue of serious concern for India.<sup>21</sup>

### **Naga Insurgency and Its Impact on Arunachal Pradesh**

British rulers penetrated into Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland between 1830-40. After World War II, the Nagas formed Naga National Council (NNC) in 1946. In 1947, NNC suggested that Naga Hills be kept under the guardianship of India for 10 years. On 27-29 May, the Nagas and Akbar Hydari, Governor of Assam, negotiated a Nine Point Agreement. But the Nagas were pressurised by Phizo to declare their Independence on 14 August, 1947. In 1951, Phizo met Prime Minister Nehru and demanded Independence, but Nehru rejected this demand. Phizo, then adopted a course of confrontation. In 1955, NNC formed a parallel Government. In 1956, Phizo escaped to East Pakistan and subsequently to London, where he died in 1990.<sup>22</sup> The moderate Nagas joined the peace committees. The Government of India accepted a sixteen point agreement in July 1960. President Radhakrishnan inaugurated a new State of Nagaland in December, 1960. In 1966, the rebel groups supported by the Church and Chinese Army decided to send the Naga youths for training in China. About 800 Naga volunteers reached Yunnan in China in two batches. When a group of trained Nagas, numbering 165 was returning from China, they were captured with their leader Mowu Angami in March, 1969. In 1972, Government of India banned NNC and FGN and lifted the ceasefire.<sup>23</sup> In order to consolidate the peace process, Shillong Accord (1975) was signed whereby the Nagas accepted the constitution of India. However, the supporters of Phizo repudiated the Shillong Accord.<sup>24</sup>

### **Formation and Split of National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN)**

Shillong Accord was rejected by Isac, Swu and Muivah who returned from China. In 1979 Isac-Muivah convened a National assembly in which SS Khaplang was elected as Federal President. In 1980, Muivah, Khaplang and Isac Swu announced the formation of NSCN replacing FGN (Federal Government of Nagaland). But NSCN leaders could not work together for long. On April 30, 1988 SS Khaplang raided the camp of Isac and Muivah and killed 140 men. With this NSCN formally got split into two factions. Khaplang formed NSCN (K) and Isac and Muivah formed NSCN (IM). The split of NSCN resulted in bloody conflicts between the two groups. The division within the ranks of Naga insurgents and increased attention of the super powers on the Northeast India, destroyed the peace and tranquility of Arunachal Pradesh.<sup>25</sup>

The demand for creation of greater Nagaland by dividing Arunachal Pradesh has significantly contributed to the growth of terrorist activities in this State. Armed clashes and feuds between the two factions of NSCN are going on since 1990's. China is actively supporting NSCN groups by providing arms, ammunition, logistics as well as its territory for free movement towards South East Asian countries and setting up of camps. The movement of the armed militiamen in the east Arunachal Pradesh has created serious law and order problem. The people are subjected to harassment, extortion, and blackmail. A kind of parallel government is established by the separatist groups in the area.<sup>26</sup> Armed bands of the terrorists organisations force villagers to abandon their religion. Any one who dares to oppose the conversion is mercilessly beaten up, and humiliated.<sup>27</sup> The insurgent groups, backed by foreign powers, have also interfered in the politics of the State. Initially, their intervention remained confined to only Eastern part of the State. But from 1990 onwards, the NSCN (K) strengthened its position in other areas too. In 1998, Chipu Menon, a self styled Colonel of NSCN (K), became virtually a kingmaker in the State. On 15 December, 1998, the NSCN (K) kidnapped all the twelve MLA's of Tirap and Changlang districts and transported them to Jeduwa. In a conclave of twelve Legislators and opponents of the then Chief Minister Gegong Apang a blueprint to effect the fall of the Apang Government was worked out. Consequently, the Apang government collapsed in January 1999 and the assembly elections were held in October 1999. Mukut Mithi became the next Chief Minister who also secured victory in assembly elections and formed Ministry on 11 October 1999. The withdrawal of support to Gegong Apang under pressure from the terrorist organisations and the fall of Apang Government is an event of very high significance. The NSCN (K), a dreaded terrorist organisation, supported by the Foreign Powers and Church had assumed the role of a king maker in this State. Due to armed clashes between NSCN (K) (IM) and interference by cadres of these groups,

there is a constant threat to peoples lives, kidnapping, extortion and rampant violence has become the order of the day. Young men and women are forced to act as head load carriers for the militants. Everyone knows everything but no one can dare to speak out.<sup>28</sup>

About 27 violent incidents took place in 1999, 51 incidents occurred in 2000 and 47 in 2001. The insurgency related incidents in this peaceful State have substantially increased from 1992 onwards which is proved by the data given in the Tables No I and II. Table I shows that the NSCN (IM) and (K) started operating with violence and terrorist acts from 1990 onwards and caused blood-bath and killings in the State. Gradually, the Eastern Arunachal Pradesh had become a hotbed of conflict between the NSCN (K) and (IM) as both are trying to outsmart each other and establish their mastery over this area. Large quantities of weapons, supplied by foreign powers, are recovered from the cadres of the terrorist groups. The recovery of arms, incidents of extortion and killings in this State, bordering China, are a pointer towards the growing security threat to our Country. Foreign powers are trying to penetrate this strategically important State of India through the terrorist organisations.<sup>29</sup>

The NSCN (IM) and (K) factions are also trying to raise local terrorist organisations in the State<sup>30</sup>. In 1990's, Arunachal Dragon Force also known as East India Liberation Front (EILF) was formed by some disgruntled elements influenced by NSCN (IM) and Church, to create a separate Teola Country. ADF cadres became active in East Arunachal and adjoining areas of Assam. The ADF cadres were trained and equipped by NSCN (K), ULFA and NSCN (IM).<sup>31</sup>

The details about other local level minor terrorist organisations operating in the State suggest that it is slipping into the hands of terror groups. The following terrorist organisations have also sprung up in various parts of the State with the support of NSCN, ULFA etc.

S.N.	Particulars of the Terrorist Organisation	Area of Operation in the state
1.	United Peoples Volunteers of Arunachal Pradesh UPVAP)	Lohit and Changlang district
2.	United Liberation Movement of Arunachal Pradesh (ULMA)	Lower Subansiri
3.	United Liberation Volunteers of Arunachal Pradesh (ULVA)	East Siang
4.	United Liberation Army of Arunachal Pradesh (ULAAP)	West Siang
5.	Patriotic Revolutionary Army of Arunachal Pradesh (PRAAP)	Lohit District
6.	Liberation Tigers of Arunachal (LTA) (Controlled by ULFA)	Papum Pare/Itanagar
7.	Arunachal Dragon Federation (ADF)	Lohit District
8.	All Liberation Tigers of Arunachal Pradesh (ALTAP)	East and West Siang
9.	National Liberation Front of Arunachal Pradesh (NLFAP) controlled by NSCN (K)	Lower Subansiri

The above mentioned terrorist outfits are indulging in extortion, harassment and coercion of state officials and people. With the help of local outfits ULFA, NSCN etc are planning to expand the area under their influence. Thus, through the terrorist outfits the foreign powers are planning to convert this peaceful State into a hotbed of conflict. Pakistan's ISI and DGFI of Bangladesh are also trying to penetrate this State. In this situation, security agencies of the Government of India must wake up, and take pre-emptive measures. Failure on this count may cause irreparable damage to the safety and security of India.<sup>32</sup> The self styled government of the NSCN called Government of the People's Republic of Nagaland is collecting 25 per cent of the earnings from the people working in Arunachal Pradesh.<sup>33</sup> Huge amounts of money collected by way of GPRN Tax, are used by terrorist groups to procure weapons. The ISI of Pakistan, DGFI of Bangladesh and Chinese intelligence agencies facilitate the training and weaponisation of these terror outfits.<sup>34</sup> Consignments of weapons for all the extremist organisations are transported from Bangkok to the bordering areas in Kachin state. Subsequently, such consignments are moved within Indian Territory via East Arunachal Pradesh. Several foreign agents have secretly travelled in past to the area located between Thailand, Myanmar and India so as to provide support to the terror organisations operating in India.<sup>35</sup>

Conclusion

Thus, Arunachal Pradesh has become highly vulnerable as the area falls on the transit route which is frequently used by ULFA, NSCN and other groups.<sup>36</sup> If the extremist organisations are not checked in Arunachal Pradesh this peaceful State may come under the grip of anti-India elements. This would further enhance the gravity of Chinese

threat to India. The illegal entry of foreigners from across the border also exposes the weakness of our security system. We must understand that, strategically this State is highly significant for India. From here, one can keep an eye on the entire Eastern world. Super powers have strengthened their position in the region, either by helping all the terrorist organisations who claim to establish either a Christian State or People's Republic on the lines of Mao Tse Tung. The terrorist organisations have set-up their offices across the globe. Huge terror infrastructure is maintained by the separatist groups, which is not possible without support from the foreign powers. To eliminate terrorist organisations backed by foreign powers in this State, Government of India must increase the strength of security forces, conduct sustained army operations against foreign supported terror groups, improve rail and road communication and re-establish the authority of the Government by dismantling the structure of parallel government run by terrorist organisations.

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**\*\*Dr Narayan Singh Rao** is Director, Mewar Institute of Management, Vasundhara, Ghaziabad.  
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