

TALKING TOUGH: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON THE NAGA ISSUE

Relevant for: Indian Polity | Topic: Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure, Dispute Redressal Mechanisms, and the Centre-State Relations

Five years since the signing of a [framework agreement](#) between the Indian government and the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah), the [deadlock in the talks](#) that came about in October 2019 persists with the emergence of bottlenecks. The NSCN (I-M) has demanded that Nagaland Governor R.N. Ravi should be removed as the interlocutor for talks on the Naga accord. Talks were expanded in 2017 by including other Naga groups under the banner, the Naga National Political Groups (NNPGs). Clearly, the [Governor's letter in June](#) addressed to Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio, alleging the collapse of law and order and that armed gangs “who question the sovereignty and integrity of the nation” were engaging in “blatant extortion”, touched a sore spot for the NSCN (I-M). While the group defended the practice by terming it “tax collection”, the letter was not entirely off the mark. Yet, this has become an issue for the peace process with the NSCN (I-M) going on to release [details of the 2015 framework agreement](#) that has not been shared in the public domain so far. While the other Naga groups also took exception to the Governor's remarks to the Chief Minister, they have [differed with the NSCN \(I-M\)](#) on the demand for Mr. Ravi's removal as interlocutor.

Since 2015, the engagement with other Naga groups has increased, even if the NSCN (I-M) is perceived as the major rebel organisation. The differences between the NNPGs and the NSCN (I-M) are not insignificant. The NSCN (I-M) still insists on a “Greater Nagalim” beyond the boundaries of Nagaland State besides seeking a flag and constitution. Most of the NNPGs based in Nagaland on the other hand have sought to settle the issue without disturbing the State boundaries while keeping the “Greater Nagalim” question in abeyance. Any moves to alter boundaries will intensify ethnic conflicts and insurgencies beyond Nagaland, especially in Manipur. The increasing support in Nagaland for a solution without affecting boundaries should have compelled the NSCN (I-M) to move away from its intransigent position. Instead, the rebel group has sought to redefine the talks process by expressing its lack of confidence in Mr. Ravi. The NNPGs, political parties and other civil society organisations also took exception to the Governor's stern letter that went beyond raising concerns over law and order; Mr. Ravi wrote that functions such as the “transfer and posting of officials” in charge of law and order above the district level would be done with his approval. But they have delineated clear differences with the NSCN (I-M) on the peace talks issue. The Central government needs to take their concerns on board and reiterate its commitment to finalising the Naga accord while seeking to re-engage with the NSCN (I-M) without giving in to its arbitrary demands.

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