



The Power of Truth

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Arrogance of Power!

The Naga public has to stop being passive detached spectators and shift from reactive dissent to informed dissent through nonviolent social action in order for any real political change to take place

The Nagaland Legislative Assembly, the state's seat of political power, has come under much ridicule in the social media and has been sharply criticized for conducting brief hurried sessions during which the elected representatives did not engage on many of the substantive and pressing issues. This is occurring at a time when Nagaland State is being challenged in various areas of governance where basic human needs continue to be unmet, and the public's expectations for legislators to rise to the occasion has been belied.

History reminds us that when a government exists to function without credible opposition to ensure checks and balances – like the present 'opposition-less government' in Nagaland State – there is an overriding tendency for an opposition-less government to become self-indulgent and exhibit tyrannical characteristics. After all, the arrogance of power corrupts absolutely with little or no regard at all for the people, particularly in areas of long standing conflict fueled by a climate of impunity and corruption. This is especially true as the exploitative nature demonstrated by the flagrant arrogant display of political and economic power is being felt throughout Nagaland.

In all this, the people, the public, are reduced to mere powerless spectators. They are ridiculed and mocked in the culture of impunity and the culture of power, as their attempts to resist or stop the far-reaching tentacles of power in any meaningful way are continually compromised and thwarted. This is clearly evident by how the powers that be have disregarded and navigated their way across many expressions of public discontent.

In 2016 alone, there have been many threats of (and some short-lived) agitations, protests, bandhs, but nothing substantive enough to cause the powers that be to alter their behavior. What is more demoralizing is that every call for protest has been pacified by some form of verbal or written assurance. By caving in to power politics and pressure, the people by default, have only legitimized and strengthened the arrogance of power.

The urgent need for change and accountability has reached critical mass. The change that Nagas are yearning for, in all likelihood, will be initiated by individuals united by their sense of common concern and shared responsibility.

The political dynamics over the last few years have shown that Naga traditional organizations and institutions have lost their dynamism and are being pulled more into a polarizing colonial framework. Change will also not come through organizations whose actions are based on knee-jerk actions, reactive dissent and whose analyses are both apolitical and ahistorical.

Any framework of this nature does not have the inherent capacity to respond to the changes needed to today's serious problems. One such consequence is what Dr. Wati Aier has called "seduction of tribeness." Such a seduction will further lead to fragmented and entrenched views created along narrow constructs of identity based on state and tribal formation.

The people, the public need to stop being complacent detached spectators and truly embody the spirit of what the Brazilian artist and social activist Augusto Boal called the 'spect-actors'. By being 'spect-actors' the people are engaging in self-empowering processes of critical thinking to allow them to make conscious interventions and informed dissent through nonviolent social actions which are rooted in shared analysis. This requires a minimum amount of shared common concern for the society.

The question is whether there exists a substantial section of the Naga population that shoulders a minimum amount of shared concern to push them from reactive dissent to informed nonviolent dissent in the theatre of change.

LEFT WING |

IANS

Protein and carbohydrate combo good for gut health

Dietary combination of protein and carbohydrate may help promote good gut health as such a diet encourages cooperation between ourselves and bacteria in our gut, suggests new research.

"There are many different diet strategies that claim to promote gut health, and until now it has been very difficult to establish clear causality between various types of diet and their effect on the host's microbiome," said lead author Andrew Holmes, Associate Professor at the University of Sydney in Australia.

"This is because there are many complex factors at play, including food composition, eating pattern and genetic background," Holmes said.

In this study, the researchers found that the availability of intestinal nitrogen to microbes in the gut plays a key role in regulating interactions between gut microbes and their host animal.

"This research really lays the groundwork for future modelling by setting out the rules for a general model of how diet shapes the gut ecosystem," Holmes said.

"The simple explanation is that when we eat in a way that encourages cooperation between ourselves and bacteria we achieve a good microbiome, but when we eat in a way that doesn't require cooperation this lets bacteria do whatever they want -- and mischief can ensue," Holmes explained.

Despite the huge diversity of gut bacteria, two main response patterns emerged in the study -- microbe species either increased or decreased in their abundance depending on the animal's protein and carbohydrate intake.

"The largest nutrient requirements for our gut bacteria are carbon and nitrogen in the foods we eat. As carbohydrates contain no nitrogen but protein does, the bacterial community response to the host animal's diet is strongly affected by this diet's protein-carbohydrate ratio," Holmes said.

"The fact that this same pattern was seen across almost all groups of gut bacteria indicates that the makeup of the microbial ecosystem is fundamentally shaped by a need to access nitrogen in the intestinal environment," Holmes added.

This new research -- published in the journal *Cell Metabolism* -- is the latest in a series stemming from a study in which 25 different diets composed of different amounts of protein, carbohydrates and fat were systematically varied in 858 mice.

The researchers said their new model suggests that while high-carbohydrate diets were the most likely to support positive interactions in the microbiome, such benefits were relative to the protein intake of the host animal.

COMMENTARY

Alaa Tartir

What peace? State disorders and non-state orders

For many, peace is just a long and complex process that will deliver very little if at all, and will mainly benefit the political and business elite

Everyone is interested in peace, but very few are interested in what type of peace. Peace became almost equivalent to sustaining the status quo, to compromises, to security concerns and needs, but hardly ever about lasting justice and equality. The notion of peace became one of those 'slippery', if not 'dirty' concepts, and for many people, peace is just a long and complex process that will deliver very little if at all, and will mainly benefit the political and business elite.

This 'pessimistic' take on peace is driven by a failure after another in putting an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict, which remains a key issue for the world (dis)order. It is also based on my real-life experience as a human being who grew up and lived under a brutal Israeli colonial occupation for 30 years, and my experience of living in the shadow of failing peace and failing state building processes. Multiple levels of tension at this intersection can be explored as far as peace is concerned, but fundamentally, for the right world order, it is crucial to ask and answer the right questions such as: What peace?

Going beyond Palestine-Israel, and as far as the global (dis)order is concerned, could a real global political inclusive agenda shape the new world order, or is it too late and are we just moving in the other direction, towards further fragmentation in the global political scene? The answer could be that if we had effective and inclusive state and non-state structures in place, structures that would provide a space for everyone and accommodate different views, then the Islamic State would most likely not be here today. If we had functional global accountability mechanisms and institutions focussing on 'checks and balances', maybe the invasion of Iraq and its political ramifications that we are seeing today would not have taken place either. These two indicators point out to the argument that there is an utmost need to reinvent global governance institutions that 'run' or dominate the global order, such as the Security Council, in order to address the structural deficiencies in our world order today.

Let us deconstruct this conclusion by looking at elements of the complex dynamics that exist between the state and non-state actors commonly blamed for the world (dis)order.

Empirical and historical evidence suggest that non-state actors emerge and eventually dominate in fragile settings where a security and leadership vacuum exists and where the state actors are weak, corrupt, or unable to deliver effectively. This is when non-state actors start to pose a serious threat to pre-existing authorities and slowly replacing them. In most cases, non-state actors are seen as security threats to the state-actor and to regional stability. They are also seen as competitors in the realm of governance and challengers to political representation. But here we have two unresolved tensions: one is related to the notion of statehood, and the other is related to the nature of non-state actors. Most of our current understandings assume the centrality of the statehood and sovereignty as the key pillar in the global political system. Yet, this might be outdated as the nature of the state has evolved. Absolute sovereignty hardly exists, and for a new global world order to emerge, there is a need to re-conceptualise the role and nature of states.



Furthermore, there is a need to scrutinise the nature of non-state actors. These actors can be political actors, social movements, armed groups, armed resistance factions, gangs and criminals, and many others. Yet, we don't sufficiently understand the evolving character and the transformative capacities of these non-state actors. They are not as rigid and unchangeable as the current global order perceives them. Let us take the example of Hamas or Hezbollah.

In the eyes of many global actors these organizations are simply 'terrorist organisations'. Period. However, this does not reflect the complex reality. Such non-state actors were excluded and criminalised because the 'world order' does not speak to the 'terrorists'. By doing so, this 'world order' refuses to see or acknowledge how entrenched these organizations are in their societies, and maybe how legitimate they are. It also refuses to see the transformations and shifts that these organizations went through over the decades, and therefore refuses to understand their evolving character.

Meanwhile such non-state actors challenged this condition of exclusion and criminalisation by expanding and further entrenching themselves locally, almost building parallel institutions to those of the state, gaining more legitimacy especially as a result of effective public good and service delivery, and eventually winning elections. This tension is alarming as clashing systems (or parallel avenues discussed above) will continue to be re-born, which does not allow for an organic convergence between the realms of 'order and disorder'.

Consequently, and in this highly securitised world, the dominant powers and actors view non-state actors mainly as 'security threats' and as competitors to the state's exclusive legitimate use of violence. Therefore, the magical solution was a top-down security governance reform that mainly aimed to integrate these non-state actors in the state structures, disarm them, force an ideological change, and when needed use violence against them. However, this is by definition a forced mechanism, and it must come with some serious consequences. Think here of places like Libya or Palestine.

The security sector reform processes took place as key pillars of the state-building projects, but they effectively resulted in two things: either further fragmentation, or criminalisation of national liberation projects. When resistance is criminalised, and when fragmentation get further entrenched, then world disorder should not come as a surprise.

Order vs. disorder is not a black or white dichotomy, and the complexity of this world necessitates having them both. The challenge, however, is how to strike the right balance, and agree on the actors who will decide on this right balance. Setting the parameters and reference points is a key task that we need to engage with seriously.

Accordingly, to understand peace, we need to better understand the political economy of conflict and fragility. Most often, fragility is understood by the current world order in technical and apolitical terms, and this is a deep problem that we need to address. I argue that only by bringing the dimensions of political economy to the domain of fragility will we be better placed to understand the dichotomy between state and non-state actors. Indeed, the 'fragility gaps' translate and extend into the security domain. But more importantly, these 'fragility gaps' extend to questions of political representation, economic and human security, sovereignty, border dynamics and the social contract.

A better understanding of conflicts and fragility will eventually lead us to put the people - particularly in conflict areas - at the centre, before state and non-state actors. And this is the core of the matter. In fragile and failed contexts, the focus tends to be on state and non-state actors, but hardly on the people (unless it is in reference to a humanitarian or refugee crisis). Yet, I argue that if we have a different starting point (the people and their dignity), then we will have different dynamics to deconstruct (both intellectually and in policy) in relations to the world (dis)order.

Finally, world disorder is not only coming from weak, fragile and failed states that are unable to govern themselves effectively. Indeed, in such contexts, gaps in political representation, legitimacy, effectiveness and efficiency, as well as dignity do exist. These gaps can also be seen as 'political opportunities' that can be used, abused or misused by the different actors in the global world order. However, only with legitimate, functioning and effective global accountability mechanisms and institutions, can we move a step further in the direction of striking the right balance between the world order and its disorder, and to better understand the complex relationship between the state and non-state actors.

A version of this article was presented by the writer at a panel discussion on 'State Disorders and Non-State Orders' at a conference on 'What Peace? Which World Order?' organised by the Geneva International Peace Research Institute (GIPRI), 8 & 9 November 2016, Geneva.

Many Impacts of Migration in Assam

Sanjay (Xonzo) Barbor

Everything that is of economic and political significance here is linked to flows of water and humans," said Prithibhushan Deka, a functionary of Gramya Vikas Mancha (GVM) in Nalbari District, as he explained the importance of migration to the author. GVM is a significant institution in Assam that works with developmental issues among the rural people, especially in the areas where people struggle with floods, conflicts and diminishing returns from agriculture.

The villagers of Borbari, where the GVM office is located, had organised an interaction between farmers and journalists from Guwahati on January 20, 2013. It was an effort to get the urban media to pay some attention to the plight of rural agriculturalists and their families. Against the backdrop of the ethnic violence that had taken place in western Assam in 2012, the meeting was a reminder that the media and researchers had failed to understand the pressures being faced by various agricultural communities in Assam.

Activists like Deka had a very detailed and nuanced understanding of history, topography and governmental interventions in their area. The Borbari area was flanked by major embankments that were built during the 1950s and 60s, ever since India embarked on a Soviet-style planned economic growth. Building canals and embankments were foundational instruments of development during that time. However, as local activists were at pains to

Roundtable series on Migration on December 3
Photo Exhibition on December 3-4
Time - 10:00AM
Venue - Hotel Acacia, Dimapur



Villagers catching fish in local pond, Nalbari.

point out, the construction of one embankment in a particular area often meant the loss of wetlands around its neighbourhood. In such densely populated areas, the embankments resulted in impoverishment of one section, while creating opportunities for another. This led to resentment, especially when some had to migrate outside the region in search of other opportunities.

For instance, a suburb (locality) of Scheduled Caste Assamese villagers

dependent on fishing and subsistence farming, were left without any viable livelihood options as their beels disappeared after the river water was diverted. With parcels of land too small to sell, or even to rely on for cultivation, many youth began to question the imperious manner in which their pasts had been summarily snatched away from them. A few joined the armed struggle, while others simply left Nalbari and the daily deprivations that they had to face from the

military in the 1990s.

Even as one group of people were forced to leave in search of political and economic alternatives, others were quick to occupy the land that was vacated. Hence, over a few seasons, groups of landless peasants appeared from other districts. Some were brought there by richer farmers who had shifted their money from agriculture to dairy; others came seeing the opportunity for acquiring land at very low prices. This process started another cycle, whereby those without land titles were in a hurry to achieve high yields from the lands that they had leased, or were going to sell off after a few seasons of growing paddy. They used chemicals and fertilizers that would scar the quality of the soil, leaving behind ill animals and poorer people willing to migrate further in order to earn a little more.

For activists like Prithibhushan Deka, piece-meal solutions about agriculture and incomplete discussions about migration will not solve the complex problems that arise from bad planning. Instead, they argue that solutions have to be rooted in dialogue with those who have been most affected by the outcomes of these developmental schemes. It would necessarily involve looking at the kind of future one envisages for those dependent on agriculture in Assam.

[Fieldwork for this study was supported by Stockholm University's project titled "The Indian Underbelly: Marginalisation, Migration and State Intervention in the Periphery" that was carried out between 2013 and 14.]

Letters to the Editor should be sent to: **The Morung Express**, House No. 4, Duncan Bosti, Dimapur - 797112, Or -email: morung@gmail.com
All letters (including those via email) should have the full name and Postal address of the sender.

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