



Coupland plan and Second World War: A root of extremism in North East India

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Abstract:

“A direct British ruled crown colony would be formed with the Kachin of Northwestern Burma and India's Northeastern hills areas and the planning is on process.” An announcement was declared in a school meeting at Shillong in 13th November, 1941 by Robert Nail Rides, Governor of Assam. According to the plane the British colonial powers want to be form a territory of tribal peoples and want to role them directly. Their vision was to make separate the tribal peoples from the freedom struggle of India and kept them with their side. They seeded the concept of separate territorial idea of tribal people, which were reflected post independence period in India.

Another important fact was Second World War, where many tribal people were joined in allied forces and trained them the guerrilla warfare. The main camp was the southwestern Burma, known as Kachin. In that terrine area, British were trained the tribal peoples for their war purposes and harass the Japanese soldiers in jungle by the guerrilla warfare. For that purposes of Second World War they gathered a large number of arms and ammunition in the Kachin areas. But after the atomic bombardments, Japan surrendered and the allied forces were withdrawal from China-Burma-India theatre. After the withdrawal of allied powers they left their gathered arms and ammunition in the camp of Kachin and those were captured by the trained Kachin soldiers. After ending of war they became workless and started trade of arms and ammunition to the insurgent groups in lieu of money. Slowly they began the training of guerrilla warfare for the insurgent groups in lieu of money.

The Coupland plan or crown colony concept rooted in the mind of the North Eastern hill people and after independence of India the hill people started demand of separate independent territory. Fizo for Naga people, Laldenga for Mizo and Bisweswar Singha for Manipuri raise their demand and all of them trained at Kachin and started their activities in North East India. In 1979, United Liberation Front of Assam was formed for Asom also started their movement for independent state and stared to train in Kachin and activities in Asom. Thus this paper is trying to highlight the roots of the extremism in Northeast India, which were seeded since the time of colonial rule.

KEY WORDS

Coupland plan, Crown colony, World War II, Extremism, Northeast India

INTRODUCTION

THE CROWN COLONY OR COUPLAND PLAN:

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As per the treaty of Yandaboo in 1826, British were entered Assam and rooted their grips and expand their empire by occupying other independent territories of North East. The British government was trying to implement various plans in North east India, which are mostly beneficial for them only. For own interest one after another legal and administrative decisions were taken since 1874, highlighting separateness of particularly the hill areas in northeast India. Among these plans the Crown Colony or Coupland Plan was important one.

“A direct British ruled crown colony would be formed with the Kachin of Northwestern Myanmar and India's Northeastern hills areas and the planning is on process.” It is to us to see that they are given under our protection period of respite within which they will develop on their own lines and without outside influence, but if the present opportunity to give them that is let slip, the danger is that it will never occur”- an announcement was declared in a school meeting at Shillong on 13th November, 1941 by Robert Nail Rides, Governor of Assam (1937-1942).

The crown colony had great importance in the political history of India, through this was not widely discussed. A number of historians like H.K. Barpujari, V.V. Rao, S.K. Choube, Bimal J. Dev, Dilip Kumar Lahiri, J.B. Bhattacharjee, D.R. Syiemlieh, P.L. Mehra etc. has mentioned about the crown colony in their writings. Some one used to say it as Rides plan and some other as Coupland plan. Because of the honorable Governor of Assam, R. Rides approved the project and handed over to than secretary of India, S.L. Amiri. Amiri sent the file to scrutinize closely to Prof. Regineld Coupland of Oxford University. After securitization of the file he sent back with a secret summery report, for which the plan is also known as Coupland plan.

MASTERMIND BEHIND THE PLAN:

The innovators of the plan were British administrators, namely E.N. Perry and Dr. Hoton. Perry was the chief administrator of Garo hills district and later he was appointed as district commissioner of Lushai hill district. Hoton was the chief administrator of Naga hill district. Both of the administrators submitted a note in front of the statutory commission in 1928 from their experiences and thoughts that the tribal areas of the British colony should be kept separately from the administrative reform of India and administrate directly. In this plan they also mentioned that the included tribal areas of Assam should be kept in the plan. Instead of this between 1930 and 1935 Dr. Hoton sent many notes and letters to the authorities to keep the North Eastern tribal areas and neighbouring hill areas in a unit. In this proposed hill areas, he included 16 district with Kachin areas of Burma (presently Myanmar). In his imaginary state he included 25 Khasi estates, Manipur, Tripura and the Nagas, the Miris, the Monpas etc. British administrated excluded, partially excluded areas of Northeastern side of India and Southwestern side of Myanmar. Dr. Hoton gives some argument in support of their plan. These are:

- Kachin, the northwestern province of Myanmar, (presently Myanmar) is closely linked with the hill areas of Assam. It is situated in the border of Naga Hills of Assam and Manipur. Most of the people in these areas are basically Christian. Other hand the Nagas, the Mizos, the Khasis, the Garos and most of the Manipuri, who are living in the hill areas and belongs in same religion.
- The peoples of the region are basically similar in culture and language. They have been facing same problems. Other hand the people neither closely related with Myanmar nor with India. If these areas would be merged with independent India, they might be unsatisfied. The areas were spread up to the Chinese border and a common border would be needed.
- The Christian missionaries devoted themselves for the all round development of these areas would be benefited from this plan.
- The areas are resourceful in forest and minerals.
- In 1834, the 3rd British Commissioner, Major Jenkins advised to form a separate British colony in North East India.
- If British would leave India in near future, they will leave an own crown colony in North East

INDIA.

On basis of these arguments Dr. Hoton suggest a separate colony from India and Myanmar. The arguments of Dr. Hoton studied by Rides, the Governor of Assam and the plan attracted Rides.

In India Act 1935, North East not getting so much importance due to this reason. Governor Rides himself wrote a letter to S.L. Amiri, the Secretary General of Myanmar on 3rd March, 1941 as “The Act of 1935 had not given hill people sufficient safeguards. As to their future it would have to be decided by the British Parliament. It cannot be left to Indian political leaders, with neither knowledge interest nor feeling for these areas.” From this point of view Governor Rides approved the plan.

But before implement the plan, Crown Colony, it faces some complexity. For this purpose a meeting was held at Shimla dated 5th December, 1942, where not able to come in a common decision. Dorman Smith,

the Governor General of Myanmar decided to keep the areas under Rangoon. After this they planned the crown colony with the remaining parts of their plan.

Roots of extremism in the Coupland Plan and Second World War:

In that time the Second World War was broke out. It had given another importance to Coupland Plan. But the freedom struggle of India dimmed their plan of and they did not trying to implement the plan.

Though the plan was not implemented by British, the importance of the plan was remaining strong after the independence of India. The crown colony rooted an anti Indian feeling in the mind of the North East Indian hill people/states. After independence the idea of separatism had grown rapidly and that idea became full fledged at presents of time.

In the initial period of the Second World War, Japanese were destroyed the British Navy power in Singapore and Andaman and occupied Myanmar. After occupation of Myanmar the Japanese forwarded towards Manipur and Naga hills and trying to extended themselves in the whole Northeast India. In that time British had not such capability to resist the Japanese military forces and so they planned to attack them through guerrilla warfare at Naga Hills.

To form the guerrilla force British recruited the youths of hill areas, who had experience of the First World War. British formed two forces, one was at Naga Hills and another one at Kachin state. These youths were trained by British-American soldiers with modern arms, which were imported from America-England. British built some depot of arms and ammunitions in that hill region for war purposes.

But suddenly the War was ended and the Allied military forces left the region with the Japanese war prisoners. A large number of Japanese soldiers surrendered in this region with large number of arms and ammunitions. Allied forced did not feel the necessity of the arms to bring with them, which are gathered in the Kachin and Naga Hills. These arms and ammunitions were became property of the guerrilla forces in later time.

After the end of the war the guerrilla forces were became work less and they started to run training camp of guerrilla warfare in Kachin areas. The strong arm revolt of Kachins against Rangoon attracted the other hill communities and guerrilla of Kachin encouraged them to take training in lieu of money.

The hill people are basically independent in nature and they regarded their defeat in the hands of British as a "Historical accident". After the return of British they wanted to be independents as earlier. They thought that the government will not be able to understand their feelings and thoughts. When the government merged them in India without listen any views, they were naturally unsatisfied. They used to think that arms struggle is a simple matter and so they started an arm struggle against "India". They demanded separate independent territory. A. Zaphu Fizo on behalf of Naga people response to the Crown colony as "best brains of the Nagas were whole heartedly with the British in the Scheme", it is their spontaneous loyalty. In the very same source, however, he contradicts himself. He wrote "Naga leaders stood against the scheme of Colony because it would goes against the interest of other Eastern people..... We had to fight against the scheme for a long time. Laldenga for Mizo and Bisweswar Singha for Manipuri raise their demand and all of them trained at Kachin and started their activities in North East India. In 1979, United Liberation Front of Assam was formed for independence of Assam and stared to train their cadres in Kachin.

Slowly other states of Northeast India started arm struggle against the government. At present North East India is a "spot of extremism", where a large number of insurgents groups present there. A state wise list of major insurgents groups in North East India as follows:

List 1: State wise list of Insurgents groups in NEI(Major)

Sl. No	State	Insurgent Groups
1	Arunachal Pradesh	United Peoples' Volunteers of Arunachal Pradesh (UPUA) United Liberation Volunteers of Arunachal Pradesh (ULVA) United Liberation Movement of Arunachal Pradesh (ULMA)
2	Assam	United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) Bodo Security Force (BSF) Karbi National Volunteers (KNV) Adam Sena National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) Muslim Security Force (MSF) Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam (MULTA) Islamic Tigers Muslim Volunteers Force (MVF) Sadam Bahini Bodo Liberation Tiger (BLT) Karbi National Liberation Front (KNLF)

3	Manipur	United Nationalist Liberation Front (UNLF) Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL) Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA) Peoples Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) Kuki National Front (KNF) Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) Islamic Liberation Front (ILF) Hmar People's Convention (HPC) Kuki National Party (KNP)
4	Meghalaya	Achik National Volunteer Council (ANVC) Hynniewtrept Volunteers Council (HVC) Achik Liberation Matgrik Army (ALMA)
5	Nagaland	National Socialist Council of Nagaland [Isaac-Muivah (NSCN-IM)] National Socialist Council of Nagaland [Khaplang (NSCN-KM)]
6	Tripura	National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) Tripura Commando Force (TCF) National Militia of Tripura (NMT) All Tripura Volunteer Force (ATVF) All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF) Tripura and Tribal Commando Force (TTCF) Tripura National Force (TNF)

All these groups demanded separate state with their own control and trained at Kachin state of Myanmar. The Kachin guerrilla also engaged in the smuggling of arms, ammunition and drugs, which affected the peace of neighbouring countries.

VIEWS OF WESTERN POWERS TOWARDS THE PLAN AND EXTREMISM IN NE INDIA:

The Coupland plan of British is still alive in their mind, whom were formulated it. Questions arise – if the north eastern region remain another five year under British rule would it be reshaped as per their plan? Would the area become independent from the Indian politics if they remained here for another five years? In The Argentina International, dated 7th December, 1966 Dr. Alexgender Prence praised the Coupland plan and he advised to reactive the plan if needed. In that paper it was mentioned : “the Indian state not ideal one to safeguarding tribal and backward communities in the frontier areas of North East.....inequalities in the distribution of income, wealth.....population has been living in poverty.....there are a large number of non-tribal who also, feel deprived and who also suffered from various inadequacies....” The reason of this reminding of western powers is that the foreign policy of India, which was anti colonial. In 1962, when China attacked India, the western powers were afraid and they again wanted to create some friendly states in this region up to Dhaka. For that purpose they supported with money, arms, education to Christian missionaries, insurgent groups, organizations, institutions etc. Even the CIA selected some organizations, institution in Assam and cooperated secretly in that respect. After the extension of Coupland plan up to Dhaka, Bangladesh also became a free land of Northeast Indian insurgency like Kachin of Myanmar. Recent action of the neighbouring countries against Northeast Indian insurgent groups is a shine of hope of peace into the region.

CONCLUSION:

In North East India, the extremism is much more than other region of India. At present time the North Eastern insurgents, extremist getting support from its neighbouring countries, which are not friendly with India, directly or indirectly and they used them in their own interests. Their aims are varied and trying to

fulfill these with the supports of insurgent groups. From this discussion it can be assume that Coupland's Plan and British policy somehow rooted the seed of extremism, intentionally or un-intentionally, and present scenario might be a fruit of that seed. Some other factors are also responsible for the extremist project in North East India, which were initiated by the Coupland's Plan in pre-independence time.

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