ABSTRACT OF
A THESIS

INSURGENCY IN MIZORAM:
A STUDY OF ITS ORIGIN, GROWTH AND DIMENSION

Submitted to the Mizoram University for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

By
LALTHAKIMA

Supervisor
Prof. JAGADISH KUMAR PATNAIK

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
MIZORAM UNIVERSITY
AIZAWL
2008
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The title of the thesis is *Insurgency in Mizoram: A study of its origin, growth and dimension*. It consists of seven chapters;

1. The first chapter deals with *Introduction*. This chapter includes statement of the problems, review of literature, hypotheses, methodology, limitation and chapterization. This chapter examines the various problems of insurgency that started in the state and how it persisted. This chapter also analyses how different authors traced the problems of such movements in North East region in general and Mizoram in particular. The different possibilities of the causes and remedies and the way how the thesis has been written are also discussed in this chapter.

2. The second chapter provides a *theoretical framework*. Here, the different theoretical concepts of insurgency are discussed. The nature, meaning and types of insurgency are also discussed. Moreover, the differences of insurgency from *terrorism* as well as *conventional warfare* are clearly discussed. The chapter attempts to understand the true nature and meaning of insurgency from the past and in the present day world.

3. *Mizoram: A socio-Political Profile* is the third chapter. The 23rd state of India, Mizoram is studied from various angles, topography, demography, religion, social life and some important traditional institutions and officials of Mizo society in the past are clearly written. Besides these, the growth of political consciousness among the people of Mizoram which is an important dimension of insurgency is also traced with fresh interpretations.

4. Chapter IV is *MNF and insurgency in Mizoram: Emergence of the state in the Indian Union*. This chapter directly studies the important causes of MNF insurgency in detail. Various factors which led to the outbreak of insurgency are discussed and the struggle by the MNF is also discussed in detail. The historical facts of the courses of insurgency and counter-insurgency measures adopted by the government are also discussed. Various shortcomings of insurgency that resulted in the failure of the MNF insurgency along with the role of the different organizations in the restoration of peace and normalcy are also given in this chapter.
5. **Hmar insurgency in the post-1987 period**: is Chapter V. This chapter deals about the origin of the Hmars and their migration to the present Mizoram and the reason why they scattered into the northern and north-west periphery of Mizoram. It also traced the political development of the Hmars and the formation of HPC. The beginning of armed confrontation between the government and the HPC is clearly written. Signing of memorandum of settlement and its consequences and recent trends of the Hmar movements are included and concluded with some observations.

6. **Chapter VI** deals with the **Bru insurgency in the post-1987 period**. This chapter deals with the origin of the Brus and their migration to Mizoram. A profile of the Brus and development of political consciousness is also discussed. The beginning of actions of the Brus is traced and the chronology of events during the courses of insurgency is clearly laid down. The present problem of the Bru insurgent group is also discussed with some concluding remarks.

7. The last chapter, **Chapter VII deals with Summary and Conclusion**: In this chapter, a summary of the causes of various insurgencies had been discussed and freshly interpreted. Different problems of insurgency are studied from its true nature. The way out of insurgency in the present time and the way to avoid the possibilities of such movement is suggested.

The thesis is relevant for it comprises of the facts about the insurgency in general and the true nature of insurgencies in Mizoram in particular. Without tracing the root cause of any insurgencies, it is impossible to give long lasting solutions in a multi-cultural society. Moreover the more important part; that is, the prediction of the future from the lessons learnt in the past should be gained from the study of the past movements. For that purpose, the thesis would be significant for the analysts and policy makers.

There are many cases in various parts of the world where there is an internal political revolt started by some marginalized sections of society. The states which have not been affected by such internal revolt used to call it as a *civil war* or in common parlance *autonomy movement.* The name of such movement is coined by different writers according to the changed circumstances. This illustrates that there is no clear cut acceptance on the criteria of insurgency. In International Law, it is
used to describe an internal political revolt which the state did not wish to recognize as belligerency. Therefore, the insurgents do not seek the protection customarily extended to belligerents.

In the contemporary literature there are many definitions of relevant terms as *insurgency, revolution, guerrilla warfare, and terrorism and freedom struggle*. Some authors use these terms imprecisely and many times interchangeable. According to William J Lucas, "*insurgency is an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict.*” Another definition of insurgency which focuses more on the political aspect is from Andrew M. Scott: "*Insurgency refers to efforts to obtain political goals by an organized and primarily indigenous group using protracted, irregular warfare and allied political techniques.*” Depending on which definition is used, the amount of categories will vary. O'Neill defines insurgency as, "*a struggle between a non ruling group and the ruling authorities in which the non-ruling group consciously uses political resources (e.g. organizational expertise, propaganda and demonstrations) and violence to destroy, reformulate, or sustain the basis of legitimacy of one or more aspects of politics.*”

Insurgency, therefore, is an organized movement of a section of the people of the country by unconstitutional means against the existing state authority; with a view to capture state power to achieve its cherished political goals. Therefore the aspects of definition may be summed up under such heads.

1) **It is an organized movement.**

2) **By unconstitutional means, it includes peaceful, illegal and violent actions.**

3) **It is against the state authority.**

4) **Its main aim is to capture government power with the view to achieve political and socio-economic goals**

   After going through all these aspects of insurgency, an insight of insurgency illustrates the fact that when the marginalized sections of the society felt neglected and deprived of their rights as a subject of an authority, they easily fell into an action which manifested itself as an act of insurgency causing various
intensities of troubles upon the existing authority. Again, insurgency when looking from its objective clearly illustrates that it is an attempt to overthrow the existing structure with an attempt to replace it with one of their choice. Countries of the world are more or less disturbed by different insurgencies with various intensities for at least once or more. It seems like a disease of the contemporary world that gradually weakens the security of nation states through different manifestations. It is a tool in the hands of the powerless against the powerful. Insurgency ridden government should look at every viable means to suppress it and try to find out an amicable solutions before it reach the point of no return.

Mizoram is the 23rd state of Indian union. The name of the state literally means 'land of the Mizos.' Majority of the population was constituted by the Mizos. The present Mizoram state attained its statehood in February 1987. Mizoram occupies an area of great strategic importance in the north-eastern corner of India having a total boundary length of 630 miles-with Bangladesh and Myanmar. It is geographically situated between 22.20’ and 24.27’ (N) and 92.20’ and 94.29’ (E) latitudes. The tropic of cancer runs through the territory. The state is divided into eight districts: (1) Aizawl (ii) Champhai (III) Kolasib (IV) Lawngtlai (V) Lunglei (VI) Mamit (vii) Chhimtuipui (viii) Serchhip. In addition to these, the state government recently announced the creation of three new districts namely, Hnahthial, Saitual and Khawzawl. With that, the number of districts increased to 11. With an area of 20,987 sq.km, Mizoram has a population of 891,058 (Eight lakhs ninety one thousand and fifty eight) people according to the 2001 census. The density of population is 42 persons per Sq. Km. out of 8, 91,058 populations 4, 59,783 are males and 4, 31,275 are females. The population of Mizoram is mainly constituted by the Mizos who are scheduled tribes with a percentage of 94.46.

The study of Mizo society clearly shows that, the Mizos as a whole possess a unique social system which although patriarchal, yet the women play a key role in the social affairs and in the process of betterment of the society. With the coming of the English Missionaries in January 11, 1894 Christianity had reach Mizoram and now majority of the people are Christians. Christianity lit the torch of education which resulted in the attainment of second highest literary percentage in India for the state. In fact, the British occupation as well as the introduction of the new religion
brought about drastic changes in the whole society. The traditional way of life was completely subdued by the new lifestyles and ethos of new religion.

April 9, 1946 heralded a new era of Mizo society politically, the first political party ‘Mizo Union’ was established for the first time ever in the soil of Mizoram. Since then, Mizoram had entered a new era. Other political parties began to establish, national parties and regional parties began to fight for supremacy within the state. United Mizo Freedom Organisation (UMFO), Eastern India Tribal Union (EITU), People’s Convention (PC), Congress (I), Mizo National Front (MNF) and others were among the prominent parties.

The political consciousness that noticed a steady progress resulted in the dissatisfaction of the people. Coupled with regionalism and economic backwardness there was insurgency movement threatening the peaceful life of the region, the present state was plagued by the insurgency for twenty years. One of the political parties of Mizoram, Mizo National Front (MNF) which was established on October 22, 1961 skillfully organized the fighting for secession from India. It was started on February 28, 1966. This insurgency inflicted sizeable casualties and death on both the insurgents and the government of India. The insurgents were at the initial stage aimed at fighting for an independent sovereign status, to secede from the Indian Union. But due to many shortcomings of the insurgency and effective counter-insurgency measures taken by the government including grouping of Villages, their main goal of independence was not achieved. Though the insurgents failed to fulfill their intention, they put a severe pressure on the Indian government and their insurgent activities were one of the most prolonged insurgency movements in the country. The heed from the central government had inclined towards placating the insurgents. Therefore, it gave the status of statehood to the Mizos. Hence, the improvement in socio-political life of the Mizos which has started in the indefinite period and progressing slowly at last, led to the attainment of statehood to become one of the states of India.

After the statehood was attained, there was peace and progress that flourished in the state for a time being. However, the tranquility of the state was threatened by the uprisings of some of the marginalized sections of the society. The Hmars in the northern side of the state and the Brus in the western side of the state
were creating havoc through their insurgent activities. The state was diverting its resources and energies to counter the insurgency of these two marginalized sections of the society. Lots of live were lost and the protracted insurgency caused the sufferings of the people of the affected area.

One of the insurgent groups was the Hmars; they were earlier migrants to the present state of Mizoram. They migrated to the present Mizoram prior to the mass migration of the Lusei tribes. But the Hmars were not a separate clan of the Luseis they are a cognate clan of the Lusei tribe and therefore, resulted in the stagnation of political development of the Hmars. As the time passes by, the growth of political consciousness among the Hmars expressed itself by demanding the Autonomous District Council; it was a post-eighties development due to the feeling of negligence and apathy from the state government. December 18, 1986 was a milestone in the political history of the Hmars, on that date the Hmar People’s Convention (HPC) was formed. It was the main organization which fought for the political autonomy of the ethnic group. The HPC has attracted a large number of youths and a group of 50 volunteers was undergoing physical and political training. The camp though intentionally carried on clandestinely was noticed by the Government of Mizoram. The incumbents of the Government regarded the trainees and their activities as detrimental to the interest of the state as a whole. When the training was over, the HPC called - on a peaceful bandh throughout the HPC Demand Area. It was called on the 28th March, 1989; this was followed by second Phase of non - violence peaceful bandh on April 18-19, 1989. The Hmars expressed their desire to establish an identity, separate from that of the Mizos. Their demands also include Autonomous District Council in Hmar dominated area of the north Mizoram under Sixth Schedule. This second phase of the bandh lasted for forty eight hours and the counter measures taken by the Government had an outcome of the Hmar volunteers being fled to the Forest. The Volunteers were followed by the Mizoram Armed Police and the gun battle between the Hmar People’s Convention and The Mizoram state began on 16th May, 1989 at Moniarkhal where two Hmar Volunteers and a sub-inspector of Police were killed at a clash. This was the beginning of armed confrontation between the Hmars and the state of Mizoram.
After holding 14 rounds of peace talks, the Government of Mizoram and the HPC signed a memorandum of settlement on July 27, 1994. The movement which led to the death of 44 volunteers as recorded by the HPCs has ended with an agreement, thereby, brought together the Mizo mainstreams and the Hmars under one umbrella.

The western side of Mizoram was inhabited by many sub-tribes; among them Brus were one of the major tribes. Their migration from Tripura to Mizoram took place recently and it is held by some that their number in Mizoram appears to have increased very substantially due to their uprising against the then Tripura Raja under the leadership of Ratan Manikya in the year 1942. The latest record of the Brus in Mizoram as published by the ‘Baptist today’ stated that there are 58,269 Brus in 80 villages of Mizoram. The Brus in Mizoram have now been affected by the proselytizing activities of the Mizo christians particularly the Presbyterian church in the western side and Baptist church in the southern regions and now majority of the Brus in Mizoram are christian in religion.

As the Brus were not original inhabitants of the state of Mizoram, there was not much political participation of the Brus in the governance of the country. None of them are represented in the legislature of the state of Mizoram even for once. The political awareness was so low, they are scattered in various small villages in the western and southern part of Mizoram. The political development of the Brus in Mizoram could be traced back to 15th June, 1990 when they formed a Riang Democratic Convention Party (RDCP). The policy of this party was to safeguard the Bru culture, language and custom and to develop welfare of the Bru People.

On October 20, 1997 one of the Forest Department employees, K. Lalzawmliana was killed while he was on his duty. It was realized that there is an insurgent group of the Brus known as Bru National Liberation Front (BNLF) who killed K. Lalzawmliana. The BNLF since then launched insurgency; the state government tried various ways to curb the Bru insurgency. As much as 13 talks were held between the two sides. Starting from 7th, Sept, 2001, it was on 26th, April, 2005 that the Mizoram government and representatives of the Brus signed an agreement; a small scale insurgency stirred by the Brus in the western parts of Mizoram was settled by the Mizoram state government successfully. During
insurgency period, 17 Bru militants has lost their life, on the other hand the government of Mizoram also lost 7 valuable lives which has ended after the signing of an agreement. The Brus are now living a normal life and back to their own village.

Mizoram is experiencing an insurgency movement since 1966. It was followed by the problem of insurgency stirred by the Hmars in the northern parts of Mizoram and the Brus in the western parts of Mizoram. However the two insurgencies of a clan-based movement are a post-eighties development that took place as a result of feeling of negligence and deprivations. Those insurgencies though not equal in its intensity are all an attempt to have more autonomy in the political sphere. The first insurgency led by the MNF was an attempt to create a sovereign independent state of the Mizo, the second and third as discussed already were an attempt to have more political autonomy without necessarily overthrowing the existing structure. Fortunately, these insurgencies were a history of the past, it was a result of an in depth understanding of the problems of an insurgent group on the part of the government which creates patience and endurance in holding talks and negotiations in spite of the agonies brought by an insurgent groups.

Now Mizoram is often described as an island of peace and harmony. This era of peace is not attained by a state smoothly. Instead there are many hardships undergone by the state to be in the era of peace and harmony. In a country like India where a clan-based politics becomes a vogue, perhaps insurgency of various intensities would have reared its ugly head. It is indeed necessary for any representative organizations to understand the ground reality of an insurgency movement. The state of Mizoram has set a role model in regards to the solution of the problems created by the clan - based insurgent group.

First and foremost, the Mizo National Front Insurgency in the year 1966 was a result of a combination of different factors like feeling of separatism and economic deprivation. In fact, the feeling of separatism came first which sows the seed of feeling of economic deprivation strengthened by an ethnic consciousness among the Mizo people. In the case of the Hmars of Mizoram, their insurgency movements could be said as an aspiration of the Hmar people that was manifested in the violent movement. Though their political movements had started way back in 1979, with the formation of Hmar National Union in Mizoram, feeling of deprivation that dwells with
the hearts of the Hmars lies without expression. As stated by SN Singh “the Hmars are late in projecting their autonomy demand. It is a post eighties development in the Hmar areas which was almost dormant in their minds earlier.” The actions of HPC were only the expression of the accumulated discontentment of the Hmars. In the meantime, other insurgent group, the Brus of Mizoram, is a minor ethnic group who resented over the attitude of discrimination of the dominant tribe towards minority group dotting the periphery. For them the problem lies not only in the political dimension, but also in their economic condition. This feeling of economic deprivation resulted in the minds of some of the Brus the need to form an outfit to put pressure on the government for their upliftment.

The state of Mizoram is successful in checking the insurgencies that had taken place within its jurisdiction. It manipulated the insurgent groups to enter into a term of agreement to restore peace and stability. However, signing an agreement with the insurgent groups without complete submission by insurgents is a dangerous one. The government must have insights on the nature and reality of insurgent groups. Attempts should be made for giving some directions for handling problems from different points of views, as the problems are quite complex and acute so that long lasting peace and tranquility may be evolved.

Looking at the different cases of insurgencies in the north-east India, it is visible that political emancipation, territorial autonomy, cultural revivalism etc., are the main essence or ideology of different insurgent groups; yet, there are some common problems which are unique to the entire hill people and these are enough to generate such discontent. The common problems may include; geographical isolation and cultural alienation, problem of subsistence economy, problem of exploitation by others, feeling of being ousted by other cultural groups and problem of lopsided developmental measures and maladjustments. The state of Mizoram, one of the states of north-east India too is not an exception to these problems.

The insurgency problem is not only a law and order problem nor is it a problem generated from socio-economic and socio-political malpractices alone. Rather it is the product of various adverse situations. So, to handle this problem all aspects and perspectives are to be taken into consideration and the preventive
measures are to be taken by both the government and non-government agencies collectively.

Insurgency takes place when the marginalized section’s identity is at stake and when this section feels that it cannot get justice and have honorable existence within the existing system. This reason is quite suited with insurgencies that have taken place in Mizoram. Their movement comprehends all dimensions of life. So in order to handle it, owing to the complexity of the situation, in addition to the socio-economic and other developmental measures, socio-political dimensions are also to be evaluated. The hostile leaders who represent the grievances of the ethnic groups should be brought unconditionally to the table for open discussion in order to know the grievances of the people and let them know the limitations of the government in the matters of fulfilling their aspiration outside the framework of the constitution. Logical suggestions may be invited from the insurgent leaders to meet their grievances within the constitutional framework.

Positive steps may be taken in the government network and electoral politics. Political parties within the state should not take an advantage of separatist tendency to secure vote banks of ethnic groups based on their identity. Political parties should remain cautious so that money and muscle power do not play any role to dictate the political fortune of the ethnic groups by taking advantage of their poverty, ignorance and simplicity. Only then the insurgency problem in Mizoram may be eliminated fully and peace restored.