The problem of insurgency is one of the most significant questions confronting modern states. As Giriraj Shah remarks “During the four decades after World War II, there have been more than a hundred insurgency movements of varying intensity in different parts of the world.”¹ The sufferings it brought to the humankind are uncountable, leading to poverty, hunger and frustration. Insurgency is in fact considered an incurable disease. It leaves hundreds of scars among the masses; and insurgents firmly lead the revolution as means of overthrowing the existing system of the country.²

North Eastern states of India comprising eight states of India, sharing a long international boundary on different sides also is not an exclusion to this dreadful scenario. As much as 115 groups from various states of North East were listed as terrorist, insurgent and extremist outfits.³ 36 outfits were active in Assam while the state of Manipur alone is the victim of 39 active outfits. The state of Meghalaya witnessed the trauma of four active militant groups. Nagaland is the dwelling place of 3 militant groups while Tripura, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh suffered the activities of 30, 2 and 1 militant groups respectively. The region of North East India is a habitat of multi-ethnic groups with each tribe and groups having a different way of life, but the common features they share together may easily be said as the problem of insurgency. B.C. Bhuyan in his analysis about the North East India region truly states that “The problem of insurgency is the greatest of the problems being experienced by the people since independence.”⁴

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¹ Giriraj Shah., Terrorism : Tenets and Tactics (Delhi, Anmol publication, 2000) p. 52
² Ibid. p. 92
⁴ B.C. Bhuyan., Political Development of the North East Part II (Delhi, Omsons Publication, 1992) p.ix
In such circumstances, the way out of insurgency and its related activities is the need of the time. Governments and existing authorities attempted to curb various sorts of insurgencies. But, the problem still persists and seemingly increasing till date. The proliferation of the problem needs to be checked for future betterment. Thus, “a regime that is given to seeking ad hoc solution or one that is used to mere fire-fighting is doing nothing but writing a sure recipe for inevitable disaster.”

Although the problem of insurgency can be found in most of the countries of the world, the nature of insurgency is not always and everywhere the same. It has differed in form and intensity in various parts of the world at different times. It is seen that those who resort to insurgency almost seek to overthrow the existing social, economic or political order and replace it by one of their choice.

As India is a multi-ethnic state, where competition between different groups exists, some believe that the insurgency movements may lead to disintegration and devastation in the country. The smooth functioning of the government is upset by various insurgent groups, which is detrimental to the interests of another groups of people living within the same political boundary and thus resulting in the disunity and confusion. But on the contrary, others like Giriraj Shah believe that insurgency has not been considered as dangerous to our society as terrorism due to the fact that insurgency movements directly targeted the governments to make their demand more effective at a time when the terrorist used to aim at soft targets like innocent civilians, children etc.

**Statement of the Problem:**

We have heard many cases of insurgency in various parts of India. “Mizoram also noticed secessionist insurgency in the past by rejecting the

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existing political community of which they are formally a part.\textsuperscript{7} It sought to withdraw from it and constitute a new autonomous political community of its own. For that purpose, the MNF insurgency for a period covering twenty years was fought against India. It resulted in loss of many lives and brought untold misery to the people.

This research work will deal with the MNF led insurgency which has changed the whole structure of Mizoram. Moreover, the present day Hmar insurgency and Riang (Bru) insurgency will also be studied which have confronted Mizoram politics till date.

The genesis of the MNF insurgency can be traced back to 1959 when the Mizo Hills were hit by a most severe famine known as ‘Mautam’. It is commonly believed that the government of Assam was neither able to assess the intensity of impending famine nor could it rise to the occasion in dealing with it. There was animated discussion in the Mizo Hills District Council at the slow moving process of the government of Assam while the rats were causing havoc. The members of the District Council were very angry with the government of Assam. One of the members of the District Council Vanlalbuka said, “If we continue to be neglected.... the people’s feeling will be secession from Assam.”\textsuperscript{8} And this upset due to the famine as remarked by N.C. Asthana and Anjali Nirmal, “sowed the seeds of resentment which came to be directed against the government of India.”\textsuperscript{9} First, the Mizo National Famine Front (MNFF) was formed. By the time the famine was over, it was overwhelmed by political consideration and converted itself into the Mizo National Front (MNF).

Apart from the effect of the famine, there was a deep discontent among the Mizos due to the abolition of chieftainship. The old chiefs being paupers accused the government of Assam for their plight. The disgruntled chiefs

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid, p. 24
\textsuperscript{8} V. Venkata Rao & H. Thansanga & Niru Hazarika, \textit{A Century of Government and Politics in North East India, Vol. III} (Delhi, S. Chand and Co. 1987) p. 259
\textsuperscript{9} N.C. Ashthana & Anjali Nirmal \textit{Op. cit}, p. 151
supported the MNF who were fighting for secession. Besides this, the spirit of independence among the tribal of North East India can also be blamed. This explains the whole situation. The tribal of North East India resent any interference in their day to day life.

One of the most important causes for the outbreak of the MNF led insurgency could be said as aid from foreign governments especially Pakistan, “Pakistan assured the MNF arms and ammunition, training facilities in guerilla warfare, above all sanctuary in East Pakistan when the MNF started combing operations.”\(^{10}\) When they fought for secession, the MNF took shelter in the Chittagong Hills in East Pakistan. Pakistan was anxious to harass Indian government and strain her economy. Finally, the MNF claimed that the Mizos had all along been independent with a distinct culture, distinct language, distinct civilisation, and living in a definite territory before their conquest by the British and semi-independent during the British period. With this principle, they influenced the minds of the common Mizos to start hatred against the Indians.

On March 1, 1966, the government was in for the unkind surprise to find the MNF insurgents launching raids on almost all the Security Posts simultaneously all over the Mizo Hills. “That was the *Operation Jericho* in action.”\(^{11}\) And thus began one of the series of longest negotiations in the history of the country. They dragged on for more than ten years and witnessed a number of failures in between. The arduous negotiations came to an end in July 1986 when Laldenga finally signed the accord known as ‘*Mizo Accord*’ with the government; Mizoram was given ‘Statehood’. Peace returned to Mizoram. But are the Mizos satisfied with a mere statehood? Did the germs of insurgency against India really vanish? And why did some portion of the Mizo population cannot accept themselves as Indian? Didn’t the agreement and statehood cure


the insurgent minds of the then MNF volunteers? All these important questions need answers and solution till date.

One of the protracted insurgency in Mizoram has been stirred by the Hmars. The Hmars are a cognate clan of the great Mizo tribe and they live in Mizoram, also in Cachar District of Assam. They are known as *Kukies*¹² and unlike the *Lushais*; they have been living in Cachar for a pretty long time. They are in fact, the native residents of Southern Cachar and Eastern Cachar. Like the Mizos, they also belong to the Tibeto Burman stock.¹³ They inhabited mainly the northern part of Aizawl District of Mizoram. Many of them are residing in Churachandpur District of Manipur. Some of them are living in Assam and Tripura. They are old Kuki group of tribe.¹⁴

The name ‘Hmar” was given by the people of Mizoram.¹⁵ The word *Hmar* means ‘North’ in Lushai language. This word is to denote them as immigrants into Mizoram from Manipur side. They claim that historically and culturally they are different from other tribes of Mizoram. They have a distinct language, highly literate population and have their own literary society which has been started in 1921.¹⁶ The implementation of the North-East Area (Reorganisation) Act 1971 raised the status of Mizoram as Union Territory, accordingly, three District Councils, Viz. The Lakher District Council, the Pawi District Council and the Chakma District Council were created. “The Hmars felt let down and some sort of psychological depression grilled them.”¹⁷ Subsequently, inter-tribal feeling and subdued rivalry gave birth to clan-based politics, which is responsible for fermenting political tension in Mizoram. The minor ethnic groups resented over the attitude of discrimination of the dominant tribe towards minorities groups dotting the periphery. The Hmar tribe living in

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¹³ Ibid  
¹⁴ Ibid  
¹⁵ Ibid  
¹⁶ Ibid  
the northern fringe had no other alternative but to form an outfit on the ethnic line of the Pawi, Lakher and Chakma.

Of course, the Hmars could be said as somehow late in projecting their autonomy demand. It is a post-eighties development in the Hmar areas which was almost dormant in their minds earlier. A clearly perceptible unrest among the Hmar community due to the growing frustration has surfaced and a separatist tendency has developed these days. This has been projected by an outfit named the Hmar People’s Convention (HPC). They demanded an autonomous region comprising the Hmar dominated areas. The HPC is an insurgent group well-organised by the Hmar people to achieve their demands. They indulged in many violent activities and disturbed the functioning of the government of Mizoram, it was a post-eighties development that created hardships for the state of Mizoram.

The Brus are other insurgent group inside Mizoram. The Brus, also known as Riangs or Tuikuks, reside in the western part of Mamit District of Mizoram. The origin of the Brus is hard to be traced because of lack of written records and documents. “The original home of the Riangs is said to be Maian Tlang (a hill) near Rangamati of Bangladesh.” They migrated from Shan state of Burma. They belong to the Mongoloid racial group and their dialect has been classified as to the Austro-Asiatic group of Tibeto Burman family. Their dialect is their own and it is known as Polong-O. This Riang dialect is also known as Riang. At present, the insurgent activities of the Brus are difficult to visualise. The Riangs are demanding Autonomous District Council which the Mizos do not approve of. In October 1997, a Mizo was murdered in a Riang

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18 Ibid, p.126
19 A Brief Account of Riangs in Mizoram (Aizawl, Tribal Research Institute, Department of Education, 1986) p.1
21 S. Sen, Tribes of Mizoram: Description, Ethnology and Bibliography (Delhi, Gian Publishing House, 1992) p.154
22 Ibid, p. 154
dominated area. In retaliation the Mizos resorted to large scale arson and did it with such brutal efficiency that 41,000 Riangs were forced to flee to Tripura and Assam. Now the Mizos are manipulating to ensure that some of the foreigners or outsiders of Mizoram state who claimed themselves as the native residents of Mizoram are not able to return to Mizoram. Against this backdrop it is not surprising that the Riangs too have formed an outfit called the Bru National Liberation Front (BNLF). Ultimately all such outfits come to vent their ire on the government and the security forces inflicting sizeable casualties. It is also suspected that the BNLF has developed links with the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT). The state of Mizoram is facing a serious problem stirred by the Bru insurgency.

Thus, the insurgent activities of Hmars and Brus are a very important part of politics of Mizoram in spite of the peace that returned to Mizoram since the signing of the MNF-Government Peace Accord. This study, therefore, will attempt to analyse the complexities of the insurgencies of these two groups and the past of the MNF days.

Review of Literature:

The study of insurgency has assumed a great significance for modern political systems. As such it has attracted the attention of scholars and a number of works can be found relating to it. N.C Asthana and Anjali Nirmal’s book entitled *Terrorism, Insurgencies and Counter Insurgency Operations* presents an exhaustive analysis of terrorism in Kashmir, the North Eastern States and Punjab besides left-wing terrorism. The authors have developed a comprehensive strategy for counter insurgency followed by an enunciation of the crucial tactical concepts that would ensure victory in the war against terrorism. But the book covers a wide area; as such no serious attempts have been made to understand the real root of insurgencies in different parts of India.

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23 N.C Asthana and Anjali Nirmal, *Terrorism, Insurgencies and Counter Insurgency Operations* (Jaipur, Pointer publishers, 2001)
Giriraj Shah’s book, *Terrorism: Tenets and Tactics* also is a book on terrorism which distinguished terrorism from insurgency. The book also gives a clear account of counter-insurgency measures. But it did not direct as to how insurgencies experienced by a small state within a nation state would be checked. Its main focus is on insurgencies and terrorism of big countries.

B.C. Bhuyan (ed.) book entitled *Political Development of the North East (Part-II)* is a collection of articles on insurgency in North East. It is an important scholarly work on insurgency which emphasized on the political integration of the region in the context of national integration. But it does not describe how the insurgencies in the North Eastern states affected the peace process of the region.

“*Insurgency Movement in North Eastern India*” by Phanjoubam Tarapot is another comprehensive study on the prevailing situation in India’s sensitive North Eastern region bordering with China, Myanmar and Bangladesh. It also deals with the factors that led to the formation of different underground organisations in the region.

The volume entitled “*A century of government and politics in North East India Vol. - III Mizoram*” by Venkata Rao, H. Thansanga & Niru Hazarika is a book which clearly discussed the profiles of Mizoram and the constitutional development since 1947. The Mizo system of chieftainship has been elaborately written. The other chapters deal with the head of the state, the Legislative Assembly, Political Parties, and District Councils. The chapter on insurgency has been very well written, detailing how it started and measures taken by the government of India to curb the insurgency and restore normalcy.

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24 Giriraj Shah., *Terrorism: Tenets and Tactics* (Delhi, Anmol publication, 2000)
25 B.C. Bhuyan (ed.) *Political Development of the North East (Part-II)* (Delhi, Omsons Publication, 1992)
But, the book is not clear about why the MNF’s claim had changed from independence to a mere statehood and why the MNF felt contented with statehood after a hard struggle of 20 years.

R. N Prasad’s (ed.) book entitled “Autonomy Movements in Mizoram” presents a collection of the articles written by 17 scholars. It deals with objectively the concept of autonomy movements in Mizoram. The work deals with the Mizo National Front (MNF) led insurgency, its relations with foreign powers, counter-insurgency measures, the efforts of regional political parties in mediating the crisis and impact of autonomy movements on Socio-cultural and economic-political transformation of Mizoram.

C. Nunthara’s book Mizo Society and Polity presents the interplay of society and polity in the context of ethnic identity consolidation in Mizoram and demand for separation by the MNF.

Though there are several related works, no significant work has been done to understand the roots of insurgencies and its cures to eliminate it completely from the politics of Mizoram. Hence, this work is an attempt to study the roots of insurgencies in Mizoram from the past till date. This will enable the scholars to understand the interplay of politics and ethnicity in insurgency movements in the North East.

**Objective:** This work has the following objectives.

1. To study why insurgency has taken place in the North East in general and in Mizoram in particular.
2. To study the different factors, agencies and events that created a condition for the insurgent movements among the Hmars and Riangs.
3. To examine the consequences of MNF insurgency in the past. And to examine the consequences of the Hmars and Brus insurgency in the state of Mizoram.

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29 C. Nunthara, Mizo Society and Polity (Delhi, Indus Publishing Co., 1996)
4. To compare the similarities or differences of insurgencies initiated by different groups

5. To examine the possible interplay of politics, ethnicity and deprivation in the insurgency movements in the North East in general and Mizoram in particular.

Hypotheses:

1. The main cause of MNF insurgency was the continued negligence of the Assam government which finally resulted in the poor handling of famine situation in Mizoram.

2. 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.

3. The feeling of negligence and apathy of the Mizoram Government might also be one of the reasons for the Hmar and Bru insurgency in the state.

4. Mizoram has become a role model for other conflict-ridden states of India for resolution of insurgent-related conflicts.

5. There is the interplay of politics of deprivation and ethnicity in insurgency movements in the North East.

Methodology:

This study is based both on Primary and Secondary Data. Sources for the primary data include documents and publications of government, party documents, legislative Assembly debates, etc. Secondary source data include both published and unpublished works, apart from journals, newspapers (local and national) and other relevant materials.

For data collection empirical method has been adopted, although historical method has also been adopted to study the history of insurgency movement in Mizoram. The researcher has used non-participant observation
method to study the Bru and Hmar insurgency. The researcher has also undertaken interviews of some select political leaders and people who are directly involved in the activities.

**Limitation:**

Although the researcher has tried to delimit the study to three important insurgency movements of the state, two of which are also still dormant today, the study has the usual limitation of time and resources.

The limitation of understanding the Bru and Hmar language, although overcome to a great extent, can not be ruled out. Even then, this limitation has no bearing on the generalization of the study.

**Chapterization:**

**CHAPTER I**  
Introduction: This chapter is an introduction to the thesis, statement of the problems, review of literature, methodology and hypotheses are included

**CHAPTER II**  
Insurgency: A Theoretical Framework: The second chapter deals about the conceptual framework of insurgency and its various dimensions.

**CHAPTER III**  
Mizoram: A Socio – Political Profile: This chapter goes into the historical development of Mizoram, social life of the people from the past till date and the political developments leading to the formation of statehood.

**CHAPTER IV**  
MNF and Insurgency in Mizoram: Emergence of the State in the Indian Union: In this chapter, attempt is made to trace the root of insurgency in the historical setting. Also, it strives to analyse the causes of MNF insurgency, its shortcomings and its consequences.

**CHAPTER V**  
Hmar Insurgency in the Post-1987 Period: This chapter analysed the socio-political background of Hmar ethnic
group, the causes and nature of their insurgency and signing of Memorandum of Settlement and the consequences of agreement with government of Mizoram.

**CHAPTER VI**  
*Bru Insurgency in the Post-1987 Period:* This chapter is devoted to the study into the historical background of the Bru’s and their demands. It also attempted to trace the factors responsible for the origin of the Bru insurgency.

**CHAPTER VII**  
*Summary and Conclusion:* The last chapter contains the concluding observation and final remark about insurgency in North – East India in general and Mizoram in particular. Suggestions were also made for the policy makers to curb the possibilities of insurgency in the future.

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