CHAPTER III

ADMINISTRATIVE AND SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT

3.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND ADMINISTRATIVE CONTEXT

Manipur was a kingdom for many centuries situated between South Asia and South-East Asia. This geographic location influenced the course of her history and cultural development. Manipur literally means the “city or the land of gems”. This name of the state is of comparatively recent origin dating from the eighteenth century only and it lost its independence to the mighty British in 1891.1 Poireipak, Meitrabak, Kangleipak etc. were her indigenous names.

Manipur had a long march in her historical development from a small clan principality at Kangla at the heart of Imphal to a powerful kingdom comprising the surrounding hills and territory in the Chindwin river basin of Burma. Though several manuscripts speak of the existence of organized society and the glorious reign of successive kings from the hoary past, the royal chronicle Cheitharol Kumbaba records the history of this people from early part of the first-century A.D. only.2 Manipur with an area of 22,327 sq. kms. more or less had remained fixed since the controversial transfer of Kabow Valley to Burma in 1834.3

Nature divides the state into hills and valley. This geographic division is a determinant factor in the socio-political and historical development of the land. The valley inhabited by the Meitieis had kingdoms while in the hills the political system could

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2 Ibid., p. 5.
not develop beyond the village society or republics. Manipur valley since the ancient time has been the land in which diverse social and political groups settled and had the cultural influences of both South-East Asia and South Asia.

Manipur's population has three major ethnic groups, the Meiteis of the valley, the Nagas and Kuki-Chins of the surrounding hills. They are predominantly Mongoloid with some non-Mongoloid elements who speak Tibeto-Burman languages. The Manipuri Muslims (Meitei Pangals) settled in the valley since the seventeenth century adopted Meitei language as the mother tongue and now form an integral part of Manipur society. Meiteis are predominantly Hindus while the Nagas and Kuki-Chins are mostly Christians.

Migration of Indian communities began from the end of nineteenth century with Bihari oil crushers and the Bengalis. During the colonial period came the Marwaris, Nepalese and after India's independence came the Punjabis, Tamils and others. Thus, Manipur is a mini-India with diverse culture and civilization and is a plural society. The history of Manipur is the unending process of evolution of such a culture and society. Such diversity combined with history, geographical location and multi-ethnicity have a great impact on the politics, socio-economic processes and integration processes both with India and within the state.

Indian communities and Nepalese as well as Bangladeshis who had settled in the valley since the beginning of the twentieth century i.e. colonial period till today have maintained their distinct identities. This is in contrast to those who came in the valley in

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4 Ibid., p. 8.
5 Ibid.
6 There are non-Christians among Nagas and Kuki-Chins people who are sub-divided into numerous tribes of which 29 are recognized Scheduled Tribes. Meiteis are a "nation". A Meitei may follow any religion or may be an atheist. Meitei Sanamahi does not believe in Hinduism/Hindu Gods/Goddess. There are Meitei Brahmins and Meitei Christians also.
7 Kabui, Gangmumei, op. cit., p. 24.
the earlier centuries who adopted the language, culture and way of life of the valley people. Integration of Manipur into India in 1949 led to the loss of political power of the Manipuris for the first time and beginning of the domination by the outsiders in the administration and in the economy by the people of outside origin.

In such a situation and due to migration as well as illegal immigration in the valley had threatened the continuance of the identity of Manipuris. The general public is obsessed with the fear of swamping of the Manipuris by foreign nationals. Such a fear was appeared to be realistic since the people of Manipur were aware of the conditions of Tripuris who had been reduced to minority in their own land. Moreover, anti-foreigners movement was going on in neighboring Assam.

The recorded history of Manipur began from 33 A.D. when the first king Pakhangba ascended the throne. The process of development of Manipur as a political entity did not take place under one supreme political power. By the end of the seventeenth century the composite Meitei people emerged and also under one supreme Meitei king. Manipur was an independent kingdom till the Burmese occupied it during 1821-26. King Gambir Singh recovered the possession of Manipur and Kabow Valley (now in Myanmar) with the help of British. He was recognized as Raja of Manipur by the Treaty of Yandabo, 1826, which was signed between the British and the Burmese.

Manipur's existence as an independent kingdom came to end with the military defeat of Manipur by the British in the

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9 Ibid. This fear was felt particularly by the Meiteis of the valley who cannot move into vast hill areas as no transfer of hill/tribal land is allowed by law to non-tribes and outsiders. There is no such restriction in the valley areas.
10 Ch. Manihar Singh, op. cit., p. 5.
Anglo-Manipuri War, 1891. The war of 1891 was an act of self-defense on the part of a tiny state to maintain its sovereignty and integrity. Under the British colonial rule Manipur was a Princely State perhaps because of strategic location which came to an end in 1947.

The monarchical rule which began in 33 A.D. finally came to an end in 1949 when Manipur was integrated into Independent India as Part C state. In 1956 Manipur became a Union Territory and from 1972 a state of Indian Union. Thus, as political entity, Manipur has a long existence in the country. Any attempt to disintegrate this political entity has been strongly resisted by the people of the state.

Under Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947, election based on adult franchise was held on 11 June, 1948 for the Legislative Assembly. A coalition government of non-Congress parties was formed. For the first time in the history of Manipur, the elected representatives of the people formed a responsible government. This responsible government was removed and the elected Assembly was dissolved with integration of Manipur into Indian Union in 1949. Manipur was put under the administration of Chief Commissioner and people of Manipur had to struggle and wait for long 23 years for a responsible government till 1972 when she was granted statehood. Such a situation led to the questioning of the benefits of associating with independent democratic India by a section of the people.


13 State Reorganization Commission, 1955, recommended merger of Manipur into Assam. Even the agreement to extend ceasefire to Manipur signed between Indian Government and the armed group NSCN (IM) who has been demanding Greater Nagaland has to be withdrawn in July 2001. This was because of strong protest by the people of Manipur as they considered it a threat to territorial integrity of Manipur.
Manipur became a state of India on 21 January, 1972 with a Legislative Assembly of 60 members of which 19 are reserved for Scheduled Tribes and one for Scheduled Caste. The remaining 40 are general seats for the Valley. The state is represented in the Lok Sabha by 2 members of whom one is reserved for Scheduled Tribes and by one to the Council of States. It is a member of North-Eastern Council and also come under special category states for central financial assistance. Manipur was Union Territory before 1972.

It is situated on the easternmost part of India bounded by Myanmar (Burma) on the East, state of Nagaland on the North, Assam on the West and by Mizoram and Myanmar on the South. Physically, 9/10 of the total area is hills which surround the centrally situated valley which is about 9% of total geographical area, on all sides. The geographical features can be understood by looking at the map of Manipur. It has an area of 22,327 sq. kms. out of which 78.92% is forest. About one third of population of the state lives in the hills while the remaining is in the valley. The total population as per 1991 Census is 18.37 lakhs of which 37,105 are Scheduled Castes and 6.32 Lakhs are Scheduled Tribes. According to latest Census 2001, the total population is about 24 Lakhs.

Imphal is the capital city of Manipur. There are 9 Districts, 28 Sub-Divisions and 45 Police Stations in the state. Four Districts of Imphal (East), Imphal (West), Thoubal and Bhishnupur are in the valley while five districts of Chandel, Churachandpur, Tamenglong, Senapati and Ukhrul are in the hills. There are 31 towns and 2,182 inhabited villages in the state. The four valley districts excluding the areas which fall within the Municipalities,

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Town committees and other notified areas are covered by the Panchayati Raj system. There are 7 Municipal Councils in the state. Under *Manipur District Council Act, 1971*, Hill Autonomous District Councils were established since 1972 for the administration of the hill areas.

Though a Bench of the Gauhati High Court came into existence in Imphal since 1972, it became a permanent Bench only in 1992. The break up of All India Services for Manipur and Tripura Cadre are 198 IAS, 105 IPS and 75 Indian Forest Service as against 5067 IAS, 3337 IPS and 2555 IFS of all India respectively as on 1st April, 1995.

Literacy rate of the state is 59.89% as per Census of India, 1991. There is one University, one Central Agricultural University, one Regional Medical College, and one Engineering College in the state. There are 25 government colleges, 18 are in valley and 7 Grant-in-Aid colleges. There are many privately run colleges also.

National Highway Nos. 39 and 53 connect Imphal with rest of India. There is no railway line in the state. Dimapur in Nagaland is the nearest-railway station from the state. Imphal airport connects Manipur to Shilchar, Guwahati, Calcutta and Delhi. No major expansions of roads inside Manipur and with other parts of India have taken place. Railways lines upto Imphal has remained in the form of demands only for past many decades.

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16 Ibid., p. 45.
19 Known as MT Cadre, Manipur and Tripura have common cadres for All India Services perhaps because of same historical evolution from Centrally Administered Areas to Union Territories, and finally states.
Manipuri (Meiteilon) which is the mother tongue of Meiteis and Meitei Panghals (Manipuri Muslims) is the official language and lingua franca of the state. It is recognized by National Sahitya Akademi and is a National Language included in the Eight Schedule of the Constitution of India. Besides Manipuri, there are more than 30 tribal languages/dialects in the state, all belonging to Tibeto-Burman languages.

Manipur has a temperate climate with long rainy season. Several streams and rivers traverse the oval-shaped valley and surrounding blue mountain ranges. The valley is endowed with large number of lakes including Loktak Lake which has the only floating national park in India, Keibul Lamjao.

Monarchy was the prevalent system of administration in Manipur till 1947. Normally, the principles of heredity and primogeniture were followed in the succession. The period of monarchical rule may be divided into 3 stages\(^1\), (1) from 33 A.D. to 1709 during which the king remained strictly a constitutional ruler, (2) from 1709 to 1891 when Manipur witnessed a real monarchical form of government, and (3) from 1891-1947 when the king was merely a nominal and a constitutional head as this was under British colonial period.

The king was the pivot of the state. The higher posts in the monarchy system— Jubaraj, next to the king, Senapati (the commander of the army), Kotwal (the head of the police), Sagolhanjaba (master of the horses), Samu Hanjaba (master of the elephants) were normally distributed amongst the brothers of the king, in their absence the sons of the king would get them. All these officers had seats in the Cheirap, the chief judicial body in the State. The office of the Awa Pural (foreign minister) was also there.

For the administration of justice the valley was divided into 4 circles in each of which there was a Panchayat court. Besides them, there were 3 higher courts at the capital, (1) Paja (2) Military Court and (3) Cheirap. The highest court was the king’s court and the king was the supreme judge. For deciding cases there was no formal code of laws. In this respect, religious laws and customs of the country served as the guiding principle.

In Manipur all land belonged to the head of the state. There was an officer called the Pornam Selungba whose duty was to superintend all matters connected with land cultivation. The country was divided into 6 Panas (divisions). Though Panas were mainly military associations Lallup was obligatory on each member. The 6 Panas were again subdivided into 107 groups. Every male in the country above 16 years of age, irrespective of caste and creed were liable to serve the State for 10 days in forty. This service was due to the State and none was remunerated for it.

The Loi and Naga villages were under the charges of village officers possessing the “same titles” as are now found among the hill tribes. Each village had its own chief called Ningthou. Next to him was the Senapati. The Khullakpa and the Luplakpa follow him in precedence.22

With the coming of British rule, significant changes were introduced in the administration. Slavery and Lallup were abolished in 1892. The Indian Penal Code was extended to Manipur in 1904. Though Manipur was ruled by a king, its administration was handed over to a Darbar consisting of eight members with the Maharaja as its President. The supreme power for the administration of the state was in the hands of the British government through its Political Agent in Manipur as the powers.

of the king and the Darbar were merely formal.\textsuperscript{23} The Political Agent who was Vice-President of the Darbar became President as the king retained only the supervisory control and vacated the post in favour of the English I.C.S. officer since 1916.

The above system of administration continued upto 15 August, 1947. In case of hill areas, British adopted a policy of segregation as in other North-Eastern Hill Areas and also a policy of divide and rule with the Kukis and Nagas tribes. However, British did not introduce "inner line" regulation in Manipur as in case of tribal areas of the region. The hill tribes continued to be administered on behalf of the king by the President of the Darbar who was British India's representative in Manipur with his two assistants.\textsuperscript{24} British did not interfere in socio-religious affairs which were in the hands of the king in the case of valley but in case of hill areas British encouraged Christian Missionary activities.

Under the \textit{Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947}, elections were held in June, 1948. A coalition ministry of non-Congress parties was formed. This first ever elected government and Legislative Assembly were dissolved with the integration of Manipur into India in October, 1949. In the Constitution of India, 1950, Manipur was a Part C state directly administered by President through a Chief Commissioner at Imphal.

Manipur became a Union Territory in 1956 with a Territorial Council of 30 members provided by the Seventh Amendment Act of 1956. The Territorial Council came into existence from 1957. This Council continued to function till July 21, 1963 with M. Koireng Singh as the last Chairman of the Council. In 1963, the Territorial Council was converted into Territorial Legislative Assembly of 30 elected members. This Act also provided a Council of 3 Ministers

\textsuperscript{24} Roy, Jyotirmoy, op. cit., p. 139.
for Manipur which were collectively responsible to the Legislative Assembly. However, Manipur continued to be administered by the Centre.\textsuperscript{25} This system of administration continued till 1972 when she was granted statehood after a prolonged mass movement for the same.

The administration of Manipur since 1972 has the following 3 features because of historical reasons, geography, ethnic factor and Constitutional arrangement. First, is the General Administration of the state as a whole which is similar to any other state of India. There are 9 Districts which are further sub-divided into 28 Sub-Divisions. These Districts function as field agencies in the administration of Manipur.\textsuperscript{26} The administration of each district is in the hands of a Deputy Commissioner who also acts as District Magistrate.

The General Administration Department of Manipur Secretariat coordinates all the Secretariat Departments/offices under the Government of Manipur in respect of multifarious administrative services. It includes the offices of Chief Minister, Ministers, Deputy Chairman and State Planning Advisory Board.\textsuperscript{27} Chief Secretary is the administrative head of the state assisted by Secretaries of various Departments, Under-Secretaries, Commissioners etc. There are many Directorates which function as Departments/Units for the administration of Manipur.

Second is the administration of the valley. The administrative structures of the 4 valley districts of Manipur are similar to any other system of general administration of India. The systems that are prevailing in other part of India and changes take place therein as a whole are also in the valley areas. For instance,


\textsuperscript{26} Ksh. Bimol Devi, op. cit., p. 352.

\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Administration Report}, 1995-96, op. cit., p. 92.
the Panchayati Raj system and Municipality administration as per 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts, 1992, are in operation in the valley areas.

Third is the administration of hill areas. There are separate arrangements and protection for hill areas and tribal communities in view of their distinct tradition and way of life. Autonomous District Councils were established in 1972 under Manipur District Council Act, 1971 in the hill areas. As per the provisions of Article 371-C of Indian Constitution, there is Hill Areas Committee with a Chairman in Manipur Legislative Assembly from the 19 representatives reserved for the Scheduled Tribes. As per the provisions of the Constitution reservations are provided for the Scheduled Tribes in government recruitments, legislature, education etc.

There is no land tenure system in the hill areas. The Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960 has not been extended in the hill areas. No transfer of land is allowed to non-tribal communities and outsiders in the hill/tribal areas. Thus, hill areas have been provided protection and ensured autonomy in the administration of their affairs according to their distinct way of life and culture. Such a separate system combined with historical factor, geographical divide, ethnicity, and underdevelopment have contributed to lack of development of common identity among the people of Manipur. Unfortunately, electoral politics and underground movements among the various ethnic groups have further acted as obstacles in bringing unity and sense of all Manipur identity.

The history of Manipur and her cultural development has been the result of internal dynamics and external factors. Till the

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28 For details on the powers, functions and working of these Councils see, Ksh. Bimola Devi, op. cit., pp. 352-356.

beginning of British colonial rule in 1891, the external influences were largely confined to religion and cultural affairs since Manipur was an independent kingdom. Those who came and settle till 1891 in the valley had adopted the language, culture and way of life, thus significantly contributed to the development of a composite culture and society in the valley.

With the coming of British, significant transformations took place in the administrative system in fact in all the spheres including demography. British adopted separate administration for the hill areas different from those of valley and intervened in socio-religious affairs of the tribal communities. Such a policy had contributed to spread of Christianity and modern education in the hill areas. However, British did not interfere in socio-religious affairs of the valley which was in the hands of monarch.

With the integration of Manipur into India, major changes took place in the administration and other spheres as well. Till the granting of statehood the administration and big business were dominated by the outsiders. One important development that has acted against national integration process has been the secessionist movements which are discussed next.

3.2 SECESSIONIST MOVEMENTS

Any discussion on secessionist movements is a difficult task. This is primarily for two reasons. First, it is a controversial subject and it involves claims and counter-claims. Second is that it is a subjective matter and it is an armed movement against the existing state and recognized nation. Here, an attempt is made to understand the phenomenon of secessionist movements in Manipur particularly in the context of the valley. The focus is on the main causes, nature and responses of the state to these

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30 The Naga insurgency in Manipur hills is with total NSCN orientation and part of the same see, Nayar, V.K., Threat from within: India’s Internal Security Environment, New Delhi, Lancers Publisher, 1998, p. 181.
movements. The impact of these movements on state institutions and society in general are also briefly examined.

It is recognized here the existence of the external factor in the secessionist movements in Manipur valley. However, it is not a significant factor as in the case of NSCN, in Kashmir or even ULFA in Assam. The primary objective of these movements is for "independence" of Manipur from India. However they claim that their movements are not for secession but for the "restoration of lost independence and sovereignty" of Manipur. This is perhaps due to the controversial nature of the integration of Manipur into Indian Union and the manner in which Manipur king was "forced" to sign the Merger Agreement in Shillong in 1949.

While history may provide the basis of these movements, the origins and motivations are to be found in the prevailing socio-economic and political conditions. It is assumed that historical basis and external dimension of the secessionist movements in Manipur valley become relevant only after examining the socio-economic and political processes in the state. Seen from this perspective it may partly explain the continuance of the problem despite various measures including military solution. However, these movements are the combined results of several factors.

A secessionist movement lays claim to and struggles to achieve sovereignty of its own in the form of independent statehood.31 It legitimates its claim to an autonomous territorial survival on the natural right as a unique nation to determine its own destiny. This right to secede is asserted in diametrical opposition to another sacred right, that of a state to safeguard its

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sovereignty and territorial integrity. Thus, secession is a contested moral claim.\textsuperscript{32}

The core of the original doctrine despite logical, practical and legal difficulties remains the compelling proposition that the only legitimate form of government is self-government based on the consent of the governed. As an act of territorial and political assertion, a secessionist struggle is usually prolonged, punishing and prohibitively costly.\textsuperscript{33} The origin, nature and responses to secessionist movements vary from one country to another or within the same country also.

The secessionist movements in Manipur valley essentially began around 1978. It was around this time PLA (People's Liberation Army), PPEPAK (People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak) and KCP (Kangleipak Communist Party) started armed struggle against Indian State. This is also because of the fact that intensity, public sympathy and response of the government of India in 1978 were the strongest. For instance, Manipur was declared as “disturbed area” and President's Rule was imposed as a part of the response to the secessionist violence.

Before 1978, there were organizations formed with the objective of the independence of Manipur.\textsuperscript{34} However, local police crushed them by early seventies. The movements that started


\textsuperscript{34} UNLF (United National Liberation Front) around 1965 and “The Meitei State Committee” in 1967 were formed with the objective of independence of Manipur. The movement of 1948-51 led by Hijam Irabot wanted to establish a “Sovereign Socialist Republic” in Manipur and parts of Burma. It had the influence of Communist movements of the time in parts of India, Burma and China. The historical roots of these movements were “ingrained” in those movements which started in 1978.
around 1978 were not direct continuation of the earlier movements and were significantly different from them.

The seeds of discontent were sown during the long period of central rule (1949-72). The developments during this period and the socio-economic and political conditions after 1972 provided the fertile ground for the rise of secessionist movements in Manipur valley. After integration with India, Manipur lost her political status for the first time in her long history. Even during British rule (1891-1947), Manipur was a Princely State. Monarchy rule was considered by people as their own though effective power in key areas like defense was in the hands of British. Except Manipur State Congress who favoured integration with India, king, leaders and parties which formed the responsibility government in 1948-49 were opposed to the merger.

It will be useful to know the developments during the long period of central rule (1949-1972). This will help us in understanding the rise of secessionist movements in Manipur valley. The administration was under the complete grip of the bureaucrats who did nothing for the improvement of economic lot of the Manipuris.35 Till 1972, the administration was manned by Indian Administrative Service personnel causing local resentment.36 Even in the lower rung of the administration the percentage of non-Manipuris appeared to be proportionately large.37

The non-local business community who dominated the economy was identified as profiteers and exploiters.38 "The

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Mayangs (outsiders) control over their economy and wield of the executive power in conjunction provided a perfect colonial milieu of pre-independence vintage.\textsuperscript{39} The continuing semi-colonial forms of the economy allow the outsiders to treat the North-East as region for quick profits and employment.\textsuperscript{40} The process of semi-colonialism has encouraged heavy influx of outsiders to the relatively isolated areas.\textsuperscript{41}

Because of such influx, the fear of being swallowed up and the loss of cultural identity of the people are strongly felt by every section of the Manipur society.\textsuperscript{42} The strains and stresses generated by the large scale influx of culturally diverse elements have provided fertile ground for separatist tendencies to emerge and get accentuated among the Assamias in Assam and Meiteis in Manipur.\textsuperscript{43} Such a situation combined with the domination in the administration and the economy of Manipur by outsiders naturally leads to anti-outsiders feelings.\textsuperscript{44}

In spite of belonging to the same religion Hinduism, the racial difference is greatly felt by the people of Manipur. The sharing of a common identity did not bring the Meiteis any marked economic gains. Therefore, cultural revivalism was found to be the most useful goals and Meiteis have been trying to revive old Meitei script, culture and reform the Meitei society.\textsuperscript{45} This assertion of

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{42} Kabui, Gangmumei, " Insurgency in Manipur Valley", in Abbi, B. L., (ed.), \textit{North East Region: Problems and Prospects}, Chandigarh, CRID, 1984, p. 236.


\textsuperscript{44} Kabui, Gangmumei, op. cit., p 238.

\textsuperscript{45} Sarin, V.I.K., op. cit., p. 164.
distinct identity in political terms led to the glorification of the ancient political system and sovereignty of Manipur.46

The demand for responsible government and statehood were rejected on the grounds of financial and economic viability. However, Nagaland which was a District of Assam and smaller in size and population than Manipur was granted statehood as early as 1963. Manipur which existed as independent kingdom for centuries as well as people of Manipur had experienced the rule of responsible government before merger to India (1948-1949) could not be expected to remain satisfied with the bureaucratic central rule.47

The price of merger was paid in terms of losing Kabow Valley to Burma and the constant fear of balkanization of Manipur.48 Attempts were made even to destroy the political entity of Manipur when States Reorganization Commission went to the extent of recommending the merger of Manipur with Assam. All these had intensified the sense of deprivation and dispossession among the erstwhile ruling elite and more vocally among the coming generation.49 Assam Rifles which is stationed at Kangla50 has not been shifted despite the assurances to do so. Kangla is considered a sacred place by the Meiteis.

47 Roy, Jyotirmoy, op. cit., p. 152.
50 The first king of Manipur, Pakhangba ascended the throne at Kangla which continued to be the capital of Manipur kingdom till 1891. It lies at the heart of Imphal city and on the bank of Imphal River.
The volatile situation created by the agitation mood of the people over the denial of responsible government led them to indulge in political violence. The government of India has sowed the seeds for insurgency by blatantly ignoring the conditions of merger agreement and depriving a responsible government for more than two decades.\(^{51}\)

Among others, the Article VIII (3) of the *Merger Agreement, 1949*, provides that “The Government of India also undertake to make suitable provisions for the employment of Manipuris in the various branches of public services; and in every way encourage Manipuris to join them.” \(^{52}\) This was not implemented with specific measures and steps for the Manipuris.

The memory of independence of Manipur persisted in the minds of people and there are still sections of people who feel that the 1949 merger with India was a mistake and folly.\(^{53}\) People started interpreting the long central rule as Indian version of colonial rule.\(^{54}\)

Thus, in such a situation nationalist youths seriously questioned the benefits of political association with India. Those who favoured integration with India believed that they would have more democratic freedoms and rights in Independent India. The manner and circumstances under which Manipur king was pressurized to sign merger agreement was brought up for public discussion. The king was coerced to put his signature to the merger agreement.\(^{55}\)

\(^{51}\) Naorem, Sanajaoba, op. cit., pp. 258-259.


\(^{54}\) Kabui, Gangmumei, op. cit., p. 237.

\(^{55}\) Naorem, Sanajaoba, op. cit., p. 256.
Manipur always stood as a country or nation state and had a national mental attitude for centuries till its merger with newly born Indian Union. What transpired after the merger was "complete political subjugation" which deprived the people of Manipur even a responsible government. However, the ethnic groups once they become nationally conscious generally tend to resist being assimilated or integrated on unequal terms.

To the political frustration of the people what have been added are the miseries of economic stagnancy and exploitation by an unholy alliance between big business, a corrupt bureaucracy and a political leadership which is equally corrupt and inefficient. The development grants do not reach the target population but to the coffers of the ethnic capitalists from outside.

The economy of the state is underdeveloped and there is no industrial development worth to name. Manipur and Assam which were rice surplus areas in the fifties but now large quantities have to be brought from outside and trade are in the hands of outsiders. People complain that most of centre's allocations are cornered by dishonest non-Manipuri traders and crafty and corrupt politicians. Moreover, a large part of the funds was siphoned off by the local middle class who did not utilize for increasing the production capacity. Thus, it is consumer oriented economy, as goods are supplied from outside and naturally money is again drained away.

56 Ibid., pp. 253-254.
58 Kabui, Gangmumei, op. cit., p. 237.
59 Naorem, Sanajaoba, op. cit., p. 267.
60 Gohain, Hiren, op. cit., p. 9.
62 Gohain Hiren., op. cit., p. 9.
Some argue that the traditional subsistence self-reliant economy of Manipur had been throttled without any alternatives. The genesis of this degeneration lies in two economic processes.\(^{63}\) One is the gradual shrinking of the territory of Manipur who lost Kabow Valley to Burma. The entire economic activity and residential purposes are concentrated in the small valley exclusively. Tribal and foreign nationals own land in the valley, the traditional home of the Meiteis who are not allowed to settle/buy land in the vast hill areas by law.

The second process is the abnormal and steep increase in the population of Manipur due to influx of foreign nationals, Indian nationals and paramilitary forces and army. This has brought unprecedented price rise of essential commodities and shortage of the limited resources of the state.

These two processes jointly led to the reducing of land, increases consumers, swamp and throttle the economy of the state and what remained was non-productive, parasitic consumer culture. Every item of consumption is in short supply. The immediate prospects of improvement seem to be unlikely. The human discontent exploded into political discontent in the state and the political dominance is definitely accountable for this economic strangulation.\(^{64}\)

Even after statehood in 1972 and despite central assistance, the performance of the state has not been a happy experience. The needed modernization of agriculture, development of transport and other infrastructure, industrialization etc. has not taken place. Moreover, this landlocked state has been kept isolated and no economic interaction with Myanmar was encouraged despite huge trade potentials. Added to these are complex ethnic relations and political instability and frequent change of governments.

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\(^{63}\) Naorem, Sanajaoba, op. cit., pp. 265-266.

\(^{64}\) Ibid., p. 268.
Despite the problems of the state began to multiply assuming an alarming magnitude, the political leadership in the state embraced opportunism and changes their political levels frequently.\(^{65}\) The politics was characterized by instability as politicians were only interested in power for self interests who also encouraged factionalism within the parties.\(^{66}\) As a result no government survived for even two years. Between 1972 and 1978 there were 6 Councils of Ministers in Manipur. The promises of leaders and political parties made at the time of elections were hardly fulfilled. The worsening economic conditions of the people and the cynical disregard for any political principle or the vital needs of the state by political leadership only further bred a sense of frustration among the educated youth.\(^{67}\)

The soaring unemployment and the widely held belief that much of the central funds that poured into the state lined the pockets of politicians and bureaucrats fed the anger among the younger Meiteis.\(^{68}\) The government is the biggest employer and the government jobs are given to the highest bidders, which are widely believed by the people. Administrative corruption continues to flourish without any fear.\(^{69}\) Towards the close of seventies people were quite indignant with government as poor people thought they had no future.\(^{70}\) Thus merit, equality and justice which are pillars of democracy and modern administration had no place in Manipur.

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\(^{65}\) Sareen, H.K., op. cit., p.50.

\(^{66}\) The details of politics and government in Manipur are discussed at the end of the present Chapter.

\(^{67}\) Sareen, H.K., op. cit., p. 50.

\(^{68}\) Hazarika, Sanjay, *Strangers of the Mist: Tales of War and Peace from India’s North East*, New Delhi, Viking Penguin Books India, 1994, p.120.

\(^{69}\) Kabui, Gangmumei, op. cit., p. 238.

Apart from historical background, insurgency movements were born out of the frustration of educated youths who were facing an uncertain future under the present system, a view that has been denied by the insurgents. The leaders of the insurgency and many of their followers have been victims of bureaucratic apathy and corruption.71 Thus, the high rate of unemployment with existence of corruption in administration and government besides inefficient and corrupt political leadership could be taken as an important direct cause of educated youths’ involvement in rise and continuance of insurgency.

The younger generations of Meiteis who belong to general category do not find suitable employment avenues while the hill tribes manage to corner most of the prestigious jobs under preferential policy of the government.72 Moreover, top administrators who are outsiders were found lacking to understand people with sympathy and their aspirations.73 Thus, practically Manipuris lose both the head and tail in their home state as well as outside the home state as the absorption of the Meiteis in the Central Service and other states is virtually negligible.74

In the above situation Marxism and Leninism came in as handy weapon for curing the ills of society. The insurgents have found an ideology and a method which are anti-capitalist, anti-parliamentary system, anti-Indian and China has become their inspirer if not actual aid giver.75 The emergence of Maoism in China with a strategy of protracted guerrilla welfare and its

71 Kabui, Gangmumei, op. cit., p. 238.
74 Naorem, Sanajaoba, op. cit., p. 269.
75 Kabui, Gangmumei, op. cit., p. 238.
euphoria because of its success gave inspiration to the militant youths of the North-East taking to arms.\textsuperscript{76}

The young radicals launched armed struggle to bring about fundamental changes in the society and they form the nucleus of the rebel hard core.\textsuperscript{77} In a sense they were rebelling against the political and administrative leadership in the state who were inefficient, corrupt and seemed too stubborn to change their old ways. As mentioned above, there were as many as six ministries between 1972 and 1978 in the state. The frustration naturally generates aggressive thinking and the unemployed youths were attracted to radical ideology and violence.

Those who started armed struggle formed PLA\textsuperscript{78} and came out with their own brand of Maoism. They called for all the oppressed nationalities of North East and the working class of India to join them in their fight against “Delhi bandits” (Delhi Rulers). The objective was to lead the whole people to a revolutionary war and to train them through a violent war to raise their consciousness both ideologically and militarily.\textsuperscript{79} They were the ones to bring back urban guerilla warfare techniques within India.

They struck in 1978 and for the first time a systematic wave of violence was rocking in the Manipur valley.\textsuperscript{80} The leadership in Manipur was not geared to meet the challenge posed by these “leftist radicals”. The action initiated by them to bring social justice was well appreciated by poor people. Many people felt their

\textsuperscript{76} Chintamani, Panigrahi, “North East India: Roots of Insurgency”, \textit{the Hindustan Times}, May 15, 1993.

\textsuperscript{77} Sarin, V.I.K., op. cit., p. 168.

\textsuperscript{78} “People’s Liberation Army, Eastern Region”, was led by Lasha (Tibet) trained leader Bisheswar. The main objective was for “liberation” of Manipur and setting up a society based on “socialism”. For details see, Naorem, Sanajaoba, op. cit., pp. 250-51.

\textsuperscript{79} Nibedon, Normal, op. cit., p. 73.

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid. p. 72
activities might check the rampant corruption although people did not support the demand for the secession of Manipur.\textsuperscript{81} It was admitted that the armed strength of PLA was not much but its sympathizers were numerous.

Thus, origins of the secessionist movements in Manipur valley can be traced back to the socio-economic and political conditions in the state during 1949-72 and developments up to 1978. These conditions have not changed significantly since 1978 and also after 1995 though new problems have emerged. The state is still underdeveloped with poverty and high rate of unemployment and the financial situation has been further worsened.\textsuperscript{82} Since late eighties important changes have taken place in the secessionist movements.

One significant change is the multiplication of armed groups largely due to factionalism. PLA and UNLF are the two most powerful groups which have two factions each. All the armed groups claim for establishment of a socialist society, for egalitarian order and social revolution. Their activities are not confirmed to the propagation of their ideologies but also fight against social evils and injustice. Moreover, they talk about threat to Manipuri identity which, they believed could be preserved only in independent and sovereign Manipur.

Because of demographic change due to influx of outsiders and foreign nationals as well as domination in administration and economy by outsiders in Manipur, these movements have anti-outsiders feelings. One distinction that can be made of these movements from the rest of India is their claims that their movements are for “national liberation movement” and for the “restoration” of lost independence and sovereignty of Manipur.

\textsuperscript{81} Phanjoubam, Tarapot, op. cit., p. 99.

\textsuperscript{82} Many factors contributed to such a situation, the implementation of Fifth Pay Commission recommendation has been one important factor. Even the government is not able to pay salaries regularly to its employees.
This is primarily on the basis of historical existence of Manipur as an independent kingdom for centuries and the fact that Manipur king was forced to sign the merger agreement in 1949.

Ideologically, these movements have elements of socialism, Meitei nationalism, revivalism and preservation of Manipuri identity. They intervene in almost every aspect of social life and deliver "justice" and take action against social crimes. These are in present phase of these movements which began since late eighties. They differ significantly from the earlier phase which began around 1978. For instance, PLA preached the armed revolution for the liberation of Manipur guided by Maoist philosophy and strategy. According to them, people were suffering from feudal and colonial exploitation and the implementation of Marxist principle only could solve all the problems of the society.  

Leadership of these movements particularly of earlier phase was educated youths. The charisma and personality of the leaders led many youths to join these movements. The founder chiefs of the armed groups had considerable respect within the respective organizations. In fact, it was due to their ideology, propaganda and activities that such movements actually got momentum and laid their foundations. However, in the present phase leadership of these groups lacked charisma and respect of the leadership of the earlier phase and there are many factions and groups also.

The members of the armed groups are variably called as militants, insurgents, terrorists or underground activists or

83 Phanjoubam, Tarapot, op. cit., p. 77.
84 PLA founder leader late Bishewar was a post graduate, late R.K. Tulachandra founder leader of PREPAK was a graduate and UNLF leader, R.K. Megen is a post-graduate.
85 For instance, PLA leader late Bisheswar had charisma and appeal. He was revered and respected by people, government, security forces and other insurgent groups. Hence, he was army's prime target see, Nayar, V.K., op. cit., p .25.
They themselves declare as revolutionaries or nationalists. The propaganda campaign is whipped up either by launching attacks on the security forces or by distributing pamphlets or writing on the walls. They take shelter in homes and seek help and cooperation from every section of the society.

Organizationally, the armed groups were not well structured in the initial phase. On the top was a chairman, general secretary or president depending on the organization. He was the supreme head of military, political and anything relating to the organization though there was no such formal organizational division. The leadership controlled the membership of all the organizations of these movements. The actual strength and members of these armed organizations were not many. However, it seemed their strength derived from the moral support and sympathy of the people.86

The armed groups were formed initially by the youths. They did not develop or evolve from the existing religious, social or political organizations. However the leaders might have been associated with social or youth organizations in the past. Some of them are the result of split or factionalism of earlier groups.

Since the beginning of nineties that is the last/present phase of these movements, there are significant changes in these organizations.87 The organizational structures have been modified and there is closer cooperation among these groups. They form common alliances with liked minded groups within Manipur as

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86 UNLF for instance in the formative years before 1970 its activists were approximately 20 to 25 see, Kshetri, Rajendra, op.cit., p. 8.

87 For details on organization, membership and strategy of earlier phase see, Rao, V. Venkata, "Meitei Nationalism", in Proceedings of North East India History Association, 3rd Session, Imphal, 1982, pp. 210-14. For instance PLA now has formal organizational structure and divisions in charge of various activities/ departments.
well as understanding and cooperation with other organizations of the North East India.  

They have engaged in new activities and strategies that are significantly different from the earlier phase. Perhaps with a view to earn the sympathy and support from the common people they take actions against social crimes and evils. They intervene and punish those involved in social crimes like rape, use of drugs and its peddlers. They also imposed prohibition, banned smoking and sell of lottery tickets. It is reported that some people consider their authority as “relevant authority” and they intervene and “deliver justice” in matters including individual disputes.

For many years Republic Day and Independence Day celebrations have been reduced to a symbolic one and confined to police and security forces only in Manipur. Besides warning people not to participate these celebrations, the armed groups also call bandhs on these days in Manipur. As a result there has been hardly any participation by the people, schools and colleges on these occasions as in the past. The basic reason given by the armed groups for such boycott of national celebrations is that independence of India is not related to the people of Manipur.

There has been open celebration of the founding days of the armed groups with the request for large participation of the general public. They have become more resourceful and have large weaponry. As army and security forces have not done enough or failed to check their growing activities they almost present eveywhwere. They intervene government activities considerably in their favour to promote their interest. There has been increase in kidnapping cases and force has not been used against state police

88 See, Phanjoubam, Tarapot, op. cit., p. 142 and p. 68.
89 For details on the actions of armed groups on social crimes and evils see, ibid, pp. 69-72.
forces. However they have not spared any individual or officials or police who do not follow their dictates.

Armed groups have regrouped and are more organized in the present phase. Significant changes have been in their ideology, strategies and the nature of their activities. Earlier armed struggles that started around 1978 were crushed with the help of army and central security forces by early eighties. It is reported that they have become active since the beginning of nineties. We will now discuss the response of the state to these movements in Manipur.

The central government's response will have an important, possibly conclusive effect on the outcome of a secessionist struggle. Desire to maintain its territorial integrity, a central government is faced with two basic options in a secessionist situation. One is to repress the secessionist coercively. The second basic option is attempt to rebuild nation and state in fuller recognition of existing plural divisions which most central governments follow.

In India response of the central government to the secessionist movements have been combination of accommodation and ruthless repression. The accommodation has been done through constitutional reforms either making allegiance to the Constitution or redrawing of internal boundaries. It is done without undermining unity and national integrity. Central government cannot success in its fight against secessionist

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91 One significant change is the "extortion" of money by the armed groups who call it as "tax", from government employees including police, businessmen, rich people etc. It has changed the attitude of the people towards them as it involves "force" in some cases as well as in their other activities.


movements without the cooperation of state government and people of the concerned state. The more centre bypasses state governments, the more it undermines not only its own capability but also that of state governments. Because when the state governments stop functioning, the centre also stops functioning.\textsuperscript{94}

In Manipur the immediate response of the centre was outlawing the secessionist organizations under \textit{Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967}. The state was declared as “disturbed area” and \textit{the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958 (Assam and Manipur)} was promulgated on October 8, 1980. The reason for such an action among others was existence of “secessionist activities” by unlawful elements.\textsuperscript{95}

The President’s Rule was imposed in Manipur on 14 November, 1978 to deal with the situation firmly and decisively. Heavy deployment of army and central forces in the state was part of the central response. The initial and most intense phase of violence since 1978 by armed groups had been brought under control by army. However, it was temporary solution. The armed groups have become regrouped since the beginning of the nineties and they are active since mid-nineties and their activities continue to simmer which is termed by some as “low key insurgency”.\textsuperscript{96}

Under the \textit{Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958}, the members of the armed forces have almost unlimited powers. Under this Act, the Governor has the power to declare any part or the whole of Manipur as “disturb area” and may use armed forces in aid of the civil power. Any person can be arrested without warrant or search any premises on the grounds of reasonable suspicion. No prosecution, suit or their legal proceeding shall be

\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., p. 190.
\textsuperscript{95} Phanjoubam, Tarapot, op. cit., pp. 84-85.
\textsuperscript{96} For instance see, Nayar, V.K., op. cit., p. 196.
instituted except with the previous sanction of the central government in those matters relating to this Act.97

It is alleged that the security forces in Manipur have committed excess and atrocities on the innocent civilians under this Act. Torture and killing of civilians and youths on fake encounters are alleged to have committed by the security forces. Thus, there is accusation that deep racial prejudice appears to have drawn out enough of the security forces and the revolutionaries succeeded in naming them (security forces) as occupation army of the racist regime.98 Therefore, there have been demands for the removal of the Act from Manipur.

Leaders and members of the armed groups had been either killed or arrested by the security forces thereby controlling their activities temporarily.99 While some youths developed strong anti-government feelings and some had led to joining of the armed organizations to escape harassment from the army, security forces and police. The packages or concrete measures for removal/reducing the root causes of the problem have been lacking.

Thus, it appears that there has been no major policy other than military type solution to the problem of secessionist movements in Manipur. There has been no initiative by the centre for negotiated solution in case of Manipur which have been tried with other armed groups in North East. This approach without any socio-economic policy changes proves to be ineffective and even counterproductive. This is clear from the activities of armed groups which became active since the beginning of nineties though

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97 For more details see, Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958 (Assam & Manipur), Appendix-IV.

98 For instance see, Naorem, Sanajaoba, op. cit., p. 252.

99 For instance, Indian army captured PLA leader Bisheswar. The security forces killed PREPAK leader R.K. Tulachandra.
they were almost crushed by army and security forces in early eighties.

During the intense phase of the secessionist challenge as in case of 1978 phase, state government and civil administration were powerless or ineffective. Political leadership in the state had been even accused for the rise of the movements. Some chief ministers like late R.K. Jaychandra Singh\(^{100}\) made efforts towards negotiated settlement of the problem. However there was no tangible progress.

There is not a single political leadership who did not express the dictum peace is necessary in the state for development. Irrespective of party affiliation and ideology political leaders express the view that there should be a political solution to the problem. Whenever, a new chief minister assumes office it has become as customary to declare that the top priority of the government would be to restore peace and bring about a political solution to the problem. No chief Minister has so far been able to make any breakthrough on the issue.\(^{101}\)

As far as impact on state institutions is concerned the intensity depends on the extent of violence and threat to security of the State. During the intense phase of the secessionist movements (1978-81), the civil administration was either absent or could not function. The same was true in the case of responsible government which was powerless.

President's Rule was imposed in Manipur on 14 November, 1978. It was based on the Governor's report which said that there was decline in the efficiency in the administration and virtual

\(^{100}\) The efforts of Manipur government under him was only note worthy attempt to have peace talks with armed group leaders see, Phanjoubam, Tarapot, op. cit., p., 166.

\(^{101}\) Ibid., pp. 162-163. It has been reported that there has been lack of coordination and cooperation between state police and army and central security forces. In fact, there has been blame on one another.
breakdown of the “law and order machinery”. It also pointed out that misadministration had become all pervasive and police as an instrument of enforcing law and order had been virtually destroyed. However, state police force has not been modernized, in fact ill-equipped to face armed groups which are well-equipped.

In the height of the secessionist movements, it was done as mentioned above with the imposition of President’s Rule, Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958 and heavy deployment of army, counter-insurgency units of army and central security forces like CRPF in the state. Thus, it was army and security forces of the centre that had been entrusted the responsibility to deal with the situation armed with special powers.

Judiciary has been kept out of its jurisdiction under the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958. Since the previous sanction of central government is required for any legal proceeding against any person in respect of anything done in exercise of the powers conferred by this Act, such a sanction is rarely granted. Human rights group and the people of Manipur have been demanding for the removal of this Act which confers security forces almost unlimited powers.

Another development has been huge expenditure involved on security and counter-insurgency measures. State police and paramilitary forces like Manipur Rifles have been used for security of VIPs. Though there is no increase in the recruitment of government jobs for many years, recruitment into police and Manipur Rifles has been a continuous process. Though the armed groups were formed primarily due to unemployment and lack of development, the activities of these groups have acted as obstacles to peace and progress in the state.

The normal functioning of the state government and civil administration has also been affected. The money, energy and time as well as other resources have been utilized for security and
counter-insurgency measures. There is also fear and insecurity among the government servants and police forces of the state besides people. Such a situation definitely affects efficiency of the administration as well as development projects and activities.

Thus, secessionist movements began in 1978 were crushed in the early eighties, have regrouped and active since late eighties. The armed groups have been active since mid-nineties and their activities have been expanded. It not only affects the normal activities of government but also the entire social, political and economic processes in Manipur, even the way of life and attitudes towards life.

People of Manipur have been living with the problem for more than two decades (1978-2004). Being armed struggles it involves violence and violation of human freedom and individual liberty. It is for or against situation. Both armed groups and security forces do not tolerate those who do not cooperate with them. Therefore the general public is sandwiched between them. They have neither security nor confidence. They have been living under constant fear and insecurity.

Major concern has been territorial integrity and security of the State. Problem still exists and has become even more complicated. The tendency has been to react and response only in crisis or violent situations. No serious effort has been made to bring peace and normalcy in the state. This is true of leadership of both at centre and state. This reflects lack of political will, indifference, insensitivity and unresponsiveness on the part of state and national leadership to the aspirations of people who desire peace and progress. Now we will discuss government and politics in Manipur.
3.3 ELECTORAL POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

As described above Manipur was an independent kingdom for centuries till 1891. She came under British colonial rule as Princely State (1891-1947). Monarchy system was prevalent. The king regained full control in 1947 but from 1948 he was reduced to constitutional monarch as responsible government (1948-49) came to function under Manipur Constitution Act, 1947.

In Manipur monarchy system finally came to an end when she was integrated into India in 1949. Along with the integration, responsible government and elected Assembly were dissolved. Manipur was a Part C state in 1950 Constitution. She became a Union Territory in 1956 and finally granted statehood in 1972. It took long 23 years for the people of Manipur to enjoy responsible government and in running the government and management of their own affairs through their elected representatives once again.

The demand for responsible government was started in 1939 and was led by Irabot Singh. The Krishak Sabha, the only peasant organization also made such demands. The Manipur State Congress formed in 1946 joined this demand. Since mid-forties peasant based political parties and other parties gradually emerged in Manipur politics. Because of their demands constitution making process was began in 1946 and was completed with the enactment of Manipur Constitution Act, 1947. Under this Act, election was held on 11 June, 1948 for 53 members Legislative Assembly. Congress Party emerged as the single largest party in the election. But a non-Congress coalition of independents, socialists and Praja Shanti formed the government with M.K. Priyobrata Singh as the first Chief Minister of Manipur.

Maharaja Bodhachandra who was a constitutional monarch, inaugurated the maiden session of the Legislative Assembly on 18th October, 1948. With the establishment of Legislative Assembly and installation of responsible government, the long
standing demand of all political parties was finally fulfilled. With the merger, the first elected Legislative Assembly and responsible government in the history of Manipur were dissolved in 1949. The people of Manipur had to wait and struggle for a responsible government for 23 years (1949-72) till she became a state in 1972.

Thus, political parties and party system had already been established even before the First General Elections to the Lok Sabha in Manipur. This is clear from the fact that eight political parties including national parties like Congress Party and Communist Party contested the first General Election in 1952 in Manipur. The rest were regional parties. However, the electoral and party based politics have emerged in full spirit particularly after statehood beginning from 1972 Assembly election.

One important feature of parties and party system in Manipur has been existence of multi-party system. It reflects the ethnic diversity, geographical division and plural character of Manipur society. Multiparty system has two features. One is the existence of national parties like Congress Party and Communist Party which contested elections since 1952 General Elections. Congress has been the dominant party since the beginning till its decline at the national level since 1996 General Election. The second is the existence of regional/ state parties though their numbers have fluctuated. After statehood of Manipur in 1972 Manipur People's Party (MPP) (formed in 1967) emerged as an alternative party to Congress for a long time.

Another feature of party system and politics in Manipur is the deep impact of party system and politics at the national level. Congress that dominated party system and politics in India till

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1996 election with the exception of 1977 election also dominated in Manipur. Congress with the exception of 1967 General Election, have won all seats or at least one seat out of two in every election since 1952 to 1996. Any increase in the number of parties at the national level or any change in national politics has found its impact in Manipur. Thus, Janata Party from 1977, Bharatiya Janata Party (1984), Janata Dal (1989), Samata Party (1996), RJD (1998) have contested election in the state. Similarly, NCP also contested and won elections in the state.

Socialist Party and Community Party have strong presence in the politics of Manipur which are evident from the General Elections to the Lok Sabha. One reason is the impact of Communist movement of 1948-51 led by Irabot Singh. Socialist Party won one seat each continuously out of total two in 1952, 1957 and 1962 General Elections. Communist Party though won only one seat each in 1980 and 1998 General Elections; it has been an important political force in the state.

Independents right from 1948 Assembly election till the last General Election in 1999 have contested elections. Though they have won only one seat in 1967 General Election and numbers of candidates fluctuate, they have maintained together a good percentage of votes polled in almost every General Election. Thus, their combined percentages of votes polled are 27.14% (1957), 30.53% (1962), 32.56% (1967), 28.99% (1971), 25.94% (1984), 12.26% (1989) and 23.05% (1996). These are about the General Elections to the Lok Sabha in the state. The electoral politics and Assembly elections are different from the General Elections in number of ways.

103 This and above analysis on the parties and party system is based on the analysis of Data on "General Elections to the Lok Sabha, Manipur", in Manipur Today, DIPR, Government of Manipur, August 15, 1999, pp. 44-52.

104 Ibid.
Manipur became a Union Territory in 1956 but Legislative Assembly of 30 members and a Council of 3 Ministers began to function from 1963 only. The Council of Ministers was collectively responsible to the Legislative Assembly. However, Manipur continued to be administered by the centre. Therefore, the demand was for responsible government and statehood.

Prior to statehood in 1972, the political instability was the fundamental feature of Manipur politics. The politics of defection and opportunist coalitions were primarily due to the dissatisfaction of the portfolios, denial of ministerial berths and selfish motives of the elected members. The longest ministry did not survive even one complete year. Thus, between 1963 and 1972, the total period of popular ministry was less than six years; rest was under President's Rule. The President's Rule imposed on October 16, 1969 that continued till popular ministry was formed after Manipur became a state in 1972.\(^{105}\)

After Manipur was granted statehood on January 21, 1972, Assembly Election for 60 members Assembly was held in March of the same year. Out of 60, 19 are in the hills reserved for Scheduled Tribes, the rest 41 are in the valley of which one is reserved for Scheduled Caste. One important factor that has influenced politics and electoral behavior is the diversity of the people of Manipur.

Marked differences in religion and language together with attendant different ways of life among various groups have been important features of Manipur society. These combined with other factors including insurgency movements have created problems of integration and unity among the people of Manipur. All these factors have played important roles in the electoral politics as well

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as government and political stability in the state.

Social and ethnic compositions in the state have influenced the politics and development in the state. Broadly, the population may be divided into two groups – valley and hills. Meiteis and Panghals (Manipuri Muslims) both have the same mother tongue but follow different religions – Hinduism and Islam are the major ethnic groups in the valley. There are Mayangs (as locally known are the people who were originally from outside Manipur or other Indian communities) and Nepalese. Both are mostly Hindus but maintain their distinct identities. There are pockets of tribal colonies also in valley.

There are numerous tribes who predominantly follow Christian religion but speak different languages/dialects in the hill areas. Officially, there are 29 Scheduled Tribes. Broadly they are divided into two groups- Kukis and Nagas. Some groups within these two do not like to be called by the broad name but by their own tribe names. There have been conflicts between the two groups. But the violence between the two has been primarily indulged by the armed groups of the both. Thus, in the hills the diversity is more and politics is more complex than the valley.

There were movements in the hill areas for integration with the neighboring states of Nagaland and Mizoram. Among sections of Nagas of Manipur there were movements for integration of their areas with Nagaland. Today, the armed groups among the Nagas have made these demands. Similarly in the mid-sixties during the height of Mizo separatist movement in Mizoram unification of all Mizo (including Kuki) people were voiced.106 There are armed groups among the Kukis who are demanding separate homeland for themselves.

106 For details see, Chaube, S.K., Electoral Politics in North-East India, Madras, Universities Press, 1985, p. 102.
Thus, historical factors, pluralism, ethnic affinities across the borders and uneven development within the state have shaped the political process in the state. Every election saw the emergence of new parties of both national and regional and contesting the elections. The emergence of MPP (Manipur People's Party) formed in 1967 had given a new dimension in Manipur politics.

1972 election was the first Assembly election in which MPP fought and proved to be a viable alternative to the Congress. It secured 15 seats in 60 members Assembly while Congress got 15 seats. MPP formed the government with the help of Socialists and Independents. This was the first government formed after Manipur became state in 1972. The emergence of this party as alternative to the Congress indicates the emergence of regionalism in the state politics.

The United Legislator’s Party led by MPP formed the government. MPP leader Md. Alimuddin was sworn as the first Chief Minister of Manipur state on March 30, 1972. But in July 1972 three members of the MPP led ruling alliance, joined the Congress. But the Ministry survived as the ruling alliance also engineered defections from the opposition camps.

On March 15, 1973, Progressive Democratic Alliance led by Congress was formed with those who defected from the MPP led ruling alliance. It made an effort to form the government. While the no confidence motion was moved, the Council of Ministers resigned on March 26, 1973. Thus, the first popular government of the young state went out of office just after one year and six days. President's Rule was imposed and the Legislative Assembly was dissolved with effect from March 23, 1973.

Manipur went through a mid-term poll in early 1974. The

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Congress fought the election in alliance with CPI in the valley while MPP with Manipur Hills Union (MHU). MPP secured 20, Congress 12, and MHU 11 seats. The only Nepali candidate, a Congress nominee won the Kangpokpi seat. A government led by Md. Alimuddin of MPP alliance United Legislative Party (ULP) on March 4, 1974 was formed which survived for about four months.

After the ouster of ULP government, a government led by Yangmaso Shaiza of Progressive Democratic Front (PDF) was installed on July 10, 1974 who survived for about five months. On December 6, 1974 a Democratic Legislative Party (DLP) government led by R.K. Dorendra Singh was formed and it survived for about eight months. In the wake of National Emergency the DLP government was replaced by a Congress government on July 23, 1975 which was also led by R.K. Dorendra Singh.

The change of government in Delhi has its impact on the state politics also. In June, 1977 the entire Congress Legislative Party and Congress MP, Yangmaso Shaiza defected to Janata Party. He formed the first Janata government in the state on June 28, 1977. The secessionist violence broke out in Manipur valley in a massive scale which began around 1978. President’s Rule was imposed to deal with the situation. The Assembly was dissolved on November 14, 1979.108


On November 27, 1980, Rishang Keishing Ministry was formed which was superseded on the grounds of deteriorating law

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108 For details on this and above see ibid., pp. 181-85.
and order on February 28, 1981. However, the Ministry was returned on June 19, 1981. His Ministry continued till 1984. After the 1984 Assembly election, a Congress Ministry led by Rishang Keishing formed a new government with the help of Independents. In this election, Bisheswar, the founder PLA leader was elected while he was in jail.

Due to infighting and intervention by central leadership in Congress Party, non-member of the Assembly R.K. Jaychandra Singh was appointed as Chief Minister in 1988. It set the trend of central leaders playing important role in the selection of Chief Ministers and their continuance in the office.

The 1990 Assembly election was marked by an unprecedented violence by burning the ballot boxes. Congress emerged as the single largest party with 26 seats. A coalition government of MPP, Janata Dal and Congress (S) led by R.K. Ranabir Singh of MPP was formed. Amutombi Singh of Janata Dal was deputy Chief Minister in this United Front Government.

The United Front Government was collapsed within two years and a Congress Ministry led by R.K. Dorendra Singh was formed in April, 1992. Due to the failure to end Kuki-Naga clashes President's Rule was imposed on December 31, 1993, but Assembly was put under animated suspension. Rishang Keishing became Chief Minister on January, 1995.

In the 1995 election, one MPP candidate and one BJP leader before the election and six CRPF jawans on the polling day were killed. Two regional parties, the Federal Party of Manipur and the National People's Party were formed. For the first time, BJP secure one seat. Ethnic divisions operate at the informal level of campaign as far as electoral politics is concerned. In the politics of violence

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they are more pronounced.\textsuperscript{111} Congress with the help of small parties formed the ministry after 1995 election.

1995 Assembly election was characterized by there developments. One was violence including killing of candidates. Second was the formation and participation of Federal Party of Manipur in electoral politics. Third was the beginning of the emergence of BJP as important player in Manipur politics. It began with the formation of BJP led coalition government at the centre. Federal Party later emerged as the most powerful regional party in the state with a strong support base both in the valley and hills.

Thus, we have seen that no single government or a Chief Minister has survived a full term of five years. Instability appears to be inherent in Manipur politics. Besides, the above mentioned factors, the lack of political vision and ambitious and corrupt politicians are other contributing factors. The politicians seem to be no concern at all for the progress and economic transformation of the state. The emergence of armed groups and their intervention in the electoral politics have been significant changes in the politics of the state.

Toppling of the governments has been another important feature of politics and in fact very frequent. It is generally followed by replacement by a new one either by defection or splitting of the parties. There have been instances of horsetrading and camping of MLAs even in outside Manipur. Opposition or MLAs who are not ministers or both have always attempted to form a new government by toppling the present one.

This has led to political instability and frequent change of governments in the state. Therefore, it is not surprising that no government has lasted for five years or no assembly has survived full terms. In the last 31 years (1972-2003) since the statehood in

\textsuperscript{111} Chaube, S.K., "Manipur Patterns", \textit{Frontline}, 16 June, 1995, p. 46.
1972, the state has had more than 18 Chief Ministers, some of whom had more than 4th time (see Appendix-IX for details).

In 1997, a group of ministers and legislators led by then Speaker W. Nipamacha Singh broke away from the ruling Congress and formed Manipur State Congress Party (MSCP). A new government led by W. Nipamacha Singh of MSCP was formed subsequently. Similarly in 2001 Radhavinod Kojjam along with 9 MLA of Congress (I) joined the Samata Party and formed the Samata Party led coalition government in the state by ousting the Nipamacha Singh government. Except the Congress (I)'s Rishang Keishing, all the opposition MLAs supported the Kojjam government including six MLAs of BJP who supported it from outside.

In the same way 18 MLAs of MSCP joined BJP whose strength was increased to 26 when two MLAs from the Federal Party of Manipur joined it. In the 2000 elections BJP had only 6 MLAs. With 26 MLAs BJP claimed to lead the coalition government and wanted Radhavinod Kojjam of Samata Party to step down in favor of BJP's R.K. Dorendra Singh. This was not acceptable to the Samata Party. The issue could not be resolved despite intervention of central leadership of BJP and Samata Party including L.K. Advani and George Fernandes. The Kojjam government was ousted after BJP MLAs voted for a confidence motion against it.\(^\text{112}\) Subsequently President’s Rule was imposed on June 2001. Imposition of President’s Rules has been due to governmental instability in the state in many instances.

Thus, switching political loyalties and destabilizing of governments have been the hallmark of the political leadership

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\(^{112}\) *Frontline*, March 15, 2002, p. 16. For an interesting discussion on the politics and government of Manipur essentially from coalition perspective see, Pakem, B., *Coalition Politics in North East India*, New Delhi, Regency Publications, 1999, pp. 82-96. Most of the governments right from M.K. Priyobrata Singh government (1947-49) have been coalition governments with a dominant party.
and MLAs of the state. They appear to have no regard for any political ideology or principle. They seem to have shown no interest for political stability and progress of the state. Most of them keep changing the political loyalties and parties according to circumstances and their personal advantages and interests.

The 2000 Assembly elections were held along with Bihar, Orissa and Haryana state Assemblies in the month of February. An important feature of this election was pre-poll alliances. There were three alliances. First was United Front consisting of Federal Party of Manipur and MSCP. The second was Secular Democratic Front of Congress (I), MPP, CPI and Janata Dal (Secular). The third was Manipur Democratic Alliance of BJP, Samata Party and the Kuki National Assembly (KNA).

The results in the Assembly Election of 2000 further indicated the main features of electoral politics in the state - high voter turnout, political fragmentation and hung Assembly. So far no party or alliance since 1972 has secured a clear majority in the Assembly Elections. This not only reflect the political pluralism in the state but also lack of all Manipur party and political leadership acceptable at least to a majority of the people. United Front secured 29, MSCP (23) and FPM (6). Secular Democratic Front got 16, Congress (11), MPP (4), JD (S) (1) and Manipur Democratic Alliance got 8, BJP (6), JD (U) (1) and Samata Party (1). Nationalist Congress Party won 5 and RJD (1) and Independents (1).113

The ruling MSCP led by W. Nipamacha Singh was back in power with a jumbo ministry. United Front government led by W. Nipamacha Singh had 34 members in council of ministers of 60 members Assembly. It consisted of 22 of 23 MSCP MLAs, 5 of 6 Federal Party of Manipur, 3 of 5 breakaway NCP, 2 of 4 MPP, one

RJD MLA and one Independent MLA were in the council of ministers. The continuity of the government was uncertain because of breaking up the parties and given the all out efforts by opposition leaders and MLAs to topple the government for ministerial berths or cabinet berths.

Nipamacha Singh government continued about one year and finally ousted in February 2001. Samata Party which won only one seat in 2001 election increased to 12 after 10 of 11 Congress MLAs led by Radhavinod Koijam formed a new government which was supported by all the opposition MLAs except the Congress’s Rishang Keishing. BJP who are partners with Samta Party in NDA government at the centre supported Samta led coalition government from outside.

However, Koijam government did not last long as BJP wanted its leader R.K. Dorendra Singh to be the head of new coalition government. A crisis emerged after Koijam government was voted out. BJP claimed to form a new BJP led coalition in the state. However this was not acceptable to Samata Party. The result was mid term election of February 2002 along with Assembly elections in Uttranchal, UP, and Punjab after imposition of President’s Rule since June, 2001.

The February 2002 election was preceded by unprecedented violence in the previous year 2001 that started from June 18 when thousands of people took to the streets in the state. The spontaneous upsurge of anger was against the government of India’s agreement with NSCN (IM) to extend the ceasefire from Nagaland to Naga inhabited areas of Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh from July 31, 2001.

115 For a discussion of the situation in 2000 and bias role of Speaker see, Frontline, August 18, 2000.
The agreement was made despite stiff opposition from the North Eastern Chief Ministers particularly of Manipur and Assam. The mobs in Manipur torched the Assembly building, the Chief Minister's office, the Speaker's Residence and 12 Bungalows of legislators, former Ministers and offices of major political parties. Four MLAs including the Speaker were injured due to mob violence while 14 people lost their lives in security forces firing on June 18, 2001.116

On July 27, 2001, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee announced at a meeting of the Chief Ministers of North Eastern States that Bangkok agreement to extend ceasefire beyond Nagaland had been revoked117. However, it was after a series of bandhs, demonstration, strikes and violence in Manipur. The state was under President's Rule and remained under curfew for a month. During this one month a mass movement was developed which had anti-national sentiments as well as tensions and suspicions between the ethnic groups in the state.

The root of violence protest in Manipur was the perception and strong fear that government might also accept NSCN (IM)'s demand for greater Nagaland which threatens seriously the territorial integrity of Manipur. Political offices and MLAs were targeted by the mob as they believed that their leaders were indulging in power politics only and not even bother about the interest and the territorial integrity of the state.

The episode of ceasefire had shown once again the lack of sensitiveness on the part of central leadership in dealing with sensitive issues like territorial integrity. The whole process of government's efforts towards ceasefire and talks with armed group NSCN (IM) was marked by secrecy and underestimation of prior warnings. Had the centre considered the advice of the Chief

Ministers of the region and were sensitive such events could have been avoided.\textsuperscript{118}

The whole event caused a crisis of popular confidence in government of India, ethnic tensions and raised the troubling issues of identity and territorial integrity. Besides transparency, the confidence and involvement of groups and parties affected by such political decision must be taken into account. This is because of sensitive nature of the issues involved and their politicization.

The mid-term election of February 2002 witnessed significant developments. Two new parties, Democratic Revolutionary People's Party (DRPP) and Manipur People's Conference (MPC) were formed and contested the elections. There are about 35 armed groups in the state. Their actions had direct visible influence in this election on the political leaders as well as voters which was so far indirect.

The political leadership particularly members of previous Assembly had a taste of the people since June, 2001 due to ceasefire issue. Many stalwarts in the state politics except R.K. Dorendra Singh lost in this election. Those who lost included former chief Ministers Rishang Keishing, W. Nipamacha Singh and former Speaker S. Dhananjoy Singh. Issues of ceasefire and territorial integrity dominated the election. A record number of 16 political parties fought in this election.

Like in the past elections, no party or alliance secured a majority in the 60 member Assembly. Congress with 20 seats emerged as the single largest party followed by Federal Party (13), MSCP 7, CPI 5, BJP 4, NCP 3, Samata Party 3, MPP 2, DRPP 2, and MPC 1. The details of the results see Appendix-VIII. Secular

\textsuperscript{118} For a discussion on the nature of the protest, ceasefire agreement and their impact see, Bidwai, Praful, "Botching up the Naga Ceasefire", in Frontline, July 20, 2001, pp. 105-106.
Progressive Front (SPF) government led by Okram Ibobi Singh of Congress was formed on March 7, 2002 ending 8 months long spell of President’s Rule. SPF has strength of 35 seats in which the Congress has 20 MSCP 7, CPI 5 and NCP 3. The coalition government of SPF appears to be stable till the beginning of May, 2004.

An emerging feature of electoral politics in Manipur particularly since 2002 election has been direct intervention by the 35 odd underground outfits (or insurgent groups). This intervention has been in two forms. One is the extortion by using threats and extends protection to them. The second is the influence on the voters to vote for a particular candidate or candidates. The best example is the open support of NSCN (IM) to candidates who backed the “Naga cause” i.e. extension of ceasefire into Manipur. Union government seems to be concerned about the influence of the insurgents in the state machinery, the resurgent militancy and the extortion in Manipur. However, no one has clear idea or action about how to deal with them.

Thus, instability and politics of alliances and counter alliances have been the main features of Manipur politics. These have led to frequent change of governments and imposition of President’s Rule in the state. Since Anti-Defection Law 1985, popular ministries have survived comparatively longer when compared to the past. Political parties have entrenched into the political process and electoral arena.

After 1985, defection has taken a new form. Anti defection law has led to split of political parties or formation of new ones. It means split or formation of new parties has substituted defection. Leaders of political parties primarily represent the aspirations and

120 For a discussion on the influence of armed groups in the electoral process in Manipur see, Singh, Charu, “Democracy at gunpoint”, in Frontline, March 29, 2002.
interests of their respective areas, ethnic groups or both. These factors along with their personal ambitions are important factors that have caused instability and also hampered the growth of healthy democratic process and emergence of all Manipur leadership.

Till today no one can really know for sure which way the ruling and opposition members would behave. The contributing factors to political instability include hill-valley divide, ethnic politics and strategic position of the state in the periphery of a big country and existence of armed groups of major ethnic groups. With this kind of political instability, Manipur would continue the process of coalition politics and government.\textsuperscript{121}

One significant aspect of Manipur politics has been the deep impact of national politics at the state level. Emergence of political parties at the national level and change of ruling party at the Centre subsequently follows at the state level also. Janata Party, Janata Dal, BJP, Samata Party, NCP etc. when formed government or they became national parties, their units are also began their presence in the state and even form their governments in the state. Normally the same party or coalitions of parties who are ruling at the centre have their governments in the state also.

Emotional issues involving integration and maintenance of territorial integrity of Manipur or group identities have emerged in Manipur politics. The political instability continues primarily due to the personal rivalry among the political class or elected representatives of the people. The problem has been compounded due to continuance and increasing complexity of insurgency in the state. There are more than 35 armed groups who intervene in the electoral politics and government functioning. The General Elections 2004 witness poll related violence as armed groups have given a call to boycott the elections in the state.

\textsuperscript{121} Pakem, B., op.cit., pp. 95-96.
In the process, crucial issues of economic development, development activities and solutions to the problems like insurgency have been relegated to the background. There has been increasing politicization of emotive issues in the state. Issues like good governance as well as social and economic transformation and efforts to end financial bankruptcy have been completely ignored.

A new development in the electoral politics and government has been the almost complete elimination of Independents since 1990 Assembly Election. Till 1984, Independents played an important role. However, new parties increase with every election. Congress has dominated the political scenes in the state with maximum number of Chief Ministers and seats in every election. State parties MPP from 1972 to 1995 and Federal Party since 2000 are the other key players in state politics.

Though women play a crucial role in socio-economic life in Manipur their role in politics has been primarily remained as voters and candidates. They are still ignored by political parties. Number of women candidates is very few in elections and their representations to state Assembly and Parliament have been almost nil. Subsequently their power and influence in government and decision making process is insignificant.

Politicians irrespective of ideology or party affiliation have not bothered for political stability or development of the state. They seem to have no concern about the problems of insurgency, underdevelopment, peace, progress or other real issues of the state. The money power and force have become critical factors in

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122 This can be understood by looking at the number of seats won by Independents in each election till 1984. For details see, Appendix-VIII.
123 Appendix VIII and IX clearly show the dominance of Congress and emergence of state parties as key players in the politics of the state.
winning elections and government formations and functioning. Policy making and effective implementation of policies are neglected. Policy makers appear to be aware of their welfare and interests only and look to be helpless to bring peace, stability and progress of their own people.

In the following chapters we will examine above and related issues in the context of Manipur. The focus is on policies and policy makers on development and counter-insurgency. It is in this environment as discussed above policy making take place in the state. In the next chapter we will examine the development and counter-insurgency policies in the context of Manipur and also their evaluation.