AUTONOMY MOVEMENT OF THE HMARS
IN MIZORAM

ABSTRACT

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Introduction

Autonomy movement has become a major issue especially in the context of cultural and ethnic differences and diversities. It is generally held that such differences manifesting in modern states have often led to demands for autonomy in various regions of the country. The question of autonomy is central to many conflicts today. Responses to ethnic conflicts have ranged from oppression and ethnic cleansing to accommodations. One of the most sought after, and resisted, devices for conflict management is autonomy. However, autonomy is controversial and many conflicts are themselves about the demand for and resistance to autonomy.¹ The case for autonomy rests on three major principles- minority right, indigenous right and the right of self-determination.

Self-determination has been recognized as having an internal aspect that requires full and effective participation by all groups in a society. And autonomy is being considered as a method of allowing internal self-determination to minorities who form a part of the peoples of an existing state.² Autonomy is not equivalent to sovereignty or independence.³ In respect of the self-determination of peoples two aspects have to be distinguished. The right to self-determination of peoples has an internal aspect, that is to say, the rights of all peoples to pursue freely their economic, social and cultural development without outside interference. In that respect there exists a link with the right of every citizen to take part in the conduct of public affairs at any level. In consequence, Governments are to represent the whole population without distinction as to race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin. The external aspect of self-determination implies that all peoples have the right to determine freely their political status and their place in the international community based upon the principle of equal rights and exemplified by the liberation of peoples from colonialism and by the prohibition to subject peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation.⁴

Autonomy is distinctly political, signifying civil or national independence.⁵ In politics, autonomy means that people can govern themselves instead of being ruled by someone else. Thus, in its broadest sense, autonomy in political context means self-rule or self-government. In fact, an autonomy movement

is politically motivated for self-rule. It is one of the social movements within the area of politics. Autonomy movement may be peaceful or violent in nature depending upon the ideology of leadership, the release of force and the coercive nature adopted by the system under which it operates. The movement tries to modify, re-interpret, re-adjust and alter the age-old tradition, values and all political culture, attacking the very foundation of the legitimacy of the existing system into a new kind of socio-political order. However, there is a growing view that it could also maintain economic growth and territorial integrity if minorities are granted appropriate autonomy. It is very interesting to know that most communities normally launch such autonomy movement only when the educated elites or the middle classes come to realize that the existing establishment is not being able to accommodate their interests. When small nationalities launch movements for autonomy, we conceive it as a movement through either formal or informal organizations in order to alter or supplant the existing socio-economic and political arrangement of the system. The purpose of autonomy is to establish a political arrangement to allow ethnic and other groups claiming a distinct identity to exercise direct control over affairs of special concern to them while allowing the larger entity those powers which cover common interests.

The idea of right to self-determination is always at the root of all the movements for autonomy. The factors responsible for the rise and growth of autonomy movement are mostly economic disparity, socio-cultural differences, language, religion, ethnicity, geography, historical experience, psychology, demographic composition, local interests and sense of defense of minority culture. Indeed, the economic factors as deprivation, exploitation by outsiders, and developmental aspirations remain the mobilization factors for such autonomy sentiments.

Autonomy movements have been examined from different perspectives-Marxist, Relative deprivation, Internal colonialism and Identity based theories. Autonomy movement is now

9 Santanu Sengupta, op. cit., p. 35.
considered as a possible tool in accommodating separatist movements without endangering the continued territorial integrity of existing state. Some states in Western Europe have embraced autonomy as a means of maintaining their territorial integrity. Autonomy can play an important, constructive role in mediating relations between different communities in multi-ethnic states. It can defuse different conflicts. It is a particularly appropriate mechanism for the protection and promotion of the culture and values of a community. Autonomy should be chosen not because of some notion of preserving ‘Sovereignty’ but in order to enable different groups to live together, to define a common public space.

In India, different types of autonomy demands and movements have taken place in various places. The range and forms of autonomy in India is very wide. Autonomy has been used not only as a mechanism to accommodate the claims of territorially organized ethno-linguistic groups, but it has also simultaneously been used in shaping the public space for the expression and maintenance of identity of the territorially dispersed minority groups and communities. The principle of federal autonomy has been applied to accommodate the claims of ethno-linguistic groups by creating federal institutions and developing the power and responsibilities to them for determining and getting control over the domains of their competence. The reorganization of States on ethno-linguistic basis and going beyond the partition mind set and the consideration of creating administrative unit of convenience is one of the major indicators in this regard. One important discourse of autonomy involves demands for autonomy from hegemonic relations resulting in colonial domination and developmental dependency. Most of the autonomy movements in Northeast India are struggles for identity, language, preservation of traditional culture, economic development, etc. Autonomy movements in Northeast India are perceived mainly in ethnic terms. The feeling of ethno-nationalism and regional consciousness are the main motivating force for their political movements. The Hmar of Mizoram is no exception.

The Constitution of India provides multiple forms and range of autonomy, which not only lays down the principle of group accommodation on an asymmetrically and differential basis but also reinforces integration. Its objective is to facilitate integration by way of making the secessionist aspirations of ethnic groups get transformed into autonomy claims, as well as to reinforce national

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20 Jayanta Krishna Sarmah, op. cit., p. 27.
identification among the minority groups. The most important case in this regard is the autonomy provisions and arrangements in the Northeast region (see, Articles 244 (2) and 275 (1) of the Constitution of India).

The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India exclusively grants autonomy through District Councils and Regional Councils to the ethnic groups in some parts of Northeast India. The institutional structures of autonomy in the forms of District Councils and Regional Councils provide opportunity to the respective ethnic groups to maximize their claims of identity, rights and competence. However, this form of autonomy is organically linked to other institutions of federal governance in terms of sharing of power, responsibilities and competence. Beyond this institutional form of territorial autonomy and competence, the strengthening of a third tier of governance through the seventy-third and seventy-fourth amendment to the Constitution of India is also important both from the perspectives of autonomy and accommodation.

Unlike mainland India, various ethnic movements in Northeast India are primarily organized on the line of ethnic identity. In the context of Mizoram, the elevation of the 3 Regional Councils namely the Pawi (Lai) District Council, the Lakher (Mara) District Council and the Chakma District Council into full-fledged Autonomous District Councils in 1972\(^1\) had far-reaching effects in the politics of Mizoram. The advantages of having a separate ADC in the new democratic dispensation led Hmars to also demand separate ADCs to protect their cultural identity in the late 1980s.\(^2\) The Hmars felt that they are deprived of their socio-political rights as one of the tribes of Mizoram. Thus, autonomy movement of the Hmars in Mizoram has evolved out of ethno-politics and ethno-development.\(^3\) The history of autonomy movement of the Hmars in Mizoram is now nearly three decades old. Apart from the political factor, economic backwardness of the Hmar dominated areas is the most important factor that has contributed to the shaping of autonomy movement in Mizoram.

The Hmars in Mizoram at present are mostly concentrated in the districts of Aizawl, Kolasib and Champhai, although they are also scattered in other districts. As per details from Census 2011, Mizoram has population 10.97 lakhs, an increase from figure 8.89 lakhs in 2001 census. The census figure of 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011 in Mizoram population revealed that the Hmar population is 8,600, 12,350, 12,535 and 18,155 respectively.\(^4\) This figure, however, does not include the assimilated Hmars in Mizoram.

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\(^{3}\) Apurba K. Baruah, *op. cit.*, p. 32-33.

Hmar population within Sinlung Hills Development Council in 2017 is 33764. The Hmars, a cognate of Chin-Kuki-Mizo tribe, inhabit the northern part of Mizoram and the adjoining parts of Manipur and Cachar and North Cachar Hills of Assam. The term Hmar as a common nomenclature gained popularity and wider acceptance only in the 20th Century.

**Statement of the Problem**

Hmars are scattered throughout Northeast India and Chin state of Myanmar. In northeast India, they settled in Mizoram, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura and Assam. In Mizoram, majority of them were under the control of the Sailo chiefs till the abolition of chieftainship. They also used Lushai dialect as the medium of worship in the Church and instructions in schools as the Christian missionaries initially advocated Lushai dialect as a lingua franca among the new converts. In addition, Christian songs composed by them in the early days of their conversion to Christianity were in Mizo dialect. The Hmars also supported the Mizo Union (MU) movement for abolition of chieftainship and integration of Mizo inhabited areas of North-East India under one administrative unit. The Hmars of Mizoram, Manipur and Assam established MU units and branches. In fact, there were no separate Hmar political organizations in Mizoram although there were few Hmar political parties and organizations formed in Manipur and Assam during the early 1950s. Indeed, a close linguistic and cultural affinity with the Mizos was the main motivating force for the Hmars in Mizoram to have felt satisfied and considered themselves as part of Mizo society. However, the feeling of oneness that prevailed among the Hmars as being part of Mizo gradually took some of them to the path of assimilation into Mizo. Indeed, Hmars in Mizoram are divided into two groups even today; those who are still conscious about their ethno-cultural identities and the other group who are completely assimilated into Mizo. While the former group is conscious of their distinct identity, traditions, customs and language and still speaks in Hmar dialect, the latter group is assimilated with the Mizos in all aspects.

The failure of MU in integrating the Hmar inhabited areas of Manipur and Assam in the Mizo Hills District seemed to have far-reaching consequences in the socio-political life of the Hmar people. It is claimed that the failure of integrating the Hmar inhabited areas in the then Mizo Hills District led to the emergence of ethnic and identity consciousness among the Hmar people. Further, the Hmars also seemed to have been disappointed with the Mizo Peace Accord in 1986, which failed to address the

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25 An interview with Hmingchunghnung, former President HPC and existing Chairman, SHDC on 24th August 2017, Aizawl.
29 Hmingchunghnung, *Aw Kan Hmar ram*, Published by HranglienkhumSinate, Churachandpur, 1999, p. 35.
integration of Hmar inhabited areas of Manipur and Assam into Mizoram. Since then, Hmars began to maintain their separate identity by forming ethnic based political party and did not like to be called as Mizo and openly began to demand autonomy with the formation of the first Hmar political organization in Mizoram, the Mizoram Hmar Association (MHA) on July 3, 1986. In the same year, it renamed the Mizoram Hmar Association (MHA) as Hmar People’s Convention (HPC). The HPC made a demand for the creation of ‘Hmarram’ a homeland for the Hmars to preserve their culture, customs and language. Initially, it was proposed to comprise the Hmar inhabited areas within the three adjoining states of Mizoram, Manipur and Assam. However, it was decided by the HPC on May 23, 1987 to confine the demand of ‘Hmar Autonomous District Council within their compact area in the north of Mizoram. As a result, the HPC submitted its Memorandum to the Governor of Mizoram in 1987 for the creation of ‘Hmar Autonomous District’.

In 1994, Memorandum of Settlement (MoU) was signed between the Mizoram Government and HPC, in which Sinlung Hills Development Council (SHDC) came into being. The Hmars claim that the Sinlung Hills Development Council (SHDC) has little control over land and resources of the Hmar community as compared to other ADCs in Mizoram. As a result, a new insurgent group of the Hmar Peoples’ Convention-Democratic (HPC-D) came into existence again in 1995 to continue the demand for a full-fledged Autonomous District Council through insurgency.

The main obstacle in the autonomy movement of the Hmars in Mizoram seems to be the Mizoram government and the Young Mizo Association (YMA). While the former is not willing to grant the Autonomous District Council to the Hmars as enjoyed by Pawis (Lai), the Lakher (Mara) and the Chakmas, the latter considers the creation of a separate Hmar Autonomous District would create disunity among the Mizos. In response, the Hmar militants put restrictions on setting up YMA units in Hmar inhabited areas.

In the light of the above discussion, it would be interesting to study as to why and how the Hmars living in Mizoram, who identified themselves as Mizo in the past, are now beginning to maintain their identity and demand for autonomy. Further, the genesis of Hmar autonomy movement, the formation and role of HPC and HPC (D), their strategies, social base and the responses of Mizoram government and YMA towards Hmar autonomy demand would be of great interest. It would also be interesting to study whether the assimilation of a large chunk of Hmars to Mizo has weakened the Hmar autonomy movement or not.

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30 Lal Dena, op. cit., p. 144.
The present research work therefore attempts to study the autonomy movement of the Hmars in Mizoram, the role of HPC, HPC (D) and the responses of YMA, Mizoram government and the assimilated Hmars with a view to understanding the consequences of the movement on the Hmars and other communities in general.

**Review of Literature**

*History of the Relation of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the Northeast Frontiers of Bengal* (1884)\(^{32}\) by Alexander Mackenzie, highlights different tribal communities and their relations with the plain people as well as the British Government of India. *Hmar History* (1956)\(^{33}\) by Hranglien Songate discusses more about the traditional and political history of the Hmars in Mizoram and other Northeast states of India. *The Education of the Hmar People* (1963)\(^{34}\) by Rochunga Pudaite deals with the educational work of the Hmar elites and the introduction of Christianity among the Hmars. The book no doubt is helpful in understanding the emergence of Hmar elites and their works. *History of Modern Manipur* (1826-1949)\(^{35}\) edited by Lal Dena deals with the overall relations between the British and Meiteis with the Tribals in Manipur. *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (1991)\(^{36}\) by Paul Brass discusses a distinctive theory concerning the origins of ethnic identity and modern nationalism. It deals with the significance of cultural symbols and elite competition in ethnic identity, community and nationality formation. The book covers various patterns of ethnic movements and mobilisation in different parts of the world.

*Tribals and their culture, Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram*, Vol-1, (1992)\(^{37}\) by G.K. Ghosh deals with the traditions, politics and culture on the tribes and other people of Mizoram, Assam and Meghalaya. *The Hmar of Manipur: An anthropological Exploration* (1992)\(^{38}\) by V.P. Sharma deals with the background of Hmars living in Manipur and other tribes who are very close to them. *Tribes of Mizoram, Description, Ethnology and Bibliography* (1992)\(^{39}\) by Sipra Sen highlights a brief history of Hmars in Mizoram and gives us understanding about the Hmar culture, customs and identity. *Regional Movements*

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45Sarthak Sengupta, Peoples of Northeast India, Gyan Book, New Delhi, 1996.
such as Hmar, Mizo, Pawi, Lakher and Chakma. The book is helpful for us to understand more about the political problem of Mizoram in a wider perspective. *The Autonomous District Councils* (1997) edited by L. S. Gassah presents on the historical development leading to the creation of ADCs and also on contemporary political problems faced by the tribal communities in North-East India. The much talk about question of relevance of ADCs today becomes a serious issue in the discussion. The most important aspect of the book is the critical analysis of crucial aspects relating to the autonomy of the ADCs and their contributions towards the development of the tribal areas of North-East India. *Community, Authenticity, and Autonomy: Insurgence and Institutional Development in India’s Northeast* (1997) by Jyotirindra Dasgupta observes that an excessive preoccupation with violence and a narrow reading of the implications of insurgent violence on the part of the observers are responsible for a substantial misunderstanding of the North-Eastern political processes. The book deals with the positive aspects of community formation, the linkage of communities in wider political perspective.

*Hill Politics in Northeast India* (1999) by S. K. Chaube discusses, in general, the socio-political history of Northeast India up to the time of the reorganisation of the region. The author examines the contradiction or competition between the traditional chiefs and Christianized elites claiming for the leadership. *Autonomy and Ethnicity: Negotiating Competing Claims in Multi-Ethnic States* (ed.) by Yash Ghai examines responses to ethnic conflicts in recent decades that have ranged from oppression and ethnic cleansing to accommodations of ethnic claims through affirmative policies, special forms of representation, power sharing, and the integration of minorities. One of the most sought after, and resisted, devices for conflict management is autonomy. This book uses select countries including China, Canada, South Africa, former Yugoslavia and Australia to explore the dialectics of ethnicity and territory as mediated by a variety of forms of autonomy.

*History Religion and Culture of Northeast India* (2001) by T. Raatan deals with the origin and migrations of various Mizo groups and helps us to draw the reality of the Hmar community in a comprehensive manner. *Essay on the History of the Mizos* (2004) by Sangkima is a collection of papers written on the history and culture of the people of Mizoram. The objective of the book is to serve the students, scholars and all others who are keenly interested in the study of the Mizo and their culture. The

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compilation of the papers deal with the different aspects of the history and culture of the Mizos and it brings the papers together as a book for ready use and reference. *Terrorism and Separatism in North East India* (2004)\(^5\) by Chandra Bhushan conceptualizes the concept of different ethnic identities and separatist movements in North East India. It analyses the significance of cultural symbols and ethnic identity, community and nationality formation. *Ethnic Autonomy Question in North-East India: Search for an Answer* (2005)\(^6\) by Niru Hazarika deals with socio-cultural pluralism of Northeast India. It discusses different dimensions of the concepts of Autonomy, Integration and Development of the region. Though the book raises many questions on the political problem of ethnic autonomy of Northeast India, it is difficult to find out answers and alternatives for which the scope of study is unlimited. *North East India in Perspective* (2005)\(^7\) edited by Rajat Kanti Das and Debashis Basu is a compilation of research papers presented in the seminars held in different parts of the country. It discusses a wide range of tribal socio-cultural formations and contemporary political problems in North East India. *In Search of Identity: Hmars of the Northeast India* (2008)\(^8\) written by Lal Dena is a collection of occasional papers published in some books and presented at regional and national seminars. The book discusses the origin of the Hmars, including their social and political development, leadership pattern, literary development, the Mizo integration movement etc. *Mizoram: Dimensions and Perspectives, Society, Economy and Polity* (2008)\(^9\) edited by Jagadish K. Patnaik deals with the post-accord Mizoram and it contains the contributions from various academics, most of them are Mizo scholars. *Mizoram, A Study in Comprehensive Geography* (2009)\(^6\) by Rintluanga Pachuau, highlights an account of historical, cultural and political background as well as settlement patterns in Mizoram. It discusses in detail about various clans of Mizo and the Hmar in particular.

*Oral Traditions of the Hmars* (2011)\(^6\) by Vanlal T. Bapui deals with the oral traditions of the Hmars which are handed down from generation to generation. The book is helpful to understand Hmar origin and their migration. *Identity Issues in Northeast India* (2011)\(^\) edited by Ruma Bhattacharya

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discusses questions of different identity crisis among various communities of Northeast India. The book is helpful to understand the concept of Identity. Social and Political Movements (2011)\(^{63}\) edited by Cyrus Ernesto Zirakzadeh discusses the various approaches of social and political movements. The book also deals with empirical account of contemporary social movements in different places of the world. Contemporary Conflict Resolution (2011)\(^{64}\) by Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse and Hugh Miall deals with the fundamental new challenges of conflict resolution in global and domestic politics and also between communities, families or individuals. Problems of Hills Areas in Northeast India (2012)\(^{65}\) edited by George T. Haokip discusses widely different ethnic communities with their problems such as ethnic crisis, identity, socio-economic and political. The book gives us understanding about the crucial issues of Kuki-Chin-Mizo groups. Sociology of Social Movement (2012)\(^{66}\) edited by D. R. Sahu is a collection of articles on conventional and new social movements. It deals with the conceptual and theoretical issues of various social movements. Insurgencies in North East India (2013)\(^{67}\) by Gautam Das discusses the development of various insurgency movements and it suggests the mechanisms for peace and harmony in the region. It conceptualizes the methods and processes involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of various insurgency movements and conflicts. The book is useful to understand and identify geopolitical viability of the North East India. History and Ethnic identity Formation in North-East India (2013)\(^{68}\) edited by J. V. Hluna clearly highlights a cross-current of the issues relating to the origin and early Mizo history. It also focuses the political, religious, socio-economic and cultural history of the Mizos in wider perspective. Problem of Peace Making in Mizoram (2013)\(^{69}\) by Lal Hmingthanga deals with the reconciliation processes initiated by the people of Mizoram and it presents complex political situation in Mizoram and the great sufferings caused by violent conflict between the Indian Army and MNF militants. History of the Hmars in Northeast India (2013)\(^{70}\) by Hrilrokhum Thiek, presents the account of the Hmars migrations, folklores, customary practices and traditional songs handed down to the generations. The book is a comprehensive account of the Hmar tribe. Politics of Regionalism in North-East India (2014)\(^{71}\) edited by Malsawmliana and Lalsangzela Pachuau focuses the history of various autonomy movements in North-East India. The book, particularly, covers autonomy movements among the hill tribes of the region.


\(^{67}\)Gautam Das, Insurgencies in North-East India, Pentagon Press, New Delhi, 2013.


\(^{70}\)HrilrokhumThiek, History of the Hmars in Northeast India, Bhabani Offset, Guwahati, 2013.

\(^{71}\)Malsawmliana and LalsangzelaPachuau (eds.), Politics of Regionalism in North-East India, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2014.
A History of Mizo Nationalism Movement (2017)\textsuperscript{72} by Zoramthanga deals with the nation building process of the Mizo perpetuated by the educated Mizo leaders. The book discusses the various factors for the emergence of Mizo ethnic movement in the line of identity, religion, linguistic and cultural context. The book is a revelation of the history of Mizo ethnic movement.

From the above review of literature, it is evident that although some research has been done on the Hmars in general, none of them have comprehensively dealt with the genesis of autonomy movement of the Hmars in Mizoram, role of HPC, HPC (D), responses of Mizoram Government and YMA. The present work, therefore, filled the research gaps.

**Objective**

The objectives of the study are;

(i) To examine Hmar demand for autonomy in Mizoram and the role of HPC and HPC (D).

(ii) To analyse the responses of Mizoram Government and YMA towards Hmar autonomy demand.

**Methodology**

The study is both historical and analytical. Data for the study is collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include government documents and publications, Assembly Proceedings, constitutions, pamphlets, resolutions and memoranda of HPC, HPC (D) and YMA. Primary data was also generated through unstructured interviews conducted with three former presidents and one former secretary of HPC and the current President and Secretary of HPC (D) to understand the genesis and role of these two organizations in the autonomy movement of the Hmars in Mizoram. Further, in-depth interviews were also conducted with two former presidents, one existing president, one former secretary and one existing secretary to get the responses of YMA towards Hmar autonomy demands. To get the response of Mizoram government towards Hmar autonomy movement, in-depth interviews were also conducted with one former Chief Minister, the present Chief Minister, one former Home Minister and the present Home Minister. The secondary data on the other hand include books, journals and newspapers.

The constitution, pamphlets, resolutions and memoranda of HPC, HPC (D) and YMA and information generated through interviews were examined and compared with data collected from

secondary sources. Data collected from different sources are analyzed using quantitative and qualitative methods to understand the Hmar autonomy movement in Mizoram.

**Chapterisation**

Chapter-I: Introduction.

Chapter-II: Genesis of Hmar Autonomy Movement in Mizoram.

Chapter-III: Role of HPC and HPC (D) in Hmar Autonomy Movement.

Chapter-IV: Responses of Mizoram Government and YMA.

Chapter-V: Conclusion: Summary and major findings.

**Summary of the Chapters**

**Chapter I: Introduction**

This chapter basically deals with conceptual framework of the autonomy movement and a brief account of Hmars in Mizoram. The term ‘autonomy’ is employed by very early writers, is distinctly political, signifying civil or national independence. Some authors of the 17th and 18th centuries used it to denote the freedom of religious conscience. Kant is the only one who introduces it into the language of moral philosophy in a truly characteristic sense. Autonomy is always in relation to the state, and describes the state’s limitations and autonomy determination, and the regulation of specific affairs in certain institutions. In a narrow perspective, the concept of autonomy is limited to the protection of minorities and their self-determination. The theory of autonomy for the protection of ethnic or national minorities and the settlement of self-determination conflicts became a political reality in various parts of the world as well as in India.

Movement literally means ‘a series of actions and endeavours of a body of persons for a specific object’. The central concern in the study of movements is ‘its relation to the analysis of change and social conflict’. Political movement primarily seeks to change any of the existing political structure of the society. Politically, autonomy movement is regulated for political power, for a separate territory. Autonomy movement may be defined a political occurrence. It is one of the social movements within the

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area of politics. A social movement is a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure.\textsuperscript{77} In this connection, it may be pointed out that political movement in any society is not one time process but an ongoing and continuous process because people are never satisfied on the outcome of the movement. In fact, one autonomy movement is the basis of another higher level of autonomy movement. Autonomy movement can be arisen when political movement revolves round a public issue and is concerned with leadership and organization. Apart from the political factor, economic backwardness is the single most important factor that has contributed to the shaping of autonomy movements in North-East India.\textsuperscript{78} Social movements are very complex phenomena and are affected by various social, political, economic, and historical forces. Autonomy movements in North-East India have their genesis in history that dated back to the British subjugation of the hill tribes of North-East India.\textsuperscript{79} Ethnic identity assertion invariably leads to the ethnic movements in various regions of North-East India. The mainstream of the hills movement today can be characterized as ‘sub-national’. Its goal is a respectable position on the national map for the simple hill people who acquired western education in greater numbers than many of their plains neighbors, and who feel they are as modern as any other group.\textsuperscript{80}

The Hmar movement in Mizoram is basically an ethnic one. This ethnic movement is not a sudden occurrence but the outcome of long planning and preparations, clandestinely made by the dissident group who are not satisfied in the Mizo politics. This movement is a complex one with many factors contributing to its formation and developments. The movement can be said as the outcome of the various accumulative forces of the ethnic, socio-cultural, historical, political and geographical factors which are inextricably interlinked with to give rise to what we know today as Hmar autonomy movement. It was also deeply rooted in the economic condition of the Hmar society. The social texture of a society and the nature of crises which surface in it are a product of its historicity. Crisis and contention do not surface instantly in any society; they are rooted in history.\textsuperscript{81} However, the immediate political outcome of the Hmars movement started in the late eighties when the decades old MNF insurgency came to an end. The political development after the MNF insurgency constitute the basis for the Hmars quest for identity. After the formation of Mizoram, the Hmars in the north have raised their demand for autonomy.\textsuperscript{82} The Hmar movement for autonomy has caused anxiety to the people and government of Mizoram. It may also

\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Ibid}, p. 50.
\textsuperscript{82} S. K. Chaube, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 256.
be worth mentioning that the autonomy demand movement of the Hmars in Mizoram has been creating an alarming situation in the unity and integrity of the Mizo society. At the same time, the Government of Mizoram claimed that they could not grant autonomy to the Hmar community by constituting the Hmar dominated regions in Mizoram. The Government of Mizoram considered the Hmar movement for autonomy was just a mere law and order problem. But it was proved inappropriate when the ground reality of the Hmar political grievances came to the knowledge of Central Government and the state government through the memoranda submitted by HPC party. It is the interest of the Hmar people and the Government of Mizoram to settle the main issue of the Hmar and explore ways and means for an amicable and lasting solution through sincere bilateral dialogue. Thus, the Hmars made a demand for the creation of Autonomous Council for themselves to preserve their cultural identity, customs, language and economic prosperity.

Chapter II: Genesis of Hmar Autonomy Movement in Mizoram

This chapter deals with the genesis of Hmar autonomy movement in Mizoram. The Hmars mainly inhabited the northern side of Mizoram, the southern hills of Manipur and Cachar and North Cachar Hills of Assam. Thus, the Hmar inhabited areas were partitioned according to administrative convenience and separated by different state boundaries. They argued that the administrative boundaries acted as the main barriers to their political integration and social interactions, in spite of sharing the culture and customs.

It is evident that the Hmars and the Luseis are related historically, socially, culturally and linguistically. They are generally grouped together under the generic name Mizo. Living together for many centuries, there have been a close cultural and traditional affinity in many respects. As a result, many common clans are found both among the Hmars and Luseis. In fact, the cultural and traditional relationship between the Hmars and Mizos cannot be clearly separated. In fact, Hmars played important roles in both the Mizo Union and MNF movements by holding important high positions in these organisations. Mr. Pachhunga, the first President of the Mizo Union in 1946 was a Hmar. He was considered to be the most successful businessman during the 1940s and 1950s. Another Hmar leader from Cachar, Assam, named H. K. Bawichhuaka became the General Secretary of the Mizo Union in 1949 till 1958 and President in 1962. Such was the intertwined relationships of the Hmars and Mizos in Mizoram.

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Meanwhile there sprang up an extreme view from some sections of Mizos who demanded for renaming of Mizo Union to Lushai Union. As a result, some Hmar leaders in the then Lushai Hills formed the first Hmar political organization called Hmar Fenngo Federation (HFF) at Aizawl. Many Hmar leaders such as H. Raltawna and Lalbuaia felt insecure from the growing ethnic feeling among the Mizos. Subsequently, the suggestion for the change of Mizo Union to Lushai Union was dropped because of the objections from some leaders of the Mizo Union. As a result, the HFF without having made much headway petered out. However, its formation, irrespective of its duration, was an indication that the Hmars had played a defensive and politics of survival from the Mizo Union since the beginning. Since the time they attained political consciousness, their political activities moved along the line of the Mizo politics and the future of the Hmar politics definitely depended on the Mizo. According to the Hmars, the Mizo Integration movement should go along with the aspiration of the Hmars in politics. Their political status was not identified and their double-edged identity made their political problems inevitably depend on the politics of the Mizo.

While the realisation of the Mizo integration was anticipated by the Hmars, the Mizo Union leaders in Mizo Hills had accepted the Autonomous Hills District plan of the Government of India thereby excluding the Hmar inhabited areas contiguous to the Lushai Hills District. The Hmars felt that their political ambition seemed to be irrevocably shattered owing to the acceptance of Mizo Hills District by the Mizo Union leaders. The Hmars complained that the dominant Lushai population in the district intentionally favoured the exclusion of the Hmar population in Manipur and Assam for fear of being outnumbered.

The Hmars living in different political administrative set up in Northeast states, owing to their dissatisfaction on Mizo Union movement started to think in terms of communal politics. They are minority community in Mizoram, Assam, Manipur, Tripura and Meghalaya. Dissatisfied with the Mizo politics, the Hmars came to realise the inevitability of forming a separate political party based on the Hmar ethnic interest only. They felt that loyalty to the Mizo politics would be a political blunder for themselves and began to write a new chapter of politics to preserve Hmar culture and identity. In order to fulfil and renew their political aspirations, the Hmar leaders wanted to form a strong political organisation which will bring all the Hmars under one political party. That was the reason behind the formation of ethnic based political organisations within the Hmar community. That was why Hmar National Congress

85 An interview with Paul B. Chonzik, Associate Professor, Department of History, Assam University, Diphu Campus, on 29th July 2014, Shillong.
Hmar National Union (HNU),\textsuperscript{87} Hmar Peoples’ Convention (HPC)\textsuperscript{88} and Hmar Peoples’ Convention-Democratic (HPC-D)\textsuperscript{89} were formed in 1954, 1958, 1986, and 1995 respectively.

The economic backwardness and under-development of the Hmar area and acute unemployment problem and the consequent frustration of the Hmar youths due to unfulfilled Greater Mizoram have engineered the ethnic based political movement. Apart from the political factor, economic backwardness is the single most important factor that has contributed to the shaping of the genesis of the Hmar autonomy movements in Mizoram.\textsuperscript{90} Other concerns include feeling of political deprivation, fear of cultural and customary extinction, language assimilation and socio-economic exploitation.

Chapter III: Role of HPC and HPC (D) in Hmar Autonomy Movement

This chapter deals with the role of Hmar Peoples’ Convention (HPC) and Hmar Peoples’ Convention-Democratic (HPC-D) in Hmar autonomy movement in Mizoram. The integration of all the Hmar inhabited areas has been the main political objective of these political organisations. They consider the division of the Hmar inhabited areas under different administrative units as the main obstacle for the progress and development of the tribe.\textsuperscript{91} The proposed Hmar District Council covers the Hmars inhabited areas of Manipur, Mizoram, Cachar and N.C. Hills of Assam and Meghalaya. However, the present study examines the autonomy movement of the Hmars in Mizoram.

The birth of the HPC party was obviously not a sudden development. In fact, there are several factors responsible for the formation of HPC party in the 1980s in Mizoram. They propagated the idea of unity of the Hmar tribe so as to influence the Government of Mizoram to create an Autonomous District Council for the Hmars. Within a short period of time, HPC party became the most powerful political organisation of the Hmars.

The MNF Accord granted full statehood to Mizoram, although the political issues of the minority tribes such as the Hmars who are living in the North and the Brus (Reangs) who are living in the West of Mizoram remained unresolved. The Hmars living in the Northern parts of Mizoram had expected to share and benefit the new political arrangement of Mizoram Statehood in the form of a separate Administrative Unit for themselves, as was the case for the Pawis, the Lakhers and the Chakmas who had enjoyed the benefits of Autonomous District Council right from the time when Mizoram was a Union Territory.

\textsuperscript{87} Lal Dena, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 132.
\textsuperscript{88} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 134.
\textsuperscript{89} S. N. Singh, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 127.
\textsuperscript{90} An Interview with J. C. Hmar, Secretary HPC-D on 4\textsuperscript{th} March 2013, Hmarkhawlien.
\textsuperscript{91} An Interview with Hmingchunghnung, former President HPC and existing Chairman, SHDC on 24\textsuperscript{th} August 2017, Aizawl.
\textsuperscript{92} R. Pudaite, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 237.
Dissatisfaction with the politics of MNF, the Hmars in Mizoram had started ethnic political movement under the political umbrella of HPC party. The HPC launched its first phase of non-violent protests with a 24-hour peaceful bandh in their demand area on 28th March, 1989 as a means of raising public awareness to fight their constitutional right of demand and calling for immediate implementation of its demands. But, the Government of Mizoram reacted violently against the non-violent movement of the HPC. The peaceful bandh called by the HPC and its supporters were forcefully encountered by the Mizoram Armed Police and resulted unprecedented clash between them. In fact, the confrontation between the Government of Mizoram and HPC had prompted the latter to take up arms and go underground.

The Government of Mizoram came to realise the complication involved in putting down the HPC movement by means of arm showdown. The Government then expressed its willingness to solve the situation politically and prepare the ground rules for a political dialogue with the HPC on the question of autonomy, provided that HPC undergrounds would surrender their arms and ammunitions and discontinue any subversive activity before having any meaningful peace talk.

The subsequent Memorandum of Settlement signed on 27th July 1994 between the Government of Mizoram and HPC ended the seven year arm revolt of HPC. The Peace Accord resulted in the formation of Sinlung Hills Development Council (SHDC) and more than 300 hundred HPC undergrounds with their arms and ammunitions surrendered to the Government of Mizoram. Each of HPC underground member was given an amount of Rs.30000/- by the Government of Mizoram for rehabilitation and ex-gratia to the next of kin of the HPC members who died during the armed confrontations. After the signing of peace accord, HPC party was no longer an underground organisation but it became one of the recognised regional parties in Mizoram.

While the peace process between HPC and Government of Mizoram was in process, some sections of HPC cadres were not satisfied with the peace process. These leaders convinced some of their members not to surrender their arms and also oppose to Memorandum of Settlement, which they argued would not bring political aspirations of the Hmar. They resolved to continue to fight for a full-fledged Autonomous District Council. Some leaders who broke away from HPC formed the Hmar Peoples’ Convention-Democratic (HPC-D) in 1995.

The HPC-D submitted memorandum to the Union Home Minister of India for the creation of Hmar Autonomous District Council under sixth schedule to the constitution of India within Mizoram on 1st July 2001. The memorandum asked the Union Home Minister to give direction to the Government of

93 An Interview with J.C. Hmar, Secretary HPC-D on 4th March 2013, Hmarkhawlien.
Mizoram to take immediate measures for the implementation of HPC Accord and to create permanent solution of the Hmar issue in Mizoram. With the instruction of Ministry of Home Affairs, Suspension of Operation was signed between Mizoram Government and HPC-D for a period of six months. But the Suspension of Operation did not last long due to lack of understanding between the two parties on the question of foreigner issue for the representatives of HPC-D in the proposed peace talks. Rev. Dr. Rochunga Pudaite, an American citizen was said to be one of the delegates of HPC-D in the proposed peace talk. Thus, the Government of Mizoram refused to resume peace talk due to the proposed involvement of Rev. Dr. Rochunga Pudaite as the Government of Mizoram considered him a foreigner. In fact, Rochunga Pudaite was born and brought up in Manipur and he got dual citizenship of India and the US. The reconciliation process to solve the Hmar political problem once again failed. As a result, the HPC-D boycotted all political parties except the HPC candidates to contest Village Council election in thirty one villages within the Sinlung Hills Development Council area. Owing to alleged dictate of HPC-D to vote for HPC-D backed HPC candidates only, the State Election Commission on 22nd February, 2012 indefinitely postponed the Village Council elections in thirty one villages within HPC-D demand area.

As mentioned earlier, HPC-D did not accept the Memorandum of Settlement signed between the Government of Mizoram and HPC. The political demand and grievances of the party over the years have changed from an up-gradation of Sinlung Hills Development Council (SHDC) to a Homeland (Hmarram) consisting of the Hmar dominated areas of Mizoram, Manipur and Assam. With the change of their demand from Autonomous District to Homeland (Territorial Council) the area of their operations and movements were also changed. In the beginning, the HPC-D militants were primarily active in Sinlung Hills Development Council (SHDC) areas of Mizoram. With the change in their demand, they also spread to the Hmar inhabited areas of Churachandpur District in Manipur and Cachar and North Cachar Hills District in Assam.

Chapter IV: Responses of Mizoram Government and YMA

This chapter deals with the responses of Mizoram Government and YMA to the autonomy movement of the Hmars in Mizoram. To strive for its political objective, HPC leaders, for the first time met the then Chief Minister, Laldenga in 1988, who promised them to examine their political grievances at the earliest possible. However, Mr. Laldenga’s ministry was defeated in the House before any decision was taken. The Congress ministry under the Chief Ministership of Lalthanhawla felt that the creation of

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94 An interview with LalhmingthangSanate, President, Hmar Peoples’ Convention – Democratic, on 10th June 2015, Shillong.
new Autonomous District Council for the Hmar community alone will provoke several communities to demand for the same.

To pressurize and draw more attention from the Government of Mizoram, HPC launched its first ever agitation in the form of peaceful bandh throughout HPC demand area on March 28, 1987. The Government of Mizoram sent Mizoram Armed Police (MAP) to counter the bandh supporters by force. The physical clashes between the Mizoram Armed Police and the Hmar people caused bloodshed and many bandh supporters were wounded in the confrontation. As a result, HPC again called for a second phase of forty eight hours non-violent peaceful bandh on April 18-19, 1989. The counter measures adopted by the Government of Mizoram had prompted the bandh supporters to take up arms in revolt against the Government. Many Hmars said that the repressive measure taken up by the Government of Mizoram within the HPC demand area was an unforgettable episode in the history of Hmar in Mizoram.

The armed confrontation lasted till the signing of Accord on 27th July, 1994. The Accord led to the creation of Sinlung Hills Development Council (SHDC). In contrary to their initial demand of the creation of Hmar Autonomous District Council, the Hmars were given a small administrative Council with its headquarters at Sakawrdai. Other provisions of the accord include recognition of Hmar language as one of the major languages of Mizoram and a medium of instruction up to primary level in the schools, upgradation of existing Primary Health Centre at Sakawrdai to Community Health Centre and payment of ex-gratia to the next of kin of HPC cadres killed in armed confrontations during insurgency and facilitate rehabilitation of the HPC cadres. The Hmars in Mizoram, Manipur, Assam and Tripura were far from being satisfied with the outcome of the long-drawn movement of HPC that had claimed a number of lives for the creation of Hmar District. It was agreed in Para 5.5 of the Memorandum of Settlement that the Government of Mizoram would take immediate steps for the up-gradation of SHDC to a full-fledged Autonomous District Council for the Hmar within two years of interim period. However, the Government of Mizoram has chosen to ignore the matter till date. Further, the unresolved boundary of the SHDC hindered the smooth functioning of the Council for many years.

The Home Minister, R. Lalzirliana reiterated that the Hmar’s demand for ADC could not be materialised because the Government of Mizoram would not support the creation of a new ADC and other related demands. The Home Minister also mentioned that the three ADCs namely, Lai, Mara and Chakma Autonomous District Councils had been created in Mizoram without the consent of the Mizo people during the time of Mizoram Union Territory. Owing to short-sightedness in politics, some politicians in Mizoram had supported the creation of these autonomous districts for their political benefit. He directly stated that the Government of Mizoram will not entertain the creation of any more ADC’s for any particular community. Moreover, the creation of ADC under the sixth schedule to the Constitution of
India is not a state subject, it is the subject of Indian Parliament. The Hmars complained that its continuous demand for ADC was mainly due to the failure of the Government to implement the Memorandum of Settlement signed on 27th July, 1994 between HPC and the Government of Mizoram.

YMA has emerged as a strong social organisation in Mizoram. Being a voluntary and philanthropic organisation, it is generally found in every village in Mizoram. Now, it is by far the most influential organisation in Mizoram. YMA is striding forward by doing what it ought to do and by opposing what it considers harmful and detrimental to the healthy existence of the Mizo society. On the issue of HPC-D movement and the implementation of the HPC Accord, the Units and Branches of YMA in different villages within the SHDC area had requested the Government of Mizoram to take a concrete step to bring about an amicable solution to the Hmar political unrest and grievances. The YMA units of Tuisual Group, Chalfilh Group and Tuivai Group called a joint meeting and made a joint resolution asking the CYMA to take immediate action for the peace talk between the Government of Mizoram and HPC-D. While exerting pressure to the Government of Mizoram, the Central Young Mizo Association (CYMA) at the same time cautioned the Government of Mizoram to solve the Hmar political problem only within the purview of Mizo unity and integrity.

The creation of any new Autonomous District Council or Regional Council based on the name of particular tribes or communities is objected strenuously by CYMA. The CYMA felt that the creation of new Autonomous District Council for the Hmar in Mizoram would cause Mizo disunity because this may arouse communal feeling among the other tribes like Ralte, Paite, Lushai etc. Thus, the demand of Hmar Autonomous District in Mizoram is objected by YMA as it considered that the creation of such Autonomous District Council would automatically produce adverse effect on the unity and territorial integrity of Mizoram in the near future. While every community appreciates the contributions of YMA, its increasing intervention in the administration of the state Government has certainly caused a lot of regional feelings and tensions between the non-Lushai speaking people and the dominant Lushai speaking group.

Chapter V: Conclusion

The last deals with summary and major findings of the study.

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96 Sangkima, op. cit., p. 257.
97 An Interview with Lalhmachuana, General Secretary, Central YMA on 23rd August 2017, Aizawl.
98 An interview with Lalbiakzuala, President, Central Young Mizo Association (CYMA) on 23rd August 2017, Aizawl.
The Hmars considered themselves as an integral part of Mizo and were the first to support the cause of Mizo Union movement for Greater Mizoram. However, the final outcome of the movement turned against their wishes when the State Re-Organization Commission recommended the formation of Mizo Hill district on 25th April, 1952, by excluding the Hmar inhabited areas in Manipur and Assam. The Hmars felt that their brothers in Mizoram betrayed them. While the Hmar ethnic based political movement was in progress with the establishment of HNU units and branches in different places of Hmar dominated villages, the Mizo National Front (MNF) emerged with Mizo unification and independence from the Indian government as its main objectives. The support base of HNU was severely affected by the birth of MNF and its movement. As a result, HNU confined only to the Hmars living in Tipaimukh Sub-Division of Manipur in the later years. The existence of any political organization based on ethnic line was totally unacceptable to the MNF party. In those days, no one dared to challenge the dictates of the MNF militants. In fact, the Hmar leaders were not much supportive to the MNF movement as they felt that the Hmars have been let down and betrayed by the Mizo Union leaders by accepting Mizo District Council. Doubt and suspicion of Mizo Union politics remained fresh in the heart of the Hmars. They also did not have confidence in the leadership of MNF. The Hmar leaders had learnt from the blunders committed by the former Hmar leaders in the previous years. The Hmars did not want to fall victim of another political deception from the Mizo politics. There was fear among the Hmar leaders that another deception would be more disastrous. Obviously, it has become hard for them to believe in Mizo politics. They will skeptical and pessimistic about the MNF movement for Mizo independence and territorial unification. In the midst of the MNF movement the Hmar communal politics seemed to be at a crossroads. However, there was no other choice left for the Hmars than to give up their communal politics and lend support to the ideology of MNF movement. When Mr. Laldenga, the President of MNF, openly declared that all the Mizo inhabited areas of Manipur and Assam be included in the proposed state of Mizoram, many Hmars joined MNF for the cause of Mizo unity once again. Mainly for the sake of Mizo integration, the Hmar leaders were once again convinced to work in tandem with MNF. Many people in Mizoram believed that the agreement of MNF and Government of India would fulfill the unfinished integration of all the Mizos. But the peace accord accepted the demarcation of the same boundary of the erstwhile Union Territory of Mizoram excluding the Hmar areas of Manipur, Assam and Tripura. There was a general feeling that the signing of the Mizo Peace Accord on 30th June 1986, brought about nothing for the socio-political benefits of the Hmar. Instead, Hmar population in Mizoram was on the threshold of complete assimilation. The disappointment of the Hmars in the politics of Mizo nationalism finally led to the beginning of Hmar ethnic movement in the late 1980s in Mizoram. Finally, the Hmar Peoples’ Convention (HPC) was founded in 1986. Since then, the Hmars decided to maintain their separate identity by forming ethnic based political party. The main aim of the Hmar was to create a
separate homeland for themselves and preservation of their ethnic identity and culture. HPC drew support from all corners of the Hmars cutting across state boundaries soon after its inception. They began to demand for the creation of Hmar Autonomous Hill District Council comprising the Hmar inhabited areas of Northeast India.

Major findings:

• The study found that the Christian missionaries, who first reached Mizoram (Lushai Hills) and then went to Hmar inhabited areas in Northern Mizoram, Southern Manipur, Cachar and North Cachar Hills of Assam, advocated Mizo (Lushai) dialect as a lingua franca among the new converts. The new Hmar converts used Mizo (Lushai) dialect as a medium of worship in Church and instruction in schools leading to the popularity of the Lushai dialect among the Hmars. The Mizo Holy Bible and Hymn Books were commonly used and kept in almost all the Hmar families for devotional services because the Hmar versions were yet to be published. This was the beginning of Hmar assimilation to Mizo identity. It is interesting to note that the figure of Hmar population, which was 10,411 in 1901, came down to 3188 and 4524 in 1961 and 1971 census respectively. The Hmar population of Mizoram as per 2011 census is 18,155, although they claim that their total population within the demand area is approximately 60,947. It is probable that the assimilated Hmars are not conscious of their Hmar identity and happy to be identified as Mizo.

• In the 1960s, the Bible Society of India (BSI) and the Hmar Musical Assembly had completed the publication of Hmar Holy Bible and Hmar Devotional Song books. The Hmar National Union (HNU) General Headquarters instructed its volunteers in Vangai Range to collect the Mizo Holy Bibles and Mizo Hymn books used by Hmar families. Meanwhile, there was a widespread rumour among the public that the collected Mizo Holy Bibles were burnt by some volunteers. This created a feeling of hatred and enmity among the Mizo speaking groups against the Hmars in general. According to Lienkhawkam, the collected Mizo Holy Bibles and Songbooks were not burned or destroyed, but distributed among the United Pentecostal Church (UPC) members, who were still using the Lusei dialect as a medium of church administration and worship services. There was no evidence of such resolution or order from the HNU high command, Blocks or Units to burn the collected Mizo
Holy Bible. No doubt there was an order from HNU leaders to collect it but there was no evidence of burning episode.

- The Hmar dominated Churches of the Independent Church of India (ICI) and the Evangelical Free Church of India (EFCI) also established several educational institutions with Hmar language as medium of instruction in several Hmar villages. But all these schools were forcibly closed down by MNF. The school authorities were told to introduce only Mizo language as medium of instruction in these schools if continue. Further, some churches which were administrated by the Hmar denominations were intimidated to close down unless they merge with the Churches dominated by Mizo speaking people. It seems that the MNF not only played Mizo politics but also church politics. To many Hmars, the MNF movement was not secular in nature. The HNU gravely condemned such atrocities and actions of MNF volunteers upon the Hmar speaking people in Mizoram.

- The study also found that Hmar autonomy movement in Mizoram did not receive support from the Hmars in the state capital, Aizawl. Most of the Hmars in Aizawl felt satisfied to be called Mizo and they do not feel the need for safeguarding the Hmar community in the form of an Autonomous District Council provided in the Sixth Schedule to the constitution of India. The Hmars who are satisfied to be called Mizo are none other than those Hmars who have been completely assimilated with the Mizo society and culture in all spheres of life and played a very important role in the Mizo society and politics. The Hmar movement under the banner of HPC was very much supported by the Hmars of Northern Mizoram. This group felt the need to preserve and maintain a separate Hmar ethnic identity and culture. They advocated the need to develop and promote the Hmar dominated areas educationally, economically and politically. Therefore, the support base of the HPC movement was not strong enough among the Hmars in Mizoram due to the absence of unity and consensus between the assimilated and unassimilated Hmars.

- The study found that the non-inclusion of the Hmar inhabited areas of Manipur and Assam into the then Lushai Hills District Council was the most important factor for the consciousness of Hmar identity and the emergence of several political parties based on Hmar
The Hmars, who initially sought for linguistically and culturally kindred ethnic groups to merge with and form a bigger and viable Mizo identity, began to maintain their separate identity since 1952 when their hopes for an integration of Hmar inhabited areas with Lushai Hills failed. Consequently, they formed their own political organisations such as Hmar National Congress in 1954, Hmar National Union in 1958, Mizo Integration Council (MIC) in 1977, and Hmar Peoples’ Federation (HPF) on 9th July 1977. They began to emphasise on the preservation of their ethnic identity, culture and unity of the community. The Hmar political consciousness and their political movement since then holds the key to Hmar politics cutting across state boundaries.

- The study found that autonomy movement of the Hmars in Mizoram have evolved out of ethno-politics and ethno-development. Identity and economic backwardness of the Hmar dominated areas seem to be the most important factor that has contributed to the shaping of autonomy movement in Mizoram.

- The study found that the Young Mizo Association (YMA) and many other Mizo civil societies have not supported the Hmar autonomy movement on the ground that granting of HPC demand would lead to bifurcation of Mizoram state. By virtue of its enormous membership, it has not only emerged as one of the strongest voluntary organisations in Mizoram but also has now assumed the status of a vigilant group, which shows no hesitation to exercise their authoritative control of the state decision-making apparatus on some issues. YMA felt that the creation of Lai (Pawi), Mara (Lakher) and Chakma Autonomous District Councils by the Government of Mizoram have already weakened the Mizo unity. HPC-D reacted against the policy of YMA and dictated to all office bearers of YMA units and branches in their demand area to quit their official work and to submit YMA office seals to the YMA Headquarters. Although CYMA informed all the YMA units not to abide by the dictates of HPC-D but seventeen branches of YMA within the Tuisualral Group YMA unanimously resolved to obey the order of HPC-D and submitted seals and letter heads of YMA to the Central YMA before 25th April, 2012. The Hmars had accused of the YMA of promoting suzerainty of the Lushai speaking people over the non-Lushai speaking community. The increasing intervention of YMA as a spokesman of the dominant Mizo speaking people in the affairs of the decision making body of the Government of Mizoram
paved the way for many ethnic groups to fight for their political security. The existence of YMA in the Mizo society is very significant for the Mizo unity and philanthropic activities but their increasing intervention in the administration of the state Government has certainly caused a lot of tensions between the non-Lushai speaking people and the dominant Lushai speaking group. Though CYMA claimed that it is not their policy to interfere in the state politics and ethnic politics, but its influence partly restricted state administration and ethnic politics on many issues.

- In the midst of strong opposition from the YMA, the representatives of Scheduled tribes of Mizoram namely Hmar, Mara, Lai, Paite and Chakma organised a Convention on 15th May, 2013 and formed Mizoram Minority Co-ordination Committee to co-ordinate and champion the rights of all the tribals in Mizoram. The convention demands for more powers to the ADCs, peaceful negotiation with HPC (D), and support for Paite Tribe Council (PTC) demand for ADC. The ethnic minority groups in Mizoram felt that they are in need of certain safeguards and protection of their political rights and ethnic identities from the dominant ethnic group.

- The repressive policy of the Government of Mizoram have compelled the HPC volunteers to take up arms. The subsequent man-hunt launched by the police personnel compelled HPC volunteers to flee into the jungle. That was the beginning of armed confrontation between HPC and the Government of Mizoram. Mizoram Government strongly asserted that conceding of the demand of Autonomous District Council under the sixth schedule to the Constitution of India is non-negotiable.

- The question of SHDC boundary was an endless issue between the Government of Mizoram and HPC. The first two Boundary Commissions concluded that the Hmars are not majority in almost all the villages of the HPC demand area. The HPC flatly rejected these two Commission Reports and claimed that the report was very bias and one-sided. This has led to the formation of another Boundary Commission consisting of three members in 1995. The Boundary Commission submitted its final report on 1st August, 1996 to the Government of Mizoram. The Commission after conducting house to house survey concluded that the Hmars are in majority in all the villages of HPC demand area. This is contradictory to the statement of the Chief Minister of Mizoram who pointed out that except in one village, Hmars have no
majority in northern part of Mizoram. Interestingly, the Commission Report was withheld by
the Government of Mizoram. This shows that the Government of Mizoram was not serious
enough for a full implementation of the Memorandum of Settlement. Lack of agreement on
the question of demarcation of Council boundary based on Hmar majority has been the main
stumbling block for the proper functioning of the Council till today. The SHDC functioned at
the mercy of the State Assembly.

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