INTRODUCTION

The entire belt of North-Eastern India is a zone of ethnic and political tension, which in turn bred political turmoil in the form of armed revolt or insurgency. Mizoram is not an exception. The land which was a paradise for anthropologists, has become now-a-days, a part of local and regional instability. This instability has to be studied and analysed from the geopolitical perspective, as the region has become the focus of attention at national and international scale. The North-East Region, represented a melting pot of heterogeneous races, language and cultures. The migration of races originated from the East or North-East to West. In the process of migration inter-mingling of races took place in the region; and then many of the inhabitants confined themselves to the difficult terrain of the mountainous periphery. The geographical distribution of phenomena kept them isolated and this phenomena enabled them to retain their traditional characteristics.

In the North-East Region, identity and individuality (of groups and sub-groups) crisis assumed serious proportions.

Each tribe and sub-tribe of the region is in the race for recognition of its racial identity upon which the demand or regional autonomy in political and economic terms has been propagated subsequently. This has given way to regionalism and irredentism in different forms in different parts of the region. Such claims based on narrow parochial considerations, fomented tension and crisis which ultimately encouraged secessionist movement. In fact, the ethnic and linguistic affiliations remained the most powerful elements of regional movements in the region particularly in Mizoram. The creation of Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram had consequent impact in the minor ethnic groups, who were stridently rooting for autonomy, for example the Hmar, the Lakhers and the Chakmas.

The Government of India had to compromise with the situation by allowing smaller ethnic groups to have autonomous District Councils - Chakma, Pawi, Lakher D.C., but not smaller states (may not be economically viable) that may go against the name of national integration. But all these changes are the results of power struggle based on intense ethnic chauvinism and irredentism. This ultimately proved the role of geopolitical undercurrents.

The colonial policy largely aimed at excluding the area from the remaining part of the region and the country. They initiated specific policy measures that not only permitted the retention of traditional equations in political, economic and social relations, but also enabled the population to come under the limited influence of change. This, then, suggested that the administration's intention was of maintaining the status-quo rather than dealing with development and instability. The specific politico-administrative measures aimed at minimum interference while ensuring maximum mobilization to the policy measures. These were followed by the specific financial considerations, relaxations and grants that maintained the status-quo. They also initiated a form of representation, which largely comprised the various chiefs. This reset the role of the population at large.

It was out of strategic necessity that a loose system of political administration was established in these frontier areas. Communication remained meagre if not non-existent. The contact with outside world was tenuous,

which suited their geo-political interest. But, in the process, British failed to perceive and appreciate the economic and political requirements of the area and consequently neglected them. This policy, in fact, continued up to the 1940's and 1950's.

These aspects along with traditional aloofness, led to conceptualisation that incorporated a conservative political establishment allied to, and providing justification for, the tribal resistance. Political perception of the mountainous inhabitants was that the centralization of power would deprive them of their legitimate authority. This to some extent still pervades their attitude.

The systematisation of the administration, therefore, was made intentionally different. The tribal societies found it difficult to perceive this distinction. To them these efforts were only means of bringing them under political sub-ordination. This suggested that the legal instruments were not implemented effectively to introduce political changes unless the tribal political culture is pre-disposed (to which the tribal society is not attuned).

The British kept the inhabitants particularly the tribals of eastern frontier of the region as a 'museum piece'
by inventing an exotic barb around them through the introduction of various Rules and regulations. The British subjects were debarred from going beyond the 'Inner line' without a permit from the District authority. This was primarily intended to maintain peace and non-interference in tribal affairs and economic exploitation. But its results were not bright. The tribals lost their contact with the plainspeople and thus a cleavage between the plains people and the Hill people was created by the British authority in India.

Based on the recommendation of the Bordoloi Sub-Committee of the Constituent Assembly, the Constitution of India incorporated a provision in the 'Sixth Schedule' for the social and economic development of the Hill Districts of the North-East. These districts fell under the category of 'Excluded Area' or 'Partially Excluded Area'. Lushai Hills District (now Mizoram) came under the 'Excluded Area'. This arrangement was sequence to the colonial policy and was continued in order to safeguard interests of the tribal people after independence. It is said that this policy had to do more with geopolitical considerations that took into

5. Constitution of India 1950 (Sixth Schedule of the Constitution), Government of India.
account different racial and cultural identity as well as politico-economic basis of the Hill Tribes inhabiting North East India.

At the fag end of the British Raj in India, a plan was proposed by a British constitutional expert, R. Coupland to create a buffer state comprising the 'Excluded and partially excluded Areas' in the easternmost part of the country. The plan was not acceptable and consequently shelved and discarded.

The colonial administrators annexed, expanded and integrated different tribal districts with the mainland for their own imperial interests. But they did not interfere in the inhabitants' internal affairs, and left them to manage their affairs according to their own respective tradition. The British did not take initiative to bring them into the mainstream of national life. Rather by their attitude and approach they encouraged differences between and among the plain people and the Hill inhabitants by creating an artificial barrier under the cover of 'Inner line'. The declaration of Hill Areas as "Excluded Areas" tended in the long run to insulate the aspirations of the inhabitants of the

hill section from sharing common perspective with the rest of the inhabitants of the country.

The present state of Mizoram was a part of Assam known as Lushai Hills District. It was one of the districts of Assam in the extreme southern fringe of N.E. India. In 1954 the nomenclature of the Lushai Hills district was changed to Mizo Hills District, by the Act of Parliament which later on in 1972, was elevated to the status of Union Territory Mizoram and subsequently, attained its Statehood on February 20, 1987.

Mizoram is located between 22° 19' N and 24° 19' N latitude and 92° 16' E longitude covering a geographical area of 21087 sq.km with a population of 4,93,757 (1981 census). It had an average density of 23 persons per sq.km. The state of Mizoram is surrounded by Burma in the East, Manipur and Cachar district of Assam in the North, Tripura and Bangladesh in the West and again Burma in the South. Geographically, it is 277 km from North to South, 121 km from East to West.

The Tropic of Cancer goes through the middle of the State (just south of Aizawl town 23° 30' N). (Map No. 1)

LOCATION OF MIZORAM

NORTH EAST REGION OF INDIA

CHINA
ARUNACHAL PRADESH
BHUTAN
ASSAM
MEGHALAYA
NAGALAND
MANIPUR
TRIPURA
MIZORAM
BANGLADESH

50 0 50 100 150Km

Map No. 1
The geographical location of Mizoram is of great significance, and forms an ideal field of geographical (and Geopolitical) study. It has a long inter-State border with Assam (123 km) Tripura (66 km); and Manipur (95 km). Besides, Mizoram shares international borders with (from three sides) Burma in the East and South (404 km) and Bangladesh in the West (306 km). This has divided the Mizos and their associated (cognate) clans. It has a complex North-South trending mountain terrain which is, thickly forested. Along with its inaccessible and isolated nature, the southern margins and the trijunction points (of Mizoram - Tripura, Assam; Mizoram - Manipur - Assam; Mizoram - Bangladesh - Tripura; and, Mizoram - Burma - Bangladesh) have formed an important core of activities at the time of instability (insurgency). This is the reason why this frontier state has exaggerated strategic and geopolitical significance.  

The important characteristics of the state of Mizoram can be summed up as -

(i) It has a predominantly mountainous terrain
(ii) It is predominantly composed of tribal population.
(iii) Its accessibility is limited to Silchar-Aizawl Highway (NH 54). The communication within the State is also limited.

12. R. Gopalakrishnan, n.1 p.25.
(iv) It has predominantly subsistence agriculture with wide-spread jhum cultivation.

(v) Its socio-economic profile is confined to tribal structure.

(vi) Its economy is dominated by small-scale industry and cottage industry that substantiates local needs, and

(vii) The tribal population is highly politicised and is predominantly Christian. Significant non-Christian elements in the Southern part of the state have added to the balkanization of the state.

Mizoram is the cradle of diverse communities like the Lushai, Ralte, Paite, Bete, Powi, Lakher, Hmar, Riang, Tlanglau, Bawm, Chakmas and so on. They are mostly of Mongoloid stock, who migrated to the present location from the southern and south-western parts of China through upper Burma. The inhabitants are mostly Christians (83.81%) followed by Buddhists (8.19%) and others Hindus (7%) and Muslims (0.45%). The literacy figure in Mizoram is one of the highest in the country, next to Chandigarh, Delhi and Kerala (70.42%) as against all India average of 36.23%. Despite the high literacy, Mizoram as a whole is economically backward. This backwardness is largely

due to unfavourable natural environment, the poor and inadequate communication network (11.89 km per 100 sq.km as against 47.02 km of all India). It is more or less isolated from the rest of the country. The communication within the state itself is also limited. The mountainous terrain of the state has exerted substantial influence on the agriculture which is the main source of livelihood of the people.

Some Terminological Clarifications:

The use of the term 'Geopolitics' has long remained proscribed, as it connoted designs for territorial expansion and the ideologies that encouraged such an action. The constant figurative use of the term had further diluted its significance. But, persistent review of relevant literature suggested that Geopolitics was in effect a study of complex relationships between political and geographical configurations of a territorial Unit. Applying it on a scale, Geopolitical reasonings revealed alternative approaches to interpretation of crisis situations and parameters and their

15. Methodological and terminological definitions and clarifications have been adopted from R.Gopalakrishnan, Draft Manuscript of article on Reflections on Political Geography of India". In addition to this, R.Gopalakrishnan's works on various aspects of Political Geography of the North-Eastern States have been widely and exclusively used and quoted in the present work.
impact on stability. In other words, inherent in such an understanding was the accounting of spatial configurations while examining the relationship between forces and masses and that crisis on scale were interrelated. Thus, the present study not only accounts for the role of permanent geographical features but also of change and movements which occur for a short time over a small area. These changes and movements frequently unsettled, or speed up and/or at times overturned the peculiar power relationships to create specific pattern of spatial ensembles. The articulation of which outlines the value of geographical reasoning.

By the term 'crisis' we mean the consequences of the locational attributes at local, regional and national levels. In other words, problem faced by a given territorial population group/sub-group and its inter-relationship with the environment. The environment in such a context is applied in a wider sense and covered perception and responses. Frequently, crisis is often used in conjunction with problems. The present attempt adopts the same approach but with one qualification that the problems/or crisis faced by a territorial group with a definite territorial parameter transforms itself when there are changes in preconditions.

The study of the relationship of the geographical conditions and political processes are the primary task of
political geographer. Apart from the knowledge and background of economic and geo-political implications, the field of study also embraces the application of concepts of State power through which measurement and evaluation of the State policies could be made.

The influence of the 'core' on the activities of the 'periphery' (Mizoram) inevitably leads us to an area-analysis emphasising the tactical concepts and processes. The identification and formulating explanation for questions like under difficult terrain condition with limited resource potentials, how insurgency developed become obvious. Other aspects like the psychological background and the environment that made the inhabitants responsive to these conditions fall within such a perspective. 16

The conflict of two or more opposing interests are the inherent causes for aggravation of problems everywhere. The two opposing interests in this case were the State (Central Government) and the dissidents comprising of traditional pressure groups and extra-mural forces. The final outcome of the two interest groups depended much on the mobilisation of resource and management of the crisis parameters.

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Mizoram, by virtue of its location at the periphery of the North-East part of the country reflected the interaction and tension between the State and ethnic nationalism. These have created a dynamic socio-economic structure that reality responded to the changes introduced in the mountainous landscape. Traditional patterns and modernization have exhibited clash of interests between the State, the pressure group and the population. This also reflected a sustained rivalry between them. The resort to insurgency was a means to eradicate this conflicting relationship for despite the attempts of the State to rationalise social and economic relationships, violence as a means to redress problems has continued. These were either launched by the majority population group like Lusei and affiliated groups, or by the minority groups such as Pawis, Lakhers, and Hmars, etc. The crisis parameters were also different from the pattern of State formation. These influenced the nature of conflicts and had determined the development of the territorial unit's extent. Ample testimony is provided by the size and shape of the unit as well as by the recommendations of the boundary Commissions. The demarcation of the boundary were also clear reflections of settlement pattern of constituent territorial units as in the north Mizoram particularly those sections

17. See R.Gopalakrishnan, 1990, Political Geography of India's North-East, Vikas, New Delhi.
bordering the thickly populated plains of Cachar, Manipur, Tripura and Bangladesh plains.

Mizoram was conceived to represent a specific social organization and social economic relations. It also indicated the advantages the erstwhile intermediary territories achieved through state intervention. However, it allowed the individual and factions to challenge the existing pattern and required use of administrative machinery (legal or illegal) to force a change in the pattern.

Because of its evolution, terrain condition and policies, Mizoram lacked behind in economic, social and political development. It represented strong entrenched feudal element and was re-inforced by virtual divisions. Influence of modernization process and exposure due to the World Wars enabled the traditional pressure groups to seek separation. In consequence, the state experienced dependence and under-development; its economic and political rhythms were reactions to change or to the impulses generated in other parts of the country. 18

Crisis or problems, therefore, reflected the responses of a territorial population/sub-group to a given set of circumstances - these circumstances were primarily locational

18. Ibid.
attributes of the State.

The geopolitical perspective emerged when relationship between people, territory and ideology was sought on the basis of the distribution of geographical phenomenon of the State. In other words, crisis was the manifestation of inherent drawbacks of the territorial unit and the response of the inhabitants who continuously strove to offset these drawbacks vis-à-vis regional and national conditions.

The crisis posed a threat to the traditional imperatives. It is premature to deal extensively the responses of the government, for the diagnosis of the ecological aspect is only at the beginning stage. The impact of this depended on a variety of unpredictable factors including the attitude of the participants (also the leaders of the political organizations) and the shape of the public opinion. Much depended on whether these crisis were coherently interpreted as a part of the overall ecological imbalance, or whether a rational path to equilibrium can be treated with vividness and equity.

Initial response was to strengthen the co-operative tendencies in the state. They were, however, of greatly and effect different views of causes and were product of circumstances
of intense perceived diversity. It did not lend itself to solution by way of regional contrast.\(^{19}\)

It is an accepted proposition that physical and ecological phenomena affected the political events in a state. It is more applicable to Mizoram where geographical environments has had a tremendous influence on the developments in the State. The socio-economic changes were due to the same phenomena. The course of events and pattern of development in Mizoram can be analysed in the light of some important factors such as distance, accessibility, resource endowment, location of territorial groups, perception and as response of inhabitants distributed in a wide territory.\(^{20}\)

Mizoram, like the other State of the North-East has a peripheral location. This peripheral location offered an ideal ground for study of the interplay of distance, dependence and differences which interact with each other to create a mosaic of uncertainty within the territory and the people living therein.

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20. See Gopalakrishnan, n.12
Purpose, Objectives and Justifications:

The purpose and objective of the present study is to understand and identify the geopolitical viability of Mizoram. The present study becomes important when the strategic and security environment of the country is considered. Thus the study of political-geographical processes suggest a close inter-relationships and linkages between environment-processes-population-behaviour. Geographers are equipped to tackle the political processes and spatial consequences directly. Explanation of areal arrangement and landscape forms a natural fall out of the present study. It is also contended that the locational perspective goes a long way in understanding the politico-geographical processes operating in Mizoram. Moreover, political processes are inseparable from the societal forces by which man orders his political life.

The scope of the study includes the conspicuous alternative i.e., the rationale of which being adaptations and responses. The study will identify the action-space of the people which they have individually perceived and responded to. These are co-relates of social and psychological mechanism on which the geographical attributes of Mizoram have spatio-structural implications. There are two distinct
co-relates in the study; these are space and time. These suggest qualitative implications offering contextual considerations. The study thus includes following hypotheses.

**Hypotheses**

1) Generalisation concerning the location of the State can be organised into some sort of geopolitical frame-work.

2) The processes of change affected political and geographical patterns and relationship as evinced in places, area and landscapes. It has direct influence on the succession of events, actions and operations that man employed to establish and maintain change in the political pattern in geographical space.

3) Perception of a population can be related to appraisal of the environment on a spectrum between opposite extremes of determinism and possibilism.

4) Environmental possibilism which interprets man as a free agent choosing between the wide or limited range of choices made available by his environment.

5) The fact that these react to environment as it is provided rather than as it really is with decisions being made in the light of perceived factors and past experiences.
Review of Literature.

The literature on Mizoram available so far is not comprehensive. Earlier, the British administrators, who were in charge of district administration made an attempt on the anthropological aspects of Lushai Life and that the administrative convenience in view. The army and the civil officers highlighted the land and the people from the administrative and strategic points of view. For example, J. Shakespear, who was the Superintendent of Lushai Hills for fourteen years acquired a knowledge of the Lushai and other tribes inhabiting the district and published a valuable book, 'The Lushai-Kuki clans' in 1912. Another book entitled 'History of Assam Rifles' was published by L.W. Shakespear in 1929. N.E. Parry, the Superintendent of Lushai District in 1920 wrote "A Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies" in 1928 and "The Lakhers" in 1932, B. Carey and H.N. Tucks wrote a book "The Chin Hills - A History of the People" in 1931. A.G. McCall wrote "Lushai Chrysalis" in 1949 which was descriptive in nature throwing light on social systems of the Lushais. But these original works of the British administrators concentrated mainly on the sociological and anthropological aspects of the Lushais and other tribes stressing their mode of life and environment. The
growth of political and administrative system, policy and prospects along with the socio-economic problems of the Mizo tribals were peripherally treated in these studies.

The post-independence works on Mizoram have no doubt widened the range of study, but no work has been done on geopolitical aspects of Mizoram. The interplay of space and politics has been completely untouched as yet. L.B. Thanga (1978), Lalthangliana (1977), A.C. Roy (1982), N. Bibedon (1980) have written comprehensive books on Mizoram which highlighted social, political and administrative matters. The economic aspect of Mizoram has been studied by B. Bose (1967), P.C. Goswami (1969), J.B. Baveja (1970), N. Saha (1973) and K.K. Upadhyaya (1985). The publications of the government of India and the Government of Mizoram also dealt with social-economic aspect of the state. R.N. Prasad (1986) and V.V. Rao (1987) highlighted the evolution of the government and the party politics in the state. The historical aspects of Mizoram were studied by A. Makenzie (1869) A.S. Reid (1893). However, none has touched the geographical aspects. J.M. Cosh, and H. P. Das (1970) have only studied geography of the region, including Mizoram, but it, too, is not complete in all respects. It has ignored the impact of geographical factors on the political process of Mizoram.
Recently, two books on geopolitics in the Indian context have been written: Debabrot Sen's 'Basic Principle of Geopolitics and History' (1975) is the most original work on the subject but it is mainly concerned with the theoretical aspect of the subject with relation to history and geography. However, it is a great source and a guide to the present study. The second book on geopolitics is by G. S. Singh (1966) 'Maratha Geopolitics and the Indian Nationalism' but it deals mainly with Maharashtra whose context is different from that of the North-East Region (Mizoram).

**METHODOLOGY**

The present research is based on empirical method and follows the line of J.R.V. Prescott, R. Muir and R. W. McColl. The emphasis on description, analysis and evaluation of inter-relation between geography and politics as done by McColl in his political ecological approach (1966) has been made. The organisational basis for the study of interrelationship between political-process and environment as followed by R. Muir (1975) has been kept in mind in the analysis. The behavioural approach in which the political authorities instigated landscape changes through legislation concerning security, territorial integration, socio-economic policy has also been taken into consideration.
The present work mainly depends on the secondary source such as books, magazines, articles available in various libraries, published and unpublished works of scholars. The old government records, the reports of various commissions and committees have also been consulted. The Constituent Assembly debates, Assembly and Parliamentary debates have been utilised for the analysis of the work. The Survey of India, Shillong and Silchar branches have been fully utilised. Topographical maps and various other records have been of great help to this researcher. The field work mainly included on-the-spot study of natural environment and human activities, economic functions, political and social behaviour the people of the State. The personal contact with the personnel of various state and central government organizations are worth appreciating.

Other data have been collected from the statistical handbook of Mizoram and the "Basic Statics of North-Eastern Region", N.E.C. Secretariat, Shillong, and various Directorates of Agriculture, Industry, Education, Statistics of the State. The Border Road organization's net work in the state and the neighbouring areas have also provided materials for the study. The data collected for the purpose have a geographical
and territorial basis. The region wise, i.e., district, sub-division, block or village-wise classification has been made, which will facilitate in analysing spatial attributes of the political process (political system) or Mizoram. Geopolitically, the international boundary and the security problems of the most sensitive part of the country can be analysed with the helps of data, charts, maps and secret documents collected from different sources.

Chapterisation:

The entire research work has been grouped into nine chapters. The first chapter begins with the theme of the research and its relevance and importance of the study with reference to local, regional and national significance. This chapter also includes the objectives, methodology, review of literature and hypothesis.

Chapter II deals with the entire physical environment of the State which throws light in detail on the physical potentialities of Mizoram. In brief, it discusses the physiogeography, geology, climate and vegetation, soil and resource potentialities.

Chapter III discusses the historical evolution of Mizoram and population characteristics and their settlement
during the pre-independence and post-independence periods. Chapter IV throws light on the socio-economic profiles of Mizoram. The agricultural landscape and economic potentialities are the main subjects of this chapter. The communication network is also another important part of this chapter.

Chapter V highlights the evolution of the boundary of Mizoram from the beginning to the present time. The second part of the chapter deals with the administrative subdivisions of the state. Chapter VI analyses the development of political institutions both traditional and modern, and their interrelationships.

Chapter VII speaks of the political participation of the Mizos and their political perception and behaviour and the role of the tradition of the Mizos in influencing the decision-making process. Chapter VIII deals mainly with the insurgency and counter-insurgency and finally, the settlement with the MNF.

Chapter IX deals with the problems and prospects of the whole project, including the testing of the hypothesis.