

**DIMENSIONS OF
ETHNO-NATIONALISM AND POLITICS OF IDENTITY:
A CASE STUDY OF THE ZO PEOPLE**

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H. GINLALLIAN SIMTE



**Centre For Political Studies
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi – 110 067
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CENTRE FOR POLITICAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

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DECLARATION

Certified that the dissertation entitled **DIMENSIONS OF ETHNO-NATIONALISM AND POLITICS OF IDENTITY: A CASE STUDY OF THE ZO PEOPLE** submitted by **H.GINLALLIAN SIMTE** in partial fulfilment for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy in his original work. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree to this university or any other university to the best of our knowledge.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

PROF. SUDHA PAI

(Chairperson)

(acting ch)

DR. BISHNU MOHAPATRA

(Supervisor)

CHAIRPERSON
Centre for Political Studies
School of Social Sciences-II
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067

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- H. Ginallian Simte

CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION:

The concept of ethno-nationalism advocated by the leading intellectuals in Europe draws heavily from the libertarian spirit of enlightenment: “if individuals have a right to autonomy, then by analogy nations and peoples have the right to self-rule.”¹ This spirit gets manifested in the 19th century when nationalism based on ethnic identity became an international revolutionary creed aimed at destroying the power of ossified autocratic empires by liberating the subject peoples. It must be made explicit here that the term ‘nationality’ has often been broadly defined in two ways using two criteria—‘ethnic’ and ‘civic’. While ‘ethnic nationality’ is based on the consciousness of shared identity, culture, belief in common ancestors and history, ‘civic nationality’ is encompassed within a geographically defined territory. This implies that ethno-nationalism is the transformation of passive, often isolated and politically excluded communities into potential or actual “nations”—active participants and self-conscious in their historic identities. This effectually makes ethno-nationalism a potential force which challenges the contours of state boundaries, and seek to bargain space within or without the state wherein the ethnic interests may be optimally realized. Against this theoretical backdrop

¹ Istiad Ahmed, *State, Nation and Contemporary South Asia*, (Great Britain: Pinter, 1996), p.8.

the dissertation looks into the rise of Zo ethnic consciousness in the North-East India and the Zo inhabited Chin Hills of Burma. Our work puts this consciousness in history in order to observe its emergence as well as its developments at different points of time

1.2 FIELD OF ENQUIRY:

In this study the term Zo is used for the group of people who are commonly known by outsiders as Chin, Kuki, or Lushai (Mizo). This group of people shares the same culture, religion, folklores, same linguistic affinities, and occupy contiguous geographical areas apart from claiming to have originated from the same place. Recent researchers and scholars among the Kuki-Chin-Mizo ethnic group shared the same view that 'Zo' is their 'generic name' (Zo as the generic name is discussed in Chapter III), whereas Chin or Kuki is an imposed name, Dr. G.A. Grierson also wrote in his book *'Linguistic Survey of India'* Vol.III, Part-III:

'The words Kuki and Chin are synonymous and are both used for many of the hill tribes in question. Kuki is an Assamese or Bengali term, applied to various hill tribes, such as the Lushei, Thadous, etc. The name is not used by the tribes themselves, who use titles such as Zo or Yo and Sho.'²

The treatise, therefore, used Zo in the subsequent discussion with 'Zo' of 'Zo people' or even 'Mizo/Zomi' ('Mi' means people) as its varied plural form,

² Dr. G.A. Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol.III(iii), (Calcutta, 1906), pp.1-2.

either the Britishers, Indian Government or Burmese Government used different names—Chin, Kuki, Lushai—for the same Zo ethnic group. These ‘given names’ have a great impact on the Zo polity as each group(s) of people who had identified with such names projected it to be their true ethnic identity. This has made the Zo ethnic-politics more complex and this complexity has to be kept in mind while understanding the politics of Zo identity. This study is an attempt to present the various ethno-nationalist movements within the Zos into a single unified style.

The territorial scope of the study is confined to the Zo inhabited areas along the Indo-Burma borders. This includes the present administrative unit of Chin State and parts of Magwe Division of Burma; Mizoram, parts of Manipur and Assam in India; and Chittagong Hills of Bangladesh. An attempt is made to synchronise the historical and political events related to Zos in this area.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND METHODOLOGY:

While theorizing the phenomenon of ethno-nationalism in the Zo context, an academic approach that tends to impose rigid or inappropriate theoretical categories on the reality needed to be avoided. But, without explicit theoretical reflection crucial issues may become elusive. So, a whole chapter is devoted to a comprehensive survey of theories of ethnicity and its related concepts.

The basic framework that informs this work has been laid can be broadly termed as 'syncretist' in our work attempts have been made to employ disparate theories and concepts of ethno-nationalism to understand the phenomenon of Zo ethno-nationalism. How should one explain the development of Zo political organization like the Mizo National Front (MNF) in Mizoram, Zomi National Council (ZNC) and (Kuki National Assembly) KNA in Manipur and Chin National Forum (CNF) in the Chin Hills of Burma during the post-colonial period? Why did the most expansive Zo ethno-national bodies like the Zo Reunification Organisation (ZORO) and Zomi Reunification Organisation (ZRO) consistently forges towards a unificationist goal, or why do they feel the need to work for such 'Pan-Zo nationalist vision?' These and many other allied questions are sought to be answered in this treatise. At times the answer seemed elusive; however, a blend of the primordialist and constructionist views (apparently contradictory) throws some light on the issues discussed in this work.

A discussion on the legacy of Zo resistance during the colonial period is felt necessary; and therefore, anti-imperialist resistances by the Lushais of Mizoram, Chins or Upper Burma, and the Kukis of Manipur have been briefly discussed. This is necessary to examine the evolution of Zo ethno-nationalism right from the colonial past to the more recent developments. The assumption in doing this is that the contemporary character of Zo ethno-nationalism can only be understood by linking it to its evolution in the colonial period. During the colonial period one can see the genesis of a proto-Zo identity in their anti-colonial consciousness.

Even though the primordialist approach is considered to hold water in explaining uniformly the proto-nationalist resistance culture during the colonial period, for different parts of the Zo country, the later political developments in Mizoram, Manipur and the Chin Hills deserves a different understanding. In other words, the unique features of the post-Independent ethno-nationalist tendencies among the Zo people in Mizoram, Manipur and the Chin Hills need to be recognized. For instance, whereas the emergence of MNF in Mizoram out of the problems of famine-related issues may be understood in terms of 'relative deprivation' theory, the concept of 'resource competition' became more relevant while explaining the birth of ZNC or ZRO within the multi-ethnic context of Manipur.

Unlike the adoption of the primordialist view of ethnicity for a construal of anti-colonial Zo resistances, now a constructionist view becomes more relevant for understanding the post-colonial political development among the Zo people. Faced with the 'other', (which can be the Indian state itself in case of Mizoram, or other ethnic groups like the Meiteis or Nagas in case of multiethnic Manipur), the Zo people sharply felt the need to define a pan-Zo ethnic identity vis-à-vis other groups or the outsider, called "vai" in the Zo language. Perhaps, this is done with a view to maximize their gains in their competition with other ethnic groups for scarce resources like jobs, political mileage, prestige, etc. But the argument that Zo ethno-nationalism or ethnic group is merely a 'construct' vis-à-vis the other, does not mean that this real or imagined identity is a false identity, nor does it mean that this 'imagined nationalism' is not genuine and illegitimate. Thus, the employment of many concepts, apparently unconnected in themselves, makes this treatise essentially 'syncretic' in its framework.

1.4 STURCTURE:

A scheme of four-fold chapterization has been followed in this study to make the subject more manageable for analysis. The *first chapter* is the introduction which briefly touches upon the meaning of ethno-nationalism, and then defines the scope of study, before making a statement of the problem and the methodology adopted in the study.

The *second chapter* makes a comprehensive survey of the most significant theories of ethnicity, ethno-nationalism and other related concepts which is hoped to illuminate our understanding of the subject. But actual application of theories which are formulated by Western scholars (in the course of their analysis of certain problems) for the study of Zo ethno-nationalism, which emerged in a different socio-political setting, is always problematic. However, one great benefit of a survey of theories has always been their usefulness in equipping a social analyst with the languages necessary to construe or articulate socio-political issues. To this extent, the chapter on theory is found to be useful.

The *third chapter* lays down the background of Zo ethno-nationalism by enquiring into the early history, migration and traditional socio-political institutions of the Zo people. The generic term 'Zo' has also been adequately explained and its use in this study defended as well. The Chin-Lushai Conference of 1892 is also included in this chapter to vindicate the fact that the Zo people are a distinct ethnic group. This chapter is not directly related to the problem of ethno-nationalism, but it is useful in as far as it sets setting within which Zo ethno-nationalism emerges.

The *fourth chapter* focuses on the progress of ethno-nationalism from the colonial period to its mature growth during the post-colonial period when it got institutionalized in the form of MNF, ZORO, ZNC, ZRO, KNA, CNA, etc. The socio-political dimension of Zo ethno-nationalism finds expression as famine front, cultural club, anti-chieftain agitation, missionary movement, demand for statehood, etc. The spatial dimension of Zo ethno-nationalism has also been examined in this chapter by vertically cutting up the subject into geographical units like Mizoram, Manipur and the Chin Hills. The final and concluding part is an overview and assessment of the preceding chapters.

CHAPTER-II

ETHNIC GROUP, ETHNICITY AND ETHNO-NATIONALISM: A THEORETICAL EXPLORATION

2.1: ETHNIC, ETHNIC GROUP AND ETHNICITY:

The recent upsurge of ethnic nationalism and the message it carries has culminated in conceptualization and theorization of certain key terms or categories like ethnic group, tribe, ethnicity, state, nation, nationalism, etc. by social scientists drawn from different disciplines. Though one may attribute this as a reflection of the concerned response to a persisting societal crisis, it is more so due to the persistence and in fact the revival of the crisis in poly ethnic and multinational politics and the breaking up of some of them in the recent past.

Despite their key roles these concepts are shrouded in ambiguity due to improper utilization and their careless use of it. The employment and substitution of inappropriate terminologies, at times co-relating while on the other hand conflating and equating one term with the other, has wrought confusion thereby perpetuating or impeding the understanding of ethnic conflict or movements with its ramification. There are no doubt widely debated concepts around, but without any unanimity. Confounded as it is by widely varying definitions and usage, it can mean different things to different people and in different context, and more so when it becomes a political act. "Whether an ethnic group should be called an ethnic group at all or rather a nation, a nationality, a minority,

a tribe, a community, a culture, a people or be denied of these labels, has become more of a political issue than a simple procedure of scientific inquiry”¹. Thus, for a meaningful analysis of a complex ethnic scenario it would be in order to look into the conceptualization of such categories.

Regardless of the frequent use and the reverberation wrought about by it, ethnicity and ethnic group as a concept do not appear to be either precise or clear. In fact, “the English language possesses no term for the concept of an ethnic group or ethnic community”². Ethnicity seems to be a new term³, states Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan, who point to the fact that the word’s earliest dictionary appearance is in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1972. However, it was in 1953 that the term was first employed by David Reisman in Social Science to denote the character or quality of an ethnic group⁴. Historically, the term ethnic is much older and is derived from the Greek word ‘ethnos’ (which in turn is derived from the word ‘Ethnikos’), which originally meant ‘heathen’ or ‘pagan’. It was also used, particularly after the mid nineteenth century to refer to races or population sharing characteristics inherited genetically. One may contest this interpretation, as ethnos appears to be more suited to cultural rather than biological kinship differences... the similarity of cultural attributes in a group that attracts the term ethnos⁵.

¹ Walker Connor in ‘Nation Building or Nation Destroying’, *World Politics*, 24 (April 1972).

² Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 21.

³ Nathan Glazer and Daniel P Moynihan (eds.), *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, (Cambridge : Harvard University Press 1975), p.1.

⁴ M.P. Banton, ‘Ethnicity, Ethnic Group’ in Michael Mann (ed.), *Macmillan Student Encyclopedia of Sociology*, (London: Macmillan, 1983), p.114.

⁵ Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origin of Nations*, p.22.

There is a wide divergence of opinion among scholars regarding the meaning and interpretation of the term 'ethnic group'. Call it a generic term, interest defined group, specific term, ethnic group has been connoted either different meaning by different people and in different context. For some it refers to a small community with archaic characteristics⁶. For others ethnic group refers to both small and large communities not only in backward societies, but also in advance industrialized ones⁷. As pointed out by Glazer and Moynihan⁸, in the overall social context the practice was to use the term ethnic group to refer to minority and marginal group at the edges of a society, groups expected to assimilate, to disappear, to continue as survivals, exotic and troublesome to major elements of a society.

Ethnic consciousness, that is, realization by the members of the group that they belong to it and by virtue of it are united by emotional bonds and are concerned with the preservation of their type, is an indispensable ethnic feature. Hunter and Philip Whitten refer to ethnic as "... Any group of people within a larger cultural unit who identify themselves as a distinct unity, separate from the rest of that culture. Along with this element of self-identification, this group usually has a number of characteristics that shows its distinctiveness and put social distance between itself and others. These characteristics may include a separate dialect and social customs, distinctive dress, foods, and mode of life and a circumscribed land base. In some stratified societies, ethnic groups

⁶ Rouall Naroll, 'On Ethnic Unit Classification', *Current Anthropology* 5 (October 1964), p.1.

⁷ Frederick Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organisation of Cultural Difference* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1970).

⁸ Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan (eds.), *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, p.49.

are identical to social classes or caste. In the modern world ethnic groups are present in many societies for two major reasons: migration of people from other than their original homelands to other countries and incorporation of several separate cultural units into one large nation state⁹.”

Ethnic group has also been conceptualized in terms of primordial affinities and attachments. Every person carries with him through life ‘attachments’ derived from a place of birth, kinship, relationship, religion, language and social process that are natural for him and that provide a basis for an easy affinity with other people from the same background. The attachments constitute a ‘givens’ by the human condition and are rooted in the non-rational foundations of personality¹⁰. Milton Gordon has referred to it as “a shared sense of peoplehood”¹¹. Understood in this sense, ethnic groups ‘constitute the network into which human individual are born’ and where ‘every human infant or young child finds itself a member of a kinship group and of a neighbourhood’ and therefore comes to share with the other members of the group certain common cultural attributes¹². Some of these common cultural attributes are language, religion, customs, tradition, food, dress and music .

Originally, an ethnic group was distinguished by a common cultural heritage, and something to do with race and biological and genetic differentiation and there are

⁹ E. Hunter and P. Whitten, *Encyclopedia of Anthropology* (1976)

¹⁰ Clifford Geertz (ed.), *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and South Africa* (New York: Free Press, 1967), pp. 108-110.

¹¹ Milton Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life* (Oxford, 1967), p.24.

scholars who relate and supported race relation as the basis of ethnicity. Horowitz for instance prefers an inclusive concept of ethnicity that encompasses differences based on colour appearance, language, religion, common origin and their permutations and combinations. He writes: ‘... ethnicity easily embraces groups differentiated by colour, language and religion; it covers tribes, “races”, “nationalities” and “castes”¹³. Similarly, Bulmer writes: an ethnic group is a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of shared past and cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements which define the groups’ identity, such as kinship, religion, language, shared territory, nationality or physical appearance¹⁴. According to Cohen ethnic group is a “collectivity of people who share the same pattern of normative behaviour and form a part of a larger population, interacting with people from other collectivities within the framework of a social system¹⁵. He mentions about patterns of normative behaviour as the symbolic formations and activities found in kinship and marriage, ritual and other ceremonies. Thus, these definitions bring into focus ethnic groups as essential and permanent with main emphasis on the socio-psychological nature of ethnicity. According to J. Milton ‘it is important to distinguish a sociologically and psychologically important ethnicity from one that is only administrative or classificatory’¹⁶.

¹² John Rex, ‘Ethnic Identity and the Nation-State: The Political Sociology of Multi-Cultural Societies’, *Social Identities 1*, No.1, 1995, pp.24-25.

¹³ Donald H. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

¹⁴ H. Bulmer, ‘Race and Ethnicity’, in R.G. Burgess (ed.) *Key Variables in Sociological Investigation* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986).

¹⁵ Cohen Abner (ed.), *Urban Ethnicity* (London: Tavistock Publication, 1974), pp.ix-x.

¹⁶ J. Milton Xinger, ‘Ethnicity in Complex Societies: Structural Cultural and Characterological Factors’ in Lewis A. Coses and Otto N. Larsen (eds.), *The Uses of Controversy in Sociology* (New York, 1978).

Society is divided both horizontally and vertically and the question of an individual belonging to any ethnic monolith is hard to find. In a traditionally multi-religious, multi-racial, multi-lingual plural society united by a common history, civilizational identity and territory, ethnicity may cut across the dividing lines. In fact the vast majority of individuals residing in different parts of the globe or inhabiting the same nation-state as its citizens may have multiple ethnic identities. The same person may belong to different ethnic groups depending upon the distinguishing criterion or religion, language, community, etc. Even if common cultural pattern is the criteria, for distinguishing one ethnic group from other immediate ethnic group, it does not, according to E.K. Francis, automatically constitute an ethnic group¹⁷. The 'we' feeling or otherness of the group may be dormant until it comes into contact with another group. Closely related to this is the notion of 'boundary', first emphasized by Frederick Barth, as the main criterion for self-identification for ethnic groups¹⁸. According to him, different cultural traits that marked an ethnic group may change over time. Yet, the sense of separateness, of distinctive ethnicity often continues to persist, thus maintaining their ethnic boundaries.

Emphasizing a common descent, Glazer and Moynihan have defined ethnic group as all those groups of society that are characterized by a distinct sense of difference owing to culture or descent¹⁹. Still for others territorial relationship is important. Anthony Smith, for instance, describes ethnic as a named human population with shared ethnicity,

¹⁷ E.K. Francis, "The Nature of Ethnic Groups" in *American Journal of Sociology*, March 1947.

¹⁸ Frederick Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*.

¹⁹ Glazer and Moynihan (eds.), *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*.

myths, history and culture having association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity²⁰. Raman Onufrischuk, taking the line of Benedict Anderson, suggests that ethnos are imagined communities based to a great extent on language, shared history and the dissemination of shared cultural expression through the media, print in particular²¹.

Given the different definitions put up by different scholars one can infer that there is no agreed meaning of the term ethnic or ethnic group though each of them refer to some characteristics. A review of literature by Paul Brass suggests that ethnic groups can be defined in terms of objective attributes; with reference to subjective feelings and in relation to behaviour²². However, it is not the pre-eminence of the subjective over the objective or vice-versa but the linkage between the two, the complementary of one with the other that facilitates an understanding of the process of evolution and growth of an ethnic group characterized by continuity, adaptation and change. Further, what is important is the self-defined and 'other recognized' status and it is this self-perception which is common in most of the definitions. One of the most comprehensive definition of ethnic group is given by Weber who defined ethnic groups as those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities in physical type or of customs or of both, or because of colonization and immigration in such a way that this belief is important for the continuation of non kinship communal relations.²³

²⁰ Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origin of Nations*, p.22.

²¹ Raman Onufrichuk, "Post Modern: 'De-constructing Ethnicity'" in Ian Angnes (ed.): *Ethnicity in a Technological Age* (Edmonton, 1988).

²² Paul Brass: *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*, (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1991) p.18.

²³ Max Weber: 'Ethnic Group' in Montserrat Uniberman and John Rex (eds.): *The Ethnicity Reader* (Cambridge, 1997), p.2.

2.2: ETHNICITY AND IDENTITY:

The rise of ethnicity has been one of the most pervasive features of political life, national, regional and international, during the last half a century and more so in the post-Cold War era. It has much to do with the emergence of new nation state in the post World War II era and growing awareness among people about their separate identities and economic-political exploitation of their rights. As mentioned by David Robertson in *A Dictionary of Modern Politics*: ethnicity refers to a combination of racial, cultural and historical characteristics by which societies are occasionally divided into separate and probably hostile, political families.....” According to the same author, ethnicity raises the whole socio-political spectrum of national identity... Given the overall strength of national identity and the analogous importance of other basic political issues related to organizing a productive economy, ethnic divisions may be absolutely central to the problem of organizing a working political system²⁴.

By ethnicity is generally meant the condition where certain members of a society in a given social context, choose to emphasize as their most meaningful basis of primary extra familial identity, certain assumed cultural national or somatic traits²⁵. In political terms ethnicity is a sense of ethnic identity that has been defined by George Devos as consisting of the *subjective, symbolic* or *emblematic* use by group of any aspect of culture, in order to differentiate themselves from other groups or as Paul Brass suggests

²⁴ David Robertson, *A Dictionary of Modern Politics* (London, 1985), pp.111-12.

²⁵ Peterson, ‘On the Sub-Nations of Western Europe’, in Glazer and Moynihan (eds.) *Ethnicity, Theory and Experience*.

in order to create internal cohesion²⁶. The cultural markers may be language, distinctive customs, religion, etc. Any of the cultural markers may become a divisive cause of creating differentiation between two groups of people in a community,. It may be noted that an ethnic group may not emerge as another separate ethnic group unless it has develop a ‘subjective self-consciousness’ a claim to status, either as a superior group or as a group at least equal to other group. Ethnicity is to ethnic category, while class-consciousness is to class²⁷

Ethnicity is a sense of ethnic identity. Identity is both a psychological and sociological term. It is a concept to describe both the individual sense of who he or she is and his place within a group or identification with a collectivity. Parson defines it as ‘pattern maintenance code system of individual personality²⁸’ It provides ‘a definition, an interpretation of the self that establishes what and where the person is in both social and psychological terms²⁹’. These two aspects of identity may be accomplished through the use of symbols that vary independently of each other. As Anthony Cohen puts it, ‘Ethnicity has come to be regarded as a mode of action and of representation: it refers to a decision people make to depict themselves or other symbolically as the bearers of certain cultural identity; but the apparently monolithic or generalized character of ethnicity at the collective level does not pre-empt the continual character of ethnicity at

²⁶ Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*, p.19

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ Dashefsky and M.S Howard, “Ethnicity and Identity” in Dashefsky Arnold (ed.) *Ethnic Identity in Society*, 1997, p.5.

²⁹ M. Gubernau, *Nationalism: The Nation State and Nationalism in the 21st Century* (Cambridge:L Polity Press, 1996), p.72.

the personal level³⁰. Thus ethnic identity is the result of membership in a specified group based on a number of criteria, including culture, history, language, geographical location, etc. It tends to evoke a sense of loyalty to a particular group. Thus we can say, identity is a sense of solidarity on the bases of certain ethos. Ethnicity is a symbol of peoplehood and of cultural boundary. These symbols may be called ethnic identity system. “Ethnic identity system generally incorporates political goals. The need to protect the autonomy of one’s own group, culture, language or religion is what often dramatizes ethnicity³¹. Ethnic identity system represents the political aspirations of a group and is effective in mobilizing group members for political goals.

Other writers pointed out that situational character of ethnic identity. Identity is multi-dimensional and consists of different ingredients—religion, language, skin colour and so on and its relevance depends on the requirements of the situation³². On the other hand, there are others who pointed to the fact that acceptance of multiple identifications at a collective level does not mean a loss of identity at an individual and psychological level. It is simply a fact of human existence that human beings live within, and identify with, a multiplicity of groups according to occasion, without becoming individually psychologically disturbed; such disturbance, however, might occur among a minority³³.

³⁰ A.P. Cohen, *Self Consciousness: An Alternative Anthropology of Identity* (Routledge, 1994: London).

³¹ J. Pandian, *Caste Nationalism and Ethnicity* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1987) p.5.

³² V. Phadnis, *Ethnicity and Nation Building in South Asia* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1989), pp.14-15.

³³ Monserrat Guibernan and John Rex (eds.) *The Ethnicity Reader: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Migration*, p.4

One can also account for the difference between the ethnicity claimed by the people themselves and that attributed to them by others. Ethnic identity or the sense of belongingness by the members of an ethnic group is the root wherefrom the interaction manifesting ethnicity arises. This identity contributes to the sameness and oneness among its member for identification and it perceived itself, just as by other groups, as distinct from others. However, the subjective interpretation of the difference between groups may vary enormously in attitude to what group members think about themselves and how others regarded them³⁴. Far from perceiving ethnicity in terms of some scientific sociological truth, different criteria are usually employed for classifying people by inclusion or exclusion of some group. This becomes all the more significant when certain groups try to mobilize other groups using certain criteria, real or imagined, for a broader political goal. Another aspect given by Thomas Hyllan Eriksen is that, for ethnicity to come about, the group must have a minimum contact with each other, and they must entertain ideas of each other as being culturally different from themselves³⁵. Ethnicity in this sense refers both to aspects of gain or loss in interaction, and to aspects of meaning in the creation of identity. It has a political organizational aspect as well as a symbolic one. Further, substantial social contexts of ethnicity differ enormously, and indeed that ethnic identities and ethnic organization themselves may have highly variable importance in different societies, for different individuals and in different situations³⁶.

³⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵ Eriksen, "Ethnicity, Race and Nation", in *The Ethnicity Reader*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). p.39.

³⁶ Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life*. (New York, 1964), p.24.

Political translation of ethnic interests is necessary to move ethnic groups from a social space to a political space. Political communities of all shapes and sizes have sought to instill in their members a sentiment of belonging and a belief in common identity. In recent decades, the process has gained significance having political and social implications including that for stability and structures of government. In developing countries particularly, ethnic identities become convenient rallying points to be utilized as 'political instruments for development gains' and prospects of advancement thereby enhance the utilization of ethnic identity. The deepest loyalties in society are ethnic and in politician's terms, "These are the elements of electoral arithmetic which make elections sure things"³⁷.

Ethnicity implies historical continuity, which can be best understood not merely as a primordial phenomenon, but as a strategic choice by individuals who in other circumstances may choose other group—membership as a means of gaining some power and privileges. Therefore, ethnicity may be viewed as a device as much as a focus for group mobilization by its leadership through the selected use of ethnic symbols for socio-cultural and politico-economic purposes. Members of an ethnic group possess some fundamental values and common myths that can be expressed in ideological forms and can become prime foci for mass mobilization. In this context, an ethnic reawakening may be either a positive or a negative phenomenon; it can be aggressive or defensive, future oriented or backward looking; it contains both rational and emotional elements; it may be

³⁷ Iftekharuzzaman, *Ethnicity and Constitutional Reform in South Asia* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1998), p.31.

consistent or unpredictable; it has moments of intensity and periods of relative passivity; and it is often contradictory³⁸.

On the positive side, ethnically based nation, focusing on primary group loyalties, may be binding, cohesive, and motivating force in asserting a groups' cultural identity and regaining autonomy, sovereignty or statehood during periods of occupation or subordination while limiting the influence of unwelcome outside power in domestic affairs³⁹. It may instill a sense of patriotism, community loyalty, pride in one's ethnic history and recorded cultural achievements and develop a sense of common purpose.

Ethnicity is not simply an outmoded traditionalism but an embodiment of a rational calculation of individual and group interests. During particularly traumatic and revolutionary periods, shared ethnicity with all its mythic, ritualistic, symbolic, cultural, and social attributes may provide an important anchor of continuity, predictability and stability. At such times, a sense of community and mutual identity compensates for profound feelings of uncertainty and confusion in a rapidly changing environment⁴⁰.

As regard the basis of ethnicity, one may speak in general, of five, viewpoints: the objective or the primordialist, the situationalist, the subjective, the syncretist and the

³⁸ Woodrow J. Kuhn, "Political Nationalism in Contemporary Eastern Europe" in Jeffrey Simon and Trond Golberg (eds.) *Security Implication of Nationalism in Eastern Europe* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), pp.81-107.

³⁹ Anthony D. Smith, "The Origin of Nations" in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol.12, No.3, July 1989, pp.340-67.

⁴⁰ Cynthia H. Enloe, *Ethnic Conflict and Political Development* (Lanham, NY: University Press of America, 1986).

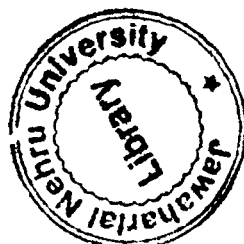
constructivist. The objectivists or primordialists conceived the ethnic identity as a 'given' or 'natural' phenomenon. Because of the primordial affinities deriving from race, skin, colour, tribe, caste, language, religion or other such factors each ethnic group has a different historical experience and consequently its position in society is likewise determined. The primordialist argued that every person carries with him *life* through life 'attachments'—constitutes the 'givens' by the human conditions and are rooted in the non-rational foundations of personality and that human beings have always been grouped together on the basis of given primordial characteristics⁴¹.

The situationalist argued that identity is multi-dimensional. Ethnic identity is a reactive awareness formed in a given situation and, therefore not a given category. Instead of considering ethnic solidarity as primordial in the sense of 'given from the beginning', it claimed that it is a product of interaction and varies in intensity, depending on circumstances. This new approach which distinguished ethnicity from culture implied, in Barth's words, '....focussing on the boundaries and the process of recruitment, not on the cultural stuff that the boundary encloses'⁴². Thus, Barth presented ethnicity primarily as an element of social organization, by defining ethnicity in terms of social organization, by defining ethnicity in terms of ascription and self-ascription. This situational basis of ethnicity also implied the view that 'ethnic solidarity might have a good deal in common

⁴¹ C. Geertz, 'The Integrative Revolution', in Geertz (ed.), *Old Societies and New State* (New York: The Free Press, 1963)

⁴² Frederick Barth, 'Enduring and Emerging Issues in the Analysis of Ethnicity', in Hans Vermeulen and Cora Govers (eds.), *The Anthropology of Ethnicity: Beyond 'Ethnic Groups and Boundaries'* (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis), pp.11-32.

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with the phenomenon of political mobilization.⁴³ And so the study of ethnicity became to a large degree the study of ethnic policies and of ethnic groups as political and economic interest groups.

The subjectivists on the other hand, without dismissing the importance of cultural markers in the manifestation of ethnic identity, stress the psychological aspect of self and group related “feeling of identity, distinctiveness and its recognition by others” as a crucial determinant of ethnic identity selection and its persistence⁴⁴. Finding fault with accounts that focus only on cultural production of meaning, Thomas J. Scheff stress the importance of pride and shame as powerful orienting emotions (or perhaps, two sides of an emotional coin). According to him, the urge to belong and the intense emotions of shame and pride associated with it, may be the most powerful forces in the human world⁴⁵. Group formation is psychologically determined. However, the exact nature of the psychological feelings is neither precise nor clear. Rex argues that in psychological terms three things are important for group creation viz. (1) the emotional satisfaction, or warmth that one gets from belonging to the group, (2) a shared belief in a myth of origin or history of the group is important because it sets the boundaries of the group, (3) finally, the members of the group must regard the social relations, within which they live, as “sacred” and as including not merely the living but the death⁴⁶. Subjectivists, therefore

⁴³ Michael, ‘Response to Cohen: Max Weber on Ethnicity and Ethnic Change’, *American Journal of Sociology*, 1981, pp.1162-8.

⁴⁴ Phadnis, *Ethnicity and Nation Building in South Asia*, p.14.

⁴⁵ **Geff** Thomas J, ‘Emotions and Identity: A Theory of Ethnic Nationalism’ in Craig Calhous (ed.) *Social Theory and Politics of Identity*.

⁴⁶ John Rex, ‘Ethnic Identity and the Nation State: The Political Sociology of Multi-Cultural Societies’, *Social Identities 1*, No.1 (1995), pp.24-25.

without ruling out the importance of cultural attributes, put more emphasis on the psychological aspect in the formation of ethnic boundaries and the development of 'we' versus 'them' feelings among a group of people. This psychological emphasis provides a framework for understanding the process through which individuals transform their membership of political groups into potent political identities. The ability of political groups to generate powerful 'we' identities depends, in part, on the nature of the group themselves. Because they are frequently rooted in real communities and are capable of generating immediately common goods. Ethnic groups are often visible and sufficiently salient to produce strong identities.

The third perspective with regard to the basis of ethnicity is that of syncretists which stresses the complementarity of the three approaches. It is the fallout of the identification of the shortcomings of the explanations of the objectivists, situationalists and subjectivists. The extent in which an individual can socially adapt to new environment other than his cannot be accounted for by the objectivist which strictly consider ethnic solidarity as primordial in the sense of 'given from the beginning'. A.L. Epstein's⁴⁷ book *Ethos and Identity* is a search for an answer to the question of whether, or rather why, ethnic relations are strongly affect-laden. He called in psychoanalysis to help in this effort. His central conclusion is that where an ethnic identity maintains itself there may not be a common 'public culture' anymore, but there will still be a common 'intimate culture', collective values and attitudes manifested in intimate situations.

⁴⁷ A.L. Epstein, *Ethos and Identity: The Studies in Ethnicity* (London: Tavistock, 1978).

The dilemma faced by the subjectivists is in explaining when and how groups arrive at self-ascriptive feelings. Roosens argues that, however useful the concept of boundary may be, it does not get at the heart of the matter: boundaries may create identities, but not necessarily *ethnic* ones⁴⁸. The syncretists view ethnicity as a complex phenomenon compressing many components, and therefore not reducible to single factor explanation. They defined ethnicity as a 'subjectively held sense of shared identity based on objective cultural and regional criteria'⁴⁹.

Anthony Smith in trying to solve the problem of choosing between a natural or a 'modern theory of the origin of nations', develops the concept of ethnic or ethnic community. In Smith's view, 'it is ethnic rather than nations ethnicity rather than nationality, and ethnicism, rather than nationalism; that pervades the social and cultural life antiquity.....'⁵⁰. He represents the syncretic approach by examining six 'bases' or 'foundations' of ethnic identity. *First*, an ethnic group must have a name in order to be recognized as a distinct community, both by its members and by outsiders. A lack of name reflects an insufficiently developed collective identity. *Second*, the belief in or, myth of common ancestry. *Third*, the presence or shared historical memories (as interpreted and diffused over generations by group members, often verbally) among members of the group. *Fourth*, the group must have a shared culture generally based on a combination of language, laws, dress, food, customs, institutions, music, crafts and

⁴⁸ Eugene E. Roosens, 'The Primordial Nature of Origins in Migrant Ethnicity' in Hans Verneulen and Cora Grovers (eds.), *The Anthropology of Ethnicity: Beyond 'Ethnic Groups and Boundaries'*.

⁴⁹ Timothy M. Frye, 'Ethnicity, Sovereignty and Transition from Non-Democratic Rule', *Journal of International Affairs* 45, No.2 (Winter 1992), p.602.

⁵⁰ Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origin of Nations*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986) p.89.

architecture. *Fifth*, a feeling of attachment to a specific territory, which it may or may not actually inhabit. *Sixth*, the people in a group have to think themselves as a group in order to constitute an ethnic community; that is, they must have a sense of common solidarity or a sense of their common ethnicity. The group must be self-aware⁵¹. Smith also discussed about the conditions that promote the formation and survival of ethnic groups and pointed out factors in pre-modern times that favoured ethnic crystallization and survival. The first condition was ‘the acquisition (or later, the loss) of a particular piece of territory, which was felt to ‘belong’ to a people as they belonged to it⁵². Second, a history of struggle with various enemies not only led to a sense of community but also served (through historical myths and beliefs) as a source of inspiration for future generations. Third, some form of organized religion was necessary for producing specialists in communications and record keeping, as well as for generating rituals and traditions that formed the channels of continuity for ethnic communities⁵³. Finally, ‘the proximate cause of ethnic durability and survival was the rise and power of a myth of ‘ethnic closeness’⁵⁴. According to Smith, the factors which promote one’s sense of ethnic identity have become more influential in modern times’ of crucial importance have been the increasing cultural and civic activities of modern state, activities of intellectuals and intelligentsia within the ethnic group, and the development of the ideology of nationalism—particularly ethnic nationalism in contradiction to a territorial or civic ones⁵⁵.

⁵¹ Anthony D. Smith ‘Ethnic Sources of Nationalism’, *Survival* 35, No.1 (Spring 1993), pp.50-51

⁵² *ibid.*, p.52.

⁵³ *ibid.*, p.53.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, pp.53-5

Finally, the fourth perspective which may be labeled as the ‘constructionist turn’⁵⁶ indicated a change from a focus on organization and the mobilization of ethnic attachments to an analysis of the social construction of identities. Like situationalists, constructivists opposes a view of ethnic identity as static and give, and pays more attention to anti essentialist concerns like the variability, fuzziness and discontinuity of identities, which problematize the notion of boundaries. Constructionism is used to indicate changes in the study of ethnicity in a much broaded sense, as these are indicated for example by the popularity of statements which refer to the social or cultural constructedness of ethnic identities and by attention to the meaning of ethnic terms, discourse and ideology. It takes a critical look at the notion of ethnic identity itself. While pointing out that the presumption of naturalness of the nation and national identity distinction obscures the human hand and ‘motivations’ behind these processes and that the terms ethnic identity and ethnic group mean quite different things in different places and among peoples. Constructivists contend that these concepts are social constructions—‘that product of specific historical and geographical forces rather than biologically given ideas whose meaning indicated by nature’⁵⁷. From the constructivist perspective, ethnic identity and ethnic nationalism should be viewed as ‘the product of processes which are embedded in human actions and choices’ rather than as ‘natural’ or given⁵⁸.

⁵⁶ Crawford Young, *The Rising Tide of Cultural Pluralism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), p.23.

⁵⁷ Peter Jackson and Jan Penrose, ‘Introduction: Placing Race and Nation’, in Peter Jackson and Jan Penrose (eds.), *Constructions of Race, Place and Nation* (London: UCL Press, 1993), p.1.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p.2.

Constructionism with its relative emphasis from ethnicity as an aspect of social organization to ethnicity as consciousness, ideology or imagination, neither implies a totally new conception nor the existence of a school or movement. One may recall Weber's definition of ethnicity, dating from 1922: we shall call 'ethnic groups' those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both; this belief must be important for the propagation of group formation; conversely, it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relation exists'⁵⁹. Weber also stressed that 'any cultural trait, no matter how superficial' can function as an ethnic boundary and that 'political action can give rise to the belief in blood relationship' Ethnic membership, by itself, according to him, 'does not necessarily result in ethnic group formation but only provides the resources that may, under the right circumstances, be mobilized into a group by appropriate political action.'⁶⁰

Charles Keyes distinguishes between the 'social descent' and 'genetic descent' and argued that ethnic identity is rooted from a 'cultural construal of descent'⁶¹. The formation of social descent depends upon the cultural construal of those characteristics that indicates who does or does not 'belong to the same people as oneself' or as sharing descent whereas genetic descent, on the other hand, consists of 'biological characteristics

⁵⁹ Max Weber, 'What is an Ethnic Group' in *The Ethnicity Reader* by Montserrat Guibernan and John Rex, pp.18-21.

⁶⁰ John Stone, 'Race, Ethnicity and the Weberian Legacy', *American Behavioural Scientist* 38, No.3 (Jan. 1995), p.396.

⁶¹ Charles F. Keyes, 'The Dialectics of Ethnic Change', in Keyes (ed.), *Ethnic Change* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), p.5.

transmitted through genetic inheritance⁶². Different cultural variables may be presented or seized upon by groups as to distinguish the group from other group. However, the type of cultural markers that are put forward as ‘emblematic of ethnic identity depends upon the interpretations of the experiences and actions of mythical ancestors and/or historical forebears. These interpretations are often presented in the form of myths and legends in which historical events have been accorded symbolic significance’⁶³. The forms that these myths and legends can take vary just as it can be interpreted differently by the member of the group due to lack of interactive or geographical contiguity. They can be found, for example, in ; ‘stories, both oral and written, songs, artistic depictions, dramatizations, rituals’⁶⁴. But no matter how these myths and legends are created and presented, ‘The symbols of ethnic identity must be appropriated and internalized by individuals before they can serve as the bases of orienting people to social action’⁶⁵. According to Keyes, this alone is not enough because ethnicity becomes a variable ‘only if access to the means of production, means of expropriation of the products are determined by membership in groups defined in terms of non genealogical descent’⁶⁶. It is at such moments ethnicity can be ‘a device as much as a focus for group mobilization by leadership through the select use of ethnic symbols for socio-cultural and politico-economic purposes⁶⁷.’ Ethnic identity, therefore, is the social and political creation of elites, who draw upon, distort and sometimes fabricate materials from the cultures of the

⁶² *ibid.*, p.6.

⁶³ *ibid.*, p.7.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p.8.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p.9.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

⁶⁷ Urmila Phadnis, *Ethnicity and Nation Building in South Asia* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1990), p.16.

groups they wish to represent in order to protect their well-being or existence or to get political or economic advantage for their group as well as for themselves'⁶⁸.

To conclude, the basis of ethnicity as seen from the eyes of the primordialists, subjectivists, situationalists, syncretists and lastly constructivists varies and their orientation at times seems to overlap. The role of culture in the formation of ethnic identity remains as the most contentious issue between the primordialists and the social constructivists. The primordialists consider culture to be more integrally connected with ethnic identity formation, 'although even they recognize that some behaviors and emblems may change independently of basic identity'. On the other hand certain scholars argued that 'there is no necessary continuity or distinction in time and space, between social (including ethnic) groups and cultural practice'⁶⁹. Thus, culture according to this viewpoint is a 'mere epiphenomenon of ethnicity dependent on more basic organizational and strategic factors. Social constructivists, however, have taken this particular viewpoint to an extreme level 'where culture is relegated to a very secondary position in the ethnic scheme of things as a series of symbols that justify the existence of particular (ethnic) interest groups'⁷⁰. Some constructivists have even suggested that cultural markers can be 'manipulated to rationalize the identity and organization of the ethnic group'⁷¹.

⁶⁸ Paul Brass, '*Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*', p.8.

⁶⁹ Barth, Frederik, Ethnic Groups and Boundaries in Glazer and Moynihan (eds.) *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*

⁷¹ *ibid.*

2.3: THE CONCEPT OF ETHNO-NATIONALISM

Ethno-nationalism as a collective focus employed in the pursuit of group interest has, of late, assumed prominence particularly in the post-cold war period. This is evident from the fact that there is hardly any region of the world which have not been rocked by ethno-nationalist movement demanding of greater autonomy political self determination, a stake in national decision making, and more equitable economic redistribution etc. which the populace-majority or minority have been affected by this upsurge of ethno-nationalism in the programs and goals of different national communities have clashed, resulting in manifestation of conflict that threatened to derail the further progress of democratic reform.

Regardless of the attention being presently accorded to ethno-nationalism is not a new phenomenon though it still remain contentions as a concept. In his essay on representative government, J.S.Mill reach the conclusion that “It is in general a necessary condition of institutions that the boundaries of government should coincide in the main with nationalities.”⁷²

In fact, it was during the 19th century nationalism is based on ethnic identity became an international revolutionary creed aimed at destroying the power of ossified autocratic empires by liberating the subject peoples. It was advocated by leading

⁷² John Stuart Mill, *Representative Government* (London: J.M. Deut and Sons, 1910), p.362 and quoted in David Welsh, “Domestic Politics and Ethnic Conflict”, *Survival*, Vol.35, No.1, (Spring 1993), p.65.

intellectuals in Europe and was closely linked with political and economic liberalism. It is regarded as the manifestation of a rational and democratic and by that token universal-principle originating in the libertarian spirit of enlightenment: If individuals have a right to autonomy, then by analogy nations and peoples have the right to self rule⁷³.

The anti colonial movements in the 20th century among the people of Asia and Africa were inspired by democratic passion about self-rule and national sovereignty. The concept of ethnicity and nationalism, implicit though, connotes a certain commonality among members of a group, the ethnic group in one case, the nation in the other. Both stresses the cultural similarity of its adherents, presupposes the existence or draws boundaries vis-à-vis others, which separates one group from another. The nation predicates continuity with the past thus bringing ethnicity into nationalism.⁷⁴ It is too often superficially discerned as principally predicated upon language, religion, customs, economic inequality or some other tangible elements. But what is fundamentally involved in such a conflict is the basic identity which manifests itself in the “us-them syndrome”⁷⁵ which is the fundamental dynamics of nationalism. Nationalism has a strong ethnic character. Since culture is nothing but a way to describe human behaviour, it would follow that there are discrete groups of people i.e. ethnic units, to correspond to each culture. And if choose to regard the culture bearing aspect of ethnic groups as their primary characteristics⁷⁶, this has far reaching implications for our conceptions of

⁷³ Istiad Ahmed, *State, Nation and Contemporary South Asia* (Great Britain: Pinter, 1996), p.8.

⁷⁴ Montserrat Guibernan and John Rex, *The Ethnicity Reader*, p.7.

⁷⁵ Walker Connor, ‘Nation Building or Nation Destroying’, *World Politics* XXIV(3) (April 1972).

⁷⁶ Frederik Barth, *Process and Form in Social Life*, Vol.I (London, 1981), pp.190, 200-1.

nationalism. Nationalism operates not along class lines within society nor along national boundaries but along ethnic lines in confrontation with the generalized other. The ethnic group is a discrete social organization vessel within which mass mobilization and social communication may be effective. And ethnicity provides the potent raw material for nationalism that makes sense to only the members of the ethnic group⁷⁷. Its primary function is to differentiate the group members from the generalized others. It therefore, calls for an ethnicity specific approach to a specific culture through which nationalism is expressed.

The belief in particular pattern of social relations, ascriptive traditional component (custom, ancestral origin, language, religion, etc.) is not however a feature which defines all nationalism. Greenfeld made a distinction between 'ethnic' and 'civic' nationalism. Civic nationalism is identical with citizenship, and, in this case nationality is at least in principle open and voluntaristic, it can sometimes be acquired. Ethnic nationalism believes nationality 'to be inherent- one can neither acquire it if one does not have it , nor change it if one does; it has nothing to do with individual will, but contributes a genetic characteristic'⁷⁸. Nationality may be defined in one of two ways by ethnic or civic criteria. While ethnic nationality is based on the consciousness of a shared identity, culture, belief in common ancestors and history. Civic nationality is encompassed within a geographically defined territory. In fact, ethnic nationalism has had an advantage over territorial and civic nationalism because the former appears as a

⁷⁷ Dawa Norbu, *Culture and the Politics of Third World Nationalism*, (London: Routledge, 1992), p.183.

⁷⁸ Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), p.11.

natural continuation of a pre-existing ethnicity⁷⁹. Louis L. Snyder breaks down the variation of nationalism as: (i) a force for unity; (ii) a force for status quo; (iii) a force for independence; {iv} a force for fraternity; (v) a force for aggression (vi) a force for economic expansion; (vii) a force for anti-colonialism⁸⁰.

Ethnic nationalism may be defined as that politicized social consciousness centered upon an ethnicity identity born out of shared commonalities, seeking to achieve unity, autonomy and group interest by mobilizing ethnic based constituencies⁸¹ stressing the objective of a movement. Richmond, however, defines ethno-nationalism as the struggle for recognition of higher economic and social status and political power by minorities. Sometimes this type of movement or struggle implies autonomy on territorial basis, which may take a separatist form⁸².

Central to the notion of ethno-nationalism is the notion of ethnic identity as defined in terms of multiple ethnic variables or which depending on inter-ethnic situation may be emphasized in order to achieve the greatest degree of differentiation from the generalized other in contact or conflict. Ethnic boundaries are maintained so as to preserve ethnic identity. Ethnic nationalism has its moments of intensity and periods of relative passivity. "The success or failure of ethnic movements in maintaining their separate identities, institution and organization depends upon the outcome of their power

⁷⁹ Anthony Smith, "The Ethnic Sources of Nationalism," *Survival*, Vol.35, No.1, (Spring 1993), p.55.

⁸⁰ Louis L. Snyder, *The New Nationalism* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1968), p.35.

⁸¹ Dawa Norbu, *Culture and the Politics of Third World Nationalism*, (London: Routledge, 1992), p.181.

⁸² Anthony H. Richmond, "Ethnic Nationalism and Post Industrialism" in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol.7 No.1, 1984.

struggle”⁸³. Under certain conditions of ethnic conflict, ethnic identity tends to be more aggressively asserted and more acutely differentiated national identity, which also marks the critical turning point in the transformation of ethnicity into ethno-nationalism. The transformation is brought about by the politics of mass mobilization and social communication. It is primarily the political community no matter how artificially organized, that inspired the belief in common ethnicity.⁸⁴ Thus ethnic-nationalism ‘strive to turn the ethnic group into that more abstract and politicized category “the nation”, and then to establish the latter as the sole criterion of statehood’⁸⁵. In short ethno-nationalism is the transformation of passive, often isolated and politically excluded communities into potential or actual “nations” active participants and self-conscious in their historic identities’⁸⁶.

Just as most scholars agree that there exists fundamental distinction between ethnic politics and nationalistic politics there is also a remarkable similarities that ethnic nationalism shares with nationalism. However, the extent in which the distinction can be made and the circumstances or condition in which ethnic and nationalist politics can coincide be contested, for which there can be no consensus among scholars. One significant difference is that ethnic nationalism is retarded, small-scale and limited in its goals in comparison with large-scale nationalism for obvious reasons. These differences spring not from the logic of ethnic nationalism but from the specific historical situation in

⁸³ *ibid.*

⁸⁴ Max Weber, ‘What is an Ethnic Group’ in *The Ethnicity Reader* by Montserrat Guibernan and John Rex.

⁸⁵ Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Revival* (London: 1981), p.xi.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p.24.

which it finds itself, that is the multinational state whose power is captured by the dominant ethnic group⁸⁷ while accepting the distinction between ethnic politics and nationalist politics. Anthony Smith, however, suggests that, “Ethnic nationalism.... Unlike the territorial and civic versions of nationalism... conceives of the nation as a genealogical and vernacular cultural community whereas civil and territorial conception of the nation regard it as a shared culture, common laws and territorial citizenship, ethnic concepts of the nation focus on the genealogy of its members, however fictive, on popular mobilization of ‘the folk’; on native history and customs; and on the vernacular culture. As a vernacular community of genealogical descent, the ethnic nation seeks to create itself in the image of an ancestral ethnic. In doing so, it often helps to recreate that ethnic.”⁸⁸

This interpretation of Smith is not however agreed by all the scholars. Walker Connor believes that nationalism refers to loyalty to one’s nations or ethnic group⁸⁹. Paul Brass⁹⁰, on the other hand, distinguishes between ethnic group, community and nationality/nation on the basis of level of consciousness. According to him a community is an ethnic group whose members have developed an awareness of common identity and have sought to draw boundaries of the group. A community becomes a nationality or nation when it mobilizes for political action and attains political significance. However, not all groups move in such a direction: some disintegrate or merge into the larger

⁸⁷ Dawa Norbu, *Culture and the Politics of Third World Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.182.

⁸⁸ Anthony Smith, ‘*The Ethnic Sources*’, p.55.

⁸⁹ Walker Connor, ‘Nation Building or Nation Destroying?’, *World Politics* 24, No.3 (April 1972).

⁹⁰ Paul Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p.9.

society, others retain their separate identity. Brass emphasizes the role of elite competition as the basis for ethnic group developing subjective consciousness and making political demands⁹¹. From this perspective, one can infer that any political activity undertaken by individual is on the basis of their loyalty to ethnic group is a manifestation of ethno-nationalism. It may be noted that not all group qualifies as to be characterized as ethno-nationalist. For instance, simple tribal societies whose identities are operative only within each tribe and have not reached the level of historical development whereby they possess even most of the prerequisites for national consciousness. They are too fragmented to enjoy social unity and lack system wide symbols that can facilitate social communication⁹². Nationalism predicates an advanced political consciousness indicating the optimal unit of integrated social life. It essentially possesses certain prerequisites—(a) a complex yet unfragmented society that provides the social basis for national unity; (b) socially shared fundamental cultural values that forms the psychological basis of general will; (c) a common language or a system wide symbols that facilitate social communication; (d) considerable stratification and literacy rate so that nationalist leadership may emerge; (e) a pan *ethnic* identity that transcends tribal or other particularistic identities⁹³. Ethnic nationalism may reveal almost all the essential characteristics of modern nationalism precisely because all the five prerequisites of nationhood are inherent within the structure of most ethnic group.

⁹¹ Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Practice* (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 1991) pp.23-36.

⁹² Dawa Norbu, *Cultural and the Politics of third World Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp.205-207.

⁹³ *ibid.*

Ethnic politics may revolve around different variants. The precise form that an ethnic politics takes depends on the policies and objectives of an ethnic organization. It also depends on the comparative position of ethnic communities in the existing state structure. The conflation of ethnic politics and national politics arises if the political goal of an ethnic group coincides with the political objective of the nationalist doctrine, namely self-determination. Thus, ethno-nationalism poses a serious threat to the territorial integrity and political legitimacy of multinational states. For what ethnic nationalists today demand is no less than what J.S. Mill wrote at the age of European Nationalism:

‘...where the sentiment of nationality exists in any force, there is a prima-facie case for uniting all the members of the nationality under the same government, and a government to themselves apart. This is merely saying that question of government ought to be decided by the governed.’⁹⁴

Kellas, while distinguishing national and ethnic politics pointed out that nationalism focuses on ‘national self determination’, or home rule in a national territory while ethnic politics is largely concerned with the protection of rights is largely concerned with the protection of rights for members of the group within the existing state with no claim for a territorial “homeland”⁹⁵. Their demands may include seeking more autonomy or the creation of state or they may settle for less, at least for the time being, if

⁹⁴ J.S. Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government* (London, 1905) quoted in Dawa Norbu, *Cultural and the Politics of Third World Nationalism*, p.184.

⁹⁵ James G. Kellas, *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991), p.4.

some more autonomy is granted by the state governments to manage their local administration and developmental affairs. Ethnic groups is said to manifest ethno-nationalist sentiments only when their political agenda hinges on 'ethnic self determination' and the creation of a nation state corresponding to their specific territorial homelands. It does not necessarily possess a feeling of a sense of nationalism. As Frye points out, "Ethnic groups may or may not feel a sense of nationalism, that is, they may or may not seek the creation of a nation-state that corresponds to a given territory. The sense of nation has a territorial aspect absent from ethnicity, since a member of an ethnic group living abroad can share a sense of identity with a co-ethnic in the home country quite apart from a feeling an attachment to a nation state."⁹⁶ He further stresses that while the core objective of a nationalist movement is to achieve political sovereignty within a given territory, 'not all nationalist movements are driven by a single ethnic group, nor do all ethnic revivals lead to a campaign for national sovereignty.'⁹⁷ However, as pointed out, ethnic group or ethnicity may provide the potent raw material or form the core of nationalism/nationalist movements, and when they do, they shift from being ethnic to ethno-nationalist groups. Favouring such interpretation, Ted Gurr in his *'Minorities at Risk'* defined ethno nationalize groups as large politicized groups of people sharing a common language and ethnicity who are territorially concentrated and exhibit a history of

⁹⁶ Frye, Timothy M., "Ethnicity, Sovereignty and Transitions' from Non-Democratic Rule", *Journal of International Affairs* 45, No.2 (Winter, 1992), p.602.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p.603.

making demands for political autonomy or separate statehood⁹⁸. Ethnic nationalism in most cases, have to confront a highly centralized, scientifically rationalized and coercively empowered state structure with an impressive mandate of the dominant ethnic group who constitute in most cases the overwhelming numerical majority. While it poses a serious threat to the political legitimacy of multinational states, ethnic nationalism views the multinational state as an empire controlling various nationalities with no explicit or implicit mandate of the non dominant ethnic groups. It therefore attempts, no matter how feebly, to create a true-nation state that reflects ‘the political expression of the democratic will of the people’⁹⁹.

Ted Curr provides a detailed description of various types of ethnic political movements active in the world by using the term non-state communal groups and communal group. Non-state communal groups refer to people sharing language, ethnicity region or residence and history but not necessarily constituting nations or states. ‘Communal groups’ are cultural and psychological entities rather than bounded political communities¹⁰⁰. Politically salient communal groups are those who suffer or benefit from systematic discrimination, engage in political mobilization to promote self defined interests, or combine these characteristics. National peoples can be ethno-national groups—large, regionally concentrated peoples with history of organized political

⁹⁸ Ted Robert Gurr, *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethno Political Conflicts* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1993). p.10.

⁹⁹ Alfred Cobban, “National Self Determination” (Chicago, 1994) as quoted in Dawa Norbu (ed.), *Culture and the Politics of Third World Nationalism*.

¹⁰⁰ Ted Robert Gurr, *Op cit*, p.10.

autonomy and separatist movements. Minority people on the one hand, according to Gurr, are made up of three groups: (a) ethno classes, that is usually low status ethnically distinct peoples; (b) militant sects, or groups focused on defense of their religious beliefs; (c) communal contenders, or culturally distinct groups aspiring to exercise a share of state power. Communal contenders may be given advantages over other groups and therefore represent dominant minorities or they may be disadvantaged, suffer various forms of discrimination and be drawn into ethnic struggles of a particularly blood kind.

Ethnicity has become a focus for political mobilization. This is so because ethnic interests necessitates the group to move from a social space to a political space. Various scholars discussed this transformation wrought about by ethnic mobilization leading to formulation of theories of ethnicity. Given the complexity and varied nature of ethnic group and ethnic politics, as reflected in Gurr's detailed description/classification the formulation for general explanation of ethnic politics has become more cumbersome. The current theories of ethnicity can be divided into 2 (two) main categories—those who emphasize cultural and psychological elements and those emphasizing economic and political factors. The resurgence and the factors accounting for the mobilization of ethnic groups underlying these two emphasis helped us to our vantage in understanding ethnic politics. Thus, within these two broad framework different theories of ethnic political mobilization and conflict have been variously described.

While this may limit or impede the explanation of the group itself the nature of its demands, they however, for sure, rendered a general explanation of what motivates or

moves ethnic politics. This is done by focusing on the causes while conceding that ethnicity can be better understood through multiple rather than unitary factor.

2.4: MODERNISATION AND ETHNICITY

According to this theory which is also called Negative theories of integration, ethnic identity referred to traditional obstacles which were supposed to disappear in the course of development. He argued that communication, revolution and other aspects related to the industrial transformation of the world would help bring people together, breakdown ancient divisions and isolations and enabled the concept of nationhood go well. In the process of nation building people will loose their local, parochial identities and loyalties in order to identify themselves with the larger economic and political unit, the nation¹⁰¹. In *Nationalism and Social Communication*, Deutch constructed a paradigm of national integration and argued that modernization leads to a greater mobilization of the population and increasing urbanization and the spread of communication results in the assimilation of those mobilized into the national mainstream. The outcome is national integration, the basis for nationalism. Foreseeing the dangers of disruption in the process, he states, “The mobilization—assimilation gap created when mobilization was the root cause of national fragmentation and the rise of parochialism.”¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Karl W. Deutch and William Folitz (eds.), *Nation Building*, (New York: Altherton Press, 1966), p.196.

¹⁰² Karl W. Deutch, *Nationalism and Social Communication* (Cambridge, M.A.: MIT Press, 1953), pp.86-130.

In the same vein, Samuel Huntington and Daniel Lerner accounted for the disintegrative tendencies in the third world countries. According to the, modernization in the developing countries generated a tension between 'rising expectations' and 'rising frustrations'. The process of modernization led to an increase in the number of political participants who were sensitive to the poverty in which they live. Hence demands on the political system greatly increased as new groups entered the political arena—thereby creating 'political fragmentation and decay and the rise of parochial and ethno-nationalist sentiments'.¹⁰³

The rise of ethnic political mobilization has also been provided by strain theorists such as Clifford Geertz who argued that 'during the disorienting process of modernization... unintegrated citizens, looking for an anchor in the sea of change, will grab hold of an increasingly anachronistic ethnic identity, which bursts onto the scene and then recedes as the process of structural differentiation moves towards a reintegrated society. Thus, ethnicity might resurge temporarily, but like suicide it is a manifestation of anomie that would inexorably disappear'¹⁰⁴. Thus ethnic political mobilization, as seen by strain theorists, was possible only in the event of 'some failure to draw—draw sub-nations into national economic life.... and... because of the growing economic, cultural and political divergence of the sub-nation from the rest of the nation'¹⁰⁵.

¹⁰³ Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968).

¹⁰⁴ Saul Newman, 'Does Modernisation Breed Ethnic Political Conflict?', *World Politics* 43, No.3 (April 1991), PP.454-55.

¹⁰⁵ Charles Ragin, *The Comparative Methods*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p.134.

The Pluralist or Plural Society Approach:

In a culturally diverse societies where different ethnic groups co-exists, the structural requisites of political order lead to the sub-ordination of one group by the other, in the process of which multi-ethnic societies could not remain ‘both stable and democratic’¹⁰⁶. Unrestrained economic competition and competing nationalism that follow between different cultural groups cause society to fragment. Furnivall argued that the only way such plural societies could be held together was through the application of external force. This external force, for him, was provided by colonialism.¹⁰⁷ Modifying the plural society approach, M.G. Smith prescribed incorporation of members of different cultural groups into a multi-ethnic state, so as to create a plural society. This can be created in one of three ways viz. (1) *uniform incorporation*, where individuals are incorporated as equal citizens with equal civic and political status irrespective of ethnic or cultural affiliation, (2) *equivalent incorporation*, where different collectivities are incorporated into a single society with equal or complementary public rights and status, (3) lastly, *differential incorporation*, where dominant group exercises power and maintains its superior position by excluding other groups from power.

The Theory of Consociationalism:

The theory of consociationalism and hegemonic exchange came as an alternative response against the inadequate explanation of the pluralists to the issue of stability and

¹⁰⁶ Stephen Ryan, *Ethnic Conflict and International Relations*, (Aldershot, Dartmouth, 1990), p.1.

democracy in multi-ethnic states. Conciliationism featured the inclusion of minorities in a political “grand coalition” that granted them cultural autonomy. It also gave minorities a veto over important legislation and made ethnic “proportionality... The principal standard of political representation, civil service appointments, and allocation of public funds.”¹⁰⁸ Lijphart considered consociational policies as the best policy option for the world’s divided societies¹⁰⁹ while reducing ethnic conflict and acted as pillars that could lead to a stable, democratic, multi-ethnic societies. He further provided conditions that promoted elite competition. These included a power balance between the various groups so that none could form a majority by itself, a multi-party system, small state size, cross cutting societal cleavages, feelings of patriotism or a common religion, clear group boundaries and a tradition of co-operation among group elites.’

Lijphart’s conditions for bringing about a stable multi-ethnic democracy, however, are not exhaustive enough, sufficient by themselves to determine the success of consociational democracy. In fact, while some conditions are contradictory, the presence or absence of some or all conditions may unleash new ethno-nationalistic feelings and conflict among various groups in a multi-ethnic state.

The Theory of Hegemonic Exchange:

This theory, associated primarily with Donald Rothchild, refers to a hegemonic exchange of state group relations in which ‘a somewhat autonomous central-state actor

¹⁰⁷ J.S. Furnivall, *Netherlands India: A Study of Plural Economy*, (New York: Macmillan, 1944), pp.1-2.

¹⁰⁸ Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*, (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1977), p.25.

and a number of considerably less autonomous ethno-regional interests engage, on the basis of commonly accepted procedural norms, rules, or understandings, in the process of mutual accommodation.’¹¹⁰ Ethnic groups, according to this theory are seen as having overt, tangible interests that can be pursued in rational, utility maximizing manner. Therefore, trade-offs and bargaining are possible, and ethnic violence can be ended by changes in policies of allocation of power and wealth.¹¹¹ The state, according to this scheme as engaged in a process of exchange with the ethnic group, acts as a *mediator* and *facilitator*.

The various models of cohesion and control do not ascertain the existence of political stability. It has its own problems which may rather facilitate the rise of ethno nationalist feelings. For instance, the balance of power between various ethnic groups may change over time or inter-ethnic cohesion achieved through institutionalized control and domination cannot be maintained for long when the legitimacy of state authority cannot be taken for granted.

Relative Deprivation and Ethnicity:

In his classical book “*Why Men Rebels*”, Ted Robert Gurr developed relative deprivation referred to as ‘discrepancy between value expectations and value expectances

¹⁰⁹ Arend Lijphart, “Self Determination Versus Pre-Determination of Ethnic Minorities in Power Sharing Systems”, in Will Kymlica (ed.), *The Rights of Minority Cultures*, (New York: OUP, 1996), p.279.

¹¹⁰ Donald Rothchild, ‘Hegemonic Exchanges: An Alternative Model for Managing Conflict in South Africa’, in D.L. Thompson and D.Ronen (eds.), *Ethnicity, Politics and Development*, (Boulder, Reinner, 1986), p.72.

¹¹¹ Ryan, *op cit*, pp.19-20.

in a society'¹¹² vis-à-vis economic situation, political power and social status in relation to other. This means that 'the inclination to revolt is more likely to be present when people perceive an inequity in the wretchedness of their condition—when they receive less (their expectations) than they feel they deserve (their expectancies)'¹¹³. He thus emphasized the psychological aspect of agitation which conforms to Lenin's view that it is the feeling of being exploited rather than the exploitation itself that makes a person revolutionary. Gurr develops for stages by which relative deprivation leads to revolt. *First*, the recognition by the group that deprivation exists. *Second*, the awareness by the people that the wretched conditions they experience are not universal and that others enjoy what they lack. *Third*, development of the feeling that a situation of deprivation is unfair. That political action may be able to change the situation. This is the stage for mass political activity and revolution.¹¹⁴

According to this theory, ethno political mobilization does not develop not only among economically backward groups or region but also among relatively prosperous ethnic group or region if they perceive relative deprivation within the state on political or cultural matters as well. Another dimension is that in the process of development some minorities have done better than the majority. Those who have done well feel that they could do much better if only their future was not tied with others in the structure of a single state. Those who feel deprived also seek the same solution: to have their own state

¹¹² Donald M. Snow, *Distant Thunder* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), p.60.

¹¹³ *ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970).

so that once free of their depriver, they can develop better.¹¹⁵ Speaking in the same vein Rothchild maintains that politicized ethnic assertiveness or ethos politics seeks to address two sets of contradictions: the structural inequity of regions and groups, despite theoretical equal development, and the failure of the state to implement the “normative promises” which is the *raison d’être*. Given the complexity of modern life and the overlapping groups which demand attention from the existing power structure, ethnicity appears to be a rational organizational principle available to the political elite as well as those who seek to replace it.¹¹⁶ Thus the concept of Relative Deprivation helps us to understand why perceived disadvantage or discrimination (real or imaginary) by a group regarding its status (socio-cultural, economic, political) is an underlying cause for political action.¹¹⁷

The Primordialist or Developmental Approach:

The primordialist argues that every person carries with him ‘life attachments’ that provides for an easy affinity with other people from the same background. It stresses on cultural markers as a source of ethnic identity and consciousness. By reformulating modernization theories, they acknowledge that socio-economic factors may form the basis of discontent but ‘only discontent founded on ethnic symbols, such as language,

¹¹⁵ D.L. Sheth, ‘*State, Nation and Ethnicity: Experience of Third World Countries*’, EPW, March 25, 1989.

¹¹⁶ Joseph Rothchild, *Ethno Politics: A Conceptual Framework*, (New York: Colombia University Press, 1987), p.22.

¹¹⁷ Gurr, *op cit.* p.120.

religion, culture, origin or race can lead to separatism'¹¹⁸. Connor contended that modernization, far from bring about a new kind of relationship among different ethnic groups based on rational principles of mutual interest and social needs, actually sharpened ethnic divisions in the society. This is facilitated in four ways. *First*, 'rapid social communication and transportation' increased 'the cultural awareness and exacerbated inter-ethnic conflict'¹¹⁹. *Second*, improvements 'in communications and transportation' increased the 'cultural awareness of the minorities by making their members more aware of the distinctions between themselves and others'¹²⁰. *Third*, the rise of militant ethnic consciousness in many parts of both developed and developing worlds could be explained not in terms of the 'nature of or density of the communication media, but the message'¹²¹. The reference here was to the doctrine of self-determination of nations which, in its pristine form, made ethnicity, 'the ultimate measure of political legitimacy, by holding that any self differentiating people, simply because it is a people, has the right, should it so desire, to rule itself'¹²². This doctrine not only provided justification but also acted as catalyst for ethnic political movement¹²³. According to Anthony Smith, 'Ethnic Conflict arises out of incongruence between economic modernization and processes of political development associated with the birth of the

¹¹⁸ Clifford Geerts, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civic Politics in the New States", in G.E. Welch, Jr. (ed.), *Political Modernisation* (Belmont, CA: 1967), p.170.

¹¹⁹ Connor, '*Nation Building or Nation Destroying?*' p.328.

¹²⁰ *ibid.*, p.329.

¹²¹ *ibid.*, p.331.

¹²² *ibid.*

¹²³ *ibid.*

modern state. Modern bureaucratic state seeks legitimacy in scientific rationality. When coupled with economic and educational modernization of society, the rationality imperatives produces an expanding stratum of secular intelligentsia. However, the inability of the state bureaucracy to absorb the entire body of secular intellectuals causes them to “identify with their ethnic groups, which help legitimate their perceptions of injustice.”¹²⁴

Ethnicity and Resource Competition:

Another model of understanding ethnic political mobilization or ethnicity is with regards to resource competition based on the belief that ethnic cleavage generally acts as a façade for deeper socio-economic cleavages. According to this view, the root cause of ethnic political mobilization leading to ethnic violence and even ethnic separatism lie in ‘elite disputes over the direction of change and grievances linked with the scarcity of resources’ and also ‘when previously acquired privileges are threatened or alternatively when underprivileged groups realize that the moment has come to redress inequality.’¹²⁵ Kellas pointed out that material and economic are at stake in ethnic politics and individuals seeking an advantage usually play up their ethnicity to secure scarce resources¹²⁶. This theory also stresses the importance of technology and environment in determining the form and substance of culture. Development leads to rise rather than

¹²⁴ Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Revival*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

¹²⁵ Heraclides, *The Self-Determination of Minorities in International Politics*, (London: Frank Cass, 1991), p.9.

¹²⁶ James G. Kellas, *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, (Hound Mills: Macmillan, 1991), p.19.

decline in ethnic mobilization because it provides resources to ethnic groups in the periphery increasing their bargaining position and organizational capacity for action.¹²⁷

Elite Competition and Ethnicity:

According to Paul Brass, ethnic identity and modern nationalism arises out of specific types of interactions between the leadership of centralizing states and elites from non-dominant ethnic groups especially but not exclusively on the peripheries of these states. Elite competition is the basic dynamic that precipitates ethnic conflict under specific condition¹²⁸. This arises from the broader political and economic environment rather than from the cultural values of ethnic group in question. According to this theory, cultural values, practices, etc. becomes symbols and referents for the identification of members of the group, which are called up in order to create a political identity more easily.

Cultural Deprivation and Ethnicity:

States are entities representing organized power and the most powerful group or groups are like to be those who not only constitute the majority but also dominate the state. In a multi-cultural society, the biggest group usually dominate the state both in terms of political and military power and in terms of cultural identity. Inducements to

¹²⁷ Joane Nagel, 'The Ethnic Revolution: Emergence of Ethnic Nationalism' in D. Leo (ed.) *Ethnic Canada: Identities and Inequalities*, Toronto, 1987, pp.32-33.

¹²⁸ Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*, (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 1991) pp.29-32.

ethnicity or ethnic political mobilization come from the feeling of insecurity among the ethnic minorities. This may be either because of the discrimination or oppression by the majority, the state identifying itself with the majority or the homogenization process arising out of modernization. The apprehension of minority ethnic group about their loss of their cultural identity may also arise from two sources. The first is the dominant majority, generally politically powerful, questioning the so called privileges or rights of minority and attempting to impose its religious or cultural values as that of the whole society. It means making the political ideology of the core group also the basis of nationalism in the state¹²⁹. The second arises from the ideology of modern states to equate the state and nation. This modern centralized nation-state, even in formal democracies, thinks of regions or local units as its sub-ordinates and agents. Any challenge from them is considered as anti-nation and subversive of national unity¹³⁰. It is thus suggested that there has been a cultural resurgence among ethnic or linguistic groups who bears a loss of identity due to increased social pressures from dominant modern society.

To conclude, it is manifest from the above discussion that ethnicity is certainly an important feature of modern politics. It can no longer be dismissed as a primitive hangover, inconsistent with a liberal democratic environment. In fact, ethnicity has become a focus for political mobilization. Enloe¹³¹ argues that ethnic factor is of paramount importance in the security planning of states and suggested that the

¹²⁹ A.S. Narang, *Ethnic Identities and Federalism*, (Shimla: IAS, 1995). p.150

¹³⁰ Sajal Basu, *Regional Movements: Politics of Language, Ethnicity-Identity*, (Shimla: IAS, 1992). p.25

¹³¹ C.H. Enloe, *Ethnic Soldiers*, (London: Penguin, 1980), pp.12-22.

recruitment to the armed forces, deployment of troops and filling of sensitive and strategic positions be screened on an ethnic basis. Just as there are different theories on ethnicity, one can also account for a variety of explanations for the rise of ethno-nationalism. Most observers accept the fact that no single theoretical approach can explain all cases of ethnic political mobilization in all its aspects and in all types of situation. Ethnic mobilization or politicization of ethnicity can be due to single or diverse factors—cultural, economic, political combination of or due to all these. Ethnic politics, as an intrinsic component of multi ethnic state, may take different variants in any state depending on historical traditions, on the policies and objectives of ethnic organization and on the comparative position of ethnic communities in the existing state structures. It can take the shape of agitation for autonomy, movements for better socio-politico-economic status or struggle for independence. They may not be mutually exclusive or permanent but can be envisaged as potential states of development, particularly in instances where as ethnically based organization, due to internal or external pressures, escalated its demands from cultural revivalism to full-scale territorial self-determination or even toward secession. Of course, the programs and achievements of distinct ethnic communities depend on several inter-related factors, including the response of the government and other instate communities to minority and majority demands and the policies of foreign governments in sponsoring or discouraging various ethnic movements. Thus, in multi-ethnic and multi-cultural state issues as to how to response, manage or absorb the shocks of political dissent articulated in ethnic or regional terms remains significant.

CHAPTER-III

BACKGROUND TO THE ZO ETHNO-NATIONALIST CONSCIOUSNESS

The Zos are ethnically a Mongoloid race belonging specifically to the Kuki-Chin sub-group of the Tibeto-Burman linguistic group. They consist of a group of familial tribes, subdivided into clans and sub-clans speaking varied yet closely related dialects or languages. Besides they are closely knitted together by common tradition, custom, culture, mode of living, rights and practices, etc. They are spread over an area extending to three countries which are contiguous to one another. Thus, we find Zos not only in India's northeastern states of Mizoram, Manipur, Assam and Tripura but also in Bangladesh where they are found in Chittagong Hill Tracts occupying, in particular, the hill regions—between the Sangut and the Karnaphuli rivers. In Myanmar, they live mainly in the Chin Hills, in the Hkamti and Somra Tracts and in the Kalem-Kabaw-Myitta valleys as well as in parts of the Arakan Hills.

As a result of frequent contact and interactions with other neighbouring people and with the advent of the British, they had been known for a long time to different people and regions by different names but mainly by three well documented nomenclatures, namely Kuki, Lushai and Chin—all applying to the present day term Zos. One characteristic feature of this people, commonly referred to as the Kuki-Chin or the

Kuki-Chin-Mizo, is the peculiar importance attached to names.¹ Prior to their settlement in the Chin Hills in Burma and their subsequent historical movement and dispersal so as to come to their present habitat, Zo tribes were said to have been united under a single ethnic entity.

3.1 EARLY HISTORY AND MIGRATION

The Zo people belong to the Mongoloid race and are generally believed to have originated from China. The area which lies between the upper course of the Yangtse-Kiang and the Hwang-Ho rivers are believed to be the original home of the Zo people and other ethnic groups of the Indo-Myanmar frontier areas.² S.K. Chatterjee identified the area of northwest China between the headwaters of the Hwang-Ho and the Yangtse-Kiang river as the place of origin of the Sino-Tibetan migration into India and Burma.³

The pattern of their settlements in different parts of South-East Asia leads us to believe that the Zomi and other Sino-Tibetan races entered into Burma in different waves following different routes. This argument is supported by folklores, oral traditions, and legends. Some group had gone up into the Tibetan area in the north, and other groups moved into Burma in three waves: the first group of people who migrated from china were the Mon-Khmer races, and the second were that of the Tibeto-Burman races which includes the Zo people, the Burmese, Lolo, Kachin, etc. the third wave consisted of the

¹ Carey and Tuck, *The Chin Hills: A History of the People, Our Dealings with them, their Customs and Manners, and a Gazetteer of their Country*, Vol.I, 1896, (Reprinted), Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, 1976. p.14.

² Neihzial, Tualchin, "*History and Culture of the Zoumis*" (Thesis), Imphal: Manipur University, 1993. p.19

³ *Ibid.*

Tai-Chinese consisting of Shan, Siamese, Karen, etc.⁴ The Tibeto-Burman wave which includes the Zo tribe moved south-westward along the Irrawady and the Chindwin river and settled in the mountainous region of the Indo-Burma areas.⁵ Carey and Tuck are of the opinion that the Zo people migrated from the north to the southern valleys of Chindwin river, and then stopped by the Bay of Bengal and turned to the north again.⁶ When they reached the plains of Burma they divided themselves into several groups. One group moved towards the area lying between the Chindwin and the Irrawady river, the other group moved towards the south and the west of Chindwin via Hukawang valley. The last immigrants were perhaps the Lushei and Hmar ancestor who, according to Pu K. Zawla, came to the Chindwin belt around 996 A.D.⁷ The first settlement in Burma was believed to be in Chiinlung or Sinlung located somewhere in or near the Shan state⁸ where the ancestors of the Zos fought with the Shans.⁹ Another theory based on folktales and legends claimed that the Zo people had founded a kingdom called Pu Gam with Pagan as its capital.¹⁰ The Asho Zomi tradition says that the original name of Pagan was Pu Gam which literally means 'country or kingdom of our ancestors.'¹¹ The British eventually recorded this as Pagan. Thus, it is clear that the Zo people settled in the plain areas of Burma for centuries until the hands of the Tartars (Mongols) struck them in the last

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Carey and Tuck, *op cit*, p.2.

⁷ Zawla, K., *Mizo Pipute and An Thlahte Chanchin*, Aizawl, Modern Printing Press, 1964. p.16.

⁸ Vankata Rao, V., *Century of Tribal Politics in North-East India (1874-1974)*, New Delhi, S. Chand & Co., 1976. p.29.

⁹ For details see *Mizo Union Memorandum*, Aizawl, 26th April 1947.

¹⁰ S.T. Haugo, "Our People, Our Language and Our Culture", *Chin Magazine*, Rangoon, Rangoon University (1971-72), 1972. p.8.

¹¹ Sing Khaw Khai, *Zo People and Their Culture*, Lamka, Khampu Hatzaw. p.1.

part of the thirteenth century A.D.¹² They eventually drove the Zo people out of the Chindwin valley in the western hills. A sizeable group of them entered into the northwestern corner of Burma and made their settlement, which is presently known as Chin State in Burma.

According to Thangtuan, after coming out from the Kale-Kabow valley they established Chiimnuai where the various clans spread along the different sides of Chiimnuai.¹³ Another observation is that as they fled into the hill areas they first settled in the cave or cliff areas called Khul. For about four generations all the northern Zos lived at Chiimnuai without any problem.¹⁴ Eventually their size increased and after some decades they started settling in different areas assuming names after the topographical places or after the names of their ancestors.

Some of the Zos entered the hills of Manipur directly, while others entered northeast India through the Chin Hills. The former included such groups as the Zous, Paites, Simtes and some families of the Thadou clans. But majority of them moved southwards and established a permanent settlement at Tedim, Falam and Haka. Still others moved further down to Zotung, Matupi and the Mara areas in the southernmost portions of the present Mizoram. A part of his group moved westward and in due course, crossed the Ciau (Tiau) river entering into the hill areas of Mizoram.¹⁵

¹² Neihzial, Tualchin, *op cit*, p.24.

¹³ Thangtuan, *Khamtung Mite Tangthu*, unpublished article, 1988. pp.1-3.

¹⁴ Sing Khaw Khai, *Suangpi Mual Suang(1931-1981)*, Suangpi, TOPC, 1981. p.11.

¹⁵ Khup Za Go, *A Critical Historical Study of Bible Translations among the Zo People in Northeast India*, Lamka, CBLB, 1996. p.25.

Soon after, this group left the Chindwin river for the Chin Hills, another group, the inhabitants of Khampat town also followed them to this hill. After spending a number of years in the Tedim area they moved across the Manipur river and settled in Lantang (Lan range) in 1466 A.D.¹⁶ This group consisted of the Raltes, Chongthus, Khiangtes, Hauhars, Chaungous, Chauhangs, Ngentes, Partes and the Paites.

Thus, the early history and pattern of migration of the Zos played an important role in the formation of their ethnic and political developments. During their occupation of the plains of Burma, the Zo people had attained a measure of unified national character. But their subsequent migration into the adjoining hilly areas marked a turning point in their history. The difficult terrain and rugged hills on which they settled had a great impact on their societal lives—they began to split up into small groups, often single families or clan groups concentrated in a single village. Due to lack of communication, interaction between them became difficult and less frequent leading to diverse dialects and variations in their emerging ways of lives. To quote Dr. Vumson, “...the rugged terrain, and each migratory groups’ suspicions of others led to limited contact with one another, thereby developing different dialects and differing habits.”¹⁷

3.2 ‘ZO’—THE GENERIC NAME

The historical usage of the term Zo could be traced back to the writings of Fach’o, a Chinese historian in the early ninth century A.D. He used the term ‘Shou’ for the king

¹⁶ Liangkhaia, *Mizo Chanchin*, (4th ed.), Aizawl, Private, 1976. p.21.

of Mi-no (Chindwin) people, the ascendants of the contemporary Chins of Myanmar.¹⁸ Much later Fr. V.Sangermano, writing in 1783, noted, “to the east of Chien mountains between 20.30 and 21.30 degrees North latitude is a pretty nation called Jo (Yaw). They are supposed to have been Chin, who in progress of time become Burmese, speaking their language although very corrupt, and adopting all their customs.”¹⁹

Again in 1839, Howard Malcolm, an American missionary from Boston mentioned a district called Yo of Jo in his book, *Travels in South East Asia*. He wrote, “the Yaws (Zo) are on the lower waters of Chindwin not far from Ava. The district is sometimes called Yo of Jo. The language is essentially Burman but spoken with a dialect intelligible only to themselves.”²⁰ Similarly in 1855, Henry Yule mentioned the Zo country in his famous book, *A narrative of the Mission to the Court of Ava*.²¹

These references show that for centuries the term Zo has been used. These group of peoples dispersed from the Chindwin area in Myanmar and moved towards the adjoining areas till they spread to occupy the present North Eastern state of India. Undoubtedly the scattering of the people led to the sometimes confusing different terms with which they identify themselves. Clan names became a more important form of identifying themselves. In Myanmar they were referred to as Chins. When some section of the Zo people moved across the rugged hills and come into contact with the people of

¹⁷ Dr. Vumson, *Zo History*, Aizawl, Private p.74.

¹⁸ G.H. Luce, *Phases of Pre-Pagan Burma: Languages and History*, Vol-2, London, OUP, 1985. p.78.

¹⁹ Fr. V. Sangermano, *A Description of the Burmese Empire*, Parbuty, Rangoon, Allen & Co., 1884. p.43.

²⁰ Vum Kho Hau, *Profile of a Burma Frontier Man*, Bandung, Private, 1963. p.301.

²¹ *Ibid.*

Bengal and Assam, they were referred to as Kukis. They were known by this name until the early 1870s when another term Lushai was used by the Britishers. It should be noted that these various terms were imposed upon them and that they were usually denoted by the people when they referred to themselves. Moreover, these terms usually denoted some physical characteristics of this tribal people. Due to the growing importance of clan identity, frequent feuds were prevalent amongst them during the pre-Colonial times. Hence, outside observers tended to regard the different clans as distinct varied communities.

Therefore, in the course of this work the term Chin or Kuki of Mizo will be used interchangeably to refer to one ethnic group, i.e., Zo. The early history of the Zos, their migration, and subsequent recognition of themselves as a distinct ethnic group will be dealt with in more detail presently.

3.3 TRADITIONAL SOCIO-POLITICAL SYSTEM OF THE ZO PEOPLE

The social relations of the Zo society are based on clan-lineages. The village is headed by a chief upon whom all political authority is vested. Chittaranjan Nag noted that, “the traditional Zo politics was clan-lineage based in which the centralization of political authority rested with the class of chiefs.”²² Village members usually belonged to the same clan and, therefore, related to the chief in one way or the other. Thus, the

²² Chittaranjan Nag, *Mizo Polity and Political Modernisation (Pre-Colonial Institutions)*, New Delhi, Vikas Publishing house, 1995. p.15.

chieftainship system was almost always welfare oriented owing to close familial ties between the chief and his subjects.

During the British colonial rule there were several paramount chiefs among the Zo people, each ruling over a cluster of villages or over a certain specific region. Under these paramount chiefs were petty village chiefs who took care of single villages. A.K. Ray, in his study of the Thadou-Kuki tribe, mentioned three types of chiefs—clan chiefs, traditional village chief and the territorial chief.²³ The original clan chiefs were the direct lineal descendent of the original progenitor. The traditional village chiefs were the younger branches of the original clan. The chieftainship of the Zo people is hereditary.

All executive, legislative and judicial powers are vested in the hands of the chief. He is the supreme head of administration whose words are laws within his chiefdom. He has a council of advisers known as 'Upas' (elders). These Upas appointed by the chief himself act as ministers to the chief in administration and as jurors in judicial matters. The Upas helped in deciding all cases of disputes, crimes and also advice the chief in social and political matters. To help him in other matters, the chief assigns a village crier known as 'Tangko' or 'Tiangau' whose duty is to give information to the villagers. Another office is blacksmithy, also known as 'Sikseek' or 'Thirdeng'. He is appointed by the chief to manufacture agricultural implements and warfare weapons. There is a village priest who is also appointed by the chief known as 'Siampu' or 'Puithiam' to perform all village ceremonies and conduct sacrifices to appease the gods.

²³ Ashok Kumar Ray, *Authority and Legitimacy: A Study of the Thado-Kuki in Manipur*, Imphal Renaissance Publishing House. p.8.

The solidarity of the Zo society is based on clan-lineages. Customs and traditions are mostly similar across different clans. Certain social institutions such as 'Indongta' among the northern Zo people, 'Bawi' or 'Tawkai' system, and 'Zawlbuk' or 'Haam' existed in almost all clan-based villages of the Zo people with little or negligible variations. Indongta is a kinship relation defined as a household council. In this council the offices or portfolios and the responsibilities attached are an extension of division of labour within the family, Haam or Zawlbuk is a bachelors' dormitory where young boys are taught the art of warfare, wrestling, etc. and where values important to the Zo people are inculcated. Bawi or Tawkai system of the Zo people is one where the chief sheltered reformed criminals or orphans in return for services to his household. Captives from clan wars were also used as Bawis (slaves).

3.4 ZO AS AN ETHNIC GROUP

The Zo people are closely interrelated tribes having common characteristic features which connect them from one another. This group of tribes have a number of common affinities. Though known by various imposed names and living under different administrative units the Zos can be identified as an ethnic group having distinct culture, language and tradition. They form a separate ethnic group which transcends political boundary.

Some prominent characteristic features which bind the Zo people together as an ethnic entity are:

i) Linguistic affinities: Linguistic affinities exist among this group of tribes. They all belong to the Tibeto-Burman linguistic group with negligible variations. A remarkable feature is that different tribe members can converse to one another by using their own respective dialects.²⁴

ii) Belief in Common Origin: The different tribes of the Zos hold a common belief that they originate out of a cave according to their mythological folklores. This mythological cave is known by various names, viz. 'Khul', 'Khur', 'Khurpui', 'Khurfu-Bijur', 'Sinlung', 'Chhinlung' and so on by various tribes like Thadou, Lushai, Lakher, Paite, Tedim-Chin and Moyon-Monsang.

iii) Possession of Common Folktales: There are many folktales common and current among these tribes. Some of the prominent tales include 'Khupching leh Ngambawm', 'Thanghou leh Liandou', 'Ngalngam', 'Ralngam', 'Temtatpu', etc. these stories are similar in content among most Zo Tribes in Manipur, Mizoram, Burma, etc. this implies that they enjoy similar social rituals, norms and philosophy and ultimately similar historical processes.

²⁴ Kamkhenthang, H., 'Groping for Identity' in *In Search of Identity* (ed.), Imphal, KBC, 1986. p.3.

iv) Agamous Marriage: Majority of the tribes, if not all follow agamous marriage in which a man can marry any woman within and outside his clan except his immediate family members.

Thus, these above features validate Anthony Smith's views on ethnic identity as applicable to the Zo. He examined six bases or foundations of ethnic identity,²⁵ in which firstly an ethnic group must have a name in order to be recognized as a distinct community both by its members and outsiders. Secondly, the belief in or myth of common ancestry. Thirdly, the presence of shared historical memories (as interpreted and diffused over generations by group members, often verbally among members of the group. Fourthly, a group must have a shared culture generally based on a combination of language, laws, dress, food, customs, institutions, music, crafts and architecture. Fifthly, a feeling of attachment to a specific territory which one may or may not actually inhabit. Sixthly, the people in the ethnic group have to think of themselves as constituting a group to form an ethnic community, i.e. they must have a sense of solidarity or a sense of their common ethnicity. The Zo tribes have always had a consciousness of kind contributing to a strong emotional bond. For instance, the contemporary Zos demand for reunification of the inhabited area under a single administrative unit is a telling manifestation of their ethnic consciousness.

²⁵ Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origin of Nations*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1986. p.89.

3.5 BRITISH COLONIALISM AND THE ZO PEOPLE

Prior to the advent of the British rule in the Zo inhabited areas, the Zos lived in isolation and completely independent, each Zo village ruled and administered by its respective chief. The only little contact they had with the neighbouring people as well as the Britishers who rules the surrounding areas was through raids and counter-raids undertaken for a number of reasons. The first recorded encounter between the Zo and the British subjects occurred in 1824 when enterprising traders from the plains penetrated the hills along the Dhaleshwari river to collect bamboo and timber for trade.²⁶ In their attempt to expand their territory, the Britishers' motives included commercial interest and economic benefit. "The extension of the British tea plantation on the foothills of the Lushai country was taken by the chief as an encroachment upon their future lands"²⁷ and was viewed with suspicion by the chief to the extent that they prohibited their subjects not to work in the tea garden.²⁸ As a result the Zo people increased the frequency and intensity of their raids. Beyond Mizoram they extended their raids to the Chittagong area in Tripura, Sylhet, Cachar district in Assam and Manipur. Having faced the brunt of a number of raids by the Zos the Britishers perceived a serious challenge to their sovereignty. They appointed a superintendent of a hill tribe in the Chittagong Hill Tract "to supervise the independent tribe; and ...the preservation of peace in the frontier."²⁹ This was to be maintained with the cooperation of Tripura and Poong Rajas. Earlier is

²⁶ Carey and tuck, *op cit.*, p.14.

²⁷ R. Vanlawma, *Ka Ram leh Kei*, Aizawl, Zalen Printing House, 1972. p.19.

²⁸ A. Ray, *Mizoram: Dynamics of Change*, Calcutta, Pearl Publishers, 1982. p.5.

²⁹ T.H. Lewin, *Wild Races*, Calcutta, Firma KLM, 1918 (Reprinted). p.34.

1852, after the second Anglo-Burmese War, the golden plains of Chindwin, which was then part of the Zo country fell into the British hands giving the British a military foothold for further invasion to other parts of the country. The policy to quieten the Zos achieved limited success. And it continued on an even greater scale. It was not until an attack upon the tea garden at Alexandrapore in which the planter, Winchester, was killed and his six0year old daughter was carried off as hostage that the British changed their policy from sending punitive expedition to a policy of pacification through occupation. Thus, the Lushai Expedition-I took place in 1871-72 followed by a massive invasion of the Zo country under the Chin-Lushai Expedition-II. The expedition was entrusted with the implementation of the new policy advanced from three directions, involving the governments of Bengal, Assam and Burma. This three-pronged policy was to deal with the whole area inhabited by the Zo clans and subsequently came to be referred to as the “Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-1890.” With the annexation and occupation of the Zo country a new era thus began.

The annexation and occupation of the Lushai Hills and subsequent consolidation of administration was governed by the principle and objective of keeping the Lushais tamed and unable to attempt any uprising at the least possible cost.³⁰ As part of this new policy and in recognition of the formal annexation by the Government of India, new districts were constituted, namely: the north Lushai Hills in May 1890, the South Lushai Hills in 1891 and the Chin Hills in 1892-93. These districts were spread over three

³⁰ Lalchungnunga, *Mizoram Politics of Regionalism and National Integration*, New Delhi, Reliance publishing House, 1994. p.33.

provinces—Assam, Bengal and Burma respectively. The officers in charge were to work in concert with each other for the purpose of “establishing political influence and control over them (Zos), and inducing them to submit to our (British) rule.”³¹ Though the British administrators could bring about peace and order in the area, it was short lived. The policy of ‘divide and rule’ of the colonial power as an ‘administrative convenience’ created ‘administrative inconveniences.’ The fact that these administrative units were attached to three governments made the policy unworkable nor the coordination or work made easier. More important was the unnatural situation because the peoples inhabiting these hills had been, during the expedition, found to be of ‘one race’³² or of the same stock.³³

3.6 THE CHIN-LUSHAI CONFERENCE 1892

Not long enough, before measures aimed to consolidate the hill country inhabited by the Zos was adopted to test the efficacy of their policy, the British realized the inadequacy and infeasibility of dividing the Zos into three administrative units attached to the three governments. The realization of this blunder came in the form of a conference known as ‘Chin-Lushai Conference’ held at Fort William on January 25, 1892 in which the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, the Chief Commissioners of Assam and Burma (Myanmar) and high ranking civil and military officers participated. It passed a resolution part of which stated:

³¹ R. Reid, *Lushai Hills*, (Reprinted), Aizawl, TRI, 1983. p.21.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Carey and Tuck, *op cit.* p.2.

i) The majority of the Conference are of the opinion that it is very desirable that the whole tract of the country known as the Chin-Lushai Hills should be brought under one administrative head as soon as can be done.

ii) The Conference is of the opinion that the boundaries of the new administrative areas should be, generally speaking, the boundaries of the areas occupied by the savages newly brought under the British rule.

The policy of dividing the Zo people was thus sought to be rectified as per the resolution of the conference. It was an admission of the mistake made on the part of the colonial British and a major attempt to bring the Zos under a unified administration. The resolutions, however, were not implemented. The state of affairs had far reaching implications on the socio-political destiny of the Zo people. The spirit of the resolutions of the Chin-Lushai Conference subsequently lingered on as was evident in the present state of Zo politics.

Another major effort was made in 1898 as per the resolution of the Chin-Lushai Conference to bring the Zo inhabited areas under one administration. The Conference agreed that North and South Lushai Hills with some portion of the Arakan Hill Tracts should be placed under Assam at once.³⁴ Thus, the North and South Lushai Hills amalgamated under a common province known as Lushai Hill District administered by an officer styled superintendent of the Lushai Hill District. However, this was only a partial

³⁴ A. Ray, *Mizoram: Dynamics of Change*, Calcutta, Pearl Publishers, 1982. p.21.

fulfillment of the resolutions passed, as major part of the Zo people were left under different provinces. Had the decisions taken by the Government of India on the recommendations of this Conference materialized, the whole region occupied by the Zo ethnic group comprising some portions of India, Bangladesh and Burma (Myanmar) would have come up as a distinct political entity. The decision taken by the government was half-hearted at best and was out of sheer 'administrative convenience' rather than the unification of the Zo people. Ray observed thus,

“Of these important decisions many ultimately did not take shape. Chittagong division continued with Bengal as did Arakan with Burma. Only the North and South Lushai Hills were amalgamated into one district which was brought under the control of the Chief Commissioner of Assam, This decision regarding jurisdiction would show explicitly that the question of keeping these areas under one administration or another was decided mainly from the point of administrative convenience. This decision had, however, far reaching effects. Had the Chittagong Hill Tracts been merged with the Lushai Hills or had these hills been transferred to Burma the future of these hills would have been different.”³⁵

This suggests that the main consideration in taking this important decision was not the unification of the Zos but of administrative convenience.

³⁵ *Ibid.* p.21.

Meanwhile, by the time the Lushai Hills was annexed, the British had learned of the disastrous consequences of permitting unrestricted access of unscrupulous traders, moneylenders and lawyers from outside.³⁶ Besides, the tribals of the Northeast had no racial, historical, cultural or linguistic affinity with the peoples of the plains. Thus, these factors led the British to introduce an administrative system with emphasis on self-government based on traditional chieftainship.

John Shakespeare, the first superintendent of the amalgamated Lushai Hills designed the administrative set up. Immediately after assuming charge he introduced the land settlement system under which each chief was given a certain area of land within which he and his subjects could freely move about. Each chief was given well defined boundaries, thus removing the cost of disputes regarding land. It also brought in a network of village roads connecting all sides.³⁷ In 1901-02, John Shakespeare introduced yet another new system called 'Circle Administration.'

Some of the traditional privileges of the chiefs were curtailed and invested in the superintendent which implies that the chief was under the control of the latter. Each chief, therefore, became the link between the superintendent and the villagers. Besides, with the rapid spread of schools and Christianity, new centers of power and influence were created in the person of the new roles played by the teachers and Christian leader. The Zo culture and society which had been existing secludedly without any contact from the outside

³⁶ J.H. Hutton, 'The Effect of Western Contacts Upon the Primitive Tribes of India' in LSSO Malley (ed.) *Modern India and the West*, 1941. pp.3-4, 22-23

³⁷ A. Ray, *op cit.* P.24.

world was thus exposed to the too powerful influences of British imperialism and Christianity (which by now had made great inroads into the Mizo society due to zealous missionary activities). Despite administrative policies designed to safeguard the traditional culture it was inevitable that the very presence of the British would lead to changes in the lives of the people. Acting on what they believed to be the interest of the people the British were inadvertently interfering with the Zo culture and the traditional fabric of the indigenous community life. The government undertook active measures to do away with what it considered 'savage' and 'barbaric' practices. The permanent land settlement prevented the people from migrating to new places. Zawlbuk, one of the most important social institutions of the Zo community, the center of Zo socio-cultural life, was not spared. The traditional chieftainship and its accompanying authority was also challenged ultimately leading to its abolition. Thus, the advent of the British as the conquering and administering power in the hitherto secluded hill country shook the Zo culture to its roots. These developments further contributed to the social and economic development of the people³⁸ in ways unforeseen and brought about remarkable changes in all spheres of their traditional life.

³⁸ Mangkhosat Kipgen, *Christianity and Mizo Culture: The Encounter Between Christianity and Zo Culture in Mizoram*, Aizawl, MTC, 1997. p.153.

CHAPTER-IV

THE PROGRESS OF ZO ETHNO-NATIONALISM

4.1 EVOLUTIONARY DIMENSION: ORIGINS IN THE LEGACY OF ANTI-COLONIAL RESISTANCE

This section is an attempt to bring out the evolutionary dimension of Zo ethno-nationalism by establishing a link between the imperialist tribal uprisings of the colonial era on the one hand, and the more mature political movements of the later periods among the Zo peoples. Even though the maturing of Zo ethno-nationalism came as late as the post-independence period in Zo country, its root can be traced back to a much earlier period, viz. the colonial period. Of course it would be an exaggeration to claim this 'Primary Resistance' as an expression of ethno-nationalism. Nevertheless, it would not be too farfetched to state the later evolution of Zo ethno-nationalism took inspiration from the legacy of tribal resistance during the colonial period. Such notable instances of anti-imperialist resistance includes the Lushai Resistance of 1871-72, Sihzang-Gungal Rebellion of 1892 and Kuki Uprising of 1917-19.

(i) **Resistance in the Lushai Hills (Mizoram), 1871-1872:** Ever since the annexation of Cachar into British dominion, the local authorities had to deal with the incursions of the Lushai Tribes. The British first came in contact with the Lushais of Mizoram in 1844, when some 'Poitoo Kookies' attacked a village of Sylhet under a chief

named Lalchokla, who carried away Zo human heads and six live captives. Within another five years such raids were reported; and attacked by Mizos on British subjects and counter attacked by the British with a good frequency seems to characterized British dealings with the Lushai Hills till 1891.¹

Under the British government India decided to send an expedition into the Zo country during the winter season of 1871-72. Meanwhile the leaders of the raiding Mizo chieftains were tentatively identified as Vanhnuailiana's sons, Liankhama, Buangthauva, Pawiboia and Lalburha in the east, and Savunga, Lalpuithanga and Bengkhuaia in the west.

Plans for the expedition were made and in December 1871 it set off in two columns. The left column advanced from Cachar under the command of General G. Bouchier, with Edgar, Deputy Commissioner, Cachar as Civil Officer. The right column advanced from Chittagong under the command of General C.A. Brownlow, with Captain T.H. Lewin, Superintendent of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, as Civil Officer. In addition, a contingent of Manipuris accompanied by General Nuthall, the Political Agent of Manipur, made a demonstration march across the southern border of Manipur in support of General Bouchier's operations.

Realizing the dangers implicit in confronting the eastern tribes who could be an even 'fiercer and more formidable foe', whose extermination would remove the buffer

¹ R.G. Woodthorpe, *The Lushai Expedition 1871-72*, Aizawl, Tribal Research Institute, 1873; (Reprinted 1978), p.11.

man hanging from it. Another consisted of small strips of bamboos stuck into the trunk of a felled tree, from the wound of which a deep red sap, strongly resembling blood, flowed. These dire symbols were intended to be warnings to the troops who persisted in advancing into the furious Zo country.³

As far as possible, the Lushais avoided direct encounter with the British troops, and generally they resorted to guerilla warfare. But there were heavy cross-firing occasionally. Two British officers died during the expeditions in consequences with the hardships of the campaign.

It is true that the conquered natives left no record whatsoever about their impressions or anxiety which they experienced within the campaign. However, even the one-sided colonial record, for example, Woodthorpe's account is enough to impress us with some idea of how the Lushais highly prized their independence and resented any sort of outside interference. Woodthorpe recorded, "Hill-men dread the invasion of foreigners, more on this account perhaps than any other—I mean the introduction of strange diseases. Smallpox and other diseases from time to time spread among them by traders, though the northern Lushais with whom we had to do, had hitherto, enjoyed apparent immunity from the consequences of intercourse with strangers, as, out of the many who visited our camps, we only saw one man at all marked with smallpox."⁴

³ Woodthorpe, *op cit*, p.127.

⁴ *Ibid*, pp.312-313.

ii) Resistance in the Chin Hills (Burma) 1892-95: A popular resistance movement of the Zo people in the Chin Hills of Burma occurred after the Anglo-Lushai encounter of 1871-72 though relatively less known, comprising the Kamhau-Sukte, Surkhua and Thantlang areas. Recognising the strategic importance of this areas the British government was bent on consolidating its hold in this part of the Zo country. The government raised a large number of labourers for construction purposes. It also imposed heavy fines on the people who crossed the colonial ruler's directives. Moreover, demands were made to supply attendance to British officials.⁵

These above measures antagonize the Zo people of Sihzang-Gungal area. Pu Thuamthawng, chief of Kaptel was the architect of popular uprising on May 6, 1892. He along with other chiefs of Zahau, Hualngous and Lusheis attacked military post at Boutung (Bouchung). He also sent envoy to other chiefs and asked them to join him. Having received good responses from other chieftains Thuamthawng was emboldened to assassinate the British Political Officer, B.S. Carey and to remove Myook U Tunwin and all the interpreters from the hills. He devised a scheme for fooling the British. He sent messengers to fought while professing repentance for his misbehaviour and expressed his wish to submit to the British. At that time Mr. B.S. Carey, the Political Officer, was on tour to the south. But as Myook U Tunwin proceeded to the rendezvous at Pumba on October 9, 1892 with a military escort of 30 sepoy, Thuamthawng sprang a trap and killed U Tunwin and half his men in an ambush.⁶

⁵ Carey and Tuck, *op cit*, pp.61-62.

⁶ *Ibid*, p.87.

Taking stock of the alarming situation, the British government immediately decided to take repressive measures against the revolting Zos. On November 3, 1893 British forces attacked Sihzang village. By December 1893 all Sihzang villagers involved in the rebellion were completely annihilated and army posts established in the area. From there a British column crossed the Manipur river to advance into the Gungal territories. On January 14, 1893 the column occupied Kaptel the hometown of Thuamthawng. They destroyed all foodgrains and livestock completely ruining the people. Having no alternative, the rebel chief surrendered to the British in the month of July 1893. They were subsequently deported to Burma. The families of the few chiefs who continued their resistance movement were kidnapped and threatened unless they surrendered. Finally, in May 1894 the remaining chief surrendered and were deported to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Thus, the rebellion was successfully suppressed. The British disarmed all the rebels and recovered 4,302 guns in the Chin Hills alone.⁷

Even though this resistance movement was concentrated in Sihzang-Gungal as its epicenter in the Chin Hills, parts of Manipur where Zos lived also joined the uprising during 1892-95 as Indo-Burmese border was still very fluid then. Even though such resistance movement lacked proper ethno-national consciousness in a strict sense of the term, it cannot be denied that the Zo people gained confidence for later assault at their oppressors, even as their movement augmented their political self-consciousness vis-à-vis the colonial state. Each move against the oppressor opened up more space for further protest against the common enemy that confronted the Zo people. Long after the uprising

⁷ *Ibid*, p.107.

of the Sihzang-Gungal, which was brutally suppressed by the British government, the sparks of ethno-nationalism gradually got kindled from such ashes of resistance legacy dating back to the colonial period. The history of participation of the numerous Zo tribes in the Chin Hills, Lushai Hills and Manipur Hills in the common struggles against the British was later an unfailing source of inspiration for the ethno-nationalist aspiration of the Zo people presently fragmented by state and international boundaries.

iii) Resistance Movement in Manipur Hills 1917-1919: The Zos' Resistance Movement in Manipur, commonly known as the Kuki Uprising or the Zogal (Zo War), in the hill territory of Manipur is well-known. It cost the government 28 lakhs of rupees in order to quell it besides loss of many lives.⁸ The Kuki is a generic term employed by the colonial writers to refer to the Zo people in different parts of India. At present the term is popularly used among the Thadou speaking section of the Zos. But the Kuki Uprising of 1917-19 was by no means a struggle confined to the Thadou groups only; for there are evidences that pointed to the participation of non-Thadou tribes like the Zou in the South of Manipur. The anti-colonial edge of the uprising was so sharply and remarkably prominent that it evinced elements of rudimentary ethno-nationalism. But let us briefly mention the sequence and circumstances of the uprising.

The First World War made it necessary for the British government to have a labour force in the battlefields of France. This labour force were raised amongst the various tribes of Zo, Nagas and others who were willingly drafted in. By 1917 more

⁸ Robert Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering Assam, 1883-1941*, 1942 (Reprinted 1983) Delhi, p. 79.

labour was needed and these were sought from the Zo tribes yet again. The Kuki chiefs with whom the first draftings were made declined to send men. A further effort on the part of the political agent only produced angry refusals.⁹ The Zo chiefs refused to send either coolies or to come to Imphal to discuss the matter.¹⁰ The officiating political agent with Capt. Cole and hundred rifles marched into Mombi village, a six-day journey from Imphal, in September 1917 where they were greeted with open hostility. A skirmish followed and the whole place was destroyed. With this initial encounter, the military show-down dragged on for two long years. The prolonged duration of the uprising, coupled with the swelling scale of the area under the rebel's control became a matter of serious concern. In desperation the British Government wrote that, "It may be necessary to employ aeroplane as the quickest way to bring in the rebels into subjects."¹¹

During this season of anti-imperialist fervour in Manipur, feelings of proto-nationalism appeared not to be absent among the Zos. In fact, a folk song composed on the occasion of the First World in the Zou dialect runs as follow:

"Tuizum Mangkang kill bang hing khang

(Zota kual zil bang liing e)²

Pianna ka gamlei hi e! Phal sing e!

Namtem hiam a I Zogamlei laal kanaw, Sansii 'n zeel e!

Ngalliam vontawi ka laulou laai e"¹²

⁹ L.W. Shakespeare, *History of Assam Rifles, 1929* (Reprinted 1977), Aizawl, p.210.

¹⁰ Foreign and Political Department; External Sec., July 1918, PRO. No.7.

¹¹ *Foreign and Political Department*, Int.-August, 1919, Prog. No. 50.

¹² Folksongs compiled by *Zomi Sangnaupang Pawlpi*, Delhi Branch. Delhi , 1998.

Free Translation:

*“The sea-faring White imperialists coil like the “kill” plant,
 (Tremors of earthquake do quiver the Zo world)
 ‘Tis the land of my birth! I shall not part with it!
 Stain’d with blood is my Sword that has routed the adversary of Zoland,
 I shall yet fight with the wild Boar, injured”.*

This folk song, reflecting the collective mind of the natives, indicated two interesting elements. First, the anti-colonial sentiment of the uprising made the Zo folk-poet to compare the British imperial power with the ‘kill’ plant, which is a native wild creeper. Second, the poet’s resolve not to part with the land of his birth may seem somewhat vague in meaning, nevertheless the sense of patriotism and the sort of ethno-nationalist feeling expressed by the poet is remarkable.

4.2 SOCIO-POLITICAL DIMENSION

Even though the attempt to annex the Lushai Hills by the British was greatly opposed, it was eventually annexed in 1890 and was divided into two administrative wings: the North Lushai districts and the South Lushai districts. The chiefs were retained and allowed to rule the villages in accordance with the customary laws and the British officials interfered only when a chief refused to obey their general norms set. This was so because the British found it politically expedient and economically beneficial to maintain the indigenous patriarchal system of tribal/clan chieftainship under their overarching

dominance and control. Under the 1935 Act, for instance, the Mizo Hills were designated as excluded areas under the direct control of the chief executive of the area, i.e. the Governor of Assam.¹³ Under the provision of the Act, the Governor of Assam was the sole administrative and legislative power and authority over the excluded areas. As a result the Governor of Assam administered the Lushai Hill District through the district head, the Superintendent appointed by him. The practice of singular bureaucratic administration run by the superintendent without any political interference had far reaching effects.¹⁴

The impact of the concept of 'excluded areas' on the future political development of the Mizos is observed thus, "all the subsequent future political developments including insurgency in the Lushai Hills and Naga Hills and the creation of small states and Union Territories in the area could be directly traced to the creation of 'excluded areas' by the act of 1935."¹⁵

This state of affairs continued until the end of the Second World War when India's independence from the British rule was looming large. The politically conscious Zo leaders of Mizoram were confronted with sharp differences of opinion regarding the future of Lushai Hills. The recently formed Mizo Union avowed in favour of staying within India. However, a faction of it thought in terms of becoming independent as they

¹³ A. Roy, *Mizoram: Dynamics of Change*, pp.12-91.

¹⁴ Chittaranjan Nag, *Mizo Polity and Political Modernization*, B.S. Publishing House, New Delhi, 1997, p.71.

¹⁵ A. Ray, *Mizoram: Dynamics of Change*, p.49.

had been before the British occupied their land.¹⁶ Besides, the District Conference supported by the chiefs wanted the Lushai Hills to remain a British Crown colony. The representatives of these two groups did not find favour of the Sub-advisory Committee (Bordoloi Committee) of the Constituent Assembly formed to study and recommend on the future administrative set up in the hill areas of Assam. In the wake of India's independence in 1947 there was a question whether the Mizo should join Pakistan, or Burma, or India, or remain a British colony, or become an independent country. An alternate scheme was also being floated by Prof. R. Coupland at this juncture, which suggested the creation of the Crown colony of the 'Eastern Agency' consisting the hill areas of Assam and Burma which would in due course be an independent state.

(a) Genesis of Modern Political Bodies: UMFO and MU:

Ultimately, on July 2, 1947 a group formed a party called the United Mizo Freedom Organization (UMFO), which tried to mobilize the Zos towards an objective of joining Burma instead of India, thinking that the Zo people would have greater autonomy in Burma than in India.¹⁷

The spurt of political activity during the mid-40s in the area reflected an emphasis on Zo-ness by various emerging elites claiming to represent commoners (vantlang)

¹⁶ R. Vanlawma, *op cit*, pp.133-4.

¹⁷ R. Vanlawma, *op cit*, p.147.

versus the established elite—the Chiefs (lal).¹⁸ The term Mizo is a self-given generic name and is an indigenous term presumed to cover all the Zo tribes.

The future of the Mizos, according to the leadership of the Mizo Union, lies with the Indian Union. In its first General Assembly on September 24, 1946 at Kulikawn, Aizawl, the party resolved that in the event of India attaining independence the Lushai Hills must be included within the province of Assam. The Assembly also resolved that all the contiguous areas occupied by the Mizos should be administrated under one administration. These demands were further confirmed by the Second Conference at Lakhipur, Cachar District on November 21, 1946, which was attended by representatives of Mizos in Cachar, Manipur and Lushai hills.

In its Memorandum, His Majesty's Government, The Government of India and the Constituent Assembly, through the Bordoloi Committee in which two top Mizo Union (MU) leaders were co-opted members. They made the following points in the memorandum:

(a) Mizos are a family of numerous tribes spreading over Lushai Hills, Manipur, Cachar, Tripura, Chittagong Hill Tracts and Burma.

(b) The creation of Lushai Hills comprising only Luseis, a Mizo tribe, was effected for the British administrative convenience, leaving other Mizo tribes outside

¹⁸ B.B. Goswami, *The Mizo Unrest: A Study of Politicization of Culture*, Jaipur: Alec Publishers, 1979, p.25.

it. Quoting various authorities like Shakespeare, Stevenson, Liangkhaia, Shaw, Kingdanward and Kim of the Statesman, they maintained that the Mizos within Lushai Hills and without it had strong solidarity.

(c) The Mizos were distinct from the plains people as well as from the Nagas and Manipuris.

(d) Migrating to their present habitats from the east, the Mizo villages lay within the areas covered by the border of the present Falam Sub-Division in Burma in the east.

(e) The area occupied by Mizo tribes was as big as 15,993 square miles and the population was about 328,400.

(f) It is, therefore, imperative that His majesty's Government, the Government of India and the Constituent Assembly do the "just and proper thing" and grant the Mizos their "Just demand" for Territorial Unity and Solidarity.

(g) The Mizos were never subjugated by the Maharajas of Manipur, Tripura, Chittagong and Cachar. When the British annexed their land, they became loyal to the British, as proved by their willing participation on their side during the Two World Wars, Abhor Expedition and Haokip rebellion.

(h) The Mizos had efficient system of administration and discipline as a distinct group governed by their traditional laws, customs and organization.

(i) Mizos had never been under the Indian Government and never had any connection with the politics of the various groups of Indian Dominion. So, they could not be thrown on a common platform with the rest of India, because their ways were too different from those of others.

(j) It is, therefore, important to the highest degree that the Mizos be given self-determination in its fullest form.

(k) On account of all the problems and its strategic location, lack of developmental facilities, it is all the more imperative that Mizoram be given special financial provision by the Centre while allowing them their territorial integrity "as anything short of this will be detrimental to their upbringing."

(l) The District shall join Assam through legislature with adequate representation and be also eligible to the provincial services with due reservations of posts at the same time retaining her territorial integrity and self-determination; as otherwise, thrown among forty crores of Indian, the 3,28,400 Mizos with their unique system of like will be wiped out of existence.

On the eve of independence, a meeting was held under the chairmanship of the British Superintendent of the Lushai Hills, Mr. L.L. Peters, in which both the Mizo Union

and the UMFO representatives participated. The meeting resolved, inter alia, that if the Lushais are to enter the India Union, their main demands were:

(i) that, the existing safeguards of their customary laws and land tenure, etc. should be maintained;

(ii) that, the Chin Hills Regulation, 1896 and the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873 should be retained until such time as the Lushais themselves through their District Council or other parallel District authority, declared that these can be abrogated;

(iii) that, the Lushais will be allowed to opt out of the Indian Union when they wish to do so subject to a minimum period of 10 years.¹⁹

It may be worth pointing that the last clause was similar to the one put forward by the Naga National Council (NNC) headed by A.Z. Phizo in its memorandum to the Nehru government. In fact as late as in April 1947, Phizo had invited the Zo leaders to join hands with the Nagas and fight for independence. He even suggested that the Zo (Mizo) language could become the lingua franca of the independent state of Naga and Mizo Hills. The Mizo Union leaders, however, declined the offer.²⁰

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.135.

²⁰ V.I.K. Sarin, *India's North-East in Flames* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1980), pp.146-48.

The Bordoloi sub-committee, meanwhile, recommended a set up based on the concept of regional autonomy in all matters affecting their customs, laws of inheritance, administration of justice, land, forest, etc.²¹ Thus, the outcome of the efforts and representation was the Sixth Scheduled provisions of the Constitutions of India giving District Autonomy to the tribal areas of Assam including Lushai Hills. This 'spirit of autonomy' concept still maintained today, for good or for bad, in the administration of Mizoram was to have a far reaching political impact on the state.

Though the fear of being submerged was reconciled by providing self government through the Autonomy District Council under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution²² the economic condition of the Mizo Hills was far from satisfactory. The Assam Government was directly responsible for the economic development of the Mizo Hills made possible for the provincial government to manipulate economic power. The Zo people were unsatisfied at the way money had been siphoned off for their development and welfare activities. In 1953 the UMFO passed a resolution for the formation of a hill state consisting of Manipur, Tripura, the autonomous districts of Assam and northeastern frontier agency (the present Arunachal Pradesh). Thus when the States Reorganisation Commission (SRC) visited Assam in 1952, a demand was made for the integration of a Zo inhabited areas with the Mizo District. In its report the SRC observed that the demand for a hill state was partly due to secessionist movement and partly due to economic backwardness. Unhappy with the recommendations the tribal leaders met at Aizawl in

²¹ Report of the North-East Frontiers (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub-Committee (Bordoloi Committee), 1947, Manager Publication, Delhi.

²² V.I.K. Sarin, *op cit*, p.147.

1955 and demanded the formation a hill state comprising the hills districts of Assam with this a new political party, Eastern Indian Tribal Union (EITU) was formed . The UMFO and the right wing followers of the Mizo Union joined the EITU thereby on 1957.

(B) CHRISTIANITY AND THE NEW ZO IDENTITY:

The ethnic differences of the Zo, from the rest of Indian constituted a strong base for regional assertiveness, inherent in it are various factors which resulted in the growth of Zo ethnic assertion and the eventual development . The external factors were (1) a sense of identity that had developed through was scale conversion to Christianity (2) The relative isolation of the area from the rest of the country.²³ Further, the internal factors were: (1) the contradictions that those between the various ethnic elements which were reflected in rivalries and conflicts between groups; (2) between the traditional chiefs and the common educated people in terms of class interests and democratic rights of the people; (3) between the backward economy and the modernizing culture and awareness of the Zo elite.²⁴ The isolation due to geographical conditions and historical background has enabled the people to maintain a spirit of independence. The Zo people live on the international boundaries and share ethnic and cultural affinities with other tribes across the international frontiers. This made the region geo-politically and internationally susceptible and sensitive to the rise of secessionist movements.

²³ B.B. Goswami and D.P. Mukherjee. 'The Mizo Political Movement' in K.S. Singh ed. *Tribal Movement in India*, Vol-I 1982, Manohar Publication, New Delhi , pp. 147-48.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

The Zos in Mizoram are apprehensive of the possibility of losing their cultural traits, norms and values if the process of modernization goes on undirected.²⁵ The conversion to Christianity also entails a new culture which is not in congruence with the tradition of the Zos. But they gradually adjusted to these practices and gave up whatever is considered as undesirable to their Christian faith. Christianity gave the Zo people a sense of identity which has been the guiding principle in the course of the national movement

The economic situation on the eve of the colonial departure was precarious. This necessitated a desire to join India with the hope that it would uplift the region. According to Lalchungnunga, "It was economic constraint which prevented the Mizos from opting for independent polity and it was the same economic consideration that induced them to prefer joining India through the province of Assam".²⁶ It also provided linguistic and territorial integrity and a 'sense of cultural homogeneity, specially in the central part of the territory'.²⁷ In the process, it also gave rise to a new educated elite which developed a sense of relative deprivation *vis-à-vis* the tribal chiefs and sought change. However, it was not easy to challenge the dominance of the chiefs as they were virtually the protégés of the colonial government. Nonetheless, the processes of transfer of power during 1946-47 did provide them an opportunity to ventilate their protest against the then prevailing system.

²⁵ Lalchungnunga, *Mizoram: Politics of Regionalism and National Integration*, Reliance Publishing House, New Delhi, 1994, p.46.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p.60.

²⁷ B.K. Roy Burman, 'Demographic and Socio-Economic Profiles of the Hill Areas of North-East India', *Census of India 1961*, Department of Publications, Delhi, 1970.

(c) The Politics of Mautam (Famine)

In spite of being endowed with a fair degree of autonomy under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution through the state of Assam, their hopes and expectations had been belied by the Central government and the state government in particular. To make matter worse, a great famine (mautam) occurred in 1959 which acted as an immediate impetus to the founding of the MNF. According to Zo elders Mautam has a 50 years cycle and for ages dreaded the flowering of bamboos. They have noted that the flowering of bamboos was invariably followed by an unprecedented increase in the rat population in the countryside, which in turn created havoc on the standing crops leading ultimately to famine²⁸. Anticipating the famine, the Government of Assam, the District Council in 1958 cautioned the Government of Assam. The appeals to take adequate measures, however, fell on deaf ears and when the famine struck, the government was unprepared to take any effective relief measures.

'Cases of starvation death officially reported by the District Council were denied by the Assam government. Discontentment grew bigger and bigger in the minds of the people. They felt that the government did not pay much attention nor did they attach so much importance to the District Council.'²⁹ As a result welfare organizations like Mizo Cultural Society (1959), Mizo National Famine Front (1960), etc. were formed to undertake relief work and help the famine stricken people. The Mizo Union leaders, who were a party to the Congress legislature Party 'drifted away and parted company from

²⁸ Vumson, *Zo History*, Published by the Author, Aizawl, Mizoram.

²⁹ A.K. Nag, 'The Ups and Downs of Mizo Politics', in *North Eastern Affairs*, Oct.-Dec., 1972.

it'.³⁰ Besides, differences on the famine relief operation, the decision of the Assam government to impose Assamese as the state language further antagonize the tribes of the Hill District. Capitalizing on the situation, and taking full advantage of the relief works, the Mizo National Famine Front was converted to Mizo National Front (MNF) on October 22, 1961 under the leadership of Laldenga.

4.3 SPATIAL DIMENSION

(A) MIZORAM: MNF'S UNFINISHED AGENDA OF ZO UNIFICATION

The birth and emergence of the Mizo National Front (MNF) as a major political force marked a new phase of Zo politics and political foundation. It carried on one of the most protracted armed struggle, spreading more than two decades in the sub-Continent drawing serious national and international attention to their cause. The MNF was the manifestation of the sentiment in an organized form with political overtones.³¹ The youths provided major segment of the MNF. It also attracted all those who had a strong dislike for the Mizo Union (MU). Laldenga had also succeeded in winning the support of the UMFO and MU factions which had nurtured secessionist ideas earlier. Besides this, the chiefs who had lost their privileges and rights under the new dispensation also joined the MNF. The ex-servicemen also played an important part in the MNF movement. After independence many of them were in the Assam Regiment, which was disbanded due to a

³⁰ V.K. Sarin, *The Mizo Imbroglia: India's North East in Flames*, p.147.

³¹ R. Vanlalawma, *Ka Ram leh Kei*, Aizawl, Zalen Printing House, 1972, p.193.

number of reasons. These ex-servicemen who came back to Mizoram had a grudge against the government. Thus, by joining the MNF they acted as a trainer to the villagers in guerilla activities.³² The original aims and objectives of the MNF, according to the booklet published by the party were:³³

(i) Integration of all the Mizo ethnic groups under one government possessing the highest degree of freedom;

(ii) Upgradation of the status, and the development of the economic conditions, of the Mizo people; and

(iii) Safeguard of the Christian Religion.

The MNF harnessed the values of Christianity and initially professed non-violence. Laldenga wrote thus:

“The Mizo people are religious-minded and peace-loving. They love peace in as much as they need it..... though known as martial race, Mizo nation commits itself to a policy of non-violence, not to resort to violence for their liberation..... They have witnesses and clearly seen the result of violence and its futility in Kashmir and in Nagaland. They do not want such things to happen in Mizoram: Mizoram being landlocked and taking into consideration its supply routes and economic conditions,

³² Goswami, *op cit*, pp.144-49.

³³ *MNF Pawl Thiltumte Hrilhfiahna*, (An Explanation of the MNF's Aims and Objectives), 1972, p.1.

the leaders know that military victory over India is not possible and they hope that the problem would well be solved through negotiations.”³⁴

Various tribal heroes of the region and tribal symbols were used to inspire and rouse to induce the youths and bring about solidarity for the movement. The fact that these heroes and tribal symbols belonged to Zo ethnic groups provided an easier and remarkable degree of multi-ethnic symbol congruence to emphasize the politico-cultural identity of the peoples. Though the famine was the immediate cause for the Mizo independent movement there were many other inherent factors attached to this development. It had roots deeper than the famine conditions, like the ‘fear of losing their ethnic-cultural identity’.

The MNF also sought to politicize the Zo ethnic identity based on shared commonalities, seeking to achieve unity by stressing the objective of sovereign Greater Mizoram. It emphasized the distinct identity of the Zos as a nation incorporating the various tribal identities. In a memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India on October 30, 1965, the MNF states:

“The Mizos from time immemorial lived in a complete independence..... The Mizo country was subsequently brought under the British political control in December 1895, when a little more than half of the country was arbitrarily carved and named Lushai Hills and the rest of their land was parceled out of their hands.... The

³⁴ Laldenga, *Mizoram Marches Towards Freedom*, published by the “Government of Mizoram” (MNF), p.25.

Mizo people are inseparably knitted together by their strong bond of tradition, custom, language, social life and religion wherever they are. The Mizo stood [sic] as a separate nation, even before the advent of the British Government having a nationality distinct and separate from that of India.”³⁵

The MNF, in its ideology, also had a broad reference group like tribal, non-tribal, Christian, non-Christian. They were considered as intruders and exploiters. The MNF had consistently maintained that the hill areas were discriminated and this failed to bring about economic development in the area. It also alleged that most of the government posts were occupied by the non-Mizos. Thus, the demand for a sovereign state also implied the concern for ‘the sons of the soil’. Laldenga also used the word ‘vai’ (outsiders) as a strategy to convince the Mizos that they had been exploited by the same ‘vais’. He maintained that the Mizos and other tribes of Assam did not consider themselves Indians in view of their socio-cultural distinctiveness and in any case, even when they joined India, it was with a clear understanding that the issue would be reopened after 10 years. In a memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India in October 1965, the MNF stated that despite close contact and association with India since independence, the

“Mizo people had not been able to feel at home with Indian [sic] or in India, nor have they been able to feel that their joys and sorrows have really ever been shared by India. They do not, therefore, feel Indian. They refused [sic] to occupy a place within

³⁵ Nirmal Nibedon, *Mizoram: The Dagger Brigade*, Delhi: Lancer International, 1980, p.40.

India as they consider it to be unworthy of the national dignity and harmful to the interest of their posterity. Nationalism and patriotism inspired by the political consciousness has now reached its maturity and the cry for political self-determination is the only wish and aspiration of the people. It is the only final and perfect embodiment of the social living for them. The only aspiration and political cry is the creation of Mizoram, a free and sovereign state to govern herself to work out her own destiny and to formulate her own foreign policy.”³⁶

The MNF grew into an extremist organization and stood for ‘a sovereign independent state of Mizoram’. Under the leadership of Laldenga, the MNF took up arms and went underground. It adopted a two-pronged approach, i.e. electoral mobilization the one hand and military preparedness on the other, to achieve their objectives. It had regular contacts in the erstwhile East Pakistan and China where batches of volunteers were sent for training in arms and guerilla war activities and commando tactics. Laldenga was even assured of all help including supply of arms and finance by Pakistani agents and officials.³⁷ Interestingly, Laldengs’ liaison officer on behalf of the Pakistan Army in the late 60’s was General Ershad, then a Captain.³⁸

By 1965, the MNF had formed a shadow government called Mizoram Sawrkar (Mizoram government) with the Legislature, Executive and Judiciary. The MNF also had an underground network or defense wing called the Mizo National Army (MNA). The

³⁶ MNF Memorandum to the Government of India.

³⁷ Sudhakar Bhat, *The Challenge of the Northeast*, Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1975, p.77.

³⁸ *India Today*, 12 (June 30, 1982), p.39.

MNA formed battalions which were named after the well known legendary heroes. The formation of the MNF and its armed wing MNA was, in fact a major step in the consolidation of Zo nationalistic force. The MNF had, thus, completed its formalities to assert its self-styled political entity.³⁹

On March 1,1966 the MNF declared themselves independent. The declaration says, “.....in the course of human history, it becomes invariably necessary for mankind to assume their social, economic and political status to which the laws of nature’s God entitle them [sic]. The Mizos, created and moulded into nation and nurtured as such by nature’s God, have been intolerably dominated by the people of India in contravention to the Laws of Nature.”⁴⁰

In the wake of the armed secessionist movement of the MNF, the immediate response of the government was that of counter-insurgency operation. The Indian Defense Ministry retaliated with absolute fury, especially because the debacle came so soon after the 1965 war with Pakistan and the disastrous border failure with China in 1962.⁴¹ In fact, for the first time in free India’s history, air raids were ordered on rebel holdouts within the country⁴². Paratroopers were dropped in different places where the MNF rebels had control. Reinforcements were made by helicopters which moved across jungle and vale in swift counter insurgency operations.

³⁹ R.N. Prasad, ‘Evolution of Party Politics in Mizoram’ in *Political Science Review*.

⁴⁰ B. Poonte, *Notes on the Mizo District* (unpublished), Mizo District, Aizawl.

⁴¹ Sanjoy Hazarika, *Strangers of the Mist: Tales of War and Peace from India’s North-east*, Penguin Books, 1995, p.113.

⁴² R.N. Prasad, *op cit*, p.184.

In addition to banning the MNF, the Mizo District was declared a Disturbed Area under the Assam Disturbed Area Act of 1955, extending the powers of the civil and military administration. Alongside, the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958 was also invoked. These acts gave wide-ranging powers to the military to cope with the insurgency. Also, with the armed MNF volunteers resorting to the traditional method of passing messages from the hilltops using signal torches, possession of torches without a permit became an offence.⁴³

The insurgency in Mizoram had drawn a massive and often drastic military intervention in the pretext of counter insurgency. Of these, the most significant and radical was, what the government called 'operation security scheme'—the policy of regrouping of villages. It was a counter-insurgency tactic which was intended to isolate the MNF rebels from the loyal overground Zos, cut off the sources of supply to the rebels, make the zone difficult for hostiles' movement and facilitate effective army operations to wear out the guerillas. The aim was to establish new villages that would be under the control of troops but more important, to deny access to food, water and shelter to the rebels. Such a move certainly disturbed the traditional style of living of the Mizos and while it was officially justified partly as a counter-insurgency measure but more so as a measure which could facilitate the development of the area through the clustering of villages, there is no doubt that the removal of the Mizos from their habitat coupled with the military supervision and control in the area did provide more recruits to the MNF, at

⁴³ Animesh Roy, *Mizoram: Dynamics of Change*, Calcutta: Pearl Publishers, 1982, pp.164-82.

least initially.⁴⁴ After a decade of disturbance and insurrection in Mizoram, Laldenga agreed to a peace accord, with the Government of India in 1976. In doing so the MNF leaders acknowledged that Mizoram was an integral part of India, agreed to lay down arms and to seek the solution of all existing problems within the framework of the Indian Constitution. Laldenga's intention was to extract as much personal gain out of this agreement as possible, and he had repeatedly asked that the agreement should include a clause whereby he would automatically head a provisional government before calling for fresh elections. His contention was that no real peace would come to Mizoram unless both sides implemented the terms of agreement under his personal supervision. This was, however, not acceptable to the Government of India, which insisted that the rebels must first lay down arms without preconditions. An agreement was, nevertheless, drafted in February 1976, and signed in July that year.⁴⁵ Peace appeared to return to Mizoram which however proved to be shortlived. The new government under Janata party resumed talks and the failure to come to any agreement induce the MNA to step up their subversive activities. Ten years later after a series of negotiations with the central government a historic 'memorandum of settlement' was signed by Laldenga, Lalkhama and the Indian Home Secretary, R.D Pradhan, on June 30, 1986.⁴⁶ This agreement finally brought the insurgency in Mizoram to an end after almost twenty years of strife.

⁴⁴ Amritha Rangaswami, *Mizoram: Tragedy of Our Own Making*, EPW, 13 (15 April 1978), pp. 653-62

⁴⁵ For details see the text of the February 1976 Agreement signed between the Government of India and the MNF.

⁴⁶ The text of the Memorandum of Settlement is given in Appendix.

While there are reasons to cheer and felicitate the MNF, there are equally a good number of trails faced, blunders committed, betrayals made by the MNF during those turbulent and peaceful times. However, one cannot underrate but concede that MNF had bought about a sense of ethnic unity. Under its patronage, though short of its goal, the Zo descent can claim a pride of place as a land where they can be integrated.

There are also dark clouds hovering around the horizons of Mizoram. The inherent weakness of Mizoram was that this unity was more in the central part of the Mizo District and the intra-ethnic consciousness was still present and gradually took a political turn.⁴⁷ Clan identities remain significant though clan distinction is more or less absent among the Mizos due to process of socialization and modernization, the Pawis, Lakhers, Chakmas and Riang still maintain their distinct identities.⁴⁸ Thus in recent times, the urge to have a separate identity increases among the Mizo sub-groups. Best instance would be the Hmars of North Mizoram, who demanded autonomous council within the 6th Schedule of the Constitution. It adopted agitational path which later on turned militant in the form of Hmar Peoples' Convention (HPC). The Mizoram government had to deal with a heavy hand using their Armed Police even in the state of Manipur to thwart the HPC activities. Later on, the Mizoram government conceded in 1995 to give 'Sinlung Autonomous Council', whatever may be the pros and cons of the

⁴⁷ Goswami and Mukherjee, *op cit*, p.142.

⁴⁸ Lalchungnunga, *op cit*, p.26.

Hmar agitation and its demand for autonomy it is clear beyond doubt that the Mizo homogeneity is a myth now.⁴⁹

The Issue of Greater Mizoram

The issue of Greater Mizoram is as old as the British colonial times. The division of the Zo country by the British into 3 administrative units and its attempt to amalgamate the Zo areas speaks volumes of the Zo ethnic unity. Since the formation of Mizo Union the issue of Greater Mizoram is taken as an emotional turn as manifested in all the manifestos of political parties in Mizoram.

Brig. T. Sailo (Retd.), former Chief Minister of Mizoram and founder president of 'People's Conference', has demanded amalgamation of all Mizo inhabited contiguous areas in India, Burma and Bangladesh within the Indian Union. The areas brought under the proposed land and Mizos are:⁵⁰

1. Mizoram (area 21,087 sq.km.) with population of nearly 5 lakhs.
2. Lakhimpur area in east Cachar District of Assam (area 50 sq.km. with population of 25 thousand).
3. Jampui Hills area in Tripura state along the north-western border of Mizoram (area 400 sq.km. and population 25 thousand).

⁴⁹ S.N. Singht, *Mizoram*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1994.

⁵⁰ *Op cit*, p.187.

4. Chin Hills area in Burma in Western Burma adjoining eastern Mizoram (area 56,000 sq.km. with a population of about 9 lakhs).
5. Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in Bangladesh adjoining Western Mizoram (area 480 sq.km. and population of 5,000).
6. Mizo inhabited areas of Manipur (Sadar hills, Tengnoupal and Churachandpur areas also to be brought under the proposed 'New State'.

Zomi National Congress (ZNC) with its headquarter at Churachandpur and under the presidentship of T. Gougin has also advocated the unification of all the Mizo areas. He favoured the immediate urgency of an insurrection by the Burmese Mizos for the amagamation of their land with India. The word Zomi carries the idea of common ethnic oneness of the Mizo speaking people.⁵¹

The Zo Reunification Organisation (ZORO):

The Zo Reunification Organisation (ZORO) in Manipur and Mizoram aim at reuniting all Mizo inhabited areas in India, Burma and Bangladesh under one administrative set up. Unlike other tribal people of North East India, who are blamed for secessionist sentiments, the Zo leader want only to enlarge the territory of India.⁵²

⁵¹ *Op cit*, p.188.

⁵² *The Hindu*, Madras, 25 August 1989.

The First World Zomi Convention was held on 20 May 1988 near Champhai, close to Mizoram's border with Burma, which was attended by several thousand delegates from Mizoram and other Mizo inhabited areas both inside and outside India. The outcome of the convention was the formation of Zo Reunification Organisation (ZORO) which accommodated different political parties and individuals for their common goal of reunification of Mizo inhabited areas within India as well as outside into a larger capital Zoram as a constituent state of the Indian Union.⁵³

(B) BURMA: CNF SPEARHEADS THE DEMAND FOR ZO STATE

Immediately after the signing of the Panglong Agreement of February 12, 1947 the Zo leaders in Burma soon realized that they had been stymied by the resolution. A mass meeting was held at Falam on the 20th February 1948. The meeting, attended by Zo representatives from Tedim, Haka, Matupi, Mindat and Paletwas townships unanimously decided 'to abolish the age-old feudal administrative systems and to establish a democratic administrative system in accordance with the people's wishes.'⁵⁴ The day, i.e. 20th February, is being observed every year by the Zos as the Zo National Day since then.

The Zo leaders in Burma, believing that freedom will be achieved more speedily for their people, signed the historic Panglong Agreement on the condition that they will have the right to secede from the Union of Burma at any time. Accordingly, Section 201-

⁵³ Singht, *op cit*, p.189.

⁵⁴ Neihzial, Tualchin, *India-Burma Gamgi Bula Singtangmite' Dinmun* (The Predicaments of the Zos on Indo-Burma Border Areas), Lamka, 1988, p.39.

204 of the Constitution of Burma, 1947 provided the people the right to secede.⁵⁵ But such logical and constitutionally provided for received a major setback with the assassination of Aung San and the subsequent military coup d'état of 1962.

From mistrust to open antagonism against the Burmans grew when the Burmese emphasized integration of Burma through repressive measures—passing of religious laws, Burmese language law, etc. Their resentment over Burmese government (Burma Socialist Peoples' Party, now SLORC) grew when their demands for a change of name from 'Chin Hills' to 'Zo State' was rejected. The Zomi leaders put aside their differences to demand the consolidation of the Zo-populated areas of Magur, Sagaing, and Arakan in an independent Zo state. In 1964 the remaining uncommitted Zo tribes joined the growing separatist war and by mid-1970s, for the first time in their history, the Zomi had united as a nation.⁵⁶ The Zomi leadership advocated independence within a federation of sovereign states that would replace Myanmar's brutal military regime.⁵⁷

As an offshoot of the Chin National Union (which was formed in 1928), the Chin National Organisation (CNO) was launched in the mid-1960s by Hrangkhawl and Son Cin Lian. The Chin Liberation Army (CLA) was formed in 1970s as the armed wing of the organization. The CLA under the leadership of Lt. Col. Son Kho Pau and Tunkhopum

⁵⁵ For details refer 'A Memorandum to the Secretary-General of the United Nations' by ZORO (Aizawl, 1995).

⁵⁶ Minhas, James, *Nations Without States: A Historical Dictionary of Contemporary National Movements*, London: Greenwood Press, 1996, pp.641.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

managed to get foreign support and made their presence felt among their Zo counterpart in Mizoram and Manipur (India). After fierce encounters with the Burmese Army at various places majority of the Zo nationalists were ruthlessly suppressed by the Burmese Army.

After the massive student uprising for democracy in Burma, Chin National Front was formed. Subsequently, Chin National Army (CNA) was set up to safeguard the country and the Zo people. In its first party conference in June 9-13, 1993, it resolved to form the Government of Chinland with the following objectives:

- i) 'liberation and development of the Zos.
- ii) to forerun a stable government which is formed with democratic principles.'⁵⁸

Today, the exiled students and leaders of the CNF were working for restoration of democracy in Burma. The Zos in Burma also successfully fought the 1990 election under the banner of Zomi National Congress and elected two MPs from their area. Both the CNF and ZNC were a party to the National League for Democracy (NLD). Thus, it can be safely said that the present ethno-nationalist movement in Burma focus on the restoration of democracy in the country rather than establishing an independent Zo country which was advocated by the earlier Zo leaders.

⁵⁸ For details refer to the websites: <http://www.chinland-org/chinforum.html> and file:"C:\my document,/CNF.htm.

(C) MANIPUR: THE STRUGGLE FOR ZO SURVIVAL IN A MULTI-ETHNIC SITUATION

The poly-ethnic situation in Manipur is divergent and it is unfortunate that, till today, the Zo people in the state could not act in unison. The Zo ethno politics in Manipur has the difficulty in rising above significant clan or tribe-based politics and in accepting a common nomenclature. Before Indian independence, the Britishers know them by the name 'Kuki', however, the various Zo tribes rejected the given name and promoted their own clan-based names. In their search for an alternative nomenclature the leaders of the various tribes formed an organization called 'Khul Union' in 1948 with the idea that they all descended from a place called 'Khul' (caves). But the Khul Union broke-up and the divisions among them intensified so much so that the Kabui, Anal, Chothe, Maring, Monsang, Moyon, etc. who are the Zos, have since joined the Naga polity and now prefer to be identifies as Naga.⁵⁹ The process of tribe recognition in Manipur in the 1950s further legitimised the divisions among the Zo people. In fact, today, almost all tribes/clans have formed independent and distinct organizations of their own appending the term 'national' or 'union' or 'council', e.g. Tedim-Chin Union, Vaiphei National Organisation, Simte National Council, Gangte national Union, Hmar National Union, Paite National Council, etc. Each tribes nourished their petty communities, thus, making an effort to unite them a Herculean task. Strong

clan-based royalty in Manipur is one of the reasons that the movement for Greater Mizoram in the 1960s did not gain much support from the Zos of Manipur.

A para-political organization of the Kuki-Zo called the Kuki National Assembly was formed in 1946. This organization, stealing the storm from the Naga movement, gave an usual threat to secession but paradoxically had changed the stand and had shown a typical integrationist stand.⁶⁰ In fact the KNA was a Manipur based organization and when the Naga National League (NNL) argued for the merger of the Naga areas of Manipur with the hills of Assam, the KNA upheld the unity and territorial integrity of the tribes within Manipur. In the sixties their aspiration for a new polity was rejuvenated with the Union of India. But this demand was subsequently toned down to that for a fulfilled revenue district within Manipur.⁶¹ Asok Kumar Ray, Lecturer in Presidency college of Manipur, a Kuki dominated area, further put forth the question:

‘...how the Kuki National Assembly of Manipur could materially link the territorial movement with the fate of the others of the same stock living in the Naga Hills, North Cachar Hills, and Tripura, and how a separate

⁵⁹ Dr. Ngul Za Dal, ‘The Zomis in Manipur’ in a booklet on ‘*The Zomi*’, Lamka, 2000, p.21.

⁶⁰ Asok Kr. Ray, “Ethnicity and Polity Alternatives; A North Eastern Experience”, in *Jr. of N.E.I.C.S.S.R.* Vol-15(1) April 1991, p.44.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

district alone could sustain the political aspirations of the Kukis elsewhere?’⁶²

In the 1960s while the movement for greater Mizoram was gaining ground in Mizoram under the leadership of Laldenga, there was a parallel movement in Manipur called Chin Solidarity Movement consisting of the Zos in the Indo-Burma border areas. The Paite National Council became the greatest advocate of the Chin Solidarity Movement. In a memorandum in 1960, the PNC submitted a memorandum to Pt. Nehru, the then Prime Minister demanding unification of the Zo people in India and Burma. The Chin unification movement faces a major setback without the support of their kindred Zo tribes although it resurrected again in 1979 under the banner of the Chin Union (C.U).

The formation of the Zomi National Congress (ZNC) on January 21, 1972 at Daijang under the leadership of T. Gougin was a historic attempt to unify the Zo people by the name Zomi. The preamble of the Party unequivocally seeks to:

“inculcate a sense of Zomi nationalism among the people of Zoland ...to pull down the communal barrier that dimmed the visions of the Zomisand pledge to establish a free and democratic state called Zoland...”⁶³ The plan for Zogam (land of the Zos) was again, parallel to the greater Mizoram plan that would include the Chin-Kuki-

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Gougin, T, *History of the Zomi*, Lamka, Zomi Press, 1984, p.235.

Lushai groups in the proposed land of Zo-gam. In a pamphlet issued in 1986, entitled '*Zomi Inkuan Laibu*', the territorial limit of the proposed Zo-gam was shown as not only the contiguous Chin-Kuki-Lushei areas of India but also as many as nine contiguous townships in Burma, viz. Tonjang, Tedim, Falam, Khalkha, Matupi, Thantlang, Paletwa, Mindat and Kambatlet. Though the ZNC started the movement⁶⁴ with a changed nomenclature (Zomi in place of Mizo) including all the Zos in principle, it could not win the support of other Zo tribes. The organization also come down from an independent Zo-gam to the demand for Union Territory status for the Zos in the contiguous area of Manipur, and fought the Assembly election in the State. Consequently the majority Zos in Manipur lost their faith in the party to realize their dreams for emancipation and freedom.

In the 1990s, another waves of Zo-ethno nationalism developed in Manipur. The Kuki-Zos, who had long been suffering from the repressive activities of the Naga insurgents formed the Kuki National Organisation (KNO), the Provisional Government of Zal'en-gam and its armed wing, the Kuki National Army (KNA) in 22 February 1990.⁶⁵ Apart from the KNA, there are as many as five separate armed outfits, viz. KNF (P), KNF (MC), KDF, KNV and KRA.

When the Kuki outfits try to expand their command area to the southern district of Manipur, collect taxes and impose the term 'Kuki', there was strong reaction from the

⁶⁴ As quoted by Asok Kumar Ray, *op cit*, p.46.

⁶⁵ Haokip, P.S. *Zal'en-gam: the Kuki Nation*, (KNO Publication, 1998), p. 203. According to the author the connotation Zal'en-gam refers to Kuki inhabited areas in India, Myanmar and Burma which is synonymous with the concept of Zo-gam propagated by ZNC and Greater Mizoram by the MNF.

various Zo tribes living there. Although they could not accept the term Kuki and displeased with the repressive measures followed by the Kuki armed outfits, their strong feeling that all the Zos should unite for their survival, In their search for an alternative nomenclature other than the imposed names like Kuki-Chin and Mizo a team of intelligentsia went to Burma to access the ground realities there. As per their findings, which were substantiated by the researched findings of scholars like Dr. Tualchin Neihzial, Dr. Hawingam Haokip, etc., they adopted Zomi as their common nomenclature since they are the descendants of Zo. Here it may be pointed out that the Kuki-Chin Baptist Union of Manipur started consultation among the intelligentsia way back in 1981 and came out with a booklet called '*In Search of Identity*' where each writer stressed for the generic name 'Zo'. Subsequently, a new organization called Zomi Re-unification Organisation (ZRO) was formed in April 1993 at Phapyam, Kachin State, Burma with the following objectives:

- 1) Ethnical or cultural re-unification of the Zomis
- 2) Territorial re-unification of the scattered Zomis into a single geographical unit called Zo-gam.
- 3) Political re-unification of the Zomis under one administrative unit.⁶⁶

Mr. Oinam Sunil reported in the *Telegraph* dated 16 June 1997 that the Zo peoples of Manipur are trying to unite with its brethren in Myanmar and Bangladesh

⁶⁶ A booklet '*Zomi and Zogam*' issued by the ZRO, Ciimnuai, 1993, p.14.

under the Indian Union.⁶⁷ The organization also submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister of India seeking help in their efforts to re-unify the scattered Zos.⁶⁸ The ZRO floated its own outfit called the Zomi Revolutionary Army (ZRA) as their armed wing. The Zo tribes who were not a party to the ANC movements in the 1970s are now patronizing the ZRO movement for re-unification. This fact, and the formation of Indigenous Peoples' Revolutionary Army (IPRA) by the Hmar Peoples' Convention (Democratic), the Kuki National Front (KNF) and ZRO in the year 2000 may be seen as a step forward in the Zo ethno-nationalist movement. The leadership of the organization is spearheaded by their Zo brethren from Burma (the President of ZRO, Sia Thang Lian Pau himself is an MP in-exile from Burma). However, amidst strong optimism, certain sections of the Zo tribes are still skeptical about their political future. Their fear and insecurity still looms large as the Indo-Naga Ceasefire area extension of June 14, 2001 has immediate impact on their polity.

From the above discussion it could be seen that the Zo ethno nationalist movements in Manipur, in comparison to their Mizo and Chin Hills counterparts, suffered setbacks from time to time. The major factor could be the existence of strong clan-based royalty which is furthered by various Assembly elections. There also exists a parallel nomenclature—'Kuki'—although majority of the Zo tribes do not accept the name.

⁶⁷ Sunil Oinam, 'Highlanders Seek Reunion Cutting Across Borders,' *The Telegraph*, 16 June, 1997.

⁶⁸ For detail refer to *The ZRO Memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India*, Cimmuai, 1993.

The British administration of the Zo country in two administrative units—Chin Hills and Lushai Hills—and its subsequent fragmentation into different states in India is another hurdle in arriving at a cohesive ethno-nationalist movement. The Zos in Burma lived under strict military restriction and control, whereas the Zos in India were busy in promoting their petty communities. However, this is not to say that the Zos do not dream for re-unification; be it the Chin Union, Mizo Union, ZNC, KNO, and now ZORO and ZRO—they all strived for re-unification and demanded for the same geographical areas. As of now, the ZORO and ZRO are actively working to achieve their goals. It is yet to be seen when and how this two organizations, using the name Zo, will work together to emancipate their people and bring them under one administrative unit.

CONCLUSION

In the final chapter of this thesis, let us briefly recapitulate the main arguments advocated in the previous chapters. To begin with, three dimensions of Zo ethno-nationalism have been clearly identified in this work: the evolutionary dimension, socio-political dimension, and spatial or geographical dimension. The evolutionary dimension of ethno-nationalism attempts to establish a connection between the legacy of anti-colonial Zo resistance and the later emergence of institutionalized Zo ethno-nationalism in Mizoram, Manipur and the Chin state of Burma. Thus, the shared culture of Zo resistance in the colonial period is re-interpreted in the light of the later post-Independence development of Zo ethno-nationalism. The section on socio-political dimension highlights the significance of mautam (famine) and the emergence of Zo identity. Social forces like the advent of Christianity accompanied by modern education largely define this new identity. Then, the spatial dimension vertically splits the Zo ethno-nationalist movement into three geographical units, viz., Manipur, Mizoram and Myanmar.

The second chapter of this work explores the theoretical framework necessary for understanding Zo ethno-nationalism. It will not be out of place to mention again at this point that the application of rigid theories (however fashionable it may be) for the study of peripheral areas like the Zo-inhabited frontiers of Burma, India and Bangladesh are not enough. Most of the current theories of social sciences are devised by western scholars

for the study of typically western socio-political problems or issues. No wonder if any standard theory hardly fits in perfectly in our analysis of Zo nationalism. Nevertheless, the usefulness of theories in equipping the social analyst in articulating his ideas intelligibly does not need any further elaboration.

On the whole, this study can be regarded as based on a 'syncretic' framework in its analysis of Zo ethno-nationalism. Whereas the section on the evolutionary dimension of Zo ethno-nationalism is structured on primordialist assumption, the study of socio-economic and spatial dimensions of Zo ethno-nationalism is chiefly informed by 'situationalist' and 'constructivist' assumptions. The combination of all these disparate concepts lends a 'syncretic' tinge to our perspective of Zo ethno-nationalism. Moreover, the concepts of relative deprivation becomes handy for explaining the politics of *Mautam* (famine), which resulted in the birth of the Mizo Famine Front (MFF) as a forerunner of the Mizo National Front (MNF). The fact is that there is not a single theory that can adequately explain the evolution of Zo ethno-nationalism from the colonial period to the recent developments.

The section on socio-political dimension of Zo ethno-nationalism has dealt with the emergence of modern political bodies or rather cultural clubs like the Mizo Union. Interestingly, it was such modern political bodies like the Mizo Union which spearheaded the anti-chieftain agitation in Mizoram. The emergence of the new elite class, not unconnected with the introduction of education by the Christian missionaries, has also been briefly analysed.

We have tried to argue in this work that Zo ethno-nationalism emerge at a critical period of the Zo history wherein socio-economic considerations seemed to have over-determined the political imperatives of organizing the Zo people under a common platform. The Zo ethno-nationalism, which had long been highly ascriptive, gets overtly political, enforced by the Mautam Famine of 1959 and championed under the institutionalized framework of MNF. This, however, could not prove to be powerful enough to encompass the whole Zo inhabited areas. Thus, with the birth of the state of Mizoram the Zo ethno-nationalist movement gets confined to a small periphery. This has considerably reduced the bargaining power of the Zo ethno-nationalists who now had to be contended with confronting the Indian state. Such a development, though historic, does not bode well for the Zo ethno-nationalist movement.

It has been well said that whereas the Zos represent a picture of 'diversity in unity', the Nagas demonstrate an example of 'unity in diversity'. In spite of sharing a common cultural identity (unlike the Nagas, which is a heterogeneous group linguistically and culturally) the Zo people have never been as successful as the Nagas in their attempt to build a common political identity. The attainment of Zo States, Mizoram in India and Chin State in Burma, had very limited success; for they fell short of the goal of Zo ethno-nationalists dream of uniting all Zo inhabited territories in India, Burma and Bangladesh.

But one does not need to stretch one's imagination too far in order to understand this problem. *First*, the forces that hindered the maturing of Zo ethno-nationalism were

structured in the colonial history itself. In other words, the partition of Zo inhabited areas into three nation states by the Britishers with the sole consideration of administrative convenience; and further fragmentation of the area with the creation of state boundaries after independence are unfortunate for the cause of Zo political unity. *Second*, the Zo predicament of being governed under different state systems (democracy in India and Bangladesh, military regime in Burma) gave them different political experiences; this does not bode well for Zo ethno-nationalism. *Third*, the mushroom growth of clan-based organizations like PNC, SNC, TCU, UZO, VNO, etc. instrumentalised this deep division particularly in Manipur. *Fourth*, the linguistic chauvinism of Lushai-Duhlian dialect in Mizoram and Thadou-Kuki dialect in Manipur also helps in explaining why the growth of Zo ethno-nationalism appears to be arrested prematurely. In the light of these problems the present Zo ethno-nationalist organizations like ZORO and ZRO can be said to be desperate attempts to correct the past mistakes and reunify their people.

It must be noted here that despite the initial hiccups and lackluster approach, Zo ethno-nationalism has been deep-rooted in the popular political consciousness of the Zo people over the past decades; and it has the potential for bouncing back with full vigour and added strength (provided the state structures in 'democratic' India and 'military-junta' in Burma shows signs of weakness). The sense of oneness, felt by the Zo people, informed by the inheritance of a shared culture, close linguistic affinities, common origin, identical religious experiences, and the shared history of anti-colonial struggle are often too powerful to be ignored. If this is bounded up with constructivist trend, then it promises to be a great force to reckon with in the coming days.

Finally, it has to be acknowledged that neither the Myanmarese nor the Indian state would be easily persuaded to recognize and accommodate the ethno-nationalists aspirations in North-East India, particularly the Zo people and the Nagas whose demand areas cut across existing boundaries. Any proposal that requires the re-drawing of international or national boundaries is seen negative by the modern states, which usually felt its national security jolted by such moves. How, then, shall we reconcile the interest of the state at the core and the aspirations of the ethno-nationalists at the periphery? Here, mention may be made of what Henriksen has called the 'Nordic Saami' model, first expounded in his recent work "*Saami Parliamentary Cooperation*" (1999)¹. Like the Zo people, the Saami people are found in three different Nordic countries, viz., Norway, Sweden and Finland. Each of the three Nordic countries has a Saami Parliament. The three parliaments coordinate their activities through a non-statutory Saami Council. Henriksen has recently suggested a framework for an elected trans-border Assembly without affecting the borders of the three nation-states. This proposition is of considerable significance for the prospect of Zo ethno-nationalism.

¹ Roy Burman, B.K., "Naga People and Prospects for Peace", in *The Sangai Express*, Imphal, 8 August, 2000. p.2.

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