

Unifying The Fragmented: An In-depth Analysis of Identity Politics in Ethnic Conflict of Manipur

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Abstract—The Manipur ethnic conflict is a complex and long-standing issue that revolves around identity politics in the North-eastern Indian State of Manipur. This ethnic conflict is shown to be a consequence of a lingering identity problem, aggravated by land dispute and equivocal responses of the state. Identity politics place a significant role in this conflict as different communities rise your voice for cognition and protection of their culture linguistic and territorial rights. This complex situation involves demands for autonomy, land dispute and historical grievances among the different ethnic groups in the region. Various organizations are focused on the issue of Manipur. This article highlights to understand how fractured ethnic identities contribute to conflicts and explorers potential pathways to achieve harmony and unity. The conflict has been a change nation identity to address and request careful consideration of diverse perspective to find a peaceful resolution.

I. INTRODUCTION

The state of Manipur is one of the six states of North East which are referred to as the seven sisters. Titanic conflict in Manipur has been shaped by the intricate dynamics of identity politics, resulting in fragmented landscape of cultural, social and political affiliation. The conflate highlights the deep rooted historical and contemporary tensions among various ethnic groups like Meitei, the Nagas, and the Kuki - Chin tribe. Manipur consists of three major ethnic groups- the Meitei in the valley and the Nagas and the Kuki- Chin tribals in the hills. The Meitei represent around 53% of the population of Manipur, followed by various Naga ethnic groups at 24% and the various Kuki tribes (also known is chin-kuki-mizo people) at 16%. Manipur's ethnic groups practice a variety of religions. There are around 40 ethnic groups in Manipur, with various languages and cultural practices. In this context the conflict and explore potential avenues for unification and resolution.

In this paper, I attempt to analyze how identity politics and ethnic interwind in the Manipur state. Identity politics refers to political movements that are primarily based on the collective identity of group, such as ethnicity, religion or gender. In the context of ethnic conflict, identity politics has played a significant role in dynamics and exacerbating tensions between different ethnic the region. The underlying ethnic conflict in Manipur is rooted in competition for political power, resources and recognition various type of groups. Identity politics in Manipur has ethnic conflict by emphasizing and mobilizing around ethnic has led to the rise of ethnic-based political parties, social and armed groups that advocate for the rights and interests of communities.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The history of the conflict dates back to the colonial era. Manipur independent kingdom until 19th century. Later, when it came colonial rule the merger of Manipur into the Indian Union in following India's Independence marked the turning point. This concerns among the local population about the protection of their cultures framework of the and rights within the Indian nation

Identity politics have played a significant role in exacerbating the conflict ethnic communities in "Manipur have sought to protect and promote their identities related cultures and languages. The Meitis, being the majority community, have expressed concerns about safeguarding their identity in of demands for greater autonomy by other communities. This led to tensions and a complex web of negotiations, agreements and



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disagreements. Another ethnic group the Kuki - Naga clashes have revolved around issues of land, identity and political representation. The kuki - Naga Communities have distinct cultural and historical backgrounds and their interactions have sometimes led to conflicts over territorial claims and social differences, land disputes along with differing perceptions of ownership and boundaries. The Kuki-Naga clashes serve as a reminder of the intricate interplay between identity politics, historical legacies and regional dynamics in Manipur. They highlight the grievances of both communities and foster lasting peace in the region. Both the communities have distinct cultural identities and historical background.

The post-independence period witnessed the rise of insurgent groups seeking greater autonomy or independence for various communities. This groups often resorted to violence to achieve their goals the struggle for ethnic and regional identity was central to these conflicts.

III. POLARIZATION AND DIVISIONS

Identity politics in Manipur ethnic conflict has been multifaceted. Identity politics has deepened divisions and created a sense of us versus them" mentality among different ethnic groups. Ethnic divisions in Manipur are fueled by factors such as competition for resources, "historical of grievances and differing visions of political representation. Various insurgent groups have emerged, demanding separate homelands or increased autonomy for their respective communities. These conflicts have often resulted in violation, displacement, and disruptions to daily life. Identity politics in Manipur often revolves around issues of land rights, political representation and preservation of cultural heritage. These issues are deeply interwind with broader concern about economic development, social inclusion and the relationship between the state government and the central government of India.

The complexity of Identity politics and ethnic conflicts have polarized Manipur society. Community that was once neighbors and friends have found themselves on opposite sides, by mistrust and fear full stop the lack of inclusive governance and mechanisms for resolving disputes has exacerbated this division. Polarization is also evident in the media and public discourse, with different communities often perceiving issues through their own ethnocentric lenses.

Several factors contribute to the division within Manipur. This historical legacy of animosities and grievances has been passed down through generations. Economic dis parties between different communities, coupled with limited access to opportunities, have fueled resentment. The lack of effective representation in government institutions and policies has left many feeling marginalized and voiceless. Yet, external influences and allegiances have sometimes exacerbated conflicts. Historical animosities, economic disparities and lack of representation drive division. Historical background, economic disparities and lack of representation drive division. Under solved past conflicts contribute to ongoing tensions. Marginalized communities seek empowerment and equal opportunities. External influences sometimes aggravate the situation. This has intensified feelings of exclusion and generated mistress among communities. This has resulted in the polarization of communities and perpetuating cycles of violation.

IV. POLITICAL FRAGMENTATION

The emergence of ethnic-based political parties and movements has fragmented the political landscape in Manipur. The persistent identity-based conflicts had deterrental effects on Manipur social fabric and economic development. The cycle of violation and instability has hindered economic growth, deterred investments and disrupted education and healthcare systems. The prevalence of armed groups and the militarization of the region have also contributed to our sense of insecurity among the population. The Indian government response to Manipur identity politics and ethnic conflicts has been a mixed of security measures, development initiatives, and attempts at political dialogue. While security operations armed at curbing insurgency operations aimed at curbing insurgency have been undertaken, there have also been efforts to address the root causes of the conflict through economic development, infrastructure projects etc.

Identity politics has played a significant role in Manipur, so that different communities seek to protect their cultural and political identities. These has led to tensions and conflicts over issues such as land rights, language etc. In response to the ethnic conflict, the Manipur state government has grappled with challenges related to governance and administration. The government has has faced difficulties in ensuring equal representation and addressing the diverse needs of various ethnic group. So that, the central government in New Delhi has at times struggled to effectively mediate between the conflicting demands of different ethnic communities.

The government fragmentation in Manipur is also evident through the presence of ethnic-based political parties. Many parties, they are try to primarily cater to the interest of specific ethnic groups and promote their culture and political aspirations top the proliferation aap sach parties has sometimes led to a fractured political landscape, making the challenging to form stable governments and implement cohensive policies. Over the years, several atoms have been made to address the ethnic conflict and government fragmentation in Manipur. These efforts have included negotiations, peace talks , and arguments between the government, insurgent groups, and ethnic leaders. However, achieving lasting piece and resolution has proven to be a complex and complicated process, as

deeply ingrained grievances and mistrust persist among the various stake holders. Civil society organisations and the media have played important roles in advocating for peace, reconciliation and the resolution of the ethnic conflict. They had provided platforms for dialogue, raised awareness about the consequences of violence, and pressured governments to address the concerns of various ethnic groups.

While the Manipur identity base ethnic conflict and government fragmentation remain ongoing challenges, there is hope for a more peaceful future. Sustainable resolution requires addressing the root causes of the conflict, such as identity-based grievances, resources distribution and political representation. A comprehensive thought that involves the active participation of all stakeholders, including the central government and the state government ethnic communities media and civil society is crucial for achieving lasting peace and stability in Manipur.

V. A GROUP OF ELITE STRATEGY AND IDENTITY MOBILIZATION

The late 20th and early 21st centuries witnessed the rise of insurgency movements in Manipur, fueled by a combination of socio-economic disparities, political grievances, and the aspiration for autonomy. Manipur has been led by elites and marginalized groups, highlighting the multifaceted nature of Identity mobilization. The role of dominant political elites in Manipur in mobilizing Meitei

identity to capture power and authority, and also look at chiefs and ethnic associations among tribal/hill communities responded to meta-identity mobilization by politicizing their individual identities. The vehicle and arena of mobilization have been political parties and community-based groups. Key political actors and social organizations have contributed to the dynamic in the state, narrow and conflictual in one and inclusive and aggregating in the other.

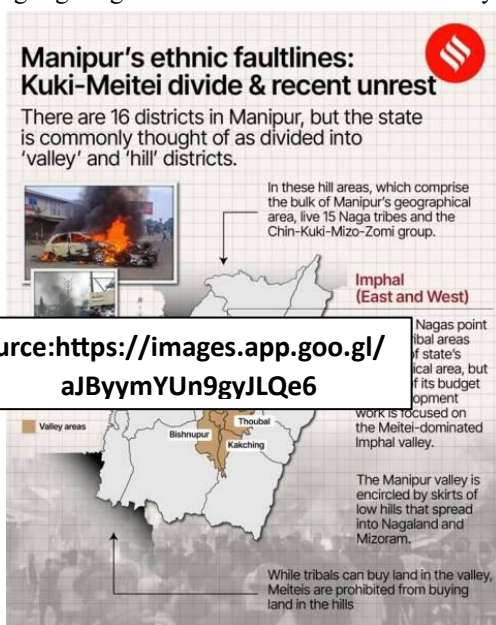
The relationship between Elite strategies and identity mobilization has been complex and many of times contradictory. Elites have occasionally co-opted identity mobilization to advance their own interests, using cultural symbols and narratives to consolidate power. In Manipur identity-based movements have at times challenge established elites, questioning their legitimacy and demanding more inclusive governance structures. In recent few years, efforts have been made to address these dynamics through political negotiations and policy initiatives. The implementation of the inner line permit system, for instance, aimed to protect the cultural and demographic integrity of Manipur by regulating the entry of outsiders. However, such measures have also sparked debates, revealing the intricate balance between safeguarding identity and ensuring economic development.

Manipur history is a testament to the interplay of elitist strategies and identity mobilization. These dynamics shaped the regions political landscape, influencing power structures, social cohesion and aspirations for autonomy. Manipur's elite strategies have played a role in maintaining power, identity mobilization has been a force for preserving cultural distinctiveness and demanding representation. The ongoing dialogue between these two forces continues to shape Manipur trajectory in the larger context of India democracy and cultural diversity.

VI. VIOLENCE AND INSURGENCY

Since the emergence of Manipur state, the presence of insurgency has been noticed there at various times. Identity-based grievances and aspirations have fueled armed insurgency in Manipur. Various ethnic armed groups have resorted to violence, including attacks on security forces, inter-state clashes, and instances of ethnic cleansing. The struggle for political power and control over resources has frequently manifested through violent means. Different insurgent groups formed each pursuing its goals through armed struggle. These groups often clashed with each other and with the Indian state, leading to a cycle of violation. Several factors have fueled insurgency in Manipur, leading to violence. Marginalized groups felt excluded from political power and economic opportunities, pushing them toward insurgency. In Manipur leaders leveraged the Meitei identity to gain political control. This strategy emerged as a response to the growing resentment against the central administration, which was perceived as an external force imposing its authority on the region.

The dominance of the Meitei community and their history of self-rule led the state leaders to adopt a strategy of embracing their Meitei identity to effectively govern. However, this approach also resulted in the exclusion of other communities from the mobilization process. These excluded communities had maintained their unity through traditional authority structures. It sounds like you are describing a historical process of mobilization and counter-mobilization that led to conflict. This process involved political parties,



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bicycle groups and community organizations. To understand their better can examine the historical progression and it's impact on the conflict.

Socio-economic disparities and under development aggravated feelings of neglect and resentment. The Presence of AFSPA (Armed forces special power act) granted security forces broad powers, often resulting in human rights abuses and civilian unrest. Dispute overland, territory and resources have led to clashes among different communities. The ongoing violence and insurgency have severe consequences on Manipur society. Insurgency groups and security forces both have been accused of violating human rights, leading to civilian casualties and displacement. The uncertain security situation has hindered economic development and innovation in the region. Prolonging violence has taken a psychological role on the population, causing trauma and distress.

VII. MEDIA AND NARRATIVES: A ROLE IN MANIPUR

Media narrative has played a significant role in shaping perceptions and exacerbating tensions within the region. Traditional media outlets, as well as social media platforms, have been used to disseminate both accurate information and distorted narratives. These narratives often highlight the grievances of particular ethnic groups while down playing those of others, contributing to a cycle of misunderstanding and mistrust.

Identity politics, fueled by media narratives has created a situation where even minor incidents can escalate into major conflicts. Misinformation and propaganda spread through various channels intensify feelings of victim hood and marginalization. The media often focuses on isolated incidence rather than the broader structural issues that underlie the conflict and reduces the possibilities for dialogue and reconciliation.

Furthermore, the spread of misinformation through social media and other digital platforms has added another layer of complexity. False information, rumors and inflammatory content have often gone viral, intensifying tensions and leading to violent incidents. Speed at which information disperses in the digital age can make it challenging to counter false narratives and prevent the escalation of conflicts. Media can also influence public perceptions and government responses. Balanced and responsible reporting can create an informed public discourse that encourages dialogue and understanding. Converging biased or inflammatory reporting can sway public opinion and push policy makers toward particular decisions, potentially aggravating the conflict. The efforts to mitigate the role of media in Manipur ethnic involve promoting ethnical journalism and media litigacy. The Manipur ethnic conflicts connection to identity politics had both reflected and influenced by media. While media has provided a platform for marginalized voices, it has also a times contributed to mis information and division. Responsible journalism and media literacy are essential tools for addressing these challenges and fostering a more inclusive and informed dialogue among the diverse communities in Manipur. Media responsibility to provide accurate ,unbiased and balanced reporting is crucial in fostering understanding and peace in conflict ridden areas like Manipur. In this state ethnical journalism that highlights the voices of all stakeholders and offers comprehensive insights can contribute to promoting dialogue, tolerance and reconciliation among different ethnic groups.

In recent years, efforts have been made to encourage responsible reporting and ethical journalism practices in Manipur to counter the negative impacts of media sensationalism on the ongoing ethnic conflict. However, the media role is not without controversy. Sometimes, media coverage can inadvertently perpetuate stereotypes or amplify tensions between communities. Ensuring balanced and accurate reporting is crucial to prevent exacerbating existing divisions. Manipur media landscape has evolved , with increased access to digital platforms enabling more diverse voices to be heard. It remains essential for the media to responsibly navigate the intricacies of Identity politics, fostering understanding and unity for respecting the unique heritage of each group.

VIII. RESOURCE ALLOCATION

In India, Manipur has been marred by ethnic conflict and identity politics for decades. This conflict arises from historical grievances, social tensions, and the complex interplay of various ethnic groups vying for recognition resources, and autonomy. In Manipur another issue is the struggle for control over resource allocation, which exacerbates the underlying tensions. The state diverse population comprises several ethnic groups including metei, Naga ,kuki and others each with distinct cultures languages and historical narratives. These groups often to political power and control over resources, such as land, water and economic opportunities. Resource allocation is seen as a manifestation of political power leading to fierce competition and some cases are violent clashes. In this region identity politics place a significant role in shaping those conflicts. Maine apne groups seek to preserve and promote their distinct identities, often viewing resource allocation as a means of asserting their interests. This has led to demands for separate administrative units or regions, each representing the dominant ethnic group in that area. Such demons contribute to tensions and further complicate the allocation of resources, as the creation of separate administrative units has implications for the distribution of power and resources.

In Manipur government resource allocation decisions become highly contentious, infrastructure development, education, healthcare and economic opportunities are critical areas where resource allocation choices impact different ethnic groups disproportionately. Fostering a sense of unity among the diverse population can help shift the focus from ethnic divisions to shared goals and aspirations. These could involve promoting cultural exchange programs, interethnic corporation, and platforms for open discussions on identity and resource allocation.

Resource allocation exacerbates these tensions, Manipur is resource rich, processing valuable minerals, fertile land and strategic economic locations. However, unequal distribution of resources and benefits often leads to resentment among various groups. Competition over land, jobs and economic opportunities further fuels the conflict. Addressing the ethnic conflict necessitates a multi-pronged approach. This historical backdrop of Manipur integration into India also influences the conflict. Resource allocation exacerbates the conflict by magnifying existing disparities. In this region limited resources, including land, water, and economic opportunities become points of contention between different groups. Competing claims over these resources further intensify the sense of marginalisation and foster resentment among communities. The competition is compounded by issues such as land rights, border disputes and historical grievances that intersect with identity-based concerns. The Manipur ethnic conflict requires a delicate balance between acknowledging cultural identities and ensuring equitable resource distribution. Politics that promote inclusive governance, representation and decision-making can help bridge divides. Economic development initiatives focused on job creation, infrastructure improvement and resource management can mitigate resource-related tensions. In Manipur inter-community dialogue, cultural exchange and educational initiatives can help build mutual understanding and trust. In this region ethnic conflict entanglement with identity politics and resource allocation underscores the need for comprehensive, well-rounded solutions.

Addressing historical grievances, promoting inclusive governance and implementing sustainable development strategies can create the way toward a more peaceful and harmonious Manipur, where the diverse identities of its community are respected, and resources are shared equitably.

IX. CONCLUSION

In this paper I have emphasized Manipur ethnic conflict and identity politics related issues like media narratives, resource allocation, violence and insurgency, elite strategy, political and fragmentation. In Manipur identity politics and ethnic conflict are complex interplay of historical, cultural, and socio-economic political factors has fueled these tensions, resulting in a situation that requires a nuanced understanding and multifaceted solutions. Unconscious increase in the past few years. Resolving this conflict will require a comprehensive and inclusive approach that addresses both the immediate security concerns and the long-term socio-economic and cultural dimensions. Initiating and sustaining inclusive dialogues among all ethnic groups and stakeholders is crucial. These dialogues should be facilitated by impartial mediators and focus on addressing grievances and finding common ground. Economic development programs that are equitable and benefit all community can help reduce tensions. Recognising and preserving the cultural heritage of different ethnic groups is essential. This can be achieved through cultural festivals, museums and educational initiatives.

In this situation land reform is very essential. Evaluate and reform existing laws and policies that may contribute to tensions or discrimination. Ensuring that the legal framework is just and fair for all communities is vital. Then establish effective conflict resolution mechanisms that are accessible to all communities. This includes local dispute resolution committees and access to justice for all. In this region promote responsible media reporting and inclusive educational curriculum that teach tolerance, diversity and respect for all cultures and identities. Consider seeking international mediation or assistance if necessary to facilitate peace talks and provide a neutral platform for negotiations. For that, the central and state governments should work together.

The ethnic conflict and government fragmentation in Manipur are complex issues with deep historical roots and multifaceted dimensions. Resolving these challenges requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders to address identity concerns, resource distribution and political representation while fostering an environment of understanding, dialogue and reconciliation. Only through collaborative endeavours can Manipur move toward a future of sustained peace and development. In this Manipur region the political system in Manipur needs reform to ensure fair representation of all ethnic groups. Building trust between security forces and the local population is vital to prevent further violence. Human rights abuses must be investigated and perpetrators held accountable to restore faith in the justice system. Cultural preservation and promotion can also play a role in conflict resolution. External mediation and support from the central government can aid in the process. International organisations and neighbouring states can play our role in facilitating dialogue and providing resources for development and conflict resolution. So that unique identities, addressing socio-economic disparities, political reform, security improvements, cultural preservation and external support are all critical components for a holistic solution. The journey towards lasting peace and harmony in Manipur will be changing, but what sustained efforts and a commitment to dialogue and development it is achievable. Ultimately the goal should be to create a Manipur where all its diverse ethnic groups can coexist peacefully, with equal opportunities and a shared vision for the future.

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