

Book Review

Manipur and the Paradox of Security

Teinkoo Soibam

Sanghita Das. *Manipur and The Paradox of Security*. New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 2011, pp. 272, Rs. 995.

The situation of security in Manipur today has gone from bad to worst. It is no longer a question of law and order problem but increasingly a socio-political and economic problem of the various ethnic groups of the state. The security concerns are not merely confined to insurgency and counter-insurgency operations, and its repercussions on the general public and society, it also encompass the ethnic tensions faced by the state and the people as a major challenge to the peaceful co-existence of the numerous ethnic communities. The scenario is a cluster of complex and myriad issues ranging from identity formation by various ethnic communities to gross human rights violations especially by the security forces. In a very common parlance, the notion of security is closely related with the concept of security forces or the police. The people look up to them as an agency for ensuring public order, protection of the people and property for a peaceful and secure life by maintaining law and order, and prevention and detection of crime. However, people in Manipur have developed a different perception of these law enforcing agencies. Mistrust of the public towards the security forces are large, where they are seen as tormentors rather than helpers.

The book “Manipur and the paradox of security”, is yet another book which tries to throw light on the various challenges regarding the issue of security concerns in Manipur. The book has rather provided immense insight to those problems the state face today, with probable solutions and remedies or rather what will help in coming up with the crucial answers to the problems put forth in the volume.

The book has nine chapters. It starts with an overview of the state of Manipur pertaining to its historic formation, ethnic composition, etc. The author further discusses the reasons for the emergence of the various insurgent groups in relation to the unique history and ethnic setup of the state. The fact that the several insurgent groups were established on ethnic lines has been properly highlighted. She further put forth the various factors responsible for the sustainability of insurgency for the last forty years or so. But astonishingly most part of the first chapter is a direct replication from the work of

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Upadhyay¹ (pp. 1-4, pp. 7-16). The author, however, seems not to consider the ethical academic values and clearly indulge in plagiarism, by avoiding proper references or copyright permissions of earlier workers.

In the next chapter, right from the start, the writer infringes upon the writings of various authors and duplicated in her book. The entire chapter itself is a direct copy from various sources compiled together which include writings by Laishram² (p. 17-19, p. 21-27), Neken³ (p. 19-21), Talukdar⁴ (p. 27-30), Kamboj⁵ (p. 30-36) and Goswami⁶ (p. 36-37). The chapter addresses the complex contemporary issues pertaining to the security paradox currently faced by the state and its people. It also discusses the complications the common man encounter from both the armed forces and the insurgents. The controversial Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act 1958 has not been able to contain insurgency and, on the contrary, escalated the number of militant outfits, thereby misusing the Act in the name of counter-insurgency, increasing the cases of human rights violations. The people in hills alike, see the state government's move of deploying state forces as a strategy to restrain their dogmatic aspirations, and regarded the government as Meitei centric. All these have led to a sense of isolation and insolence towards India in general, and among the communities of the state in particular.

Whether it is isolation and insolence from the country, between the valley and the hills or among the tribes themselves, the sense of divisiveness due to the lack of inclusive politics is well highlighted in the third chapter. The chapter deals on the geographical seclusion of the state owing to the landlocked nature and its subsequent social complications, compounded by the government's failure to address these complications and social issues. The chapter deals more on the internal isolation and insolence among the different communities of Manipur and less on the political and social isolation the people feel towards the greater Indian society. However, the author once again lifts major portion of the chapter from different articles. For instance, page 38 to 42 is taken from an article in "The Sangai Express"⁷ entitled "*Political Isolation: New Delhi's Gift To Manipur*", page 42-45 from Rahman⁸, page 50-53 from Singh⁹, pages 53-56 from Amarjeet¹⁰ and page 56-60 from Goswami¹¹. With a sense of exclusivist feeling among the communities, as the chapter highlights, peace efforts in Manipur seems to be a non-success story. On the one hand, insurgency has been perceived as law and order problem rather than being perceived as political and human problem. It is not an easy task for the government when the state is affected by different forms of militancy, which have contradictory political objectives. The state machinery, including bureaucracy, is in a complete breakdown, and the efforts made by the State have led to the emergence of State terrorism. These complex issues have been addressed well in the fourth chapter. With this kind of scenario, coupled with no interest shown by major militant groups in peace dialogue, are perhaps a stumbling block in bringing peace in the state. The chapter also emphasises on the role of Manipuri women as a forerunner in maintaining peace initiatives in the state. Yet again, the entire chapter is shoplifted from the mentioned sources "*Centre for Development and Peace Studies*"¹² (pp. 61-65, 69-71), "*Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis*"¹³ (p65-69) and "*The role of women in peace initiative in Manipur*"¹⁴ (pp. 71 – 75).

The fifth chapter discusses thoroughly about almost all the major (or rather active)

militant outfits operating in Manipur. The author has presented well the history, objectives, activities, composition, strength etc. of each and every major insurgent groups. The chapter will make a reader aware about these organisations in a single place. The author also cites the emergence and the growing alliance of Islamic terrorism in North-east India, which may be attributed to the abnormal growth of Muslim population in the subsequent decades and their growing identity. Like the previous chapters, this current chapter is also a facsimile from various sources. Pages 80-92 have been copied from “*Centre for Development and Peace Studies*”^{15,16}, pages 77-80 from Singh¹⁷, pages 93-96 from Singh¹⁸ and pages 96-99 from Singh¹⁹.

Chapter six which exclusively deals with the major incidents in Manipur during 1981 to 2010 is an applaudable work by the author. However, there are many drawbacks when examined carefully about the 769 incidents the author has documented. Firstly, the author does not provide a credible source for the data she has presented. Secondly, it is unclear and the author failed to clarify whether the incidents compiled were only insurgency related events or encompass other broader security related events as well. Thirdly and most importantly, the author has not taken into account various other major incidents which are deemed important. In fact, the author totally sidelined those incidents where the state or central security forces have indulged in gross human rights violations, forced abductions and disappearances, unwarranted arrests, tortures, custodial deaths, etc. In this regard, it can be said that the author has presented a one sided view about the security issues in the state of Manipur probably giving a biased and prejudiced conclusion.

The ethnic composition of the state is quite varied and complex. Each and every ethnic group is concerned and aware of its identity and aspirations. Due to the conflict of interests among these varied groups, ethnic tension among the communities in Manipur is high. There are several factors compounding to the emergence of ethnic conflicts. The divide between the hills and valley created by the advent of Hinduism in the valley and the subsequent conversion of hills to Christianity, the tensions among the tribe itself due to the considerable flux in identity and nomenclature, tribal group formation and self-identification etc. is studied meticulously by the author in chapter seven titled “Ethnic Conflict in Manipur”. She also highlights the land rights and ownership issues and the concept of ancestral domain as a causal factor to the ethnic tensions among the communities. However there are many such instances where she has put forward careless and insensitive assumptions which are not factual and lack clarity. Astonishingly, the entire chapter is taken out from an article by Pukhrambam Lalitkumar Singh (pp. 191-196, pp. 218-231)²⁰ and manipuronline.com (pp. 196-218)²¹.

The succeeding chapter which deals with the issue of “Dignity and Human Security in Manipur” has been addressed fairly well. The chapter gives a detailed account on the violations of rights and safety of the citizen by the security forces. The State Government as well as the Central Government are not committed to ensure the rights of the people. It may be noted that the people have lost faith on the government as well as the security forces which compelled them to organise themselves to defend their rights. Interestingly the ideas presented are once again not of her own. She again plagiarised almost the entire chapter from “*Dignity and Human Security in Manipur*” by Babloo

Loitongbam²² (pp. 237 to 246) and “*Indian Democracy in Manipur – Human Rights Out of Control*”²³ (p246 to 248) without any proper acknowledgement. This kind of hijacking/stealing of knowledge by the author is another serious lack of academic commitment and ethics.

The concluding chapter with the heading “Defeating terrorism through Development” which discusses the developmental aspects of Manipur in relation to insurgency in the state has been presented reasonably. The author boldly mentions about the obscure nature of the insurgent groups judging from their ideology and goals, and points out various causes for the lack of development primarily due to the prolonged insurgency. She emphasised the need to have an environment conducive to attract investment. The chapter also discusses the importance of the role of public in containing insurgency, and further goes on to suggest that securing public support requires a trustworthy authority, which is, so as to say, completely lacking in Manipur. At the middle of the chapter, the author concentrates more on the strategies for combating terrorism which rather appears “defeating terrorism for development” rather than “defeating terrorism through development”. The author also presents a few impractical remedies, for instance, non-allowance of local press to operate if these press do not publish all extortion related activities or statements of the militant groups, and at times goes into hasty conclusions on the negative facets of insurgency without proper and reasonable explanations. It is highly regrettable that the author has repeatedly plagiarised. Right from the start of the chapter till the end, she has lifted thoughts and ideas from different authors and sources without proper acknowledgements. In this concluding chapter, page 249 to 258, is copied entirely from an article from *Dialogue - A quarterly journal of AsthaBharati*.²⁴ Page 258-265 is again directly reproduced from Benjamin Kuipers’ “*How to Defeat Terrorism*”.²⁵ Page 265-268 is yet again lifted from Madhu Chandra’s “*Patrotic Love for Manipur is Terribly Missing*”.²⁶

It is observed that there are many instances where the author goes into a statement without a proper understanding and investigation. Various facts are wrongly presented or more precisely not updated properly. For instance, she asserted that the term “Hao” is derogatory, meaning “uncivilised”, is erroneous. The fact that the term “Hao” is used as a derogatory term now is true, but equating “Hao” with “uncivilised” is totally wrong. “Hao” means “old” or “elder”.²⁷ The writer again mentions that Meiteis perform rituals and ceremonies according to Hindu customs while the tribes perform according to Christian faith, is really surprising. Such conclusion only gives a shallow view on the customary practices of the complex and varied ethnic communities (see Shakespear 1913). “Kom”, a tribe claiming to have independent identity, has been wrongly clubbed as Nagas, which is earnestly deceptive (Serto 1995; Shimray 2001). She also asserts that the emergence of insurgency in Manipur is to restore the pre-British politico-ethnic supremacy of the Meiteis, which is, again a very immature statement. In the pre-British era, no ethnic community were supreme to other (Naorem 1991). She again blames the state government of sabotaging peace efforts with any insurgent group initiated by the centre which is rather a comical statement. In no case there has been any such effort by state government, rather it is the insurgent groups who have no interest in such initiatives. She also failed to provide any such peace proposal by the centre which is being obstructed by

the state. She even criticised that the people wanted removal of Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act 1958, to indulge in lawless violence in the state which is absolutely outrageous and silly. The statement “quite unlike rebellion or say resistance movement in others parts of the Indian NE Region, the insurgency in Manipur is infested with factionalism” is an absurd statement. In fact any state, which is now facing the problem of insurgency, is all infested with factionalism. Probably such factionalism could also be the outcome of counter insurgency measures taken up by the union government.

In the course of the entire book, the author has never made any references, which is quite questionable, the genuineness of her work itself, with the fact that she has indulged in high degree of plagiarism. In fact the in-text references made by the authors of the original articles were eliminated by her. The book though, provides comprehensively a good understanding about the prevailing security conditions in the state of Manipur, the ideas provided were not at all original ideas of the author. She has crossed the ethical limits of being a good academician by directly lifting with a cut and paste method, which is a serious offence in the academic fraternity.

The index provided in the end of the book is furthermore very unsatisfactory and seems quite inadequate.

Notes

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² Laishram, S Bidhan (2004): “Manipur and the paradox of security”, *Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies*. Accessed on 18 July 2013 (<http://www.ipcs.org/article/terrorism-in-northeast/manipur-and-the-paradox-of-security-1456.html>).

³ Neken, Seram (2009): *A different Meaning of Security in Manipur*, Accessed on 18 July 2013 (<http://www.merineews.com/article/a-different-meaning-of-security-in-manipur/15782465.shtml>).

⁴ Talukdar, Surajit (2010): *Manipur Sitting on a Powder KEG*, Accessed on 18 July 2013 (http://www.chillibreeze.com/articles_various/Manipur-sitting-on-a-powder-keg-1010.asp).

⁵ Kamboj, Anil (2004): “Manipur and Armed Forces (Special Power) Act 1958”, *Strategic Analysis*, 28(4): 616-620.

⁶ Goswami, Namrata(2009): “Manipur: In Need of Serious Perception Management”, *IDSa Issue Brief*, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi.

⁷ *The Sangai Express*(2010): “Political Isolation: New Delhi’s Gift To Manipur”, Imphal, 4 July, 2010.

⁸ Rahman, MirzaZulfiqur(2010):”Blockading Peace And Development In Manipur”,*Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies*. Accessed on 18 July 2013 (<http://www.ipcs.org/article/india/blockading-peace-and-development-in-manipur-3155.html>).

⁹ Singh T. Khurshcev (2008): “The Attack on Migrants in Manipur”, *Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis*. Accessed on 18 July 2013(http://www.idsa.in/idsastrategiccomments/TheAttackonMigrantsinManipur_TKSingh_290408).

¹⁰ Singh, M. Amarjeet (2007): “The growing trends of Bandhs and Blockades in Manipur”,

Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis. Accessed on 18 July 2013 (http://www.idsa.in/idsastrategiccomments/TheGrowingTrendofBandhsandBlockadesinManipurr_MASingh_051007).

¹¹ Goswami, Namrata(2009): “Manipur: In Need of Serious Perception Management”, *IDS A Issue Brief*, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi.

¹² Centre For Development and Peace Studies (2008): ‘*Insurgency And Peace Efforts In Manipur*’. Accessed on 18 July 2013 (http://cdpsindia.org/manipur_insurgency.asp).

¹³ Singh, M. Amarjeet (2006): “State of Militancy In Manipur”, *Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis*. Accessed on 18 July 2013 (http://www.idsa.in/idsastrategiccomments/StateofmilitancyinManipur_MASingh_091206).

¹⁴ Kamei, Gangmumei (2006): *The role of women in peace initiative in Manipur*. Accessed on 18 July 2013 (http://e-pao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=news_section.opinions.Opinion_on_Manipur_Integrity_Issue.Role_of_women_in_peace_initiative_in_Manipur).

¹⁵ Centre For Development and Peace Studies (2008): *Militant Groups’ Profile*. Accessed on 18 July 2013 (http://cdpsindia.org/manipur_mgp.asp).

¹⁶ Centre For Development and Peace Studies(2008): *Militant Groups Active, Inactive And Under Ceasefire*. Accessed on 18 July 2013 (http://cdpsindia.org/manipur_outfits.asp).

¹⁷ Singh, M. Amarjeet (2007): ‘The emerging Islamic Militancy in North-East India’, *Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis*. Accessed on 18 July 2013 (http://www.idsa.in/idsastrategiccomments/TheEmergingIslamicMilitancyinNorthEastIndia_MASingh_030807).

¹⁸ Singh, M. Amarjeet (2009): “Unholy Alliance in North-East India”, *Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis*. Accessed on 18 July 2013 (http://www.idsa.in/idsastrategiccomments/UnholyallianceinNorthEastIndia_MASingh_190209).

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²⁰ Pukhrambam, Singh Lalitkumar. *The People of Manipur*. Accessed on 17 July 2013. (http://e-pao.net/spSubPageExtractor.asp?src=manipur.thnic_Races_Manipur.The_People_of_Manipur).

²¹ "Land rights, Autonomy and Conflict in Manipur", *Manipuronline.com*, September 14, 2010. Accessed on 17 July 2013(<http://manipuronline.com/research-papers/land-rights-autonomy-andconflict-in-manipur/2010/09/14>).

²² Loitongbam, Babloo (2005): “Dignity and Human Security In Manipur”, *Eastern Quarterly*, 3(1):31-39.

²³ "Indian Democracy in Manipur-Human Rights out of Control" *development.thinkaboutit.eu*, Accessed on 17 July 2013. (http://development.thinkaboutit.eu/think3/post/indian_democracy_in_manipur_human_rights_out_of_control).

²⁴ Chaudhury, Dipanjan Roy (2006): “Manipur Seeks Development to Defeat Insurgency”, *Dialogue: A Quarterly Journal of AsthaBharati*, 7(4). Accessed on 17 July 2013 (http://www.asthabharati.org/Dia_Apr%2006/Dipa.htm).

²⁵ Kuipers, Benjamin. (2004): *How To Defeat Terrorism*. Accessed on 17 July 2013 (<http://www.cs.utexas.edu/users/kuipers/opinions/defeating-terrorism.html>).

²⁶ Chandra, Madhu (2010): *Patriotic Love for Manipur is Terribly Missing*. Accessed on 17 July 2013 (<http://www.sinlung.com/2010/05/patriotic-love-for-manipur-is-terribly.html>).

²⁷ Meitei used to regard their elder brother (Hill people) as “HAO” (original people or early men or descendant of God). “HAO” means original viz. Hao-pukham or old or original or traditional etc. The “MEITIES” were derived from “HAOS” according to “MEITEI PUYAS” (Meitei’s old books). King Charairongba (1697-1714) consolidated the relation between hill and plain people. He constructed “HAO-MACHA LOISANG” (Guest-Houses) for the hill people at Kangla (the Capital of Ancient Manipur Kingdom). Old customs and rituals like “Mera-Hao-Chongba” (a symbol of brotherhood between the hill and valley people), Laiharaoba, Phambaltongba and marriage ceremony etc., and the word ‘HAO’ was used by Meitei from ancient times without any disrespect.

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