

CHAPTER 7

Summary and Conclusion

7.1. Back to Propositions

In the present thesis we have presented an analysis of the phenomena of cyclical bamboo flowering in Mizoram, its impact on human security, and the role of the state in addressing the problems emanating from the ecological process of bamboo flowering. However, the central focus of the study has been to locate, map and analyse the politics involved in the mitigation of the menace of bamboo flowering by state and its agencies at varying points of time. In this backdrop, therefore, the present study, drawing from the theoretical insights on human security and adopting a political ecological conceptual framework on human security keeping in mind the rich and complex interrelationships between the ecological, social and the political systems, was designed, as stated in the 'The Problem', (see Chapter 1, Section 1.2) evaluate the role of the state in providing security to its citizens under such circumstances as bamboo flowering in Mizoram, and the complex interplay of local, regional, national and global politics involved therein.

The study had designed five research questions (see Chapter 1, Section 1.5: Research Questions) and as tentative answers, designed some three interrelated hypotheses (See Introduction, Section 1.6: Hypotheses) based on the research questions framed, which were to be tested in course of the study. The hypotheses being, first, that bamboo flowering (a natural ecological process) has impacted the livelihood entitlements of

the marginal communities of Mizoram leading to human insecurities; and second, that the existing governance model has failed to address the issues of human insecurity (as those arising from the natural process of bamboo flowering); third, state failures in mitigating human insecurities (as in the case of Mizoram in India or Thailand, Korea etc.) generate anti statist feelings (such as terrorism or ethnic nationalism). The theme of this chapter, however, is confined to neatly summarizing the study and its findings, and, adding a note on the possible policy interventions for an improved sustainable experience of human security by the people. The following sections on the summary of chapters and major findings would point out as to how the objectives of the study are realized and how the hypotheses have been tested.

The present work has been designed in seven chapters. Our summary consists three sections. The first section is an overview of the different chapters. The second section throws some light on the major findings of the present study. Section three briefly outlines the possible policy interventions for better future sustainable human security experience.

7.2. The Summary of Chapters

We started off our investigation in an organic manner, moving from general to particular. Chapter 1 is entitled "*Introduction*". In this Chapter, we have introduced the problem under study, contextualized the study with a brief profile of the study area, designed our research questions and hypotheses, introduced the framework for the study, and explained our methodological orientations. The chapter also points out the significance of the present study and makes an honest confession on the major

limitations of the study. The section, finally gives a bird's eye view of the organization of the entire thesis.

Chapter 2 bears a title "*Review of Literature*", which is self explanatory of its contents. It introduces the importance of survey of literature in a research exercise, presents a review on the evolution of human security studies, reviews the literature on the conceptualizations of the concept of human security, literature on the Mizo society-its history and social, economic and political structures and organizations, etc, and finally the literature on bamboo flowering and human security/insecurity issues with a particular focus on Northeast India and Mizoram. Finally, the chapter unfolds the research gaps and justifies the necessity of the present research.

Chapter 3 is given the title "*Political Ecology of Human Security*". This chapter has begun with a brief introduction of the notion of human security, explained the link between the human and ecological systems and sciences, described the nature and character of political ecology as an academic discipline and as a perspective in social sciences, and, finally developed and explained a synthetic framework of human security studies in relation to the natural ecological processes by linking and synthesizing the knowledge of the social and ecological systems from a political ecological perspective.

In Chapter 4 entitled '*Bamboo Flowering and Human (In) Security: An Historical Survey*', we have begun with a discussion on the various bamboo species available in Mizoram, percentage of forest cover of bamboo, and the flowering habits of major species of bamboo in Mizoram. In the next section of the Chapter, we have presented a detailed discussion on the history

of bamboo flowering in Mizoram, beginning from the pre-colonial period to today. The chapter has discussed the various waves of bamboo flowering, resultant increase in rodent population, and the consequent famines, starvations and deaths, and migration. It has also analyzed the various responses to such insecurities as results of bamboo flowering from the people, from state agencies, and other institutional responses.

Chapter 5 bears a title '*Mizoram: The Politics of Bamboo Flowering*'. The chapter has two broad sections: first, *Bamboo Flowering: Contextualizing the Political*, and second, *Politicking Bamboo Flowering in Mizoram*. The first section of the chapter highlights that the sufferings of the Mizos due to famine were far reaching and unbearable and they often created and provided socio-political structures for political opportunities. Various subsections of the chapter here have delineated the spaces created by the human insecurity owing to bamboo flowering, wherein power struggles could take place. The chapter reveals that such spaces and structures facilitating political opportunity and struggle for power could be discerned at different stages of Mizo history from the pre-British period to the present. The second part of the chapter reveals the processes of struggle for power unto such spaces through history. This section highlights as to how bamboo flowering could be politicized and so the insecurities flowing from it. The section evidences the use of bamboo flowering as a site of political contestation at the local, regional and national arenas.

Chapter 6 is entitled '*Security, State and Politics: Beyond the Limits*'. Based on the MSSD research design, the chapter has a two-pronged approach to security: first, how the human security is ensured under similar circumstances of similar insecurities in

other political systems in the neighbourhood has been explored, and the possibility of the replication of such security models in the context of Northeast India in general and in Mizoram in particular is interrogated. Secondly, from the point of view of national security, the peoples' possible trans-border movements in search of immediate solutions to such insecurities, is contextualized keeping in view the fragility and sensitivity of the region in terms of national security.

7.3. Major Findings

The objective of the study as proposed in the title was to explore the relationship between bamboo flowering and human security. The study was designed to explore whether the natural process like bamboo flowering impacted human security, and, under such circumstances, to evaluate the role of the state in providing security to its people. The study reveals the following findings:

7.3.1 The relationship between bamboo flowering and human security

The study revealed a positive relationship between bamboo flowering and human insecurities. In such instances of human insecurity in the form of famines, starvations and deaths as a result of bamboo flowering could be had throughout Mizo history – from the pre-British period (section 4.3.1) to the British period (section 4.3.2) and the post independent period (sections 4.3.3 and 4.3.4) till today. Hence, the Mizo history remains a testimony to the human insecurity produced by natural process like the cyclical bamboo flowering (Hypothesis 1; research question 1) although in varying degrees in different points of history.

7.3.2 Failure of the State to Address Human Insecurities

It is interesting to note that there has been cycles of bamboo flowering and cycles of state intervention to curb the adverse impact of bamboo flowering on human security. The objective of the state has remained primarily to control and rule rather than to promote security and welfare measures to its people. Hence, the state responses have been more tentative and short term than a committed response to solve the issue amicably. This is evident both with the colonial state (section 5.2.1 and 5.2.2) as well as in the post independent period (sections 5.2.3 and 5.2.4). It is precisely because of this that every cycle of bamboo flowering is nightmarish for the people with the state expressing its inability to curb the menace. The state unpreparedness and the continuity of the threat of bamboo flowering implies that the state has failed to address the insecurities arising out of the natural process of bamboo flowering (hypothesis 2; research question 2), with the existing pattern of policies and programmes adopted by the state to this end.

7.3.3. State failure to address insecurities has led to anti-statist feelings.

Political obligation is conditioned by the ability of the state to provide the primary goods (basic necessities) like security and liberty. Hence, it is obvious that the failure of the state to deliver is likely to invite anti-statist feelings and resistance against the state. The state failures to address the issues of insecurity arising out of bamboo flowering has led to the emergence of

radical revolutionary groups like the Mizo National Front (MNF under Laldenga), which waged a war for the right of self determination of the Mizo nation (section 5.2.3). however, despite the creation of the state of Mizoram, the problem still remains unresolved with politicking on bamboo flowering being practiced at various levels from local to the national (section 5.3.3A, 5.3.3B and 5.3.3C). The contention still remains that the Union Government has failed to provide adequate funds to address the problem, thereby fostering a sense of alienation from the Indian state (hypothesis 3). However, the insurgency under MNF led by Laldenga against the Indian state too did not yield positive results seen from ecological perspective. Instead, the long drawn insurgency led to ecological/environmental damages because of the insurgent group's involvement in illegal trade of timber and other wild life products to generate fund for insurgency, thereby multiplying negative ecological impacts and threat to livelihood resources of the people.

7.3.4 Other findings and a concluding note

The magnitude of the famine and the associated hardships and insecurities has often been underplayed by the administrative apparatus of the state. The initiation of combat mechanisms and the relief measures, however, to some extent amplify some general aspects of the crisis and they too are rooted in the North-eastern feature of politics for central resources. When ecological or environmental issues are so constructed and appropriate control measures suggested involving a radical transformation of traditional cropping pattern hardly ever its destabilizing impact upon traditional Mizo lifestyle considered. Mizoram, being a deficit state from the point of view of income tax collection, has to depend on the central assistance for meeting the

developmental needs. It, with largely underdeveloped civil societies, which too are dependent on central government and foreign assistance, their accountability and effectiveness, can always be doubted. These types of issues actually require an in-depth study of social structures and processes that regulate power dynamics. However, quite often than not the ecological and political dynamics may parallelly and simultaneously impact on human security in their mutual interactions.

The role of the state (see research question 1) particularly in case of Mizoram has been varying depending on the nature of structure of the government at large. For example the attitude of the state as discussed in 5.2.2 and 5.3.2 has shown differences as regard to seriousness and carelessness on the part of the state in different stages of history. We have found that the helping hands of the Britishers during the colonial rule were heartily welcomed by the Mizos that had facilitated the expansion of Christian Missionaries on the one hand and expansion of the colonial administration on the other. However, later following the post independent period the attitude of the Assam state government was found to be improper by the Mizo people at large. The careless approach of the Assam government was responded with the anti-state feeling by the Mizo national Famine front initially and Mizo National Front at the later stages which stood for independent statehood for Mizoram. However, at stages the famines following the bamboo flowering has found to be more artificially created than natural or ecological. This has been understood as the politics of grants-in-aid from the Union Government of India and as a deliberate politicking for fund (see research question 3) generation at different levels. Apart from the government, the non-governmental organisations both national and international have diverted huge funds for the so called

famine stricken people (sections 5.3.3A, 5.3.3B, 5.3.3C, 5.4 and 5.5) but their utilization and appropriateness have always remained unclear and questionable.

Although, the nature of the political arrangements under the federal scheme is usually blamed for the inability of the state of Mizoram (research question 4) to effectively manage the problems arising out of bamboo flowering. A closer analysis reveals that the entire north-eastern region in general and for this matter the state of Mizoram in particular suffer from 'dependency trap syndrome' because of the existence and perpetuation of 'dole-led development' process through the pumping of funds by the central government. The mechanism of distribution of grants-in-aid to the units of the Indian Union, special status given to the north-eastern states on the one hand and the black lash of the idea of 'mainstreaming' developing in it a sense of being alienated and marginalized, have all contributed towards active construction of failure on the part of the Indian Union to deliver. Therefore, politically, the present arrangements have been largely responsible for state failures in mitigating the problem, although constructed politically.

As regards the alternative methods of amicable solution to the crisis (research question 5), the study may encourage a mood of pessimism. But our comparative evidence from countries like Myanmar surely makes us less pessimistic. As in the case of Myanmar, the political regime under the military dictatorship have coupled the magnitude of the instances pertaining to human insecurities by not providing the state assistance on the one hand and not encouraging the international donor organizations and NGOs on the other. On a different note evidence from other countries, shows the deficiencies of state

sponsored control measures in Mizoram. Although, our analysis of the MSSD and MDSD (taken as framework of reference) reveals that political system differing in nature from that of India historically (European countries, Australia) have strong and effective policy and programme frameworks to address the menace of bamboo flowering and rodent ecology. However, the political systems in south-east Asia, some of which have similar colonial history, too have designed effective policies to combat such disasters. This is a pointer to the fact that it is the nature of political arrangements in India vis-à-vis its northeastern region that has contributed to the perpetuation of continuous unpreparedness and failure to address the issue. India's flexible democratic practices and institutions are accommodative enough to accommodate a synthesis of problem solution framework of both MSSD and MDSD, which if implemented, would probably free her from this ecologically and politically constructed crisis. Yet, the study concludes with a note of caution that such solution frameworks would be tenable only if the approach towards the northeast is revamped to transform the psyche of the region and free it from the 'dependency trap syndrome' in the development process.

If we focus on the extended domain of our study, beyond Mizoram and include the states affected by the incidence of bamboo flowering in general, we seem to find a corroboration of a pattern of the political ecology of human security. Indeed, ecological transformations, more specifically side of it, represent an important source of human insecurity where millions of people get affected. The countries that we studied reveal such involvement. Yet, this specific source of insecurity from bamboo flowering does not appear on the global agenda of ecological threats to be tackled globally. It appears that there exist political

divisions between more important and less important threats to human insecurity. Neglecting this kind of issues having high human impact but low economic or strategic significance for corporate sectors has a dangerous aspect. If neglecting the possible destruction of local communities of diverse life-worlds connected ecologically with unique bio-physical regions are seen together with the marginality that the issue of bamboo flowering has been reduced to, we have reasons to feel that not state but communities and their networks should be activated in tackling unacceptable changes to their environment, occupations and existence. We have been witnessing across countries popular activism on local environmental issues against techno-managerial developmental initiatives of different kinds. The hope lies there.