

REGIONAL POLITICS IN NORTH EAST INDIA: A STUDY ON THE ELECTORAL ALLIANCES IN MIZORAM

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Abstract

Elections become an essential aspect of the political process in Mizoram. With the insertion of formal political institutions by the British and the successive conduct of democratic elections, commencing with the first Lushai Hills District Council elections in 1952, the political consciousness of the people gradually increased along with the expansion and development of electoral politics in the hills. When the Mizo District was granted the status of Union Territory (UT) in 1972, the relevance of electoral politics became widely acknowledged. Regular elections to the Union Territory of Mizoram's Legislative Assembly were held every five years by adult franchise until Mizoram acquired full statehood in 1987. Mizoram has successfully held eight State Legislative Assembly elections so far. Although the state had witnessed the emergence and participation of regional political parties in the electoral process. This paper will analyze the electoral alliance in various State Legislative Assembly elections in Mizoram. It will also highlight the factors and decline of electoral alliances in various State Assembly elections in Mizoram.

Keywords: Election, Mizoram, Alliance, Votes

Introduction

Alliance or political alliances are generally recognized as political coalitions and may also be referred to as parties with the intention of competing in elections together and occasionally collaborating on a shared political agenda. Earlier in India, regional parties were unable to play significant roles in electoral politics in the centre as well as in the state due to the dominance of the Indian National Congress (INC) party. However, political alliances have played a determining role in the formation of governments since the dominant system of the INC was replaced by coalition politics. The rise of regional parties has posed the most powerful challenge to India's 'One Party Dominant System.' Since 1967, regional parties have gained greater political appeal and have exerted significant influence in state politics. India's being the world's largest democracy, has an important element of the multi-party system, which is recognized both at the national and regional (state) level of politics. Since a single political party could not always assemble a clear-cut majority in the Legislative Assembly, the parties were forced to seek the support and cooperation of other parties in order to form a government. It is common for political parties to form coalitions before elections in order to develop a common platform to run for office.

With the signing of the Memorandum of Settlement on 30th June, 1986, the MNF Party's fight for "Greater Independence Mizoram" came to an end. At the same time, the Indian National Congress (INC) and MNF proposed a political agreement for the formation of the interim government in Mizoram. As per the agreement, Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) leader and Chief

Minister of Mizoram Lalthanhawla relinquished his position to MNF President Laldenga. Lalthanhawla, on the other hand, accepted the post of Deputy Chief Minister (Hermana, 1999, p.101). The INC and MNF parties came together to form the first coalition government in Mizoram.

After six months in office, Laldenga's coalition government was dissolved. The main concern of this interim government was the rehabilitation of MNF returnees. The date for a fresh election was fixed by the Election Commission of India (ECI) on 16th February, 1987. The 53rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1986 was passed by the Parliament of India on 14th August, 1986. Mizoram was constituted as the 23rd State of the Indian Union under this Act, with particular safeguards and provisions under Article 371(G) of the constitution of India. The number of Legislative Assembly seats was also increased from 30 to a total of 40 seats. On 20th February, 1987, India's Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi declared Mizoram a full-fledged state at A.R. Ground, Aizawl. The first Mizoram State Legislative Assembly election took place on 16th February, 1987. With 24 seats and 36.62% of the total vote share, the MNF party comfortably formed the first Mizoram State government. Dissident activities within the MNF party swiftly led to the collapse of the government after Laldenga's ministry held power for nearly 18 months. This resulted in the dissolution of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly and the imposition of President's Rule in Mizoram.

Methodology

The present study aims to identify the role played by different political parties in the electoral process in Mizoram. The study also aimed to analyze the formation, evolution, and dissolution of electoral alliances in various State Legislative Assembly elections of Mizoram. The research work is based on inter-disciplinary approach. Both qualitative and quantitative methods are applied in the study. The study also uses both primary and secondary data. A portion of the research is conducted using primary sources, such as government records, documents and publications, political party pamphlets and leaflets, party documents, data collected from Election offices. Majority of the study relied on secondary sources. It was collected from books, newspapers, magazines, internet based web sources and related works from Mizoram State Library, Mizoram University Central Library, and Mizoram State Archives.

1. Indian National Congress (INC) and Mizo National Front (Democratic) Alliance, 1989

A mid-term election was held in Mizoram on 21st January, 1989, and for the first time in Mizoram's electoral history, a pre-poll alliance was formed between the INC and the MNF (Democratic). Out of 40 constituency seats, the INC nominated 34 candidates and left six seats open for its ally, the MNF (D). The election featured the candidacies of the Presidents of three major parties, namely Lalthanhawla (INC), Laldenga (MNF), and Brig. T. Sailo (PC), in two Assembly constituencies each. Following its electoral loss in 1987, the PC party attempted to appeal to the masses through its policy of Zo-reunification. Two new ethnic-based regional political parties, Hmar People's Convention (HPC) and Chakma Jatiya Parishad (CJP), as well as the Mizo National Union (MNU),

entered the electoral fray. With the exception of the MNF and the PC Party, all other regional parties were not acknowledged as state parties, resulting in their candidates being recognized as independents.

Table 1: List of Elected Candidates from INC-MNF (D) Alliance, 1989

<i>Sl.No</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Constituency</i>
1.	Lalthanhawla	INC	Serchhip
2.	P.C. Zoramsangliana	INC	Tlungvel
3.	C.L. Ruala	INC	N. Vanlaiphai
4.	Vanlalngena	INC	Suangpuilawn
5.	Vaivenga	INC	Kawnpui
6.	Zalawma	INC	Bilkhawthlir
7.	Saikapthianga	INC	Kawrthah
8.	Lalhuthanga	INC	Mamit
9.	Liansuama	INC	Phuldungsei
10.	P.C. Bawitluanga	INC	Lungpho
11.	Rosangliana	INC	Aizawl North I
12.	Dr. H. Thansanga	INC	Aizawl North II
13.	J. Lalsangzuala	INC	Aizawl East I
14.	Rokamlova	INC	Aizawl East II
15.	Vanlalnghaka	INC	Hnahthial
16.	Hiphei	INC	Tuipang
17.	S. Hiato	INC	Saiha
18.	F. Manghnuna	INC	Lawngtlai
19.	P. Lalbiaka	INC	Buarpui
20.	Nirupam Chakma	INC	Chawngte
21.	Hari Kristo Chakma	INC	Tlabung
22.	Lalthanhawla	INC	Lokicherra
23.	P. Siamliana	MNF(D)	Tawipui
24.	Andrew Lalherliana	MNF(D)	Saitual

Source: Statistical Report on General Election to the State Legislative Assembly of Mizoram, 1989. Election Commission of India.

The INC swept the polls by winning 23 seats, and its allied MNF (D) won two seats for a total of 39.95% vote share. The President of the Indian National Congress (INC), Lalthanhawla emerged victorious in the Serchhip and Lokicherra constituencies. However, despite his leaving Lokicherra constituency, a bye-election was not conducted due to legal intervention. The INC-MNF (D) alliance has a total of 23 MLAs in the State Assembly. With Lalthanhawla as Chief Minister and

five Cabinet Ministers and five Ministers of State, the INC and MNF (D) form the coalition government. The Minister of State portfolio was assigned to P. Siamliana, who is one of the elected candidates for MNF (D). Unfortunately, a bye-election was held in two constituencies following the deaths of two MNF MLAs, Laldenga in Aizawl South II and J. Thanghuama in Aizawl West I. The Indian National Congress (INC) secured both vacant seats in the bye-election, thereby consolidating the INC-MNF (D) alliance with a total of 25 members in the State Legislative Assembly.

2. Indian National Congress (INC) and Mizoram Janata Dal (MJD) Alliance, 1993

The third Mizoram State Legislative Assembly election, 1993, was scheduled on 30th November, 1993. The election was originally scheduled for January 1994, but it was rescheduled owing to Mizoram's Gospel Centenary Celebration. The 1993 Assembly election saw the least number of political party's participation. Three political parties have entered the electoral fray, including national parties INC and BJP and regional state parties MNF. Following Laldenga's tragic demise on 7th July, 1990, his successor, Zoramthanga, led the MNF party in this election.

The 1993 State Assembly election witnessed a pre-poll alliance of INC (I) and Mizoram Janata Dal (MJD). Prior to forming an alliance with INC, MJD formed an alliance with the MNF. However, the alliance was terminated shortly before the elections. The MNF-MJD partner got into trouble mostly due to the question of leadership in case the alliance holds power after the poll (Zoram Express, 1993). On the other hand, INC and MJD reached an agreement to file a common candidate in 24 constituencies, leaving 16 constituencies open for electoral battle. All of the MJD candidates, however, contested as independents since the party was not officially registered party. In this election, MNF contested 38 seats, and for the first time BJP contested eight candidates.

The final tally of the election came out with INC winning 16 seats and its electoral partner, MJD secured 8 seats (Hermana, 1999, p.122). The two parties came together to form the United Legislature Party (ULP), with Lathanhawla (INC) nominated as Leader and Lalhmingthanga (MJD) as Deputy Leader. On 8th December, 1993, a new coalition ministry was sworn in with Lalthanhawla becoming the Chief Minister, and Saikapthianga, C. L. Ruala, J. Lalsangzuala, Liansuama, P.C. Bawitluanga, all Indian National Congress (INC), Zosiama Pachuau, Lalhmingthanga, C. Chawngkungsa, all MJD becoming Cabinet Ministers.

Meanwhile, P. Lalbiaka, P.C. Zoramsangliana, S.T. Rualyapa, Nirupam Chakma, all from INC and C. Vulluaia, H. Thangkima, both from MJD, were appointed as Ministers of State. Two elected Independent MLAs, H. Zathuama and K.T. Rokhaw, who had previously allied with the MNF, joined the ULP government. Also, five of the 14 MNF MLAs from Lunglei and Chhimtuipui Districts defected from the party and joined INC, and thus the strength of the coalition ministry went up to 31 MLAs.

Table 2: List of Elected Candidates from INC-MJD Alliance, 1993

<i>Sl.No</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Constituency</i>
1.	Lalthanhawla	INC	Serchhip
2.	Lalhuthanga	INC	Mamit
3.	Johna Rotluangliana	INC	Lokicherra
4.	Liansuama	INC	Phuldungsei
5.	Vaivenga	INC	Bilkhawthlir
6.	Saikapthianga	INC	Kawrthah
7.	Hari Kristo Chakma	INC	Tlabung
8.	C. L. Ruala	INC	N. Vanlaiphai
9.	Nirupam Chakma	INC	Chawngte
10.	S. T. Rualyapa	INC	Sangau
11.	P. Lalbiaka	INC	Buarpui
12.	P.C. Zoramsangliana	INC	Tlungvel
13.	J. Lalsangzuala	INC	Aizawl East-I
14.	P.C. Bawitluanga	INC	Lungpho
15.	R.L. Valla	INC	Kawnpui
16.	Lalbiakzuala	INC	Khawhai
17.	Lalhmingthanga	Ind. (MJD)	Aizawl North I
18.	C. Vulluaia	Ind. (MJD)	Khawzawl
19.	Zosiana Pachuau	Ind. (MJD)	Kolasib
20.	Dr. J. V. Hluna	Ind. (MJD)	Aizawl West I
21.	F. Lawmkima	Ind. (MJD)	Suangpuilawn
22.	C. Chawngkunga	Ind. (MJD)	Saitual
23.	Hrangthanga Colney	Ind. (MJD)	Khawbung
24.	H. Thangkima	Ind. (MJD)	Vanva

Source: Statistical Report on General Election to the State Legislative Assembly of Mizoram, 1993. Election Commission of India.

After five months of the new coalition government being in place, Lalhmingthanga, the Minister of Finance, and H. Thangkima, Minister of State, were dropped from the ministry. C.

Chawngkunga and Zosiama Pachuau, the other two MJD ministers, joined the INC and firmly entrenched themselves in the ministry. Later, the remaining three MJD Ministers of State, C.Vulluaia, Hrangthanga Colney, and F. Lawmkima, were also discharged from the ministry. Despite numerous difficulties, the ministry remained in power for a full five years.

The main feature of this short-lived coalition experiment was dissimilar parties assembled together to exercise political power. Their electoral alliance was not based on any set principles. The only binding factor among the two parties was a desire for the governance of Mizoram without any programmatic or policy consensus. They lacked homogeneity due to the opportunistic alliance struck between desperate and ideologically heterogeneous parties. There was lack of clarity on two points. Firstly, they were based purely on the ambition to stay in power but did not have common programmes and policies as their foundation. Secondly, the alliance did not think of evolving any mechanism for the effective coordination and monitoring of the government.

3. Citizen Common Front (CCF) (1998), Mizo National Front and Mizoram People's Conference Alliance, 1998

The 1998 Mizoram State Legislative Assembly election witnessed participation of the largest number of political parties in electoral fray for 40 seats in the state's political history. The number of national political parties contesting the election also expanded significantly. Meanwhile, the original People's Conference of Brig. T. Sailo was renamed Mizoram People's Conference (MPC) from Mizoram Janata Dal (MJD). The MPC and Citizens' Common Front (CCF), a group formed by a conglomeration of church leaders, senior citizens, and non-governmental organizations, formed a successful alliance in the 1998 Parliamentary Lok Sabha election with their common candidate, Dr. Lallungmuana, who won the election against rival INC candidate by only a margin of 40 votes, which many experts attributed to the anti-incumbent surge against the INC. However, due to fundamental differences in party policies, the alliance split before the 1998 State Legislative Assembly election (Zo Ni Eng, 1998).

The contesting political parties in the election fray were MNF, MPC, Mizo National Front (Nationalist) as MNF (N) / Citizen Common Front (CCF), Maraland Democratic Front (MDF), Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), Lok Shakti, Janata Dal (JD), Samata Party, BJP and INC along with several independents candidate. As Brig. T. Sailo's party, MPC, spilt its partnership with CCF, there was a pre-poll alliance between the MNF and MPC in the election. The MNF's fraction group, MNF (Nationalist) and CCF collaboration, was the third force in this election. Despite the presence of a large number of political parties and independent candidates, the real electoral struggle was between the INC, the MNF-MPC alliance, and the coalition of MNF (N) and CCF.

During the election campaign, INC and MNF-MPC emphasized granting more privileges to women generally. None of these political parties, however, fielded a single female candidate in the poll. The Indian National Congress (INC) stressed the importance of boosting rural development in the state. In addition to addressing Mizoram's escalating unemployment rate, the party pledged to enhance the status of women by granting them special privileges. The MNF-MPC alliance pledged a clean, transparent, and corruption-free government if they were able to form the

government. The MNF (N) and CCF campaigned with religious overtones throughout the state. They highlighted the importance of establishing a new Mizoram which should be free from corruption and would continue to push forward with these concepts. The 1998 election was among the most peaceful elections ever held in Mizoram. The church and social organizations such as YMA were responsible for such a tranquil and pleasant atmosphere.

On 25th November, 1998, ballots were casted in the forty constituencies. The MNF party won 21 seats in the election, while its alliance partner, the MPC, won 11. They secured a total of 32 seats. The CCF was unable to capture even a single seat in the election. The MNF, which had lost power to the INC for two consecutive terms, regained its strength and popularity under the leadership of Zoramthanga, who succeeded Laldenga in 1990. The INC party, which had ruled Mizoram continuously for nearly a decade since the 1989 election, lost severely in the election, captured only six seats. They suffered a humiliating loss at the hands of the MNF-MPC alliance. The MNF (Nationalist) Party, including its President, Lalduhawma, failed to capture any seats. The new MNF-MPC coalition ministry was sworn in on 3rd December, 1998, with Zoramthanga, MNF President, as Chief Minister of Mizoram and Lalhmingthanga, Working President of MPC, as Deputy Chief Minister. Ten of the fifteen ministers belonged to the MNF, and five to the MPC. MNF has eight Cabinet Ministers. Only three Ministers with cabinet rank were assigned to the MPC. Thus, the Zoramthanga ministry had a total of four Ministers of State and 11 Cabinet Ministers.

The seat vacated by MNF leader Zoramthanga prompted a bye-election in the Khawbung constituency. He was elected on MNF tickets in the assembly constituencies of Khawbung and Champhai. He vacated the Khawbung constituency for a bye-election, which was won by MNF candidate K. Vanlalaiva.

Table 3: List of Elected Candidates from MNF-MPC Alliance, 1998

<i>Sl.No</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Constituency</i>
1.	Dr. Lalzama	MNF	Aizawl North-I
2.	F. Malsawma	MNF	Aizawl North-II
3.	R. Tlanghmingthanga	MNF	Aizawl South-I
4.	C. Sangzuala	MNF	Aizawl South-II
5.	Lalrinchhana	MNF	Aizawl West-II
6.	H. Vanlalaiva	MNF	Aizawl East-II
7.	Zoramthanga	MNF	Khawbung
8.	Zoramthanga	MNF	Champhai
9.	Aichhinga	MNF	Khawzawl
10.	Lalthankunga	MNF	Ratu
11.	Sanghmingthanga H. Pautu	MNF	Kawnpui
12.	Rualchhina	MNF	Kolasib
13.	Z.H. Ropuia	MNF	Tawipui
14.	R. Lalawia	MNF	North Vanlaiphai

15.	C. Lalrinsanga	MNF	Vanva
16.	Dr. R. Lalthangliana	MNF	Lunglei North
17.	K. Sangthuama	MNF	Kawrthah
18.	K. Thangzuala	MNF	Serchhip
19.	B. Lalthlengliana	MNF	Sateek
20.	Lalchamlia	MNF	Bilkhawthlir
21.	Tawnluia	MNF	Lokicherra
22.	Lalhmingthanga	MPC	Aizawl East-I
23.	Col. Lalchungnunga Sailo	MPC	Aizawl West-I
24.	J. Lalthangliana	MPC	Phuldungsei
25.	L.N. Tluanga	MPC	Tlungvel
26.	Brig. Thenphunga Sailo	MPC	Mamit
27.	Vanlalhlana	MPC	Lungpho
28.	J. Lawmzuala	MPC	Lunglei South
29.	K.L. Lianchia	MPC	Khawhai
30.	P.B. Rosanga	MPC	Ngopa
31.	F. Lalthanzuala	MPC	Hnahthial
32.	Lalrinzuala	MPC	Buarpui

Source: Statistical Report on General Election to the State Legislative Assembly of Mizoram, 1993. Election Commission of India.

The MNF-MPC coalition was therefore short-lived as the MPC withdrew from the government after one year and six days. The fact that MPC and the INC intended to work together in the Village Council election that was set for the 16th of December, 1999, was the primary factor that led to the collapse of the two parties' coalition government. Since the MNF party had a desire majority on its own, the sole MNF ministry was formed under the Chief Ministership of Zoramthanga on 10th December, 1999, and completed the normal five year term (Lalnithanga, 2005). The alliance of MNF-MPC did not depend on any particular ideologies or policy matters. They formed electoral alliance solely to end the decade-long reign of the INC government, which began from the State Assembly elections of 1989. For that reason, if some little renegade in the coalition occurred, the two sides were eager to break the alliance.

4. United Democratic Alliance (UDA), 2003

The 2003 Mizoram State Assembly election saw a three-cornered contest from three angles. The two regional state parties, namely, the Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP), Mizoram People's Conference (MPC) and Maraland Democratic Front (MDF) formed an alliance known as United Democratic Alliance (UDA) to fight the two major parties in the state, the MNF and INC. There were ten political parties in the electoral fray, three of them were national parties, while the rest were regional parties. With a total of 31.38% of votes polled, the UDA was able to capture only six seats. The ZNP won two seats, MPC won three seats and MDF secured only one seat.

After the election, MDF leader P.P. Thawla, who was elected from the Tuipang constituency, joined the MNF ministry and was sworn in on 15th December 2003 as Minister of State in charge of two departments. This enraged opposition parties, particularly MDF alliance partners MPC and ZNP. Therefore, the coordination committee of three opposition parties, Indian National Congress (INC), ZNP and MPC issued a joint statement condemning P.P. Thawla's actions. They urged him to withdraw his support for the MNF ministry, but their efforts had no impact. Even another MPC representative, F. Lalthanzuala from the Hnahthial constituency, joined the MNF ministry. After joining the MNF ministry, he was appointed Vice Chairman of the State Planning Board, a rank of Cabinet Minister. As a result of his actions, he left the MPC party and formed the Progressive MPC.

Table 4: List of Elected Candidates from United Democratic Alliance (UDA), 2003

<i>Sl. No</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Constituency</i>
1.	PP Thawla	MDF	Tuipang
2.	Andrew Lalherliana	ZNP	Khawzawl
3.	Lalduhawma	ZNP	Ratu
4.	Sailothanga Sailo	MPC	Kawnpui
5.	Lalhmingthanga	MPC	Lunglei South
6.	F. Lalthanzuala	MPC	Hnahthial

Source: Statistical Report on General Election to the State Legislative Assembly of Mizoram, 2003. Election Commission of India.

5. United Democratic Alliance (UDA), 2008

The MNF ministry in the fifth legislative assembly, which was elected in 2003 Mizoram State Legislative Assembly election, served its full five year term. It was the second consecutive term for the ruling MNF since 1998. In the 2008 Mizoram State Legislative Assembly election, eleven political parties competed such as MNF, MPC, ZNP, BJP, INC, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), Janata Dal (United) whereas Lok Jan Shakti Party, Lok Bharati, and Maraland Democratic Front (MDF) were the remaining four registered unrecognized parties. The distinctive aspect of the 2008 election was the Mizoram People Forum's (MPF) efforts to reform politics and electioneering. To ensure free and fair elections, all political parties, including independent candidates, have strictly adhered to the appeals of the MPF.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) scheduled 29th November, 2008 as the date for the sixth State Assembly elections in Mizoram. However, in response to a complaint from Sabbath Christians in the state as the polling dates fell on Saturday, which was also backed up by various political parties in the state; the ECI later rescheduled the date of the election to 2nd December, 2008. Election preparations with the political parties were in full swing following the announcement of the poll dates. Thus, a pre-poll alliance known as United Democratic Alliance (UDA) was formed, consisting of three constituent partners: MPC, ZNP, and a farmer forum,

Zoram Kuthnathawktu Pawl (ZKP). The UDA signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on 26th August, 2008, in the presence of its members at Vanapa Hall. At this joint public meeting, President of ZNP, Lalduhawma, criticized the two main parties in the state, MNF and INC, for not achieving people's expectations in developing the state. Brig. T. Sailo, an 86-year-old former Chief Minister of Mizoram and President of the MPC party, also condemned the two parties for failing to continue developmental work done by their parties when in power. Thanbanglova, President of the ZKP, attacked the state government for ignoring farmers' demands and neglecting to ensure a market for the crops they were instructed to plant. The UDA also pledged the public that their type of government would be a people's government (The Aizawl Post, 2008).

The UDA announced its candidates on 4th November, 2008. In accordance with the poll agreement on seat allocation, two of the 34 seats that the UDA has contested are reserved for ZKP. Even though it was not a political party, the ZKP, a platform of farmers' groups, was regarded as the backbone of UDA. ZKP candidates filed as independent candidates, while the remaining 32 seats were allocated between the MPC and ZNP. The ZNP fielded candidates in 17 seats, while the MPC fielded candidates in 15 seats. Brig. T. Sailo contested in Aizawl West-I, while ZNP chief and former IPS officer Lalduhoma was contesting in two seats in Aizawl West-I and Tuivawl constituency. If the UDA won elected, T. Sailo was expected to serve as Chief Minister, with Lalduhoma as Deputy Chief Minister. The main contenders in the 2008 State Assembly election were the incumbent MNF party, the INC, and the United Democratic Alliance (UDA).

The 2008 State Legislatives Assembly elections witnessed a high voter's turnout of 80.02 percent. The Indian National Congress (INC) has won an absolute majority, with 38.89 percent of the total vote polled and able to secure 32 seats in the 40-member assembly. Although the MNF obtained 21 seats in the previous election, it only managed to capture three seats in the 2008 election for the state assembly. With a total vote share of 20.6 percent, the UDA won four seats, MPC and ZNP each won two, and MDF took a single seat. The victory of the INC party in the 2008 elections was credited to the implementation of the New Land Use Policy (NLUP). The policy claimed to provide financial and material assistance to unemployed people who lack funds to start their own business profession. Beneficiaries were promised to be assisted with direct cash to enable them to start their own businesses. The UDA had great hopes to form the government but ended up with poor performance because voters prefers to vote for a single political party that could give them a stable government, rather than a minor party or pre-poll alliances whose chances of victory were uncertain.

Table 5: List of Elected Candidates from United Democratic Alliance (UDA), 2008

<i>Sl.No</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Constituency</i>
1.	Lalduhawma	ZNP	Aizawl West-I
2.	K. Liantlinga	ZNP	Aizawl South- I

3.	Brig. Thengphunga Sailo	MPC	Aizawl West-II
4.	Lalthansanga	MPC	Hrangturzo

Source: Statistical Report on General Election to the State Legislative Assembly of Mizoram, 2008. Election Commission of India.

6. Mizoram Democratic Alliance (MDA), 2013

The election for the 2013 Mizoram State Legislative Assembly was scheduled for 4th December, 2013 in a single phase, with the counting date set for 8th December. The churches, civil societies, and political parties requested to change the date since the scheduled polling date coincides with the Synod, the Presbyterian Church's highest decision-making assembly which was scheduled to be held from 3rd- 8th December, 2013. The annual General Conference of the United Pentecostal Church, Mizoram (UPC Mizoram) was also scheduled to be held at the same time frame. Since the polling date clashed with these two events, thousands of people, including pastors and deacons, would not be able to cast their vote. They also demanded a change for the counting date, as 8th December was on a Sunday, a holy day for Christians. They also wanted the counting date to be altered to any day besides Sundays and Saturdays. The reason being Saturday is also a sacred day for several churches, such as the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The Election Commission of India on 23rd October changed the 40-member Mizoram assembly election schedule by rescheduling the polls on 25th November and postponing the counting day to 9th December. The State Legislative Assembly election was contested by major state parties, namely MNF, MPC, and ZNP; three national parties such as BJP, INC, and NCP; two registered (unrecognized) parties, Maraland Democratic Front (MDF) and Jai Maha Bharat Party (JMBP); and a few independent candidates. In this election, the main opposition party in the state, MNF, and its ally, the MDF, tried to form a pre-poll alliance with another regional political party, MPC. The three parties signed a formal pre-poll alliance agreement in the MNF General Headquarters office on 18th October 2013. The three party pre-poll alliances were termed Mizoram Democratic Alliance (MDA). The alliance was formed on the basis of seat sharing. As per the agreement, MNF was given 31 seats to contest, leaving eight seats for MPC and one seat for the MDF contesting in Palak constituency. Despite the presence of other parties in the state, the stage was set for a triangular fight between the three forces: the ruling Congress, the three-party coalition MDA, and the ZNP.

The MDA attempts to use the spirit of Zo-Nationalism as a means of influencing the populace, as can be seen from its common manifesto. Starting with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on 13th September, 2007, the three-parties manifesto pledges to make every effort to bring Zo reunification with different governance under one umbrella (Vanglaini, 2013). The declarations of the manifesto and its newfound cooperation conjure memories not only of 1966, when the Mizo uprising for an independent homeland, but also of the historic 1998 assembly elections, when the two parties collaborated to win 32 of 40 seats and ended a decade of INC government. Furthermore, MNF senior vice-president Tawnluia stated his belief that good

governance, transparency, and the protection of Christian religion would be the MDA's top priorities if they were in power. On top of that, MNF president Zoramthanga urged the people to vote for the MDA. He promised that if the alliance comes to power, the new government would transfer the Assam Rifles from the heart of Aizawl city and use the land for public interests. He also assured that if in power, the new government would also empower the Youth Commission, strengthen Mizoram Health Care Scheme, make Aizawl a traffic jam-free city, and implement the six basic needs of the MPC party.

The MDA was feeling hopeful about forming a new government after the elections went smoothly. However, the results came out with the incumbent INC party regaining power in the election on the strength of its economic program, NLUP. The electorates also expressed satisfaction with the ruling party's performance by returning INC to power for a second term. It received 44.63 percent of the total vote share and won 34 seats. The 2013 State Assembly election saw a historic voter turnout of 83.41 percent. Only six seats were occupied by the MDA with a total vote polled of 35.75 percent. The MNF, the strongest opposition party, retained five seats, while the MPC only secured one seat. The MDF failed in its attempt to win the lone seat it contested for in the Palak constituency. In five of the eight districts in the state, MNF did not capture any seats while it managed to secured three seats in Aizawl District and one seat in each of the Serchhip and Saiha districts. The MPC party only won one seat in Aizawl districts and nil in other seven districts. In the East Tuipui constituency, the two-time Chief Minister and MNF President, Zoramthanga, was defeated by a newcomer, INC candidate T. Sangkunga. MNF allied partner MPC party President, Lalhmangaiha Sailo, also suffered a heavy defeat in the poll.

Table 6: List of Elected Candidates from Mizoram Democratic Alliance (MDA), 2013

<i>Sl.No</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Constituency</i>
1.	K. Sangthuama	MNF	Aizawl West- I
2.	Lalruatkima	MNF	Aizawl West-II
3.	Vanlalzawma	MNF	Aizawl West-III
4.	Er. Lalrinawma	MNF	Tuikum
5.	Dr. K. Beichhua	MNF	Saiha
6.	Lalthanliana	MPC	Aizawl North-II

Source: Statistical Report on General Election to the State Legislative Assembly of Mizoram, 2013. Election Commission of India.

Several factors contributed to the failure of the MNF-MPC-MDF alliance. The result of the election was a resounding rejection of the Mizo Nationalism sought by the Mizoram Democratic Alliance (MDA). The MNF and its allies emphasized Mizo Nationalism as a significant electoral issue and accused the INC party of supporting Indian Nationalism. It can be argued that Mizo Nationalism polarized minority non-Mizo communities in Mizoram, like Brus and Chakma. Moreover, the MNF-MPC alliance caused conflict among party members regarding the allocation

of seats between the two parties. Both parties have also promised an alternative to NLUP, but the feasibility of the scheme has not been widely publicized.

7. Zoram People's Movement (ZPM), 2018

The ECI announced the date of the eight Mizoram State Legislative Assembly elections on 6th October, 2018 along with Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Telangana. The assembly poll in Mizoram was scheduled in a single phase on 28th November, 2018 and the date of counting was set on 11th December. The Model Code of Conduct came into effect immediately after the ECI announced the poll dates. Since Mizoram became a state in 1987, the ruling INC party and the MNF have been the two main dominant political parties. The BJP seeks to emerge as a key player in the state's politics, despite the fact that none of its 17 candidates won in the last 2013 assembly elections in the state, with a total vote share of only 0.87 percent.

Pre-poll alliances were known in the various elections of Mizoram, but the attempt to form an alternate front did not yield significant results since most of the alliances could not sustained post-poll political scenarios. In the 2018 Mizoram State Assembly election, the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM), a pre-poll alliance of various regional political parties, formed a strong front by overtaking the INC party and emerged as the main opposition in the State Assembly. The first comprehensive and major groundwork for the unification of regional political parties came on 15th August, 2017. Three regional political parties—Mizoram People's Conference (MPC), Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP), and Zoram Exodus Movement (ZEM) agreed in principle to form an electoral alliance for the 2018 Mizoram Assembly elections without relinquishing their identities. On 1st September, 2017, the three regional political parties named its joint platform as the "Zoram People's Movement (ZPM)." It was later joint by Zoram Democratic Front (ZDF), Mizoram People's Party (MPP), Zoram Decentralization Front (ZDF) and Zoram Reformation Front (ZRF) (J. Zahluna, 2021).

ZPM has a unique party structure in comparison to other political parties in the state. It had a Steering Committee and Val Upa Council which comprised of party members chosen to guide and directs the fledgling political party in the right direction. The ZPM has been formed to provide a political alternative to the INC and the MNF in the state. The party's primary objective is to reform state politics as well as the electoral process by eliminating corruption, malpractices, and extravagant expenditure. Unlike the past pre-poll alliance in Mizoram election, ZPM candidates did not contest in the name of the political party to which they belonged in the 2018 State Assembly election. But since the ECI had not officially recognized the party as a registered party before the election, each of its candidates contested as an independent candidate with a common symbol Hat. The party's color is yellow, and its emblem and name are inscribed in the middle of the flag.

The MNF secured an absolute majority of 26 seats in the 2018 State Legislative Assembly election, marking its return to power after a decade. The INC party got five seats, while the BJP won only one. The ZPM won eight seats with a total vote share of 22.9 percent. The party became the second largest party in the State Legislative Assembly after MNF. Six of ZPM's seats were captured from the constituencies of Aizawl city. Without a doubt, the formation, expansion, and penetration of

the ZPM among the urban masses reflects their dissatisfaction with government policies. MNF unanimously put its party President, Zoramthanga, as Chief Minister. Lalthanhawla, a two-time Chief Minister and President of the Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC), lost both Serchhip and Champai South seats. In the latter seat, he lost to TJ Lalnuntulanga of the MNF, while in Serchhip, he was defeated by ZPM Chief Ministerial candidate Lalduhawma. Thus, the Mizoram assembly election battlefront shifted from Congress-MNF to MNF-ZPM.

Until the ZPM attempted to register as a political party in the ECI in the second half of September 2018, its members did not have full trust in the party. It can be assumed that church leaders with no political affiliation were known to back the selection of ZPM candidates at the grassroots level. Twelve of the 37 ZPM candidates were new to politics, and the majority of the candidates began their campaigns at the grassroots level two months before the election. Eleven of the candidates who lost the election had prior experience in electoral politics; five of them were first timer candidates in the constituencies where they were nominated and three of them lately began contact with voters. Even ZPM candidates who had been elected in the 2018 assembly election started their campaigns way too late. Of the eight elected MLAs from ZPM, four of them were first timer candidates in the State Legislative Assembly election (Vanlalremruata, 2021.p.29-30).

Table 7: List of Elected Candidates from Zoram People’s Movement (ZPM), 2018

<i>Sl.No</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Constituency</i>
1.	Vanlalthlana	Aizawl North-I
2.	Dr. Vanlalthlana	Aizawl North-II
3.	Lalduhawma	Aizawl West-I
4.	Lalduhawma	Serchhip
5.	C. Lalsawivunga	Aizawl South-I
6.	Lalchhuanthanga	Aizawl South-II
7.	V.L. Zaithanzama	Aizawl West-III
8.	Andrew H. Thangliana	Tuirial

Source: Statistical Report on General Election to the State Legislative Assembly of Mizoram, 2018. Election Commission of India.

A bye-election was held in Aizawl West-I due to the ZPM leader's decision to retain his Serchhip seat. The bye-election was won by MNF candidate Zothantluanga, who obtained 12,489 votes. Lalbuanga Sailo, an independent candidate who was supported by ZPM and INC, received 5322 votes. A bye-election was also held in Serchhip constituency on 17th April, 2021 after State Assembly Speaker Lalrinliana Sailo charged and disqualified Lalduhawma for "losing the character of an independent legislator." In the bypoll, ZPM official candidates and incumbent Lalduhawma won with 8269 votes. By over 3000 votes, he defeated his nearest rival, Vanlalzawma of the MNF. It is evident that many voters obviously felt sympathy towards Lalduhawma, due to baseless accusations made by the ruling party. In the Tuirial constituency, a bye-election was also held on 30th October, 2021, to replace the deceased ZPM allied independent MLA, Andrew H.

Thangliana. The election was won by K. Laldawngliana of the MNF, who obtained 39.96 percent of the total 14,593 votes polled. This result in the ruling MNF holding 28 seats in the 40-member assembly, while the Congress has five, and the ZPM and BJP hold one MLA each. And there are five independent MLAs affiliated with the ZPM.

The ECI officially registered the ZPM party as one of the political parties in Mizoram on 3rd July, 2019. Except for MPC, all the constituent units of ZPM disbanded their own parties and amalgamated into ZPM. The MPC party advocated that the new party should allow constituent units to retain their own distinct party identities. The MPC's leadership was sharply divided on the subject of a merger. Following the failure of the unity talks, the MPC party cut ties with the ZPM on 20th July, 2019. The greatest obstacle to the unifying campaign was the divisiveness of the party's top leaders. However, the ZPM remains one of the strongest political fronts in Mizoram. The Election Commission of India (ECI) has registered ZPM as a registered political party under section 29A of the Representative of People Act, 1951 on 3rd July, 2019. There is a possibility that the party would be able to compete with the major political parties in the state, i.e., MNF and INC, and attract voters if it inculcates its wave at the grass-roots level.

Conclusion

In the political scenarios of Mizoram, it has experienced elections since the Lushai Hills District Advisory Council of 1948. Following the first District Council election in 1952, the main political struggle has been between two dominant parties, such as the MU and UMFO. In the latter part of the District Council era and the beginning of the Union Territory (UT) era, the electoral battle shifted to MU and INC. Another alternative to that was the fight between the INC and PC party throughout the rest of the UT era. After statehood, the main contenders in the politics of Mizoram were MNF and INC. Electoral battle after statehood experienced quite a number of political alliances. Pre-poll alliance was mostly prevalent in the state and was formed by parties prior to election of the State Legislative Assembly in 1989, 1993, 1998, 2003, 2008, 2013, and 2018. However, it did not bring an alternate to the main battle between the two major parties in the state, INC and MNF. Surprisingly, the emergence of Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) in the 2018 Assembly election has challenged the status quo political paradigm of a fight between two dominant parties. ZPM provided an alternative front and became the main opposition party in the state.

In addition, the main feature of the various short-lived political alliances in Mizoram was that they were not based on any set of principles. Most of the political alliances were bound only by a desire for governance without any programmatic, policy or ideological consensus. The 1993 Mizoram State Legislative Assembly election first observed an MNF-MJD pre-poll alliance. However, the alliance ended shortly before the election. The MNF-MJD partner got into trouble primarily because of the issue of leadership in case the alliance won the election. As a result, the INC-MJD formed a pre-poll alliance to fight the election and secured 24 seats. However, after five months of coalition government, the alliance was dissolved due to discontent with the distributions of portfolio. In the 1998 State Assembly election, the MNF and MPC formed a pre-poll alliance,

which won the Assembly election with a majority of 33 seats in the 40-member assembly. But, the conflict between the two parties led to the dissolution of the coalition government in December, 1999. Since the MNF party alone won the maximum of 21 seats, party members were eager to form a full MNF ministry. A new ministry led by Zoramthanga was formed and completed its five-year term. The MNF-MPC electoral alliance was for the sole purpose of ending the decade-long reign of the INC government. Similarly, the 2008 MPC-ZNP-ZKP pre-poll alliance known as the United Democratic Alliance (UDA) and the 2013 MNF-MPC-MDF pre-poll alliance named as Mizoram Democratic Alliance (MDA) both fell short after losing in the State Assembly election. The political alliance in Mizoram lacked a substantive ideological or policy foundation. Therefore, in the event of any minor dissension within the coalition, the parties involved were inclined to dissolve the alliance.

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