



Mains Practice Question

Q. Discuss the factors giving rise to recurring internal security threats in Northeast India? (150 words)

10 May, 2023 GS Paper 3 Internal Security

Approach

- Start your answer with a brief introduction of challenges to internal security in Northeast India with reference to recent context.
- Discuss the factors contributing to these challenges.
- Conclude with way forward approach.

Introduction

Northeast India, comprising of eight states, has been grappling with internal security challenges for several decades. The region has witnessed a range of issues, including insurgency, ethnic conflicts, economic marginalization, and cross-border infiltration.

Recent events of **ethnic violence in Manipur between Kukis, Nagas and Meities** have once again brought the issue in light.

Body

In this context, the factors contributing to internal security challenges in Northeast India are discussed below.

- **Historical Factors:**
 - The region has been a melting pot of various tribes, kingdoms, and empires over the centuries. The **complex interplay of historical factors, such as colonization, border disputes, and demographic changes**, has contributed to internal security challenges in the region.
 - The **imposition of the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system by the British** has also led to ethnic tensions and conflicts.
- **Ethnic Diversity:**
 - The Northeast It is home to around 40 million people **including 213 of the 635 tribal groups listed by the Anthropological Survey of India**. These tribes have distinct culture and languages.
 - The ethnic diversity has led to the formation of numerous insurgent groups representing the interests of their respective communities. These groups have been **involved in armed struggle against the state, leading to violence, displacement, and human rights violations**.
 - For instance, **ULFA in Assam, NSCN in Nagaland** are few of the insurgent groups active in Northeast region.
- **Border Issues:**
 - Northeast India shares borders with several countries, including China, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Myanmar. The porous borders have made it **vulnerable to cross-border infiltration and smuggling of arms, drugs, and contraband**.

- NE region is geographically located adjacent to opium producing region of **Golden triangle** (Myanmar, Thailand, Laos)
- The **border disputes with neighbouring countries** have also led to tensions and conflicts, **particularly with China and Bangladesh.**
- **Economic Marginalization:**
 - Northeast India is considered as one of the economically backward regions in India. The region has a **low per capita income, inadequate infrastructure, and limited job opportunities.**
 - The economic marginalization has led to youth **unemployment and poverty, making them vulnerable to recruitment by insurgent groups.**
- **Natural Resource Exploitation:**
 - Northeast India is endowed with **rich natural resources, including oil, gas, coal, and minerals.** The exploitation of these resources has led to environmental degradation and **displacement of local communities.**
 - The displacement has led to resentment among the local communities and has provided a **fertile ground for the growth of insurgent groups.**
- **Isolation and Relative Deprivation:**
 - The Northeast region's distance from New Delhi and **limited representation in the Lok Sabha** have resulted in a reduced voice of the people being heard in the corridors of power.
 - This has led **to increased disillusionment in the dialogue process** and has made the use of violence more appealing, making insurgency a more attractive option.
- **External State and Non-state Actors:**
 - The insurgencies in the NEI have been **supported by erstwhile East Pakistan** in the late 1950s; and in early 1960s, in the form of **training of personnel of Naga Army** and giving them **weapons.**
 - Later, China also provided weapons and support to insurgents and Maoists.

Way forward

- **The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA)** should be gradually lifted from areas showing improved situation.
- **Continued Efforts by Civil Society:** Notwithstanding the progress in peace talks, efforts by the civil society for rapprochement with the insurgent organisations must continue. This enables a respectable way out for the insurgent leaders and leads to a win-win situation for all the stakeholders.
- **Clear demarcation of borders** between states should be there to avoid conflicts between different ethnic groups of these states.
 - For example. Assam-Meghalaya and Assam- Arunachal Pradesh boundary agreement.
- **Strengthening Security on Borders** to avoid infiltration, money laundering, arms trafficking.
- A holistic approach is required to address these issues, including political dialogue, economic development, and environmental sustainability. **Three pronged strategy of Defense, Dialogue and Development** is key for peace and security of North East region.