

## Syllabus

### General Studies – 3

*(Technology, Economic Development Bio-diversity, Environment, Security and Disaster Management)*

**Linkages between Development and Spread of Extremism. Role of External State and Non-State Actors in creating challenges to Internal Security**

#### **What is PLA, the group responsible for attack on Assam Rifles convoy in Manipur?**

- The People's Liberation Army and the Manipur Naga People's Front have jointly claimed responsibility for the ambush of an Assam Rifles convoy on Saturday (November 13) morning in Churachandpur district of Manipur, killing seven, including a Commanding officer, his wife and their five-year-old son. The ambush is one of the biggest in the state since the attack on the Dogra Rifles in 2015.

#### **What is the People's Liberation Army (PLA)?**

**The group was founded on September 25, 1978, under the leadership of N. Bisheshwar, after having broken away from its parent body, the United National Liberation Front.**

- In 1979, the PLA's political wing Revolutionary People's Front (RPF) was set up.
- Like the UNLF, and many other splinter groups that would follow, the PLA was fighting for the secession of Manipur from India. While the PLA called for Kuki and Naga insurgents to join their ranks, it remains till this day dominated by the Imphal valley-based Meitei Hindu insurgents.
- Also, like other Meitei underground groups, in its initial years, PLA cadres were trained by the NSCN and **hold Marxist ideology**.
- Its political wing, the RPF campaigned against the use of drugs, and banned alcohol in the state, often using violent means to impose these bans.
- Considered one of the strongest groups in Manipur, the PLA has been working out of Myanmar where they continue to have camps, like the other Meitei groups, and remain active with no ceasefire agreement with the Indian government, and have so far not expressed any intent of peace talks with India.

#### **Why is this attack different?**

- While there have been reports of women and children being attacked in the 1990s – during the clashes between the Nagas and the Kukis in Manipur – since then, this is the first attack in which an Indian security officer's family has been killed.
- Later in the evening, while claiming responsibility, the PLA and MNPF said that they were unaware that the commanding officer was being accompanied by his family.

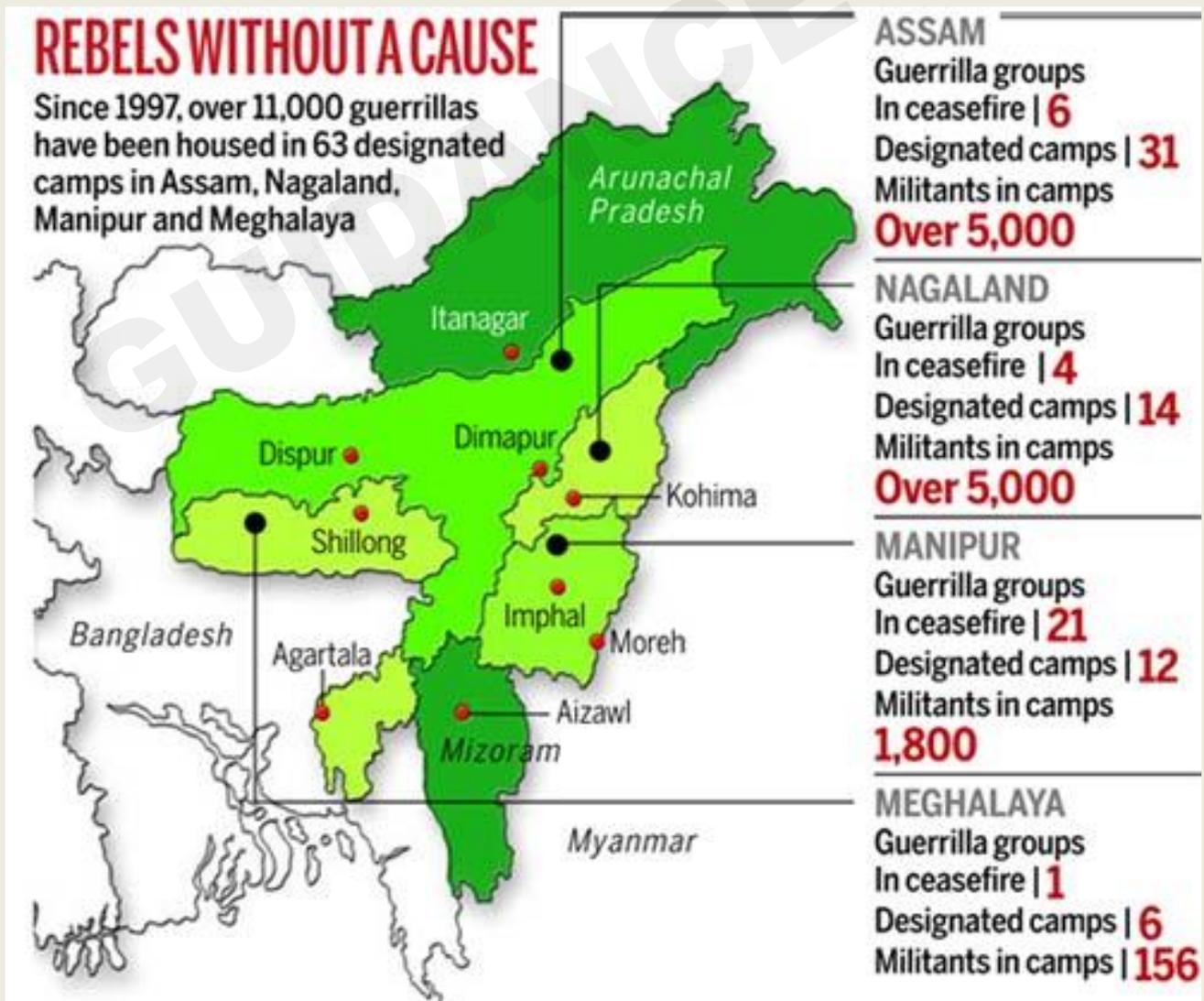
**Insurgency in North East India:**

- North East India (NEI) today comprises of eight states of India, namely Sikkim and the “seven sister states” of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh (ALP), Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Meghalaya. NEI is bounded by Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh.
- The region is rich in bio-diversity and untapped raw materials. It is connected to mainstream India through the 22 km narrow “Siliguri Corridor”.
- Thus it has **strategic, political and economic significance for India**.
- NEI has been witnessing insurgency since 1950s and there is no end in sight. Even though some states in the NEI have remained peaceful after ending insurgencies, overall the situation in the region is not conducive to peaceful living and corresponding prosperity
- This article covers the genesis of insurgency, the present day situation and makes some recommendations for future.

Year (s)	Course of Action	Impact
1995	Operation “Golden Bird”, against PLA (People’s Liberation Army-Manipur), NSCN-K (National Socialist Council of Nagaland Khaplang), and ULFA insurgents.	40 insurgent deaths
2000-2001	Tatmadaw launches an operation against Indian insurgent organisations.	200 Manipuri rebels rounded up
2005 and 2006	India and Myanmar launched some small scale joint military operations against NSCN (K).	N.A
2007	Tatmadaw launches an offensive against ULFA and NSCN-K.	N.A
2015	Indian army launches cross-border surgical strikes.	38 insurgents killed
2019	Tatmadaw takes over NSCN-K headquarters, despite a ceasefire. Substantiates the presence of other anti-India groups.	Outposts and schools ceased; 6 NSCN (K) leaders arrested.
2019	Phase 1 of Operation Sunrise launched from respective territories, targeting the AA.	12 camps destroyed
2019	Phase 2 of Operation Sunrise launched from respective territories, targeting NSCN (K), ULFA, KLO (Kamatapur Liberation Organisation), and NDFB (National Democratic Forum of Boroland).	7-8 camps destroyed; 78 nabbed.
2019	Tatmadaw cracks down upon NSCN-IM (Isak-Muivah) militants.	N.A
2020	First-ever mass deportation of Indian insurgents.	22 Indian militants deported

**Historical Perspective:**

- Present day Assam was ruled by the Ahom kings from 1228 till 1826. Due to incursion by the then Burmese kingdom into Assam, the Ahom kings requested the British East India Company for help.
- As a result, the British defeated the Burmese and then signed the Treaty of Yandaboo on 24 Feb 1826 thereby ending the reign of Ahom Kings and amalgamating Assam into British India. Thereafter, Assam was a province ruled by the British till Independence.
- At the time of Independence, NEI consisted of Assam, North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) i.e. present day ALP, and the princely states of Manipur and Tripura which opted for merger with India in 1949.
- Present day Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram were then part of Assam and were carved out of it later – Nagaland in 1963, Meghalaya in 1972, and between 1972/1987 Union Territory (UT)/state of Mizoram.
- Sikkim was a monarchy which was amalgamated into India after a referendum in 1975. Thus, the present day NEI has been a melting pot of various tribes, languages, cultures, history and ethnicity.



### Reasons for Insurgency in NEI:

- (a) **Multi-Ethnic Region.** NEI is the most ethnically diverse region in India. It is home to around 40 million people including 213 of the 635 tribal groups **listed by the Anthropological Survey of India.**<sup>2</sup> Each of these tribes is having its own distinct culture. Thus, each tribal sect resents being integrated into the mainstream India as it means losing their own distinct identity. The situation gets further aggravated due to inter-tribal rivalries, which fuel tribal/ethnic insurgencies.
- (b) **Underdeveloped Region.** Due to the difficult terrain configuration of jungles and mountains, infrastructural development in NEI has generally been slow, often at a snail's pace. This has widened the schism between the NEI and mainstream India, and further increased a sense of disenchantment with the GoI.
- (c) **Lack of Economic Development.** GoI's economic policies have also fuelled resentment and insecurity amongst the people. Due to various factors, the development of NEI has lagged behind thereby resulting in lack of employment opportunities. Thus the youth are easily lured by various insurgent groups in order to earn easy money.
- (d) **Sense of Isolation, Deprivation and Exploitation.** Distance from New Delhi and meagre representation in the Lok Sabha has further reduced the vox populi being heard in the corridors of powers, leading to more disillusionment in the dialogue process, thereby making call of the gun more attractive.
- (e) **Demographic Changes.** The influx of refugees from former East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) into Assam led to a dramatic change in the demographic landscape of the region. In the Mangaldai by-election in 1979, there were about 45,000 illegal immigrants in the electoral rolls.<sup>3</sup> This led to discontent amongst the people of the region, thereby giving rise to insurgency in Assam with the United National Liberation Front (ULFA), formed on 7 Apr 1979, leading the mass anti-immigrant agitation.
- (f) **Internal Displacement.** Internal displacement is also an ongoing problem. From the 1990s to the start of 2011, over 800,000 people were forced to flee their homes in episodes of inter-ethnic violence in western Assam, along the border between Assam and Meghalaya, and in Tripura. According to conservative estimates, some 76,000 people remain in internal displacement in NEI due to the prolonged armed violence.<sup>4</sup>
- (g) **External Support.** 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 moral support.
- The Chinese support for insurgency in India was at a high from 1967-1975 when China's foreign policy advocated the spread of 'revolution' around the world. **In a 2007 article, the present National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval stated that the Chinese support for the Indian rebels also experienced a 'lull' during the mid-1980s but that there was, of late, 'increasing evidence' of China's revival of its 'covert offensive' in the region.**<sup>6</sup> Pakistan's **Special Services Group (SSG) also trained the Naga guerillas in the 1960s through their bases in East Pakistan** (now Bangladesh).
- (h) **Impact of Revolutionary Politics.** Members of the NNC, Thuingaleng Muivah, Thinoselie Medom Keyho and an Angami Naga from Kohima, travelled across the Naga Hills of Myanmar reaching

Yunan in Jan 1967, seeking support from the Chinese for their cause. This could be marked as the beginning of the Chinese involvement in NEI. The success of people's revolution in China motivated insurgent leaders and further fuelled insurgency in NEI.

- (i) **Perceived Excesses by IA.** The promulgation of Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in most of the NEI has further alienated the local populace. Though imperative for strengthening the hand of IA for CI operations, it is often portrayed as draconian by various Human Rights (HR) organisations and thus has been vilified by various insurgent groups.

**Following recommendation to control insurgency:**

**A peaceful NEI without insurgencies is a strategic necessity for India, especially for the success of the 'Act East Policy'. In order to achieve the same, a few recommendations are outlined below:-**

- (a) **Signing of Peace Accords.** To ensure peace and stability in NEI, however temporary, the Gol must sign peace accords with various remaining insurgent groups in the region, on the lines of 'Framework Agreement' signed with NSCN (IM) in Aug 2015. A similar accord may be signed with the NSCN (K), ULFA and other insurgent groups. Engagement of insurgent groups in talks is vital for conflict resolution and therefore must be pursued actively and persistently.
- (b) **Inclusion of Insurgent Leaders.** Now that ULFA's General Secretary Anup Chetia, who was in prison in Bangladesh, has been brought back and has been released on bail in Dec 2015, he must become the pointsman of Gol for further talks with ULFA leading to an agreement with ULFA in a time-bound manner.
- (c) **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.
- (d) **Increased Socio-Economic Development: Act East Policy (AEP).** In order to weed out one of the root causes of insurgency, Gol must accelerate its plans for the development of the region. PM Modi first used the term 'Act East Policy' in Nov 2014 at Nya Pi Taw, Myanmar. The stress of PM Modi on AEP is, therefore, a step in the right direction. The building of infrastructure like roads, hospitals, schools, sanitation facilities, et al are essential in inculcating a sense of oneness in the peoples of NEI.
- (e) **Emphasis on Identity, Not on "Mainstreaming".** NEI is a pot pourri of various tribes, ethnicities, religions, customs, languages, et al. Therefore, the focus should more be on maintaining the individual identities of these peoples. Fear of balkanisation of NEI must not dictate the policies of Gol.
- (f) **Continued Military Operations against Select Insurgent Groups.** IA should continue to operate against those insurgent groups who have not shown inclination towards any peace talks, like NSCN (K), NDFB (S), ULFA, etc. This will erode their resisting power and will bring about stability in the region while political solution is being drafted. It is reiterated that a humane approach in these operations is imperative.

- (g) **Sanctity of Indo-Myanmar International Border (IB).** India shares approximately 1400 km long IB with Myanmar in states of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram.<sup>14</sup> The sanctity of the same must, therefore, be strengthened to preclude insurgents from crossing the border at will. This is a herculean task and must therefore, be given high priority.
- (h) **Three Tiered Deployment.** In order to focus the military operations against selected insurgent in select areas, a three tiered deployment is imperative. This can be achieved by increasing the deployment of Assam Rifles (AR) along the Indo-Myanmar border in the first tier, IA in the second tier and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in the third tier. This will ensure cohesive operations thereby, further focussing the ongoing military operations in selected areas.
- (j) **Continuation of Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA).** It is strongly recommended to continue AFSPA in regions where there are high levels of insurgency. In this regard, the verdict of Meghalaya's High Court on the subject is unprecedented. Taking into consideration the situation in the region from Jan-Oct 2015 during which various militant outfits had abducted 87 people for ransom including 27 businessmen, 25 civilians, 25 employees of private firms, five government employees and five teachers, the bench comprising Chief Justice Uma Nath Singh, Justice TNK Singh and Justice SR Sen issued the order on 02 Nov 2015 for enforcement of AFSPA. "We have no option but to direct the Central Government to consider the use of AFSPA in Garo Hills area and deployment of armed and para-military forces to control the situation .... till life becomes normal and the incidents of rampant kidnapping and killing are totally stopped", the order stated. The bench noted that the police and civil authorities, despite their best efforts, were not able to control the situation.<sup>15</sup>
- (k) **De-induction of IA from Select Areas.** Consequent to the peaceful conduct of state elections in Apr 2016 in Assam, it is amply clear that the situation in many parts of Assam and NEI has stabilised. Hence, in these areas, IA must go back to barracks and hand over these districts to the civil administration. If required, the CRPF can fill the void and assist the state police in maintaining law and order in these areas.
- (l) **Monitoring Spread of Radical Islam.** Gol must keep on monitoring the situation in NEI to prevent spread of Islamic radicalism by initiating appropriate socio-economic development measures including education. This will preclude youth from falling easy prey to radical Islamic propaganda.

#### Conclusion:

- The insurgencies of NEI have continued for the past seven decades despite various efforts by Gol for a permanent solution. However, with the older generation passing away and the new generation having little interest in insurgencies, the time is ripe to hammer out a long term strategy for elimination of residual insurgencies. A wise mix of socio-economic development and political settlement are the pillars of an everlasting peace in the NEI. Winning the hearts and minds should be the cornerstone for achieving conflict resolution in NEI.
- As an instrument of state policy in accordance with goals of statecraft, IA has the key role of undertaking CI operations to prevent the insurgent groups from escalating violence. Towards that end, it has performed in an exemplary manner till date and must therefore, continue to do

so whenever and wherever mandated. Resolving the ongoing insurgencies in NEI will be the harbinger of peace and consequent economic prosperity for the millions of people in NEI. It is therefore a step in the right direction, for the success of India's AEP, and for India to emerge as one of the global powers in a multipolar world of the 21st century.

**Note:**

**About Assam rifles:**

- ✓ The **Assam Rifles** is the oldest paramilitary force of the Indian Army, dating back to 1835 under the British Raj, raised under the name Cachar Levy. The present name of "Assam Rifles" has been used since 1917. Similar to the Rashtriya Rifles in Jammu and Kashmir, in the Northeastern States the Assam Rifles is the specialised force that carries out anti-insurgency operations in difficult terrain of the region.
- ✓ Over the course of its history, the Assam Rifles have served in a number of roles, conflicts and theatres including World War I, where they served in Europe and the Middle East, and World War II, where they served mainly in Burma. After the Chinese annexation of Tibet, the Assam Rifles were tasked with manning the Tibetan border of Assam Himalayan region. They were also instrumental in maintaining law and order in Arunachal Pradesh.
- ✓ The Assam Rifles is under the control of Indian Army of the Ministry of Defence. The entire control is held with Ministry of Defence. It is a part of the Assam Regiment of the Indian Army. There are currently 46 battalions of Assam Rifles with a sanctioned strength of 63,747 personnel.
- ✓ They perform many roles including the provision of internal security under the control of the army through the conduct of counterinsurgency and border security operations, provision of aid to the civilians in times of emergency, and the provision of communications, medical assistance and education in remote areas.
- ✓ In times of war they can also be used as a combat force to secure rear areas if needed. Since 2002 the force has been given the role of guarding the India–Myanmar border.

**Administrative arrangements:**

1. **Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER):** It is responsible for the matters relating to the planning, execution and monitoring of development schemes and projects in the North Eastern Region, to accelerate the pace of socio-economic development of the region.
2. **Inner Line Permit (ILP):** Restrictions are imposed on the entry of outsiders to maintain the original identity of indigenous people of Mizoram, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh entry of outsiders are not allowed without ILP.

**Constitutional provision**

- **Article 244 (1)** provides that – Provisions of the 5th schedule shall apply to the admin. or control of scheduled areas and scheduled tribes.
- **Article 244 (2)** provides that – Provisions of the 6th schedule shall apply to the admin. or control of schedule areas, in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram to create Autonomous Districts Councils in these states.
- In pursuance of these provisions, the various autonomous district has been created to contain the demands of various ethnic groups like **Karbi Anglong, Khasi hill district, Chakma district etc.**
- **Under Article 371 (A) Nagaland** has been accorded special status.