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## Topic:

## Growth of terrorism in North-East India: Causes

The North-East of India is consists of eight states- Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim. The North-Eastern states have borders with four countries, namely, China and Bhutan on its North; Myanmar on its East; and Bangladesh on its South and West. It has an area of 2.6 Lakh sq. km. (7.6% of India’s land area) while its population is 39 million plus (3.6% of India’s population). It has 475 ethnic groups and 400 languages and dialects are spoken here.

 All the North-Eastern states are severely affected by terrorist activities since independence. It has been alleged that the entire region is the fertile breeding ground of different militant outfit. Number of insurgent groups active in North-East region is much more than any other part of India. There are some inherent and genuine causes that may be attributed to the growth of terrorism in the region.

**Growth of Terrorism in North-East India: Major Causes**

Following are some of the important causes responsible for the growth of terrorism in the North-Eastern region:

1. **Historical Cause:** This is the most important cause for the rise of terrorism in the North-Eastern region. The people of North-East India were never historically integrated to the mainland of India. It was after Yandaboo Treaty of 1826 that the British regime was extended its territory to the undivided Assam and its neighbouring regions. Even a state like Manipur was annexed to the region after attaining the independence of the country. Likewise, after independence different ethnic group of people were not integrated psychologically and culturally with the mainstream politics of India. These feeling of historical detachment among the people are considered as the major cause behind the growth of terrorism in the region.
2. **Geographical Isolation:** The geographical isolation of North-Eastern region from the main land of India also contributed to the growth of terrorism. In fact, the whole North-Eastern region is connected through the 21 K.M. Siliguri corridor called ‘chicken neck’ created by the Radcliff line, the boundary drawn by the British colonial administration before they departed from India in 1947. Consequently, the people of the entire region feels alienated from rest of the country and started terrorist movement to secede from the Indian Union.
3. **Porous Borders:** This is another vital cause for the growth of terrorism in North- East India. The North-Eastern states of India having longest boundary lines with foreign countries surrounded by Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar and China. All these boundary lines remains open except a few K.M. sealed by fencing along with Indo-Bangla border. The open border helps the terrorist organisation to continue their activities from the other side of the border. For example, NDFB ultras operate their activities across the Indo-Bhutan border. Similarly, NSCN and ULFA are conducting their terrorist activities through Indo- Myanmar border. The North Eastern states have for many years, been a victim of terrorism sponsored from across the border. It has been alleged that the indifferent attitude of the Central Government in the protection of international boundaries helps in the growth of terrorism in the region.
4. **Illegal Immigration Problem:** Large-scale immigration into different North-Eastern states also contributed to the growth of terrorism in the region. The historical, geographical and socio-political factors are responsible for the infiltration of migrants from the neighbouring countries. The demographic imbalance and changes in the population structure is the direct outcome of the continuous immigration process in the region. For example, at present the indigenous tribe in Tripura has been turned to a minority group within two decades of partition. This provoked the indigenous people to take up arms in Tripura.

 After the Partition of the country, Assam was pressurized to accept more than six lakhs refugees by 1961. When the Assam Chief Minister, Gopinath Bordoloi opposed, Nehru threatened him with denial of development funds unless refugees were allowed to settle in Assam. Sardar Patel, the then Indian Home Minister even wanted the Assam government to distribute reclaimable land evenly between landless Assamese peasants and Bengali refugees. That did not go down well with the Assamese. Assam’s middle class and rural masses were immensely resentful of the state’s changing demography and land lost to Bengali migrants and colonial exploitation by the Indian state. Thus, in Assam and Tripura, the problem of immigration has led to the insurgency-cum-terrorism to prevent immigration especially from Bangladesh.

1. **Ethnic Clashes:** Ethnic clashes among different ethnic groups also helped abundantly to the mushroom growth of terrorism in the region. The North-East region of India is a home of more than fifty rebel groups. It is quite evident from the paste incidence of insurgency that militants are battling the Indian security forces on the ground of ethnicity. For example, the ethnic clashes between Dimasa and Kuki, Dimasa and Karbi have given birth to insurgency groups in the region. Thus, the militants are fighting mainly in the states of Mizoram, Nagaland, and Manipur due to feelings of ethnic separateness.
2. **Identity Crisis:** Growing consciousness about the protection of identity among different ethnic groups is also the cause of terrorism in the region. It is said that the ethnic identity crisis is an intrinsic component of the socio-political reality of multi-ethnic states in North-East region. The real fact is that a large number of little known or small tribes are either facing ethnic identity crisis or on the verge of ruin or facing cultural assimilation problem. The issue of identity crisis, of late, have transcended the other problem and become one of the major foci in North- East politics. It would not be exaggerated to say that each ethnic tribe has their own terrorist outfit on order to save their identity.
3. **Demand for Separate States in the name of Tribes:** The continuous demand for separate state in the name of different ethnic tribes also provided fuel to the growth of militant activities in the region. The Bodo ultras are fighting for Bodoland, a separate state from Assam. Likewise, Tiwas, Karbis and Dimasa insurgent groups are demanding separate statehood. The Bru National Liberation Front (BNLF) has been fighting to protect the rights of the Reang people by restructuring the state. However, the terrorist groups like ULFA, NSCN, and PLA have been seeking independent sovereign states and want to secede away from the mainland of India.
4. **Claim on Land:** Land is another important factor in the on–going conflicts in the North-East. It is the struggle for land as territory that each emerging ethnic nation claims to own as a right. For example, the assertion of Naga identity and its nationhood seeks to assert claims to the Naga inhabited areas of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Manipur and even in Myanmar. Many of the rebel groups are demanding homelands and adopt armed militancy to achieve them. These armed groups often attack settler communities or rival tribes as part of a strategy of ethnic cleansing to achieve ethnically compact homelands. It has become a trend for almost each ethnic community in the North-East to claim nationhood.
5. **Inter-States Territorial Disputes:** There are existing territorial conflicts within the North-Eastern states, including between [Manipur](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manipur) and [Nagaland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nagaland), Nagaland and Assam, Meghalaya and Assam, and Mizoram and Assam. These are often based on historical border disputes and differing ethnic, tribal or cultural affinities. There have been a number of [insurgent activities](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Insurgency) and regional movements because of inter-state boundary disputes.
6. **Economic Backwardness:** Economic backwardness is another cause behind the growth of terrorism in the region. The entire North-East region is abundant of valuable natural resources and possibilities are there for industries bases on these natural resources. The unutilization of resources results in the economic deprivation of the region. The people of North-East region believe that the successive Indian Governments have deliberately neglected the economy of the region with a view to denying them the economic rights. Some of the terrorist outfits like ULFA were formed in revolting against the tardy economic policy towards the region by the Central Government.

 Mostly, Assam felt slighted by the economic exploitation of the state by the Indian state. The oil refinery agitation raised this issue. From the initial 0.1 million tons in 1947 Assam’s annual crude oil output touched a peak of 5 million tons in the 1970s. Before the anti–foreigner agitation Assam received only Rs. 42 per ton of crude oil as royalty. The Government of India collected six times that amount in excess. Assam would get only Rs. 54 as sale tax on a tone of crude oil while Government of India collected Rs. 991 on the same quantity. For plywood extracted from Assam the state received only Rs. 35 – 40 lakhs a year while Government of India got Rs. 80 crores. Assam sale tax collections from tea hovered around Rs. 20 – 30 crores per year until the outbreak of anti – foreigner agitation in 1979 whereas West Bengal made 60–70 percent more because the head offices of the tea companies were located there.

1. **Unemployment problem:** The rising unemployment problem has also provided breeding ground for the growth of insurgency in the region. The socio-economic conditions of rising unemployment, lack of opportunity to earn living, growing awareness of inequality between rich and poor, deprived young people who feels discriminated-all these factors created favourable conditions which encourages many youth to join hand with terrorist groups. In recent years growing activities of the Maoist among the Adhivasi in upper Assam may be attributed to the growth unemployment problem, rising youth unrest and grievances against the present political system of Assam.
2. **Religious Cause:** This is another significant cause for the emergence of religion based terrorist group in the region. Islamic terrorist groups like MULTA, Hiz-Bul- Mujahedeen, and Jehadi groups are also active in the regions especially in the lower Assam. Most recently, the activities of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) have been observed in the state. This has created menace among the people of the whole North-Eastern regions. All these groups are operating their terrorist activities across the Indo-Bangla border. It has been alleged that the Pakistan is striving to destabilize the whole region by pushing and supporting the Islamic militants in the region.

Thus, the above mentioned are the major causes for the growth of terrorism in the region. Besides, some other causes such as corruption, superstition, exploitation, illegal arms trade, political instability etc, are some other causes of terrorism in the North- Eastern region.

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