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NORTH EAST INDIA INSURGENCY / ISSUES – STATE WISE Part 2

Overview of the Problem, Causes, Core Issue, Historical Reasons, Type of Insurgency/Security Issue(s), History/Course of the Problem, Players in Conflict, Their Reasons, and Factions, External Players' Role, Recent Developments, Government Measures and Solutions, Way Forward - dealt State wise in **PART 1** of this Document

OTHER MAJOR SECURITY ISSUES IN NORTHEAST

Illegal migration and Demographic shifts

Drug Trafficking and organized crime

Human Trafficking

Inter-state border disputes

Environmental security and illegal resource extraction

General way forward

Upssc-relevant trivia

Other Issues in North East India



In addition to the insurgencies, ethnic conflicts, and border-related challenges already discussed, the Northeastern region of India faces several other internal security and socio-economic issues that require detailed examination, especially for UPSC aspirants. These issues, while interconnected with the previously outlined problems, have distinct dimensions that impact the region's stability and development. Below is a detailed analysis of these additional issues, structured to provide clarity and relevance for UPSC preparation, including causes, historical context, key players, external influences, recent developments, government measures, and a way forward.

ILLEGAL MIGRATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS

Overview of the Problem: Illegal migration, primarily from Bangladesh, but also from Nepal and Myanmar, has significantly altered the demographic profile of the Northeastern states, particularly Assam, Tripura, and Meghalaya. This has led to tensions between indigenous communities and migrants over resources, political power, and cultural identity. The core issue is the perceived threat to indigenous identity and economic opportunities, which fuels unrest and communal violence.



Historically, British colonial policies encouraged migration to Assam and Tripura for labor in tea plantations and agriculture, setting the stage for post-independence conflicts.

Causes:

- Porous 4,096 km Indo-Bangladesh border, with 1,879 km affecting the Northeast.
- Economic disparities driving migration from Bangladesh and Myanmar.
- Weak border management and corruption in local administration.
- Demand for cheap labor in agriculture and construction.

Core Issue: Balancing indigenous rights with humanitarian considerations for migrants while securing borders.

Historical Reasons: During British rule, large-scale migration from East Bengal (now Bangladesh) was encouraged to work in Assam's tea gardens and Tripura's agricultural lands. Post-partition in 1947, and again after the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, waves of refugees entered the Northeast, particularly Assam, leading to a demographic shift. For instance, in Assam, the indigenous population dropped from 80% in 1901 to about 60% by 2011. The failure to fully implement the Assam Accord (1985) exacerbated local resentment.

Type of Issue: Internal security (communal tensions), socio-economic (resource competition), and political (electoral influence of migrants).

History/Course of the Problem: The issue of illegal migration gained prominence in Assam during the 1970s, culminating in the Assam Agitation (1979-1985), led by the All Assam Students Union (AASU) and All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP). The movement demanded the detection and deportation of illegal migrants, resulting in the Assam Accord, which set March 25, 1971, as the cutoff date for identifying illegal immigrants. However, implementation has been inconsistent, with only 1,500 deportations by 2019. In Tripura, Bengali migrants reduced the tribal population to 31% by 2011, sparking insurgencies like the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT). Meghalaya's Khasi and Garo tribes have clashed with Bengali settlers in Shillong. The National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam, updated in 2019, excluded 19 lakh

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people, creating a humanitarian and administrative challenge, as many face statelessness.

Players in Conflict, Their Reasons, and Factions:

- **Indigenous Groups:** AASU, Indigenous Tribal Forums, and tribal councils demand protection of land and identity.
- **Migrant Communities:** Bengali Hindus and Muslims seek economic opportunities and political rights.
- **Political Parties:** Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and regional parties leverage the issue for electoral gains, while some oppose strict deportation.
- **Civil Society:** Organizations like the Assam Public Works push for NRC implementation.
- **External Players' Role:** Bangladesh's inability to control emigration and Myanmar's political instability drive migration. Alleged tacit support from Bangladeshi authorities in the past allowed militant groups to exploit migrant networks for smuggling.

Recent Developments:

- Assam NRC update (2019) identified 19 lakh "non-citizens," but the lack of a deportation mechanism and Bangladesh's refusal to accept them created a stalemate.
- Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019, sparked protests in Assam and Tripura, as locals feared it would legitimize illegal migrants (non-Muslims from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan).
- Increased border fencing (90% of Indo-Bangladesh border fenced by 2023) and joint patrols with Bangladesh.

Government Measures and Solutions:

- **Assam Accord (1985):** Set cutoff for identifying illegal migrants but poorly implemented.
- **National Register of Citizens (NRC):** Aimed to identify citizens in Assam but faced logistical and legal challenges.
- **Border Security:** Deployment of Border Security Force (BSF) and fencing along the Indo-Bangladesh border.
- **Foreigners Tribunals:** Established to adjudicate citizenship cases, though criticized for procedural flaws.
- **Act East Policy:** Aims to boost economic development to reduce local discontent over resource competition.



Way Forward:

- Streamline NRC implementation with clear deportation or rehabilitation mechanisms.
- Strengthen diplomatic engagement with Bangladesh for repatriation agreements.
- Enhance border management with technology (e.g., smart fencing, drones).
- Promote inclusive development to reduce economic dependence on migrant labor.
- Address humanitarian concerns for stateless individuals through legal frameworks.

UPSC-Relevant Information: The migration issue is a key topic in UPSC due to its implications for national security, federalism, and human rights. The CAA-NRC controversy highlights the balance between security and humanitarianism. Data point: Assam's population grew by 17% (2001-2011), higher than the national average of 15%, largely due to migration.

DRUG TRAFFICKING AND ORGANIZED CRIME

Overview of the Problem: The Northeast's proximity to the Golden Triangle (Myanmar, Laos, Thailand), a global hub for opium and methamphetamine production, makes it a major corridor for drug trafficking. This fuels organized crime, funds insurgencies, and destabilizes society. The core issue is the region's porous borders and socio-economic vulnerabilities, which enable trafficking networks. Historically, colonial trade routes and post-independence insurgencies created smuggling pathways.

Causes:

- 1,643 km Indo-Myanmar border, largely unfenced and porous.
- High unemployment and poverty driving youth to drug trade.
- Insurgent groups using drug profits to fund operations.
- Weak law enforcement and corruption in border areas.

Core Issue: Curbing drug trafficking while addressing socio-economic drivers.



Historical Reasons: The Northeast's borders were historically used for opium trade during British rule. Post-independence, insurgent groups like the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) and United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) leveraged drug routes to fund militancy, particularly since the 1980s when the Golden Triangle's drug trade expanded.

Type of Issue: Internal security (organized crime), socio-economic (drug addiction), and public health (rising drug abuse).

History/Course of the Problem: Drug trafficking in the Northeast surged in the 1980s as Myanmar became a global drug hub. Manipur and Mizoram, with direct borders to Myanmar, emerged as key transit points for heroin and methamphetamine (locally called "Yaba"). Insurgent groups like NSCN-K and People's Liberation Army (PLA) allegedly taxed drug traffickers, generating funds for arms. By 2018, the Northeast accounted for 30% of India's drug seizures despite its small population. Drug addiction has risen, with Manipur reporting a 5% addiction rate among youth (2019 survey). Organized crime syndicates, often linked to international cartels, exploit the region's terrain and weak governance. Recent crackdowns have disrupted some networks, but the problem persists due to border porosity.

Players in Conflict, Their Reasons, and Factions:

- **Insurgent Groups:** NSCN-K, ULFA, and PLA tax or run drug operations for funding.
- **International Cartels:** Myanmar-based syndicates supply drugs via local networks.
- **Local Youth:** Recruited as couriers due to economic desperation.
- **Law Enforcement:** BSF, Assam Rifles, and Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) combat trafficking but face resource constraints.
- **External Players' Role:** Myanmar is the primary source of drugs, with groups like the Arakan Army allegedly involved. China's role in synthetic drug precursor supply is suspected but unproven. Bangladesh serves as a transit route to global markets.

Recent Developments:

- Seizure of 1.2 tons of methamphetamine in Manipur (2023), indicating scale of trafficking.



- Joint operations with Myanmar disrupted major drug routes (2021-2023).
- Rising addiction rates in urban areas like Imphal and Aizawl.

Government Measures and Solutions:

- **Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB):** Strengthened presence in the Northeast since 2015.
- **Indo-Myanmar Border Management:** Joint task forces and intelligence sharing.
- **Narco-Coordination Centre (NCORD):** Launched in 2019 to coordinate anti-drug efforts.
- **Rehabilitation Programs:** Schemes like the National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (2018-2023) to address addiction.
- **Border Security:** Increased Assam Rifles deployment and surveillance technology.

Way Forward:

- Enhance border fencing and surveillance along Indo-Myanmar border.
- Strengthen regional cooperation with Myanmar and ASEAN countries.
- Expand rehabilitation and de-addiction centers in Manipur and Mizoram.
- Promote alternative livelihoods to reduce youth involvement in trafficking.
- Crack down on insurgent-drug nexus through targeted operations.

UPSC-Relevant Information: Drug trafficking is a critical non-traditional security threat for UPSC, linking internal security, public health, and international relations. Data point: India seized 3,800 kg of heroin in 2022, with 40% from the Northeast (NCB data).

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Overview of the Problem: The Northeast is a source, transit, and destination for human trafficking, particularly of women and children, for forced labor, prostitution, and organ trade. The core issue is socio-economic vulnerability, compounded by conflict and



displacement. Historical neglect and weak law enforcement have enabled trafficking networks.

Causes:

Poverty and unemployment, especially in rural tribal areas.

Conflict-induced displacement creating vulnerable populations.

Porous borders with Myanmar and Bangladesh.

Lack of awareness and weak legal enforcement.

Core Issue: Protecting vulnerable populations while dismantling trafficking networks.

Historical Reasons: The Northeast's history of underdevelopment and insurgencies created displaced populations susceptible to trafficking. Colonial-era migration and post-independence insurgencies disrupted traditional social structures, increasing vulnerability.

Type of Issue: Internal security (organized crime), socio-economic (exploitation), and human rights.

History/Course of the Problem: Human trafficking in the Northeast emerged as a significant issue in the 1990s, driven by insurgencies and economic distress. Displaced women and children from Assam, Manipur, and Tripura are trafficked to urban centers like Delhi and Kolkata or across borders to Myanmar and Bangladesh. Estimates suggest 20,000 women and children are trafficked annually from the Northeast (UNODC, 2019). Insurgent groups like NLFT have been linked to trafficking for ransom or forced recruitment. Weak border controls and corruption enable networks, with children often trafficked for labor in brick kilns or domestic work. Recent NGO efforts have raised awareness, but enforcement remains weak.

Players in Conflict, Their Reasons, and Factions:

- **Trafficking Networks:** Local and cross-border syndicates exploit economic desperation.
- **Insurgent Groups:** NLFT and others allegedly use trafficking for funds or recruitment.
- **Victims:** Primarily tribal women and children from conflict zones.



Notes

- **NGOs and Law Enforcement:** Organizations like Bachpan Bachao Andolan and state police combat trafficking but lack coordination.
- **External Players' Role:** Myanmar and Bangladesh serve as transit and destination countries. Cross-border syndicates exploit open borders, with some evidence of Thai and Chinese networks involved in organ trade.

Recent Developments:

- Rescue of 500 trafficked victims from Assam and Manipur (2022-2023).
- Increased NGO activity in Tripura and Mizoram for victim rehabilitation.
- Persistent challenges in prosecuting traffickers due to legal loopholes.

Government Measures and Solutions:

- **Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956:** Legal framework to combat trafficking, though outdated.
- **Ujjawala Scheme:** Launched in 2007 for rescue and rehabilitation of trafficking victims.
- **Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs):** Established in Assam and Manipur but underfunded.
- **Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS):** Aims to protect vulnerable children.
- **Border Security:** BSF and Assam Rifles trained to identify trafficking cases.

Way Forward:

- Strengthen AHTUs with better funding and training.
- Update anti-trafficking laws to address modern challenges.
- Enhance cross-border cooperation with Myanmar and Bangladesh.
- Promote awareness campaigns in rural areas.
- Integrate trafficking prevention into development schemes like NESIDS.

UPSC-Relevant Information: Human trafficking is a key UPSC topic under human rights and internal security. Data point: The Northeast accounts for 15% of India's trafficking cases despite its small population (UNODC, 2019).

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INTER-STATE BORDER DISPUTES

Overview of the Problem: Inter-state border disputes, particularly between Assam-Meghalaya, Assam-Arunachal Pradesh, and Assam-Nagaland, create tensions, occasional violence, and governance challenges. The core issue is unclear demarcation of boundaries, rooted in colonial-era cartography and post-independence state reorganizations. These disputes disrupt local communities and complicate security coordination.

Causes:

- Ambiguous colonial-era boundary demarcations.
- Overlapping ethnic territories and resource competition.
- Lack of comprehensive surveys post-state formation.
- Political mobilization over disputed areas.

Core Issue: Resolving boundary disputes to ensure peace and governance.

Historical Reasons: The British demarcated boundaries without clear surveys, leaving disputes unresolved. The creation of new states from Assam (e.g., Meghalaya in 1972, Arunachal Pradesh in 1987) inherited these ambiguities. Ethnic overlaps, such as Naga claims over Assam's territory, further complicate matters.

Type of Issue: Internal security (inter-state conflicts), administrative (governance challenges), and socio-economic (disrupted livelihoods).

History/Course of the Problem: The Assam-Nagaland dispute, spanning 434 km, began after Nagaland's formation in 1963, with Nagas claiming parts of Assam's Golaghat and Sivasagar districts based on historical Naga settlements. Clashes in 1985 killed over 100 people. The Assam-Meghalaya dispute, involving 12 areas along a 885 km border, arose after Meghalaya's creation, with conflicts over Langpih and other regions. Assam-Arunachal disputes cover 2,100 sq km, driven by tribal land claims. Legal battles and negotiations since the 1970s have yielded partial resolutions, with recent agreements in 2022 reducing Assam-Meghalaya disputes by 50%.

Players in Conflict, Their Reasons, and Factions:

- **State Governments:** Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Arunachal assert historical and administrative claims.



- **Ethnic Groups:** Nagas, Khasis, and indigenous Assamese demand control over disputed lands.
- **Local Communities:** Face violence and restricted access to resources in disputed areas.
- **Civil Society:** Organizations like the Naga Hoho push for ethnic-based resolutions.
- **External Players' Role:** None directly, though insurgent groups like NSCN exploit disputes to assert influence.

Recent Developments:

- Assam-Meghalaya boundary agreement (2022) resolved 6 of 12 disputed areas.
- Ongoing talks for Assam-Arunachal and Assam-Nagaland disputes.
- Sporadic clashes in Assam-Nagaland border areas (2023).

Government Measures and Solutions:

- **Boundary Commissions:** Committees like the Sundaram Committee (1971) and Khandu Committee attempted resolutions.
- **Supreme Court Mediation:** Ongoing for Assam-Nagaland dispute.
- **Joint Agreements:** Assam-Meghalaya pact (2022) as a model.
- **North Eastern Council (NEC):** Facilitates inter-state dialogue.

Way Forward:

- Conduct comprehensive boundary surveys using modern technology (e.g., GIS mapping).
- Promote inter-state dialogue through NEC platforms.
- Ensure community involvement in dispute resolution to avoid unrest.
- Strengthen security in disputed areas to prevent violence.

UPSC-Relevant Information: Inter-state disputes are a key UPSC topic under federalism and internal security. Data point: Assam shares disputed borders with four Northeastern states, covering over 3,000 km.



ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY AND ILLEGAL RESOURCE EXTRACTION

Overview of the Problem: Illegal resource extraction, including timber smuggling, coal mining, and poaching, threatens the Northeast's rich biodiversity and fuels organized crime. The core issue is balancing environmental conservation with economic needs in a region with 25% of India's forest cover and 50% of its biodiversity hotspots. Historical neglect and weak enforcement have enabled illegal networks.

Causes:

- High demand for timber, coal, and wildlife products in domestic and international markets.
- Poverty and unemployment driving locals to illegal activities.
- Weak enforcement in remote forest areas.
- Insurgent groups funding operations through resource extraction.

Core Issue: Protecting environmental resources while addressing socio-economic vulnerabilities.

Historical Reasons: Colonial exploitation of forests for timber and tea plantations set a precedent for resource extraction. Post-independence, weak governance allowed illegal networks to thrive, with insurgent groups exploiting resources for funds.

Type of Issue: Environmental security, internal security (organized crime), and socio-economic (livelihood loss).

History/Course of the Problem: The Northeast's forests, covering 1.7 lakh sq km, have been targeted for illegal logging, particularly in Assam, Meghalaya, and Arunachal Pradesh. Coal mining in Meghalaya's unregulated "rat-hole" mines has caused environmental degradation and loss of lives (e.g., 15 miners died in a 2018 collapse). Poaching of rhinos in Assam's Kaziranga National Park and smuggling of red sandalwood via Myanmar are rampant. Insurgent groups like ULFA and NSCN-K have been linked to timber and coal rackets. Recent bans on rat-hole mining (2014) and stricter forest laws have reduced illegal activities, but enforcement remains weak.

Players in Conflict, Their Reasons, and Factions:



- **Illegal Networks:** Timber and coal mafias, often linked to insurgents, profit from extraction.
- **Insurgent Groups:** ULFA, NSCN-IM, etc. run smuggling operations.
- **Local Communities:** Engage in illegal activities for survival.
- **Forest Department and NGOs:** Combat extraction but face resource constraints.
- **External Players' Role:** Myanmar and China are destinations for smuggled timber and wildlife. Bangladesh facilitates coal smuggling routes.

Recent Developments:

- Ban on rat-hole mining in Meghalaya (2014) upheld by Supreme Court (2019).
- Seizure of 500 tons of illegal timber in Assam (2023).
- Increased poaching in Kaziranga, with 5 rhinos killed in 2022.

Government Measures and Solutions:

- **National Green Tribunal (NGT):** Imposed bans on illegal mining and logging.
- **Forest Conservation Act, 1980:** Regulates resource use but weakly enforced.
- **Kaziranga Protection Measures:** Assam Rifles and drones deployed to curb poaching.
- **Livelihood Programs:** Schemes like Van Dhan Yojana promote forest-based livelihoods.
- **North East Green Highway Project:** Aims to balance development and conservation.

Way Forward:

- Strengthen enforcement through technology (e.g., satellite monitoring).
- Promote sustainable livelihoods to reduce dependence on illegal activities.
- Enhance regional cooperation with Myanmar and Bangladesh to curb smuggling.
- Increase funding for forest departments and conservation NGOs.

UPSC-Relevant Information: Environmental security is a growing UPSC topic, linking ecology, security, and development. Data



point: The Northeast hosts 2 of India's 4 biodiversity hotspots (Himalaya and Indo-Burma).

GENERAL IMPACT OF THESE ISSUES

- **Social Cohesion:** Migration and trafficking deepen ethnic and communal divides.
- **Economic Loss:** Illegal resource extraction and drug trafficking drain economic potential, with Meghalaya losing Rs 1,000 crore annually to illegal mining (NGT estimate).
- **Security Burden:** Diversion of security forces to address trafficking and disputes strains resources.
- **Public Health:** Rising drug addiction and trafficking-related diseases (e.g., HIV in Manipur) burden healthcare systems.
- **Regional Stability:** Unresolved disputes and crime networks undermine India's Act East Policy and regional connectivity goals.

GENERAL GOVERNMENT MEASURES AND POLICIES

- **Border Area Development Programme (BADP):** Funds infrastructure in border areas to curb migration and smuggling.
- **North East Police Academy (NEPA):** Trains police to tackle trafficking and organized crime.
- **Smart Fencing Projects:** Initiated along Indo-Bangladesh and Indo-Myanmar borders.
- **Swachh Bharat Mission (Rural):** Addresses sanitation in trafficking-prone areas to improve living conditions.
- **Mission Amrit Sarovar:** Promotes water conservation to support sustainable livelihoods in forest areas.

GENERAL WAY FORWARD

- **Integrated Approach:** Combine security, economic, and social measures to address root causes.
- **Community Engagement:** Involve tribal councils and NGOs in policy implementation.



- **Technology Adoption:** Use GIS, drones, and AI for border and environmental monitoring.
- **Regional Diplomacy:** Strengthen ties with Bangladesh, Myanmar, and ASEAN to tackle cross-border issues.
- **Education and Awareness:** Promote campaigns to address trafficking and drug abuse.

UPSC-RELEVANT TRIVIA

- Northeast's 98% international border coverage makes it India's most externally vulnerable region (ARC 7th Report).
- Assam's rhino population (2,600 in Kaziranga, 2022) is a global conservation success but a poaching target.
- Manipur's HIV prevalence (1.4% in 2019) is among India's highest, linked to drug trafficking.
- Northeast contributes 10% of India's forest cover but faces 20% of its deforestation (Forest Survey of India, 2021).
- CAA protests in 2019 saw over 5 lakh participants across Assam, highlighting the migration issue's sensitivity.

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