

**Discussing Internal Security Challenges – Addressing Terrorism and
Insurgency in Disturbed Areas**

Letter From The Executive Board

It is our utmost pleasure to welcome you to the Lok Sabha at ACMUN 2025. The committee

you will be a part of will be discussing Internal Security Challenges in India. During this 2-day conference, you shall all be representing different political leaders and hopefully coming to a solution to this pressing issue, or even changing history.

To help guide you through your research, we have prepared this background guide. It shall provide you with the basic information to get familiar with the agenda, and the basis for your further research. We hope you all research further than this alone and can understand and bring forth the nuances of this multi-faceted issue.

It is an honor for me to be serving on the Executive Board of Lok Sabha and look forward to having you on our committee. For any further clarifications, please feel free to reach out and get in touch with us. We are all excited and looking forward to having an interesting committee at ACMUN 2025, debating such a hot topic (at the time), that affected countless civilians across the country.

Sincerely,

Aarav Jhunjhunwala

Chairperson

Lok Sabha

Introduction

Internal security is a cornerstone of a nation's sovereignty, and for India, this issue takes on particular significance in the context of its ongoing battle against terrorism and insurgency. The internal security landscape is particularly complex in regions designated as "disturbed areas" due to the high levels of violence, insurgent activity, and external influence. These areas, such as Jammu & Kashmir and the northeastern states, have been plagued by insurgency and cross-border terrorism for decades, severely affecting both the national integrity and the lives of citizens. This background guide aims to examine the challenges posed by terrorism and insurgency in these regions and provide a comprehensive framework for discussion in the Lok Sabha-style parliamentary simulation.

Relevance to India's Internal Security and National Integrity

The impact of terrorism and insurgency on India's internal security is profound, threatening the unity and territorial integrity of the nation. The regions affected by insurgent activities often find themselves in the crosshairs of separatist movements, external terrorist organizations, and internal factions demanding greater autonomy or independence. The instability caused by such threats often exacerbates social, economic, and political challenges. Addressing these issues is paramount to ensuring the nation's security and long-term stability.

Aim of the Committee's Discussion

The primary goal of this committee's discussion is to explore effective and balanced strategies for addressing terrorism and insurgency in disturbed areas. Through this debate, the committee should aim to develop policies that effectively balance the protection of national security with the protection of human rights and dignity. The ultimate objective is to find a sustainable resolution to these conflicts that promotes peace, security, and democratic governance in the affected regions.

Defining "Disturbed Areas"

Legal Definition under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA)

The designation of "disturbed areas" has legal significance under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) of 1958. The Act grants the military and paramilitary forces sweeping powers to maintain public order, including the authority to arrest without warrant, use force (including lethal force) to maintain law and order, and conduct searches without a warrant. The law is invoked in areas where the government believes that insurgent or terrorist activities threaten public safety and national security. Under the AFSPA, areas are designated as "disturbed" based on the perception of escalating insurgency or violence.

Overview of the Regions Classified as Disturbed

The most prominent areas designated as disturbed include:

- Jammu & Kashmir (J&K): A region long embroiled in a violent insurgency fueled by both domestic and cross-border terrorism.
- Northeastern States: States such as Manipur, Nagaland, and Assam have experienced decades-long insurgency, largely driven by ethnic and separatist movements.

Implications of the Designation

Being labelled as a disturbed area has significant implications for both the local population and the security forces. The AFSPA's provisions enable the deployment of military and paramilitary forces to enforce peace, but the draconian nature of the law has drawn criticism for human rights abuses. Moreover, the socio-political fabric of these regions is often further strained, leading to increased alienation and mistrust between the state and the affected communities.

Historical Context

Timeline of Insurgencies in Jammu & Kashmir and the Northeast

- Jammu & Kashmir: The roots of insurgency in J&K date back to the 1980s when the region witnessed an armed uprising. Initially, it was driven by calls for Kashmiri independence or merger with Pakistan, exacerbated by Pakistan's support for cross-border infiltration. Over time, this insurgency evolved into a full-fledged war involving local militants and foreign jihadist groups.
- Northeastern States: The northeast region, consisting of diverse ethnic groups, has experienced several insurgencies since India's independence. Movements like those in Nagaland, Mizoram, and Manipur have been fueled by demands for ethnic autonomy and the historical neglect of the region's socio-economic issues.

Evolution of Counter-Insurgency Policies in India

Over the decades, India's approach to counter-insurgency has evolved. Initially, the focus was on direct military intervention to suppress insurgent forces. However, over time, there was a shift towards a more comprehensive approach involving intelligence gathering, political dialogue, and socio-economic development aimed at addressing the root causes of insurgency.

External Influences (Cross-Border Terrorism, Ideological Funding)

Cross-border terrorism, especially from Pakistan, has played a significant role in fuelling insurgency, particularly in J&K. Similarly, ideological funding and arms supplies from external actors have exacerbated insurgent movements in the Northeast. These external elements complicate internal security efforts, requiring international cooperation to curb the flow of resources to insurgents.

Current Challenges

Nature of Terrorism and Insurgency in J&K, Manipur, Nagaland, and Others

Each of these regions has unique insurgent dynamics, ranging from religious extremism and separatist nationalism in J&K to ethnic struggles and demands for autonomy in the northeast. The insurgencies in these regions are characterized by a blend of local grievances, external interventions, and complex inter-community tensions.

Cross-Border Infiltration and Separatist Movements

One of the key challenges India faces is the infiltration of insurgents and militants across the borders from Pakistan and Myanmar. In J&K, infiltration from across the Line of Control (LoC) remains a persistent threat. In the northeast, insurgent groups often operate from Myanmar's territory, complicating efforts to secure the region.

AFSPA: Necessity vs. Human Rights Concerns

The AFSPA remains a contentious issue. While the law is deemed necessary by the government for maintaining order in disturbed areas, its implementation has led to numerous reports of human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings and arbitrary arrests. The balance between maintaining national security and protecting individual rights is a critical debate in this context.

Civilian Impact, Displacement, and Psychological Warfare

The civilian population in disturbed areas often bears the brunt of the conflict. Thousands of families have been displaced, and the psychological toll of constant violence is immense. The fear of both insurgent forces and security operations creates a climate of constant insecurity.

Government Response and Strategy

Military and Paramilitary Operations

The Indian government has adopted a variety of military and paramilitary operations to address the ongoing insurgencies in the disturbed areas. These operations often involve direct confrontations with insurgents and militants. A notable strategy used is the **Clear, Hold, Build** approach, which involves clearing insurgent strongholds, securing the area to prevent a resurgence, and building socio-economic infrastructure to gain local trust. Some of the most significant operations in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) and the Northeast include:

- **Operation Sarp Vinash (J&K):** Launched in 2002, this operation focused on neutralising the leadership of militant groups in the Kashmir Valley. It involved intense military actions aimed at eliminating key insurgent leaders and weakening militant factions.
- **Operation Meghdoot (J&K):** A more targeted approach involving airstrikes and ground operations, this initiative aimed at controlling the Line of Control (LoC) and preventing cross-border infiltration.

The military's role, however, has often been criticised for its heavy-handed approach, particularly in densely populated areas, which has led to accusations of human rights violations.

Role of Intelligence Agencies and Technology in Counter-Insurgency

Intelligence plays a vital role in the success of counter-insurgency operations. India's intelligence agencies, particularly the **Research and Analysis Wing (RAW)**, **Intelligence Bureau (IB)**, and **Military Intelligence (MI)**, have been integral in gathering information about insurgent groups. The agencies monitor both domestic and cross-border communication channels, track the movements of insurgents, and engage in cyber intelligence gathering.

In addition to traditional intelligence gathering methods, technological advancements have become a crucial element in counter-insurgency strategies. The Indian government has leveraged technologies such as:

- **Drones:** Used for surveillance of insurgent hideouts and border areas, drones provide real-time intelligence and help avoid unnecessary civilian casualties by pinpointing targets more accurately.
- **Geospatial Mapping:** Advanced mapping technologies help security forces in tracking militant movement and planning operations with greater precision.

Peace Accords, Surrender-and-Rehabilitation Schemes

While military operations play an important role, the government has also sought to address insurgency through peace accords and surrender-and-rehabilitation schemes.

- **Surrender and Rehabilitation Policies:** Initiated in the 1990s, these policies offer financial incentives, protection, and a chance at reintegration for militants who wish to lay down their arms. These schemes have been more successful in the Northeast, where numerous insurgents have returned to mainstream life.
- **Peace Accords:** The **Naga Peace Accord** of 2015 and the **Mizoram Peace Accord** of 1986 are examples of attempts to peacefully resolve long-standing insurgencies. These agreements often involve provisions for greater autonomy, cultural rights, and socio-economic development, which address some of the core grievances of insurgent groups.

However, peace accords have often been slow to implement and faced challenges in keeping insurgent groups from resorting to violence after signing agreements. The challenge remains to ensure lasting peace through robust implementation mechanisms and addressing the evolving nature of insurgent demands.

Socio-Economic Development as a Security Strategy

India has also adopted socio-economic development as part of its counter-insurgency strategy. The government focuses on building infrastructure, improving education, providing healthcare, and creating employment opportunities in conflict-affected areas. Initiatives such as the **Prime Minister's Development Package (PMDP)** for Jammu & Kashmir, or the **North Eastern Council** for the Northeast, aim to uplift the socio-economic conditions of the local populations, which insurgents often exploit to gain support.

The underlying premise of these programs is that the roots of insurgency are often tied to socio-economic deprivation, and addressing these issues can reduce the appeal of extremist ideologies.

Legal and Constitutional Issues

AFSPA and Its Parliamentary Oversight

The **Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA)** remains a key piece of legislation in managing insurgency in disturbed areas. The Act, however, has been widely debated within Parliament and among human rights groups. The Act gives the military sweeping powers to conduct operations, arrest suspects without a warrant, and use force, including lethal force, in areas designated as disturbed.

Parliamentary oversight of the AFSPA has been a significant issue. While successive governments argue that the law is essential for national security and maintaining order in disturbed areas, there have been repeated calls for **reform or repeal** due to concerns over excessive military powers and potential human rights abuses.

Some of the most pressing constitutional concerns regarding the AFSPA include:

- **Excessive Use of Force:** The Act allows security forces to use force, including deadly force, in the maintenance of public order, often without adequate judicial oversight. Critics argue that this violates the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution, particularly the right to life and liberty.
- **Accountability:** The law provides the military with immunity from prosecution for actions taken under the AFSPA. This lack of accountability has led to allegations of extrajudicial killings, disappearances, and arbitrary arrests, which have been condemned by human rights organisations.

Supreme Court Rulings on Excessive Force and Accountability

The **Supreme Court of India** has intervened several times in cases related to AFSPA. In 2016, the court ruled that the military should exercise restraint and ensure that the use of force is proportionate. It stressed that military operations should be conducted with the minimum necessary force and that the military must be held accountable for any violations.

A landmark ruling was in the case of **Extra-Judicial Executions in Manipur**, where the Supreme Court ordered the formation of a special investigation team (SIT) to investigate allegations of extrajudicial killings by security forces. The Court's emphasis on accountability, particularly regarding security force operations in disturbed areas, marks a significant push for transparency in counter-insurgency operations.

Human Rights Obligations Under Indian and International Law

India's internal security measures are subject to both national and international human rights laws. Domestically, the **Indian Constitution** guarantees fundamental rights such as the right to life and liberty (Article 21), which are often seen as being at odds with the sweeping powers granted to security forces under the AFSPA.

At the international level, India is a signatory to various **human rights conventions**, including the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)**, which mandates the protection of civilians in conflict zones. International law stresses that while states have the right to defend their territorial integrity, they must ensure that counter-insurgency measures do not result in unnecessary human suffering, torture, or forced disappearances.

Thus, India's approach must align with both constitutional safeguards and international obligations, leading to a nuanced debate about the appropriate level of state response to internal conflict.

Case Studies

2024 Pahalgam Ambush (J&K)

In 2024, the **Pahalgam ambush** in Jammu & Kashmir marked another tragic chapter in the region's history.. This attack highlighted the persistent threat posed by militants, despite extensive security operations in the region. It also demonstrated the growing sophistication of insurgent tactics, involving not only local militants but also cross-border infiltrators from Pakistan-based terror groups. The ambush was part of a series of escalating attacks as militants sought to disrupt the peace process and maintain their influence in the region.

The response to this attack highlighted the tension between aggressive counter-insurgency operations and the safety of civilians, as the military response involved large-scale cordon-and-search operations that often inconvenienced the local populace, leading to further resentment towards the state.

Naga Peace Accord

The **Naga Peace Accord** of 2015 was a breakthrough agreement between the Government of India and the Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM), one of the longest-running insurgent groups in the northeast. The agreement, which promised to address issues of autonomy, economic development, and cultural identity, was seen as a model for resolving insurgencies through dialogue.

Despite initial optimism, the peace process has encountered hurdles. There are concerns over the full implementation of the accord, especially with regard to the demands for greater autonomy by some sections of the Naga community. Additionally, factions within the NSCN-IM have continued to engage in violence, demonstrating the challenge of maintaining peace even after a formal agreement.

Operation All Out in Kashmir

Operation All Out, launched by the Indian Army in 2017, was a comprehensive military offensive aimed at neutralising militant groups in the Kashmir Valley. This operation was marked by its intensity and the mobilisation of substantial security forces, and it targeted both local militants and infiltrators from Pakistan.

While it was initially successful in neutralising a large number of militants, the operation has had mixed results. The Kashmir Valley continues to experience periodic unrest and violence, suggesting that while military operations can degrade insurgent capabilities, they alone cannot bring lasting peace. The root causes of the insurgency—such as political discontent, human rights violations, and cross-border terrorism—must also be addressed.

Imphal or Manipur Ethnic Violence

In **Imphal**, Manipur, ethnic violence erupted in 2021, leading to widespread unrest. The violence primarily involved clashes between different ethnic communities, with insurgent groups exploiting these tensions. The military's intervention helped restore order, but the violence highlighted the complex intersection of ethnic identity and insurgency in the region.

This case underscores the challenge of distinguishing between ethnic violence and insurgent activity, especially in a region with multiple insurgent factions and competing political ideologies. It also brings attention to the need for a more nuanced approach to counter-insurgency that incorporates ethnic reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts.

Key Questions a Resolution Must Answer

1. How can India balance its counter-insurgency efforts with the protection of human rights?
2. Should the AFSPA be repealed or amended to ensure greater accountability for security forces?
3. How can India effectively curb external influences, such as cross-border terrorism and ideological funding, in disturbed areas?
4. What measures can be taken to ensure the rehabilitation and reintegration of former insurgents into society?
5. What role should international cooperation play in addressing terrorism and insurgency in India's disturbed areas?
6. How can the government ensure that counter-insurgency policies do not alienate the local population?