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## **UNIT 8**

## **CASE STUDIES (PUNJAB AND NAGALAND)**

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### **8.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Punjab and Nagaland serve as pertinent case studies for the process of conflict management in the Indian context especially in recent times. The settings of Punjab and Nagaland are almost different; the languages spoken and assimilation into the mainstream of the Indian life and society is also quite different. Punjab has been at the centre of attention from the days of partition to the post-recovery phase of militancy that threatened its existence. Nagaland, on the other hand, presents a different problem. A small state in the remote North-east part of India, of which many people are unaware of, it has its unique culture and tradition. The assimilation process has not been easy and the history of the same is wrought with resistance. It is viewed more as an

attack on its cultural and traditional life. Various efforts have been taken up for secession from the Indian Union and represented by different groups that claim to represent the real aspirations of the people of Nagaland. This Unit familiarises the learner with the understanding of these two complex cases and deals extensively with most of the crucial aspects of the cases.

### **Aims and Objectives**

After going through this Unit, you would be able to understand

- The magnitude and causes of Punjab problem;
- The management of the complex problem;
- The genesis of the problem in Nagaland; and
- Recommendations for the conflict management in Nagaland.

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## **8.2 PUNJAB AND NAGALAND: BRIEF BACKGROUND**

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### **8.2.1 Punjab**

The magnitude of the disorder in Punjab can be appreciated by the scale of violence. Since 1981 almost 25,000 people have been killed, and the number of disappearances and detainees remain unknown although the latter are estimated at from 20,000 to 45,000. At its peak between 1989-92, the insurgency by Sikh militants campaigning for Khalistan, a separate Sikh state, threatened to overwhelm the security forces and effectively sidelined the moderates in the Akali Dal, the mainstream Sikh political party. From May 1987 to February 1992, Punjab was under President's Rule. A series of special laws not only suspended the normal political process in the state but also empowered the security forces to take measures to contain disorder and insurgency. The level of violence increased dramatically from 1987 onward, with the death toll rising steadily from 1,333 in 1987 to 5,265 in 1991 before falling to 3,883 in 1992 and 871 in 1993. During these years, Punjab was often referred to as an area of "darkness" where virtual civil war conditions prevailed.

The Rajiv-Longowal Accord completed against the backdrop of Mrs. Gandhi's assassination, the election of Rajiv Gandhi as Congress (I) leader, and the latter's landslide victory in the 1984 elections. The Accord appeared to mark a new departure in regional policy. The territorial, economic, and religious demands that had fueled the Sikh agitation before 1984, and were held to be non-negotiable by the central Government was now recognised; and for the moderate Akali Dal Longowal AD (L), the accord provided a return to democratic politics. For Rajiv Gandhi, it represented a dynamic breakthrough and a befitting start to his premiership. But the accord could not be implemented.

### **8.2.2 Nagaland**

Nagaland is a small land-locked state that became a state on December 1, 1963. It is bound by Assam in the north and west, Arunachal Pradesh in the northeast, Manipur in the south and Myanmar in the east. Geologically, it is part of the Alpine Himalayan mountain system with thick tropical forests, which used to cover most of the state. Various factors, including indiscriminate logging, have led to large-scale denudation of hillsides and a loss of tree cover. Nagaland is home to 16 major tribes and several sub-tribes each with its own language.

Naga society remains basically rural and a large majority of them live in villages. Each village was an entity to which every resident owed allegiance. The supremacy, dignity, defence, and well being of the village was their pride. Their needs were few and they were self-sufficient, hard working, brave, honest and hospitable. That way of life is fast vanishing and the Nagas today have moved out into urban centers and into varied professions. Yet the basic allegiance that every Naga owes to his village and his clan is still very much a part of their cultural ethos. For most important decisions and at every important occasion in his life, it is to the tribe and the clan and the village that a Naga turns for support and succour.

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### **8.3 PUNJAB: CAUSES OF PROBLEM**

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Following are the various explanations that are in circulation for the Punjab problem.

#### **8.3.1 Sikh Nationalism**

Writing in 1974, Brass observed that "of all the ethnic groups and peoples of north India, the Sikhs come closest to satisfying the definition of a nationality or a nation." The achievement of a "cohesive Sikh identity," he added, had at times the "appearance of an invincible, solidary, national force" (Brass, 1974, p.277). But these compulsions towards nationhood, particularly after 1947, were contained by the parameters of linguistic regionalism set by the new Indian national leadership and its alliance with secular Sikh political elite who successfully divided the community and supported the formation of a Punjabi Suba. By the early 1980s, this delicate equipoise no longer existed; the Dharam Yudh morcha (1982-84), whether by default or design, reopened the Sikh national question, and in the process became the main cause of the Punjab problem.

The rise of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, who did not share the political culture of traditional Akalis, provided a critical catalyst in beginning the process of transforming this consciousness of a discriminated minority into the consciousness of a nation. Moreover this movement possessed an overarching ideology in fundamentalism that entrapped the traditional Akali leadership and sought to demonstrate the individuality of Sikhism. By counter posing a new world view,

fundamentalism gradually undermined the existing ground of moderate Akali politics-electoralism, a lubricating corruption, and participation in the regional political system.

### **8.2.2 Conspiracy Theories**

Conspiracy Theories assert that the events that climaxed in June 1984 were the handiwork of those conspiring to dismember India by external aggression and internal extremism through the use of terror. The White Paper on the Punjab agitation published by the Government of India provides an illustrative example.

The essence of the problem in Punjab was not the demands put forward by the Akali Dal . . . but the maturing of a secessionist and anti-national movement. The Akali Dal leadership allowed the initiative and control over the agitation to pass out of their hands [to the secessionists and terrorists]. The terrorists escalated their violence. With each passing day the situation worsened. The subversive activities of groups inside the Golden Temple had assumed menacing proportions in the context of India's security. The influence of external forces, with deep-rooted interest in the disintegration of India, was becoming evident. The Government was convinced that this challenge to the security, unity and integrity of the country could not be met by the normal law and order agencies at the disposal of the State. It was in these circumstances that the decision was taken to call the army in.

### **8.2.3 Modernising Impact of Green Revolution**

Robin Jeffrey concentrated on the modernising impact of the Green Revolution in Punjab. For him, it accelerated the emergence of mass society: face-to-face village communities disintegrated; urbanisation, consumerism, and mass literacy inflated expectations; ethnic identities became firmer emblems of occupational competition; rootlessness, alienation, and graduate unemployment nurtured messianic tendencies, especially fundamentalism; and, above all, a revolution took place in communication, particularly political communication. Social change outpaced familiar political practices and the ability of institutions to regulate them. Politicians accustomed to factional intrigues among elites now became "adrift on a sea of mass politics." In fact, they responded to these changes by launching "a desperate game in which few holds were barred." "Modernisation," asserts Jeffrey, "played a large part in shaping the Sikh unrest (represented in its extreme form in the demand for a sovereign state) which ultimately led to the storming of the Golden Temple, Mrs. Gandhi's assassination and the 'communal violence' that ripped cruelly through New Delhi in November 1984"(Jeffrey, 1986, p.2,8).

### **8.2.4 Integrated Approach**

Another approach is presented by Murray Leaf for whom the Green Revolution also provides a point of departure. The "Punjab problem," he argued, represented a choice between a pluralistic pattern of economic and political development favoured by the Akali Dal and a Sovietized model of political economy followed by the state's and the nation's administrations. The former stands for decentralisation, ethnic and religious pluralism, and the use of ethical incentives to promote development; the latter, a quasimonopolistic party-government relationship, industrial domination of agriculture, and a distributionist socialist Philosophy. Accordingly, the Akali agitation that crystallised around the Anandpur Sabha Resolution (ASR) should be interpreted as an attempt to create a new developmentalist order. The "Punjab crisis," Leaf concludes, "has not, fundamentally, been a clash between Sikhs and Hindus, nor between Sikhs and Mrs. Indira Gandhi. . . . It has been a clash between two visions of the future and of India's proper political and social constitution"(Leaf,1985, pp.475-89).

The comprehensive outlooks of Jeffrey and Leaf include: the impact of linguistic reorganisation on the Akali Dal's electoral support; the subsequent change in political recruitment to the Akali Dal, in particular the displacement of urban Sikh leadership by Sikh Jats who are held to be the main beneficiaries of the Green Revolution; the Akali Dal's adoption of a broad political and development policy, symbolised by the ASR, to accommodate conflicting caste and group interests while retaining the mobilisatory appeal of religion; the demographic threat to Sikh majority status posed by the growth of migrant labour from other states; and the role of leading personalities, both within the Congress and the Akali Dal, in promoting ethnic conflict.

### **8.2.5 Marxist Approach**

The Marxist interpretations mainly attempt to identify the interaction of three related issues: the "national question," the impact of economic policies in Punjab on the emergence of social classes, and the role of the Indian state. Most Marxist accounts of the "Punjab problem" precede from the "national question," that is, the process of nationality formation in India as an integral part of the development of capitalism. Included in this framework, with the usual dialectical contingencies and ambiguities, are operational definitions of classes, relations of production, and the state. Depending on the assumptions made, India is either categorised as a multinational country, with a concurrent or a desynchronised development of the various nationalities, or is held to possess an "Indian nationality" that is prior to, and transcends, "linguistic regionalism".

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## **8.4 SOME IMPORTANT EFFORTS**

### **8.4.1 Efforts for Normalcy**

For the restoration of normalcy the AD (L) government was dismissed in May 1987 and President's Rule was imposed on the grounds that there was "chaos and anarchy in Punjab." Anti-

terrorism became the main instrument of the centre's policy in the state. Despite the misgivings of most analysts, the policy appears to have succeeded without making major political concessions, either to militants or the moderate Akali leadership. What factors account for this success? There are three different interpretations.

#### **8.4.2 Effective Anti- terrorism**

The most public explanation for the restoration of order in Punjab credits the security forces' effective anti-terrorist policies. Although anti-terrorism had become the main thrust of the centre's policy after May 1987, it was only in mid-1992 that the security forces achieved an impressive breakthrough. Nevertheless, the policy had been vigorously pursued in what Julius Ribeiro called a form of "bullets for bullets," which led to a number of major changes. The security apparatus in Punjab, particularly the Punjab Police, was reorganised. In addition to the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the Border Security Force (BSF), and the regular use of the Army, the Punjab Police was strengthened with the creation of new senior posts and mass recruitment at constable and special constable levels. Anti-terrorist legislation-the National Security Act (1980), Punjab Disturbed Areas Ordinance (1983), Terrorist Areas (Special Courts) Act (1984), and the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA) (1985)-was rigorously enforced with official approval for a "shoot to kill" policy when known offenders were apprehended. Moreover, counter insurgency was given a high priority with the employment of irregular hit squads intended to infiltrate and liquidate terrorist organisations.

The political backing for anti-terrorism began to waiver with the November 1989 Indian election of the National Front government and eight radical Sikh MPs from Punjab out of the state's 13 Lok Sabha constituencies. While V. P. Singh's National Front government sought to introduce more accountability into the operation of the security forces, its successor led by Chandra Shekhar opened a dialogue with the militants that eventually culminated in the agreement to hold Punjab Legislative Assembly (PLA) elections in June 1991. During this period, the morale of the security forces plummeted as some former terrorists prepared to capture power through the ballot box in a contest that was boycotted by the Congress (I). Thus, the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, the massacre of 76 passengers on two trains, and the election of a Congress (I) government at the centre in June 1991 with P.V. Narasimha Rao as the Prime Minister, provided a set of circumstances that led to the reinforcement of political will and commitment to antiterrorism.

In the autumn of 1991, several measures were taken to "pacify" Punjab. K. P. S. Gill, the former chief of police who had ruthlessly prosecuted the antiterrorist campaign, was reinstated in that post. Simultaneously, nine more divisions of the Indian Army were moved into the province to contain militancy. The Army's deployment at its peak in February 1992 during the PLA elections blanketed the state with security, for in addition to 120,000 army personnel, it could call on 53,000 Punjab Police, 28,000 Home Guards, 10,000 Special Police, and over 70,000 paramilitary

personnel. Unlike previous deployments, in Operation Rakshak II launched in November 1991, the Army took a backstage role by providing support to the police and administration to re-establish the authority of the state. This was done by freeing the police from routine duties to undertake more offensive actions and by sealing the Indo-Pakistan border.

Further support for the policy came with the Congress victory in the February 1992 Punjab Legislative Assembly (PLA) elections, which were boycotted by the mainstream Sikh political parties. As the *raison d'être* of the new administration was to combat militancy, Sardar Bewant Singh, the new Chief Minister gave a free hand to security forces to "systematically plan for five years to rid Punjab of militancy." Gill bolstered the police by further recruitment; incentives were offered leading to the elimination of suspected terrorists, and police tactics were reevaluated. Massacres by terrorists were countered by massacres by the security forces, and the new mood of determination was aptly stated by Gill, who declared an "open season on terrorists." The first results of aggressive anti-terrorism became evident in the middle of 1992 when several leading figures of militant organisations were killed. Thereafter, despite the efforts of the militants to regroup and target families of the police, the security forces gained the upper hand. This turnabout was marked by a number of surrender ceremonies of terrorists and the death of Manochahal, the leader of the Bhindernwale Tiger Force, in February 1993. With the latter's death, most top-ranking militants had been eliminated and their organisations rapidly disintegrated.

#### **8.4.3 Punjab's Social Structure**

A more interesting perspective on how order was reestablished in Punjab places the role of counter-insurgency in a broader context. It suggests that the success of anti-terrorism was not simply the result of actions taken by the security forces, but rather that the failure of the militants-and therefore the success of the security forces-can be explained by the characteristics of Punjab's social structure, and in particular the values of Jat Sikh society. The militancy was largely based on support within the Jat Sikh peasantry. Historically, studies of Jat Sikhs have shown the continuation of certain types of social behaviour: high propensity toward factionalism, competitiveness, egalitarianism, and pursuit of vertical linkages to enhance the accumulation of property and prestige.

As well as utilising cultural Jat Sikh history-heroism, resistance, and an inevitable will to power-the militants in their daily operations became ensnared in existing social networks, including local feuds and factional enmities, kinship retribution, and the social underworld of criminality as well as in the private accumulation of wealth and personal aggrandisement. Slowly the support, which the militants were getting, vanished.

#### **8.4.4 Managed Disorder**

#Although the relative ease with which the security forces penetrated the militants can perhaps be attributed to the social structure, it has also revived speculation that troubles in Punjab were carefully orchestrated, representing a form of "managed disorder." Such conspiratorial explanations would be difficult to entertain were it not for the strange congruence of events before and after 1984 and the fact that this view is strongly held by the main Sikh political force in the state-the Akalis. Whereas most serious analysts agree that the role of Pakistan and the Sikh diaspora in supporting the militants' insurgency was a contributing factor to the troubles, few have ever doubted the Indian state's capacity to impose its authority in the province.

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### **8.5 NAGALAND**

#### **8.5.1 Violence in Nagaland**

Violence slowly began in Nagaland and the second half of the 1950s spilling into the 1960 saw some of the worst acts of violence. The Naga aspiration for a separate homeland in which they themselves determine their own political, administrative and socio-economic affairs is the root cause of the problem. There are also serious allegations of playing into foreign hands and secessionist forces against them. There is increasing antagonism between the Nagas and the Centre. For easier understanding, the history of the ongoing conflict in Nagaland may be broadly divided into these stages.

1. The period up to the early part of 1950s when there was no division among the Naga people and there was no physical violence.
2. The second stage, from around mid-1950s to the latter half of 1970s when armed conflict began and disunity set in among the Nagas.
3. The third stage from around early 1980s when gradually the underground militants began started having differences among themselves. Factions merged and today there are four of them, the most powerful being the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (led by Isak Chisi Swu and Th. Muivah), and which is negotiating for an overall settlement with the Government of India. The others are the NSCN (Khaplang), the Federal Government of Nagaland (Adinno, under the NNC) and a NNC faction under Thinsolie Keyho.
4. Naga society today is ridden with mistrust and violence.

In terms of armed conflict itself, Naga society, today has become the oldest sustained conflict situation in the world. From head hunting to fighting the British, from being a battlefield in World War II to the present confrontation, the entire known history of the Nagas has been one of conflict. Naga society has not experienced the kind of 'normalcy' that is meant when this phrase is used. While there is no difference of opinion in calling the decades old conflict a political one and security forces have been pitted against Naga militants, the situation on the ground is



somewhat more complex. The various factions are not united and there is constant infighting and frequent killings. The clash of interests between the over ground (State political groups) and the underground (Naga militant groups) too has resulted in armed clashes and bloodshed.

### **8.5.2 Effects of Conflict**

Most of the country's development programmes have made little inroad into this remote hill area and although the government has poured millions of rupees for the state's development, there is little evidence of its use. Naga society, on its part, has been unable to demand accountability from its political leaders and bureaucrats as they had their own axe to grind.

People have had to pay an extraordinarily heavy price for the ongoing conflict. Community health has been virtually crippled due to militancy and counter-militancy by state forces. There has been a marked increase in psychiatric disorders, attributable in great part to the highly militarised atmosphere. Immunisation, nutrition, maternal and child health care programmes have suffered and even abandoned in rural areas due to lack of staff, essential medicines and infrastructure. Most district hospitals have become non-functional because they lack facilities, staff or have been partially destroyed.

The exact economic cost of the conflict and militarisation is difficult to calculate but the cost in human lives, infrastructure, education and health is enormous. The people are bothered by the loss of work culture, love, respect and dignity in their everyday social interactions. They can trust no one, not even people they know well. Insecurity is writ large in every aspect of their daily lives and there is a visible increase in crime. Their homes cannot be left unlocked as in the recent past and women cannot move around freely for fear of molestation and extortion. Poor families are apprehensive about the lack of food security too.

Extortion demands by various factions for taxes discourage many young people from setting up business establishments; shops close early due to the same reason. Incidents of extortion and corruption are going up steadily and there is no punitive action or check. Even in government offices, top officials are often harassed by factions, and also those posing as members of factions in their demands for money.

Highly mobile rebel groups take shelter with villagers, ambush security forces and then move on. In many cases, the security forces have retaliated by descending on the village and unleashing what are known as counter-insurgency operations. This has translated into harassment for the local civilian population, including sexual abuse of women and girls and other human rights violations. Villagers are accused of and frequently formally charged with aiding and abetting the militants. State response has, so far, been to see this as a threat to national security and to react

with a number of sweeping laws that enable the suspension of democratic and representative processes.

### **8.5.3 Conflict Management: The State Efforts**

Though the peace talks between the key insurgent groups and the Indian government have been initiated, these decades of insurgency have naturally had a debilitating and disastrous effect in terms of the state's infrastructure and a general feeling of insecurity and fear.

Within a span of six years three Acts were passed: the Assam Maintenance of Public Order (Autonomous District) Act was promulgated in the Naga Hills in 1953; the Assam Disturbed Area Act in 1955 and the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act in 1958. Since then Naga areas have been intermittently under the AFSPA, which was amended in 1972. The AFSPA gives wide discretionary powers to security forces to use force as a method of warning, to search any shelter that could be a hideout and to conduct searches without warrants. The AFSPA was extended to all states and Union Territories. All the laws mentioned have been in force in various parts of the North East at all times since independence and they allow the state to suspend civilian rule for an indefinite period without review.

All these add to the confusion and social unrest in the state. It may be concluded that conflict definitely has a direct or indirect relationship to the growing menace of social problems here.

### **8.5.4 Human Rights Violations**

Human rights groups and activists allege violations by security forces and there are reports of violations by insurgent factions as well. Besides direct violations, citizens, especially women, face regular mistreatment during search operations on roads and in residential areas. The brusque, rude questioning, the touching and feeling up of women during body searches is ugly and humiliating. Besides innumerable incidents of rape, harassment and gendered punishment, the everyday existence of woman has been full of humiliation and terror. In situations of economic and environmental destruction women find themselves totally alone, left to fend for themselves and for traumatised children after the death and torture of husbands, sons or fathers. Many crimes committed against women go unreported. Hence in many cases, culprits go unpunished. In certain cases, if a crime is committed by underground cadres, the authorities in that particular faction take the matter into their own hands, and punish the guilty according to their rules. In some cases this means execution.

### **8.5.6 Recommendations for Conflict Management**

The following are some of the major concerns which must be addressed if peace and normalcy are to return to the state:

1. Strengthening of peace process by creating a conducive atmosphere for peace dialogue; creating democratic space for people to decision making process.
2. A key to change lies in pressing forward strongly with the communitisation process in the education system that involves local teachers, governing groups and villagers in a participatory exercise.
3. The government should help women, especially in the rural areas, in specific ways. A marketing outlet for women in the rural areas, especially for agricultural produce is required desperately. It is also important to help women make use of whatever training they have gone through. NGOs also can come together and help each other in getting together such schemes.
4. Politicians feel that if a political settlement is reached, reconciliation will follow. But the church and prominent independent figures say that peace and reconciliation should come hand in hand and that the first step is to reach an internal settlement among the four armed factions.
5. Review the Armed Forces Special Powers Act especially in the light of the period of ceasefire.
6. Address the issue of mental health seriously. Recognise the need for rehabilitation centres and counselling centres for traumatised people. These counselling centres can be integrated to the church and conform to the culture of the people. Nagas rarely give expression for their emotional sufferings, and they may not readily respond to conventional Counselling centers. So initiation at the church /women/tribal organisations level would be more effective, because these organisations are integral to the Naga way of life.
7. Organisations, Government, Naga national workers, Media, Police and security forces, like the CRPF, BSF, etc to be sensitised about human rights issues.
8. More women cells and recruitment drive for women personnel in the police department.
9. Traditional and customary laws which are discriminatory against women should be identified. In this regard, thorough research involving every tribe and different clans within the tribes need to be carried out and changes made at the earliest.
10. Rehabilitation schemes and compensation for widows and orphans who have been affected by conflict. (This should be done on a case to case basis. Tribal organisations/ Hohos, church or Other voluntary organisations involved in this kind of issues can recommend people in their areas).
11. Government schemes should be made more accessible to genuine cases. Simpler steps should be assumed to implement programmes. More effective communication strategies should be adopted to communicate about these programmes, so that even rural people can avail of the opportunities. There should also be a mechanism to check whether the authorities concerned are carrying out the specifications properly, so as to discourage corruption.

12. Justice corresponding to the severity of the crime committed, particularly crimes against women, should be addressed. Delays and lengthy court procedures should be erased.
13. Coordination must be a central component in the effective implementation of a comprehensive peace building strategy. Different groups involved in peace building initiatives could find a common platform to air their views collectively, which would be more effective.

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## 8.6 SUMMARY

Whatever factors are held to be critical in the undermining of the militancy in Punjab, a number of implications arise for the political system in the state and for the management of regional conflicts generally. First, effective antiterrorism policies should be effectively introduced. Second, if there is some validity in the social structure and "managed dis- order" perspectives, then despite the reservations about the repeatability of effective anti-terrorism, one conclusion is obvious: problems of legitimate governance apart, the government has an enormous capacity to impose and sustain order in the social conditions pertaining in Punjab where the threat from militancy arises. Similarly, the demands for separation have been constant in Nagaland. Therefore, for conflict management to be effective, efforts should be made to address the genuine developmental aspects like infrastructure, welfare of women and children, education and health care that effectively lead to confidence building measures.

Conflicts are devastating to social and cultural forms because they impinge at the level of the whole society. Every person who has lived through the period of conflict and experienced at first hand the effect of the armed conflict is aware of the wide-ranging ramifications that the atmosphere of violence has had and (in some cases) is still having on them. The severity of the damage is often not easy to quantify but there are deep psychological, physical and social scars. The economic scars too are very visible in terms of the low development paradigms. For individuals, as for a society, things can never be the same and a new world view is needed.

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## 8.7 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. What were the main causes of problem of terrorism in Punjab?
2. How was the problem managed in Punjab?
3. Give an account of the problem of violence in Nagaland.
4. What are the recommendations for conflict management in Nagaland?

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