



Mains Practice Question

Q: What are the causes and implications of the Khalistan issue in India? How can India address the Khalistan issue? (250 words)

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Approach

- Start your answer with a brief introduction of the Khalistan issue.
- Write Causes and Implications of the Khalistan issue.
- Explain India's measures to address the Khalistan issue.
- Conclude accordingly.

Introduction

- The Khalistan issue refers to a Sikh separatist movement that seeks to establish a Sikh homeland within the Punjab region.
- The movement has its roots in the historical, religious, linguistic and political factors that have shaped the Sikh identity and consciousness.
- The movement has caused violence, terrorism, communal clashes and human rights violations, affecting both India and the Sikh community.

Body

Causes of the Khalistan Issue:

- The partition of India in 1947, which resulted in the division of Punjab and the loss of Sikh holy sites in Pakistan.
- The linguistic reorganization of states in 1966, which created a Sikh-majority Punjab but also reduced its territorial size and economic potential.
- The Anandpur Sahib Resolution of 1973, which demanded greater autonomy and cultural rights for Punjab, but was seen as a secessionist threat by the central government.
- The rise of Jarnail Singh Bhindra Wale, a militant leader who advocated for a separate Khalistan and mobilized his followers against the perceived oppression and discrimination by the Hindu majority.
- The Operation Blue Star of 1984, which was a military assault on the Golden Temple, the holiest shrine of Sikhs, to flush out Bhindra Wale and his armed supporters. This resulted in heavy casualties and damage to the temple and sparked widespread anger and resentment among Sikhs.
- The assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards in 1984, which triggered anti-Sikh riots across India, killing thousands of Sikhs and displacing many more.
- The emergence of various militant groups and factions that carried out violent attacks against the state and civilians, both in India and abroad, throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

Implications of the Khalistan Issue:

- The loss of lives, property and human rights due to violence, terrorism, counterterrorism and communal clashes.

- The erosion of trust, harmony and cooperation between different communities, especially Hindus and Sikhs, within Punjab and across India.
- The alienation and radicalization of some sections of the Sikh youth, who feel marginalized and discriminated by the mainstream society and politics.
- The interference and influence of external forces, such as Pakistan, which have supported and funded some Khalistani groups for their strategic interests.
- The damage to the image and reputation of India as a secular and democratic nation that respects diversity and pluralism.

Measures to Address the Khalistan Issue:

▪ Dialogue:

- The Indian government should engage in dialogue with various sections of the Sikh community, including moderates, radicals, and diaspora groups, to understand their grievances, aspirations, and perspectives.
- The dialogue should be based on mutual respect, trust, and goodwill, and should aim at finding common ground and building consensus on contentious issues.

▪ Development:

- The Indian government should invest in the economic development of Punjab and ensure that it gets its fair share of resources, opportunities, and benefits.
- The government should also address the problems of unemployment, drug abuse, environmental degradation, and agrarian distress that plague Punjab.
- The government should also promote Punjab's culture, heritage, and tourism potential.

▪ Justice:

- The Indian government should ensure justice for the victims and survivors of the violence and human rights violations that occurred during the Khalistan movement.
- The government should also punish the perpetrators and instigators of the anti-Sikh riots and other crimes.
- The government should also offer compensation, rehabilitation, and reconciliation to the affected families and communities.

▪ Aggressive Diplomacy:

- Government should adopt aggressive diplomacy to counter the propaganda originating on foreign soil such as Canada.

Conclusion

- The Khalistan issue is a complex and sensitive one that requires a holistic and inclusive approach from the government.
- The government should address the legitimate grievances and aspirations of the Sikh community in a peaceful and democratic manner while safeguarding the unity and integrity of India.