

PRAYAS4IAS

AN INITIATIVE BY THE PRAYAS INDIA

SPECIAL ISSUE SEPTEMBER WEEK 1



Special Issue

September (Week 1)

Contents

All about Militancy in Assam's Dima Hasao	2
What did America achieve in Afghanistan in 20 years?.....	3





All about Militancy in Assam's Dima Hasao

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *Recently, a suspected militant attack left five truckers dead in Assam's Dima Hasao hill district. As per reports, a convoy of about seven trucks — carrying clinker and coal from a factory — were fired upon, and then set ablaze. According to police, intelligence inputs suggest that an outfit called the Dimasa National Liberation Army (DNLA) was behind the attack.*

What is the DNLA?

- It is a new insurgent group, formed in 2019. It has not claimed responsibility for the attack.
- When it was formed, it had said in a release that it was “committed to revamp the national struggle and fight for the liberation of a sovereign, independent Dimasa Nation”.
- It aimed to “develop a sense of brotherhood among the Dimasa and also to rebuild the trust and faith among the Dimasa society for regaining the Dimasa Kingdom”.
- The group runs on extortion and taxation. It draws its support and sustenance from the NSCN(IM) [of Nagaland]

Who are the Dimasas?

- The Dimasas (or Dimasa-Kacharis) are the earliest known rulers and settlers of Assam, and now live in Dima Hasao, Karbi Anglong, Cachar, Hojai and Nagaon districts of central and southern Assam, as well as parts of Nagaland.
- Edward Gait, in his book ‘A History of Assam’ describes the Dimasa-Kacharis as “aborigines” or the “earliest known inhabitants of the Brahmaputra Valley”.
- Prior to Ahom rule, the Dimasa kings — believed to be the descendants of the rulers of the ancient Kamarupa kingdom — ruled large parts of Assam along the south bank of the Brahmaputra between the 13th and 16th centuries.
- Their earliest historically known capital was Dimapur (now in Nagaland), and later Maibang in North Cachar Hills.
- It was a powerful kingdom and had almost all of the southern belt of Brahmaputra under its control in the 16th century.

What is the history of militancy in Dima Hasao?

- The hill districts of Assam — Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao (earlier North Cachar Hills) — have had a long history of insurgency by Karbi and Dimasa groups which peaked in the mid-1990s, and was rooted in a core demand of statehood.
- Both districts are now protected under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, and allows for greater political autonomy and decentralised governance in certain tribal areas of the Northeast.
- They are run by the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council and the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council respectively.
- In Dima Hasao, the demand for statehood began in the 1960s, along with other tribal sections of undivided Assam.
- While new states such as Meghalaya were carved out, Karbi Anglong and North Cachar remained with Assam on a promise of more power by the then Congress government, including implementation of Article 244 (A), which allows for an ‘autonomous state’ within Assam in certain tribal areas. This was never implemented.
- A demand for a full-fledged state, ‘Dimaraji’, gathered steam, and led to the formation of the militant Dimasa National Security Force (DNSF) in 1991. The group surrendered in 1995, but its commander-in-chief, Jewel Gorlosa, broke away and formed the Dima Haram Daogah (DHD).



- After the DHD began talks with the government in 2003, Gorlosa broke away again and formed the Dima Haram Daogah (Jewel) (DHD-J), with an armed wing called Black Widow.
- Gorlosa was arrested in 2009, signed a ceasefire agreement in 2012, and joined mainstream politics. In 2017, a National Investigation Agency (NIA) court convicted him and 14 others for diverting government funds to insurgent groups for terror activities between 2006 and 2009.

What did America achieve in Afghanistan in 20 years?

(Source: [The Hindu](#))

Context: *For the first time since October 2001, there are no American troops in Afghanistan. While defending his decision to pull back the forces, U.S. President Joe Biden said on Tuesday he was left with only two options after the withdrawal agreement the Trump administration signed with the Taliban in February 2020 — either honour the deal or renege on it and send in more troops to continue the war.*

What did the U.S. gain from it?

- Mr. Biden said on Tuesday the U.S. invaded Afghanistan not because it was ruled by the Taliban but because the September 11 attacks originated from Afghanistan. In early July, he said “America didn’t go to Afghanistan to nation-build”.
- America’s primary objectives were to disrupt al-Qaeda and capture or kill Osama bin Laden. The argument is that the Taliban were not America’s main enemy and defeating them was not its primary objective.
- While it’s true that America went to Afghanistan because the 9/11 attacks originated from that country, Mr. Biden’s assessment of the Taliban was not shared by his predecessors, as their actions suggest.
- The Taliban had offered to surrender on modest terms in December 2001, but President George W. Bush rejected the offer.
- America did not pull back from Afghanistan after the Taliban regime fell. America did not withdraw after bin Laden was killed in 2011 either.
- The U.S. stayed in Afghanistan, propping up the Islamic Republic because American leaders were of the view that a return of the Taliban to power would derail the global war on terror.
- While it’s still debatable whether the Taliban have changed over the past 20 years, American foreign policy thinking has clearly changed during this period.
- If the U.S. saw the Taliban, which hosted al-Qaeda, as part of the problem in 2001 and removing them from power as a key goal of the war on terror, in 2021, it extricated a victorious Taliban from the war on terror. The Taliban are now a problem of the Afghans, not of Americans, according to the Biden doctrine.

War on terror

- When the U.S. invaded Afghanistan, it was touted as the first step in what Mr. Bush called a global war on terrorism. Where does that war stand now?
- In 2001, al-Qaeda was largely concentrated in Afghanistan. The U.S. invasion and the fall of the Taliban led to al-Qaeda’s disintegration. The terrorist outfit was driven underground, but was not defeated. Over the years, new branches of al-Qaeda sprang up in different parts of the world.
- Of them, the deadliest was al-Qaeda in Iraq, which was led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi after the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003.
- The Jordan-born terrorist was killed in a U.S. strike in 2006, but the AQI transformed into the Islamic State of Iraq, which later became the dreaded Islamic State (IS) that declared a Caliphate and established a proto-state across Iraq and Syria in 2014.



Modest gains

- The IS's physical infrastructure was destroyed by both coordinated and separate war efforts by a group of powers, including the U.S., Iran, Iraq, Kurdish and Shia militias, Syria and Russia.
- But the rump of the outfit continues to operate in parts of Syria and Iraq. The IS has also established provinces in other parts of the world, including the IS West Africa Province (ISWAP) and the IS Khorasan Province (ISKP) that claimed responsibility for the August 26 Kabul blasts in which about 200 people were killed, including 13 Americans.
- Al-Qaeda has also established a strong presence in Africa, particularly in the Sahel region, where they have carried out dozens of attacks in recent years, killing hundreds.
- So if al-Qaeda was an organised terrorist machinery concentrated in Afghanistan in 2001, it's now a decentralised amalgam that has metastasised across the world.
- The U.S. can take credit for disrupting al-Qaeda's networks in Afghanistan — which it thinks has neutralised the terrorists' capability to strike the American mainland — and for killing bin Laden.
- But the question American policymakers and public faces is whether it was required to stay 20 years in Afghanistan, spend over \$2 trillion and lose over 2,300 soldiers to meet these modest objectives.