

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2024 · 10 marks

“Relative deprivation is a major source of ethnic conflict.”
Elaborate the statement with relevant examples.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 conflict not from difference but from perceived disadvantage → Gurr's 'ought-is' gap
R2 relative deprivation defined → a group compares status / resources / recognition → identity becomes grievance

Body flow

deprivation mechanism (economic, social, cultural, language exclusion) → North-East (Assam, Nagaland): neglect + weak development → Bodo: land, language, institutional exclusion → Telangana: deprivation within a larger state → **Guru**: Dalit exclusion (bottom-up) → **Yadav**: Jat / Patidar status-anxiety (dominant castes fear decline)

Counter-view

deprivation supplies the grievance but is not sufficient → it erupts as conflict only when politically mobilised

Conclusion routes

R1 deprivation = grievance, mobilisation = trigger
R2 the answer lies in recognition, representation and equitable development

Ethnic conflict rarely grows from mere difference; it grows from the perception of being unfairly left behind. Ted Robert Gurr calls this as relative deprivation i.e. "the tension that develops from a discrepancy between the 'ought' and the 'is' of collective value satisfaction.

Conflict becomes likely where groups face economic discrimination, unequal access to land, cultural suppression or denial of language rights. The insurgencies in Assam and Nagaland grew from perceived neglect and weak development. The Bodo movement combined grievances over land, language & institutional exclusion while Telangana expressed deprivation within a larger state.

Gopal Guru links Dalit mobilisation to long-standing social & economic exclusion. Yogendra Yadav argues that Jats and Patidars seek reservations when they fear loss of status.

Deprivation therefore supplies the grievance, though it hardens into conflict when politically mobilised. Recognition and equitable development remain the confirmed response.