

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2023 · 15 marks

Narrate the various ways in which rapid environmental degradation is posing a serious threat to human security. Illustrate your answer with suitable examples.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 security widened beyond the military → protection of resources + survival of populations → **Buzan**: environment now on the security agenda

R2 degradation as a transnational, non-traditional threat → several connected pathways to human insecurity

Body flow

resource conflict (water/diamonds/oil) in scarcity → **Homer-Dixon**: supply/demand/structural scarcity → resource capture + ecological marginalisation → weakened states → insurgency + communal violence → threats to food/energy/economic security → livelihood loss → climate-induced migration + displacement → strain on borders + stability

Counter-view

the burden falls unevenly → **Buzan**/Copenhagen securitisation (existential framing, extraordinary responses) → **Beck**'s Risk Society: manufactured risks contested + unequally distributed → Global South disempowered → Maldives: existential threat, little voice

Conclusion routes

R1 environmental insecurity inseparable from injustice + inequality → a transnational threat demands cooperation → SDGs as a blueprint for resilience

R2 Beck: shift from short-term national interest to long-term planetary ethics

Security today extends well beyond military concerns to the protection of vital resources & the survival conditions of populations. Rapid environmental degradation has emerged as a non-traditional security threat whose effects cross national borders.

Barry Buzan places the environment within the present-day security agenda. It endangers human security through several connected pathways. Thomas F. Homer-Dixon shows how environmental scarcity i.e. supply-induced, demand induced & structural drives resource capture & ecological marginalisation.

Degradation weakens the material foundations of human life, threatening food, energy & economic security together. As livelihoods erode, climate-induced migration & displacement follows, straining borders & unsettling political stability.

Buzan & Copenhagen School understand climate change through securitisation, framing environmental threats as existential issues that justify extraordinary responses. Ulrich Beck's Risk Society thesis argues that such manufactured risks are politically contested & unequally distributed, disempowering vulnerable states of the Global South.

Small island states like the Maldives face an existential threat to their very territory, but hold little voice in forums dominated by industrial powers.

Environmental insecurity is therefore inseparable from social injustice & inequality. SDGs offering a shared blueprint to address the root causes & build resilience to the severest impacts.