

Q : no : 02

What do you know about ethnicity in Pakistan? Do you think its emergence as a serious threat to national integration of Pakistan? Explain your opinion with reference to various scholarly evidences and suggest your recommendation to deal with it.

1. Introduction:

Ethnicity in Pakistan refers to the distinct cultural, linguistic and regional identities that shape the country's social fabric, with major groups including Punjabis, Sindhis, Pashtuns, Baloch, and Muhajirs. However, the smaller groups include Kashmiris, Bhaluis, Hazaras, Pakhtis and many more. As Hamza Alavi noted, "The Pakistani state has historically struggled to balance the demands of its diverse ethnic groups with the imperatives of central authority," highlighting the persist challenges of pluralism.

While diversity is strength, ethnic rivalries - often fueled by political neglect, uneven resources distribution and lack of fair representation - can give rise to separatist movements, thereby posing a great threat to national integration. So, it is high time to deal with it by giving the provinces their legitimate share of power, promoting equitable distribution of resources, strengthening the rule of law and curbing politics of patronage. To conclude a Nation Action Plan (NAP) is crucial to suppress elements that trigger parochial sentiments, promote balkanization in the country.

discuss the 1st part of the ans in details well.

keep the introduction a bit brief....

2. Emergence of Ethnicity as a Serious Threat to National Integration

a) Political Centralization and Power Imbalance

Since independence, excessive centralization has bred ethnic resentment. Punjab's

dominance in state affairs has led to alienation in smaller provinces. Jajbhelot stresses, "to decentralise provinces is to strengthen them and not weaken them."

The 1971 East Pakistan crisis was the earliest manifestation, while Balochistan's insurgency (2024-25) continues today, with separatist attacks in Turbat and Quadian showing how centralized control fuels militancy.

b) Unequal Resource Distribution

Perception of Punjab receiving disproportionate development funds remains widespread.

The NFC Award disputes illustrate these tensions. Akbar Zaidi's Issues in

Pakistan's Economy (2015) highlights that

"economic disparity across provinces perpetuates ethnic nationalism more than any ideology". Current

examples include CPEC's routing disputes, with KP and Balochistan leaders

accusing the centre of favouring Punjab.
Sindh's criticism during the 2022-23 floods,
accusing centre of neglect, also neglects
this imbalance.

c) Language and Cultural Marginalization

Language has historically been a flashpoint-
the Bengali Language Movement (1952)
was an early warning of cultural neglect.
Today, groups like Sindhis and Pashtuns
demand recognition of their languages
in curricula. Tanig Rahman in Language
and Politics in Pakistan (1996) notes,
"Language has been central to ethnic
identity in Pakistan, and its suppression
has led to recurring conflicts." Current
grievances include Pashtun Tahazuz Movement
(PTM) rallies (2023-24) demanding acknowl-
edgment of Pashto heritage for cultural alienation.

d) Ethnic Conflict and Violence

Ethnicity has repeatedly escalated into open violence. The 1971 Separation of East Pakistan, multiple Baloch insurgencies. According to Jaffrelot,

"Pakistan has never been able to convert its ethnic pluralism into a cohesive national identity, leading instead to recurrent secessionist violence" (Pakistan: Nationalism without a Nation?

2002). The killing of security forces in Kech, Balochistan underlines how violent ethnic struggle remain alive today.

e) Unequal Representation in State Institutions.

State institutions are dominated by Punjab-origin officers claims made by other provinces.

Ayesh Jalal in the struggle for Pakistan (2014)

remarks "The over-representation of one province in the state's power structures has alienated others from the federal project."

The Pashtun Tahajuz Movement (PTM) often cites this imbalance, demanding fair inclusion in state organ.

f) External Interference

Foreign powers have exploited Pakistan's ethnic fissures. India's involvement in supporting separatist in East Pakistan in the Past and in Today, Pakistan alleges Indian backing Baloch insurgents. The arrest of RAW agent Kulbhushan Jadhav in 2016, accused of aiding Baloch militants, is often cited. As Jaffrelot notes, "external actors have repeatedly instrumented ethnicity to destabilise Pakistan."

3. Recommendations

i) Strengthening Federalism:

Implement the spirit of 18th Amendment by empowering provinces, ensuring autonomy and reducing central dominance.

minimum description under a heading should be 5 lines.

ii) Equitable Resource Allocation

Reform the NFC Award to guarantee transparent, need-based distribution, Address provincial concern over projects like CPEC.

iii) Promoting Cultural Recognition

Recognize and celebrate all provincial languages in curricula, media and official platform to reduce alienation. ✓

iv) Inclusive Institutions

Establish quota reforms to ensure fairer representation of smaller provinces in civil service, military and judiciary. ✓

add and highlight references/examples against these arguments/

v) Dialogue and Reconciliation

Initiate political dialogue with movements like PTM and Baloch leaders rather than relying solely on force. ✓

vi) Countering External Interference

Strengthen border security, diplomacy and intelligence to limit foreign exploitation of ethnic grievances. ✓

4. Conclusion

To conclude, a National Action Plan (NAP) is indispensable to suppress the elements that trigger parochial sentiments, promoting balkanization in the country. Ethnicity in Pakistan continues to be both a source of cultural richness and a challenge to national unity. Its politicization - through centralization, resource inequality and cultural suppression - has turned it into a serious threat to the country's sovereignty. So it has to be dealt with it through equitable governance, cultural recognition and inclusive institutions. It can transform Pakistan's diversity into its greatest strength. Ultimately, the survival of Pakistan's national integration depends not on coercion but on embracing pluralism within a just federal system.