

Abstract

Pakistan's poly ethnic social fabric is a sensitive terrain to navigate for policy makers, with conflict lingering along ethnocentric lines among others. Divided between few major and territorially aligned ethnic groups, Pakistan's political history depicts various attempts at ethnic integration, with mixed results. The Pashtun community in particular has shown resilience in sustaining their ethnic identity, while showing both integrative and irredentist potential at different points in time in Pakistan's history. In post 9/11 scenario, Pashtun ethnocentrism emerged as an extremist threat to the state, based on religious and political grounds. The research traces intrinsic and extrinsic factors which enable ethnocentrism in Pashtuns and explores pathways through which it develops into its extremities. The study does not aim to provide a granular research, incorporating all tangents of Pashtun nationalism, rather it seeks to create a concise yet insightful portrayal of the elements within Pashtun ethnic culture that may be associated with radicalism. Additionally, it intends to assess the extent to which these cultural aspects contribute to ethnic violence. Furthermore, the study will examine the roles played by key stakeholders in addressing the security challenges posed by Pashtun ethnocentrism, and implicitly explore the feasibility of mitigating these threats.