

## SUB-NATIONAL RESENTMENT AND NATIONAL SECURITY: A STUDY OF THE PASHTUN COMMUNITY IN PAKISTAN

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### Abstract

This study investigates the growing sense of resentment among Pakistan's sub-nationalities, with a particular focus on the Pashtun community in District Swabi, and examines its implications for national security. Employing a qualitative research design, data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with students, elders, political activists, and community leaders. The findings reveal four major sources of resentment: political exclusion, economic disparity, cultural marginalization, and ineffective government response. Respondents expressed concerns over inadequate political representation, unequal resource allocation, and the neglect of their language and cultural identity in the national discourse. These factors have fostered a strong feeling of alienation, undermining trust in state institutions and threatening social cohesion. Although participants largely rejected violence, they warned that persistent neglect could breed instability and be exploited by anti-state groups. The study concludes that inclusive governance, equitable economic development, and cultural recognition are essential for mitigating tensions and strengthening national unity. By shedding light on the interplay between ethnic identity and state policy, this research provides valuable insights and practical recommendations for policymakers seeking to promote national harmony and sustainable peace in Pakistan.

### Introduction

Pakistan is a country characterized by its rich ethnic diversity, comprising multiple sub-national groups such as Punjabis, Pashtuns, Baloch, Sindhis, and others. Although the state officially promotes a unified national identity, underlying ethnic, linguistic, and regional differences have persisted since independence. The failure to acknowledge and accommodate these differences has, over time, resulted in a growing sense of marginalization and resentment among various sub-nationalities. One of the prominent groups facing such issues is the Pashtun community, particularly in areas

like District Swabi in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Historically, the Pashtuns have been integral to Pakistan's socio-political and military framework. However, repeated instances of political exclusion, economic disparities, and cultural marginalization have led to increased frustration and alienation. Centralized governance, inadequate representation in decision-making processes, limited resource allocation, and negative stereotyping in national discourse have further contributed to these grievances. The sense of being politically sidelined, economically exploited, and culturally ignored

has led many within these communities to question their place within the state structure. This growing resentment poses not only a challenge to national unity but also a direct threat to Pakistan's internal security. Alienated populations are more likely to become disenchanted with state institutions, leading to a decline in trust, increased political agitation, and in some cases, alignment with separatist or anti-state narratives.

District Swabi, with its deeply rooted Pashtun identity, serves as a critical case for understanding these dynamics. The district's residents often express concerns about being overlooked in national policies, having limited access to quality education, employment, and development resources, and feeling culturally suppressed within the broader Pakistani narrative. This sense of exclusion, if unaddressed, may fuel wider discontent and potentially destabilize national integration efforts.

This study explores the lived experiences of individuals in District Swabi to understand the nature and extent of sub-national resentment and its implications for national security. By analyzing voices from the ground, this research aims to highlight the pressing need for inclusive policies, equitable representation, and respect for cultural diversity as essential pillars of a stable and unified Pakistan.

Baloch, Pashtun, Sindhi, Punjabi, Seraiki, and Muhajir are merely some of the numerous sub-national identities that constitute the multiethnic Pakistani state. The state has consistently given high priority to territorial and religious coherence as the cement of national identity, but this has often involved neglecting and marginalizing the ethnic and cultural diversity of the citizenry (Waseem., 2010). Most sub-national groups have been progressively marginalized as a consequence, and their grievances are based on stateimposed coercive measures, cultural rights abuses, uneven economic growth, and political underrepresentation (Siddiq, 2014).

Provinces such as Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where demands for greater autonomy and authority over local resources have often been dismissed through repression and not dialogue, have become further

alienated from the centralized state architecture and suffocating civil-military bureaucracy (Akhtar, 2018). These tensions have mounted since 9/11 due to the country's alignment with the US-led Global War on Terror. Sub-nationalist discourses that present the state as a suppressor instead of a unifier have been supported by military actions in tribal and periphery regions, the militarization of civilian spaces, enforced disappearances, and collective punishment (HRCP, 2021; Yousaf, 2020).

Furthermore, sentiments of economic injustice have been exacerbated by the extraction of natural resources from developing areas without an equitable redistribution of benefits. There are major ramifications for Pakistan's national security as these longstanding frustrations are now evolving into political movements and, in certain areas, even armed opposition. The legitimacy and authority of the state are challenged internally, and opposing forces attempting to destabilize the area may take advantage of these internal divisions (Rafiq, 2019).

In this regard, the increasing animosity amongst sub-nationalities poses a strategic threat to the nation's long-term stability and internal cohesion in addition to being a sociopolitical issue. In order to propose inclusive, participative, and reasonable policy choices to manage ethnic diversity in a federal framework, this study intends to examine the underlying reasons of sub-national alienation in Pakistan and evaluate its consequences for national security.

### Literature Review

Sub-nationalism in Pakistan has attracted a lot of scholarly attention, with researchers looking at how the exclusion of ethnic and regional groups has exacerbated security issues and internal instability. Centralization policies that have frequently ignored the demands of sub-nationalities have put Pakistan's federal structure—which is characterized by profound ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity—under threat (Siddiq, 2014). Political, economic, and cultural marginalization has been causing discontent among groups like the Baloch,

Pashtuns, and Sindhis to increase, endangering the nation's security (Shah, 2018).

The over-concentration of political power, which has led to an uneven distribution of resources and political power in the hands of the controlling provinces, particularly Punjab, is one of the primary reasons for discontent. Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan have traditionally felt left out of political representation, economic development, and cultural acceptance (Yousaf, 2020). Demands for greater political and economic freedoms have increased due to these provinces' absence of actual autonomy, and separatist movements have been strengthened in some cases (Rafiq, 2019).

For example, Baloch separatist movements have been fueled by historical grievances against human rights violations, inadequate political representation, and the extraction of natural resources. State security agents have been increasingly targeted by Baloch rebels, which has led to fatal encounters and rising instability, studies reveal (Sial, 2019). Equally, the Pashtun insurrection in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, inspired by past grievances and ethnic nationalism, has further complicated the security situation (Akhtar, 2018).

Another important discussion presented in the literature is how the military played a role in ending these disputes. Sub-regional movements have been largely quashed by the Pakistan Army, often by vicious and repressive military operations which are seen by the local citizenry. Because the military campaign has not had an impact on the political and economic causes that are fueling regional resentment, scholars argue that it has served only to help increase hostility (Shah, 2018). In provinces where there are deep ethnic and regional identities, like Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the military presence is perceived as an attempt to maintain power rather than redress grievances (Waseem, 2010).

These issues have been exacerbated by the Global War on Terror (GWOT). Even as Pakistan received a huge amount of military and economic aid, its alignment with the US post-9/11 has been followed by heightened domestic militancy and opposition, particularly in the tribal regions. Disenfranchised regions

have been disproportionately affected by the War on Terror and the subsequent military operations against it, leading to displacement, civilian killings, and overall resentment. As most Baloch perceive that the region has been militarized and plundered in the backdrop of global geopolitics, the counterinsurgency effort by the military in Balochistan has heightened local resentment towards the state (Rashid, 2008). As is the case, the long-standing conflict has also ignited the proliferation of terrorist ideology and the radicalization of youth in areas such as FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Haqqani, 2013).

In terms of the economy, the unequal distribution of resources is likewise connected to sub-national discontent. The fact that Balochistan is still among Pakistan's poorest provinces in spite of its abundance of natural riches has increased discontent with the national administration. The absence of infrastructure and development, coupled with the economic neglect of sub-national territories, exacerbates the sense of alienation that these populations experience (Ahmed & Bhatnagar, 2012). According to the literature, local inhabitants feel left out of the advantages of national growth, which makes economic marginalization a major contributing element to the emergence of sub-nationalist views (Gazdar, 2013).

In addition, local dynamics have significantly influenced Pakistan's security policy towards sub-nationalities. The internal security landscape of Pakistan has been complicated by the continued struggle in Afghanistan, the return of the Taliban, and the involvement of India in Afghan politics. As per scholars such as Cohen (2011), tensions in Pakistan have risen because the nation views Afghanistan as a strategic buffer and views India's rising power in the region as a direct threat. Ethnic and sectarian tensions have been fueled by the instability in Afghanistan, particularly in the Pashtun-dominated regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which has spilled over into Pakistan's border areas (Giustozzi, 2018).

In conclusion, research on sub-nationalism in Pakistan emphasizes how military brutality, economic inequality, and political marginalization interact intricately to

exacerbate animosity among local ethnic groups. Since Pakistan's internal stability and cohesiveness are in danger due to the rise of sub-nationalist forces, these dynamics have important ramifications for national security. To address these security issues and promote national cohesion, a change to more inclusive governance, fair resource distribution, and significant political autonomy for underserved provinces is essential (Shah, 2020).

### Research Gap

Although most of the study that has been done on Pakistan has been on regional inequalities and ethnic conflicts, little has been done to examine the ways in which rising sub-national resentment affects national security. The majority of research ignores how regional alienation and local grievances contribute to militancy and insecurity. Furthermore, little is known about the transition from political and economic marginalization to security issues, including the relationship between insurgency and subnationalist movements. By using primary data, this study aims to close these gaps and offer a more thorough understanding of the security consequences of sub-nationalist views in Pakistan.

### Theoretical Framework

Relative Deprivation Theory (Gurr, 1970) and Ethno-nationalist Theory (Gellner, 1983) are the bases for this research. Focusing on marginalized groups such as the Baloch, Pashtuns, and Sindhis, ethno-nationalist theory examines how regional and ethnic identities shape political conduct and security issues. Relative to Relative Deprivation Theory, perceived political, economic, and cultural grievances fuel resentment and promote militancy and insurgency. Together, these theories provide a context for understanding how Pakistani sub-nationalist actors are shaping national security dynamics and the broader implications for state stability.

### Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the growing resentment among sub-nationalities in Pakistan, with a particular focus on the Pashtun community in District Swabi, and its implications for national

security. The qualitative approach is most suitable for understanding the subjective experiences, perceptions, and grievances of marginalized groups in their socio-political context.

Primary data has been collected through semi-structured interviews with key informants, including local community leaders, political activists, academics, and security analysts. This method allows for in-depth exploration of the complex dynamics of political exclusion, cultural marginalization, and economic disparities faced by the Pashtun population. The collected data is being analyzed thematically to identify patterns, recurring narratives, and underlying factors contributing to sub-nationalist resentment. Key themes such as identity politics, historical grievances, perceptions of state neglect, and their connection to national unity and security are being critically examined. This methodology enables a nuanced understanding of how localized ethnic grievances may evolve into broader national security concerns if left unaddressed.

This study adopts a **descriptive and analytical research design** to examine the growing resentment among sub-nationalities in Pakistan and its implications for national security. The descriptive component aims to present a clear picture of the political, cultural, and economic grievances experienced by the Pashtun community in District Swabi. The analytical component critically investigates how these grievances contribute to sub-nationalist sentiments and potential threats to national cohesion.

Data has been gathered from individuals directly affected by or knowledgeable about regional tensions, ethnic marginalization, and security dynamics including community leaders, political representatives, and local experts. This design enables the study to both **documents lived experiences** and **analyze their broader implications** for national unity and stability. By combining descriptive insight with analytical depth, the research seeks to uncover the underlying factors fueling sub-nationalist movements and assess how unresolved ethnic grievances may evolve into national security challenges.

### Data Collection Method

Primary data for this research was collected through semi-structured interviews with selected participants in District Swabi, including community leaders, political activists, local residents, and regional experts. These interviews were designed to explore participants' lived experiences, perceptions, and insights regarding ethnic grievances, political exclusion, cultural marginalization, and economic disparities—particularly among the Pashtun community.

The interviews focused on participants' views about the causes and consequences of sub-nationalist sentiments, perceptions of the state's role in addressing these issues, and the broader implications for national security. Specific themes included the perceived effectiveness of state policies, trust in national institutions, concerns about militancy and border control, and recommendations for addressing regional grievances.

This qualitative approach allowed for deep, context-rich data to be gathered, providing a nuanced understanding of how local discontent may fuel larger security concerns and shape national unity.

### Target Population & Sampling

The target population for this study comprises individuals from District Swabi, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, who are directly affected by or have significant insights into the regional ethnic dynamics, sub-nationalist movements, and security concerns. The population includes a diverse group of local community leaders, political activists, residents, ethnic minorities, and security experts.

A purposive sampling technique was used to select key informants who could provide rich, detailed, and relevant insights into the socio-political and security challenges faced by the Pashtun community, particularly in relation to sub-nationalism and its potential security implications. The sample includes individuals with firsthand knowledge of regional grievances, insurgent activities, and state-society relations in Swabi.

The interviews aimed to gather a balanced representation of various viewpoints, ensuring

diversity in gender, age, and socio-economic status. This approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the local dynamics and how these grievances may contribute to larger security concerns in Pakistan.

### Data Analysis Techniques

The qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews will be analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key patterns, themes, and insights regarding sub-nationalist grievances and their implications for national security. The following steps will be employed in the data analysis process:

1. **Transcription:** All interviews will be transcribed verbatim to ensure accurate representation of the participants' responses.

2. **Coding:** A systematic coding process will be used to categorize and identify recurring themes related to ethnic identity, political exclusion, cultural marginalization, economic disparities, and security concerns.

3. **Thematic Analysis:** The data will be examined to extract major themes and subthemes that reveal the underlying causes of resentment among sub-nationalities and the resulting national security challenges.

4. **Pattern Recognition:** The analysis will focus on identifying patterns across different groups within the sample, such as varying perspectives based on age, gender, political affiliation, and socioeconomic background.

5. **Interpretation:** The themes and patterns will be interpreted to understand how the perceptions of sub-nationalism influence the security situation in Pakistan, particularly in District Swabi.

The goal of this qualitative analysis is to derive meaningful conclusions from the interviews that provide an in-depth understanding of the factors driving sub-nationalist sentiments and their impact on national security.

### Organization of the Study

This research is divided into five central chapters, with each covering fundamental

elements of the research theme to ensure there is a natural sequence of ideas and analysis.

### Analysis

This chapter presents the analysis of qualitative data collected through semistructured interviews conducted in District Swabi. It explores participants' perspectives on sub-national identity, causes of resentment, and the political and security implications of growing sub-nationalist sentiments. The findings are organized thematically to highlight recurring patterns, personal experiences, and collective concerns that shed light on the relationship between ethnic grievances and national security in Pakistan.

### Section 1: Demographics & Introduction (Brief informal introduction, can be noted or recorded)

1. Name (Optional):
2. Age:
3. Gender: Male/Female/Other
4. Occupation:
5. Ethnic/Linguistic Identity:
6. Area of Residence:

### Section 2: Causes of Resentment

1. What does the term "sub-nationality" mean to you, and how do you define it in the context of Pakistan?
2. Do you think there is growing resentment among sub-nationalities in Pakistan? Why or why not?
3. What do you think are the main causes of resentment among sub-nationalities in Pakistan? (Probe: Can you give specific examples from your community?)
4. Do you feel your ethnic or regional identity is adequately recognized by the national government? Why or why not?

### Section 3: Political & Security Implications

1. How do people in your community express their dissatisfaction or grievances regarding their sub-national identity? (Probe: Are there protests, slogans, political groups, or other forms of expression?)
2. In your opinion, how do sub-nationalist movements in Pakistan affect national unity and security?

3. Do you think growing sub-nationalism poses a security threat to Pakistan in the future? (Probe: How could this lead to conflicts or unrest?)

4. What role do you think the federal government should play in addressing these issues and preventing unrest?

### Section 4: Conclusion & Wrap-Up

1. What message would you like to share with national policymakers about improving relations between sub-national groups in Pakistan?

2. What actions do you think the government should take to address the underlying causes of resentment in sub-national groups?

3. Is there anything else you'd like to add about your community's experience with sub-nationalism or its impact on national security?

4. Do you feel hopeful about the future of inter-group relations in Pakistan? Why or why not?

### Section 1 Analysis: Demographics & Introduction

The first section of the semi-structured interviews gathered demographic data and opened a personal context for each participant, allowing the researcher to ground the findings in the lived realities of diverse community members in District Swabi. This section also helped establish rapport and contextualize responses in the later sections.

### Participant Profile Overview:

A total of 10 interviewees participated in the study. They represented a range of demographics including:

- Age: 20 to 60+ years
- Gender: Majority male; one female participant
- Occupations: Students, teachers, political workers, laborers, local shopkeepers, and elders
- Ethnic Identity: All participants identified as Pakhtun, with Pashto as their primary language
- Area of Residence: Various towns and rural villages within District Swabi

This diversity of background provided rich, multi-perspective insights into the issues surrounding sub-national identities in the region.

#### **Identity and Belonging:**

Participants showed a strong attachment to their Pakhtun identity, often placing it as equal to or more significant than their national identity as Pakistanis. When asked to define “sub-nationality,” most understood it as an ethnic or regional identity within the broader state structure of Pakistan.

“Sub-nationality is our cultural identity, like being Pakhtun. We are part of Pakistan, but our identity is different from Punjabis or Sindhis.” Interviewee [3]

This highlights that while participants do not necessarily reject the national identity, they seek recognition of their distinctiveness within the federation.

#### **Early Indications of Resentment:**

From the very start of the interviews, subtle but consistent expressions of marginalization and dissatisfaction emerged. Several respondents shared concerns about:

- Unequal treatment of provinces
- Neglect of smaller ethnicities in policymaking
- Language-based exclusion in education and media

“Even in textbooks, our language and heroes are missing. This shows how we are treated.” Interviewee [7]

Such reflections confirm that the resentment among sub-nationalities is deeply rooted in feelings of cultural invisibility and systemic neglect, which were explored further in Sections 2 and 3.

#### **Trust and Willingness to Engage:**

for interpreting Despite these concerns, most participants showed a willingness to engage constructively in national dialogue, provided that their identity is respected and their region is given due resources and representation. This suggests a desire for inclusion rather than separation, a crucial distinction the overall implications for national security.

#### **Conclusion of Section 1 Analysis:**

The demographic and introductory responses provided crucial context for understanding the participants’ views. The dominance of Pakhtun identity in District Swabi, combined with visible signs of exclusion, sets the foundation for the growing resentment discussed in later sections.

Participants do not reject Pakistani nationality outright, but their demand for respect, equal treatment, and cultural recognition is strong. These early insights indicate that policies which ignore ethnic diversity and local identity could deepen dissatisfaction and fuel sub-nationalist sentiments a dynamic with important implications for national security.

#### **Section 2**

##### **Analysis of Interviews:**

##### **Key Themes Identified:**

##### **1. Underrepresentation and Political Exclusion:**

Across most interviews, there’s a strong feeling that sub-nationalities like Pashtuns and Baloch are underrepresented in the national political sphere. The lack of political voice and the absence of fair representation contribute significantly to growing resentment.

##### **2. Cultural and Identity Recognition:**

Respondents consistently feel their ethnic and regional identities are ignored by the federal government. There is a sense of cultural marginalization, with language and traditions not adequately reflected in national policies.

##### **3. Resource Distribution and Economic Disparities:**

A recurring concern is the unequal distribution of resources. Many respondents feel that areas like KPK and Balochistan receive significantly fewer resources than Punjab, contributing to regional inequalities in terms of education, healthcare, and infrastructure.

##### **4. Impact on National Unity and Security:**

Many respondents believe that the growing resentment among sub-nationalities could lead to a threat to national unity. The lack of integration and growing demands for greater

autonomy or independence could escalate into conflicts and regional unrest.

#### 5. Cultural Marginalization:

Respondents from all interviews express that their ethnic and regional cultures are **marginalized** in national discussions. They feel their **language** and **cultural practices** are overlooked, contributing to a sense of **disrespect** and **alienation**.

#### 6. Economic and Political Exclusion:

○ A consistent theme across interviews is **economic neglect**, with subnationalities feeling **excluded** from national development efforts. These regions receive **less investment**, and resources are not equitably distributed, leading to **regional disparities**.

○ Respondents feel that they are **politically underrepresented**, which reinforces the feeling of **invisibility** and leads to resentment.

#### 7. Resource Disparity:

○ Respondents highlight the unequal allocation of **resources**, with larger provinces like Punjab receiving **more attention** from the central government. This **disparity** has been a source of tension and **resentment** among subnationalities.

#### 8. Growing Resentment:

○ **Resentment is increasingly visible** due to the combination of **cultural neglect**, **economic disparities**, and **political exclusion**. People in regions like Balochistan and KPK believe that these issues are not being properly addressed, resulting in growing frustration.

### 4.2 Conclusions- Section 3

The findings of this study reveal that the **growing resentment among subnationalities in Pakistan** stems from a combination of **cultural marginalization, economic exclusion, and political underrepresentation**. These deep-rooted issues have created a sense of alienation among ethnic communities,

Theme  
Expression Of  
Dissatisfaction  
Impact on

particularly in District Swabi, and have contributed to feelings of being ignored or neglected by the central government.

The **neglect of cultural identities**, including the lack of representation of regional languages, history, and heroes in national narratives, has led many to feel that their identity is not valued at the national level. Similarly, **economic disparities**, such as unequal access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities, reinforce the perception of exclusion and fuel discontent among sub-national groups.

**Political underrepresentation** remains another critical grievance, with respondents consistently expressing frustration over the limited participation of their communities in decision-making processes. This sense of exclusion has, in many cases, translated into increased support for sub-nationalist movements that demand greater autonomy and recognition.

If left unaddressed, these grievances have the potential to **destabilize national unity and pose serious security challenges**. The research clearly indicates that growing subnationalist sentiments can lead to social unrest, political fragmentation, and a weakening of the state's legitimacy.

To counter this, **comprehensive policy changes** are urgently needed. These must focus on **equitable resource distribution, inclusive governance, and cultural recognition** to rebuild trust between the state and its diverse ethnic communities. Only by embracing the pluralistic fabric of the nation and ensuring that all groups feel seen, heard, and empowered, can Pakistan hope to foster lasting peace, unity, and security.

### Thematic Analysis – Section 3

#### Key Themes Identified:

National Security  
Security  
Threat Potential

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**Role of the State Description**

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People express their frustration via protests, social media, ethnic parties, poetry, and informal gatherings. The expression varies from passive anger to political activism.

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Many respondents believe that sub-nationalist movements create distrust, divide society, and weaken unity. Some link it to potential radicalization.

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If current grievances remain unaddressed, they may evolve into violent movements, or be exploited by foreign entities.

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Respondents demand inclusive governance, devolution of power, respect for ethnic diversity, and economic justice as essential solutions.

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**Conclusion – Section 3:**

**Political & Security Implications**

The interviews from District Swabi clearly reveal that growing resentment among subnationalities is not just a political issue it carries serious implications for Pakistan’s national security. Respondents consistently highlighted that when ethnic or regional identities feel ignored, underrepresented, or economically marginalized, it leads to deepseated frustration. This frustration is increasingly expressed through protests, social media campaigns, student movements, and support for ethnic-based political parties.

Many participants viewed sub-nationalist movements as a symptom of poor inclusion, centralization of power, and unequal resource distribution. If left unaddressed, these sentiments could evolve into larger-scale resistance, weaken national unity, and even be exploited by external actors to destabilize the country.

Importantly, almost all interviewees emphasized that the solution lies not in suppression but in sincere engagement. They called for inclusive governance, fair resource distribution, respect for cultural identities, and the devolution of political and economic power. Sub-national identities, when respected and integrated, can strengthen the state rather than weaken it.

In essence, addressing the root causes of sub-national resentment is essential not just for harmony, but for safeguarding the future security and stability of Pakistan.

**Conclusion of Section 4 Analysis**

The final section of the interviews reveals a powerful truth: resentment among sub-nationalities is not born out of hatred or disloyalty, but from exclusion, inequality, and disrespect. The desire for justice, recognition, and equal participation runs deep, and most respondents want to be heard rather than separated. Participants from District Swabi do not advocate violence or secession; rather, they call for a federal structure that recognizes cultural identity, devolves power, and distributes resources equitably. These findings align directly with your research objectives and show that addressing the roots of sub-national resentment is not only a matter of justice, but also a strategic necessity for Pakistan’s national security and unity.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

**Conclusion**

This research aimed to examine the growing resentment among sub-nationalities in Pakistan, focusing on the District Swabi, and to explore the implications of these movements for Pakistan's national security. Through semi-structured interviews with diverse community members, including youth, students, political activists, and local leaders, the study explored key themes such as the causes of resentment, political and economic inequalities, and the possible security risks posed by sub-nationalist movements.

The findings reveal that there is indeed growing resentment among sub-nationalities, particularly within the Pakhtun community in Swabi, due to several interconnected factors:

- **Political Exclusion:** Participants felt that their political voices were marginalised and not adequately represented in national decision-making.
- **Economic Disparities:** There is a strong perception that resources, including education, healthcare, and employment opportunities, are unequally distributed, with the Pakhtun community feeling overlooked by federal policies.
- **Cultural and Linguistic Neglect:** The absence of adequate representation of Pakhtun language, culture, and heroes in national narratives (such as in educational textbooks and media) has fueled feelings of cultural invisibility.
- **Perceived Marginalization in Policy:** A significant number of participants felt that national policies failed to adequately address or consider the needs of smaller ethnic communities, especially in terms of political and economic development.

These factors have resulted in a widespread sentiment of alienation, particularly in the context of increasing political activism and local grievances, which have manifested in various forms such as protests, demands for greater political autonomy, and an increasing public discourse on ethnic rights.

Furthermore, the study finds that these sub-nationalist sentiments present a potential security threat to national unity. While most respondents did not advocate for violent action, there was a clear acknowledgment that unresolved grievances could lead to social unrest or even conflict. The majority of participants expressed that the federal government needs to engage more actively with marginalized communities to prevent such outcomes. This research underscores the significance of cultural recognition, equitable resource distribution, and political inclusion as critical components for mitigating sub-nationalist sentiments. Without addressing these core issues, Pakistan may face further destabilization, which could ultimately impact the broader national security framework.

#### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are made:

#### 1. Inclusive Policy Making:

The federal government should actively involve ethnic communities, including sub-national groups like the Pakhtuns in Swabi, in the policymaking process. This would ensure that their grievances are heard and addressed at the national level. Key decisions, especially those relating to resource distribution, cultural representation, and political representation, should be made through consultations with regional and ethnic groups.

#### 2. Cultural Recognition and Representation:

There needs to be a greater emphasis on recognizing and celebrating the diverse cultures and languages of Pakistan in the national curriculum, media, and public policy. The inclusion of regional languages, especially Pashto, in educational resources and public discourse could significantly help mitigate feelings of cultural marginalization. Representation of regional heroes and history in the educational syllabus would also foster a sense of belonging and identity.

#### 3. Equitable Distribution of Resources:

Addressing the economic disparities is crucial. The government should prioritize equitable distribution of resources, including in healthcare, education, and employment. The underdeveloped areas like Swabi should see targeted investments to improve infrastructure, create job opportunities, and enhance access to quality public services.

#### 4. Political Empowerment of Sub-Nationalities:

Strengthening local political institutions and ensuring that sub-nationalities have equal representation in the national parliament is key. This could involve reforming electoral systems to provide fairer representation for marginalized ethnic communities and ensuring that local leaders have a stronger voice in national governance.

#### 5. Enhanced Security Measures and Preventive Diplomacy:

While sub-nationalist movements in Pakistan have thus far largely been peaceful, the growing

resentment could escalate into more significant security challenges if not managed. The government should prioritize **preventive diplomacy** and **dialogue** to address the roots of dissatisfaction before they manifest into violent conflicts. Establishing dialogues at the community level, particularly with local leaders, could help de-escalate tensions.

#### 6. National Dialogue on Ethnic Diversity:

A nationwide dialogue on ethnic diversity, inclusion, and respect for different regional identities would be beneficial for national cohesion. This dialogue should aim to bridge the gap between different ethnic groups and foster greater understanding of each other's concerns and aspirations. Platforms for crosscultural exchanges, debates, and interactions should be encouraged to promote a shared national identity that respects diversity.

#### 7. Strengthening Civil Society and Community Engagement:

Encouraging civil society organizations to play an active role in mediating between local communities and the government can help build trust. Grassroots movements and community-based organizations should be empowered to facilitate peaceful resolution of grievances, promote inter-community dialogue, and work towards fostering national unity while respecting regional identities.

#### 5.3 Limitations of the Study

While this study provided insightful data on the causes and implications of growing resentment among sub-nationalities, it has certain limitations:

- **Geographical Scope:** The study focused solely on District Swabi, and while this offers rich data from this region, the findings may not be fully representative of other regions of Pakistan, where different ethnic groups may experience distinct forms of marginalization.
- **Sample Size:** The sample size of 10 interviews, while providing qualitative insights, is relatively small. A larger sample would offer a more comprehensive understanding of the issue across a broader demographic.

- **Research Design:** The research relied solely on interviews, which may be influenced by the subjective views and experiences of participants. Future research could incorporate a broader range of methodologies, such as surveys or case studies, for a more balanced approach.

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