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Mains Practice Questions

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Q. As a ruling colonial power, Britain's strategy of dividing its colonised countries on the basis of religious or ethnic grounds at the time of decolonisation has only led to wars and misery, instead of peace. Comment. (250 words)

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Approach

- Mention the premise of British policy of dividing the countries i.e. Divide and Rule.
- Give examples of the application of divide and rule and their effects.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

During the Revolt of 1857, the British were horrified to see Hindus and Muslims fighting side by side against the foreign oppressor. In order to extend their imperial rule, the British then adopted the policy of "Divide et impera" (Divide and Rule).

Body

- The colonial project of "divide et impera" fomented religious antagonisms (between Hindus and Muslims) to facilitate continued imperial rule and reached its tragic culmination into Partition of India in 1947.
- Partition of India was one of the worst humanitarian crisis: the death of more than a million people, some 17 million displaced, and countless properties destroyed and looted.
- The scars of the partition have lasted 70 years and Kashmir conflict has been the reason for wars between the two nations.
- It is due to British legacy, the South Asian region is one of the least integrated regions of the world.

This imperial policy of the British was not only extended to the Indian subcontinent, but also to West Asia.

- The cause of conflicts in the middle east crisis (Syria, Iran, Iraq) lies in the haphazard drawing of national boundaries by the British after World War I.
- Moreover, it is the British appeasement of Jews and Arabs, that led to the Israel-Palestine issue.
- The British handling of independence for Cyprus, unfortunately, was not a success and the island had a troubled history after the Second World War.

Conclusion

British imperial policy is the reason for conflicts in many parts of the world. However, the last chapter in the decolonization wave may feature British own state, whereby the UK's integrity is under pressure as seen in Scotland's referendum to secede from the UK.