

Topic:

Political Awareness Leads to political polarisation

Outline:

1. Introduction

Political awareness may or may not lead to political polarisation depending upon the nature of source of political consciousness. Generally, political awareness strengthens the democracy rather than promoting political polarisation. If motivated by extreme ideologies, political awareness may cause political polarisation; otherwise it plays effective role to counter political polarisation.

2. Nexus between political awareness and political polarisation

3. political awareness does not lead to political polarisation (Thesis)

- a. Multiparty systems never face polarisation for long period of time
- b. Economic inequalities, and not political awareness, promote political polarisation
- c. Political awareness reduces political polarisation
- d. political polarisation is product of extreme ideologies and lack of political awareness
- e. politically aware public is conscious of demerits of polarisation
- f. politically conscious public upholds the democratic values
- g. Difference of opinion is sometimes mixed with

polarisation

4. Political awareness does lead to political polarisation (Antithesis)

1. Multiparty systems are more prone to political division.

2. Politically aware people are exposed to political manifestos that can divide masses

3. Politically aware societies are facing polarisation in recent times

4. Demerits of polarisation are too hidden between the political ideologies

5. polarisation of only happens when there is a difference of opinion

5. Even considering the recent trends in politics, political awareness is not responsible for

- political polarisation (synthesis)
- a. Multiple candidates for the government keep the democracy alive
 - b. Exposing to political manifestos increases political consciousness
 - c. The societies affected by polarisation are least politically aware
 - d. political awareness addresses these hidden ideas out
 - e. Extreme stance on one's ideas leads to polarisation and not merely difference of opinion

6. Conclusion

"An educated, enlightened, and informed population is one of the surest way of promoting the health of a democracy." These words by Nelson Mandela depict the potential an informed public has to uphold the democratic values. A public acquainted with the civil and political rights it is entitled to receive and duties it is bound to fulfill never accepts the suppression of its rights. In fact, a politically aware public strives to pave way for a democratic setup. Political awareness does not lead to political polarisation, rather it hampers the way of political polarisation. This is achieved through a multiparty system which promotes democracy. In addition, economic disparities rather than political consciousness lead to political polarisation.



sation. political awareness reduces political polarization because the latter phenomena is the product of extreme ideology and politically aware public knows well the drawbacks of polarisation and it tries its best to uphold the democratic values; though, difference of opinion also plays key role in strengthening the democracy. However, it is argued that political consciousness may cause political polarisation because multiparty system brings forth the political division. Moreover, political manifestos manipulate public as societies are currently are currently facing this issue because they remain unable to identify the hidden agendas. Furthermore, difference of opinion causes political polarisation. But still, political awareness is not responsible for

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political polarisation because multiple candidate for the government ensure democracy. Moreover, the political manifestos are source of political awareness and societies affected by political polarisation are not politically aware otherwise they can identify the hidden agendas too. Also, the extreme stance on one's ideology rather than difference of opinion causes political polarisation. In a nutshell, political awareness may or may not lead to political polarisation depending upon the nature of source of political awareness. Generally, political awareness strengthens the democracy rather than promoting political polarisation. If motivated by extreme ideologies, political awareness may lead to political polarisation; otherwise, it plays effective role to counter political polarisation.

political awareness may cause political polarisation as well as it may act as an opposing force to minimize the political polarisation. On one hand, political awareness enables the public to identify the demerits of political polarisation and causes them to refrain from behaving in such ways that may lead to social division, erosion of democratic values and radicalization. On the other hand, political consciousness if based upon the extreme ideologies or influenced by populism, be it extreme left or extreme right, may lead to political polarisation. This political polarisation has the potential to destroy the socio-political culture of a society and create chaos and unrest at the societal level.

political awareness does not lead to political polarisation as multiparty systems never face polarisation for a long period of time. When there are multiple options available for the citizens in form of different political parties with different political agendas, they don't have to make a choice just two options. They can choose another political party when the incumbent party is seen to be polarised or when it fails to serve their interests. Unlike two-party system which can oversimplify political debates and lead to polarisation, multiparty system encourages coalition building and compromise, which are essential for a healthy democracy. In such a system, power is less likely to be concentrated in hands of a single party, reducing the risk of



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authoritarianism. Moreover, in a multiparty system, civil rights and freedom of press can be secured. Unlike in one party states, the countries with multiparty system like Finland, Denmark and Belgium, both individuals and press enjoy freedom (Wikipedia, en.wikipedia.org, August 2024). Thus, a multiparty system discourage the prevalence of political polarisation.

In addition to discouragement of political polarisation on part of a multiple-party system, the presence of economic disparities rather than political awareness promote political polarisation. The substantive cause of political ~~aware~~ political polarisation in some countries in the countries' economic situation. Pakistan, has long been facing economic provocation challenges including

inflation, poverty, high unemployment rate etc. These challenges have resulted in social inequalities with rich becoming richer, and poor the poorer. This inequality has developed a sense of resentment and frustration among the people which has led to polarisation and rise of populist movement. This inequality has created deep-seated grievance among low income people who might feel the political system is rigged, fanning the flames of political polarisation.

(The Decline of Political Trust and the Rise of Populism in the US, Berg Manfred, 2021). In this way, economic disparities and not political awareness promote political polarisation.

Not only political awareness, on one hand, is not responsible for political

polarisation; on the other hand, political awareness plays its role in reducing political polarisation. politically aware citizens are fully aware of the role they have to play and factors they have to keep in mind while casting their votes and choosing their representatives. Of all the democracies in the world, the most stable governments keeping the spirit of democracy alive, are the states where people are ^{the} most aware politically. A study of 78 democracies in the world reveals that Switzerland stands at first position in upholding the democratic values because its citizens are the most politically aware people (US News, 2021). Hence, where there is more political awareness, there is less political

polarisation.

political awareness reduce political polarisation because political polarisation is the product of extreme ideologies and lack of political awareness. When there is lack of political awareness, the extreme ideologies prevail under such circumstances; consequently, the effectiveness of democratic system is challenged. In addition, the extreme ideologies give rise to social unrest, distrust and lack of empathy, and disrupts the social fabric. Extreme ideologies can lead to social disruption, distrust, diminished civic capacity, social tensions, clashes, hate speech, hate crime, conflicts and violence (CORDIS Service, cordis.europe.eu, Feb 2024). In this way, extreme ideologies and lack of political awareness pave the way for political polarisation.

Even though political polarisation is product of extreme ideologies, but politically aware public, being conscious of demerits of polarisation and extreme ideologies, tries to avert it. people know that political polarisation will bring with it the erosion of democratic norms, a weak government, economic and political instability, and ultimately the social unrest. In addition, politically aware individuals often develop certain strategies and skills that help them recognize the hidden agendas in political discourse. Politically aware public recognizes the propaganda that manipulates public opinion by critically analyzing the source, content and intent of information being presented (How Propagandas Work, Stanley, 2015). In this

way, politically aware public plays its role to resist political polarisation.

A politically aware public, being conscious of the demerits of polarisation, upholds the democratic values and does not settle for less. People aware of their political and civil rights can recognize it when an undemocratic or authoritarian regime tries to suppress them and they put combine efforts to restore democracy.

The recent overthrow of the authoritarian regime in Bangladesh is evidence of the very fact that politically aware public does not tolerate tyranny and suppression of freedom for a long time. The coup d'état in Bangladesh is the result of civil self-awareness as well as political consciousness that is not ready to

put up with the corruption and the authoritarian system.

(fact-now, fact-now.com, August 2024). Hence, political awareness is prerequisite to uphold the democratic values.

A politically aware public striving to uphold the democratic values always has a difference of opinion (which strengthens democracy), but this difference of opinion is sometimes mixed with political polarisation. But, there is a great difference between the two. Difference of opinion is there when there is a group of people and each member of the group has a different say on an issue. On the other hand, the political polarisation occurs when the said individuals preach the extreme ideology and feel reluctant to accept the

difference of opinion. The amalgamation of divergent opinions ensures a comprehensive approach to decision making. This diversity ^{enshrines} ~~ensures~~ the policy formulation, resulting in the establishment of an effective government. The intrinsic value of disagreement in democratic governance needs recognition. The synthesis of diverse perspectives ensures a decision-making process that is well-informed, accountable and adaptive to evolving societal needs (Opinions differ, but differences of opinion matter, Suresh Kumar, January 2024). In this way, difference of opinion plays a constructive role to foster the democratic values.

However, it is argued that political awareness does lead to political polarisation as multiparty system are more prone

to political polarisation. It divides the social fabric into different parts. The ~~more~~ more the political polarisation, the more the social division, the greater the political polarisation. The multiparty system has a number of disadvantages, particularly in context of democracy. It has caused a perversion of democracy in many countries. In case of India, since the existence of a large number of political parties has created the electoral situation in the country in which the majority seats winning parties hardly have a vote share of majority votes. The maximum vote share of the Congress in 1984-85 elections was 48.12% of the total votes polled, which, however, is still some two percent short of majority (Multiparty

System: A factor for perversion of democracy and political instability in India, Dr Th. Siamkhun (May 2013). Therefore, a multiparty system can also lead to political polarisation and social division.

In addition to social division on part of multiparty system, when politically aware people are exposed to political manifestos, they get divided too. Each political party containing a unique set of agendas, frames issues in a way that contrasts its vision from that of its opponents. This deepens the ideological divide and creates an "us versus them" mindset among voters. Moreover, in Pakistan, the masses fall a prey to slogan politics and political rhetoric that aim at capturing the attention of masses and these slogans galvanise and

divide the public. In Pakistan, military and civil leaders rely on slogans rather than political substance. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's slogan 'Roti, Kapra, aur Makan', is still famous; Asif Ali Zardari's Pakistan Khapay, Imran Khan's Naya Pakistan etc. are some hit mottos of Pakistan's rhetoric.

These slogans are based on the situation before and after the election campaign to galvanise the public (political polarisation issues and challenges faced by Pakistan, Raja Armir, April 2024). Hence, political manifestos can also be used to divide the politically aware masses.

Due to the exposure of politically aware people to political manifestos that divide masses, the politically conscious societies are facing polarisation

in recent times. The rise of social media and digital news platforms have allowed people to consume information that aligns with their existing beliefs. This further deepens the division of masses into several groups. Brexit referendum is a prime example of uprise of political polarisation in politically aware societies which deepened the social and political divide. The Brexit debate intensified identity politics, with many voters aligning their personal identity with the "Leave" or "Remain" stance. This alignment lead to increased polarisation. (Brexit: Why Britain Voted to leave the European Union, Clarke, Goodwin, 2017). This shows that the polarisation process is intensifying even in politically aware societies.

The politically aware societies are facing polarisation in recent times as the demerits of polarisation are too hidden between the political ideologies.

While the politically aware public might sometimes identify the tactfully crafted hidden agendas of political parties, the ordinary public remains unable to dissect the hidden agendas. The political ideologies are, at times, used to blame a specific group or an external force for societal problems. This can divert attention from the actual causes of the issues towards a convenient target. The book "Using Conflict Theory" by Bartos and Wehr elaborates that in some democracies political and social conflicts often lead to scapegoating where the political rivals are

blamed for the problems being faced by masses. Hence, sometimes, public cannot identify the demerits of ~~polo~~ political polarisation hidden between the political ideologies.

Besides the occurrence of polarization owing to its hidden demerits that people remain incapable to identify, polarisation also happens ^{only} when there is a difference of opinion. Under a one party system, only one legal political party forms the government because all other parties are banned and so there is absence of political controversy. Many single party systems actively suppress dissent, the which prevents the formation of polarised groups, and reduces public debate on contentious issues. Saudi Arabia has

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never faced political polarisation because there is a single party system and so there is no difference of opinion. Hence, the difference of opinion can cause political polarisation.

Keeping in mind the recent trends in politics, political awareness is still not responsible for political polarisation as multiple candidates for the government keep the democracy alive. When there are multiple candidates, there are multiple choices. Obviously, these candidates contribute to strengthen the democracy and will stabilize the government because if there are only two parties which are fostering the extreme ideology, then people will rely on the third party to uphold the democratic

values. But this is only possible when people are politically aware. Moreover, the multiparty system ensures a healthy competition among different parties and prevents the dictatorship of a single party; thereby providing the chances of growth of the nation. Bangladesh has seen the dictatorship in the last one and half decade because a single party was holding the whole power and the opposition parties had been brutally banned and crushed. For this reason, the multiparty system plays a key role in strengthening the democracy.

On one hand, the availability of multiple candidates for the government keep the democracy alive; On the other hand, exposing to political manifestos presented by these multiple candidates

increases political consciousness rather than fostering political polarisation. When public is exposed to manifestos, it can compare and analyze the agendas of different political parties and on the basis of this analysis masses can better decide which candidate or party will serve their common interests in an effective manner. In addition to this, political

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manifestos can be a useful tool for party candidates and activists. Through the aforementioned document, they come to know how their party sees the world and what are the policies of their party. This may help them to communicate their party's goals to the public, journalists and candidates of ~~opposi~~ competing parties. The parliamentary work requires MPs to specialize; similarly, other candidates and party activists are likely to be much better informed about the policy areas relating to their party's policy to inform the public about their political agenda (Manifesto Functions: How party candidates view and use their party's central policy document, Nikolaus Eder,

February 2017). Thus, political manifestos enhance political awareness instead of giving birth to political polarisation.

Since exposure to political manifestos increases political consciousness, it implies that the societies affected by polarisation are least politically aware. The societies affected by polarisation are least when there is lack of political consciousness, the public becomes more susceptible to manipulation by politicians, interest groups and media.

Without a strong understanding of political issues, the individuals may be easily swayed by propaganda. There has been political polarisation in the UK because of political awareness but this awareness was backed by extreme political



ideologies promoted by two opposing parties. Brexit has not divided the UK as much as political polarisation - owing to the lack of political awareness - has divided the other countries. Although there has been the pros and cons of Brexit, but there is no visible polarisation in their social and political fabric. So, it can be said that lack of political awareness can result in political polarisation.

Lack of political awareness causes political polarisation but the political awareness, on contrary, addresses the hidden ideas too.

Those who are politically aware can identify the personal interests of parties behind their extreme ideologies and can take steps to protect their civil and political rights. Moreover,

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an informed electorate can demand more transparency from their leaders, questioning the lack of information or opacity of political processes. When public is aware of what to expect from their leaders, it is in a stronger position to hold the leaders accountable when the latter fails to fulfill the duty. (Leadership accountability in the 21st century, Johnson T, 2021). Therefore, owing to the political awareness, the hidden agendas can also be addressed.

Moreover, extreme stance on one's ideas and not merely difference of opinion leads to political polarisation. When a specific group or members of a group are having different opinions on an issue, it is not going to endanger the political

and social structure. But if the same ~~propone~~ persons are the proponents of extreme ideology and they go too far in supporting their stance, it can have serious implications in the political and social arena. Difference of opinion can lead to exploration of new ideas and alternative approaches to policy issues. This may result in innovative solutions that might not emerge in a more homogenous political environment. Research has shown that heterogenous political environments where differing opinions are actively engaged tend to produce innovative and adoptive policy outcomes. Hence, the extreme ideologies and not differing opinions lead to political polarisation.

To cut the long story short, this discussion has shown that

political awareness does not lead to political polarisation; in fact, it plays an effective role to counter or minimize political polarisation. The presence of a multi-party system discourages political polarisation, the awareness of public about the demerits of political polarisation does not let the polarisation happen, and the politically aware public possesses enough momentum to overthrow a tyranny or authoritarian regime and strive to uphold the democratic values.

Some argue that multiparty system divides the society, political manifestos betray the public, and incapability of public to identify the hidden agendas lead to political polarisation. However, the very existence of multiparty systems paves way for the democracy, manifestos act as tools to

make masses politically aware, in addition, if there is political consciousness, there is no room for the hidden agendas to survive for a long period.
