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# English Essay Practice

## Political Awareness is the Soul of Democracy

### Outline

#### 1. Introduction

#### 2. Ways in Which Political Awareness is The Soul of Democracy

2.1 Political awareness ensures an informed and empowered electorate

2.2 Allows active citizen participation in governance and policymaking, a building block of democracy.

2.3 Politically aware nation demands transparency and emphasises on accountability

2.4 Supports trust in democratic institutions, thereby strengthening overall democratic framework.

2.5 Political awareness enhances

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Policy literacy among citizens, enabling them to understand complex issues.

2.6

Politically aware populace can effectively contribute to policy-making through advocacy, thereby fulfilling the democratic ideal.

2.7

Politically aware population is essential for democratic decision-making such as referendums.

2.8

Political awareness drives greater and more effective engagement with civil society organisations.

2.9

Cultivates a culture of tolerance and respect for diverse opinions, which are foundational for a functioning democracy.

2.10

Contributes to political stability and social cohesion, ensuring changes in government and policy are accepted by majority.

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### 3. Negative Implications on Democracy in The Absence of Political Awareness

3.1 Ill-informed electorate could potentially elect poor leaders.

3.2 Absence of effective citizen engagement would promote elite-capture and self-interest driven policymaking.

3.3 Lack of tolerance and understanding within the populace could result in social fragmentation.

3.4 Unpopular decision-making and lack of trust within democratic institutions could lead to political instability.

3.5 Societal divisions and unstable political climate could lead to autocratic drift.

### 4. Barriers in Ensuring Political Awareness

4.1 Controlled narrative through restricted

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media.

4.2 Absence of education and lack of awareness programs.

4.3 Restrictions on democratic participation, advocacy, debates, and protest.

4.4 Overarching autocratic domination by one state organ affecting the separation of power.

## 5. Strategies to Ensure Political Awareness to Uphold the True Spirit of Democracy

5.1 Increase education and awareness among citizens through dedicated programs.

5.2 Establish and promote civic engagement platforms for debates and effective contribution.

5.3 Free and unrestricted media reporting to ensure transparency and to keep population well informed.

5.4 Strict accountability mechanisms to restrict overarching influence of one state organ within the three branches of government.

## 6. Conclusion

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Political awareness forms the very foundation of a vibrant democracy. Informed citizens understand their rights, hold leaders accountable, and actively participate in shaping the nation's future. Without this awareness, democracy becomes hollow, lacking the critical engagement needed to serve the people. A politically aware populace reflects an informed electorate which is essential in choosing the right leaders. As John F. Kennedy famously stated, "the ignorance of one voter in democracy impairs the security of all." As democracy is for the people and by the people, citizens have an important role in policy-making and decision-making. Effective contributions require awareness to avoid decisions with negative consequences. Yet, political awareness within some democratic nations is suppressed through controlled media and restrictions on citizen participation. Nations with such restricted

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approach, curb democratic ideals, and have a tendency to shift toward autocratic governance structures. To uphold the true essence of democracy, citizens should be made aware through unrestricted media and vibrant political participation.

Political awareness produces an informed and empowered electorate.

Within democracies, every adult has the right to cast their votes. The right to vote essentially means that citizens have <sup>the</sup> power in deciding who they wish to delegate powers to. Provided the significance of the subject, it is highly important that the decision-makers are empowered through political awareness. The probability of an aware electorate, electing a populist leader is slim, which protects the ideals of democracy. Recently, the rise of populist leaders has been observed which threaten the principles of democracy. Studies have traced the surge of populist leaders to lack of

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political awareness. The spread of misinformation has reduced impartial political information which reduces real political awareness and actual content. Resultantly, the electorate is failing at protecting democracy.

The role of citizens within democracy is not restricted to the right of voting. Within democracies, citizens are expected to play an active role in governance and policy-making. The participatory form of governance is considered to be the building block of democracy. For citizens to effectively and actively participate, political awareness is essential. Governance and policy-making are complex subjects which require a nuanced understanding. Countries which have a politically aware population are generally seen to have a higher citizen participation culture within governance and policy-making. Democracies such as U.S and Sweden have a high rate of citizen

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Participation within policymaking because the citizens are politically aware about the situation, needs, and thus have the ability to comprehend the impact of their contribution.

Political awareness coexists with a transparent system. Without transparency, political awareness cannot exist. However, increase in political awareness to an extent allows citizens to question the state and demand increased transparency. Since the surge of social media adoption, citizens within the third world countries have repeatedly demanded transparency in information. Consequently, the right to information legislation have been enacted in countries like India and Pakistan. With the increase in transparency, citizens become more aware, and demand accountability of the wrongdoers. The process promotes two essential features of democracy: transparency and



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accountability.

Increased transparency and accountability allows citizens to trust democratic institutions. Democracy is based on a social contract which is essentially founded on the principle of trust. As institutions become more transparent and citizens actively pursue accountability of the wrongdoers, a nation moves towards good governance. Strong governance structures automatically build trust between citizens and institutions, thereby strengthening overall democratic framework. Citizens of Singapore value and respect their institutions because of the trust they have achieved. The mutual trust strengthens the social contract, allowing democracy to thrive.

Policy literacy is derived from political awareness. Nations which are politically aware are generally regarded to be policy literate as well.

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Awareness allows citizens to decode complex issues. As policies are intended to serve the citizens, their understanding and contribution is critical for policy to be successful. For example, the law of abortion within U.S. is a highly debated policy issue within the country. A politically aware nation can truly understand the foundation of the law and its broader implications, whereas politically unaware citizens would examine the policy on the surface-level, which could have negative implications.

Democracy promotes the principle of majority decision. However, for an effective contribution by the majority especially within the domain of policymaking is critical. Surface level examinations by politically unaware citizens could turn against the principles of democracy. The belief that majority is right is based on the pre-requisite of having an aware

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population. An aware population can effectively contribute towards policy-making through advocacy to uphold the principles of democracy. A similar process within a politically unaware population poses a risk of undermining these very principles.

At times within democracies, important decision-making is conducted by citizens, other than elections. This could potentially include referendums. Recent examples include Scotland's referendum to stay within United Kingdom or not. Another prominent example is of Brexit, UK's decision to exit European Union. These processes reflect the beauty of democracy where citizens actively participate and voice their beliefs on important state decisions. However, these issues are complex in nature and require a deep understanding of the implications the decision could hold. Moreover, within such decision-making processes, there exists significant

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misinformation campaigns to allure voters towards making decisions which are favourable to a few key stakeholders. Thus, political awareness is essential to uphold the very foundation of these processes so that they serve the democratic intentions for which they were conceived for.

Civil society organisations play a key role within democracies. These organisations present their views on topics which are usually termed as controversial. However, the issues raised by civil society organisations are mostly those which are vital for citizens.

Examples of issues could include discussion on environment, women rights, domestic violence, and juvenile rights etc. Political awareness is the key driver for greater and more effective engagement within civil society organisations which are the foundation of democracy.

Lack of political awareness makes citizens victims to misinformation. The misinformation ~~substitutes~~ culminates

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into intolerance and divergence. Political awareness, on the other hand, cultivates a culture of tolerance and promotes respect for diverse opinions. Democracies promote the principle of freedom of speech, which permits the diverse opinions to exist. A functioning democracy requires a culture where unpopular opinions are also respected and different interests are accepted. Political awareness eliminates misinformation which restricts such a culture to foster, allowing democracies to function as per intended purpose.

Political awareness leads to effective citizen contributions. The contributions ensure that changes within the government and shifts in policies are understood and accepted by the majority. The acceptance contributes to political stability and social cohesion within the society. Democracies were created to ensure stability, peace and social unity by the

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effective involvement of the majority. The principle of effective involvement can be fulfilled if the citizens are politically aware and completely understand the changes. Resultantly, stability and unity within the society over political matters is achieved.

The absence of political awareness, compromises the existence and functioning capacity of a democracy. An ill-informed electorate is more prone towards electing populist or undemocratic leaders. The failure of democracy within Third world countries can be connected to the fact that such nations lack political awareness. For example, Sheikh Hasina served as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh for approximately 20 years, despite her undemocratic actions and autocratic tendencies. However, she was neither replaced nor held accountable for her actions because the Bangladeshi population were

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not politically aware. Similar examples exist in the case of Mexico during 1980s till early 2000s. The Mexican population, lacked political awareness due to low literacy rate and state-controlled media.

The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) dominated Mexican politics for about 71 years despite being highly corrupt and serving the interests of prominent drug cartels. However, the absence of political awareness among the Mexican populace made Mexico a one-party state with a corrupt leadership.

Absence of effective citizen participation reduces the principles of transparency and accountability of the political class. Resultantly, an elite-capture emerges and policy-making becomes dominated by individuals who design policies to serve their self-interest. The essence of democracy, which promotes participatory policymaking and condemns elite-capture, fades away. Political awareness is the

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regulator which keeps citizens aware so that they ensure accountability within a democracy takes place.

The absence of such regulations leads to elite-capture which undermines the principles of democracy.

As the process of policy-making is captured by the elites and decisions are formed against popular interest, social fragmentation emerges.

Self-serving policies favour a certain segment of population unjustly which divides the society and breeds intolerance.

The lack of mutual understanding and agreement within the society has a detrimental impact on social

unity. For example, within Pakistan there is serious criticism over Punjab-centric policymaking. As political

awareness is minimal within the

country, decision-making is centralised,

and the centre is dominated by Punjabi politicians. Resultantly, there is lack of

tolerance and deep-rooted societal



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divisioning within the Pakistani society.

Provided the absence of effective citizen contribution due to lack of political awareness, unpopular decision-making takes place. Democracies serve the majority and unpopular decision-making is not democratic. Such undemocratic actions erode public trust within state institutions. The disconnect between citizens and state institutions compromises the social contract upon which the entire concept of democracy is upheld. As a result, the state of democracy in such countries becomes more prone to failure and collapse.

Weakened public trust and declining social contract, breeds divisions among the society. Such situations create a highly unstable political climate, making the country highly susceptible to autocracy. The resurgence of trust and social cohesion cannot take place unless political

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awareness is focused upon. However, in situations where political awareness is absent, such divisions keep on destabilising the political environment within the country, eventually leading to the rise of an autocratic leader.

Political awareness is controlled by the creation of barriers by powers whose interests <sup>are</sup> served within a weakened democracy. The control over narrative by subjugating media is a <sup>a</sup> popularly employed tactic to restrict political awareness. Media play a key role in a dysfunctional democratic environment and ensures political awareness. Controlling the media restricts political awareness as limited information reaches the citizens which itself is tweaked and biased.

Education and political awareness are positively correlated. Lack of education or civic awareness

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programs, limits political awareness within a society. UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report (GEMR) discusses that people with only primary education are much more likely to be politically aware and thus fail to contribute within the political sphere of a country. Moreover, OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) conducted a study on Global Competence among youth. The study concluded that students with low educational attainment score significantly lower on two indicators: civic literacy and political awareness. Thus, countries with low education rates create a barrier towards their citizens attaining political awareness.

The Democracy Index by The Economist Intelligence Unit ranks countries based on five key democratic principles. Among the five democratic principles are civic liberties, political participation, and political culture.

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Countries which restrict participation such as advocacy, debates, and protests, create a barrier towards higher political awareness within the society. Resultantly, democracy is compromised and such nations fail to be classified as full democracies by the index.

Political awareness is further suppressed by within countries where one state organ out of the three branches of government plays an overarching role, establishing autocratic domination. In most cases this state organ is the armed forces. To ensure the interests of the deep state are served, political awareness among the citizens is highly restricted. Such democracies are essentially hybrid or autocratic regimes under the pretense of democracies.

Upholding the true essence of democracy requires overcoming the barriers which restrict political awareness. Political awareness is the

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core of democracy and needs to be achieved to ensure the existence of full democracy. Increasing literacy rates and establishing dedicated awareness programs is critical to ensure political awareness within a society. Studies such as PISA have established a positive correlation between education and political awareness. In addition, studies by World Bank and World Bank Governance Indicators (WGI) have highlighted through empirical data, that countries with high political awareness have strong democratic structures.

Awareness could also be attained through a free and unrestricted media. A free media is not only an important tool of political awareness but also ensures the transparent functioning of democracies. Unrestricted media should be supported and protected to promote political awareness.

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within a society.

Political awareness arises from political engagements. Effective political awareness should be promoted through the establishment of civic engagement platforms. Think tanks should be promoted and valued.

These platforms should be provided with necessary support from the state with the allowance of unrestricted debate so that their debates and research publications effectively contribute to political awareness among the population.

Strict accountability mechanisms against institutions which curb political awareness within a country should be established. Action against state organs which have an overreaching influence should be confined to their jurisdiction as per the Constitution for democratic processes to function as per intended vision.

Political awareness is indeed the soul of democracy. Undoubtedly,

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A democracy thrives only when its citizens are politically aware, as it is not just a democratic duty but a democratic right. Through informed voices and actions can true freedom and justice flourish. The absence of political awareness within a democracy undermines the very foundation of democracy itself. Numerous states with autocratic tendencies curb political awareness to retain control but through education, free media, and unrestricted civic engagement, these barriers towards political awareness can be overturned. In essence, a full democracy exists and thrives when political awareness is ~~the~~ ~~properly~~ promulgated.