

Political Polarization; Governance And Society

Outline

1: Introduction

Thesis statement:

Although, political polarization has created many obstacles for governance and society, law and order situation, economic downfall and democratic failure, pragmatic measures such as, equity and equality, mature political leadership and fully developed political culture can reduce its impacts

2: Decoding the term 'political Polarization'.

3: Current situation of Political Polarization in Pakistan

4: How political Apartheid impacts governance?

4.1 Destabilizes institutions of state

Case in point: Recent collapse of government in Bangladesh.

4.2 Challenges rule of law

Case in point: 9-May-2023 riots of Pakistan.

4.3 Dwindles the economy

Case in point: 1000 plus shares fell after vote of no confidence against Imran Khan.

4.4 Hinders the process of policy formulation and implementation

Case in point: Health card services, suspended

after change of government in Pakistan.

5: How political polarization impacts society?

5.1 Creates disunity in society

Case in point: "Our political identity defines the community we live"

(Pakistan: Search For Stability by Maleeha Lodhi)

5.2 Unrest prevails throughout the country.

Case in point: Recent attempt of martial law in South Korea and massive protests

5.3 Halts the development of country

Case in point: Lowest human development index at 0.540 and ranking at 164 out of 193 of Pakistan amidst political polarization.

(United Nations Development Programme Report 2024)

5.4 Causes democratic failure

Case in point: Elections of 1970, where party getting majority votes was kept deprived of making government.

6: Pragmatic measures to reduce political polarization.

6.1 Equal allocation of opportunities and resources

6.2 Upbringing of leadership that knitt the nation

in single fabric of unity.

6.3 Mutually agreed political setup

7: Conclusion

Moving through the pages of history, man had learned many lessons. Amongst these precious heritage, that ancestors had left for new generation, most significant teaching is the power of unity. Nations that ruled over the world had nothing else, but a deep perception of solidarity. In fact, some of those states were deprived of education, knowledge and literature, yet they have strength of unbreakable integrity. Those people who have adopted and worked upon this principle, have reached the zenith of success and glory, but those did not knit their citizens in a single fabric of harmony and solidarity, have faced multiple challenges. This disunity has created great concerns for the countries in the form of political polarization. It is the state condition of a society, in which people diverge towards ideological extremes. They do no longer share common interests and divide in different groups. This socio-political apartheid creates hurdles in progress of country. Unfortunately, same is the case with Pakistan, where

2

Political polarization is at the peak
now a days. It has been continuously
increasing since the inception of the country.

- It has overwhelming impacts on governance as well as, on society. When a society is split into many fragments, it becomes difficult to govern them. Government has to face restrictions in providing basic necessities to people because of deteriorated rule of law. Likewise economy downgrades, which make it impossible to work on the development of people and country. As a result of these impacts society suffers a lot. It went through massive friction due to disunity. It also derails the democracy of state. That in turn curtails the basic rights of people.

~~country.~~ Although, political polarization has created many obstacles for governance and society, like law and order situations, economic downfall and democratic failure, pragmatic measures, such as, equity and equality, mature political leadership and a fully developed political culture can reduce its impacts.

4
Political polarization in simple term, referred to the division of society on the basis of different political ideologies. It often describes the situation of a country in which people are engaged in conflicts, clashes and arguments with each other due their extremist affiliations with political groups. In this kind of society, it is difficult, to dealt with violence and create harmony among people. They stick to their narratives ~~and~~ strictly, due to which the progress and growth of country is compromised. Citizens, themselves become barriers towards any positive change. Political polarization causes many challenges for economy, governance and justice system of a country. Thus, it negatively impacts the society and welfare of people.

The current situation of Pakistan regarding political polarization is

The country is struck in a distressing chaotic condition. Where political divergence is at peak. After the 'vote of no confidence' against the ex-prime minister, political polarization and its impacts at their peak. Dozens of mass demonstrations and incidents of violence are observed. In Pakistan two poles political shape are clearly observed. Fuel on the fire was the elections of 2024, that further aggravated the crisis. Many people are killed, injured and jailed during these unrest. Depreciation of economy, decrease in foreign direct investment, stunt human development and law and order situations are results of this political split in Pakistan.

Political Polarization is a multi-faced dilemma. Among its offshoots governance issues are of great concern. It hinders the governance by destabilizing the state institutions. Difference in the opinions of people creates friction among the institutions. Either these are civil-military

or ~~to~~ between civilian institutions. In unstable political conditions governments try to control people by influencing the judicial and governing systems, in developing countries. As a result of which framework and foundations of state institutions are negatively impacted.

Similarly, was the case observed in the recent crisis of Bangladesh. In which above two hundred students were killed to ~~and~~ retain the say of government on the prevailing conditions. These crisis end up in removal of prime minister 'Sheikh Hasina Wajid' and her government. This political unrest and polarization has opened the ways for military to take charge of the country and government. So, the essence of the state institutions is challenged. Hence, political polarization is the greatest threat to the stability and fair working of institutions.

Furthermore, governance is ^{also} hampered in a political polarized society by decreasing rule of law. Alignment of people with the political parties at extreme level often creates problems for law enforcing agencies, when

these people want to subjugate government, in front of them. Massive demonstrations, protests and violence is observed during this. Due to which chaotic conditions become prevalent. For instance, the incident of 9-May-2023, when the civilians destroyed the government properties. Law and order situation was created and rule of law was taken for granted. In these kind of situations societies cannot be governed because people do not follow the rules and regulations of state. So, the political polarization stops the government from its proper functioning by the violation of the laws by people.

In the same way, economy of the country is also dwindled, due to political parties. Economy has a direct relation with the governance of society. As much fiscal resources a country have, governance becomes easier. Living standards and quality of life is greatly enhanced with the help of strong economy. In a country where society is in political unrest, economy suffers.

the most. People become cautious in investing in such country, at local as well as, at international level. Productivity and exports also decrease due to multiple protest and strikes. It was evident from recent example of decrease in Karachi stock exchange, following the vote of no confidence against Imran Khan, previous prime minister of Pakistan. It has dropped thousand plus points the next day. Similarly, many factories and industries are shut down and transferred to other countries due to the fear of loss. So, the governance is highly impacted due to decrease in economic growth.

Likewise, political polarization also hinders the process of policy formulation and implementation, in turn halts the proper governance. Policies are the tools through which long and short term development plans are implemented. These are very essential for governance of a society. Unfortunately, politically divided nations never let the governments to

focus of the policy formulation in a serious ways. They never allows the governments to complete their tenures.

In this way, those policies which are made by one government are stopped or changed by other, due to political immature leadership. For example, the issuance of health card by the previous government of Pakistan. That helped a lot and provided better facilities to people. This service was stopped by new government, because they felt it as extra burden on the economy, which was already at the verge of default. In this way, the political division of the society obstructs the proper governance, on the ~~model~~ model of develop countries.

Along with grave impacts on governance political polarization has enormous implication on social structure of a country. It creates disunity among the people, which is the deadliest element and root cause of all other evils. Developing countries are

6
already divided in many social strata, political polarization further increase these gaps. Situations become more intense due to political ups and downs. People now feel more affiliation to the political party rather than to a country or nation. "our political identities define the community we belong to and our communal affiliations shape our sense of self." (Pakistan: Search for Stability by Dr. Maleeha Lodhi). This quote implies the fact that political culture and intentions of political leadership has segregated the societies in many parts. Which has exacerbated the crisis and give birth to intolerance.

In the same fashion, unrest prevails in a country, where political polarization is common. Societies become very unstable due to protests, agitations and strikes against the ruling party. One of its most recent example was seen in South Korea, where in December 2024 thousands of people protested on roads against the decision of their prime minister of putting martial law in effect. The whole

country was shutdown and every work has stopped. Similar things were going on in Pakistan, Bangladesh and other political unstable countries. Communities and nations have to compromise their peace, when they leave political harmony.

Moreover, political polarization halts the development of a country. When a state is not in rest and faces many challenges, it lacks economic growth. Due to which government has decreased amount of financial assets to spend on the development of people. Similarly, they are engaged in dealing with security and law and order situations due to political enmity of opposition parties. While dealing with these dilemma growth and development is ~~also~~ compromised. It's highly observed from Human Development Index (HDI) report of 2024 by United Nations Development Programme. Which indicated Pakistan's human development index at 0.540 and ranking at 164 out of 193.

As compared to 2019 and previous years at 0.56. This phenomenon explains the impact of political polarization on progress of a society.

Further, polity (democracy in its true form) is impacted a lot due to political polarization. In some cases it is considered as failed democracy, when it becomes unable to address the political crisis. Highly polarized societies never accept the victory of opposite party, in doing so they keep on blaming the electoral process and integrity of institution, irrespective of who ever gets the power hold other party responsible for its defeat. So, the real defeat is of democracy. Much like was done in the election of 1970 in Pakistan, when democratic norms were violated and winner of elections was restricted to form government. In this way political divergence derails the democracy and country is ~~put~~ pushed on the path of multiple issues and hurdles.

Although, political polarization has

many consequences on governance, as well as on society, these can be minimized through few optimistic measures. Major reforms are needed in equity and equality of distribution and allocation regarding resources. Either these are job opportunities, dispensation of justice or financial assets. In this way all the citizens, as well as, groups and communities will come on same footing with affluent people. By doing so the feeling of alienation will diminish and an inclusive society will develop. Developing countries can take lessons from developed nations like Europe, Japan and America. The way, they formed laws and rules to create harmony and unity among their citizen. Therefore the problem of political disunity has a great solution in equality and equity of distribution of resources.

In the same way, political polarization can also be reduced through a mature and devoted leadership. Current leaders of the country are further widening the gaps,

for their own political interests. The need of the hour is to work on democracy within the parties. Party leadership must be elected and trained. Through these practices state will get those people in governance, legislation and executive, which are highly professional in their work. Their decision making and tackling of problems will decrease the crisis of country. As Lee Kuan Yew, first prime minister of Singapore, said, "I do not know of a man who became a leader as a result of having undergone a leadership course." This quote implies the importance of training for a leader. The problem of political crisis will come to an end, only through a group of people, leaders or politicians, that create harmony, unity and tolerance among people of their state.

Another set of reforms is required in political system to bring down political polarization. A mutually agreed political infrastructure is very much essential to curb this evil from its roots. Because smooth transition of the

governments is very necessary for the peace and unity of state. Every time, in the Pakistan's government, prime minister never completed its five years term. Opposition never let them work and complete their projects - They always have objections on the electoral process. Due to which the development and growth of country suffered a lot. There must be some kind of consensus among all political parties. So that who ever won election, will govern the country with full authority and dedication. In doing so, the political polarization will reduce and country will prosper.

In a nut shell, political polarization is the origin of all the social and political crisis. It has far reaching consequences on governance and social growth of a country. On one hand it creates hurdles in governance by producing economic downfall, weakening rule of law and deteriorating institutional integrity. On the other hand it demolish the societal harmony by uprising unrest, derailing

democracy and halting growth of the state. In case of Pakistan these social and political problems have given birth to many challenges for people and governments. Although these crisis can not be cured in few years, long term measures can reduce their impacts. These steps include: promotion of equality in all levels of society, so that people feel unity with all other citizens of the country. Similarly, true leadership and matured political culture is the key to unlock the potential of country. By following these optimistic actions developing countries can achieve their dream prosperity and stability.