Indian Politics and Political Polarization

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Abstract:

In this article, we will look at how majority identity politics and political division have affected India. The dominance of the majority in Indian politics allowed for the marginalization of minority groups and their subsequent formation of exclusive clubs, both of which contributed to the widening gap between the political classes. The politics of majority identification and the political polarization of important groups and castes define modern Indian politics. A Hindu nationalist party, the BJP is on the political right. In contrast, the secular Congress Party is better suited to represent the needs of the country's small Muslim minority. Thanks to their distinct ideological stances, the two parties have successfully garnered support from diverse segments of society. This has led to severe religious and caste divisions in Indian culture. This study looks at how political polarization has affected Indian society and how majority identity politics have played a part in this development within the Indian setting. According to the article, two rival nationalist ideologies have emerged in India as a result of the success of the Congress Party and the Bharatiya Janata Party. The secular beliefs of the Congress Party are at odds with the Hindu nationalist tenets of the BJP. As a result of this division, majority identity politics has gained traction in India. The ramifications of this ascent for democracy in India are discussed in the paper's conclusion. Polarization is sometimes referred to as "a prominent division or conflict that forms between major groups in a society or political system and that is marked by the clustering and radicalisation of views and beliefs at two distant and antagonistic poles." There are two common categories of political polarization, according to political scientists: elite and mass. While "elite polarization" refers to divisions among the political class, "mass polarization" describes divisions within the electorate or the general people.

Keywords: *Congress party, Polarization, Political Sciencest, Identity Politics. Majority Identity Politics, Indian Democracy.*

Introduction:

When members of the ruling and opposition parties become more divided, this phenomenon is called elite polarization. In a parliamentary democratic system, polarized political parties are characteristic; they are cohesive, united, programmatic, and ideologically different. The term "mass polarization" may refer to the sharp division in public opinion along party lines on political topics, policies, notable individuals, or other people. In its most severe forms, both factions see the other's policies and moral authority as a grave danger to their own or the country's survival.

Mass polarization may be measured in several ways. To what degree does the electorate hold ideologically divisive or uniformly liberal or conservative views on a variety of issues (e.g., maintaining a conservative stance on abortion and affirmative action despite the fact that either position is not "extreme"). Voters' tendency to "sort" or identify with a political party according to their gender, race, religion, ideology, or other demographic traits is called partisan sorting. What we call "dislikes" or "distrusts" among voters is the degree to which they are emotionally divided along party lines.

In the late 18th century, when the French Revolution split the nation in half along Jacobin and Royalist lines, the word "political polarization" emerged to describe the resulting schism. The word was used in the 19th century to denote the schism between Napoleon Bonaparte's followers and his opponents. Political parties on the left and right were more divided in several nations over the twentieth century. As the twentieth century drew to a close, the United States' political climate deteriorated due to the growing schism between the Democratic and Republican parties. Even before India gained its independence in 1947, the nation was deeply divided along political lines.

Even though there was little resistance at the time, the Indian National Congress (INC) was by far the most powerful political party. When the INC lost control of the lower house of India's parliament, the LokSabha, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, other minor parties gained popularity, and the situation altered. The Janata Party, which emerged victorious in the 1977 national election, stood out among them. But the Janata Party's triumph was fleeting, and the INC quickly took its position. Two new political parties gained traction in India in the 1980s: the Marxist Communist Party of India (CPM) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). A schism developed between the INC and the BJP as the latter became the INC's primary rival.

Definition of Political Polarization?

When individuals' attitudes on certain political topics become more divisive over time, this process is known as political polarization. There are a number of possible causes for this, including biased media coverage, individuals surrounding themselves with like-minded others, or a general trend toward more extreme viewpoints. Conflict, discord, and an inability to reach consensus on important topics are all symptoms of political polarization. People on different political sides of the aisle often have trouble communicating with one another, which contributes to the severe issue of political polarization in the US. Because of this, partisan media has grown in popularity, as individuals seek for stories that support their own political beliefs. The inability of citizens to work together to resolve issues is one way in which political polarization undermines democracies.

Background of Political Polarization in India:

The greatest global forced migration occurred as a result of the 1947 partition of India. People were forcibly removed from their homes and communities were further divided as a consequence of the schisms that emerged following the split. Militants killed millions and forced millions more to flee their homes as a result of the partition's bloodshed. Another consequence of India's division was the emergence of the world's worst refugee problem. The biggest forced exodus in human history occurred as a result of India's division. People were forcibly removed from their homes and communities were further divided as a consequence of the schisms that emerged following the split. Militants killed millions and forced millions more to flee their homes as a result of the partition's bloodshed. Another consequence of India's division was the emergence of the world's worst refugee problem. The biggest forced exodus in human history occurred as a result of India's division. People were forcibly removed from their homes and communities were further divided as a consequence of the schisms that emerged following the split. Militants killed millions and forced millions more to flee their homes as a result of the partition's bloodshed. Another consequence of India's division was the emergence of the world's worst refugee problem. The biggest forced exodus in human history occurred as a result of India's division. People were forcibly removed from their homes and communities

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History of Political Polarization after 1950 in India:

Extreme political divisions existed in India during the 1950s and 1960s. The country's political landscape was polarized between the ruling Congress Party and the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Some said that the Congress Party had too many ties to the US, while others said that the BJP had too many ties to the USSR. A Hindu nationalist assassinated Mahatma Gandhi in 1948 as a result of the political tensions that ensued. As the Congress Party and the BJP both shifted to the center, political violence decreased in the 1970s and 1980s. But political division returned in the 1990s when the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) took power. The result was a string of riots and terrorist attacks, such as the ones in Gujarat in 2002 and Bombay in 1993. A major problem in modern India is the country's extreme political division. People in this nation are strongly split between the Congress Party and the Bharatiya Janata Party. A multitude of bloody events, such as the 2008 Mumbai attacks and the 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots, have been precipitated by this schism. Even in the years to come, political division in India will undoubtedly provide a significant challenge.

Causes of Political Polarization:

Since many different things may lead to people being politically divided, there is no simple solution to this problem. Things like personal views, external influences, and social media might all have a role. The media's growing partisanship in recent years has the potential to exacerbate existing political divisions. There is a risk of an echo chamber effect occurring when individuals only consume news that supports their existing worldview. Since individuals on social media are more likely to only see content that supports their own views, this impact may be magnified. A person's social circle, including their friends, relatives, and coworkers, may also contribute to their level of political polarization. People may be less open to other points of view if they are often in the company of those who share their opinions. Another factor that might exacerbate political divisions is individual ideology. A person's willingness to consider other points of view could be affected by how firmly they believe in a certain set of ideas. Political polarization may be caused by many different things.

Even though there was little resistance at the time, the Indian National Congress (INC) was by far the most powerful political party. When the INC lost control of the lower house of India's parliament, the LokSabha, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, other minor parties gained popularity, and the situation altered. The Janata Party, which emerged victorious in the 1977 national election, stood out among them. But the Janata Party's triumph was fleeting, and the INC quickly took its position. Two new political parties gained traction in India in the 1980s: the Marxist Communist Party of India (CPM) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). A schism developed between the INC and the BJP as the latter became the INC's primary rival.This pattern persisted until the 1990s, when the BJP gained power and the CPM shifted to the role of principal opposition. A third political party, the AamAadmi Party (AAP), emerged in the 2013s; it has been opposed to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress (INC). The present age of political division started in the early 2010s with the 2014 general election, when the BJP won by a wide margin. A string of state elections followed after the BJP's triumph, with the party capturing the majority of seats. As a result, the opposition in India is now disorganised and the BJP has become the country's most powerful political party. A broader definition of "Identity Politics" has emerged in recent years to characterize the way individuals often interpret political problems in relation to who they are as individuals. One name for this trend is the "personalization of politics." Rather than voting according to their genuine policy views, some political analysts worry that identity politics may cause a kind of "tribalism" when individuals are more

inclined to vote according to their group membership. To counteract prejudice and exclusion, they say, "identity politics" is the way to go.

Explanation of Identity Politics:

Although it has several definitions, the word "identity politics" essentially means the belief that people's identities impact their political opinions. Things like gender, sexual orientation, religion, and race may fall under this category. Some see identity politics as a force for good as it unites oppressed people in the struggle for equality. Some say that identity politics causes divisions between people because it emphasizes differences rather than similarities. There is no one correct response, but we should all be mindful of the ways identity politics color our perspectives and actions in politics. Identity politics has grown in US prominence in the last few years. A contributing factor in this is the rise of Donald Trump, who has been charged of fueling racial, gender, and other forms of divide. Being conscious of how identity politics may influence your personal politics and interactions with the world is crucial regardless of your perspective on the force's good or bad aspects. A political strategy known as "identity politics" highlights the unique characteristics of certain social groups according to characteristics such as race, religion, gender, and sexual orientation. A group's interests and ideals may be advanced or discrimination against that group opposed via the use of identity politics. Following the 2016 US presidential election in particular, identity politics has risen to the forefront of Western democracies in the last several years. While some critics see identity politics as a divisive tribalism, proponents of the ideology maintain that it is a valid political tool.

Democracy has declined in almost every part of the globe, and the number of democracies has been declining in recent years. There has been a marked increase in the assertiveness of several authoritarian nations, the most notable of which being Russia and China. Hungary, Poland, Thailand, and Turkey are among the nations that reverted to authoritarianism after seeming to be successful liberal democracies in the 1990s. Yukuyama (2018)

Civil conflicts plagued Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen, and dictatorial governments remained in power after the Arab Spring uprisings of 2010–2011 disturbed dictatorships throughout the Middle East without producing much in the way of democracy. Voters in the United Kingdom decided to exit the European Union in 2016, and in the United States, populist nationalism was victorious in the presidential election thanks to a stunning upset victory by Donald Trump. This was the most unexpected and consequential development of 2016 in terms of the world's most enduring liberal democracies. The globalization of trade and technology has influenced all these changes. On the other hand, they have another origin: the emergence of identity politics (Fukuyama, 2018).

Politics in India:

Since India gained its freedom in 1947, the topic of identity politics has been a divisive and complicated one. Disagreements have mostly arisen between Hindu nationalists and secular, pluralistic state advocates in India (Dam, 2011). Conflicts and bloodshed broke out between Hindus and Muslims, Christians, and Sikhs as a result of Hindu nationalism's late-century surge. As the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its affiliates rose to power in early 2000s, identity politics as a problem reached a critical point. As a result, there has been a dramatic upsurge in anti-minority rhetoric and hate speech, and incidents of violence based on religion and caste have also increased. Several high-profile assaults against minorities, particularly Muslims and Dalits (a group at the base of the Hindu caste system), have occurred after the BJP's 2014 general election triumph, further emboldening Hindu nationalists. Secular and liberal Indians have responded by forming political and social groups to oppose the growth of Hindu nationalism. "Identity Politics Is Not as Evil as It Is Made Out to Be" (2019) argues that this political movement emerged as a backlash against dominant ideology.

Common Identity Politics in India

Despite Fukuyama's neoconservative leanings and Strauss an philosophical roots, he hails India as the shining cradle of human diversity in Politics of Identity (2022). However, majority identity politics did not emerge in India until after the 1947 partition. Religion had a significant role in the partition of India, namely between Hindus and Muslims. A Muslim nation, Pakistan, was established by the partition of India. A great deal of carnage and violence, however, resulted from the partition of India. Mass murders and rioting occurred on a grand scale. There were a lot of individuals forced to leave their homes because to the partition of India. Hindus, who made up the majority in India before division, began to stand out for themselves after the split. They began to advocate for their own nation. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a Hindu nationalist party, came into being as a result of this.

Hindutva, an ideology that promotes the primacy of Hindu culture and values, began to be propagated by the BJP. Another demand that the BJP began to make was for a Ram temple to be built at Ajodhya. Many people think that this temple is really where Lord Ram was born. Muslims were against the building of the temple. The result was the destruction of the Babri Masjid, a mosque built in the 16th century. Riots and mass murder broke out when the mosque was demolished. Muslims and Christians were among the minority groups that the BJP began to specifically target. It all began when the BJP started spreading the notion that these minority groups aren't patriotic.

Additionally, the BJP began to push for the enactment of stringent legislation targeting these minority groups. Additionally, the Dalit community became an enemy of the BJP. In Hinduism, the Dalits are at the very bottom of the social hierarchy. As a result, the majority community now backs the BJP. By spreading the ideology of Hindutva, the BJP has gained the support of the majority Hindu population. By pledging to improve the economic and social standing of the Dalit group, the BJP has also garnered their support. Members of other traditionally oppressed groups have also come around to supporting the BJP. As far as Hindu caste systems are concerned, the OBCs are at the bottom. The BJP has garnered the support of the OBCs due to its pledge to provide seats for them in government positions and educational institutions. Identifying oneself politically via one's caste to The higher castes have also sided with the BJP. In Hinduism, the highest caste is the upper castes. The BJP has successfully garnered the support of the higher castes by assuring them of reservations in public employment and educational institutions. The Scheduled Tribes (STs) have also sided with the BJP. The indigenous people of India are known as the STs. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has gained the STs' support by pledging to make educational and government posts reserved for them. By appealing to the majority's sense of belonging, the BJP was able to garner their support.

Hindu support for the BJP has been solidified via the employment of majority identity politics (Malik & Singh, 1992). The BJP has targeted minority populations using the concept of majority identity politics. With the tactic of majority identity politics, the BJP has singled out the Dalit caste. The other backward classes (OBCs) have been targeted by the BJP via majority identity politics. The higher castes have been the targets of the BJP's majority identity politics approach. The Scheduled Tribes (STs) have been the focus of the BJP's majority identity politics campaign. The BJP has successfully courted the majority group by appealing to their sense of identity. In order to solidify support within the Hindu majority, the BJP has used the tactic of majority identity politics. Since Kanshi Ram founded the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) on the philosophy of "mobilize under," it has been seen as a contentious term. Since then, the Mandal Commission is the most prominent example of when accusations of "identity politics" have re-emerged in connection with caste-based reservations.

Majority Identity Politics' impact on Indian Democracy:

There have been many detrimental effects on India's democracy brought about by the growth of majority identity politics. The most important consequence is the dramatic rise in violent incidents and tensions within communities. The ability of Hindu nationalist movements to incite religious hate and violence against minority groups, like as Muslims, is most apparent in places like Gujarat. The result has been an increase in religious fanaticism and a disintegration of social cohesiveness, both of which pose serious threats to democratic institutions. Also, right-wing populists like Narendra Modi have risen to power by capitalizing on communal tensions; this is partly due to majority identity politics. As a result, India's already precarious communal unity has taken a further hit, and the country's ability to operate as a democracy has been further compromised. Overall, majority identity politics has a lot of bad effects for India, including making it difficult for the nation to operate as a democracy. As a result, right-wing populism, religious fanaticism, and community violence have all increased, which is disastrous for democracy. In order to safeguard India's democracy, it is critical for the country's political leaders to discover solutions that cater to the needs of marginalized communities while simultaneously fostering societal unity.

Political Division's impact on India's Democracy:

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Implements of Political Polarization:

The media:

The media's coverage and framing of news may contribute to political division.

Social media:

The ease with which individuals may discover and communicate with others who share their views and opinions, as well as the wealth of information at their fingertips, are two ways in which social media can contribute to political polarization.

Political parties:

The tactics used by political parties in their campaigns and organizing may exacerbate partisan divisions.

Special interest groups:

1. Twitter and Face-book are examples of social media sites.

2. Politically biased news agencies.

3. Politicians who pursue their own goals via the use of contentious language.

3. Groups based on religion and caste attempt to incite conflicts among communities.

5. A sense of powerlessness and animosity is a direct result of economic disparity.

6. People don't have faith in institutions and the government.

7. A turbulent and violent past.

8. Populist and extreme political groups' ascent to power.

9. Involvement with the internal political process by foreign powers.

10. A media environment that is deeply divided and biased.

Conclusion:

Since India gained its independence in 1947, the nation has seen a dramatic increase in political division and the prevalence of majority identity politics. The present situation is the result of a chain reaction of occurrences and events that began after then. A watershed moment occurred with the violent Partition of India and its aftermath. Tensions between Hindus and Muslims were further intensified in 1948 when a nationalist of Hindu origin assassinated Mahatma Gandhi. In the 1980s and 1990s, Hindu nationalist movements like the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) rose to prominence, which contributed to the further polarization of Hinduism and Hindu politics. The present state of affairs in India is the culmination of long-simmering conflicts between various communities. Jammu and Kashmir, a state with a Muslim majority, lost its special status when the BJP took power, and this move has since contributed to the current spike in violence. Many people took to the streets in protest and even violence because they saw this as an assault on Muslims. Some have said that the BJP's policies discriminate against Muslims, Christians, and Dalits since they benefit the Hindu majority.

There is a breakdown in communication and understanding throughout communities as a result of the present political climate. The nation has been unable to overcome its many problems as a result of this. The polarization of Indian politics and the prevalence of majority identity politics do not have simple solutions. But everyone involved has to put their heads together and figure out how to proceed. The media, civic society, and the government are all part of this. India can only break through its internal strife if its citizens pull together. The preceding article traces the origins of India's current political divide and majority identity politics. It contends that several factions' long-simmering animosities have culminated in the present situation. In its last paragraph, the essay urges everyone involved to put their differences aside and figure out how to go ahead.

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