

How Does Political Polarization Impact Legislative Gridlock And Policy-Making Processes

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Abstract

Contemporary governance is characterized by a trend toward political polarization resulting in legislative gridlock and policy-making processes. The relationship between polarization and stagnation in the U.S. Congress is explored, focusing on how far ideological extremes have contributed to the breakdown of policymaking and articulation. Social Identity Theory, Elite Theory, Agenda Setting Theory, Rational Choice Theory, and Cultural Theory are all theoretical frameworks that offer insight into how polarization comes about. When a band of congressional members increasingly espouse radical positions, there is virtually no bipartisan cooperation and a corresponding decline in legislative productivity. The result is a stalemate, and while that in and of itself doesn't stop necessity from arising, it does prevent the consideration of pressing matters, namely (but not limited to) the federal minimum wage, which has repeatedly failed to increase despite the broad agreement on its necessity. The challenges of policy implementation in the polarized environment of resourced allocation disputes and judicial challenges also further complicate governance. In the end, the polarization and legislative deadlock that is cyclical, calls us to strategic interventions that increase the effectiveness of policymaking and return American democracy to functioning.

Keywords: Political Polarization, Legislative Gridlock, Policy Making, Social Identity Theory, Elite Theory, Agenda Setting Theory, Rational Choice Theory, Cultural Theory, Bipartisanship.

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I. Introduction

Political polarization which can be described as the widening of political attitudes to their opposing diameters is deepening across the globe's democracies. The increasing polarization of the two opposite poles of the ideological spectrum does not only complicate governance and policymaking but democracy itself. It tends to create hostility and distrust out of which there is no middle ground, and most often results in the legislature where conflict comes between opposition parties that control different branches of the government legislative stalemate which means legislative incapacity to react to, or pass, significant issues. It therefore remains our task to understand how this picture of polarization, gridlock, and policy paralysis is painted. As polarized as it is, polarization has many effects on governance and policymaking in as many ways as possible. On the one hand, ideological conflict makes it almost impossible to have relations and compromise between the two conflicting parties even on routine tasks. Instead of developing, governments continue to get bogged down in political stunts like this never-ending charade. At the same time, excessive polarization leads to democratic breakdown and the militarization of the state and judiciary agencies. The constitution's checks and balances are eroded, paralyzing further the capacity for implementation of policies. In the long run, policies shift closer to appealing to the special interests of the two extremes instead of the middle voter. Political populism also works to pressure governments to shift towards short-termism, hampering the proper process of the policy model.

Different cases show how polarized systems paralyzed systematic actions in the South and Southeast Asia region. In Thailand, tensions between royalists and supporters of the former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra dubbed 'Red Shirts' have over the years produced military coups and alleged democracy setbacks. This has utterly changed policy direction from the structures of patronages and populist encouragements and rewards in the least of far-sighted, fair developmental strategies. Likewise, the post-2014 Modi government in India has gone on an overdrive in implementing BJP's ideological agenda where issues such as citizenship and cultural policy meet the party's core Hindu nationalist vote bank's demands. Healthcare, jobs, agrarian crisis – challenges that concern most citizens remain *trung giai đoạn* despite incessant polarization. Another factor that contributes to governance capacity is the fact that the ruling party has always been at daggers drawn with federal governments headed by other political formations.

Likewise, the economic implications of such a state of polarized policy stagnation are equally huge. The cumulative framework presented here indicates that when governments cannot sustain their attention on economic

reform due to engagement in identity politics, investor certainty rises while infrastructure and human capital fall. In so doing, it flies in the face of liberal economic growth and reduces the rate of employment opportunities. For example, in Malaysia, the instability of the political nature and associated value risks created by the 1MDB crisis reduced the growth rates from over 5 percent in 2015 to less than 0.5 percent in 2019. Like India's, its growth has also been a roller coaster tilting sharply rightwards and leftwards at various phases of ideological polarization and populist pressures that stall difficult though required reforms. Prolonged polarization therefore threatens to cause developing nations to get stuck in 'middle-income traps' through a fading reform drive.

Reducing undue polarisation is therefore imperative for South/Southeast Asian governments to manage as a governance imperative. But to pull depolarized polities out of vicious cycles of hatred is much easier said than done. Whereas bringing back the politics of the center to a country can be sometimes facilitated through centrist policies, structural cleavages along ethnic and religious lines cannot be easily solved by policies. Constitutional reforms, too, which focus on improving the incentives for inclusion and participation among minorities, form a second list of features predicting greater positive change. For instance, power-sharing that formed the rationale of post-conflict reconciliation in Indonesia (Aceh) and Nepal (Madhesi) has eased polarization and governability problems. Politics can also be shed from state institutions such as civil service and judiciaries to limit polarization from dominating governance procedures. Even more attention is required to shield evidence-based policy capacities from populism trends associated with polarization. It is a long process to develop governance capabilities but a very short time to demolish them whenever ideology triumphs over professional considerations. Thus, maintaining islands of bureaucratic efficiency through proper political exclusion and mobilizing support across the party line for good economic decisions is crucial. In the case of the award, promoting reason over passion in political discourse also includes the possibility of gradually containing polarization. For instance, Malaysia has checked inflammatory identity politics by overhauling of electoral system, and how India has countered the same through legislation of anti-defection laws that provide for pre-poll coalition building completely.

Political polarization remains one of the deepest challenges to policymaking capacities and governance efficiency of South and Southeast Asian democracies nowadays. Thus, Polarization, through increasing legislative deadlock, short-termism, and vote erosion, is a structural pathogen for sound and equitable policy making. Solving this multifaceted, multimodal phenomenon calls for cautious consensus achieved and sustained by established power-sharing agreements as well as politically shielded policymaking prowess. If the roadmap to prevent the escalation of polarization is not taken soon, governance in the area may become trapped in a cycle of policy stasis and populism. Strengthening democracy's readiness to deliver in the polarization's spite therefore remains crucial.

Research objective

Political polarisation means that there are two large groups with highly distinct political ideologies and people in either group do not want to compromise. Furthermore, it further deepens rivalry and enmity in politics. The more a person is exposed to attitudes that mirror his or her own, the less tolerant he or she becomes of opposing views making it hard to achieve cross-party consensus. Many of these dynamics make it difficult to govern or pursue policy effectively. The conceptual meanings of political polarization and legislative deadlock and their relation will be described in the course of the study. The gap between the two political extremes gets larger, and the two sides are not interested in compromising on political polarization. This simply means a situation in politics whereby a government can no longer make laws because different arms of power are in the hands of different party formations. This research will assess how such bottlenecks are encouraged by polarization. The United States of course has the two-party system which is a blow to legislation with one party wanting their way and the other wanting theirs. If each side refuses to give an inch, stalemates materialize; yet, if laws are moved an inch, changes occur. Others, which slow legislation, are the filibuster and presidential veto. These events will be used in this research like rules changed to limit the filibuster and steps taken to avoid it for Supreme Court nominations. Other recent examples from budget behavior also prove how polarization holds back crucial policy formation.

Besides, the project will explain the impact of political polarization in South and Southeast Asian nations, for example, India, Indonesia, and Thailand. In India, several Hindu nationalists' electoral gains made in recent years have aggravated the controversy over its sociopolitical function. The competition between Islamist and pluralist forces has intensified in Indonesia starting from 2014. Monarchism and the social structure have been controversies in Thailand and have occasioned significant political transformation. To this, the study will also look at the causes of the political division in the society. As sociologists like Christopher Bail have observed, social media leads to isolation thus reducing exposure to cross-cutting exposure therefore increasing polarization. Alexander Kirshner in his "legitimate opposition" gives deep emphasis to the critical notion that basic politics are rivalries. Historical and cultural contexts are also to blame as Jed Atkins explains regarding various transformations of decency and tolerance. Besides, the sectional conflicts, polarization undercuts the trust in

democracy, hampers legislation, and opens vistas of violence. Making politics a central source of stress leaves a significant mark on the mental well-being of men.

Objectives

- 1) Understanding the relationship between polarization and legislative stagnation
- 2) knowing the potential impact of polarization on the policies of the country.
- 3) Props on development of remedies that may lessen the effects of polarization

Key research questions include:

- 1) What is the manner through which political polarization leads to legislative polarization?
- 2) On What policy areas is political polarization most driving?
- 3) What can be stated about the legislative body's political polarization in the past?
- 4) Which approaches can help to decrease polarization impacts on policy making?

Analyzing how political polarization prevents policy-making through legislative gridlock this research seeks to advance knowledge about challenges faced by the contemporary political systems and possible remedial measures. It will identify the trends in the polarization process in essential democracies, describe theoretical models explaining the link between polarization and stagnation, and evaluate the effects on policy-making and executive functions.

II. Evolution Of Political Polarization In Key Democracies

The most likely outcome of episodes in which democracies had achieved pernicious levels of political polarization was some form of major democratic decline. Increasingly, political polarization is a tendency that exists in many of the world's largest democracies. Political polarization has become the greatest challenge facing democratic regimes around the world and fears that it may put a lasting strain on democratic government. Given the stark evidence from different democracies, analysts have become increasingly interested in understanding how expanding political gaps influence democratic stability and functionality. Amongst extreme and prolonged political polarization, the United States is a special case. A deep 'us versus them' mindset has become more normal to the nation's political scene: legislative stagnation, depreciation of institutional standards and political violence have accelerated. The binary nature of the United States electoral system makes this problem exponential and the system feeds political sorting. Residents are highly effectively polarized, and this results in a high level of distrust and antipathy against those on the other party. The mumble on a mix between electoral majoritarianism and electoral colloquy and then the mentioned Senate, and Election College mumble the efficiency of government and the resentment of the public (figure 1).

The Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) data collection compares the United States with other countries and reveals that the United States is not alone in suffering severe polarization. From 1950 on, fifty-two democracies have experienced deleterious polarization, whereby deep and irreconcilable differences of solidarized adversaries based on political identity lead to mutual animosity within society groupings. Half of these cases, ie. 26, have seen a major decline in democracy, with many of them sliding towards authoritarianism. This underlines a disturbing trend: Democratic loss is often accompanied by severe polarization. From the late nineteenth century on, this has constituted the main source of political polarization and socialization in India: what country we are. The political leadership, however, has been divisive, fueled by a social context of economic transformation, change in the media landscape, and the rise of competitive caste politics, and has steadily brought the politics of polarization to a boil. This current wave of polarization draws inspiration from the colonial and the two clashing 'ideas of India' that arose during the same period. Some proponents thought that India should be a secular country because of a harmonious celebration of religious communities as equals. The opposing strain of Hindu Nationalists, however, insisted that this 'majority' culture should define Indian identity and that minorities must fit in by embracing the strictures of this majority culture.

The divisions over Indian national identity had yet to become a politically ascendant force when Hindu nationalism was still on the rocks until very late in the 1980s. Polarization has reached a dangerous level today since then, political leadership particularly the divisive tactics of the BJP Prime Minister Narendra Modi (2014–present) has polarized the country. Yet some democracies have succeeded in depolarizing and keeping alive their democratic processes, but they are rare and often frail. As an example of depolarization initiatives Brazil, Colombia, and Bolivia illustrate three examples of the process being implemented through democratic initiatives, judicial interventions, or political accords that were momentarily successful. Nevertheless, as these victories can tip to repolarization, the threat of polarization continues. In the early 1990s, for example, Brazil's democracy was relatively stable following a presidential impeachment but had largely polarized again by 2012. However, a subset of democracies has been able to remain much polarized and resistant to immediate democratic degradation. Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Mexico have sustained democratic democracy notwithstanding persistent polarization. The overall democratic health has suffered, even in these circumstances. V-Dem's Liberal

Democracy Index, for instance, notes this: while these countries have not received a lower Regimes of the World (RoW) rating, their democratic quality has worsened.

A major democratic decline is the most often result of polarized democracies. Polarization led to relapses to democracy in twenty-six of fifty-two cases, or to authoritarianism. Politicians from Hungary, India, and Poland have been using mainly controversial populist techniques of consolidating power, often at the expense of democratic norms and institutions. This is an example of polarization that lends itself very well to authoritarian consolidation. For example, its Islamic Pluralist cleavage is very deeply rooted in Indonesia. Political movements on opposite sides of this divide mobilized even before the country's independence in 1945. Political Islamists pushed for Islam's role, and greater authority over matters of state; and pluralists advocated greater—though not complete—secularism, in-laws, institutions, and sentiments, in the protection of the country's many religious minorities. This meant that pluralist leaders won out, and rather than explicitly referring to Islam, Indonesia's constitution avoided it, rather stating 'belief in one God' as one of the country's five founding principles – known as the Pancasila. The country's political parties have distinguished themselves from the day-to-day, primarily by their Islamic or pluralist orientation.

Since 2016, President Joko Widodo has eroded democracy by criminalizing the most extreme figures in Islamist mobilizations, targeting opposition figures in the protests of the President, ahead of the 2019 election. On. The Jokowi government had then encouraged a purge of Islamist elements from state agencies, and the Jokowi government's crackdown on opposition figures and ideologically defined threats is without precedent in Indonesia's history as a democracy since 1998. Actions such as these serve to cement the deep gulfs between the opposition forces, Islamist groups, and the counterpoised coalition of the now governing pluralists, while at the same time, causing harm to the country's otherwise fragile democratic institutions. United States' sustained, and deep division is unusual for wealthy, established democrats. For so long, no other advanced democracy has witnessed such high levels of divisiveness. This then suggests that the United States has very entrenched structural and societal concerns. There are several factors of polarization: racial and ethnic variety, tight two-party system, and partisan sorting. The comparison of political polarization in important democracies exposes a sad reality: polarization poisonous to democratic stability is a serious threat. Some countries have dealt with this successfully, but many have begun to erode, or even collapse, their democratic institutions.

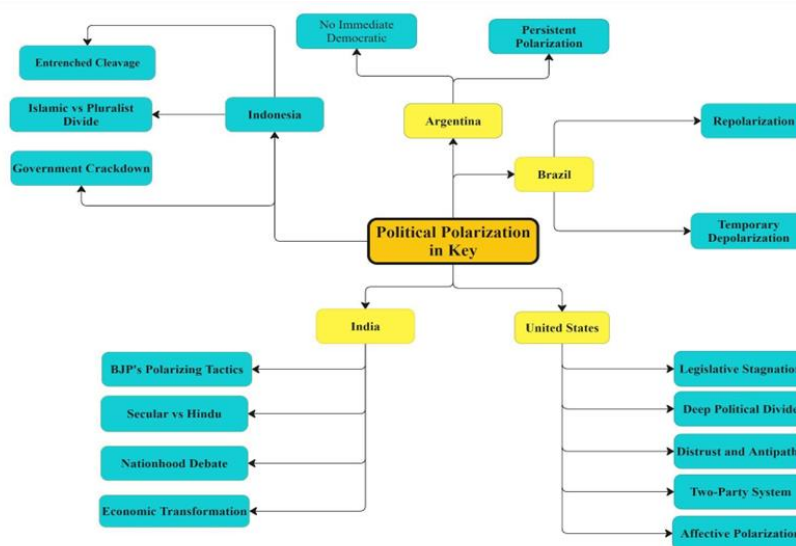


Figure 1: Evolution of Political Polarization in Key Democracies

III. Factors Contributing To Polarization

Economic Inequality- Unemployment and other economic differences have created discontent and made the voters look for nonconformist solutions to their troubles. Trends of income disparity have most often been analyzed on only an economic basis. However, it has been turning into a political issue more and more in recent decades, which yielded a negative impact on almost all spheres of political life. Increasing income disparity threatens mobility, may exacerbate physical violence, and create political instability. In this context, political polarization means the increasing chasm of politically related beliefs or positions that are unfavorable to the common Civitas. Its appearance is especially associated with the growth of ideologized masses and radical political forces. Over the last few decades, political marginalization has deepened worldwide and it has been an unsettling factor in societies all around the world whether they are first-world countries like the U S and the European countries or third-world countries like Brazil, India Turkey, and Poland among others.

With more recent measurements of polarization in US state legislatures and state-level income inequality, Voorheis et al. [48] found with similar regression results that “income inequality strongly and positively affects political polarization in American politics”. This is what led state Democratic parties to move towards the left and oust moderate Democratic lawmakers from office in favor of Republicans. A similar trend has also been noted in the European countries. Using weighted household survey data for 25 European countries for the period between 2002 and 2014 Winkler [49] posited that higher average inequality raises the probability of an individual supporting extreme left-wing parties and a higher level of support for far-right parties among the elderly. India’s economic change over the last three decades would arguably be the least discussed narrative in today’s form of polarization. Since 1991 the Congress-led government has undertaken liberalization that recast the structure of the Indian economy, broadened and deepened urbanization, and enhanced the size of the middle class. Yet, strikingly, these reforms were a goldmine for the politics of identity, with the BJP in particular, since the urban public appears to be more rather than less supportive of Hindu nationalism.” Jaffrelot observes that “urbanization has shaped Hinduism more than any other factor.” As a village people live together. You won’t fail to notice the muezzin or the bells of the temple and you are countertops of syncretism (syncretic cults). When you go to the city that is over.”¹⁷ Since 1997, economic divisions remain and ethnic inequalities are growing problems in Malaysia, and a significant number of Malaysians in the B40 bracket remain economically vulnerable with low wages, high leverage, and radical solutions to their problems.

Income inequality has been typically examined from an economic perspective. However, it has become more and more politicized in recent decades, causing a wide range of detrimental political consequences. Growing inequality could undermine social mobility, induce violent conflicts, and generate political tensions. Political polarization refers to the vast and growing gap in political attitudes and identities among the public that undermine the pursuit of a common good. Its emergence is often compounded by the rise of ideologically divided masses and radical political parties. In recent decades, political polarization has intensified globally and has been a disruptive force in societies across the world, from advanced countries including the US and those in Europe to the developing world such as Brazil, India, Turkey, and Poland. Using more recent data on polarization in U.S. state legislatures and state-level income inequality, Voorheis et al. [48] concluded that “income inequality has a large, positive, and statistically significant effect on political polarization” in American politics. This is what caused state Democratic parties to become more liberal and replace moderate Democratic legislators with Republicans. A similar pattern has also been identified in Europe. Relying on aggregated household survey data for 25 European countries from 2002 to 2014, Winkler [49] suggested that increasing inequality on average leads to a rise in the probability of an individual supporting extreme left-wing parties as well as more support for far-right parties among older citizens.

India’s economic transformation over the past three decades is the least debated driver of today’s polarization. Starting in 1991, a Congress-led government pursued a program of economic liberalization that reshaped the Indian economy, accelerating urbanization and creating a sizable middle class. Paradoxically, however, the Congress Party’s reforms proved a huge boon for the identity politics of the BJP, as urban voters tend to be more rather than less supportive of Hindu nationalist narratives.¹⁶ As Christophe Jaffrelot argues, “Urbanization has transformed Hinduism more than any other development. In the village, you live together. You can’t miss the muezzin or the bells of the temple and you have syncretic (mixed) cults. . . . When you go to the city that’s over.”¹⁷ Since 1997, economic divisions in Malaysia have persisted, and inequalities between ethnic communities have become an increasingly salient issue.¹³ A large share of those deemed to be in the Bottom 40 percent (B40) are economically insecure, with low wages and high debt. The Malays and East Malaysian formation is overly represented within this group. By making use of its ethnonationalist discourse, UMNO sought to increase the anxiety of such an electorate about the elections, where fear became an instrument and polarization resumed. On this basis, BN depended on these low-educated and rural voters’ support and through its control of patronage resources secured their votes. Since 2018 B40 now forms the base for the Muhyiddin government and this overall picture of polarization motivator is still present. Due to liberalization policies in the early 1990s, the people of this country have been integrated into the world economy. This liberalization disturbed the fixed Thai socio-economic system of castes; the rural dwellers could now try to be different from what they were and look for a better life. They have voted for such leaders, and as they stiffen their spines against the older order, having shaken the monarchy as well, they have offended not only the royalist oligarchs but also a great many other Thais who remain loyal to the reigning order.

Media Influence- Proliferation of the political media and social networks has led to polarisation as something that triangulates an individual into the existing ideologies and distrusts any opinion but one’s own. In this changing media environment, business-oriented institutions directly back specific groups and amplify small incidents cynically for polarization. Added to these factors, there emerged social networking sites especially Twitter which quickened the rate at which falsehoods and propaganda material diffuse. Particularly in India, the platform WhatsApp is most favored to spread fake news to create trouble between two different communities.

For example in the 2019 elections, the ruling party spent more money than the opposition Congress on social media advertising by almost fifteen times, and Modi has, in general, avoided conventional media since he uses Facebook and Twitter.

Indonesia in 2013 saw BN, flush with funds, fill the social media space, particularly with trolls and argumentative messages; in 2018, BN, cash strapped and much weakened politically, was unable to contain the sophistication of the opposition's use of what, for instance, WhatsApp. Through these social networks, and in the process of delivering these polarizing messages, social media has improved the capability of political elites. Race and religion relations have also been enhanced through the emergence of new media sources. For the year 2013, UMNO employed a very passionate appeal in asserting that voting against this party was a betrayal of the community and of religion these two were supposed to be defended. More often than before, Malaysians are getting their information from media sources that only present the side of the growing divide within the country. The Sri Lankan media environment, which is particularly divided along ethnic lines, and even more recently the Sri Lankan social media environment then offers canvases that can quickly escalate furious discourse. It is common to find that the Sinhala and Tamil media circles can present opposite sets of news and views for the same national events and matters. Of particular interest in Thailand is that two media proprietors, Sonthi Limthongkul and Thaksin, led the PAD and the UDD respectively. Each side has its own television broadcasting and media outlets that acted as weapons to advance their political stance and demoralize the opposition. The red and yellow shirts are both active on social networking sites with their accounts created for the mass demonstrations. Till recently the media became full of hate speech and vigilante movements. These have been created to be partisan media formats where the two groups only get to hear and watch what they want to hear and not the whole.

Identity Politics- Whereas, race, religion, ethnicity, and national identity have emerged and intensified into political colors, polarization, and political vote triggers. The greater politicization of caste, particularly the proliferation of caste parties and the rise of intermediary castes or the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in the Hindi belt has been an equally important reason that led to deep polarisation and the ascendance of the Hindu right. When OBC parties were emerging as significant vote-getters in the 1980s and 1990s, BJP and Sangh Parivar redoubled Hinduisation, primarily by Games about the Babri Masjid. This strategy has helped in breaking Hindu Dalits, the lowest class of Indians in terms of caste, and other backward classes from the dominating backward classes in the caste-based parties thus eating into their vote bank. The spectacular electoral triumph of the BJP's aggressive brand of Hindu nationalism has compelled the Congress and the various other opposition formations to opt for a more subtle form of Hindutva. For example, before the 2019 elections, Rahul Gandhi, who was the president of the Congress Party at the time, visited Hindu temples often to gain Hindu nationalist votes. More dangerously, major parties have turned cautious about supporting religious minorities, especially Islamic people, and sometimes, they have been silent about hate crimes.

Religious intensity in the Malaysian population has risen steadily from the late 1970s up to the present time. All the major faiths have enhanced the organization of religion, including through political activation of believers, and more children are still being isolated from peers of other faiths, through religious schools or home schools. These changes have also widened the divide in society because religious groups are now aligned in different camps and peoples' perception of how to deal with the other side has been framed in terms of the righteous thing to do.

Populist Movements- Such examples include the attraction of populist leaders and movements who often present themselves as critics of the political status quo for thus electoral success appeals to dissatisfied and marginalized people across nation-states. The personalities and elite moves highlighted above are unique to Indonesia; however, the processes that produced the polarisation in the country mirror those that have occurred in other divided democracies. The first is, that populism has emerged in Indonesia, and intensified social polarization that has been witnessed around the globe. This is exactly what has happened in Indonesia. By the end of the Yudhoyono era, disillusionment with the political establishment had become widespread.²⁰ The public's trust in and loyalty toward political parties had deteriorated dramatically: During the democracy consolidation about eight in ten Indonesians had a preferred party affiliation to which they voted, but by 2014 this figure had shrunk to a mere 7 percent.

Strength of the Political Parties- The strength of the political parties, does, to a great extent, become a deciding factor of polarization. This has intensified polarization because party leaders have relied on polarization to mobilize support since they lost ground with ordinary people and access to their resources following the 2018 reforms. Political parties have depended on provoking the other side as a tactic of keeping supporters together, painting the other side as evil. Ideologies of division along racial, religious, and reformist lines are a lot easier to sell than policy programs, and stoking people's anger is less of a challenge than managing the ethnolinguistic pluralism of Malaysia.

IV. Theories Clarifying The Connection Between Polarization And Policy Stalemate

Studying political polarization can be done through the use of diverse theories. Political polarization is a multifaceted process. The presented theories elucidate the nature, cause, and consequences of polarization on legislative stuck and policy-making to some extent.

1. Social Identity Theory.

Tajfel and Turner developed SIT in the early 1970s to accommodate two assumptions: That people gain identity and self-esteem from the organizations they belong to. Concerning political conflict, SIT elucidates how people categorize with political parties or other ideological fractions and how they view rivalry between the categories. To better understand this, let's look at the example of two people, Mark and Mia. Each of them has been provided with the same political representative. Their assessment and impression of the candidate though may differ. Mia might be able to share his ideology and work from his point of view, Mark could remain loyal to the party's principles, and he could have a certain level of skepticism toward this newly proposed candidate.

Application to Political Polarization:

In-Group vs. Out-Group Dynamics: The contextual factors in political parties and ideologies can render the parties highly salient where they act like highly committed in-groups and see the opposing team as out-groups. This dynamic in particular leads to polarization as members hold more extreme positions to avoid being associated with the out-group.

Identity-Based Voting: People pay attention to their group affiliation to the exclusion of policies that will enhance partisanship and reduce compromise.

Impact on Legislative Gridlock and Policy-Making:

Lawmakers lack cross-party agreements to create cohesive legislative processes that offer solutions to societal problems, which has led to a formation of parliaments with party-vileness leading to policy paralysis. Democracy becomes much more polarized and people are unable to come into dialogue and find common ground. Intergroup conflict is known to make the group identity academically relevant as aversive to those inside it, based on SIT, and thus, strengthened by Grant (1991) and Tajfel & Turner (1979). Indeed, according to Reid (2012) when identification with a group is relevant, it will act as a reference point for perception and evaluation of others. Despite this, a conflict situation may erect as a threat to the in group from the out group and is therefore more likely to give a biased perception (Hornsey & Imani, 2004). On this account, news frames that amplify political hostilities between two parties result in mass political polarization.

V. This Sort Of Party Identification Results In 3 Types Of Political Polarization:

Perceived Polarization:

Under such conditions, because of polarization within a group individuals consider their group more superior, less prejudiced, and more moderate, less prejudiced, iced, and more moderate while considering the other group as biased and significantly opposite (Maooz, 2003). This leads to what is here called 'False Polarization', where there is a risk that the difference in partners' extreme positions is overestimated. Still, people believe that affiliates of the opposite group are much more extreme in their attitudes than they objectively are, which is why the split is thought to be wider than it is.

Affective Polarization:

Affective polarization is "the degree of sentiment toward a candidate or political party, which is polarizing in a way that people are liking or starting to like their party while developing feelings of dislike or even hatred for the other party" (Jennings, Galarza & Warner, 2016, p 83).

This group-based emotion is similar to the impression of "us" and "them." Outgroup hostility is a major component of social identification that heightens positive affect in-group members but negative out-group affect as well. Americans harbor a strong dislike for members of the other party (though they also dislike their parties, as well).¹⁰ While social media is often blamed for this phenomenon, affective polarization started growing before the internet: its onset more closely relates to cable news and radio talk shows.¹¹ Its growth rate is also by far greatest among those 65 years of age and older, a group that uses the internet less than younger age cohorts (who are less polarized) but watches television and listens to talk radio more.¹² Such evidence and other investigations of social media raise the question of whether other media may also be involved. Affective polarization is still quickly emerging in the United States, and in fact, is slightly less than in some comparable European nations. In other words, while many European countries also report affective polarization in the neighborhood of, or somewhat higher than, that of the United States today, they are not experiencing the kinds of democratic malaise that Americans are. This implies that there is something about the U.S. political system, media, campaigns, or

social climate that makes the level of Americans' affective polarization especially threatening to U.S. democracy.¹⁷

Attitude Polarization:

Political attitude polarization is the process through which people shift their issue stance to be less average or more extreme depending on the recognized relevant political sentiments and ensure that they align with their preferred party ideals (Layman & Carsey, 2002; Prior, 2013). Bafumi and Shapiro (2009) proved that the mean position of both Democrats and Republicans as well as liberals and conservatives has shifted apart and become significantly more distinct on a large battery of political issues such as abortion, gay rights, the role of religion, race or civil rights. In a situation where an individual has uncertainty over an issue, he or she turns to interpersonal or mass communication to observe the group's opinion. People instead develop the attitude toward policy in coordination with the groups they subscribe to (Bullock et al., 2002). Thus, one could conclude that awareness of the position within the in-group as helps in attitude polarization.

VI. Elite Theory

In Elite Theory, politics is controlled by a group of people regarded as elite, and this small group is cohesive and very powerful. These elites bent the opinion of the people and the outcome of policies to favor their parochial interests.

Application to Political Polarization:

Polarizing Strategies: Leaders of political parties, spokespeople, media icons, and groups of interest use polarizing tactics to gain support and dominate power.

Manipulation of Information: Politicians shape the discourse through the purposeful sharing of information which in turn increases compartmentalization and polarization between the parties.

Impact on Legislative Gridlock and Policy-Making:

Bureaucrats may choose to frustrate the parliamentary process to deny the other side policy victories, thus creating a stalemate. Then there are polarized elites, who find it virtually impossible to compromise, and their inability leads to blocked policies and overall inefficiency in the governance of the society.

Media Influence and Agenda-Setting Theory

According to McCombs and Shaw's Agenda-Setting Theory, media bears an essential role in shaping public perception by offering an agenda of particular problems.

Application to Political Polarization:

Echo Chambers and Filter Bubbles: There is a current problem of partisan media, social media having feeds that feed the existing bias so that people are only fed with what they want to hear. In the case of Spain, this polarization cannot be explained otherwise than by considering the role of the media system as a factor of polarization and, more particularly, the specificities of the so-called 'polarised pluralism' system (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). Indeed, the first wave of political polarisation which took place towards the end of the Felipe Gonzales socialist period, occurred during a phase in which there was maximum media polarisation primarily due to the liberalization of television media and competition to shape and control the new media conglomerates. Therefore, alignments in today's political-media environment were fixed mainly early nineties and contributed to burgeoning the environment of political polarization for Aznar. In this case, the political-media strategy was easy to understand: Thus, while the PP was occupied in persecuting Felipe González, the parallel media dedicated themselves to enriching themselves from the socialist scandals and so destabilizing the government, offering a clear example of Castells has god-called the politics of scandal (Castells 2009). More fascinating is the second process which started in the second PP term at the time when this party gained the absolute majority at the 2000 elections. Aznar's decision is the best example of our original hypothesis: rather than targeting the median voter, the parties favor their bases even at the expense of elections the risk of which results in their production. More specifically, what this example points out is that the parties are concerned with the median voter when they seek the vote of the majority but become polarized when they are in the majority.

Framing Effects: Political issues are presented with a bias towards a given media source serving the purpose of the specific elitist agenda hence contributing to the polarized society.

Just about all members of Congress now have Twitter profiles, and most of them tweet frequently. This direct correspondence between a politician and the public interferes with the established politician news media

public dichotomy proposed by McCombs and Shaw (1972).attitudes by publicizing and framing specific problems.

Application to Political Polarization:

Echo Chambers and Filter Bubbles: The advent of partisan media and social media algorithms has created echo chambers in which people are only exposed to information that confirms their pre-existing ideas, exacerbating polarization. In the Spanish case, polarization is inexplicable unless we take into account the influence of the media system as a factor of polarization and, more specifically, the peculiarities of the system known as “polarized pluralism” (Hallin and Mancini 2004). The first phase of political polarization, at the end of the Felipe González socialist period, occurred at a moment of maximum media polarization, due to the liberalization of the television media and the resulting struggle to form and control the new media holdings (González 2008). Thus, today’s political-media alignments were shaped largely in the early nineties, and they served as a breeding ground for Aznar’s political polarization. In this case, the political-media strategy was easy to understand: while the PP devoted itself to harassing Felipe González, the parallel media devoted themselves to exploiting the socialist scandals, thus undermining the government and providing a paradigmatic example of what Castells has called “the politics of scandal” (Castells 2009). More intriguing is the second phase of polarization, which began during the second PP term, shortly after this party won the absolute majority in the 2000 elections. Aznar’s decision is the best example of our original hypothesis: far from competing for the median voter, the parties give preference to their core constituencies, despite the election risk that this involves. More specifically, what this example suggests is that the parties are responsive to the demands of the median voter while they are trying to get their vote, but they become radical once they are in power.

Framing Effects: Media sources frame political issues in ways that support their ideological positions, further polarizing public opinion. Nearly all members of Congress have Twitter accounts, many of which are highly active. This direct connection between a politician and the public disrupts the traditional communication flow of politicians news media public (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Since the news media does not perform the role of an intermediary adequately in mediating between the politicians and the public, there is a rich chance for the politician to work directly with the framing about what has to be communicated to the public and what should be done by the public. Frames are warning systems that identify, evaluate, and prescribe for the ail under discussion and this paper depends on them to explain what is being said in the context of reading. Concerning the debates on the issues of the various political parties, it is this paper’s premise that different frames are employed. For instance, in the context of abortion, the Conservative party in America will speak of the baby or the child and individual procedures, and pick specific words such as baby and procedure, while the Liberal party of America will refer to women and their rights, in a manner which specific words such as women and right are used (Monroe, Colaresi & Quinn, 2009). To satisfy this need, public communicators deliberately employ certain language when building frames that can guide audience actions within SC’s decision-making sphere (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007).

Impact on Legislative Gridlock and Policy-Making:

Bipolar media shape the perception of people to the extent that they put pressure on the legislature not to compromise. For example, in Malaysia, while the policies are mostly perceived within the broad dichotomy, both the ruling and the opposition parties. Therefore, political frames and related coalitions for polarizing erode the discourse and the bargaining required in determining the solutions to various issues affecting the country, especially on structural aspects of the economy, inequalities, rampant poverty, low literacy rates, corruption, and poor human capital. In this way, playing the people against each other, the media is good at undermining faith that people have in establishments hence complicating bi-partisan cooperation.

VII. Rational Choice Theory

According to Rational Choice Theory, humans make decisions based on a rational calculation of costs and rewards, In the light of Rational Choice Theory, culture is employed to define the person’s rise and conforming action through cost/ benefit specified by the objective of Important Utility.

Application to Political Polarization:

Strategic Polarization: It is conceivable that politicians and parties care little about divided lores; these stances are employed simply to gain competitive advantage and build a strong support base enough to capture votes.

People can come to the conclusion that polarized voters are electing increasingly polarized politicians – and this assumption can be valid about the most recent primary election scenarios. But that is not the full story. The process begins long before voters get a choice: politicians have become more ideologically extreme since the

1980s.⁷ Among the candidates interested in the candidacy, party chairs tend to endorse the most extreme candidates, mainly from the right flank. This, in the 2013 election, the Republican party chairs at the county level, chose ten far-right to every-one moderate candidates over two to one for Democrats. The tendency towards more polarized platforms is consistent with an increase in “safe” seats, that is seats where one party is overwhelmingly likely to win, to satisfy the candidate and party; however, it does not account for the depth of the Republican preference.⁷

Even in primaries, only approximately 20 percent of each party votes, while 41 percent of Americans are independents with little party loyalty and may vote in only eight states’ primaries.¹⁰ As such, the large percentage of voters has a low likelihood of selecting a less polarized candidate of their party.

Impact on Legislative Gridlock and Policy-Making:

Self-interest characterizes strategic behavior, and it is reelection more than efficient legislation that voters demand, which deepens stalemate by refusing cross-party collaboration for fear of favoring the other side. Polarization generates its policy concepts suitable for the far ends and reduces the likelihood of center-based, compromised policies.

VIII. Cultural Theory

Cultural Theory, therefore, analyses how cultures- values, beliefs, and norms- shape political actions and social effects. They play an important role in understanding how political predispositions are acquired and maintained and the place of cultural identification and orientations in the process.

Application to Political Polarization:

Cultural Divides: These include; Religious culture, ethnic and/or racial culture, and social or societal culture as these separate people into different cultures and thus they form two opposed cultures.

This India of today is sharply polarized on the question of what the national identity of the country should be: secular or Hindu nationalist. This is not to work polarization along lines of caste, class, language, or region; however, the social divides do matter more at the level below the country because no group is capable of dominating the country’s politics from top to bottom. Polarisation along these axes has therefore never been a threat to India’s democracy, except for the period between 1975 and 1977 when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi suspended rights for twenty-one months—a low in India’s remarkable democratic experience. That said, the profundity of the other polarization episodes notwithstanding, the polarization of Hindu nationalism is urgently threatening liberal liberties and plurality democracy in India today. Between 1977 and 2014, processes of ‘ethnicization’ of political conflict over the meaning of Indian nationalism emerged when the BJP consolidated as a formation in 1980, and Hindu nationalists succeeded in organizing civil society movements as the last decade discussed above proved. The event that put the Hindu right on the national stage was the Ram Janmabhoomi movement organized by the RSS and the Sangh Parivar to build a temple to Ram on the site of the Babri Masjid, a mosque in Ayodhya. The mosque was constructed on the debris of a demolished Hindu temple and has a history of sparks; In 1989 the RSS started a campaign on a national level for rebuilding the Hindu temple.

Moral Foundations: Heterogeneous populations hold separate moral concerns that correspond to their culture; care vs. loyalty, and fairness vs. obedience, resulting in divergent policy tendencies. It has been rising systematically within the context of Malaysian society. All the major faiths have consolidated the structure of their religions, with many politically enlisting their followers, and more children are being isolated from Mixed Company worship through religious schools and homeschooling. These shifts seem to have aggravated cleavages in society, mainly because religious factions have been constructed in terms of one side and socialized in terms of the righteous position as in their relations with the other side.

Impact on Legislative Gridlock and Policy-Making:

Cultural polarization is a phenomenon that results in value divergence and produces legislation stalemates. In the last few decades for instance the Ties between the Sinhala people of Sri Lanka, the Sri Lankan Tamils, the Up Country Tamils and the Muslims of the Sri Lanka Islands have strained the role of cultural identities and worldviews in shaping political attitudes.

IX. Effect on policy-making mechanisms

The highlighted finding shows that the observed growing polarization and congressional stalemate bear a considerable influence on policy-making processes, including policy formulation and implementation. Finally, polarization and stagnation are intertwined, presenting substantial challenges at the policy idea stage and during the policy negotiation and policy enactment processes.

Policy Formulation

Polarization has a big influence on policy formulation and bargaining. The more Congress members polarize and provide the lesser willingness to compromise across party lines, the more the policy process turns contentious. This environment makes it very difficult for the legislature to produce bipartisan outcomes which usually leads to a legislative stalemate. In the current United States Congress, which started after the 2023 elections, the two parties are highly polarized: congressional partisans hold more extreme policy positions and vote with members of the opposite party more infrequently. This is so because the two categories of players have markedly different agendas and interests, which makes it nearly impossible to negotiate the most urgent and contentious issues. Consequently, the number of bicameral legislative efforts has gone down as well. This is exemplified in the low ability to pass key legislation such that only 34 bills passed in the first year making this congress amongst the most paralysis in history. From Marc Jacob, Barton E. Lee, and Gabriele Gratton's theoretical models it is seen how polarization hinders policy creation. Per their account, deadlock can force moderate voters to vote for extreme candidates in their political parties, thus expanding the division within the House of Congress. This increased polarization threatens policymaking because politicians attend more to party orthodoxy and less to bargaining compromise, policy making involves time-consuming and often unnecessary haggling.

Policy Implementation

Bringing equilibrium in the two polarized camps is a challenge when practicing policy. Substantial conflicts with related ideologies can play a decisive role even after the legal act is enacted. Polarization affects not only the legislative branch but also the executive branch as well as other federal institutions responsible for the implementation of the policy. To be specific, there tends to be less hospitable agreement on the resources and support for policy enactment in highly polarised legislatures. Such discrepancies lead to underfunded services, insufficient control, and frequently improper implementation of legislation. In addition, polarized societies tend to trigger numerous legal contests to new laws, thus slowing their enforcement. Jacob, Lee, and Gratton's work also shows how stalemate increases these issues as well as firmly establishes the idea that such an outcome is damaging. In the gridlocked Congress, the legislation process becomes slower and policy reforms or changes become either delayed or in some occasions, entirely overshadowed. This condition leads to an archaic policy setting that does not conform to the current type of issues. Moreover, severe stalemate perception can lead to moderate votes being given to the extreme politicians who may not have strong commitments to the programs they consider concessions. The actual contentious issues can be illustrated by the federal minimum wage argument. Though there is consensus that the minimum wage must be increased across states, no proposal has been implemented since 2007 because of parliamentary stalemate. This inaction on the relevant policy matters explains how polarization and stagnation deter realistic policy enforcement rendering obsolete policies current and standing social and economic challenges. Polarization and parliamentary deadlock happen at different points in the policy cycle and across a broad range of policy sectors. Polarization hinders policy formulation and bargaining, which in turn leads to a stalemate in legislation making and minimal compromise between the two political parties. By the time that policies are made, efforts to put them into practice are often filled with problems that stem from ideological contention, inadequate funding, and legal hurdles. Jacob, Lee, and Gratton make an effort to study the fluctuations of polarization and gridlock in the system and stress the need for approaches that can help diminish these problems before the American policymaking system and democracy become even more dysfunctional.

X. Conclusion

An important aspect related to the phenomenon of political polarization is the relationship between polarized politics, legislative gridlock, and policy-making and the analysis of this connection demonstrates that relation to be complex and multifaceted. Political polarization refers to the deep antipathy and heightened partisanship, which hinders democratic organizations' performance and policy outcomes. Consequently, the historical and comparative assessments provide evidence that polarization is not specific to the United States, though the forms of polarization vary across democracies as do their consequences. An increase in the ideological polarization of political parties led to tribal legislation as seen in the United States Congress where key business-related reforms remained undetermined due to a lack of cooperation from the opposite side of the divide. Social Identity Theory, Elite Theory, Agenda-Setting Theory, Rational Choice Theory, as well as Cultural Theory indicate the direction of the phenomenon and its effects, as the subsequent chapters in this book will demonstrate. These theories make the coherent point that identity politics, elite self-interest, media, the strategic behavior of actors, and cultural cleavages help to perpetuate the continuation of dualistic visions and legislative stalemate. Polarization has very serious consequences meaningfully affecting policy-making projections. Polarized conditions are detrimental to bargaining and accommodation during policy formulation because they produce fewer bicameral legislative concepts and, overall, reduce government efficiency. An issue that revolves around

policy implementation is that there is no coherent policy and there are continuously competing ideologies hence policies get partially funded and unequally applied.

To reduce the negative impact of polarization, many proposals are needed. Supporting cross-party discussion, demanding changes to electoral laws that will decrease partisanship effects, and setting the media environment, where reliable and objective information reigns, can all help to eliminate the gap. Moreover, targeted enhancement of civic learning in addition to the enhancement of eligible citizens' voting activity heavy with the representatives of different communities will help to make the electorate more informed and united. In conclusion, it is only possible to overcome the division in political power with the help of the united efforts of lawmakers, politicians, media, and society members. Recognition of the underlying causes of polarization and its repercussions on legislation, elucidation of the approaches to promoting cooperation, and reinforcing confidence in democracy and government among the public are the areas where this research contributes significantly. It is for this reason that the future of our democratic dispensation will depend on our handling of these challenges in the nurturing of a political culture that will embrace compromise, non-exclusivity, and the general welfare.

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