

Pernicious Polarization and Democracy: An Analysis

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Abstract

This article delves into the multifarious relationships between religion, politics, and democracy in contemporary nations. It authenticates how, while religious influence can supplement egalitarian existence, it also obfuscates nonspiritual rule and exacerbates dogmatic divergence. Pernicious polarization and democratic backsliding give the impression of sombre, extensive dangers, operated by populism and religious fundamentalism. Technological innovations like algorithmic redistricting offer partial remedies, but multifaceted societal, enlightening, and utilitarian experiments persist. As a final point, conserving democracy involves a compulsion to secular objectivity, heterogeneity, established uprightness, and thoughtful engrossment with religious-political issues. Diagnosing this stiffness empowers pre-emptive accumulation of democratic standards in the face of fluctuating dogmatic panoramas, occasioning in approachable but unwavering supervision in mottled humanities.

Keywords: Hierocracy, atomization, executive aggrandizement, stochastic, zealotry.

INTRODUCTION

According to a news report, a top US official said that God played a secret role in rescuing a downed Air Force pilot. Is this a return to old-school thinking with these bizarre views, especially in a society that prides itself on being modern? Is this just a psychological trick? We've seen similar stories in the headlines, where one political group with similar values linked up with a mainstream party to destabilize another group that appears less secular. Furthermore, there was a heated debate among political contenders about priests from a particular church pushing for a specific party during Sunday services. Are they just random occurrences, or do they indicate that theocracy is gaining ground? Many sources, including the CIA World Factbook, refer to Iran as a "theocratic republic." Francis Fukuyama even noted that its constitution has "theocratic and democratic characteristics." Given the current state of the US government, it appears like a disguised theocratic democracy is emerging. Back in the day, Kerala didn't have much influence on religion, but since a political group started in 1948 to support a religious community and help them enter politics, things have shifted. Then in 1964, another regional party emerged to represent another religious group's interests. Recently, in Tamil Nadu's assembly election, reports say certain Christian groups handed out leaflets to followers asking them to vote for a specific candidate in some areas. Historically, during the Cold War, coups often led to a decline in democracy. But this trend has become more common with the rise of populist leaders who then undermine democratic institutions.

Faith can play a big role in democracy by promoting democratic norms and protecting minority rights, but it can also cause divisions and fuel discrimination through identity politics. Non-secular organizations form the basis of many cultures' core values, like human dignity and social unity. In democracies, people are shifting around due to economic and social issues, creating a huge gap and giving rise to populist movements. While having many parties is good for a vibrant democracy, it can also lead to chaos, especially as anti-elite groups emerge that focus on narrow viewpoints instead of building consensus. There's a troubling connection between religion and politics aimed at weakening secularism and democracy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to closely investigate the consequences of disputing with one another and democratic sliding into sinful behavior in the democratic process. A bibliometric examination of 100 available books and journals was allowed to facilitate the flow of current research. The time period covered ranged from 1950 to 2025, with the United Kingdom and other nations colonizing much of the free world prior. As the question progressed, it became unclear whether the event or items demonstrated a growth in poisonous and democratic slide into sinful behaviors, motivated by excessively extreme thinking. The 21st-century political situation is viewed as strongly idea-based, with mental components underlying it. While classical social draws attention to the seriousness and ability to last of intergroup conflict, current advances in moral

judgment do not offer a new understanding of political identities. Piercarlo Graham's book *Sociology and Political Polarization* brings together experts from majors in moral and political behavior to present new perspectives on the moral basis of political belief systems as well as ideas for devising effective therapies to reconcile divisions. [1] In the book *Pernicious Political Polarization: Life at the Intersection of Belief and Reality*, Thomas R. Dalton, brings out that Political polarization is a big problem, especially in the U.S., where it's gotten worse since 2015. Research shows there have been 211 cases of this kind of polarization in 178 countries since 1900, leading to weak governments and social chaos. Fixing this divide is often tough and can even get violent, with many places, including the U.S., struggling to find stability. The book looks into why communication between different groups breaks down and points to a key issue: people see the world in "multiple realities," which makes it hard to understand each other and come together. This difference in how people perceive things makes it really challenging to settle political disagreements, adding to the difficulty of finding common ground in a divided society. [2] In the book *Backsliding* (Kaufman, Haggard, 2021) looks at how elected officials can weaken democracy by taking away checks on their power and limiting people's freedoms. It explores how polarization and changes in party systems can make way for authoritarian rule, along with slow changes that create divides between opposing views. [3] With more than 40% of congregations following democratic ideas, democracy is an important notion in American Protestantism. Edgar L Heermance's *Democracy in the Church* concentrates on the Congregationalist tradition and underlines the scarcity of recent comprehensive literature on the subject while aiming to re-examine democratic government inside the church. Though significant advancements in interpretation and church history necessitate a rethinking of church government, earlier works by historians such as Dexter, Ross, and Ladd are cited. Proposals for centralized government are being debated against upholding traditional democratic norms. [4] *The Politics of Redistricting in the United States* Stephen K. Medvic, discusses that gerrymandering is a long-standing practice in American politics that has caused widespread public disapproval, which may equally be a case applicable to other populist democracies. Politicians manipulate electoral district lines to benefit a single party. Many individuals have illusions about gerrymandering and want simple solutions, despite the fact that it is commonly viewed negatively and is extremely difficult. Although there is no perfect way to draw district lines, the book offers a comprehensive examination of the subject, looking at its history, legal frameworks, and effects as well as potential reforms. [5] Although political groups are widely distributed, their organizational structures vary significantly between systems, continents, and occasionally between countries. This depth and diversity are reflected in notable ways in the *Handbook of Party Politics*. The editors have assembled an excellent team, and the volume's scope is wide and captivating.

The *Handbook of Party Politics*, is a major publication to offer a thorough survey of current party politics investigation, and utilizes a method while also tackling distinct national and competition subjects. This joint effort includes input from prominent party scholars, forging a precious reference on non-functioning parties in present matters of institutional structure and democratic rule. [6] Over the last forty years, religion has had a bigger effect on countries, which has led to some conflicts and power struggles. P. J. Tierney in the book *Theocracy: Can Democracy Survive Fundamentalism? Resolving the Conflict between Fundamentalism and Pluralism* examines the political actions of those who rigorously adhere to religious laws, particularly in the United States. The book defines Christianity, discusses its causes and mechanisms, and examines its political development. Tierney's views on today's Christian and offers strategies to defend a system or country where leaders are elected by the people, emphasizing the necessity of keeping religion and politics separate. [7]

HYPOTHESIS

Predicated on the study's focus, the general research verbal expression adopted was: "Pernicious Polarization and Democracy." The need to focus on current and previous events was critical to emphasizing the relevance of democracy by authorizing its organizational mechanisms to carry out activities traditionally linked with human perspicacity, as well as moral and political behavior. As a result, it was decided that the concrete issue would concentrate on the subtle insinuations of illiberal democracy and kakistocracy in authoritarian forms of rule. As a result, the specific question was whether "the forerunner to harmful democracy and religious fundamentalism had rendered democracy useless in building a world order?"

CRITICAL ISSUES

Theopolitics

Religion and politics often mix, shaping social values, public policies, and how people vote, sometimes acting as a way to rally support or create conflict. While some people push for a clear separation, many political leaders use religious symbols and language to gain support, which can lead to division and even undermine secular governance. The mix of religion and politics is a strong force worldwide, blurring the lines between personal belief and public policy. While it's meant to offer ethical leadership, political moves based on religious identity often turn faith into a tool for gaining voter loyalty, especially in diverse societies. This mix can cause a lot of social tension, with "moral" issues like education, reproductive rights, and community laws becoming heated political battles. So, the rise of religious influence in politics can turn civic life into a battleground of beliefs, where the quest for political power challenges the foundations of secularism. While the topic of establishment has receded in importance at present, it has been central to political thought in the West since at least the days of Constantine. Following the Protestant Reformation, European societies struggled with determining exactly what roles church and state should play in each other's spheres, so the

topic of establishment became especially pressing in the early modern era, though there was also substantial discussion in the Middle Ages. [8].

Pernicious polarization

Pernicious polarization is the dividing of society into mutually suspicious "Us vs. Them" groups, in which political identity becomes a social identity and adversaries are considered as existential dangers. This strong polarization undermines democratic norms, supports autocracy, and allows political actors to rationalize anti-democratic actions to prevent the opposing side from winning. [9]

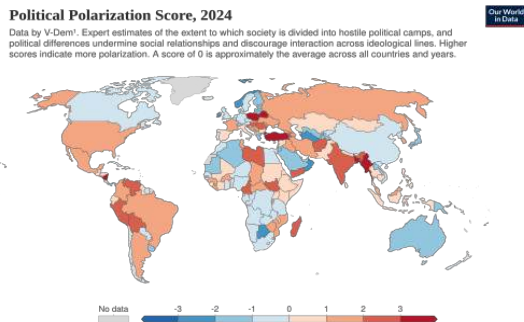


Figure 1: Political Polarization as in 2024 (Courtesy Data by V Dem)

In political science, pernicious polarization occurs when a single political cleavage overrides other divides and commonalities to the point it has boiled into a single divide which becomes entrenched and self-reinforcing. [10]

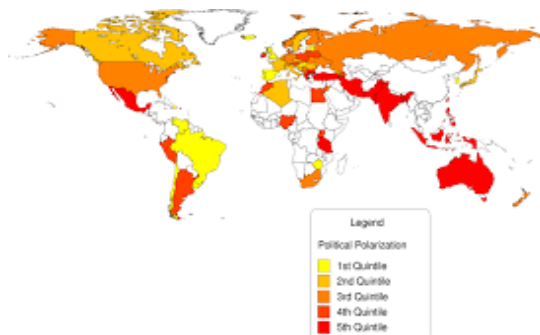


Figure 2: Political Polarization Density (Courtesy Data by V Dem)

Democratic backsliding

Democratic backsliding refers to the gradual transition from a democratic to an authoritarian form of governance, marked by a reduction in political power and an increase in repression. This process initially unfolds within a democratic framework, curtailing public discourse and political participation, thereby eroding fundamental democratic institutions such as fair elections and freedom of expression. It is important to note that this backsliding occurs as a gradual process rather than as an abrupt event, and is often executed methodically through legal means that ultimately undermine democratic principles. The Democratic Erosion Consortium has identified several precursors, indicators, and responses to these phenomena.

Factors contributing to democratic backsliding include economic inequality, unemployment, cultural reactions to societal changes, populist political movements, and external influences. Notably, economic inequality, even within affluent democracies, is strongly correlated with this phenomenon. Crises may lead leaders to implement autocratic policies that persist long after the emergencies they were intended to address have passed. The third wave of democratization has given rise to democracies that are weakly institutionalized and particularly susceptible to backsliding. Since 2010, numerous democracies have experienced a downward trajectory, with significant declines noted even in long-established democratic regimes.

Ecclesiocracy and democracy

Technological advancements are accelerating progress toward eliminating election inequities, but they must be supplemented with political will and institutional reform in order to really solidify democracy. Religious organizations occupy a paradoxical role in democracies, serving as both pillars of civic assignment and sources of disruptive influence; normalizing their effect demands rigorous control and interchange. The fragility of democracies in the face of anti-elitist authoritarianism and religious fundamentalism emphasizes the importance of a strong civil society, autonomous institutions, and education that promotes democratic values. Multiparty systems provide greater representation but raise governance instability, whereas two-party systems promote stability but may repress minority viewpoints, meaning that there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Future democratic viability is dependent on identifying and tackling the convergence of social inequity, political divide, religious mobilization, and technical challenges that face the government. [12]

Alternatives to gerrymandering

Alternatives to gerrymandering include using objective factors, such as population density and geographical features, to design fair electoral districts. These solutions seek to respect the "one person, one vote" ideal by eliminating partisan influence and ensuring equitable representation in the face of persistent issues such as partisan gerrymandering, particularly in the United States. To investigate gerrymandering, the Goal-based Redistricting for Elections Automatically Using Technology (GREAT) method, which aims to optimize compactness and political fairness in real-world district mapping, is used. [13] The system can change districts depending on partisan fairness measures and compactness while remaining under limitations, such as insuring certain party victories. The method uses simulated annealing, a local search technique that avoids local optimism by allowing non-improving stages. Each proposed redistricting plan is rated using an energy function, with lower values indicating better designs. The system iteratively adjusts old solutions, accepting new plans depending on their energy scores, allowing it to test a variety of outcomes.

Political parties

There are many political parties in India, with 650 expected for the 2025 general elections, which may result in a degradation of egalitarian medians. To confront, only parties getting more than 16% of the votes may be accredited by national parties. In addition, new parties or independent candidates should receive endorsement from 16% of voters to register. The spasmodic by-elections for vacant seats are positioning a strain on the system, so perhaps sponsoring the second-best candidate to fill such vacancies could assist. This can lead to pandemonium in the organization, making it problematic to get things done and nurturing public splits, since these parties manipulate people's disgruntlement with easy elucidations. Furthermore, some of these parties do not actually follow representative rules, but rather use them to emasculate democracy, making anti-democratic behavior justified. The oversupply of parties makes it difficult for traditional parties to form coalitions, forge shaky alliances, and erode trust in democratic institutions. These parties have the potential to become oligarchies with severe hierarchies that promote anti-liberal, nationalistic ideals that are irreconcilable with human rights and egalitarianism. The subtler "far-right lite" parties can be much more perilous, disguising intemperate determinations under a facade of decorum. In supposition, while many people regard multi-party systems as advantageous, they also host momentous progenies such as doctrinal shattering, scrawny amalgamations, strategy deadlocks, socioeconomic differences, and an amplified jeopardy of depravity. These issues can promote personal authority above the public interest, destabilizing democracy itself.

Religious fundamentalism

All fundamentalists strive for triumphalism, establishing a global church, Umm, and nation to recapture moral authority that has been ceded to contemporaries by shaping their governments' political agendas, particularly through the media. Religion has grown tremendously all the world. All faiths engage with modernity, which is founded on human freedom, market autonomy, and value independence, as exemplified by secularism and democracy, respectively. This advancement is structured in a variety of ways.

NEW INSIGHTS

The term "establishment" can refer to any of several possible arrangements for a religion in a society's political life. In contrast to these ideas, the liberal tradition has traditionally resisted establishment in all of its various manifestations. Modern liberals frequently appeal to the concept of fairness. It is claimed, for example, that the state should remain neutral among religions because it is unfair—especially for a democratic government that is supposed to represent all the people composing its demos—to intentionally disadvantage any group of citizens in their pursuit of the good as they see it, religious or otherwise.[9] Similarly, liberals frequently argue that allocating tax dollars to religious groups violates fairness since it forces non-believers to subsidize religions they reject.

Liberals take a different approach, appealing directly to the right to exercise one's religion, which is derived from a broader right to freedom of conscience. If everyone has this right, it is morally wrong for the state to coerce them into participating in religious rituals and institutions that they would otherwise dislike, such as public prayer. Democratic backsliding is evidenced by the deterioration of free elections, the erosion of liberal liberties such as freedom of speech and press, the destabilization of the rule of law, and an excessive focus on national security measures. This backsliding often manifests when democratically elected leaders implement incremental changes rather than overtly revolutionary measures, which complicates the identification of the precise moment when a government transitions away from democratic principles. This gradual decline is referred to as "stealth authoritarianism," wherein leaders exploit legal frameworks to pursue anti-democratic objectives. [14] Political scientists Levitsky and Ziblatt identify four primary indicators of authoritarian behaviour: a lack of commitment to democratic norms, disdain for the legitimacy of political adversaries, endorsement of violence, and the suppression of civil liberties. They argue that the use of various legal mechanisms to stifle dissent while cloaking actions in democratic rhetoric is a common tactic. Moreover, cultural factors have been recognized as significant contributors to backsliding; certain societies may inherently resist democratization. Promissory coups like those in Venezuela, Russia, China etc., occur when leaders overthrow elected governments under the pretext of safeguarding democracy while pledging future elections. This strategy has become increasingly prevalent since 1990. However, subsequent elections rarely yield enhanced democratic conditions. Religious leaders, together with political imams and clergy, wield substantial power over electoral choices via endorsements. Furthermore, these companies provide civic education, which fosters skills in civic discourse, management, and policy creation. For example, in Nigeria, Christian churches have aggressively promoted democratic ideas, such as the rule of law and human rights, through educational initiatives. Spiritual leaders serve as moral and ethical watchdogs, using their influence to combat corruption, nepotism, and other forms of energy misuse. They serve as a "prophetic voice," promoting social justice and the rights of the oppressed. Furthermore, places of worship contribute to social capital and network comradely love, frequently serving as the cornerstone for social movements and robust civic societies. In India, for example, religious ceremonies have been shown to improve perceptions of political illustration and religion in voting effectiveness. However, the link between faith and democracy is not without problems. The GREAT algorithm's effectiveness can be demonstrated by matching human specialists in the development of partisan and compact designs and winning a redistricting competition. The algorithm's flexibility allows it to solve complex, nonlinear objectives as long as the energy function can be quickly computed. [15]

To preserve limitations, the algorithm limits move to those that fulfil particular criteria, ensuring that the solutions represent desired results, such as party wins or compactness. It creates new district configurations using a modified tree-recombination method that combines and rebalances nearby districts using random spanning trees. For plan initialization, frequently use existing district maps or generate different starting locations by randomly partitioning the state using the tree-recombination method. This enables the creation of legal districts while allowing for a variety of techniques based on the limits specified. If stricter constraints exist, the algorithm initially optimizes them before laying the groundwork for later iterations. Key challenges in multi-party democracies include dogmatic fragmentation, which can result in weak associations that writhe to make decisions collectively, as well as policy ineptitude caused by support for "logrolling" arrangements that mystify indisputable convalescences. Trivial radical parties can garble influence, instigating mainstream parties to adopt more thrilling perceptions in order to keep their voters satisfied. Also, when power is apportioned among multiple groups, citizens find it more problematic to hold anyone answerable for mistakes. Family-run politics can also unsettle internal democracy, making it arduous to identify leadership based on merit. When comparing two-party and multi-party systems, the two-party system often delivers more stability, efficiency, and transparency, although it may limit voter options and support disruptive policies. Multi-party systems, on the other hand, improve representation and variety by giving voters more options and preventing power from becoming unduly concentrated; nonetheless, they can be unbalanced and reluctant to make decisions due to coalition concerns. Finally, a two-party system may be superior for people seeking stability and moderate administration, whereas a multi-party system is preferable for those seeking diversified representation and a wide gamut of ideas. Christian religious fundamentalism ominously influences the democratic process as it acts as a communally conservative force that defies secular modernity while encouraging public policies substantiated in strict biblical explanations. It rallies citizens, exclusively within the United States, to back conservative candidates and political parties that prioritize traditional values. This inspiration is obvious in various forms, such as intensified political assignation, nurturing intellectual divides that deepen societal rifts, musing policies on limiting reproductive and LGBTQ+ rights, and perplexing secularism by demanding the integration of religious tenets into legislation. Fundamentalists often portray secularism and liberalism as societal dangers, deteriorating the approval of dissimilar perspectives vital for a democratic society. [16] Their manoeuvres can weaken democratic principles by opposing minority rights and exploiting moral panic to gain support for certain laws. While often regarded as a hypothetical danger to liberal democracy, fundamentalism is also seen as an effective expression of political interest and uniqueness within the democratic framework.

Islamic religious extremism in India has a significant impact on the political environment by corroding secular values, undermining state personal laws, and increasing communal hatred. Radical groups question the legitimacy of secular institutions' interpretations of Islamic law, resulting in disagreements over personal law and attempts to influence judicial decisions. These factions have successfully lobbied the government to modify laws, as seen by the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act of 1986, which overturned the Shah Bano case ruling, stressing the legislative significance.

ASSERTIONS

It is unethical to force people to pay to support religious institutions and communities that they would not otherwise support. [17] Unlike most types of polarization, pernicious polarization does not need to be ideological. Rather, pernicious polarization operates on a single political cleavage, which can be partisan identity, religious vs secular, globalist vs nationalist, urban vs rural, etc. [18] This political divide creates an explosion of mutual group distrust which hardens between the two political parties or coalitions and spreads beyond the political sphere into societal relations. Executive aggrandizement involves the consolidation of power within the hands of the leader, often at the expense of checks and balances. This typically involves legal strategies that weaken political opposition and compromise judicial independence. Historical trends show a decline in the frequency of active coups in favor of executive authority expansion, which is followed by gradual institutional changes. Legislative authoritarianism consolidates authority through elected legislatures while presenting a democratic facade. Governments may enact laws that restrict opposition, diminish oversight, or entrench dominant parties, employing legislative processes to undermine democratic accountability. The strategies employed tend to obscure the decline of democratic governance, thereby complicating the detection and opposition to such decline. In essence, democratic backsliding represents a complex and multifaceted process characterized by the gradual erosion of democratic values and institutions, often facilitated by elected officials. This is achieved through a variety of tactics, including presidential overreach and manipulation within parliamentary systems, with socioeconomic and cultural attitudes playing significant roles. As a result, in order to maintain democratic government, it is critical to recognize and address the nuances of democratic decline. Populism promotes popular sovereignty while opposing necessary limits such as judicial independence, leading to democratization in countries such as Hungary and Venezuela. A 2018 study by Yascha Mount and Jordan Kyle correlates populism with democratic backsliding, revealing that since 1990, both right-wing and left-wing populist regimes have significantly contributed to democratic collapse. The Tony Blair Institute for Global Change has identified that populist regimes pose a substantial threat to democratic integrity, primarily undermining the quality of democracy, checks on executive power, and the political participation rights of citizens.

Reports indicate that over half of populist presidents have amended constitutions in ways that weaken checks and balances, thereby jeopardizing individual liberties. According to scholars from Central and Eastern Europe, populism possesses the capacity to articulate societal demands for reform while simultaneously undermining democratic safeguards and embedding private interests within governance structures. Research indicates that right-wing populism is revealing vulnerabilities within democratic systems, as individuals often compromise their own democratic principles out of concern that their adversaries may act pre-emptively. Moreover, perceptions regarding the opposing faction's dedication to democracy can significantly influence partisan behaviour, suggesting potential strategies for enhancing democratic stability. Lastly, economic inequality is recognized as a factor contributing to democratic decline, with high levels of unemployment at times fostering support for populist parties, as evidenced in both historical and contemporary contexts. Institutional reforms designed to address crises may unintentionally exacerbate democratic erosion, highlighting the complex interplay between policy decisions and the stability of democratic governance. [3] One major issue with Ecclesiastes is the struggle for power, in which non-secular authority can overcome democratic authority, potentially leading to dogmatism or hostility. Furthermore, while faith can sell togetherness, it can also incite identity politics and communal fragmentation, as seen in political events and the use of non-secular sentiments to fracture electoral alliances. In certain cases, huge religious monopolies diminish the likelihood of establishments opposing authoritarian regimes if those regimes keep power. Institutional variables show a unique effect of religion on democracy. For example, Catholicism has traditionally influenced democratization in Latin America, the United States, Japan, and Europe. Protestantism is frequently connected to advances in spiritual liberty and mass training, while the actual causal relationship remains contested in current empirical studies. Islam, on the other hand, is commonly portrayed as a political oppositional pressure; yet, many specialists believe that when not enforced by the state, it may coexist peacefully with democratic values. Judaism is marked by its strong belief in a pluralistic civil society and the protection of minority rights. A theocratic democracy is a political tool that combines spiritual regulation and democratic processes, which frequently results in instability. Religious majoritarianism maintains power by means of marginalizing minorities and restricting political freedoms. Iran is usually seen as a great example, with its charter setting up a system that includes clerical tracking through an ultimate chief and elected representatives. [19] Every other historical example is Theo-democracy, a term established by Joseph Smith Jr. that describes a governing system in which supernatural authority reigns supreme yet democratic ideals are upheld. The GREAT algorithm's comparisons to leading human-crafted redistricting plans provide a significant contribution because it is among the first to attain parity with expert designs.

Overall, the algorithm is a strong approach to redistricting that advances the research of partisan justice and compactness through systematic optimization. [20] People who support two-party systems believe that unpretentious democratic politics requires specialized politicians contending over ideas, while ordinary citizens only need to vote. They make a case that a functioning democracy does not require individuals to partake in policymaking; rather, competition among political parties forces them to pay heed to what voters want in order to win elections. However, disillusionment with major parties, such as that seen in the United Kingdom, suggests that this theory may not be in line with reality. In contrast, India has a multiparty system, whilst the United States has a two-party system, and both have advantages and disadvantages in terms of exemplification, permanence, and domination. India's multiparty system encompasses many parties that epitomize a wide spectrum of societal, cultural, and provincial interests, which aids representation but can also result in coalition governments, causing policy unpredictability and delays. This design provides voters with an assortment of options that better reflect their values. In contrast, the United States' two-party system usually results in stable rule, as one party often wins a majority. Christian religious fundamentalism, although small in scale, poses questions as it reacts to alleged threats from secularism and Hindutva nationalism. It is interconnected to antagonistic evangelism and accusations of involuntary conversions, which worsen hostility and confuse interfaith relationships. This self-protective stance contributes to electoral polarization and community strife by introducing theological issues into opinionated discussions and jeopardizing the secular foundation of democracy. Additionally, the 'conversion issue' is leveraged to justify violence and acrimony, portraying Christianity as a threat to Hindu identity. Consequently, Christian fundamentalism in India plays a noteworthy role in the arena of majoritarian politics, raising serious concerns regarding religious freedom, citizenship, and the integrity of Indian secularism. [21] Fanatical organizations have intensified their involvement in electoral politics, focusing community support towards communal goals and shaping the political views of Muslim youth. [22]

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE

How do we identify Pernicious democracy?

Core designates of a deleterious form of democracy include moralized antagonism, where political rivals are perceived as ethical adversaries in a "good vs. evil" narrative, and zero-sum politics that obstruct compromise due to the notion that one party's prosperity is another's failure. [23] Weakened democratic norms become conspicuous when bellwethers reject election outcomes, challenge the legitimacy of their opponents, and may accept political violence. The weaponization of institutions occurs when state mechanisms are employed to target dissenters, and the abstraction of centrist voices due to extreme polarization diminishes confidence in institutions as voters become

suspicious of electoral integrity and media reliability. [24] Central factors driving this trend include elite-driven rhetoric that capitalizes on societal grievances and "parenting," which segments denizens into devoted factions. [25] Partisan disinformation exacerbates public disputes over factual information, resulting in practices of active omission. Passive resistance from denizens who abide by democratic breaches by their preferred party, a cementation in "stealth authoritarianism" that utilizes licit implementations to suppress dissent, and the erosion of independent oversight through the emasculating of journalism and judiciary bodies are all designates of a potential shift to autocracy. The correlation between negative polarization and democratic decline is strong, with the vast majority of highly polarized countries losing their democratic status. [26] People have started to see politics as "we" versus "them." [27] The office of Ombudsperson of Argentina has been vacant since 2009, along with a companion Public Defender's office, allegedly because of pernicious polarization. [28] Incremental election subversion refers to the gradual undermining of democratic elections through measures such as restricting media access, disqualifying opposition candidates, and diminishing voter turnout. This form of backsliding often transpires slowly prior to elections, making it challenging for oversight entities to detect and report on the cumulative threats posed by seemingly minor yet serious misconduct. The persistent consolidation of power may accelerate when voter support appears to be fragmented or weakened, exacerbating institutional damage. The V-Party Dataset indicates that such authorization is frequently linked to populist parties that exhibit elevated levels of populism, anti-pluralism, and tolerance for political violence, while simultaneously demonstrating a lack of commitment to democratic principles. According to Pippa Norris (2019), two principal threats to Western democracies include random terrorist attacks and the rise of populist-authoritarian movements that exploit public anxieties. Norris delineates populism as possessing three defining characteristics: an emphasis on popular sovereignty, challenges to established authority, and leadership by "maverick outsiders" who claim to represent the common populace. Although some populists may advocate for traditional values, they often undermine civil liberties and the rights of minority groups. Norris posits that fears surrounding terrorism and populism have bolstered support for populist politicians, particularly during the administration of Donald Trump, when institutional distrust escalated. Scholars Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser contend that populism has a dual impact during democratization: it may support minimal democracy while simultaneously obstructing the development of a robust liberal democracy. Key traits of a theocratic democracy include prison codes founded on religious scriptures or traditions. Clerical officials wield giant energy over regulation and election applicants. Leaders assert supernatural validity in governing. While elections are held, they are often monitored by means of spiritual government, and legal guidelines regularly restricting secular liberties, substantially in terms of social behaviour and personal rights.

Universally, this machine represents a fragile attempt to blend democratic values with fundamentalist spiritual management, resulting in a delicate balance that is often difficult to maintain. With fewer options in a two-party system, voters can better follow policies, but it also risks driving people to extremes by failing to adequately express minority opinions. Whether one prefers one system over another is a matter of values: a multiparty system is better for inclusion and representation, whereas a two-party system is perceived as more stable and decisive. Both systems have advantages and disadvantages, and each country must choose the one that best suits its social and political environment. The rise of fundamentalist ideology may exacerbate communal strife and polarize voters, often allying with extremism in majority communities. While fundamentalism typically dismisses modern democratic values, other groups, such as Jamaat-e-Islami, have actively participated in democratic processes such as voting and education, establishing a complicated and growing relationship with politics. Despite the fact that Islamic fundamentalism has resulted in widespread terrorist attacks in India, the political context consistently navigates these dynamics through a Byzantine interplay of democracy, secularism, and minority rights.

Conclusion

The rebirth of religious rhetoric in political leadership epitomizes a complex interplay of faith, distinctiveness, and dominance, not a simple return to theocratic administration; it obliges nuanced evaluation rather than alarming assumptions. Pernicious polarization and democratic backsliding are reciprocally reinforcing trends that jeopardize democratic institutions globally, highlighting the perilous need for measures that promote political pluralism and respect for democratic principles. The copious tradition's demand for organizational neutrality among religions remains judicious to democratic fairness, yet political leaders habitually exploit religious feeling, highlighting a long-standing paradox that is difficult to reconcile. Technological advancements are accelerating progress toward eliminating election inequities, but they must be supplemented with political will and institutional reform in order to really solidify democracy. Religious organizations occupy a paradoxical role in democracies, serving as both pillars of civic assignment and sources of disruptive influence; normalizing their effect demands rigorous control and interchange. The fragility of democracies in the face of anti-elitist authoritarianism and religious fundamentalism emphasizes the importance of a strong civil society, autonomous institutions, and education that promotes democratic values. Multiparty systems provide greater representation but raise governance instability, whereas two-party systems promote stability but may repress minority viewpoints, meaning that there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Future democratic viability is dependent on identifying and tackling the convergence of social inequity, political divide, religious mobilization, and technical challenges that face the government.

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