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Research report

Forum: Economic & Social Council

Issue: Overcoming the impact of polarisation on social
                    safety nets and enhancing access to social services
                    for vulnerable populations

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Introduction

Addressing the impact of polarisation on social safety nets and improving access to social services for vulnerable populations is a complex and pressing issue in many societies. Polarisation can hinder the effectiveness of social safety nets and lead to unequal access to critical services. These services can include, but are not limited to, hospital care, childcare, unemployment pay, etc.
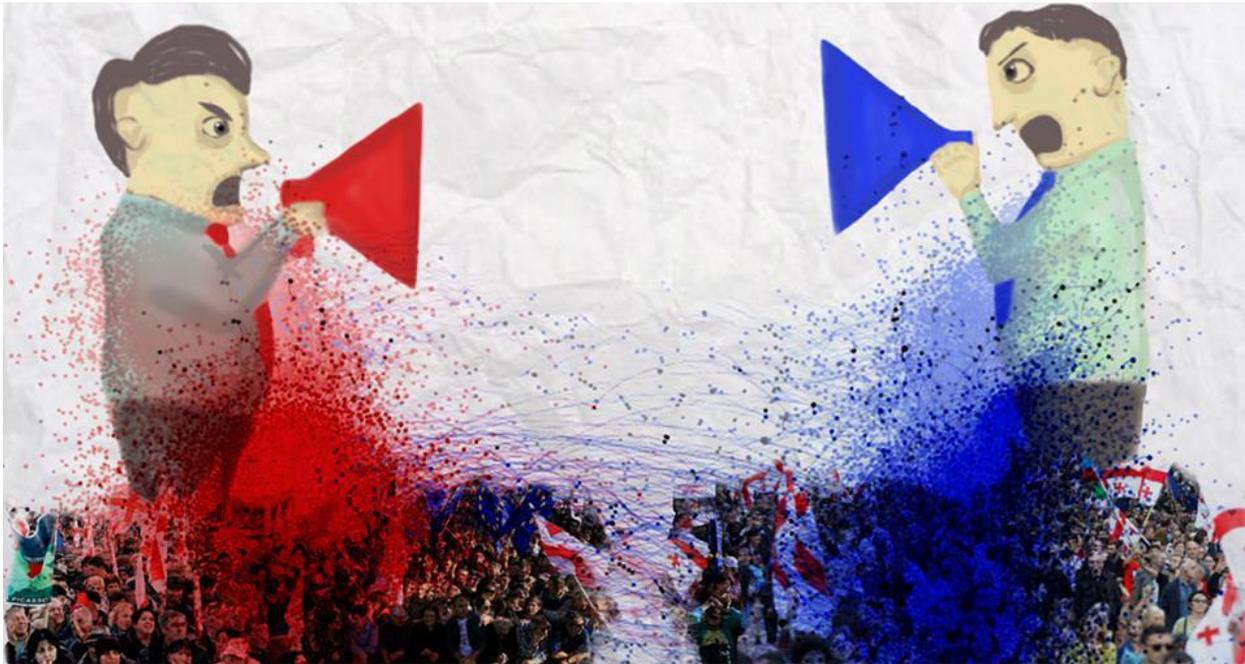
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Definitions of key terms

Polarisation

The division of society into two groups with sharply contrasting beliefs, values, and/or opinions. Often seen in politics, where polarisation allows for one's voters to strongly argue against the other side.

Social safety nets

A social safety net is a system set up by a provincial, national or international government. It allows people from the lower classes of society to receive funds from the government, so they too have a chance of getting on their feet. It is paid for by tax money, hence the name 'social'.

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General overview

Polarisation can manifest in various forms, including political, ideological, and socio-economic divides. It can also occur anywhere in the world and is not restricted to certain cultures or economies. It often results in a partisan gridlock, making it difficult to pass legislation that supports social safety nets and services. Polarisation can also lead to reduced funding for social safety programs as political parties prioritize their own agendas over the needs of vulnerable populations. These vulnerable populations, such as low-income families, minorities, and disabled persons, are disproportionately affected by polarisation. They may struggle to access essential social services due to budget cuts, reduced program availability, or eligibility restrictions.

Major parties involved.

Sweden

Sweden is the #1 country in social purpose.

APSWDP

The Association of Professional Social Workers and Development Practitioners. Housed in India.

ISS (International Social Services)

The International Social Service is an international non-governmental organization founded in 1924. It provides assistance in resolving international child protection cases.

The Red Cross

An international healthcare organization.

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Timeline of Key Events

1954-1968	The Civil Rights Movement in the USA sees significant polarisation along racial lines.
1980s	The Reagan administration in the USA reduces spending on social safety nets.
2008	The global financial crisis highlights the importance of social safety nets, as governments worldwide take measures to support vulnerable populations during the economic collapse.
2010	The Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) is signed into law in the USA, showcasing the intense polarisation around healthcare policy.
2010s	Europe grapples with economic crises, with debates over austerity measures affecting social services for vulnerable populations in countries like Greece and Spain.
2020	The COVID-19 again underscores the importance of socialized healthcare and safety nets. Polarised responses to the pandemic highlight the impact of political divisions on public health measures and relief efforts.
2021-2022	In some countries, elections and political transitions lead to shifts in government priorities, either strengthening or weakening social safety nets and access to services for vulnerable populations
Ongoing	Civil rights movements, such as the Black Lives Matter, continue to draw attention to racial and social inequality issues, often amid polarised political debates.

Previous attempts to solve the issue

Periods of economic growth and political consensus have often led to the expansion of social safety net programs. For example, the creation of social security programs in the United States during the 1930s was a response to the Great Depression and bipartisan efforts to address economic hardship.

Possible solutions

Policy solutions:

- Bipartisanship & Compromise
- Evidence-based policymaking
- Public Awareness Campaigns

Community-based initiatives:

- Local organizations and non-profits can help polarised societies.
- Community-driven programs can provide essential social services.

Bibliography

https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol50/2762/2020/en/

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Social_Service