

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2018 · 10 marks

How big a role does identity play in determining political participation in the developing countries? Discuss your answer with suitable illustrations.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

- R1 West runs on rule of law → developing world runs on identity → identity fills the gap
- R2 legal institutions weakly rooted → identity becomes the key channel of participation → decisive role

Body flow

Pye: non-Western process communal / loyalty-based → mobilise on identity, not issues → **Chatterjee:** civil society vs political society → political society (hawkers, slum dwellers) thrives on identity → India (**Kothari's** caste + **Ambedkar's** Dalit mobilisation, affirmative action) → Nigeria (**Anderson's** "imagined communities" / ethnic) → Lebanon (confessional sectarian quota)

Counter-view

Huntington's double edge → empowers the marginalised vs deepens divisions / weakens national unity

Conclusion routes

- R1 role large and defining, not marginal
- R2 worth conditional → widens participation or hardens cleavages

Identity plays a decisive role in shaping political participation in developing societies. In western systems the rule of law governs the input and output of politics. In the developing world, where legal institutions are weakly rooted, identity holds the Key to participation.

Lucian Pye shows that the non-western political process is communal, charismatic and loyalty-based and people mobilise around shared identity rather than issues. Partha Chatterjee argues this through his distinction between civil society and political society.

In India, caste provides the basis of mobilisation (Rajni Kothari) seen in B.R. Ambedkar's mobilisation of Dalits & demands for affirmative action.

In Nigeria, shared ethnicity, Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities" drives group mobilisation. Lebanon's confessional power-sharing allocates offices by sectarian quota, entrenching identity based politics.

As Samuel P. Huntington argues that identity politics empowers marginalised groups but can deepen divisions and weaken national unity.

Identity's role is therefore large and defining, its worth turning on whether it widens participation or hardens cleavages.