

ESSAY

(1) Governance is not about Ruling People but Empowering Them

(i) Introduction:

Thesis Statement:

Effective governance can not be achieved through forceful rule and coercion but by empowering citizen. Political participation, economic opportunity, social inclusion and provision of legal rights are core elements that are essential for accountability, transparency and a sustainable and good governance in general.

(ii) Ruling Centric Governance v. Empowering Governance

(iii) Drawbacks of Ruling Centric Governance

- (a) It creates a poor a weak political system and culture
- (b) It leads to economic disparity
- (c) Develops culture of marginalization in a community
- (d) Aids in creation of weak institutions

(iv) Empowerment of citizen is key to Good Governance

- (a) ~~Aids~~ Ensures development of a healthy political system
- (b) Helps in socio-economic growth of people
- (c) Improves justice in society
- (d) Global context

(v) Pathway from Ruling based Governance to Empowering Governance

- (a) Decentralization and devolution of power
- (b) Transparency and Accountability
- (c) Efforts towards human development

(vi) Conclusion

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The question of what makes a strong and good governance is age old. It has been asked throughout history in academic and power corridors. Can a government truly be strong if its people are weak? The question gained momentum since Age of Enlightenment thought history has been misunderstood as a mere exercise of authority by state over its citizen. Historically monarchs, colonial power and authoritative regimes fueled by thoughts of thinkers such as Plato, Thomas Hobbes and Machiavelli have emphasized obedience and control through coercive means over empowering of citizen. These power prioritized centralization of power over social welfare to maintain order however the order has mostly been short-termed and failed to provide sustainable growth. The modern understanding of governance fueled by ideas of enlightenment e.g. John Locke, Rousseau etc emphasize freedom, participation, accountability and inclusivity as core principles of good governance. They recognize citizen not only as a member of a community or state but active participants. Governance efficiency can be achieved

not by forceful rule and coercion but by empowering citizen. Political participation, economic opportunities, social inclusion and provision of legal rights are core elements that are essential for accountability, transparency, sustainability and good governance in general. A ruling centric governance model creates a weak political culture and weak institutions that leads to economic disparity creating marginalization in society while an empowering governance through strong institutions and political structure creates an equitable and just society. Empowering of citizen can be done by decentralization of power, ensuring accountability and transparency and working on human development.

A ruling centric governance model is one where policies are dictated by a central power, a group of small elites or an individual, and the general public are meant to comply no questions asked. This form of governance mirrors Vilfredo Pareto Elite Theory where a small elite organized elite group through access to information, capitalization of

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resources and control over institutions exercise power over the unorganized majority. The ruling central government in order to consolidate power often disturb the balance of power between the arms of government making one superior to another (often making legislation and executive superior to judiciary) distribution contradicting the concept of separation of power as laid down by Montesquieu.

Examples of this can be seen in colonial administration where the British government introduced a small body of elite britishers to rule over the subcontinent. The existing institutions were weakened and brought under few individuals and the people/citizens were made mere subjects. They were not involved in day to day governance matters. Another feature of this type of governance is that the rulers are afraid and the model is short lived. The authoritative regime is small in numbers and is always in fear of revolution of general public. The regime always try to legitimize its rule through democratic back sliding but it

has been historically observed that they live short term. We have seen it in case of we saw it in Direct crown rule in Sub-Continental which didn't last the century or in dictatorial regime in Pakistan which barely last a decade.

In Contrast to this type of model the governance that empowers people emphasizes participation of citizen in governance. This model inspired by Social Contract of John Locke and Rousseau aims to legitimize the state through delivery of rights and ensuring freedom. It aims at human development through education, health and legal rights and provision of free speech to ensure governance carry out the main idea of democracy as stated by Abraham Lincoln "Government of the people, by the people for the people. Free speech is one of the main characteristic of this type of governance model where criticism is addressed properly and taken as constructive rather than an attack. By ensuring freedom of ideas government try to incorporate

JS Mills theory of 'Market Place of Ideas' to ensure growth in a society. Let us discuss the drawbacks of ruling centric governance in detail and explain why it fails to deliver.

One of the major drawbacks of a ruling centric governance model is that the damage it causes to political system and culture of a state. Centralization of power is a key feature of this governance model. Citizens have limited avenue to influence policy making and political participation is often limited leading to alienation of general public. The policies made through this process are often not effective as they do not consider the opinion of local population. The gaps became visible very soon after implementation and the action of government is met with hostility. This can be seen in case of Pakistan especially Pakistan in 20th century where the government decided to consolidate power in Federal leading to poor policy making and implementation. The problems

caused by such policies in Pakistan are even present now in form of poor national integration, neglected towns & Balochistan, lack of human development etc. This leads to a serious mistrust between the government and the people and if not properly addressed can lead to devastating consequences as seen recently in protest in Bangladesh where alienation led to mistrust leading to mass protest and overthrow of the government of PM Sheikh Hasina in 2024.

Another issue with the ruling centric governance is that it has historically led to economic crisis or economic disparity. Economic disempowerment often lead to elite capture, misallocation of resources, abuse of funds and poor development programs even if it started with a noble goal. One clear example of this is the communist government in USSR. In USSR after Bolshevik revolution a communist government was established with aim of equality for all. They took over all major institutions and worked to ensure public

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welfare a dream that soon became a nightmare for people. A few elites took control, corruption was rampant, human development got worse and worse and in the end the system collapsed and USSR was disintegrated in 1990. Along with economic crisis the type of governance models are also often associated with promoting economic disparity. The elites that take control become corrupt and start to benefit themselves rather than the people. This was seen in during 18th century France where the ruling elite had become extremely corrupt and spendthrift while the general public faced economic hardships. The grievances of the people were often neglected which led to the French revolution where King Louis along with most of elites were beheaded and overthrown. The economic disparity led to such a bloody revolution the likes of which are rarely seen.

One of the worst drawbacks of the ruling centric governance is its poor social development. Magalisk

of certain groups which fail to consolidate power, gender disparity, lack of education to ensure legitimacy, poor health care structure, rural-urban inequality and under developed infrastructure is common under these governance models. The ruler in fear of being overthrown tries to keep general population afraid and underdeveloped. This can be seen in tribal system evident in Pakistan where the sardar tries to keep people from progressing in fear of losing his power it is not limited to Pakistan's tribal system but in every authoritarian regime or organized the higher authorities try to limit the power of lower population. This poor human development in future leads to a nation that has ~~poor~~ population that is incapable of working or thinking leading to its downfall.

One of the most impactful issue with the policies of the ruling centre governance is its attitude toward the institutions. This type of model works to weaken

The present institutions through consolidation of power or coercion. The weak institution lead to minimal accountability, rampant corruption, inadequate and inconsistent policies and worse of all lack of trust. This can be seen in case of African countries where weakening of institution lead to rampant corruption, injustice and social crisis. As Herodotus (RA) once said "System of disbelief can work but a system based on injustice can't". This corrupt, ineffective system leads to questions on government legitimacy. On contrast to this a system of governance where the people are empowered performs much better.

A government that includes public in governance matters has proven to provide better policy, making and efficiency. The public do ~~it ensures two tier accountability where the public keeps the government accountable and is also responsible~~. This puts the responsibility of holding the government accountable in the hands of public and strengthens the social contract between

the state and people. Example of the political involvement of public can be seen even in times ancient times where greek states involved public in policy making and held the ruling body accountable. The modern democratic system is best example of it. The political involvement ensures that made policies for people with diverse cultures ensuring sustainability and national integration.

The involvement of people in governance ensures effective and efficient use of economic funds for general welfare. Transparency in economic activities not only builds trust but also strengthen the nation by curbing corruptions and malpractices. It helps in avoiding economic disparity creating a society build on equitable distribution of resources, allowing social mobility and creates a healthy nation. Any looming economic crisis can be curbed through promoting a Keynesian economy where the government intervenes only if economic crisis occurs to ensure public welfare. The economic

empowerment directly affects the social structure of a nation leading to end of marginalization and promotion of inclusiveness and equity. This economic equity directly affect the sustainability of a nation as highlighted by western and eastern thinkers such as J.S Mills, Ibn-e-Khaldun etc.

One of the hallmark characteristic of governance model that empower public is their efforts in improving human development. Such governance model work on education and vocational training and provide opportunities for employment that enable citizens to contribute to national productivity. Such individual innovate, contribute of economy and reduce dependence on state. These activities lead to gender equality, strengthening of community and a productive and informed community in general which further lead to a strong nation. It can be seen across the globe that nations that are high in human development and have inclusive policy making like Sweden and Norway excel and governance indicators and

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are generally strong nation and
confident citizens.

Another important feature
of governance model that makes
it extremely effective is its
effort toward strengthening of its
institutions. As stated by Douglass
North in his theory of Institutionalism
Strong institutions matter more than
individual personalities. Strong institutions
means proper separation of power
with check and balances to ensure
smooth governance. What strong
governance represent is equality
and justice. They protect right
of all citizens irrespective of their
social standing and allow government
to curb corruption and misuse of
power. In theory if each institution
is allowed to work without offence
any of most of governance related
issues resolve by themselves. One
of the best example of this
is countries like Singapore and
America where independence of
institutions have led to accountability
and smooth governance and
trust of general public.

For creation of a governance model ~~some~~ that empower its citizen some pre-conditions are necessary. One of such is decentralization of power and its further devolution through implementation of local government system. When power is centralized the public is unable to get involved in governance matters as seen in case of Pakistan. It is only through decentralization of power that public can be empowered to participate in policymaking. Local government system takes the one step forward but distributing powers to the grass root level ensuring policy reflects the needs of a particular community. This leads to efficient use of resource through tailor made policies and instills trust between government and people.

Another step toward empowerment is to ensure transparency and accountability. It is very important as transparency and accountability not only build trust but also ensure that any entity that wishes to

decrease or undermine public participation can be dealt with timely before it gains power to compel the system. Independent oversight bodies, citizen feedback and digital governance mechanisms ensure reduction in corruption and improve policy efficiency. Last but not least, one of the most important aspects for ensuring empowering governance is efforts toward human development. Without a developed and productive population other measures amount to nothing. It is through providing quality education, expanding economic participation, instilling concept of citizen responsibility, social protection and general welfare that it can be achieved. As outlined by Amartya Sen in her theory of human development not only economic freedom but also freedom of education, health and dignity must also be ensured for development. By implementing these measures system of empowered governance can be established which strengthens the institutions, promotes equity

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and crosses a stable and sustainable nation.

Concomitantly, governance is not about ruling people but empowering them. A ruling-centric governance model prioritised control through any means necessary which leads to degradation of trust between people and government, alienation of public, ineffective policy making and weak political culture.

Citizens under such governance models often face economic disparity and social marginalisation and injustice due to weak institutions while governance model that work on empowerment of people through systems such as political inclusivity, social equity, and legal protection provides protection and human development provide space through which citizens can contribute to national development and sustainability. To ensure an empowering governance structure it is important to ensure decentralisation of power, transparency and accountability and active efforts toward human development as seen in case of countries such as Norway, Sweden and Singapore.