

The Role of Political Leadership in Undermining Democracy in third world countries

Outline

1- Introduction

Thesis statement: Political leadership in third world countries has consistently undermined democracy through various means including electoral interference, judicial taming suppression of dissent, embezzlement of public funds and assets leading to socio-political polarization, economic stagnation, weakened institutes and regional instability in these countries.

2- Role of political leadership in undermining democratic process

2.1- Electoral interference

a)- Nigeria Presidential election - 2024

b)- Pakistan Election - 2023

2.2- Taming the judiciary

a)- Pakistan's Supreme court Chief Justice Removal - 2023

b)- Kenya President's attempt to impeach Chief Justice

c) Silencing dissent and suppressing opposition

a) Arrest of Imran Khan - 2024

b) In Uganda intimidation of opposite leader
Bibi Wine

2.4- Weaponizing the law

Indian UAPA (Unlawful Activities Prevention Act) - 2024

2.5- Embezzlement of Public funds and assets

2.6- Shielding corrupt officials from accountability

2.7- Use of Executive powers to bypass legal procedures

a) President Erdogan bypassed parliamentary approval for military operations

2.8- Exploitation of Resources

2.9- Exploitation of Division

2.10- Muzzling the watchdogs

3- Consequences of undermining Democratic process

3.1- Socio-political polarization

3.2- Economic stagnation

3.3- Weakened institutions and fragile state

3.4- Regional instability and security threats

3.5- Corruption and cynicism

3.6- Lack of investments and innovation

The Essay

"When leaders put their own interests ahead of the people's, democracy is doomed."

(Alexandra Gray)

In the aftermath of colonialism, many third world countries embraced democracy as a beacon of hope, prosperity, freedom and equality. The concept of democracy was seductive because in a democratic system powers would be held ~~in~~ by the people, not a privileged elite. But decades later, the dream of democracy remains unfulfilled in many of these nations. Instead, political leadership has become a major obstacle to democracy. The very institution designed to promote democracy - elections, parliaments and constitutions - have been hijacked by leaders. They have used various means such as electoral interference, judicial taming, suppression of dissent

embezzlement of public funds and assets leading to socio-political polarization, economic stagnation, weakened institutions and regional stability. The essay will delve into role of political leadership in undermining democracy in third world countries and its consequences.

To begin with, Electoral Interferences are undermining democratic process. Rigging in elections, voter suppression and propaganda tech campaigns are the tactics used by political leaders. By undermining the integrity of elections, leaders can effectively nullify the will of people and entrench their own power, dealing a blow to democracy. Similarly, In Pakistan's 2023 election, allegations of military intervention and manipulating votes surfaced. This undermines the legitimacy of electoral process and weakens democracy.

Furthermore, Judiciary taming is used to undermine the independence of courts. As, Judiciary is often referred to as the third branch of government, critically plays role in healthy democracy. Some leaders used it to silence political opponents and some have even threatened Judiciary for their own interests. For example, In Pakistan forceful removal of Chief Justice of Supreme Court is a blatant attack on judicial independence. Similarly, In 2024 in Kenya, President attempted to impeach the Chief Justice, which is a clear concern about the potential influence of leaders on Judiciary and ultimately erosion of democracy.

Moreover, a hallmark to democracy is the ability of citizens and opposition leaders to voice their opinions. Freedom of speech should be practiced even if it is against the government. But some

Leaders resort to silent silencing dissent and suppression of opposition voices. In 2023, the arrest of Pakistani political leader in opposition Imran Khan sends a clear message that criticism of government will not be tolerated. Similarly, in 2024, the arrest of Ugandan leader **Bobi Wine** goes beyond ^{silencing} dissent. When opposition leaders are targeted, it discourages others from challenging the status quo and undermines democracy.

Likewise, weaponizing the law is another technique used by political leaders. It refers to the practice of using the legal system as a tool to harm, intimidate or silence others often for political gains. Besides, it also involves exploiting loopholes, manipulating legal procedures or abusing the power of law to achieve desired outcomes. In India, The Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), designed to combat genuine security threats

is now used to arrest activists and journalists. This weaponization process of law enforcement discourages people from raising their voices against injustice and hinders the democratic process achievement.

Additionally, political leaders use money and resources illegally that are meant for public usage. It involves the creation of fake contracts or invoices to siphon off funds, using public funds for personal use, falsifying accounting records to conceal the theft and misusing government credit cards for personal expenses. In this context, corruption charges against former South African president **Cyril Ramphosa** highlights the fact that leaders are enriching themselves at public expense. When leaders are not held accountable, it creates a culture of impunity where such activities become norm.

Similarly, leaders try to protect those officials from accountability who are involved in corruption and wastage of public resources. It not only erodes public trust in institutions but also distorts public policy. In Pakistan, some leaders shielded corrupt officials in the **sugar scam inquiry**. Similarly, in Brazil President Silva tried to protect allies from corruption investigations. When leaders shield allies they show that they are above the law, eroding public trust in legal system and democracy.

In addition, the use of executive powers to bypass legal procedures is a dangerous threat to democracy. Leadership abuses their executive powers to circumvent law and disregard checks and balances by constitution. In Pakistan, the president used executive powers to appoint election commission members.

Similarly, in Turkey, Erdogan bypassed parliamentary approval for military operations in Syria, Iraq, Libya and in Kurdish regions. This led to democratic backsliding and erosion of rule of law.

In third World countries, the exploitation of natural resources by political leadership has become a cancer that undermines democracy and perpetuates poverty. These corrosive practices concentrate power and wealth in hand of a few. Moreover, the exploitation of resources also suggests a disregard for environmental stability and long-term well-being of country. As a result, democracy is hollowed out.

Also, political leadership often exploits existing divisions to erode democracy, perpetuating a cycle of polarization and conflicts. By manipulating tribal, ethnic

religious and regional differences, leaders consolidate power and maintain control. Further, it leads to the erosion of national unity, social cohesion, fostering hatred and violence. As a result, democratic institutions are undermined and repression becomes entrenched.

Further, Watchdog refers to institutions or individuals that ensure accountability and transparency. Media is such an example. When they criticize some leaders and expose their illegal activities, leaders suppress them. They are suppressed by censorship, intimidation, pressure and co-optation. Muzzling of watchdog results in the erosion of democracy.

The next part of essay will delve into consequences of undermined democracy.

In third world countries, poor political leadership lead to social and political polarization. This polarization can result in the erosion of civil discourse, the emergence of extremist ideologies and even violence. In Pakistan, for example political polarization has led to increased tensions between rivals, resulting in protests, violence and even assassinations. Similarly, in **Chile**, political polarization has led to widespread protests and social unrest thus, threatening the stability of government. Moreover, it can also lead to a breakdown in political cohesion.

Moreover, it ^{can} also lead to economic stagnation. As, uncertainty and lack of trust in institutions hinders investment and economic growth. When government suppress dissent and manipulate information, it creates an environment of uncertainty, making it difficult for businesses to make informed decisions. In

Argentina's political polarization and poor leadership has resulted in economic stagnation characterized by high inflation and currency fluctuations. Consequently, economic stagnation leads to increased poverty, unemployment and social unrest.

Furthermore, it can also lead to the weakening of democratic institutions, resulting in a fragile society and state that is unable to govern effectively. In Pakistan poor leadership resulted in a fragile state that is struggling to maintain stability. As institutions weaken, the overall stability and effectiveness of the government are compromised making it challenging to address socio-economic challenges.

Lastly, Fragile states resulting from poor leadership can become breeding grounds for conflict and instability. In Pakistan,

For example, it has led to the proliferation of extremist groups, posing a significant threat to regional security. Similarly, Syria and Libya have become hotbeds of extremism and violence, impacting the entire region. As regional instability persists, it can lead to increased conflicts, terrorism and humanitarian crisis, further destabilizing the region.

In a nutshell, the role of political leadership in third world countries is a complex and multifaceted issue. Though various tactics ^{political} leaders have eroded democracy. The consequences of these actions are far-reaching and devastating. Ultimately, the fate of democracy in third world countries depends on the ability of political leaders to prioritize the needs of their citizens and work towards building democratic system that delivers on the promise of peace, prosperity

and human dignity for all. The international community forces must stand in solidarity with democratic forces in these countries and support their efforts. By working together, it can be made sure that democracy delivers on its promise and builds a brighter future for generations to come.
