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English Essay Modules)

"Why Nations Fail?"

Outline

1. Introduction

2. Fundamental Causes of National Failure

2.1 Social Causes

a) Inequitable wealth distribution among a society sparks resentment.

b) Inadequate educational system within a nation reduces opportunities and intellectual growth of a nation.

c) Weak health infrastructure weakens the population leading to reduced potential.

d) Social and ethnic divisions breed polarisation leading to a chaotic state.

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2.2 Political Causes

- a) Fragile and inefficient political structures lead to governance failures.
- b) Failed governance systems to widespread corruption and diminishes public trust in governments institutions.
- c) Existence of dynastic political structures block necessary reforms for modern governance.
- d) Failure of political ideologies can potentially destabilise a nation significantly.
- e) Patronage political culture produces visionless leaders.

2.3 Economic Causes

- a) Misguided and short-term economic policies leads to destabilisation.
- b) Overdependence on debts from external actors reduces independent decision-making.
- c) Over reliance on commodities especially natural resources, creates volatile economies.
- d) Economic vulnerability created

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by lack of diversification.

- e) Falling back in technological advancements resulting in negative impact on economic competitiveness.

3. Barriers Preventing Nations From Avoiding Failures

3.1 Socioeconomic inertia towards changing established social and economic patterns.

3.2 Resource curse leading to inability to effectively manage resources.

3.3 Constrained power structures, severely resistant towards necessary political reforms.

3.4 Restrictions imposed by foreign nations and international institutions.

3.5 Absence of leadership that can envision and implement progressive changes.

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4. Effective Strategies to Overcome Barriers and Ensure National Success

4.1 Empowering education within a nation to promote informed electorate.

4.2 Promoting rule of law by strengthening legal framework to ensure accountability.

4.3 Developing strong institutions that can withstand political and economic pressures.

4.4 Utilising international partnerships and alliances to promote economic and political stability.

4.5 Diversifying economic bases to enhance resilience.

5. Conclusion

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Nations prior to the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), existed in a fragmented manner with a political system dominated by the feudal class, along with significant religious and cultural influence. However, post 1648, the concept of nation-states emerged which introduced fixed territorial boundaries with the notion of sovereignty. Assessing the failure of these nation-states since 1648 results in three key domains: social, political, and economic. At times, nations have failed solely due to one factor but majority, failure of states is linked with a combination of factors across these three domains. The factors included in these domains create deeply entrenched barriers which create a situation where escaping failure or decline seems impossible. Nations with dynastic political systems or authoritarian leaders, resist change, and eventually end up in a loop of failure which at times becomes inescapable. At times, there exist external factors

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Such as colonialism which shatters economies and political structures of a nation, which are irrecoverable till date. Despite a wide array of situations and cases of nations failing, certain structural reforms along with visionary leaderships have also aided nations to overcome barriers to attain national success.

Historically, wealth distribution has been a source of major contention within societies. Inequitable wealth distribution grows resentment within societies which have the potential of sparking revolutions. The French Revolution of 1789 was primarily sparked by inequitable wealth distribution. Wealth was predominantly held by the Clergy and Aristocrats, which were known as the first and second estate, respectively. The first and second estate comprised of approximately 2% of the population while the third estate had a population

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concentration of 98%. Despite the Third estate having an overwhelming majority, they held below 1% wealth. The severe wealth inequality led to the revolution in France, ending monarchy by 1793, and creating severe destabilization. Although, France did not cease to exist but these years radically changed the structure of France, constituted in the Reign of Terror (1793-94), and installation of another dictator by 1801.

Europe's success or perhaps the golden period could be traced back to the enlightenment period of 16th century. European society flourished due to intellectual growth which had its foundation within education. A weak educational system produces unskilled young population which do not effectively contribute to the nation's growth. Moreover, absence of strong infrastructural foundation of education results in intellectual stagnancy, and as Rumi famously states, "Stagnancy is death." In the

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Present times, majority underdeveloped nations have significantly lower literacy rates compared to the developed world. The developed nations do not have higher literacy rates because they are wealthier, rather they are constituted as developed nations because of education. Education enlightens a society while its absence results in social fragmentation and leads to foundational weakness.

A healthy population means a healthy and productive workforce. Nations which fail to focus on health, do not only fail on the Human Development Index (HDI) but rather they fail as nations. Weak health infrastructure, weakens the population, which eventually diminishes the potential of a nation. John Meacham, an International Relations scholar, states that a nation's key determinant of power includes two factors, economic strength and population. However,

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despite having the fifth most populous population in the world, Pakistan does not seem to attain economic strength or power within the global context.

Pakistan's failure lies in the fact that the population of the country lacks literacy and scores extremely low in health indicators. Pakistan ranks 154th out of 193 countries in the HDI. Thus weak health systems reduce the potential of a nation, and makes it susceptible to failure.

Nations which have low development, an uneducated population, and serious inequality, are socially fragmented. The fragmentation leads to social and ethnic divisions which eventually result into severe polarisation. Societal divisions indicates the absence of a unified population. The entire concept of nationalisation stands upon national integration, which is considered as a prerequisite for success. Highly polarised nations are bound

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to fail as they create internal weaknesses which restrict success, such as, political instability, separatist movements, insurgency, and terrorism.

The divisioning not only impacts the society but weakens political stability and economic growth, eventually leading to a failed state. Yugoslavia is a prime example where deep-rooted ethnic and social divisions led to extreme polarization which culminated in violent conflicts during the 1990s. Ultimately, Yugoslavia disintegrated into several independent nation-states, leaving behind a legacy of instability.

Nations which have a fragile and inefficient political structure are bound to fail. Weak political structures produce inefficiencies which culminate into total governance failure. Countries like Pakistan have a compromised political structure which is ineffective and unresponsive. Resultantly, the country faces severe governance issues.

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Such as absence of rule of law, order, and justice. Failed governance structures resemble a failed or failing states which eventually have stunted growth and development.

Failed governance systems lead to widespread corruption. A key aspect of a governance system, is accountability which does not exist in countries with severely weak governance structures.

Nigeria ranks 140th out of 144 countries in the rule of law index.

Consequently, it stands at 145th out of 160, in the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) by Transparency International. Rampant corruption due to weak accountability because of destabilised governance structures, eventually leads to erosion of public trust in state's institution. Nation-states are based on the concept of social contracts, which implies that the individual would submit to a state in exchange of services and facilities provided by the

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State. However, when citizens lose trust within public institutions, it reflects a failed state.

Post-WW2, political ideologies dominated the world. The struggle between Democracy and Socialism was intense. The intensity could be assessed from the Cold War which existed for nearly 50 years. However, a nation's allegiance to a certain political ideology could become the cause of its failure. Nations aligned with the Soviet Union were proponents of Communism. However, as US-led democracy began to dominate the political landscape globally, communist states began to fail. The Soviet Union itself is a prominent example of a state destabilized by the failure of its communist ideology. Consequently, the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, fragmenting into multiple independent states.

Patronage in political culture refers to a practice where political

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Leaders use state resources to reward individuals for their electoral support, often prioritising personal loyalty over merit and qualification. The practice leads to installation of visionless leaders in important positions. This system undermines government efficiency, promotes a culture of negotiation and rent seeking behaviour, and eventually culminates into state failure. Venezuela is a prime example where a patronage political culture has contributed to state failure. Under Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro, the Venezuelan government distributed oil revenue and government positions to maintain political loyalty rather than focusing on economic stability or meritocracy. This resulted in severe poverty, hyperinflation, and massive political unrest, significantly destabilising the nation.

Weak political systems, patronage politics, and visionless leaders, often

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craft misguided and short-term economic policies. Economic policies of a state which focus on short-term gain, have a high probability of creating long-term destabilization.

Policies at the state level regarding economy, require a long-term approach which entails strict reforms and gradual results. Argentina's economic history is marked by misguided short-term policies which have led to repeated economic crisis. Notably, the fixed exchange rate policy in 1990s, ultimately restricted economic flexibility. Eventually, the economy collapsed in 2001, leading to social unrest and successive government defaults.

Since the establishment of international monetary organizations from the Bretton Woods Conference of 1944, the term neo-colonialism has emerged. Developing nations often get stuck within debt-traps due to overdependence on debts from organizations

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like The International Monetary Fund (IMF). Overdependence on debt from these organisations leads to austerity measures and decreased decision-making independence which destabilises a nation. As discussed earlier, poor economic decision-making, negatively impacted Argentina. The country attempted to escape the situation by starting a cycle of borrowing from IMF. However, Argentina became a victim in a cycle of debt dependency which has undermined its national sovereignty and has destabilised the country.

Nations which are rich in natural resources, often lack diversification. Countries in The Middle East such as Kingdom of Saudi Arabia primarily rely on exports of hydrocarbons for revenue. However, the overreliance on such natural resources creates a volatile economy which faces risk from external factors. Provided that in the long-term, the natural resources

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demand declines, or The natural resource itself diminishes, such economies and states as a whole will rapidly destabilise.

The modern era is dominated by technology. Leading economies are The great powers which are advancing technologically at a rapid pace. States which have fallen behind in technological advancements would feel The brunt economically, as such states are bound to lose economic competitiveness.

The world ~~is~~ has pivoted from geo-politics to geo-economics, and economic growth and strength is dependent on technological advancements.

States which are unable to cope up with The advancements are likely to be stabilised by The end of 21st Century.

States which have failed either due to social, political, or economic factors or because of The combination of all three, have certain barriers which restrict The ability to avert failure.

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Socioeconomic inertia restricts nations towards changing social and economic norms. The failure to introduce reforms in the social and economic realms, reduces a nation's ability to challenge redundant practices. The inactivity and inability to change, acts as a trap which restricts states significantly.

Resource curse is the inability of nations to manage resources due to corruption, inefficient systems, and compromised accountability. The structural flaws not only limit ability to change but rather make the ability process highly complex. Resource nations such as Venezuela have practically suffered the curse, and due to their structural inadequacies, they failed. Overcoming resource curse requires a cultural & systemic change which requires overhaul of the entire system. The complexity and difficulty of resolving this, stands as a major barrier to preventing failure.

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The resource curse becomes further complicated due to the endemic resistance within power structures to necessary political reforms. The existence of patron seeking political actors along with dynastic political structures stand as strong barriers in achieving modern governance.

The influence of external powers is a factor which further complicates the process of prevention. Constraints imposed by international organisations such as IMF's austerity measures are unchallengeable regardless of the damage they can cause. Moreover, coercive measures imposed by foreign nations such as embargoes or sanctions further stifle a country's potential and ability to prevent failure. Challenging or removing these is highly difficult, complicated, and time-consuming, and certain damage is endured by

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victim nations.

In complex and difficult situations, as discussed, the absence of visionary leadership makes failure almost inevitable. Tackling the barriers in an effective manner has a certain probability when a nation has visionary leaders like Muzedong and Lee Kuan Yew. However, the absence of a visionary leader who qualified in the position through merit, creates a strong barrier in attaining avoiding failure.

Overcoming the barriers requires effective strategies. Empowering citizens through education and civic engagement is essential. Increased literacy rate would promote an informed electorate. An aware and educated voter is likely to select a political candidate based upon his/her qualification, merits, and overall vision. Provided that a visionary leader comes into power, a nation can overcome barriers and achieve success.

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A strong legal framework promotes rule of law. Nations which do not have strong rule of law are bound to fail. Strengthening the legal framework to ensure accountability would counter corruption, improve governance, and allow social order within a nation.

Developing strong institutions is essential for proper functioning of a nation. The stronger the institutions are, the higher their ability to withstand political and economic pressures is. Strong institutions allow stability to exist within difficult times, which strengthens the resilience of a nation. The resilience allows a nation to overcome barriers and achieve success.

International cooperation, partnerships, and alliances are essential to promote economic and political stability. The modern world is highly interdependent economically,

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Constraints imposed by foreign nations and international organisations in the globalised world, are difficult to bear. Nations need to promote friendlier, beneficial, and strong international partnerships to obtain support and diplomatic leniency to survive in difficult times.

Economic diversification is vital in today's world provided the declining dependency on ~~renewable~~ natural resources and technological advancements. Nations need to remain competitive across various industries to prosper which is possible if proper diversification steps are undertaken by nations. Economies dependent on agriculture should shift towards industrialisation, nations dependent on revenues from natural resources should diversify investment across various sectors, and nations lacking technological advancements should focus on tech adoption. Diversification would

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reduce the volatility of economies and allow growth and prosperity.

Failure of nations varies but in the modern world, the mix of certain social, political, and economic factors have proven to be the major reason. From the erosion of political institutions and pervasive corruption to economic mismanagement and the lack of diversification, these elements in most cases, collectively undermine national stability and prosperity. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach which effectively deals with the complex interplay of social, political, and economic factors. The approach should encompass, strengthening governance structure, promoting economic resilience, and promoting social cohesion. Only through such inclusive strategies can nations hope to overcome barriers to success and pave the way to avert failure and achieve ~~stare~~ stability.