

THE CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP IN PAKISTAN

Outline

1- Introduction.

Thesis Statement: Pakistan is facing a multi-lateral crisis of leadership, mainly due to untapped potential. By creating an environment conducive for flourishing of leadership potential can bridge the gap between potential and its manifested forms.

2- The Crisis of Leadership in Pakistan: Historical Context.

3- Reasons of Leadership crisis in Pakistan.

a- Dynastic Politics

b- Institutional Imbalance.

c- Herd-mentality and 'Knight in the Shinning armor' complex.

d- Socio-economic and structural barriers.

e- Repressive policies of government.

4- How the leadership crisis Manifests in Pakistan.

a- Political Polarization. and Public distrust

Day: _____

Date: _____

b- Prevalence of self-interests over National interests

c- Corruption Prevails.

d- Frequent military coups and intervention.

5- Way Forward.

a- Strengthening Local Government.

b- Electoral Reforms.

c- Institutional Dialogue.

d- Inclusion of leadership courses in academies and talent hunt.

e- Ensuring intra-party merit-based selection.

6- Conclusion.

ESSAY

Leadership is the ability to lead, not control. There are very few leaders who changed the course of history and Muhammad Ali Jinnah is one of them. He is the only one who carved out a separate nation in subcontinent through his relentless efforts. Unfortunately, Pakistan has not experienced such a marvelous example of leadership. Pakistan is going through a multifaceted leadership crisis which manifests in the form of unrepresentative government, corruption, civil unrest and extra-constitutional intervention of departments. Pakistan's history is replete with incidents where the growth and stability of leadership was derailed by frequent military coups. The reasons of this crisis of leadership includes herd mentality, dynastic politics, institutional imbalance, repressive policies of the government, and socio-economic and structural barriers. The leadership crisis of Pakistan has result in recurrent economic fall outs, challenges related to security and society, and taints the

Day: _____

Date: _____

global image of Pakistan. The ~~crisis~~ crisis is not due to unavailability of leaders but not properly streamlining the potential. To tap the leadership potential, electoral reforms be introduced, ^{and} the local government system be strengthened. There should be institutional dialogue for constitutional roles. The parties must ensure intra-party democracy, and those in leadership position must prioritize investing in human capital. Pakistan is facing a multi-lateral crisis of leadership. It is mainly due lack of procedures and conducive environment to tap the potential. Hence, through reforms aimed at electoral process, intra-party democracy, elevating human capital, and institutional dialogue can bridge the gap between available potential and manifested leadership.

The leadership crisis in Pakistan has its deep roots in history. Since its inception, Pakistan has faced a leadership vacuum after death of Muhammed Ali Jinnah and assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan. This situation aggravated by delay in constitution making process for

nine years which further strengthened the vacuum. The shift from political leadership to administrative control in 1950s also proved to be a decisive factor in deepening the crisis. Frequent military coups and extra-constitutional role of army also deprived civilian leadership to build its strong foundation. Now a days, hybrid regime enforcing strict regulations for public opinion^{control} and ^{curtailing} autonomy of journalism^{is} is manifesting this crisis in its virulent form.

The leadership crisis Pakistan is facing has deeply rooted causes in ~~the~~ ^{its} political structure. The core cause of which is dynastic politics. Political leadership is exercised as family enterprises. New leaders are not given chance and selection of new representatives are not merit based in intraparty selection. Pakistan is classic example of dynastic where all three main political parties have leaders extending back to third generation. For example, Pakistan Peoples Party was established by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Benazir Bhutto was its

fare in 1980s and ~~1990~~ to 2000s and after her death in 2008, his son, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, is the leader of the party. Same is the case with A Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz.

Dynastic politics limits the space and opportunity for the newcomers to express their leadership potential. Hence, dynastic politics is a root cause of this crisis of leadership in Pakistan.

Another factor contributing to the crisis is the institutional imbalance in Pakistan.

The historical dominance of military and security establishment in foreign and domestic policy limits the space for growth of civilian leadership. This institutional imbalance can be gauged by the policy of inclusion of at least ten percent of serving armed officials into the bureaucracy, saving up space for military in civil institutions. The political intervention and inclusion of military can be gauged by the statement of Defence Minister of Pakistan Khawaja Asif who openly confessed in a public conference that Pakistan's political system

is a hybrid one, not fully democratic. This further shrinks the space for civilian leadership in the institutions. Therefore, besides military coups, institutional imbalance highly favouring security establishment is aggravating the crisis more.

Along with this, herd mentality prevails in public of Pakistan. People are more happy to be led than to take the responsibility to lead. In Pakistan, a complex name 'Knight in a shining armor' has resulted caused a mental subversion in minds of people that their leader will be not from them, but an outsider who will change their situation. This complex is strongly supported by historical instances of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and Benazir Bhutto. Though people of this land, they gained their education and experience abroad, so, they had the 'foreign courage' to lead the public. This construct further strengthens the herd mentality and general public hesitates to explore their leadership potential. Thus, ~~per~~ normally for people, it is easier to be led than to lead.

There are certain socio-economic and structural barriers that also hinder the tapping of available leadership potential. The society of Pakistan supports clan-based politics and feudalism. The illiterate public lacks intellectual honesty about their demands and role models. Voting in elections is driven by kinship and local patronage rather than leadership potential competence or national interests. Also, lack of critical thinking and civic education hinders the growth of leadership potential at ground level. Moreover, around of the population lives under below the poverty line, according to World Bank (2025). People are concerned with how to meet the ends rather than exploring leadership potential or evaluating the leadership potential of available civil leadership. Therefore, these deeply rooted socio-economic and structural barriers impact the leadership potential and result in leadership crisis Pakistan is facing.

Leadership is also to stand true to what is right and to hear and represent

Day: _____

Date: _____

the voices of public on ~~general~~ matters of concern. This ability to narrate and support an opinion is greatly reduced in Pakistan due to repressive policies of the government. These policies include frequent internet bans, forced disappearances, forced detention, use of excessive force in case of public unrest, and imposing restriction and mobilization of elements that disagree with governmental policies. According to the report of Freedom on the net, Pakistan is ~~rate~~ not free and listed among nations notorious for ^{on freedom (2024)} ~~unions~~ ^{on} ~~online~~. Moreover, acts and ordinances like Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act - 2016 (PECA 2016) and _____ have certain terms that limit the autonomy of public and curtail the freedom of stating one's opinion. When people are silenced, the leadership potential wanes and status quo prevails. So, repressive policies of the government also contribute in the leadership crisis of Pakistan.

The resultant crisis of leadership ~~manifest~~ ^{manifests} in various forms in Pakistan. One of which

Day: _____

Date: _____

is political polarization. The political fabric
of country has become polarized due to leadership
crisis