

Topic: Power tends to corrupt,
and absolute power corrupts
absolutely.

OUTLINE

1. Introduction

Thesis statement: Power if left unchecked can lead to corruption and abuse while absolute power can result in catastrophic consequences. The corrupting influence of power is a timeless concern that has plagued human societies throughout history. However, a way forward is necessary to address the corrupting influence of power.

2. How power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

a) The centralization of power
and the beginning of corruption

case study: i) Benito Mussolini's
rise to dictatorship in Italy

ii) The military coup in 1977
in Pakistan

b) The entitlement and dehumanization that accompany power

Case study: Bashar al-Assad's
regime in Syria

c) The increasing detachment
from reality and moral
judgment

Case study: i) Adolf Hitler's leadership during WWII

ii) Military rule from 1999 to
2008 in Pakistan

d) The corrupting influence of
absolute power on decision-making

Case study: i) The U.S. invasion of
Iraq in 2003

ii) The influence of Military Rule in
Pakistan

Date

e) The self-justification of corruption and power abuse
Case study: i) Sheikh Hasina's rule in Bangladesh
ii) Hosni Mubarak's rule in Egypt

f) The cult of personality and its role in power corruption
Case study: Saddam Hussein's rule in Iraq

g) The use of fear and intimidation to maintain power
Case study: Adolf Hitler's Nazi Regime in Germany - Use of The Gestapo (secret police)

3 The impacts of absolute power and corruption

a) Widening social inequality and class division

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Case study: The British Empire's
Colonial exploitation

b) Loss of human rights and
political freedom

Case study: i) Israel's policies
toward Palestinians

ii) Russia under Vladimir Putin -
imprisonment of opponents

c) Erosion of trust in institutions

Case study: i) The Watergate
Scandal in the United States

ii) The collapse of the Soviet
Union

4. Way forward: Addressing the
corruption influence of power

a) Strengthening democratic
institutions

Case study: South Africa's Post-

Apartheid reforms under the leadership of Nelson Mandela in Pakistan's 18th amendment to the Constitution

b) Promoting transparency and accountability

Case study: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) prosecutes high-profile politicians who are involved in corruption

c) Empowering civil society and media

Case study: The role of civil society in the Arab Spring (2010-2011)

ci) The role of civil society in fighting corruption in India - The Right to Information Act (2005)

5. Conclusion

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In 44 BCE, as Julius Caesar was about to cross the Rubicon and take control of Rome, he famously declared, 'The die is cast.' Little did he know, this moment would mark the beginning of a brutal rise to absolute power that would eventually lead to his assassination. Caesar's unchecked ambition transformed him from a hero of the people into a dictator feared by many. His story is a timeless reminder: history teaches ^{human beings} that the road to absolute power is often paved with corruption, betrayal, and the destruction of ideals. However, power always corrupts through the centralization of authority, the entitlement and dehumanization of individuals, increasing detachment from

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reality, the corrupting influence of absolute power on decision-making, the self-justification of corruption, and the use of fear to maintain power. Absolute power ^{also} has ~~at~~ impacts, such as widening social inequality, loss of human rights, and erosion of trust in institutions. To mitigate the impacts, a strong way forward is necessary, such as strengthening democratic institutions, promoting transparency, and empowering civil society and media. In short, power if left unchecked can lead to corruption and abuse while absolute power can result in catastrophic consequences. The corrupting influence of power is a timeless concern that has plagued human societies throughout history. However, a way

forward is necessary to address the corrupting influence of powers.

Power tends to corrupt when it becomes centralized, as it removes checks and balances, allowing those in power to act with accountability. This concentration of power sets the stage for corruption, where leaders justify unethical decisions for personal or political gains. As **Mussolini's** consolidation of power through the **Fascist Party** allowed him to dismantle democratic institutions and rule unilaterally. The centralization of power in Mussolini's hands marked the beginning of a regime characterized by oppression, censorship, and the suppression of

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opposition. Another example from Pakistan, 1977 military coup centralized power in the military, sidelining civilian institutions and implementing strict military rule. This concentration of power allowed the ^{dictator} to suppress political opposition, curtail democracy, and maintain a repressive government until his death in 1988. There are several examples in the history which show that whenever absolute power was given to someone, it paved the way of dictatorship and corruption rather than working for the development of the state. So, absolute power centralizes the power in the hands of one which results into the beginning of corruption.

Next to the centralization

of power and beginning of corruption. Absolute power also gives sense of entitled to privileges who have it. As leaders gain absolute power, they begin to feel entitled to privileges and view themselves as above the law. This sense of entitlement leads to the dehumanization of others, who are treated as mere tools or obstacles. When power remains in the hand of one authoritarian leader, it corrupts him and gives him the sense of superiority to others. As the case study of **Bashar al-Assad's rule in Syria** has led to the dehumanization of Syrian civilians, particularly during the ongoing civil war. His sense of entitlement and belief in his family's right to rule has enabled him to use brutal

tactics, including chemical weapons, to maintain power, disregarding the suffering of his people. Syrian people were detained more than a decade, during which time they were denied access to sunlight. Hence, absolute power not only gives absolute authority but also gives the right to dehumanize the masses.

Furthermore to dehumanization and entitlement, absolute power increases the perception of detachment from reality and moral judgment. As power grows, leaders often become increasingly detached from reality and moral responsibility. They justify harmful decisions as necessary for the greater good, even when they cause immense sufferings. They

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use power for personal gains, ignoring morality. As the case study of **Adolf Hitler's** leadership during WWII showed a stark detachment from reality. His refusal to acknowledge military losses and his insistence on continuing the war, despite the disastrous consequences for Germans exemplify how absolute power can distort one's moral judgement and perception of reality. **Another example of military rule from 1999 to 2008 in Pakistan** led to a growing detachment from the realities of governance. The General's refusal to relinquish power and his disregard to democratic norms, such as suspending the judiciary and dismissing political opponents, reflect how absolute power can cloud

decision-making. Therefore, power makes leaders increasingly detachment from reality, which makes them to undermine moral judgment.

In addition to the increasing detachment from reality and moral judgment, absolute powers leads to have corruption influence on decision-making. It leads to poor decision-making, as leaders begin to prioritize ^{political} survival over the welfare of their people. This results in policies that are harmful, long-lasting consequences. Absolute power ignites the leaders to make decision in their favour as the cost of morality. A famous case study in this regard is of the **US invasion of Iraq in 2003**. The decision to invade

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Iraq under president George W. Bush was influenced by a small circle of decision-makers who disregarded alternative views and misinterpreted intelligence. The invasion, justified by the presence of weapons of mass destruction, caused extensive loss of life and destabilized the Middle East. It demonstrates the corrupting influence of unchecked authority. Another example of Pakistan during periods of military rule, the country experienced decision-making driven by a desire to maintain power, often at the expense of the nation's welfare and interests. Hence, absolute power corrupts the decision-making, turning it in the favour of authoritarian leaders.

Other than the corrupting influence of absolute power on decision making, the self-justification of corruption and power abuse is also due to the absolute power. As leaders gain power, they justify their corrupt action, convincing the public that ^{their} actions are for the greater good or good for the state's development. This self-justification enables further abuses of power. As the example of Sheikh Hasina's rule in Bangladesh is a clear manifestation of self-justification of her extended rule. Sheikh Hasina has been criticized for self-justifying her extended rule in Bangladesh by framing her leadership as vital for the country's stability and progress. Despite allegations

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of corruption and authoritarian practices, she became able to justify her action and justified curbing opposition and limiting democratic space as necessary for maintaining order and national security. Another example is of Hosni Mubarak who justified his authoritarian rule, claiming it was crucial for Egypt's stability. This self-justification allowed him to maintain power for decades, despite graving inequality and widespread corruption. Thus, authoritarian leaders justify their actions which are harmful for the state and the ^{people,} due to having absolute power.

Moreover to the self-justification of corruption and power

abuse, absolute power also grants leader a glorified authority, explaining the cult of personality. A cult of personality emerges when a leader's image and authority are glorified to an almost god-like status. This intense adoration by the public allows the leader to justify unethical actions and consolidate power by creating a sense of invincibility. A case study in this regard is Saddam Hussein's rule in Iraq. Saddam Hussein established a strong cult of personality through propaganda, portraying himself as the savior of Iraq. His personality cult enabled him to rule ruthlessly, suppress opposition, and maintain an absolute grip on power for decades, contributing

to widespread human rights violations and corruption. Hence, absolute power gives the cut of personality to leaders to perform their immoral and authoritarian actions.

Besides the cult of personality and its role in power corruption, absolute power also grants authority to the leaders to use fear and intimidation to maintain their power. Absolute leaders often resort to fear and intimidation as tools to retain control. This involves creating an environment of fear, using violence or threats of violence, and manipulating public perception to prevent dissent and opposition. There are many leaders in the history who

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used force to suppress the public in order to create fear in them and maintain their power. For example, Adolf Hitler's Nazi Regime in Germany manifests the use of tactics to instill fear in the public. Under his rule, the Gestapo, a secret police, was used to instill fear among the German population, crushing any form of opposition. The Holocaust itself is a horrifying example of how a regime used fear, intimidation, and terror to maintain absolute control, resulting in genocide and immense suffering. Hence, the use of any kind of force to maintain fear among masses gives birth to power corruption.

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Apart from the factors which describe corruption due to absolute power have also certain impacts. Widening social inequality and class division is one of the significant impact of absolute power. The concentration of power in the hands of few results in economic and social disparities which gives way to social inequality and class divisions. As the elite ^{gets} benefits from the government decision due to having absolute power which ignores the broader population's sufferings. Power structures under absolute regimes tend to entrench social hierarchies and widen the wealth gap. As, during the **British Empire rule**, colonies were exploited for their resources, labor and

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land. The wealth generated from colonies was used to enrich the British elite, while the local populations were subjugated and impoverished. This not only created stark economic divisions but also entrenched long-term social inequalities that continue to affect many former colonies including the subcontinent.

In addition to widening social inequality and class division, absolute power diminishes human rights and political freedom. It leads to erosion of individual freedoms, as leaders justify repression to maintain control, resulting in severe human rights violations and suppression of political freedom. People lose their interest in politics and on

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political institutions. As, the Israeli government's policies towards Palestinians have involved the restriction of movement, land confiscation, and political disenfranchisement. The denial of basic human rights, including freedom of speech and political expression, has led to ongoing conflict and human sufferings.

Another example is of Russia under the rule of Vladimir Putin. Under his regime, opposition leaders and activists face imprisonment, censorship, and harassment. The suppression of political freedoms, including the targeting of journalists and dissidents, illustrates how absolute power in Russia has led to a significant loss of political freedom and human rights.

for many citizen. Thus, absolute power results into the loss of human rights and political participation.

To conclude, power if left unchecked can lead to corruption and abuse of power while absolute power can result in undeniable consequences. The

corrupting influence of power is a timeless concern that has caused destruction to human societies throughout history.

To combat the consequences and impacts, a way forward is necessary. The centralization of power, dehumanization, and lack of accountability lead to widespread injustice and

social inequality. From Mussolini's Italy to Assad's Syria, the

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consequences of unchecked power are devastating. However, the history of such regimes also highlights the importance of maintaining democratic institutions and checks on authority.

As James Madison once wisely state, "If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary."