



Decline Of Democracy – Autocracy In The Making?

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Abstract:

The emergence of authoritarian tendencies and challenges to democratic norms has caused a worrying change in the political landscape of the world. Political plurality has decreased, rights have been eroded, and authority has been consolidated in nations like Turkey, Israel, and France. Trust in democratic institutions has been damaged by corruption, inequality, and media limitations. Building up civil society, encouraging civic education, defending the rule of law, ensuring electoral integrity, and encouraging international collaboration are all necessary for maintaining democracy. Despite the complexity of each country's particular environment, the way forward entails active public engagement, balanced leadership, and a commitment to democratic principles.

Democracy is such a type or form of government in which the power to govern the state and people is in the hands of people and is actually given by its own people. Famously we say, by the people, for the people and to the people. Post-World War II, global order embraced Democracy as an instrument to run states, populist and result oriented towards people. The journey since then has seen matured attitude in the form of decolonization, in a way foregoing expansionism and exploitation of weaker section. But the question arising now is, whether the cycle is now revolving? Is the decline being evident? Autocracy is the new order?

Consolidation of power, taking control of system is the latest trend witnessed across. Israel, Hungary, Venezuela, Philippines, Turkey, Poland, Russia, Belarus, Sudan, Myanmar and many more having keenly observed, and even the developments in pure democratic countries have given such doubts. Lack of Political pluralism, Corruption, political coup, nepotism, favoritism is mostly evident even in largest democracies nowadays. The burning topic like climate change has given way to thought provoking discussion on ill state of democracies. A recent statement from the president of a largest democracy has given a clue to this. He says freedoms are eroding and democracies are witnessing backward slide of rights. Increase in social and economic inequalities, restricting voice of media, frequent changes to constitutional provisions are the major changes. People participation in nation building is limited and models of pure democracy are witnessing

alterations. There is largest decline in freedom observed among countries in last 10 years. As per the latest report from Freedom house publication on **Freedom in the World 2023** report, there is a struggle for democracy. In last 17yrs, 34 countries have shown improvement in democratic practice, against 35 showing negative pattern or possible slowdown on political rights and civil liberties. The report highlights the threat from leaders in abusing their powers to gain control, limiting political machineries, manipulations in election process, unholy tie-up among political parties to remain in power are few tactics echoing simultaneously across. Among 54 countries in Africa, 24 countries, which account to 50% of population is not free yet. Among 12 countries of Eurasia, 83% of population is under autocratic leadership. Middle east topping in the list, has 93% of its population among 13 countries are searching for hope for democracy. Overall, globally 39% of population are under oppression. Unfortunately this number is in the increasing trend.

If we analyse current situations across countries, Turkey comes to immediate calling. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan took over the office in 2014, it was Arab Spring popularity prompted for secular democracy in spite of Islamic governance model prevailing in the rest. The model was hailed in the beginning, but was short-lived as too many irregularities was the order of governance. Corruption charges aftermath of earthquake which killed almost 50,000 people is still at large an unanswered question. Repression of Kurdish, violation of human rights is often a reported phenomenon. Power is centralized, freedom of expression and assembly is under oppression. An independent report publishes, 58 journalists imprisonment serving sentences under terrorism charges. Democracy has given way to autocratic leadership. Similar situations in Israel, though it is an unwritten constitution, a series of conventions has shaped Israel constitution. But thereat has started in recent judicial reforms. Country has witnessed mass protest over judiciary changes by Benjamin Netanyahu. Once the bill is in force, Judges can't overrule ministers' decisions, until only based on legal grounds. This change can give immunity over political bodies to override corruption and other charges.

World is condemning over this reform bills, even Israel army has threatened to boycott if the bill is passed. However, Benjamin Netanyahu government has enforced it.

Politico has good coverage on France crisis. In its April edition, featuring topic "**French Democracy is in Crisis. What else is new?**" It has analysed the radical changes in French politics since 1789. In spite of rejection of the proposed reform by 70 percent of population, President Emmanuel Macron led government has passed the bill in April 2023. Largely it's seen as an attack on democracy. Subsequently, the developments in France after killing of a teenager, the inconclusive actions on the culprits have been ill fate of democracy.

In Poland, there is series of power abuse and betrayal actions on liberal democracy are continued. Education ministry has awarded grants to such foundations which are having close ties with political parties. On top of it, there are no track records on educational activities reflects the autocratic leadership of government.

In Hungary, parliamentary elections are scaffolded with irregularities, abuse of power, media distortions resulting in supremacy of certain parties. There are serious campaigns against independent NGO's and members of national judicial council.

Traces of neo-fascism in certain developed nations, deterioration of quality of administration and governance are common phenomenon. Question is how citizens of any country can preserve their democracy, by using with adult franchise effectively. It's a continuous debate. However, the breed of new leaders, their agenda, priorities and ambitions are driving forces of democracies into authoritarian regimes. *Autocracy is making a comeback, seeping into parts of the world where it once appeared to have been vanquished.* This exact word used in **The Washington Post** in their December 7th 2018 edition of an article titled, "The New Autocrats".

It is however inconclusive as to how the democracies in the world can be preserved, what is the real solution for this? But what is true is **Survival of the fittest**. Is being fit democratically is an advantage to be autocratic.

