

Western style  
democracy cannot  
flourish when human  
rights assignment



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For the purpose of this paper, “ Western-style democracy’ will refer to a form of preventative democracy, in which the law requires those in power to protect individual rights. Some of these rights include the right to equality, liberty, free speech and other fundamental rights. This however brings us to the definition of “ human rights”. “ Human rights” are a set of rights that apply equally to all individuals by virtue of their existence and such rights are to be observed regardless of where the Individual may find his or herself.

By the definition of “ Western style Democracy, we see that human rights are Intertwined with this style of government. And thus It Is impossible to have this form of democracy when these rights are being violated. Western style democracy also entails that power be separated into different branches, and also free and fair elections be held (Viral, 2012). Certain developing countries claim to be practicing western democracy, but they do so at the surface level.

This means they are only concerned about having a system of government In which the majority rules. By this, I mean they do not go beyond elections to consider what a true democracy should look like. Consequently, as mentioned In lecture, certain aspects of democracy such as the link between democracy, and equality are oft out, tampering with some fundamental rights. If these countries claim to be democratic, but yet do not conform to certain aspects of what a democratic society should look like, then we cannot refer to them as a real democratic society.

One of the questions that will be explored in this paper Is “ If we cannot refer to them as a real democratic society, then what do we call them? Another

question that will be explored is whether or not the abuse of human rights can be prevented in these countries. This paper will argue that human rights violations occur because decision makers often weigh the costs and benefits of violating human rights before violating them intentionally (Goodhearted, 78). It will also argue that human rights violations could occur due to other issues, including political, and religious issues.

In order to develop my argument in this paper, I will be comparing the democratic system of countries that practice western democracy to the democratic systems in other parts of the world [Africa, Latin America, and Asia]. I will do this in order to relay the social differences between the democracies that make Western-style Democracy unable to flourish in these countries. For clarification purposes, it is important to note that human rights abuses could occur due to various reasons.

The government may be incapable of providing their citizens with the kind of help they need, and this may mean human rights are violated or corrupted, as we tend to believe. Also, human rights violations can take on different forms such as torture, extra-judicial killings, political imprisonment, and disappearances (Goodhearted, 78). Extra-judicial killings are human rights violations that occur in countries like Burma for example, where prisoners are usually taken to an unknown location, then mysteriously disappear (Amnesty, 1988). Often, most African and Latin American countries are dominated by corruption, which makes it hard for western democracy to flourish. Western democracy has a system of checks and balances on the power of the government, which restricts the government from abusing power and in turn represses corruption, which is a political rights abuse <https://assignbuster.com/western-style-democracy-cannot-flourish-when-human-rights-assignment/>

(Gloom, 2012). Countries like the United States, France, and Italy have a separation of power in the sense that the government is divided into the legislative, executive and Judicial systems (Gloom, 2012).

The Judicial systems and law enforcement bodies such as the FBI are independent from the government, which makes it impossible for the government to influence their decisions (He-man, 1996). Also the FBI and other law enforcement bodies are committed to ensuring limited existence of corruption in the country, thus making corruption and consequently human right abuses unlikely. Similarly, countries like Nigeria and India have checks and balances on the power of the government. Nigeria for example has a system that separates power between the three levels of government (Gloom, 2012).

However, where Nigeria differs from the western countries is in the lack of commitment by the law enforcement bodies to ensure that corruption is at its minimum. Just like the FBI, Nigeria has a body called the FCC who fight against corruption (Schneider & Kinsley, 2013). But unlike the FBI, the FCC is a body controlled by the government, thus making it impossible for them to fish out people responsible for money laundering, election rigging, and other illegal activities that may be committed by government officials (Schneider & Kinsley, 2013). This aspect of corruption has led to the undermining of human rights in Nigeria.

In order for a democracy to exist, the will of the majority has to be represented through the elected individuals. However, the majority does not rule because the election votes are usually rigged. This means the votes of

the people are not taken into consideration as top officials pre-select whoever they want to be president, and steal the votes in order to enforce their decision (Schneider & Kinsley, 2013). Elections are often rigged because the political party owes the presidential seat to a particular individual, and has to make sure he gets his fair share of the presidency when the time is due.

Election rigging leads to siphoning of public funds because they have to make up electoral results, and also pay the thugs that fill up the ballot boxes with fake votes (Newsweek, 2011). People who try to obstruct the thugs from rigging the elections are often killed, some are left injured, and others are sometimes kidnapped (Knocked, 2011). The system of pre-selecting people to hold the presidential seat makes it more likely for this human right violation to occur.

I also call this a human right violation because the citizens do not have the right to choose who governs them, thus they are denied their basic rights to free and fair elections (Newsweek, 2011). Since human rights are a necessary element for democracy, there cannot be a democracy if rights are being violated. Also, election rigging implies that the will of the people is being violated (Newsweek, 2011). Just like Nigeria, India has a system of checks and balances on the power of the government, which means the government should not be able to abuse power (Victorianism, 2012).

However, this is not entirely the case in India because regardless of the checks and balances, what we see is a constant abuse of power. For example, the judicial system in reality is not independent in the sense that

other bodies tend to influence their decisions. In India, people and bodies that can afford to pay the Judges can influence their Judgments. Therefore, Justice is often not served when human right violations occur. Another form of corruption is that India does not have an independent body from the government to ensure that corruption is at its minimal (Kumar, 2011).

They rely on the police force to fight against corruption, and protect human rights since they do not have a specific body to oversee that. This is ironic because the police are themselves responsible for human right violations. They punish and beat up civilians without the permission of legal authorities, which is an abuse of power (Goodhearted, 77-85). Such abuses usually go unpunished because they are supposed to be reported to the police, and if the police are violating these rights themselves, then the people have no one to turn to.

These however shows how weak legal systems depict the broader picture of political corruption, thereby re-emphasizing the fact that political corruption is one of the driving forces behind human right violations (Goodhearted, 85). This does not mean that human right abuses do not occur in Anesthetized countries, rather the point being made here is that when human rights are being violated in western countries, individuals have the right to file complaints, demand investigations and expect that one body would be held accountable for the violation (Goodhearted, 84) unlike the case in India.

Using Nigeria and India as a case study, shows that corruption is one of the major cause of human rights violations. One aspect of western democracy is that corruption should be at its minimal to avoid the abuse of power, and

also to ensure that human right violations are minimal. Second, western democracy cannot flourish in countries where religion plays a huge role in the governance of the country [politics]. Western countries believe in the protection of individual rights, in the sense that every individual is responsible for their decisions as well as actions, and as such should not be told how to live their lives (Viral, 2012).

This explains why religion does not play into politics because it tends to give the impression that one religion is superior to others. This separation of religion however, ensures that the government cannot impose a particular religion on their citizens. It also ensures that citizens are not discriminated against based on religious beliefs and are free to practice whichever religion they choose. Whereas certain Middle Eastern, African and Asian countries are of the opposite view.

Countries like Iran for example, have their acceptable morals, values and ways of doing things, which are not necessarily consistent with the western style of democracy. It is important to note that Iranians allow religion to take a major part in politics because they are antithetical to western democracy and westernizes humanitarian, 2007). With technologies like the television keeping them in touch with the outside world, they feel the need to regulate whatever their citizens do and near in order to reduce western influence. Thus they do not separate religion from amongst the citizens.

Since their dominant religion is Islam, Non-Muslims are not free to practice their religion and as we know, freedom of religion is a fundamental human right (Barbarous, 2014). The Iranian government only recognizes the Jewish

and Christian faith other than the Islamic faith leaving us to wonder what will become of other religious sects in Iran (Barbarous, 2014). Research also shows that albeit Christianity is a recognized religion, the Iranian government has recently been targeting churches to be shut down in Iran (Barbarous, 2014).

This is a violation of human rights because the rights Christians have to freely assemble and practice their religion is being violated by the government's decision to shut down churches. Also, Nigeria does not separate religion from politics thus they do not allow their citizens the right to sexuality. Nigeria is a " democratic" nation that allows religion to shape how the country should be governed. It comprises of both Christians and Muslims, and because both the Bible and Quern term homosexuality as a sin, such relationships are frowned upon in Nigeria (Abiding & Abiding, 2013).

This was the force behind the recent gay laws passed in Nigeria. It states that people involved in gay relationships face up to 14 years imprisonment under the Nigerian law : abiding & Abiding, 2013). This is a human right violation because a democratic society allows its citizens the right to be with whomever they choose to be with, and also should be responsible for protecting the rights of minority groups. This anti-gay law however means that the Nigerian government has failed in their rights to protect minority groups [gay communities].

By passing a law to ban homosexual activities, the Nigerian government infringes on their rights and they are not free to be who they are. It is this non-separation of religion from state that makes it hard for Nesters-style



democracy to flourish in countries like Nigeria (Abiding & Abiding, 2013).

Also, western democracy cannot flourish because in order to practice western democracy, the country has to respect individual rights to religion and sexuality cause according to western democracy, every individual is responsible for their actions.

Restricting these freedoms constitute human right violations, which undermines western democracy thus there cannot be a western style democracy “ hen human rights are being violated. Furthermore, western democracy cannot flourish when freedom of expression is being infringed. Freedom of expression is defined as the right to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers : Monaural, 2008). This is a political right that is important in every democracy because t provides an avenue through which citizens can oppose injustice (Monaural, 2008).

In essence, freedom of expression means citizens should be free to openly criticize the government as well as voice their opinions so long as it does not cause harm to anyone (Monaural, 2008). This right provides citizens the forum to critic the government, thus serving as a form for checking their power and ensuring that they do not become tyrannical. However, this is not the case in countries like Lebanon Inhere three individuals were arrested for criticizing the president (Aziza, 2013). This is undemocratic because the right of the Lebanese people to express how they feel about government policies are being taken away.

This also makes Lebanon an undemocratic society because citizens do not have a say in the affairs of their state arrested. As already stated, the right citizens possess to oppose injustice from the government, is essential for a democracy because it serves as a way of holding the government accountable by ensuring that they do not violate the rights of their citizens. Therefore, the western style of democracy cannot work when there is no freedom of expression. Lebanon however is not the only country in which freedom of expression is being violated.

In countries like Mexico, the government violates freedom of expression, as they are responsible for assaulting Journalists and attacking media installations for critiquing those (Costa & Jamaican, 2013). This is partly due to the fact that the government is too powerful and there are limited checks on their power (Costa & Jamaican, 2013). This is a threat to human rights because the Journalists are not free to exercise their rights [freedom of expression], and neither are they able to do their Job effectively.

In a democratic society, urinalysis should be able to exercise this right because it allows them to write the truth even though it may offend those in power, without being forced into hiding for fear that they might incur the wrath of the government. This often leads to impunity that is the exemption from Justice. This is because the crimes government officials commit, be it the killing or disappearance of a Journalist or assault of a citizen trying to voice out there opinion, often go unpunished (Costa & Jamaican, 2013).

Ruinations report crimes like these, but since they do not have the right to express themselves, these crimes goes unreported. For a country to be

democratic it has to meet every requirement needed and as stated earlier in this essay, freedom of expression is necessary for a democratic government. Thus, without freedom of expression in a country, democracy cannot exist thus making western style democracy unable to exist. Fourth, western style democracy cannot flourish in developing countries because their governments often do not act intentionally when human rights are being violated because they stand to lose.

This in my opinion means that the government often weighs their options of actions as opposed to inactions in order to decide whether or not to intervene. In the case of Insignia's Niger Delta and the Shell oil crisis, the Nigerian government chose not to intervene probably for fear that Shell would withdraw their business in Nigeria. This however means that they rather allow thousands of innocent civilians suffer rather than hold Shell accountable for causing environmental disasters.

Shell is responsible for major oil spills, which tend to flow into the water bodies and consequently disrupt the livelihood of the locals who rely on the water bodies for sustenance (Baby, 2011). Shell claims to have cleaned up some of these sites; however evidence shows that there is no difference between a cleaned site and a site waiting to be cleaned (Baby, 2011). Also, oil revenues pose a direct conflict of interest, because it has brought in billions of dollars into the Nigerian economy making the government reluctant to Challenge Shell when they are found guilty of oil spills (Baby, 2011) .

This is a human right violation because the locals should be entitled to an environment that is free from pollution of any sort (Goodhearted, 383). Their security is also threatened by depletion of resources and environmental degradations, because it often leads to conflict between groups (Goodhearted, 383). For example the oil spills in the Niger Delta has led to the rise of armed militia groups that aim to challenge the government into however are usually affected because they get caught up during crossfire between the government and these militia groups thus threatening their security (Goodhearted, 383).

A western style of democracy cannot flourish in an environment like this because civilian security is being compromised and as we know, a democratic society has to ensure their citizens have the right to life, liberty and security of person (Labia, 2011). Further still, it is important to note that the countries mentioned above are considered to be democratic albeit human rights are constantly violated. They might not be practicing the western style of democracy, but in my opinion they have adopted democracy to fit their particular country.

In my opinion, they practice democracy on the surface level in the sense that they conduct free and fair elections. As already mentioned, free and fair elections are also being violated by countries like Nigeria leaving us to wonder what aspect of democracy they [Nigeria] as a country have adopted to make them a democratic nation. It is important to note that western style democracy cannot flourish if the country does not know what needs to be in place in order for a democracy to exist. As stated by Dry. Invalid H.

Guillotines on the 28th of February 2014 [lecture], we tend to term third world countries not by what they are, but by what they are not. Most African and Latin American and Asian countries transitioned from authoritarian governments from the mid-1980s in the case of Latin American countries till the late 1990s in the case of African countries. Therefore since they are no longer authoritarian, we were quick to refer to them as democratic regardless of whether or not they met the requirements of a real democracy not to talk of them practicing democracy the western way.

These countries might be democratic on paper, but the reality is that human rights are constantly being violated. It was also mentioned in lecture that these countries transitioned into democracy without discussing what a democracy should look like, or taking into consideration whether it was the most suitable model for their country. This explains Nigeria for example eliminated the fact that in order for a democracy to succeed, religion has to be separated from politics.

This however has led to the violation of human rights as mentioned in previous paragraphs thus making western style democracy unable to flourish. Seeing that, religion plays a huge role in countries like Nigeria and Iran, and also corruption has long been embedded into the Nigerian and Indian society, one can only wonder whether or not human rights violations can be prevented in these countries thus bringing us to our next point of discussion. The first step to preventing human rights abuses is to promote democratic reforms of governance (Goodhearted, 81).

Applying this to our countries of interest will mean the Nigerian government for example has to design a policy to ensure free and fair elections. This will mean they have to put measure in place to ensure that the election votes are not rigged and that those elected by the people are those who get appointed. However, as already mentioned above, it is the government rather than other independent bodies that rig the elections making this difficult to achieve. In my opinion, this can only be achieved if the Nigerian government takes time to study Neat a democracy should be like.

This will make them realize that violating the people's rights to free and fair elections lead to more human right abuses (Goodhearted, 31), which is not compatible with what a democracy should model. In Indian's case, Influence it. This is because the courts are essential tools for guaranteeing human rights protection (Goodhearted, 85) thus the need for their independence. At the same time, they need to create an independent body that specifically tackles corruption and other issues that could potentially lead to human rights being abused.

As is the case in India, the police force is in charge of this and as previously mentioned they elate these rights themselves. By creating an independent body like the FBI in the case of America or FCC in the case of Nigeria, the Indian police force will be held accountable if they are found guilty of human rights violations. Another way to prevent human right violations is to target their root causes. As already mentioned, one of the root causes of human right violations in Nigeria and India is corruption.

By tackling corruption, human right violations will most likely be minimized or hopefully prevented. Also, religion is another reason why human rights are being violated in the case of Iran and Nigeria. In order for human right violations caused as a result of religion to be minimized, religion has to be treated separately from politics. This poses a problem because these countries were founded under religious beliefs thus making the dilution of religion from their governance unlikely. The only way this can be made possible is if these countries revisit what a true democracy should model.

This would probably drive them to draw a line between politics and religion. However, as already mentioned this is highly unlikely because these countries are founded on these religious beliefs. In conclusion, it is clear that a western style of democracy cannot exist when human rights are being violated because human rights are one of the essential ingredients required to have a successful democracy. Thus there cannot be a democracy without the existence of human rights and more importantly there cannot be a western style democracy because the west emphasizes civil and political rights.

Some of these rights include the right to free and fair elections, freedom from torture, freedom of expression and other vital rights that help facilitate a democratic society. It is also clear that most of the above-mentioned countries are newly transitioned democracies that did not spend time studying the conditions under which a democracy can exist before transitioning into a democracy. Also, western style democracy cannot flourish in other parts of the world, because it is a form of democracy that best suits countries in the west.

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An attempt to adapt this style of democracy by other countries may seem futile because this form of democracy is not suitable in their countries.

Another way of interpreting the above statement is that these countries have adapted democracy to fit their specific countries and most of them only implement the aspect of democracy that says that civilians appoint their leaders while neglecting other aspects of democracy such as the citizens' rights to live their lives how they choose to.

As stated in previous paragraphs, this is due partly to religious beliefs on which these countries are founded thus making the separation of religion from the governance of the country highly unlikely. In all, issues like these are termed human rights violations in the west but not in these countries thus making a western style of democracy unable to flourish in these climates because human rights are being violated.