Vacuums of power and transition

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The democratisation process in developing countries that gained independence from their colonisers created power vacuums during the transition process.

Radical change in power relationships on all levels of society took place. Such vacuums co-produced a frantic struggle for political supremacy. Discontinuity emerged during the transition process when institutional experiences and memory vacuums or fault lines were created.

The implication is the opening up of opportunities for maladministration, fraudulent practices and systemic corruption. Because of inherent weaknesses of colonialism (such as complete disregard for human rights and dignity), traditional cultures (associated with autocratic leadership) and liberation movements (associated with radicalism), neither colonial nor traditional regimes nor liberation struggles prepared leaders for an evolutional restructuring of society.

In many developing countries an autocratic leader emerged who stifled all opposition, for example Daniel Arap Moi of Kenya. This means that people were powerless or absolutely excluded and power was centralised, maldistributed or skewed by the ruling elite. Immoral leaders excluded people from participation and decision making, and illegitimate governments were created that did not represent the will of the people.

Systemic corruption is an inevitable outcome of transformation processes in developing countries where moral and strategic leadership fails. Thus, in developing countries, there is a close relation between transformation, failed moral leadership and systemic corruption.

Alienation and polarisation

Economically, absolute poverty and a skewed distribution of income and consumption in developing countries are connected with insecurity of the poor and jobless, who do not know if they will have access to resources essential to survive. The privileged elite, who operate by means of pacts and have access to the factors of production, as a result of their connections with the ruling elite and/or being part of the business elite, do not have empathy for the vulnerable poor or a desire to alleviate their desperate conditions. Formal society is apathetic towards their needs. Such marginalised groups form their own groups because of alienation, they position themselves for survival (for example, the jobless who form gangs) and have limited options other than to steal for survival.

• References
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