Historical Discussion on How Events Make Leaders

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Abstract. This paper aims to examine how different forms of events, presented by preexisting cultural deposits, contemporary social crises, the public's evaluation of leadership, and precedent inspirational models, make the development of leadership in different stages.

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1 Introduction

The definition of leadership should go beyond political dominion and refer to a socially acclaimed figure who carries charismatic character, as defined by Max Weber as "the personal quality that makes an individual seem extraordinary, a quality by virtue of which supernatural, superhuman, or at least exceptional powers or properties are attributed to the individual" [1]. Intuitively, as leaders are generally recognized as a symbolic representation of society, the conspicuousness of charisma itself often makes people neglect the essence of "how and why does charisma exist?" So the analysis of leadership should not simply focus on personal distinctiveness, but also on the surroundings. The subtle correlation between leader and society underlies the fact that the emergence and consolidation of leadership, as well as their ways and effectiveness of inserting influence, is inseparable from events. This paper aims to examine how different forms of events, presented by preexisting cultural deposits, contemporary social crises, the public's evaluation of leadership, and precedent inspirational models, make the development of leadership in different stages.

2 Emergence of Leadership

The emergence of leadership itself heavily relies on events. Preconditions for charisma to emerge reside in cultural and social dimensions — factors that Lepsius defined as latent charismatic situations [2]. The cultural dimension describes society's preexisting addiction to charismatic power and transcendental heroism. In certain nations, the majority of the public is highly ready to believe an iconic figure is obligated for people's fate and fortune [2]. In ancient China, society generally ascribed the sacred title "Son of Heaven" to the emperors and the term "holy edict" to the emperors' announcement

of law to describe their role on behalf of God. The public's propensity on theological reliance transformed into their submissiveness toward the imperial regime. Simultaneously, successive emperors continuously delivered profound contributions. For example, the First Emperor of Qin's standardization of currency, measurement units and language, Emperor Wu of Han's victory in the Sino-Xiongnu War resuming agricultural production in northern China, and Emperor Yang of Sui's construction of Grand Canal. A cumulated cultural deposit of society's general trust toward heroic leadership developed and further prevailed charismatic power over institutional legitimacy when determining the nation's future. Such cultural deposits' influence favored contemporary Chinese leaders, including Sun Yat-sen, Mao Zedong, and Deng Xiaoping, to obtain absolute central power via charisma, and their efficiency to rule over the public is catalyzed. Other societies with such cultural deposits, such as Germany, Russia and Korea, performed similar tendencies, and superpowers are more predisposed to emerge.

But in societies that rely upon institutionalized equality over centralized supreme power, the culturally derived charisma is less likely to evolve. An example of an institution-based society was the United States, a nation that deems representative democracy fundamental to its political and social structure. Previous British parliamentary ruling over colonies had promoted the public's general hatred toward monarchy and dictatorship, and fear of overwhelming governmental power. The framework of US legitimacy after its independence, *the Constitution*, can directly interpret the legitimacy of governmental action, and heavily stress the separation and balance of power over the executive, judiciary and legislative branches. Under such circumstances, the authoritarian is trivial, and the power of president is limited and bound by institutions. For instance, while President John F. Kennedy was called charismatic, few of his reform programs were adopted by congress. Democrat President Barack Obama said congressional Republicans had "filibustered about 500 pieces of legislation that would help the middle class," [3] which also provides an insight in how institutional bondage limited presidential power.

Seen from the social dimension, crisis in contemporary society made the population comply with strong leadership that promised to alleviate the situation as political institutions are delegitimized by their inability to deal with crisis [2]. Examples are ubiquitous in history. One of the Founding Fathers of the United States, George Washington, emerged from a social context of colonial dissatisfaction with the British Parliament's dominative ruling. Outrage among colonies arose as they viewed Parliament's taxation as an exploitation of personal freedom, and their request of being represented in Parliament was disregarded; the public was expecting that a charismatic power would rise to alleviate the situation and then found Washington. The rise of Adolf Hitler's regime was in response to the populace's expectation for a charismatic leader to resolve nationwide distress caused by the Treaty of Versailles, which resulted in international humiliation of Germany and economic disaster. Additionally, the unstable nature of Weimar Republic politics fostered a general willingness to abandon old institutional orders. UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's rise to power corresponded with widely spread social expectations that a leader would reverse high inflation and an ongoing recession, and mitigate social struggles from the Winter of Discontent [4]. South African Revolutionary Nelson Mandela gained a worldwide reputation primarily by his appeals to a broader

social urge to combat Apartheid, discrimination, and poverty internationally, as previous struggles were confined to a regional scale. A more recent example was Ukraine president Volodymyr Zelensky. Originally, Zelensky's acting and sitcom career rendered him an "unserious" impression that lacked political experience. The charisma that Zelensky acquired today was inseparable from social expectations that he would resolve the escalating tensions with Russia [5]. His refusal to yield to an authoritarian power made him a Churchillian-styled hero among the populace. Those cases all point to the fact that social crises promote the public's reliance on charismatic power.

3 Consolidation of Charismatic Leadership

Consolidation of charismatic leadership also develops from events. Max Weber's model of leadership shows that charisma is validated through the public's observations of events, which events are now functioned as a proof of leader's prowess in responding members' needs, resolving social problems, satisfying the public expectations, or outdoing his or her opponents [1]. In brief, followers interpret after referencing events whether they choose to respect the leader's charisma or not. As Winston Churchill's "for without victory, there is no survival" campaign against Fascism overrode Chamberlain's appeasement, later events continuously proved the validity of his promise against peace resolution, including the evacuation of 338,226 allied servicemen from Dunkirk, and the unlikely victory at the end of Battle of Britain. Churchill's adamant refusal to surrender, noted by Roy Jenkins, was "an inspiration for the nation" [6]. President Franklin D. Roosevelt also consolidated his leadership by passing the test for the attributes required by his followers. The New Deal in direct response to Great Depression proved vital in ameliorating the status quo; additionally, FDR's "fireside chats" during evening radio promulgating post-depression reforms and pro-war nationalism energized the public and further proved his extraordinary prowess. As demonstrated above, a leader to continuously prove strength through events to sustain charisma.

Failure to deliver the public's expectation can impair leadership as well. "If proof fails to materialize, the charismatically blessed personage shows himself to have been abandoned by his God or his magical or heroic powers. If success continued to elude him, and especially if his leadership did not improve the lot of those over whom he ruled, there was a chance that his charismatic authority would vanish" [1]. The impeachment of Andrew Johnson was characterized by his continuous failure of representing a Republican president. His embrace of lenient Reconstruction, continuous vetos of Republicans' favors, and denouncements of several Radical Republican members, fueled public dissatisfaction and Radical Republican-dominated Congress' animosity [7]. Eventually, Johnson's violation of the Tenure of Office Act led to the impeachment [8]. A more radical case occurred on the eve of the French Revolution when King Louis XVI was executed for his fight against the parliamentary monarchy. After his flight to Varennes was uncovered, a letter on his writing desk revealed his antagonizing stance toward the Revolution; [9] his later declaration about withdrawing from his previous oath to the constitution seemed to justify the rumors that his fleeing was associated with his hopes of suppressing the Revolution by summoning foreign intervention [10]. Louis XVI's charisma plunged and he was eventually guillotined by the Jacobins.

4   Leaders' Influence Upon Society

The way that leaders exert influence upon the population also heavily correlates to extraneous events and factors. The concept of mimetic isomorphism, meaning "one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions," [11] points out that a leader's inspirations of influence often come from precedent events of similar scenarios. Essentials of Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence, "Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," were modeled partially from John Locke's merits of Social Contract, which deemed the natural and legal rights of civilians [12]. Japanese modernizers in the late 19th century initiated Meiji Restoration based on apparently successful precedents from the western hemisphere. The Japanese imperial government sent officers overseas to analyze "courts, army, and police in France, the Navy and postal system in Great Britain, and banking and art education in the United States"; [11] the Meiji government referenced the Prussia-German model of the institutional monarchy, United States' Constitution of "check and balance" and fiscal laws to lay its foundation. Civil Rights activist Martin Luther King Jr.'s nonviolent values were inspired by several preceding prototypes. In his autobiography *Stride Toward Freedom*, MLK discussed how his visions of nonviolent resistance developed from David Thoreau's concept of Civil Disobedience concerning the refusal of cooperating with an evil system, Walter Rauschenbusch's theological approach to social unrest, and Mahatma Gandhi's ideal of "Satyagraha" which saw love as a "potent instrument for social and collective transformation" [13]. Extensively, they all uncover a common rule that leaders learn from antecedents to influence their society.

But leaders cannot control events. The effectiveness of imposing social control is directly determined by environmental conditions. In different sets of conditions, similar methods of control may lead to opposite effects [14]. Attempts to modernize China during the late 19th century had similar goals to the aforementioned Meiji Restoration, as both were social elites' reactions to oppressions from Western imperialism and intended to improve the domestic industrial base by westernizing and overturning old regimes. Yet, different environmental conditions led to opposite results. Under the Tokugawa regime, Japan's Shogunate system allowed local government to exert autonomy to some extent, and business was encouraged by local government to boost economy [15]. Capitalistic notions sprouted under such a decentralized political system and laid the ground for successful reforms. Concurrently, the diversified Japanese culture and the public's open-mindedness in assimilating Western advances made reformists' attempts efficient. On the contrary, the Qing Dynasty's centralized political system intensely restricted commercial diversification and freedom of expression [15]. Capitalism was weak, and the predominant feudal forces kept the modernization movement from being an influential force across the country. Moreover, China's more advanced civilization over the rest of East Asia and its geographical isolation from other developed civilizations made for the public's sense of superiority, hence advocation of foreign learning encountered great resistance. Other similar examples include Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms in China and Gorbachev's Perestroika in USSR, both of which had set to liberate the economy but resulted in different results. In China, the precedent Cultural Revolution and the Great Leap Forward had deteriorated the domestic economic system, which made the

population more ready for radical changes to the existing system [16]. But in USSR, previous Brezhnev era had been relatively "too stable" [16] in comparing to China's status quo for the public to desire economic revitalization, with its preexisting reliance on the heavy industry over manufacturing and its corruptive political nature further damaging the process of economic reform. As Deng's reform brought China into a socialist market economy, USSR end up dissolved.

5 Conclusion

From superficial observations of society one may conclude leader's conduciveness of social orientation attributes to their chronological priority before events, but further retrospection in searching for causality relationship between leaders and events would justify sequential generalization of a paradox. Nevertheless, since events' occasion of occurrence can decisively interpret and shape the development of leadership from its emergence, consolidation, and to its influence, events are per se the prerequisite for leaders' spheres, hence events make leaders.

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