



Distorted Leadership Styles in the Horn of Africa

**By Adan Makina
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Does good leadership call for meddling in the affairs of others, dismembering, killing, displacing, and looting of the personal properties of the innocent? I don't think so. Then, what is leadership in the real sense? Peter G. Northouse (Ph.D., University of Denver)¹ who is professor of communication in the School of Communication at Western Michigan University best describes the meaning of leadership. Here is how he describes it: "Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal". Again, he tells us that "leadership involves influence; leadership occurs in groups; leadership includes attention to goals".²

Poor leaders don't do things right and are hardly adored by their subjects. Good leaders do things perfectly and are loved by their subordinates. I prefer not to mention the dead men of the Horn of Africa who left behind bad legacies. Instead, let's carefully divulge into the leadership traits of the living. It doesn't matter if a leader is crippled, mono-eyed, ugly or short. Tell me, what is wrong with the leaders of the Horn of Africa? Why have they turned the Horn of Africa into a bleeding mess? Eritrea and Djibouti remain at war over a piece of land; Ethiopia and Eritrea have been at loggerheads over border issues; Somalia feels it is in a bloody mess because Ethiopia is meddling in its national sovereignty; millions of the Horn of African peoples are either internally displaced, refugees, or hungry. Somalia and Eritrea have strong military ties while Turkey has the biggest overseas military presence in Somalia. Egypt, a country that is ruled by President Sisi, a man who is a military general, has a bone to pick with Ethiopia over the Nile River. The construction of a hydroelectric power plant along the Nile River by Ethiopia is the major cause of the furor between Egypt and Ethiopia.

The problem we have, my dear reader, is poor leadership—leadership styles embodied by leaders who appear shrouded in visible sheepskin. These are stomach-crats who only value their stomachs, what to eat lavishly, gold to save in safe banks in Paris, London, Rome, and New York etc., and uncountable money to squander on a daily basis. Other insurmountable misappropriations of the state economy could include amassing Lapis lazuli mined in Afghanistan and polished in India, remaining airborne most of the time, traveling in sophisticated passenger planes that are worth millions of dollars, always remaining adorned in garments made from the most expensive silk embroidery, displaying lineups of the most expensive bulletproof cars, and holidaying in the most expensive yachts in far distant seas and oceans.

To keep aloof from the horrors of magicians and magic and the evil-eyes of the poverty-stricken citizen, the totalitarian styled president or prime minister has to make deliberate changes to every vacationing site. If food poisoning was experienced in a previous site, the approaching venue would have to be different in context.

Vacationing within one regional environment is cause for suspicion as it does not augur well with the leader and his family. Having approximately 40 moon-like virgins that are interchangeable in every vacation would fit the leader. If possible, they would be buried with him as was the case of Genghis Khan who died in Xi Xia Prefecture of China but was buried in Töv and Khentii Provinces in North Eastern Mongolia after almost ten harrowing days of travel. The site and the graveyard of the man who started the Mongols acclamations of the biggest landmass in the world appears unknown to this day. In the final days of the Mongols, it had accumulated a landmass that was over 23 million square kilometers and that is equal to 9 million square miles. Among those who departed with him were 2,000 bystanders who were deliberately killed by his 1,000 well-armed warriors, his 40 “moonlike” virgins who would keep him company for the next world, and his 40 well bred horses.

Authoritarian or dictatorial leaders are men and women who don't care for anyone except for themselves, for their family members, for their close friends and close relatives. Some of their poor leadership styles and traits include the autocratic style that is confounded by ineffective conflict resolution skills, conflict avoidance and the absence of trust, being entombed in the philosophy of resistance to change and indecisiveness, lacking direction resulting from authoritarianism, and extreme mismanagement and unwillingness to assign tasks. Any employee outside of the clan employment system must “tow the line” or end up imprisoned or fired without any form or type of benefit.

With “my way or the highway” being the norm for the authoritarian or autocratic leader, the outcast employee is subjected to the most harrowing experience in life. On paying visit to the bellyful leader, the retinue of malnourished or embellished ordinary citizens obligatorily get subjected to unnecessary and abusive behaviors from those keeping watch of the dwelling of the Shangri-la cum hell that is usually known as State House or Presidential Palace. Upon meeting with the Boss of the Nation, the first action would be to bow or prostrate followed by kissing the shoes of the man or woman in-charge of the nation. Such belligerently and forcefully enforced actions eventually capture the minds of the abandoned citizen and the ultimate result would be unanticipated coup d'etat. What will follow next would be hard to swallow.

Ethiopia entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Somalia's unrecognized Somaliland region over the leasing of the Port of Zeila on January 1, 2024. With the sudden departure of former President Muse Bihi Abdi from the political arena after being defeated by Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi (Irro) in the recently concluded presidential election in Somaliland, we'll have to wait and see how the newly-elected president appears different from the former. Ethiopia's search for a naval and commercial port started after Eritrea seceded in 1993. The four countries have natural resources that have not been tapped; yet poverty is biting hard to an extent all these countries are dependent on foreign handouts. The four nations and their people have deep historical traces in the major religious scriptures where some belong to

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identical or differing anthropological classifications such as Semitic, Cushitic, Hamitic, or Hamito-Cushitic.

Anyone who has not seen the beauty of Ethiopia and the nature of desperation on the faces of its people needs to do a little research or buy a ticket so as to see the mighty Nile River that has been a source of inspiration for the pharaohs of Egypt and past Abyssinian empires. Also, trek through the Ethiopian highlands and thereafter canoe on Lake Tana then reflect the hunger on the faces of those who inhabit this blessed region of antiquity. Go see the beauty of Eritrea with its lush green vegetation; swim in the Red Sea and then tell me the colony of fish species you have seen. Endeavor to conquer Somali territory when there is peace so you can take a voyage along the longest coastline in Africa. Take a closer look at the marine species off the coasts of Somalia. You will obviously see the much-loved lobsters, mackerel, shrimps, tuna, and the dugong that now belong to illegal shipping trawlers. With trawlers that process all every kind and type of fish, illegal fishermen from as far as Asia have every reason to celebrate. They have found unmonitored, unguarded, and abandoned coastlines filled with unique fish species. Djibouti's semi-desert should not deceive your eyes. It could be small but contains a wealth of resources.

In the 1st century–960 AD, Eritrea was part of the Kingdom of Aksum or Axum. In the year 630 AD Islam was introduced to the coastal areas and in 1517, the Ottoman Turks conquered most of Eritrea. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1896 made the Red Sea accessible with merchant and naval ships going further south the Indian Ocean. In 1882 Eritrea was captured by the Forces of Bennio Mussolini who was obsessed with modern European colonialization of Africa. However, what followed next was the defeat of Italy by Ethio-Eritrean forces in 1896 at the Battle of Adwa that finally restored the territories of Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Confounding historical exegesis related to Ethiopia's past abound. It is a country of historical beauty and without an iota of doubt, one would be thrown into shock regarding the successive leaders' failures to make it a haven of peace and prosperity. With the eastern and southern regions filled with towering mountains and historical artifacts that stretch back to as far as before Christianity and up to the era of antiquity, the only eye-catching historical monument is the Church of Lalibela that was constructed during the reign of Gebre Meskel Lalibela (1881-1221) AD.³ The localized historical narration how King Gebre Meskel Lalibela encountered Jesus Christ while on a tour of Jerusalem appears to be unending daily conversation. It was at that moment when Jesus Christ instructed him to build a memorable replica of the Church of Jerusalem.

The belief that the construction of the Church of Lalibela is placed between the 7th century and the 14th century appears to be acceptable to some researchers and archeologists.⁴ The saying "second Jerusalem" may sound inappropriate because Lalibela town did not appear or display a semblance of Jerusalem. In modern times, the Rock-hewn churches of Aksum that have been chipped from strong natural mountains appear to have been disowned. It was in 1978 when it was recognized by UNESCO as a heritage site.⁵ A look at the historical profiles of past Ethiopian empires and their leaders and the aftermath of the overthrow of the last Emperor Haile Selassie stranded the necessary renovations of historical churches and monuments.

Leadership and power are inter-related because both are part of the what is called *influence process* and both have the potential to influence. Doctors, ministers, coaches, and teachers have the potential to influence people. How do the leaders of the Horn of Africa influence those they lead? Do killings, displacements, divisions, starving or bickering over petty issues have the potential to influence people who are hungry, sick and homeless in any way?

There're two types of major powers in organizations: position power and personal power. The capacity of a leader having higher status or rank than his/her followers is described as position power. Vice Presidents and heads of organizations or departments have more power than their staff, which, if used legitimately, elevates them to position power. Thus, this type of power includes legitimate, reward, and coercive power. Leadership and management deal with people. These four countries have leadership and management problems. Their offices are riddled with corruption of the greatest magnitude. Furthermore, they have come to lead not by the will of the people but through forceful illegitimate means. We know their political history.

Personal power is the process by which a leader influences his subjects because he is likable and knowledgeable. He is knowledgeable, highly competent, and considerate. He treats his staff equally without regard to race, creed, color, religion, national origin and age. He does not dominate others but leads them, guides them, and is observant of his weaknesses. Power weaknesses lead us to two faces: referent and expert power.

"The Bases of Social Power"

Referent power: A school teacher who is adored by her students has referent power.

Expert power: A tour guide who is knowledgeable about a foreign country has expert power.

Legitimate power: A judge who administers sentences in the courtroom exhibits legitimate power.

Reward power: A supervisor who gives rewards to employees who work hard is using reward power.

Coercive power: A coach who sits players on the bench for being late to practice is using coercive power. (J.R. French Jr. and B. Raven, 1962).⁶

While French and Raven came up with the five leadership powers above in 1959, five years later, they came up with the transformational power base. The two most important powers to be exercised by any leader willing to create a reliable leadership potential will be relying on the application of the expert and referent powers. They should be exclusive to the leader having the determination to administer it without regard to gender or race, creed or color, or political or national, and religious affiliations.

From what we have read above, we see that these leaders who hold the power to Africa's most strategic location do not exercise any form of the above-mentioned powers. Giving a higher

position to your relative is not reward power; punishing those who do not belong to your clan/tribe is not legitimate power; starving those who disagree with your mode of administration is far from being coercive power; practicing misleading ideology is not expert power, and finally, to be adored only by your henchmen and 'bootlickers' is not referent power.

Modern Leadership Practices

Leaders are not born, they are made. There are many types of leadership styles. The best leadership style I prefer is the transformational leadership style. Transformational leaders are significantly more innovative than transactional leaders. Transactional leaders are those leaders who clarify tasks while at the same guiding and motivating those under their authority. Most politicians play this kind of leadership style. In contrast, Contingency leadership is not efficient in atmospheres of accelerated change because leaders place themselves into positions matching their leadership style.

Furthermore, leaders need to recognize how knowledge is valued so they will be acquainted with how the learners will react to a variety of learning opportunities. Being intentional and goal-oriented leads to planned change and this is what many organizations perceive as an accidental occurrence. Given the right tools and techniques, anyone with the right intentions can be a change agent. A change agent can be a manager or non-manager. On the contrary, an organization may be resistant to change due to chaotic randomness.

By building support and commitment, fear and anxiety will diminish. It will be a solid requirement to initiate emotional commitment to change so that inconsistencies may pave way for positive efforts. One thing that is of paramount importance is to undertake full-scale negotiation to lessen the level of resistance by addressing core individual and collective needs.

To avoid potentially high costs, negotiating with all concerned parties could herald an everlasting negotiated settlement. Another easy method of overcoming resistance will be the use of cooptation which usually leads to endorsement from those resisting change. Giving key roles to those resisting changes may be defined as a 'buy off'. Unfortunately, coercion may be on the last of the list of overcoming resistance to change.

To better understand the true meaning of motivation, Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs best hypothesizes its definition when he categorized the well-known theory of motivation into five components:

Psychological: It includes hunger, thirst, shelter, sex, and other bodily needs.

Safety: Includes security and protection from physical and emotional harm.

Social: Includes affection, belongingness, acceptance, and friendship.

Esteem: Includes internal esteem factors such as self-respect, autonomy, and achievement; and external esteem factors such as status, recognition, and attention.

Self-actualization: The drive to become what one is capable of becoming; includes growth, achieving one's potential, and self-fulfillment.

Experts in the field of Organizational Behavior often use different power tactics to achieve their objectives. The use of upward influence, downward influence, and lateral influence is used in different parts of the world depending on the culture of the organization. The collection of power tactics that work best for many include rational persuasion, inspirational appeals, and consultation as they tend to be more effective to influence people in the top management level and their subordinates. However, if the use of “softer” tactics fails, one will have no other option but to apply the “harder” stand which involves the use of formal power regardless of the costs and risks incurred. The use of ingratiation helps to better define a problem. We can draw from these statements and conditions, some drawbacks of the rational decision-making model:

1. It entails a great deal of time.
2. It requires a great deal of information.
3. It presupposes that considerable conditions exist to be agreed upon.
4. It assumes precise, unwavering, and absolute knowledge of alternatives, preferences, objectives, and outcomes.
5. It assumes a rational, reasonable, non-political world.

Leadership and Followership

Though having diverse definitions, followership and leadership are two inseparable concepts of which the absence of one makes doing the job impossible. Followership may be defined as the art of following, listening, taking orders, emulating and identifying with a top figure who is there to inspire, motivate, and reward for successes. Followers are responsible for the success of any organization and that they follow guidelines set out by the leader and contained in guidelines and policies in the form of rules and regulations that may either be in publication form or through oral dictate.

On the other hand, leadership entails “the exercise of power” (Burke, 2011)⁷ and having the attributes of intellectual dimension, powerful ideas, an understanding of creativity and the meaning of life (Morris, 1997).⁸ With empathy and intense feeling for the follower, a leader stays in the forefront of overcoming turbulent conditions by changing gears. Leaders rely on others to take care of their meeting schedules, answer phones, and entertain their visitors in their absences (Blunt, 2008).⁹

Of all the jobs, in my experience, the leaders I found most incompetent were those lacking self-esteem and guarded by stalwartly men who walked insolently breathing threats without giving due respect to their followers. Informal leadership is leadership accorded to a person by other members of the organization. A leader, though not infallible, possesses characteristics not found in the manager and follower. However, whether the owner of an organization or a mere CEO, a leader is one who abides by the rules and regulations of the organization that he/she leads.

Pharaohs of Egypt wore fake goatees which implied that they were leaders in their own right just as the “He-goat”, “Billy-goat”, or “Male-goat” led the rest of the goat at all times regardless of whether the flock grazed, drove to pasture, or returned from a long day in the fields. The goatees worn by ancient pharaohs were made from goat skin. A look at the hieroglyphics on the walls of ancient Egyptian tombs is a testament to pharaonic living styles and their lively exposures as

leaders. Consequently, today's Horn of Africa leaders are no different from those of the past despite difference in lifestyle and paraphernalia. Pharaohs of Egypt sipped wine from golden cups while modern CEOs dine on elegant tables surrounded by retinue of followers.

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