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Honors Thesis

THE ABUSE OF GREATNESS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN A
LEADER'S RECOGNITION OF REMORSE AND THEIR STATE'S ECONOMIC,
POLITICAL, AND SOCIAL SUCCESS

by
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Submitted to Brigham Young University in partial fulfillment
of graduation requirements for University Honors

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ABSTRACT

THE ABUSE OF GREATNESS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN A LEADER'S RECOGNITION OF REMORSE AND THEIR STATE'S ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, AND SOCIAL SUCCESS

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Department of Geography

Bachelor of Science

In the year 1599 William Shakespeare penned a line for his new political drama *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*: “The abuse of greatness is when it disjoins remorse from power.” This thesis investigates *if* and *how* this claim is mirrored in reality. Utilizing the literature and philosophies of two historic political figures, Marcus Aurelius and Machiavelli, a spectrum of remorse in leadership is defined. On one end Aurelius articulates the necessity of remorse while Machiavelli argues the opposite on the other end of this spectrum. The research then takes us to sub-saharan Africa to explore differences in the leadership styles of politicians in post colonial Chad and Nigeria. By comparing them to Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar and Henry V we can place them on the continuum of remorseful leadership, allowing us to evaluate the human experience of leadership, its pitfalls and its obligations.

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Introduction

My feet ached as I moved four steps forward, filling in the space that the family in front of us used to hold before their baby got a little too fussy from the heat. Now without shade I distracted myself from the London sun by playing a few rounds of charades with the people around me. At the start of each new painfully long round I reminded myself how much I wanted to see this play. Finally the doors were opened and everyone ran towards the front of the stage. (There are no assigned seats at the Globe Theater in London. The majority of the audience stands in what is called “The Standing Yard” right in front of the stage, similar to how they would organize the audience when the theater was first built.) The actors came on stage and the story unfolded—the audience was welcomed into the world of Julius Caesar's Roman Republic.

In Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* the audience follows Brutus and his cohorts as they make a decision that alters the history of the Roman Republic and the world. They decide to assassinate Julius Caesar. In the first act, they debate whether their objections to him are strong enough to justify murder. I have seen *Julius Caesar* many times on high school stages and in professional theaters. I have studied and analyzed the script multiple times, but at this particular performance one of the justifications for Caesar's assassination stood out to me like a flashing red light. I was astounded that I had missed it before. I tried to hold onto the line and understand it but I had to leave it behind as the pacing of the play quickly coursed along and the next thing I knew I was watching the historic assassination of Julius Caesar.

When intermission came and I was given a moment to collect my thoughts, I quickly pulled out the little notebook I kept in my bag and wrote down as much of the

line that I could remember. As I was writing I looked up to see the fake blood from the death of Julius Caesar puddled on the stage. This is when the magnitude of what I had grasped onto settled into reality. This line, this reason was enough to kill the leader of Rome. It was justification enough to change the trajectory of an international superpower. It was powerful enough to affect the early history of the world; and I was holding it in my hand:

“The abuse of greatness is when it disjoins *remorse* from power.”¹

The Tragedy of Julius Caesar Act 2 Scene 1

The objective of this thesis is to discover if Shakespeare’s claim can be held up in reality. Imprimus, by pulling examples and definitions from historical leaders, iconic pieces of literature, and other Shakespearean characters I strive to create a clear understanding of the quote itself. I will then introduce major political leaders from two different states: Chad and Nigeria. These states were chosen due to their similar histories—as they are countries located in sub-saharan Africa they were both left to establish a new nation after their colonizers pulled out in 1960. Their close proximity also eliminates a number of extraneous variables as they have similar potential and problems due to their physical geography. While discussing these countries I will produce a brief geographic synopsis as well as discussing their colonial histories. I will then spend time exploring and analyzing the differences in leadership styles of the nation builders in these post colonial African states through comparison to Marcus Aurelius, Machiavelli, and a selection of Shakespearean archetypical leaders.

¹ William Shakespeare, “Julius Caesar (Folio 1, 1623),” ed. John D Cox, Internet Shakespeare Editions, January 11, 2019 (emphasis added).

Chapter One: Understanding

The first step to understanding this line from Shakespeare's Julius Caesar is to understand the definitions of each word. The most important words here are "greatness," "power," "abuse" and "remorse." The definitions of these words, as found in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), are as follows:

*Greatness: Inherent nobility or dignity (of mind, character, action, expression, or appearance); grandeur, impressiveness; great-heartedness. [Also] exceptional ability in the activity, field, or context specified.*²

*Power: Control or authority over others; dominion, rule; government, command, sway. Frequently with †of, †on, over.*³

*Abuse: To use (something) improperly, to misuse; to make a bad use of; to pervert; to take advantage of wrongly.*⁴

*Remorse: Deep regret or guilt for doing something morally wrong; the fact or state of feeling sorrow for committing a sin; repentance, compunction [or] Regard for or understanding of whether something is right or wrong; moral sense; A solemn obligation.*⁵

The OED offers multiple definitions for one word. For most words it is easy to tell which definition is best to use based on context. Accordingly, when I first began my research of this line I was expecting and assuming that the first definition of remorse stated above (*deep regret or guilt*) was the definition that Shakespeare intended.

² Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "greatness (n.), sense 3," December 2023.

³ Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "power (n.1), sense I.2.a," December 2023.

⁴ Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "abuse (v.), sense 1.a," December 2023.

⁵ Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "remorse (n.), sense 3" September 2023.

However, considering the context of this line, I am drawn to the latter definition of remorse. In the OED this second definition is marked as “rare” and “obsolete.” These identifiers caused me to look past this definition until I remembered that this is Shakespeare I am working to understand and if anyone is going to use a word with a “rare” or “obsolete” meaning, it would be he. Once I allowed myself to consider this definition as Shakespeare’s intention, this line gained much more meaning and I was able to examine the importance of the concept: remorse in leadership.

With this shift in definition came a correlating shift in the timeline. When working as a synonym to *regret or repentance*, remorse is usually placed at the end of the event timeline. It does not take place until a character looks back and considers whether they regret or have remorse about an action. With this definition, the current act or decision is unaffected by the presence of remorse. Conversely, when the definition of remorse is explained as a “moral sense” or “solemn obligation,” the occurrence of this remorse is pushed forward in the timeline in tandem with the decision-making process. It is not a reaction to events that have already taken place, but instead a mindset that is continuously carried with one and affecting current decisions. With this definition of remorse one can see how it may now have a larger and more prominent effect on a leader's use of power and control. Accordingly, the definition of remorse used in this thesis, unless stated otherwise in the context, will be as follows: “Regard for or understanding of whether something is right or wrong; moral sense; A solemn obligation.”⁶

In order to make sense of this more abstract definition of remorse and the idea of recognizing it in a leader, I turned to two of the most influential figureheads in history:

⁶ Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “remorse (n.), sense 3.”

Marcus Aurelius and Machiavelli. Each of these political figures not only led by example but also secured their ideologies in writing. Through studying their lives and literature we are able to create a clearer understanding of remorse in leadership and even create a metaphorical spectrum of remorse with Marcus Aurelius on one end and Machiavelli on the other.

Marcus Aurelius

Marcus Aurelius, from the beginning, acts differently than previous Roman emperors. He was born into a prominent family with connections to some of the most influential people in Rome, but it was not until he was adopted by his uncle, the current successor to the purple, that his destiny was to become the emperor of Rome. Marcus' adoption, along with one Lucius Veras, is seen as a calculated move to place both young men in the path to become the future emperors of Rome. When the time came for Marcus to step into the role of emperor, he insisted that he and Lucius share the title and duty, so they became co-emperors—a historic first. Historians believe that although Lucius Veras was being led down the same path as Marcus Aurelius, by the time they were to ascend the throne Aurelius had garnered far more public support than his adopted brother. So much so that if Aurelius had so desired, he could have easily deposed Veras without serious repercussions and could have enjoyed the power and throne himself. Nevertheless, he insisted on following the plan designed by their predecessor and they ruled the Roman empire side by side. This humility is the first indicator that Aurelius would be a leader worth studying when creating a baseline for not *abusing* his *greatness*.⁷

Throughout his emperorship the people of Rome faced many trials that seemed to

⁷ John Anthony Crook, "Marcus Aurelius," Encyclopædia Britannica, June 28, 2023.

be out of Aurelius' control and yet he found ways to enrich the lives of his citizens. With Veras taking charge of the military, Aurelius focused mainly on the law and domestic matters. During his rule "Numerous measures were promulgated and judicial decisions made, clearing away harshnesses and anomalies in the civil law, improving in detail the lot of the less-favoured—slaves, widows, minors—and giving recognition to claims of blood relationship in the field of succession."⁸ Additionally, when the empire was exposed to the deadly chicken pox epidemic, Aurelius funded many funerals and worked to make the inescapable a bit more bearable for his people. Nevertheless, none of these things were radical changes in the way the law or the leadership were viewed. So why focus on Marcus Aurelius and his emperors? Because not only did he exude honor during his rule, but he articulated it in his writing. Towards the end of his reign he wrote what became known as *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*. Scholars are unsure whether he meant them to be published or read. Regardless, they found their way to the general public and in this work Aurelius articulates what a successful political leader does and is.

The Meditations

Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* is divided into twelve different books, each one corresponding to a different period of his leadership. Although the word "remorse" is not written in any of Aurelius's meditations, he discusses characteristics that are identifiable with our definitions of the word. He offers insight in almost every book on the ability and necessity to feel remorse, as well as setting forth a selection of personality traits that is conducive to creating a successful person and worthy leader, specifically when it comes to making decisions. Through these meditations we can glean a deeper and more specific

⁸ Ibid.

definition of what it means to have and act with remorse as a political leader. The qualities of affection, freedom, justice, modesty, steadiness, understanding, and consideration are but a small section of insight Aurelius has to offer. But when paired with the OED definitions of remorse, they create a stable baseline for what it means for a leader to act remorsefully within the bounds of their “solemn obligation.”

In his second book of meditations he advises to “think steadily” and “do what thou hast in hand with perfect and simple dignity, and feeling of affection, and freedom, and justice; and to give thyself relief from all other thoughts.”⁹ In this insight, Aurelius claims that affection, freedom, and justice are the most important things to consider. An additional note of significance in this meditation is that he admits to doing things outside of these three ideals. But he says to “do what thou hast in hand” with these traits leading the way. We know that there are multiple duties and decisions that leaders have to undertake that are consistently difficult, perhaps inherently evil. Aurelius does not ignore this, rather offers how to handle them with remorse. Later in his writings, Aurelius returns to his consideration of justice and offers more insight into this faculty: “...in every movement have respect to justice, and on the occasion of every impression maintain the faculty of comprehension or understanding.”¹⁰ Adding his overall insistence throughout multiple meditations of the need for modesty in those who maintain leadership positions to the two specific quotes stated above, Aurelius adds to the baseline for what it means to act with remorse.

Change, both in the world and in oneself, is something that Aurelius insists on. He

⁹ Marcus Aurelius and George Long, “The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius,” in *Great Books of the Western World*, vol. 12 (Britannica, n.d.), 257.

¹⁰ Aurelius, 265.

assures us that change should not cause alarm as it is not evil for things to change and the world is indeed accustomed to it. Accordingly, we should welcome change into our lives for how “can anything else that is useful be accomplished without change?”¹¹ Aurelius usually speaks of changing one's opinions. He states multiple times that not only should one be willing to change their opinion, but that they should change gladly and consistently, so as to become accustomed to it. Aurelius also connects this necessity for change to his three main points of consideration, discussed earlier, when he draws the line from change to freedom by reminding the reader “that to change thy opinion and to follow him who corrects thy error is as consistent with freedom as it is to persist in thy error. For it is thy own, the activity which is exerted according to thy own movement and judgment, and indeed according to thy own understanding too.”¹² By drawing this connection Aurelius assures us that to change is advisable and admirable.

Though Aurelius values change, he also holds solidly to the importance of being resolute and confident. Confidence is introduced in two forms. The first he says, much like change, is found in the general concept: the universe. In his seventh book of meditations he explains the importance of keeping one's mind “free from compulsion” and the judgements of those crying out against you. In this meditation it seems as though a weight is lifted from the shoulders of those making large impactful decisions as Aurelius explains that “everything which happens has a relationship with God or man and is neither new nor difficult to handle, but usual and apt matter to work on.”¹³ At a cursory

¹¹ Aurelius, 280.

¹² Aurelius, 286.

¹³ Aurelius, 284.

level this seems to be identifying remorse as a waste of time and productivity. But when looking at it a bit deeper, the idea is that regret, especially when not acted upon, is a waste of time. And though more recently remorse has etymologically evolved into a synonym for regret, this insight from Marcus Aurelius offers an important distinction. In the process of decision making, regret arrives when there is rarely anything for it to do except trouble the mind or inspire adjustments in the future. Remorse can change the way the process is handled as it is used in tandem with other decision-making tools and tactics. In accordance with this analysis, Aurelius offers a meditation that reflects on the uselessness of regret and the value of remorse (in terms of our favored definition):

“This is the chief thing: Be not perturbed, for all things are according to the nature of the universal: and in a little time thou wilt be nobody and nowhere... In the next place having fixed thy eyes steadily on thy business look at it, and at the same time remembering that it is thy duty to be a good man, and what man’s nature demands, do that without turning aside; and speak as it seems to thee most just, only let it be with a good disposition and with modesty and without hypocrisy.”¹⁴

Aurelius advocates for awareness of multiple things at one time, while still being able to keep your peace. Multitasking is referred to throughout the meditations. One instance specifically relates to our purpose of defining remorse. In his first meditation Aurelius calls for an “undeviating steadiness of purpose” but closely follows this with the statement that “the same man can be both most resolute and yielding.”¹⁵ In explaining how to do so he fundamentally defines a confident person as one who is driven by

¹⁴ Aurelius, 285.

¹⁵ Aurelius, 253.

humility. This offers a path that it seems very few people in power are able to take – being able to connect the necessity of change with the importance of being resolute. This is a path that leads through a crossroads that is difficult to grasp, but if one is able, will lead to great success.

Finally, Aurelius elucidates the importance of consideration and active thoughtfulness in the second book of meditations by offering a list of things that do violence to a man's soul. “When it allows any act of its own and any movement to be without an aim,” he says, “and does anything thoughtlessly and without considering what it is, it being right that even the smallest things be done with reference to an end.”¹⁶ This call for consistent consideration aligns Aurelius’ views more closely with the second definition of remorse from the OED. Additionally, he applies it to many different aspects of the world—not just in oneself. Then we see it come up in the next book of meditations, but this time in correlation with a communal need when Aurelius advises to “labour not unwillingly, nor without regard to the common interest, nor without due consideration.”¹⁷ Again in the next book of meditations he explains, in so many words, that the desire to do good and be just should be kept in every action.

The ideal of constant consideration predominates his eighth book of meditations. We see it earlier in this book as we read “on the occasion of every act ask thyself how is this with respect to me? Shall I repent of it?”¹⁸ Later in the book he advises that “on every occasion ask thyself, What is there in this which is intolerable and past bearing?”¹⁹ These

¹⁶ Aurelius, 259.

¹⁷ Aurelius, 261.

¹⁸ Aurelius, 285.

¹⁹ Aurelius, 288.

ideas bridge the gap between the two definitions of remorse discussed earlier: regret and repentance or an understanding of right and wrong implying a moral sense. In his meditations Marcus Aurelius relates to both definitions of remorse and combines them into one experience—one necessary trait and act of leadership.

Machiavellianism

While Marcus Aurelius offers a guide to being a successful leader, Nicoló di Bernardo dei Machiavelli suggests other paths to success and power. Machiavelli, the 16th century political theorist and philosopher, spent a good many days in what we know today as “public service.” During his time as the second chancellor of the Florentine Republic, under Soderini’s rule, he was accustomed to a life of leadership and diplomacy. Unlike Aurelius, Machiavelli’s role in political leadership was not the hallmark of his life. In fact being an Italian diplomat is just one title in a list of many. Arguably, Machiavelli established his political dynasty not through his work as a chancellor, but through his words as an author.

In *The Prince* (1513) Machiavelli offers a guide to politics and power. He begins with the declaration that politicians should function under different guidelines than others. He insists that what makes a moral citizen does not make a successful political leader. Machiavelli argues that traditional values cause the demise of a powerful leader.²⁰ While there are multiple interpretations of Machiavelli’s true meaning, his targeted audience, and his motives (as with any universally influential literature) there is no arguing that *The Prince* established Machiavelli’s legacy—for it is this treatise that

²⁰ Nicolò Machiavelli, “The Prince,” essay, in *Great Books of the Western World*, vol. 23 (Britannica, n.d.), 3–37.

coined the term *Machiavellianism*.

The OED defines Machiavelliansim as “cunning, unscrupulousness, or duplicity in behaviour (esp. in politics).”²¹ Other definitions include one from a psychological study done on the idea of Machiavellianism: “the predisposition to manipulate interpersonal relationships with guile, opportunism, and deceit.”²² And from the Merriam Webster dictionary: “the view that politics is amoral and that any means however unscrupulous can justifiably be used in achieving political power.”²³ In comparison to our definition of the word *remorse*, the contrast is evident.

While Machiavelli’s writings are much less traversed than they were when originally published, his ideals live on through the adjectival form of his name—when Machiavellian became a well known character trait. In 2002, Delroy Paulhus and Kevin Williams included the trait in what would become known as *The Dark Triad of Personality*. Psychopathy, Narcissism, and Machiavellianism: three personality traits that “entail a socially malevolent character with behavior tendencies toward self-promotion, emotional coldness, duplicity, and aggressiveness.”²⁴ In the following years, the Dark Triad, including Machiavellianism, has become the subject of many research articles

²¹ Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “Machiavellianism (*n.*),” July 2023.

²² Brian K. Miller, Kay Nicols, and Robert Konopaske, “Measurement Invariance Tests of Revisions to Archaically Worded Items in the Mach IV Scale,” Plos One, accessed August 14, 2023.

²³ Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. “Machiavellianism,” accessed February 29, 2024.

²⁴ Delroy L Paulhus and Kevin M Williams, “The Dark Triad of Personality: Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and Psychopathy,” *Journal of Research in Personality* 36, no. 6 (2002): 556–63.

regarding the psychology and actions of humankind.

While there are many recent studies of Machiavelliansim through the triad, it is important to trace this concept back to its earlier days as a personality trait. In the mid-late 1900s two social psychologists created the Mach-IV test. This test took statements from Machiavelli's works and asked a random selection of people whether they agree with these statements. It is this research that formed Machiavellianism into a “distinct personality trait,”—as stated in the introduction to the open source Mach-IV test available online for anyone to take today.²⁵ After taking the test the user is brought to a page displaying a graph showing the percentage of people that have received each score (1-100) and a comment box where the participants are able to leave their thoughts, share their scores, and debate the finality of the test. On the day that I took the Mach-IV test (May of 2023) the average score was between 60 and 80 percent and the most recent comments left on the page seemed to have a general view of “machs” as intelligent and experienced. I scored 52 percent. According to this test I agree with 52% of the Machiavellian statements—effectively identifying me as “a mach.”

This data offered a different point of view on this personality trait that is usually associated with evil tendencies. After collecting this information I began to consider the ways in which this mindset could prove useful in a leadership position. Machiavelli was not a bad person, in fact those who study him often conclude that he was noble in his political life and not correctly represented by his ideas in *The Prince*.²⁶ If this is the case, why did he write it? Is there an angle where the Machiavellian personality trait is helpful

²⁵ “Open-Source Psychometrics Project,” MACH-IV: Machiavellianism Test, 2014.

²⁶ Bcburche, “Machiavelli: Devil or Your Typical Sociopath?,” *Morality and Politics*, September 12, 2014.

instead of detrimental? If so, where is that threshold and what is the difference between an experienced and calculated leader and one that is manipulative and opportunistic? To find the answer let's remember the genesis of this research: "The abuse of greatness is when it disjoins remorse from power."²⁷ Perhaps the difference between a successful world leader and a feared dictator is remorse itself.

The Baseline

To compare Marcus Aurelius and Machiavelli one has to consider the many environmental, cultural, and timely differences between the two. However, despite these differences, the effect that both Marcus Aurelius and Machiavelli have had on academia through the years levels both perspectives to a point of equal influence. As the authors are taught in schools and their works are circulated in academia it is safe to say that modern day leaders are exposed to, if not influenced by, both Machiavelli and Marcus Aurelius.

The Shakespearean dictator, Julius Caesar, resembles Machiavelli. While there is much debate on whether Caesar is a hero or a villain, multiple interpretations align him with Machiavelli's sentiment.²⁸ In Shakespeare's play the Roman emperor is portrayed as a character who gets carried away in his own self aggrandizement; so much so that his trusted advisors felt he was abusing his power. They could no longer trust that his decisions were for the good of the people—he had lost his remorse. In the eyes of Brutus, Cassius, and the other conspirators, this was punishable by death. On the other hand, William Shakespeare offers another point of view from leadership: Henry V. Henry V is

²⁷ William Shakespeare, "Julius Caesar (Folio 1, 1623)."

²⁸ Bernard Friedman, "The Nation-state: The Machiavellian Element in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar," *The Historian* 18, no. 1 (September 1, 1955): 25–40.

followed throughout multiple of Shakespeare's plays. We see him as a child occupying himself with drinking and friends, his rise to power, his reign, and his death. In that time, Shakespeare's Henry V created a bridge between the crown and his subjects.

Like Julius Caesar, Henry V had to lead his country in multiple conflicts all while establishing an empire. In his writing Shakespeare claims that Henry was able to do so in a much more successful manner. I posit that the main difference between the two rulers' methods is their relationship with remorse. One example of this can be found in act IV, scene I, of Henry V. Just before the battle at St. Crispin's day (one in which Henry's troops were sorely outnumbered by the French) Henry spends his night among his men working to understand them and their needs. Not only does he listen to his soldiers but he allows their words to inform his choices. He strove to understand his troops in order to better lead them to success. His subjects were his brothers, he factored them into his decisions and allowed his consideration for them to shift his tactics. Later on, Henry's consideration of his subjects is directly correlated to his unsuspected victory on the field. Henry considered his people in his difficult decisions, he did not use them to abandon his difficult decisions. We see this pattern time and again through Henry's soliloquies surrounding major events. He is always considering all possible options, all the different outcomes, and all the people involved. His decisions are coded with remorse. Henry V, as portrayed by William Shakespeare, illustrates Marcus Aurelius' guide to leadership.²⁹

Through Marcus Aurelius, Machiavelli, Julius Caesar and Henry V we are left with two main philosophies and roads that leaders can choose: one paired with remorse and the other tainted with selfish ambition. This juxtaposition creates a spectrum with

²⁹ William Shakespeare, "Henry V (Folio 1, 1623)," ed. James D Mardock, Internet Shakespeare Editions, January 11, 2019.

which we are able to view remorse in politics (see fig. 1).³⁰

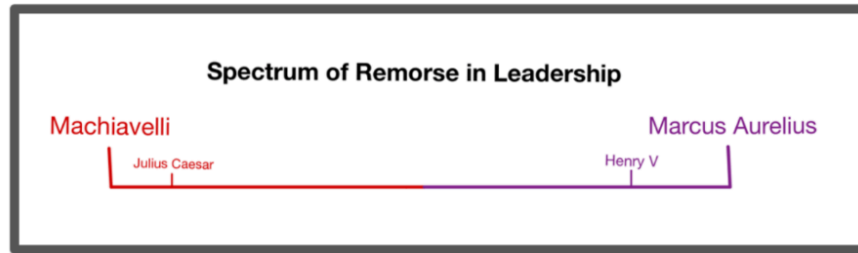


Figure 1: Spectrum of Remorse with Machiavelli and Marcus Aurelius as Guide Posts
Julius Caesar and Henry V are placed on the spectrum accordingly

Political leaders are faced with impossible decisions every day; this is an inescapable task of the office they hold. With these examples from literature we are able to compare instances of remorse in political leadership (Aurelius and Henry V) to examples of its practical opposites (Machiavellianism and Julius Caesar.) We are able to see the effects of remorse—both in its presence, and its absence. It is common knowledge that the decisions leaders make are important to defining their time as a leader and their state’s success. Even so, the way in which they make these decisions holds great import as well. Are they using affection, freedom, justice, modesty, steadiness, understanding, and consideration in their decisions—do they act with remorse?

I have spent the majority of my life's work functioning under two major beliefs: 1) literature has the ability to accurately reflect real life patterns and characters and 2) understanding others' stories and considering their motives will lead to a more successful world on every level, whether it be personal, regional, national, or universal. With this research, I once again endeavor to “hold as ‘twere the mirror up to nature: to show virtue

³⁰ The Spectrum of Remorse, and the placement of each leader on that spectrum, was created and determined by the author.

her feature, scorn her own image,”³¹ and find the point at which national leaders begin to abuse their greatness. The point at which they pivot from leading their state to becoming a detriment to it. The point where they disjoin *remorse* from *power*.

Nearly two years ago, standing shoulder to shoulder with fellow audience members in the ‘standing yard’ of the Globe theater, I witnessed the dramatic assassination of Julius Caesar. Because of my deep interest in Shakespearean literature, theater, and history I let the curiosity that enveloped me during the production take me on an expedition through the history of ideas. Considering the ideologies of Marcus Aurelius and Machiavelli, I researched political leaders in recent history whose characters were pivotal to their countries’ development and success. This led me to Chad and Nigeria—two post-colonial African countries grasping for independence and relying on their leaders to create a nation. How fundamental is character in the rebirth of a state? In studying these two countries I endeavor to understand the relevance of Shakespeare's claim expressing the profound necessity of considerate, just, and understanding leadership—“the abuse of greatness is when it disjoins remorse from power.”³²

³¹ William Shakespeare, “Hamlet (Folio 1, 1623),” ed. David Bevington, Internet Shakespeare Editions, January 11, 2019.

³² William Shakespeare, “Julius Caesar (Folio 1, 1623).”

Chapter Two: Chad

The Republic of Chad is a landlocked state sitting just within the northern border of Sub-Saharan Africa. Not only has it been plagued with domestic unrest throughout its history, but because it shares borders with six other countries it has also been pulled into many regional conflicts through the years. With its complex history of intense domestic conflict it is a given that there have been multiple Chadian presidents practicing different methods to subdue the conflict and regain power. Obviously, none of them has worked as well as they hoped or else the country would be much more successful than it has been.³³



Figure 2: Map of The Republic of Chad
“Public Domain Images - Chad Map,” Picryl, January 1, 2018.

Long before Chad was declared a Colony under the Government of French Equatorial Africa (FEA) the area was full of conflicting kingdoms all fighting for complete sovereignty. While the French colonization cooled these conflicts, it reset the stage for different forms of regional conflict. Through the French colonization, violence was the defining characteristic of the state. The inherent violence of a colonization campaign claimed the lives of many ethnic Chadians, but the pain did not end there. Throughout the colonization period civil rebellions were constant. “The country was regarded as having been conquered between 1914 (Lanne, 1993: 424) and 1917 (Chapelle, 1980). However, resistance to colonization never stopped.”³⁴ Not

³³ Chad is incredibly under researched and very poorly documented. Most of the research done is related to events of mass violence, as there have been quite a few; dating all the way back to her pre colonization years.

³⁴ Debose Marielle, “Colonial Violence and Resistance in Chad (1900-1960),” Sciences Po portal, September 30, 2020.

only was the violence of the campaign claiming innumerable innocent lives but the blow to Chad's economy is speculated to have claimed more lives than the physical conflicts. Chad was not viewed as a resourceful and important colony to the French. In fact, "colonial domination" was never completed in the region as the French all but abandoned the more arid and less fertile north, focusing solely on the south. Alongside a lack of political, economic, and agricultural interest in the region a main reason for the French abandonment and damage throughout this period can be found with the FEA leaders. The colony was constantly cycling through leaders, most of which were beginners being tested in a sort of trial period. Many were generals sent to Chad as a punishment or demotion. In this pattern a lack of consistency, compassion, and understanding in the leaders is apparent and unfortunately set the leadership standards after Chad claimed her independence.

After the second World War there was major reform to the colonial system which significantly improved the circumstances in which Chad was being governed. In 1945 the Chadians were able to vote for the first time since colonization. Although there was still much violence in the region, voting was a crucial step towards democracy and independence. Once this first crucial step was taken, it did not take long for the country to reach complete independence led by Francois Tombalbaye.

Francois Tombalbaye

In 1960 Francois Tombalbaye, after serving as the Prime Minister, became the first post colonization president of Chad, while the state was still a member of the FEA. Immediately, Tombalbaye began to rule as a dictator rather than a democratically elected

official. “In his first years in power he worked to isolate and eliminate all political rivals, and in 1962 banned all opposition parties.”³⁵ Being one of his first motions as a leader this decision defined his time as president. Some research even goes as far as to draw a direct correlation from this decision to the state’s corruption and shortcomings: “the autocratic Tombalbaye banned all political parties except for the PPT (Chadian Progressive Party,) and Chad became an increasingly corrupt one-party state dominated by the Sara.”³⁶ This quote from the Oxford researchers is not the only acclaimed source using “autocratic” to define Tombalbaye. In fact, it seems to be history’s allotted adjective to define Chad’s first president.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines "autocratic" as “relating to a ruler who has absolute power” and “taking no account of other people's wishes or opinions; domineering.”³⁷ This definition is a direct antonym for our discussion of remorse found earlier in this paper: “regard for or understanding.” Recall that Marcus Aurelius emphasized the ability to listen to and consider opposing opinions when he admonishes the readers to consider each contradiction as carefully as one can and to accustom yourself to attend carefully to what is said by another. Not only is the definition of *remorse* the opposite of *autocratic* but our understanding of remorse gained through Aurelius’s meditations is as well—placing Tombalbaye quite far from Marcus Aurelius and remorse on our scale of ethical or benign leadership.

³⁵ Henry Louis Gates and Kwame Anthony Appiah, eds., “Tombalbaye, François,” Oxford Reference, 2010.

³⁶ Henry Louis Gates and Kwame Anthony Appiah, eds., “Chad,” Oxford Reference, 2010.

³⁷ Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “autocrat (*n.*), sense 1,” July 2023.

One of Tombalbaye's main objectives as President was to create a "centralized leadership backed by a ruling party."³⁸ By adding Justice to his 1961 portfolios his decisions to force a merger of the main opposition party with his own, and his support of successive purges, is muffled behind the fog of egalitarianism. Although that disguise does not fool many, as one Oxford researcher stated, "Tombalbaye's presidency was associated with turning opposition groups against each other."³⁹ That same article continues to state that his tactics were overly ambitious and far from effective.

Throughout his presidency, Tombalbaye continued to enact policies dangerous for the country that most likely would not have been approved if he had not previously erased all opposition. One example of this is when he abandoned Chad's long standing friendship with Israel in exchange for money and support from Libya. When speaking of this deal researchers have claimed his lack of consideration to be "a clear indication of his character."⁴⁰

Looking back at Tombalbaye's presidency it is clear that he was not necessarily a successful leader; however, that was not the consensus among his contemporaries. A general that worked with him is quoted to have said that "his defiant passion" would help him govern.⁴¹ Even in America, President Lyndon B. Johnson welcomed Tombalbaye into office with these glamorous accolades: "there are men in Africa whose courage and whose understanding make the continent less forbidding—and more hospitable to human

³⁸ "François Tombalbaye." prabook.com, January 1, 2021.

³⁹ Gates and Appiah, "Tombalbaye, François."

⁴⁰ "François Tombalbaye." prabook.com.

⁴¹ Ibid.

endeavor.”⁴² In his speech President Johnson also explained that the African Development Bank had begun working with Chad under Tombalbaye’s leadership—something that is undeniably good for national social and economic growth. But when the sun had set on Tombalbaye’s time as president it was clear that he was unable to launch Chad into a successful future. Instead he left behind a legacy that the country has had a difficult time moving past.

Regardless of or perhaps because of Tombalbaye’s Machiavellian instincts, the country never found stable footing after the colonization period. After France pulled out there was an almost immediate civil war between the Muslims in the north and Christians in the south and this pattern of conflict has continued for years. Tombalbaye practiced aggressive leadership, “the iron fist,” up until his assassination in 1975, sending Chad into a spiral of distrusted and autocratic leaders with no clean transition of power.⁴³

Idriss Deby

After Francois Tombalbaye’s 15 year long presidency, Chad was tossed between leaders barely able to keep office long enough to make any lasting changes. In 1989 Hissène Habré deposed the preceding head of state who was only able to hold the title for about three years. During his presidency Habré was incredibly active in quelling any sort of rebellion against him. In one instance he accused one of his main military strategists of

⁴² Lyndon B Johnson, “Remarks of Welcome at the White House to President Tombalbaye of the Republic of Chad,” Remarks of Welcome at the White House to President Tombalbaye of the Republic of Chad | The American Presidency Project, October 2, 1968.

⁴³ Fred Muvunyi, “Chad: 60 Years of Independence – DW – 08/10/2020,” dw.com, August 10.

his own seizing of power. This general escaped to Sudan where he aligned himself with the French and returned to Chad with a formidable army ordered to oust Habré. This general, Idriss Deby, would be recognized as the president of Chad for the next 30 years.

Coming in with the help of the French, Deby established a presidency that was incredibly internationally concerned. When Deby *did* deal with domestic matters it was in his own interests—one example being the supposed democratization of the government. “Despite promises to institute democratic reforms, Déby initially followed the familiar pattern of ethnic nepotism, patronage, and autocratic rule. Nevertheless, in 1991 Déby declared his commitment to eventual democratic rule and permitted the registration of opposition political parties.”⁴⁴ Because of this, Deby eventually reopened competing political parties. Still he was constantly accused of election fraud, although it was never proven, as his party continued to win most elections.

When it comes to Chad’s journey towards democratization there were many steps taken during Deby’s presidency. While this seemed hopeful, most of these steps were merely “an illusion of progress.”⁴⁵ Throughout his presidency, Deby made multiple changes to the democratic system and the constitution—all of which increased his power and ability to stay in office longer. An example is his 2018 version of the constitution which dissolved the position of the prime minister, giving the president the duties and power previously held by that office and reframing the length and number of terms a president was allowed to serve (restarting his term-count allowing him to run for his 5th and 6th terms as president.)

⁴⁴ Gates and Appiah, “Chad.”

⁴⁵ “Armed Force,” Encyclopædia Britannica, February 21, 2024.

Most of Deby's grander decisions as head of state involved fighting the war on terrorism abroad and working to be seen as a regional power, as well as gaining and retaining support from the larger world powers e.g. France, Great Britain, and the United States. Through his alliance with England and by fighting the spread of terrorism in the region Deby "bolstered his international standing" and established Chad as a military power in west Africa.⁴⁶ Meanwhile the Chadians at home did not understand the need for all the wars abroad as it only caused major distress within Chad's borders. Deby failed to consider his country's domestic needs and instead stayed with what gave him power. Based on the differences in his domestic and international reputations it seems as though Deby's main goals were focused on Chad's international and military standing rather than his constituents' needs at home.

When discussed by critics, researchers, and people involved in his life and country, the difference between international and domestic views are stark. One Chadean political activist who had been exiled by Deby himself, claims that "he [Deby] has done everything possible to eliminate everyone who opposes his regime"—a claim similar to those regarding Francois Tombalbaye.⁴⁷ Similarly, most critics describe Deby's leadership style as autocratic, imperialistic, authoritarian, corrupt, and brutal.⁴⁸

In 2021 Deby was killed in battle against the Chadian rebel forces—his own people. Because of the nature of his recent death, the internet and archives are colored with obituaries for Chad's late president, most of which are negatively coded. In one

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Muvunyi.

⁴⁸ Reed Brody, "Remembering Chad's Idriss Deby," Human Rights Watch, April 21, 2021.

obituary written by a freelance journalist with a specialization in African politics, Deby is described as “everything a leader should not be. Corrupt, opportunistic and glory driven...” He is said to have “wielded power like an emperor,” accepted millions of dollars in bribes from the Chinese government, and created a country in which out of “15 million (people) there are just a few hundred qualified doctors, while 70% of Chadians cannot read or write and 80% live on less than a dollar a day.” This drastic failure in the social prosperity of the country is directly correlated with most of the money from the oil industry being used to strengthen Deby’s weapon arsenal instead of funding the “food assistance, infrastructure development, and education and health programs that his country so desperately needed.”⁴⁹ The international vs. domestic responses to Deby’s death also informs us of where Deby placed importance in his presidency. “The French president, Emmanuel Macron, said France had “lost a brave friend.” However, there was less obvious sentiment in the country of his birth, where Déby’s 37-year-old four-star general son, Mahamat Idriss Déby, launched a coup even before his father was buried, dissolving the government and declaring himself president.”⁵⁰ Idris Deby was murdered right after he was elected for his 6th presidential term. His country spent almost no time mourning him and immediately began to erase his 30 years of presidency.

Discussion

Francois Tombalbaye and Idris Deby are Chadian presidents, one leading at the beginning of the state and one during recent years, both with similar patterns of

⁴⁹ “Armed Force,” Encyclopædia Britannica.

⁵⁰ Vava Tamba, “Idriss Déby Obituary,” The Guardian, May 13, 2021.

leadership. When spoken of in research and history they are both described as autocratic leaders actively fighting and eliminating any form of opposition. Through their decisions made while in office and the general domestic and international responses to their leadership both presidents prove to align more closely with Julius Caesar and the Machiavellian leadership methods. At times they both lead in direct opposition to Aurelius's description of a successful leader. With Tombalbaye holding office for 15 years and Deby for 30 they have ruled Chad for 45 of the 60 years that Chad has been an autonomous state. Under their rule the country's post colonial history has become defined by "instability and violence."⁵¹ The region is rich in resources like gold, uranium, and oil and has potential to be a much more significant player on the world stage but the "inadequate infrastructure" and continual "internal conflict" prevents it from doing so. "Chad produces 1.5 billion barrels of oil—making it one of the largest oil reserve holders in Africa...However, according to the World Bank, Chad is ranked the last out of 157 countries in the Human Development Index."⁵² In 2020, under Deby's government, Chad had one of the highest levels of hunger in the world 2.2 million malnourished, 3.7 million living without food security, and 43% of children stunted in their growth.

Despite the region's inherent potential the state has been thrown into a pattern of conflict, corruption, and poverty. The basis of this dissonance can be found within the people of Chad—the leaders of Chad. "Chad has the potential to become a prosperous and developed nation. The future of Chad is in the hands of Chadians,"⁵³ says Njesada, a

⁵¹ "Chad Country Profile," BBC News, July 28, 2023.

⁵² Muvunyi.

⁵³ Ibid.

PhD scholar. Since the state began with immediate conflict under Tombalbaye it seems as though the successive presidents have come to accept and rely on that instability. Fred Muvunyi, the west African consultant for DW news, states that “the regime needs instability to justify staying in power.”⁵⁴ This statement is eerily similar to the information found in chapter 3 of Machiavelli’s, *The Prince*, which outlines the method of keeping the state in as much pain and poverty as possible, just short of rebellion, to stay in power with very little opposition.⁵⁵

Returning to Shakespeare’s portrayal of Julius Caesar, we are able to see clear reflections of his time as Caesar to Tombalbaye and Deby’s leadership techniques. All of these leaders placed significance in creating a domineering international presence and abandoned their domestic duties. In each story, their state made the decision that their leader had begun abusing their greatness and they were the ones to pay the price. In the years following each one of these leaders' assassinations all three states were thrown into patterns of unrest and civil wars.

There is no way to say for certain whether these Chadian presidents were purposefully mirroring Machiavelli's sentiments, or if they even had a similar desired outcome. Regardless, their actions align both Tombalbaye and Deby with Machiavellianism and there are similarities to Julius Caesar's rule sprinkled throughout their tenures. Parallel to this realization we have seen that the state has failed to become a prosperous or developed nation politically, socially, and economically regardless of its many resources lending to the possibility. In modern day Chad—with excessive poverty, conflict, and violence enveloping the nation—active Machiavellianism within its

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Machiavelli, 3-7.

leadership has not been a successful method of governance and the lack of remorse is apparent.

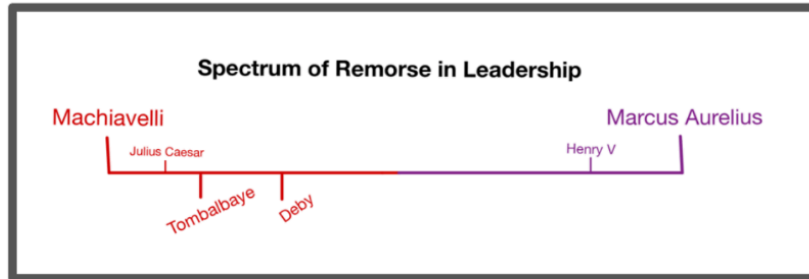


Figure 3: Tombalbaye and Deby's Placement on the Spectrum of Remorse

Chapter Three: Nigeria

Much like our study of Chad, the turning point of Nigerian history is found in the years of her colonization. There are many similarities in these states' colonization experiences as well as multiple significant differences which lead each state, and their leaders, in very different directions. While Chad was colonized by the French, Nigeria was under the British empire which functioned under a more decentralized mindset "based upon cooperation with local chiefs."⁵⁶ This became known as the British indirect rule—a method that was apparent in the occupation of Nigeria. In fact, one of the main historical references supporting this claim came from "*The Dual Mandate in British Colonial Africa*" written by Frederick Lugard, one of the first British governors of Nigeria. In succession to the system of administration that Lugard founded in Nigeria, the region continued to be a perfect example of British indirect rule which eventually led to the Nigeria that the world sees today. One pinnacle moment can be found in the Hugh Clifford Constitution.

In the midst of Nigeria's colonization, Sir Hugh Clifford adopted what became known as the 1922 Clifford Constitution, which offered new ideas and methods of government to the region while encouraging the development of differing political parties. However, "Northern Nigeria was not represented in the new legislature [and] the Governor General retained the legislative power for the North,"⁵⁷ and while there were many other things in this constitution that were more oppressive to the Nigerian people,

⁵⁶ Denis Cogneau, Yannick Duprav, and Sandrine Mesplé-Somps, "African States and Development in Historical Perspective: Colonial Public Finances in British and French West," *HAL Open Source*, June 21, 2018, African states and development in historical perspective: Colonial public finances in British and French West.

⁵⁷ "Hugh Clifford Constitution," *Government: West-African Constitutional Development*, accessed February 21, 2024.

the unforeseen outcomes, such as the creation of the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), awoke Nigerian nationalism. Twenty-four years later the new governor Bernard Bourdillon was pressured by these same nationalists to “give them a new befitting constitution.”⁵⁸ In 1946 the Arthur Richards Constitution was founded and the Nigerian people were offered just a sliver of the autonomy they were craving.

A few years prior to the adoption of this constitution, Bourdillon had split Nigeria into three separate regions: north, east, and west—each with their own correlating ethnic groups: Hausa and Fulani, Igbo, and Yoruba (see fig. 4). The Richards Constitution stipulated an overarching council, but each region was also given their own council, leaders, and powers. Naturally, the regionalism that was fostered and formalized by this constitution led to a political divide between the three regions that has resulted in ethnic and political conflict thereafter. This political divide plays a significant role in Nigeria’s independence—and was a prominent part of Prime Minister Abubakar Balewa’s leadership method.



Figure 4: Geographic Distribution of the Three Primary Ethnic Groups
Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, pp. xl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

⁵⁸ “Arthur Richards Constitution ,” *Government: West-African Constitutional Development* , accessed February 21, 2024.

Abubakar Tafawa Balewa

Reflecting the nationalism produced by the Clifford constitution, Abubakar Balewa was a co-founder of the Northern People's Congress in 1949 and was later appointed the party's vice president. Throughout his time as the prime minister, Balewa led the delegation that worked to unify the country's three regions, making it apparent that his priority was a unified Nigeria. Six years after achieving Nigerian independence, Balewa was assassinated in an Igbo-led military coup.⁵⁹ Immediately the rebels founded a government that failed within 24 hours and led to years of military rule, social unrest, and civil war. Balewa's death was "the prelude to the Nigerian Civil War and to three decades of non-civilian rule, until the restoration of democracy in 1999."⁶⁰ While there is no denying the snapshots of success that Nigeria displays in the years following, especially in economics, scholars have speculated what Nigeria would have looked like if Balewa's dream of unification had survived the rocky beginnings of a reign. Some even go as far as to claim that:

"If Nigerians could somehow have wiped the slate clean in 1960, founding new political associations with national unity as the dominant motif... a different history may have followed. Balewa's instinct was for unity but he was too entrenched in the communitarian system to nurture this in his young nation. Nonetheless, his legacy can inspire Nigerians as they seek to knit a common national identity and to order their state so that all citizens are treated equally."⁶¹

⁵⁹ The Igbo people are native to Southeast Nigeria, i.e. Igboland. Because Balewa was from the North the Igbo people felt misrepresented and disagreed with many of Balewa's decisions—eventually causing them to revolt.

⁶⁰ "Abubakar Tafawa Balewa," New World Encyclopedia, 2018.

⁶¹ Ibid.

While Balewa's time in office was too short to pave a secure path for Nigeria's future, historians claim that with more time, Balewa could have realized his objectives and a different history may have followed. Balewa's instincts and leadership may inspire modern-day Nigeria to reach a more equal and successful climate, which leads one to evaluate Balewa's legacy. Would his short time as the prime minister of the newly independent Nigeria—a time widely accepted as a success—be linked more closely to Marcus Aurelius or Machiavelli?

Though Balewa's time in office was indeed turbulent with the regional divide constantly afflicting his state and monopolizing most of his time, he achieved many of his goals. Some of the most significant are: 1) "He was an important leader in the formation of the Organization of African Unity and creating a cooperative relationship with French speaking African Countries." 2) "He was an instrumental part in the negotiations between Moise Tshombe and the Congolese authorities during the Congo Crisis of 1960-1964." And 3) "He led a vocal protest against the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960 and entered into an alliance with Commonwealth ministers who wanted South Africa to leave the Commonwealth in 1961."⁶²

While there is no way of entirely assuring Balewa's motives, his achievements correlate to Aurelian qualities of remorse: 1) As Balewa advocated for unity among the regions, his role in the creation of the Organization of African Unity showcases a steadfastness in pursuing what he felt was best for his state's overall success. 2) During the Congo Crisis, he underscored both understanding and consideration, striving for an amicable solution rather than employing force, military or otherwise. 3) When great

⁶² Ibid.

unrest tore through the African continent, he called for justice and freedom by protesting the Sharpeville Massacre. Thus Balewa exemplifies values such as steadiness, understanding, consideration, freedom, justice, and others.

In 1964 and 1965, just over a few years into his time in office and right before his assassination, elections were held in the newly independent Nigeria. Because of the tumultuous national divide, these elections were accompanied by extreme violence and little participation. The legitimacy of the vote was tainted by a negligible turnout and allegations of election fraud. In response Balewa “delegated extraordinary powers to each regional government in an attempt to restore stability.”⁶³ Instead of consolidating his own power, he offered unexpected decisions for the hopeful survival of his state. Balewa’s “instinct towards pacification is indicated by his response to the post election crisis, when, instead of using the military or the power of the central government to clamp down on civil unrest, he delegated the task of establishing order to the regions.”⁶⁴ When speaking of this decision most scholars view Balewa in a positive light deeming the event commendable and credible. Balewa illustrates Aurelian ideals: the ability to change and adjust, as well as the modesty to offer up his power to others who may be able to wield it more successfully in that instance. Regardless, though he was the prime minister during this election turmoil, he was only the vice president of his party and there was only so much he could do without getting approval from the president of the party. Many speculate that this handicapped Balewa’s ability to minimize the chaos, making this another example of ‘if only he had had more time.’

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

When studying the life and impact of a historical figure and political leader such as Abubakar Balewa, not only is it important to analyze what he did and how he was perceived, but it is critical to study what he said. There are two instances that document Balewa's words: his first speech at the legislative house of Nigeria and an interview he participated in following the death of the American president John F. Kennedy. While Balewa's dialogue in this interview is focused on President Kennedy, it offers insight into his views regarding valuable qualities in a leader. Looking through a selection of quotes from this interview invites the reader to consider where in this analysis we might have read a similar sentiment.

At the beginning of this interview conducted by Emmanuel Omatsola at the behest of the John F. Kennedy Library, Balewa remembers Kennedy stating that "he was really a great man. In my discussions with him I learned quite a lot."⁶⁵ Balewa recognizes greatness in Kennedy and immediately connects that greatness with learning. He continues, saying that Kennedy "really worked very hard to bring about understanding between the West and the East..."⁶⁶ Balewa affirms Kennedy's steadiness, perseverance, and understanding as characteristics of a "great man." He goes on to explain that people worldwide "were sad at the death of President Kennedy, because they thought he understood them and they also understood him."⁶⁷ Balewa spends most of the remaining interview explaining different ways in which Kennedy's unique understanding and

⁶⁵ Emmanuel Omatsola and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Oral History Interview, other, *John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.*, May 7, 1964.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

determination could have brought the nations together and created a peaceful international community. While not claiming to possess these qualities himself, Balewa's ability to recognize them in another and acknowledge them as characteristics of his 'greatness' reveals what he values in a person and in a great leader. Without being too repetitive, I hope to emphasize the connection that this interview creates between Prime Minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and our earlier discussions of greatness and remorse.

Returning to Balewa's first speech offered at the legislative house, as briefly mentioned earlier, we are able to understand what he deemed important to the state's economic, social, and political well being. He spends the majority of the speech focusing on facets of the nation such as: fostering a more equal education, sanctioning improvements in agriculture and industrialization, improving access to healthcare professionals, and clarifying and delegating government power. Each one of these objectives works to strengthen Nigeria in all three aspects spoken of in this study—economically, politically, and socially. While these goals were the focus of Balewa's address, he also offered an admonition regarding ambition. He stated, "In all countries of the world you find men who thirst for power, who agitate the government and happiness of the people for the satisfaction of their own personal ambitions."⁶⁸ Firmly opposing Machiavellianism Balewa reveals an understanding of the possible dangers that sprout from selfish ambition and inconsiderate power.

Starting his career path as a teacher in Northern Nigeria, Balewa became a prominent political figure whose reputation stood firm both internationally and

⁶⁸ Owei Lakemfa, "Tafawa Balewa's Mind-Set Captured Accurately - Politics - Nigeria," Nairaland, the Nigerian Forum, September 30, 2010.

domestically. As a domestic leader he is described as “sincere” and “genuine.”⁶⁹ He became known as “the Golden Voice of Africa,” is the face on the five Naira (Nigerian currency,) and was named “one of the three National Heroes of the Nigerian Nation.”⁷⁰ All indicate a legacy of respect and success in the eyes of the Nigerian people. Regarding Balewa’s political relationships outside of the domestic borders, not only was he “an international statesman, widely respected across the African continent...”⁷¹ but he was highly esteemed in the West as well. In 1960, after carrying Nigeria from a federation to an independent state, he was awarded an honorary doctorate from Sheffield University and was Knighted by Queen Elizabeth II.⁷² Additionally, across the Atlantic in the United States, Balewa maintained a peer to peer relationship with President John F. Kennedy as shown in his interview honoring the late U.S. president.

While the information described and analyzed above depicts a rather heroic Balewa, there is not universal agreement on this status. While the facts and events are the same, the difference in perception offers an alternative view of Nigeria’s first and only prime minister. Much like any high profile political leader, Balewa had opponents—some disagreeing with the objectives themselves. The idea of unification was, and still is, a highly-debated topic. Many consider it disingenuous of Balewa as a Nigerian to even want unification, while others think it laudable. While studying Balewa’s speech at the

⁶⁹ “Abubakar Tafawa Balewa,” New World Encyclopedia.

⁷⁰ “Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa: Zaccheus Onumba Dibiaezue Memorial Libraries,” Zaccheus Onumba Dibiaezue Memorial Libraries, 2024.

⁷¹ “Abubakar Tafawa Balewa,” New World Encyclopedia.

⁷² “Abubakar Tafawa Balewa.” John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum. Accessed February 21, 2024.

legislative house, I came upon an online conversation board riddled with current Nigerian citizens voicing their own opinions. One man exclaimed, “The guy spoke about fellow Nigerians as if they were aliens!” Another commented that “Balewa was a smart man indeed. Can you blame him for wanting this for his people?” I scrolled reading the current viewpoints on their “national hero.” One comment that caught my attention read, “But the fact [of] the matter is that Balewa was a true Northern leader. We as southerners may find his words crude, but the man was a leader.”⁷³ Every great leader has opponents who disagree with, mistrust, and defame them. Regardless of the topic, if political it is likely divisive, leaving at least one group of people unhappy. This inevitability leaves a nation with one hope: that the person charged with making decisions is understanding, considerate, just, affectionate, and steady, and as was stated by a voice of many Nigerians, a “true leader.”

Discussion

In the years following Abubakar Balewa’s time as Nigeria’s prime minister, the country has been in a constant state of flux. Immediately after Balewa’s assassination any progress his government made was lost through imposed military rule. Since then different presidents with differing views take the stage after every new election. While Nigeria struggles with stability, there have been instances of success. “Between 2000 and 2014, Nigeria’s economy experienced broad-based and sustained growth of over 7% annually on average.”⁷⁴ This was just a year after Olusegun Obasanjo was elected

⁷³ Lakemfa.

⁷⁴ Mansir Nasir, “The World Bank in Nigeria.” World Bank, October 2, 2023.

president. Comparable to Balewa, Obasanjo's techniques ushered in democratization and offered hope to the Nigerian people, introducing the potential for another Aurelian type leader of Nigeria. But also like Balewa, he was too overwhelmed by the state's turmoil to truly change the course of the country. After his time in office, the Nigerian economy saw another big decline.

Throughout the years, Nigeria's natural oil resources have exponentially strengthened her economy, but other political and social aspects have not strengthened accordingly. Today, Nigeria has the largest economy in Africa but there are very limited opportunities. "A Nigerian born in 2020 [is] expected to be a future worker [only] 36% as productive as they could have been if they had full access to education and health." Additionally "the poverty rate [was] expected to reach 37% in 2023, with an estimated 84 million Nigerians living below the poverty line."⁷⁵ That marks Nigeria as the second largest poor population in the world. In studying why Nigeria has struggled so greatly in overcoming this austerity, I found that most scholars blame the lack of unity in the nation. In their article titled *Post-Colonial Nigeria and Economic Dependency: Issues, Strategies and the Way Forward*, Patrick Oromareghake et al. "call for a change in the values of principle of the citizens." The authors conclude that "unfortunately, there are far too many acts of indiscipline and self indulgence on the part of the generality of [their] people... and in order for Nigeria to attain her development vision and destiny she must be remade and recreated."⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Patrick Babatunde Orobome Oromareghkake et al., "post-colonial Nigeria and economic dependency: issues, strategies and the way forward," *Arts and Social Science Research*, 11 (September 2021).

In 1960 the Federation of Nigeria was left behind and an Independent Nigeria took its place with Abubakar Tafawa Balewa at its head. Although he only led for a few years, he became a national legacy due to what he stood for and how he fought for it. His Aurelian characteristics had promise, but he died too early and was unable to change the course of Nigeria’s tumultuous fate. Consequently, the state still strains to move in that direction without his guiding vision. Still, the mark he left was great enough that many believe that if he had survived—or if the people of Nigeria could follow his legacy and work towards an understanding of each other—he could have created a reimagined and successful Nigeria.

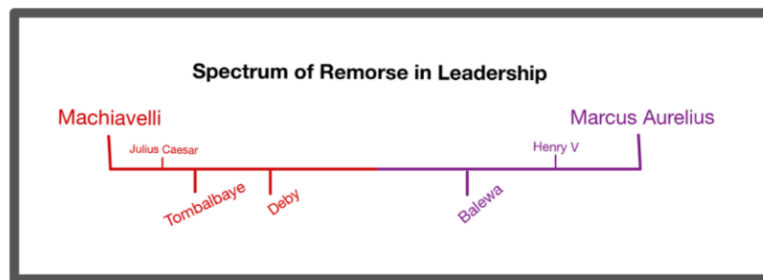


Figure 5: Balewa’s Placement on the Spectrum of Remorse

Reflecting on Shakespeare’s different examples of leadership, Balewa offers similarities to both Julius Caesar and Henry V. Both Balewa and Henry V placed significance on unifying their state through its diversity and endeavored to consider and understand their constituents and opposition. The major difference between the two lies in their endings. Henry V was able to follow through in his goals of unification and strengthening the state and continued to be a successful leader. Balewa, was only in office for six years before his opposition assassinated him—similar to Julius Caesar's story. While Balewa seemed to be working towards similar goals as Henry V, his outcome

reflected that of Julius Caesar's. This creates an interesting conversation that weaves the two leadership styles together and potentially calls for a coalescence between the two.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study of Marcus Aurelius, Machiavellianism, and the two bordering African countries of Chad and Nigeria, brings the admonitions of William Shakespeare into reality and supports his claims, which I reiterate here, with historical applications. In his play *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare offers a perspective regarding the transition from political leader to tyrant. Brutus defines a tyrant saying that “the abuse of greatness is when it disjoins remorse from power.”⁷⁷ When Brutus, Cassius, and about 40 senators are convinced that Julius Caesar has disjoined remorse from power, they assassinate him. While watching the Globe theater's production of this Shakespearean classic in 2022, this line resonated with me for the first time. That’s when I realized the paramount importance of *remorse in leadership* in understanding human relationships where people exist in both formal and informal systems of hierarchical power.

Through the writings of two political masters, a deeper understanding of the meaning of *remorse* was explored. In *Meditations*, Marcus Aurelius establishes a simple description of a successful leader i.e., one who acts with remorse. He explains the necessity of a leader acting with a “moral sense” or “solemn obligation,” emphasizing affection, understanding, justice, consideration, the ability to change, and the desire to do good. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli demonstrates, through what can still be considered a “modern” application, leadership traits labeled *Machiavellianism*. The modern day discussion of Machiavellianism is nuanced but most research identifies Machiavellian characteristics as one of three components constituting *The Dark Triad of Personality*. With correlating adjectives like manipulation, opportunism, deceit, tendencies towards

⁷⁷ William Shakespeare , “Julius Caesar (Folio 1, 1623).”

self promotion, and other self-focusing traits Machiavellianism presents itself as the diametric opposite to the qualities of remorse espoused by Marcus Aurelius.

Both writers, each with their own significance in politics and literature, offer two opposing personality profiles of The Successful Political Leader. With this research I set out to determine which leadership style (Machiavellianism or remorse) in a national leader led to social and financial outcomes which are considered positive.⁷⁸ Is Machiavellianism the most realistic and successful form of leadership, or are the virtues described by Marcus Aurelius truly necessary to produce and maintain a successful reign and country? And if it's the latter, is Shakespeare correct in his assessment and understanding of humankind? Is the keystone to a successful political tenure remorse itself?

Because William Shakespeare builds a masterful plot and character study around this very question, it is fitting to begin looking for answers within his plays. Shakespeare presents many different leaders, each with their own conflicts and leadership methods. Julius Caesar and Henry V are ideal reflections of Machiavelli's and Aurelius' philosophies of leadership respectively.

Julius Caesar was solely focused on self aggrandizement through military success and political submission. While he successfully established a far reaching super power, he lost sight of the people within his own borders. Consequently, his closest advisors declared him a national liability rather than an asset, and his rule was ended with a historical assassination.

⁷⁸ Examples of positive outcomes would be an increase in justice, fair political representation, economic benefits, etc. for non-elites in the national body. I implicitly assume in my writing that these are characteristics of a successful country and political leader.

Illustrating the converse, Henry V is portrayed as a leader guided by his consideration for the state citizenry. Even during his toughest battles his objectives are informed by the needs of his constituents and fueled by his understanding and desire to satisfy his obligation as their benevolent monarch. Throughout his story he is met with a seemingly endless number of troublesome decisions. Shakespeare invites the audience to watch Henry's inner dialogue when making them. Using this theatrical tool,⁷⁹ Shakespeare clearly aligns King Henry with consideration, affection, the ability to change, and many of Aurelius' other qualities of remorse. Henry V is a leader who avoids abusing his authority and makes a lasting impact on his people before his reign is cut short by his untimely death.

After finding direct correlations to Machiavelli and Marcus Aurelius in historic characters portrayed in Shakespeare's dramas about leadership I took another step i.e., I examined whether this notion of remorse in leadership is applicable in contemporary politicians. Turning literary analysis into scientific research, I chose two different countries with similar histories, minimizing the effects of any outside variables—to focus solely on the leaders of the states themselves. Thus, I found myself in post-colonization Africa.

The Republic of Chad and the Federal Republic of Nigeria are in the northwest region of sub-Saharan Africa. Up until 1960 these two states followed parallel histories but as is the case with most African countries, their post-colonial stories were greatly affected by political leaders helping them navigate those years.

⁷⁹ This theatrical technique referred to is called a soliloquy: a monologue offered by the character but with no partner on stage. The character is simply speaking his thoughts aloud, as if they were alone, so the audience is able to hear the unbridled thoughts and motives of the character.

After gaining her independence from the French colonial government, the future of the newly autonomous Chad was held in the hands of president Francois Tombalbaye. Tombalbaye immediately began functioning as a dictator and most of his early decisions as a leader were made to retain and strengthen his power while eliminating any form of opposition. When spoken of in history, Tombalbaye is commonly described as “autocratic” and acting with “the iron fist.”⁸⁰ During his 15 years as the president of Chad, Tombalbaye left many impressions on the state but none of them set his country on a path to success. While there was little lasting success during his presidency, his international reputation was respected to some extent. Regardless, after Chad gained independence from France, it immediately fell into a pattern of conflict and civil war. This pattern stayed consistent through Tombalbaye’s presidency and continued after his death. Looking at Tombalbaye’s time in office, the policies he pursued, and his reputation in history, it appears he embodied Machiavellianism and lacked a healthy relationship with remorse. And while he received some international accolades, he was unable to secure stability for his state and left Chad a tumultuous future.

After Tombalbaye’s death Chad was stuck in a pattern of short-term presidents until Idriss Deby ousted his predecessor and seized power. While Deby was much better at feigning interest in his state’s domestic affairs than his predecessors, it was after all only ‘feigning.’ His involvement in any policy that initially appeared beneficial to his domestic audience was quickly realized as a tool to strengthen and extend his power. Like Tombalbaye, Deby focused most of his attention on creating a substantial international standing, and under his rule Chad became known as a West African military superpower. When Deby is spoken of in academia, the adjectives: *autocratic*, *imperialistic*,

⁸⁰ Muvunyi.

authoritarian, opportunistic, and brutal are consistent. Deby's leadership tactics fall firmly on the end of the spectrum tagged by Machiavellianism.

Crossing the southwest border from Chad in the mid to late 20th century to Nigeria, a similar situation could be found. While Nigeria was dealing with different colonial powers, they too were left to create a stable state after the English pulled out in 1960. This daunting task fell into the hands of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. Balewa was Nigeria's first and only Prime Minister. During his time in office, Balewa made his concern for the Nigerian public clear as he steadfastly worked towards unification. And, unlike his Chadian counterparts, he worked towards this goal by encouraging the diverse ethnic groups to unite instead of eliminating the opposition. His policies and decisions portray a leader who acted with steadiness, understanding, and consideration. His actions prove that he was concerned for the freedom and justice of his people. He showcased the qualities of remorse described in Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*. The consensus from the information gathered about his time in office indicates that if the country were able to follow Balewa's aspirations for the nation and if he had had more time and sway, Nigeria would have seen a much more successful launch into independence.⁸¹ After Balewa's assassination, the country was left yearning for the possibilities that Balewa could have guided them to.

In 1960, both Chad and Nigeria began working to create a successful state from similar starting posts. Both countries began their journeys through independence with parallel possibilities and due to their geographic proximity, they both had similarly great

⁸¹ Because Balewa was the Prime Minister (head of government) and not the President (head of state) his ability to make any drastic changes was definitely bridled. Additionally, he was assassinated 6 years after Chad gained independence giving Balewa little time to make great changes.

potential through their natural resources. Since Chad's beginnings with Francois Tombalbaye, the country has fallen short in reaching its clear potential, be it economic, political, or social. Throughout the years the country has come to be described as a state of "instability and violence."⁸² In the limited research that has been conducted surrounding the country, scholars explain that "the regime needs instability to justify staying in power," and calls for the Chadian people to rise up and create the "prosperous and developed nation" that Chad has the potential to become.⁸³ In doing so they identify the reasoning behind Chad's failure to utilize her geographic advantages: the Chadian government and leadership methods.

In contrast to Chad's history, Nigeria has been able to take a hold of the region's potential and became the largest economy in Africa. Still, the state is lacking in features that define a successful state. In reading the cause for Nigeria's lack of success in these areas, the underlying reason is the lack of unity. Many researchers provide deep analyses on Nigeria's well being and future, and in most there is the consistent call—a call for unity—a call that Prime Minister Balewa diligently sang.

Through the leaders mentioned in this thesis, both from literature and history, there are many examples and echoes of Machiavellianism and Marcus Aurelius' remorse. Returning to the genesis of this research and Brutus's speech describing Julius Caesar's type of leadership, the four principle words are *greatness*, *power*, *abuse*, and *remorse*. Each leader discussed in this essay portrays a sense of greatness. Through Julius Caesar, Machiavelli's infamous prince, Francois Tombalbaye, and Idriss Deby, we see examples of the abuse of greatness as well as the sheer self-serving focus on power itself. With

⁸² "Chad Country Profile," BBC News.

⁸³ Muvunyi.

Henry V, Marcus Aurelius, and Balewa we grazed the possibilities of greatness honored with remorse.

Turning our focus to the three aspects of government spoken of in this essay—political, social, and economic—we present enlightening information from examples of African authorities. In Chad, both Tombalbaye and Deby created internationally respected governments—both in terms of reputation and strength. Their militaries, Deby’s especially, were sent throughout the African continent to establish Chadian power. Deby’s presidency also showcased the strength and power needed to rise and claim the highest office in the country. Both of these Chadian presidents’ methods and tendencies are clearly associated with *Machiavellian* principles. In Nigeria’s Abubakar Balewa, the world watched as his qualities of understanding, consideration, justice, flexibility, and stability transformed a Prime Minister with insufficient power and not enough time into a national legacy that inspires modern day Nigerians as they continue to liberate themselves from social distress and political instability.

While Machiavellianism is described as an inherently evil trait, and is even classified as one of the three characteristics in *The Dark Triad of Personality Traits*, there is no denying the advantages it provides the politically ambitious. Not only is the Western opinion of Machiavellianism becoming more mainstream, acceptable, and even praised but some observers have seen these Machiavellian tendencies point towards success in leadership. Machiavellianism has proven to be useful when climbing the ladder towards power, garnering a respected international reputation, and maintaining a stable military presence. But, as we saw with Tombalbaye and Deby, when this method of leadership goes unchecked the social and political effects are detrimental to the success of a

state—especially on the domestic front. Their purported “greatness” transforms from tool to weapon.

As stated in the introduction of this thesis, I chose to discuss two post-colonial countries and analyze the differences in leadership styles of the nation builders in these states through comparison to Marcus Aurelius, Machiavelli, and a selection of Shakespearean archetypical leaders. To do so, I mirrored the tenures of the African leaders to Aurelius and Machiavelli’s writings along with two great Shakespearean characters: Julius Caesar and Henry V. With the understanding of these characters’ histories and decision making tactics underlying my research I was able to utilize Shakespeare’s unique ability to comprehend and articulate the human experience through his characters to work towards understanding the African leaders discussed in this essay.

Based on the information collected in this research, I have found that Shakespeare’s claim regarding leadership was correct—that “the abuse of greatness is when it disjoins remorse from power.”⁸⁴ After two years of researching this concept, focusing on what I deemed the four pivotal words of this phrase: abuse, greatness, remorse and power, I finally find the answer in the fifth, overlooked, word: *disjoin*. When it comes to Marcus Aurelius and Machiavelli’s methods of leadership, neither one is entirely successful without the other. As we have seen through the lives and histories of Tombalbaye, Deby, and Balewa, there is no success found on either end of the spectrum of remorse we have created. A successful leader must have balance. They need to be ambitious enough to achieve power and remorseful enough to maintain greatness. Remorse *and* power are indispensable in the creation and conservation of successful

⁸⁴ William Shakespeare, “Julius Caesar (Folio 1, 1623).”

world leaders. It is when the two are disconnected, when one is left behind, that greatness is abused and a state is unable to reach her potential.

“The abuse of greatness is when it *disjoins* remorse from power.”

The Tragedy of Julius Caesar Act 2 Scene 1

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