

Moral Authority beyond the Positions and Titles

by

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Abstract

Moral authority is a kind of substantiated reliability, accountability and a deserving to be believed whether through rule of law or mere provided judgements. It cuts across the government, businesses, church, politics, and individual leadership. On one hand, positions and titles are used in institutions and organisations to help manage human capital in terms of power and decisions. On the other hand, the positions and titles do reflect the unique value of that person until the person makes decision that are tested for integrity, accountability and transparency. This article was motivated by generation Z's demand for rejection of the Finance Bill, 2024. The discussion set the base on the Kenyan scenario, moral authority, leadership in government. In conclusion, the spiritual values embedded in the Kenyan national anthem should be guarded and adhered to.

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Introduction

It was on the Tuesday of 25th June 2024 when the young people born between 1997 to present commonly referred to as Generation Z (Gen Z²) protested the Third reading of the Finance Bill, 2024. Legislatively, a Finance Bill in Kenya is presented to Parliamentarians before the start of a financial year (July-June of every year), and it adheres to the following process before it becomes an Act of Parliament: First reading where the Bill is introduced; Second reading where the Bill draft is read and a vote taken; Third reading takes considerations of all the amendments and voted for again; Presidential assent completes the process by giving the consent as an Act of Parliament; finally, commencement of the Bill³. Gen Z's desire was to have the Finance Bill totally rejected despite the Parliamentarians' amendments.

The elected government that saw the inauguration of President Ruto had promised to adopt the bottom-up economic model where jobs were a priority, safety, security⁴, and business environment were to be addressed. However, with the Finance Bill, 2024 draft that detailed increased taxes especially the housing levy, sales taxes and ripple effect on increased cost of living was challenged by the Gen Zs. The outcome of the protest was destruction of businesses within the city, storming the Parliament building and torching City Hall buildings. People died, lives were traumatized, and there was loss of property. The Gen Zs were empowered with the usage of advanced technology, which provided ways of communication via digital space and chat rooms. Hence, after the Third reading, the Gen Z called for a day to honor those who had died, called the President in their digital space to address issues that were pertinent. The President responded positively and declined to sign the contentious Bill that had been passed by most parliamentarians. Later, President Ruto dismissed all the cabinet secretaries.

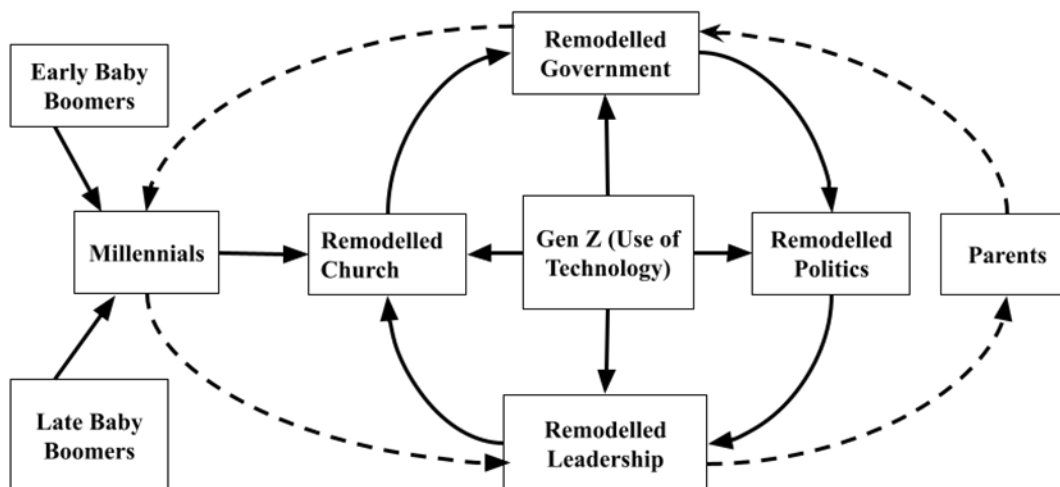
Diagram 1 shows a model of leadership and government in Kenya in its most basic form where the Church and politics are in opposite directions as Gen Z is at the center. The direct relationship is represented by the continuous lines with government and leadership while the indirect relationship is reflected by the dotted lines. On one hand, the church in terms of leadership has historically played a pivotal role of edification and guidance to the government. The Preachers are seen as primarily responsible for the condition of the church. They shape its character and give tone and direction to its life. So, the church is what its leaders are; spiritual if they are, worldly if they are, conglomerate if its leaders are. The World Economic Forum once said that "the oldest and simplest justification for government is as protector; protecting citizens from violence with each other and from foreign foes". Then, the vital role of the youth (Gen Zs whose generation is between 1997-2018); Millennials whose generation is between 1981-1996) in governance matters possesses immense potential in contribution to economic development. With their sophisticated understanding of digital literacy, social media proficiency, and technological know-how, youth can leverage modern tools and platforms to drive civic engagement, advocate for their rights, and hold governments accountable⁵.

² <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/>.

³ <http://www.kenyalaw.org/kl/index.php?id=528>

⁴ <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/read-president-ruto-s-full-speech-after-his-inauguration-3947552>.

⁵ <https://accountabilitylab.org/the-vital-role-of-young-people-in-governance-processes/>.

Diagram 1: Leadership and Government

Source: (Kagwaini, 2024)

The government and the church has been found wanting to their role and responsibilities. The call is to remodell back to integrity, transparency and godliness. Further, the politics emanating from government have been confronted with corruption, demand for positions and titles instead of providing services to its citizens. Likewise, the politics is being remodelled back to a high performing work ethics where the “political elites” are expected to exert significant power over government to make relevant decisions. On the other hand, the Gen Zs are at the center of government and leadeship, politics and the church raising their voices for right things to be done in all institutional spheres. The Millennials who have their orientation from the early and late baby boomers need to see remodelled leaderhip in the government just as well as parents’ demand for leadership in the government.

The Kenyan Scenario

In every Kenyan presidential election, there has been protests and a promise of doing things “differently”. However, with the new elected government leaders, there was a compromise of exisiting agendas that did not address the doing of things “differently”. Corruption has been a pertinent topic that lingers in every corner of the country - demand for bribe always known as “kitu kidogo” from friends, business partners and even government arenas. The main question is: What happened for Kenyan government elected leaders’ value system of serving its citizen rather than positions and titles? Could it be: First, orientation of children based on the family setting. Second, education system and mentorship. Third, culture, ethics, norms and virtue.

Based on Kenyan scenario, children are born and join primary school. At high school level, they start challenging systems that do not work and if not listened to; they storm the dorms, torch the

library and classrooms. For example, the 1991⁶ case of St. Kizito where girls were raped by the boys for failure to join in the organised strike; and in 2001 when Kyanguli Secondary School torched the school and 67 students lost their lives⁷. The students join University, and if the government does not commit to its promise, the students storm the street and barricade the roads and engage in a fight with the police. For example, the University of Nairobi students took to the streets to demonstrate against the delay in HELB disbursements⁸. The Timothy Njoya events of 1990-1992 that was led by “young Turks”. When the graduates join the work place due to the enucleated culture of strikes then the expected happens: striking nurses demonstrate in the streets⁹; teachers strike over salary increment¹⁰ and doctors strike over salary arrears¹¹. The church has not been left behind in leadership conflict and utilisation of resources. For example, the wrangles that threatened to tear apart the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) Church, the National Council for Churches of Kenya (NCCCK), Methodist Church of Kenya and the African Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa (AIPCA)¹². These are sampled historical events that draw parallel with what Gen Z did taking to the streets. The core institutions must be remodelled to reflect essence of moral authority in the church, government, and politics.

Moral Authority

The element of moral authority has been defined by Merriam-Webster Dictionary as **trustworthiness to make decisions that are right and good**¹³ in terms of political-military power, money-material power, social-cultural power, technological-digital power and spiritual power. Moral authority is inclined to Godly principles including honesty, responsibility, integrity, service, togetherness, faith, impact, excellence, and growth¹⁴. Abraham Maslow explained that moral authority relies on leadership which addresses what the people really need. In other words, successful leadership cares for the well-being of each individuals¹⁵. Using the recent Finance Bill, 2024 the Gen Z had to raise their voice against the decision of the Parliamentarians that would have jeopardized the President’s promise of bottom-up economic model. Therefore, the demand to dismiss the cabinet secretaries in leadership as uncalled for if true leadership would have been portrayed by the government.

In terms of moral authority, it was clear that Gen Z had no role model to identify themselves with the Kenyan government. Could it be the inheritance of the same people in previous government had a hold on the Kenyan leadership? This is because over and over again the younger generations in school, and University – professionals have learned the art to protest for them to be heard. The main agenda is actually the national culture of doing things – the citizens’

⁶ Musyoka, M. (2018). The day 71 girls were raped by male students at St. Kizito Secondary in Meru.

<https://www.kenyans.co.ke/news/30265-day-71-girls-were-raped-male-students-st-kizito-secondary-meru>.

⁷ <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/kenya/article/2001253987/kyanguli-school-fire-tragedy-that-claimed-67-lives>.

⁸ <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000135480/university-students-protest-delay-in-helb-loans>.

⁹ <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/health/health-science/article/2001244158/striking-nurses-demonstrate-in-nairobi-streets>.

¹⁰ <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000065023/teachers-strike-to-start-monday>.

¹¹ <https://www.bmj.com/content/385/bmj.q1088>.

¹² <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001354657/%20trying-times-as-leadership-wrangles-rock-the-church>.

¹³ Merriam-Webster <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/moral%20authority>.

¹⁴ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/373334818_God_and_Morality.

¹⁵ <https://ibw21.org/commentary/dr-maulana-karenga/swahili-pan-africanism-and-the-practice-of-freedom-prt1/>.

desire for accountability in the government, process implementation through their actions as that has not been actualised over the years. Kenyan Citizens are “crying” for things to be done “differently” indeed.

It is important to note that technology through the open access of social networks has become a reference point which Gen Z have grown up with; thus, controlling their way of life. Sadly, the church has been challenged too by this generation for the way issues and situations have been conducted. Therefore, it is a complex reality to understand how Gen Z can propose a plan for an innovative leadership which cares for all individuals at all levels.

Leadership in the Government

Leadership is defined as a process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and directs an organization in a way, that it makes it more coherent and cohesive¹⁶. For example, leadership at home is portrayed by role model; leadership at school is portrayed through accountability; leadership in the Church is portrayed with godliness and contentment; leadership at work place is portrayed through transparency and finally, leadership in the government is portrayed through efficiency and effectiveness directed with character and integrity.

Government exists to perform for their citizens in a way that is managed by an overarching state not as a private entity. Position and titles make people to be “bosses” but not “leaders” if they impede service to citizens. Analysing the Clinton-Gore reinvention model of management during President Clinton’s reinventive reform of wanting to make the federal government less expensive and efficient. The findings showed that the greatest asset for a successful reinventive reform was the President (as the leader) and support of the federal government leaders. The greatest obstacle of that reinventive reform was the national culture change¹⁷. Evaluating the Kenyan Scenario, over the years, protesting mechanism has always highlighted the plights and challenges of the people.

Conclusion

Normally, leadership is guiding and directing in all spheres of life from home, school, business, church and the government in the right direction. History has showed that the Kenyan scenario of the young people is strong and fearless. The young people have no ethnicity or political inclinations except the demand for right leadership in the government. For the first time, Kenyans have seen the Gen Zs being supported by their Millennials through use of technology to reach masses in their communications. Parents too, want to see “different” ways of running the government – true to the Kenyan constitution. If the government is for the people then moral authority must stand beyond positions and titles. It is important that moral authority be remodelled in the government and politics. The church is also to remodel leadership because its supra-authority comes from God who is sovereign. Then, the spiritual values embedded in the national anthem should be guarded and adhered to.

¹⁶ <http://www.ijcrar.com/vol-2-8/Anitha%20Aldrin%20and%20R.Gayatri.pdf>.

¹⁷ <https://www.jstor.org/stable/977579>.

Way Forward

In a sermon that Prof. Laban Peter Ayiro, the Vice-Chancellor, Daystar University gave during the Tuesday 9th July 2024 Chapel said, “Kenya as a nation is where it is today because of failing to internalise the divine call of unity...Kenya has walked away from God and people are pretending to be what they are not”. He called on Kenyans to know the mystery of “gentiles” being fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the kingdom of God. This is because the Gospel always breaks barriers and unity is central to the Gospel. Daystar University as a representative of the church manifests its servant leadership in boldness and confidence through its faith. Then, all Kenyans must pray for kings, and all who are in high positions – at home, church, schools, universities, workplace and government – that they may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. That is the desire for every Kenyan to exercise moral authority I all spehers of life.