

# Analysis of Relationship between Leaders and Events

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**Abstract.** There is often an inseparable relationship between leaders and events. By reviewing history, this paper analyzes the reasons for the success or failure of other leaders such as Li Shimin, Zhu Yuanzhang, Romulus Augustus, and the Huns, and finds that the reasons for Li Shimin's success lie in military talent, self-control, open and inclusive mentality, and ability to select outstanding talents, in addition, it is also inseparable from a strong army and financial support. In conclusion, leaders can create events, and events will also affect leaders'. This finding will affect leaders' approaches and mentality in dealing with incidents.

**Keywords:** Leaders; Events; Li Shimin; Tolerate Religion.

## 1. Introduction

Overall, leaders make events. This is best seen in the example of Li Shimin, a T'ang Emperor who was able to make the most of his circumstances to make his own history. We can compare him to less effective leaders such as the leaders during the fall of the Roman Empire, Romulus Augustus, and the Hun leaders, as well Zhu Yuanzhang, who was an emperor during the Ming Dynasty. The difference in results between these leaders despite the fact they often were the product of largely similar events show that leaders can change events by one, being careful in picking talented people; two, having self control; three, being good military leaders; and four, being open and tolerant. Li Shimin's strengths in these qualities allowed him to make his own events rather than being dependent on external forces. However, it is true events can partially determine how leaders act, for instance Li Shimin growing up rich with a strong army making him more effective than Zhu Yuanzhang who was originally a peasant before becoming emperor, leading to him being less trusting of his subordinates [1], although it is also true that this was nevertheless Zhu Yuanzhang's independent decision to make. And where the events are very different between leaders, sometimes events can make leaders, for instance Romulus who was too young and poor to show whether he would be a good leader. Even if Li Shimin was put into Romulus's place, he would not be able to do anything.

## 2. Leaders Make Events

### 2.1 No Doubt about Appointing Talented People

Leaders can make events, with good leaders such as Li Shimin finding good people to serve under them. Traditionally in China when a person became emperor, he will kill all his opponents. But Li Shimin reused a man named Li Jing, who had been arrested due to betraying his father Li Yuan when he wanted to rebel by informing the Sui Emperor [2]. Li Shimin respected Li Jing's talent in warcraft, demonstrated when Li Jing used the water to move troops very quickly down the Sanxia river, so he handed over all his troops to him [3]. With this trust, Li Jing achieved countless world-shattering achievements including defeating the southern separatist forces Xiao Qiao and the rebels of Ran Zhao in 620, opening up new territories for the Tang Dynasty [4]. Li Shimin had the good judgement to hand over military power, even though it was possible Li Jing could have killed him with it.

Comparatively Zhu Yuanzhang, another emperor of China had similar events happen to him but produced very different results. Both were young talented fighters who overthrew the old dynasty[5]. But when Zhu Yuanzhang overthrew the Yuan Dynasty, he began to doubt the officials who conquered the world with him. So he built a celebration building and invited many courtiers to attend the banquet in the Qinggong Building. Then he buried gunpowder and dry wood downstairs, and burned to death those who helped him become emperor[6], depriving himself of a generation of talent.

Therefore, even though the events were the same between the two emperors, overall Li Shimin was still a much better leader, showing that leaders make events, and not events make leaders.

But there were some small differences in events between the two leaders. Zhu Yuanzhang grew up poor, begging on the street, whereas Li Shimin didn't have experience in this. Potentially Zhu Yuanzhang was influenced by this, and didn't want to share power because he's scared of losing it and being poor. So in this case, it may seem that events make leaders. However, even when Zhu Yuanzhang was rich as emperor, he still acted the same way and didn't trust people, unlike Li Shimin. And therefore, this seems to suggest that it is leaders that make events, rather than the other way around.

## 2.2 Self Control

Good leaders could further make events by having self-control. After Li Shimin became emperor, he did not kill Wei Zheng, a courtier of his brother Li Jiancheng because he was a useful servant, whether or not he was his previous enemy[7]. Further, he allowed Wei Zheng to tell him honestly what was wrong with his choice, and therefore he could bring him back onto the right track[8]. Li Shimin also had self control when he took over a city. In February 621, Li Shimin entered the enemy palace, but ordered Xiao Yu, Dou Rail and others to seal the guard treasury from looting. He only punished the people who were responsible, including Duan Da, but he spared the innocent people[9], helping solidify his territorial gains. Conversely, the Huns at the time of the fall of Rome also invaded the cities and had lots of power, but instead pillaged the wealth of the Roman provinces[10], leading to the collapse of the Roman Empire which they sought to be part of. Therefore, even though they had similar circumstances, the leaders acted differently and produced different events.

## 3. Events Create Leaders

However, alternatively it can be argued that events make leaders, because two leaders made very similar decisions, but because of different events had very different results. Li Shimin was extremely open and tolerant and so was Constantine in the Roman Empire towards religion, but one led to the collapse of the Roman Empire and the other strengthened the T'ang Dynasty.

### 3.1 Tolerate Religion

For example, Li Shimin accepted foreign sects, such as Buddhism from ancient India, and the Christian Aristotelian sect, which is Nestorianism, and the T'ang Dynasty flourished with the additional viewpoints[11]. Similarly, Constantine in his rule from 280-337 introduced Christianity to the Roman Empire. But Gibbon argued this led to 'moral decay' as Roman citizens then became less honest, hardworking, and careful. Christian pacifism meant when the barbarians come in, the Christians did not resist and let the barbarians take over, leading to the collapse of the Empire[12]. Therefore, it could be argued that events make leaders, and not leaders make events as these two leaders had done very similar things, but because of different events had resulted in very different results.

But they seemed similar, actually Li Shimin and Constantine were quite different leaders. Li Shimin wanted to let people choose for themselves, but Constantine wanted to control the people's choices for his own power. Li Shimin's openness and tolerance are also reflected in Li Shimin's attitude towards the ethnic minorities around the Tang Dynasty. Li Shimin once said: "Since ancient times, China has always been valued, and the barbarians and Di have been humbled." But Li Shimin went against traditional wisdom, believing that the Yi, Di and Han were equal.

### 3.2 Use Tactics

Leaders again also showed their ability to make events based on their tactical ability. Li Shimin was a great military leader compared to Romulus, the last emperor of the Roman Empire. Li Shimin skilfully used nature to his own advantage, diverting the river in Puzhou to trap the thieves to behead

more than 10,000 ranks and drown thousands. In another case, Li Shimin's army was fighting Dou Jiande's army, and it was a very difficult battle. While Dou Jiande's army was very strong, Li Shimin personally went to the fight with his soldiers to see the real situation. Li Shimin's army had already fought for a long time and therefore was tired, but now Li Shimin being there meant he can see this and encourage them to fight harder. Compared to Romulus Augustus, who never went into battle himself, He relied on inaccurate and delayed reports from provinces and therefore lost lots of battles against the Huns and the Goths. From this, he ended up losing the whole Roman Empire because he was unable to defend it against all the invaders. So off this, it seems that leaders make events.

But it could be argued that events make leaders because Romulus was too young to go to the battle himself being only 10 years old when Odoacer invaded Rome. Further, he was under the control of his father, Orestes, and so without his permission Romulus could not leave Rome. Furthermore, he ruled a very weak empire because of the vicious cycle that had been taking place even before he was born. He didn't have enough money to pay for the soldiers, therefore the soldiers could not defend the provinces, and therefore the provinces don't want to pay tax to the emperor, meaning he has even less money overall.

Therefore, while leaders do make events, in some cases events make it very difficult for a leader to do things. And in some cases, where the events are particularly challenging, the events can even make a leader. Because Romulus was so young, he could have been a good leader, but he never had the chance to show this. Li Shimin in comparison to Romulus had many differences which allowed him to show his ability. He was born to a rich family with a strong army, facing a corrupt emperor in a war-torn country which was easier to beat. In the last years of the Sui Dynasty, there were many wars, and Li Shimin recommended his father Li Yuan to rebel. Because of the war, Li Shimin was able to show his military talent.

#### 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, Leaders make events. Li Shimin through his military success, self control, and ability to pick the best people meant that he was much more successful than other leaders such as Zhu Yuanzhang, Romulus Augustus, and the Hun leaders in achieving his objectives despite having similar situations to them. However, events can influence leaders. For example, if Li Shimin was in the place of Zhu Yuanzhang, he may not have been as successful because he would have been poorer and therefore less trusting of his servants. But overall, Li Shimin would still have been successful because he was a good military leader. But in the cases where the events are very different, it is sometimes possible that events make leaders. For instance, if Li Shimin was in the place of Romulus, he probably would not have been able to do anything, because he was not just very poor, but also very young.

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