

# What is the Omnipotent View of Management's Take on President Weah's Defeat in the Runoff Election

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## ABSTRACT

This article has intellectualized the reasons behind the defeat of President George Manneh Weah in the 14 November 2023 runoff election. Using the qualitative analysis, the paper employs the omnipotent view of management as the theoretical framework to explore the problem associated with President Weah's defeat. Equating the theory to politics, the article argued that as the manager, chief executive officer (President) elected to manage the affairs of the state (Liberia) takes full responsibility for the success or failure of the government.

The paper also argued that the defeat of President Weah is not only a lesson learned for his government but also for the UP government under the leadership of Amb. Joseph N. Boakai perhaps by extension for African leaders.

Conclusively, the article argued that the defeat showed that Liberians are politically mature enough to understand the difference between mere political rhetoric and tangibles. In other words, gone are the days of managing the affairs of the state on mere political rhetoric.

**Key Words:** Liberia, Government, Runoff election, Omnipotent view of management

## INTRODUCTION

About a week following President Weah's concession speech and congratulatory message to the Standard bearer of the opposition Unity Party (UP) Amb. Joseph N. Boakai in the 14 November 2023 elections (Mengonfia, 2023), he pinpointed reasons that blamed the Coalition of Democratic Change (CDC) defeat on the party. In the words of President Weah, *"We were working and fighting against ourselves and refusing for the common rules in decision making to take precedence in what we were doing", "We can't be doing the same thing over and over and expect different results. It is not possible". "We are all talking about 2029, saying we will bounce back. Yes, we will bounce back if we apply the rules of supporting the party and those on the party's ticket. It is not possible if someone feels he has cash and can pick a candidate of their singular choice. We cannot make it in 2029 divided as we were in 2023."* (The Analyst News, 2023). Understandably, President Weah was not necessarily blaming himself for the defeat but senior partisans who he appointed in strategic positions in the CDC government that screwed up or blundered. To prove this assertion, carefully ponder on President Weah statement. *"The money was given..., every resource was given to ensure that we are victorious, but some of those Ministers have left us down," "And because some of those ministers, I will not be president now, but will come back stronger in 2029,"* (Jipoh, 2023).

Reflecting on President Weah's inclination to blame some of his officials for the CDC defeat in the runoff election, this article takes a critical look at the take of the omnipotent view of management about the defeat.

It does so from four segmental structures. The first segment termed the anchor of the paper reviews the omnipotent view of management as the theoretical framework guiding subsequent discussions and arguments throughout the paper. The second segment applies or situates the theoretical framework into politics. In other words, it applies the omnipotent view of management to politics. View as the crux of the paper, the third segment employs the theoretical framework to catalog the reasons for President Weah Lost re-election for his second term bid during the 14 November 2023 runoff election. Finally, but not the least is the fourth segment which concludes the paper with implied lessons for the new UP government.

## **MATERIALS AND METHOD**

As its methodology, this paper adopts a qualitative analysis approach. In the opinion of Miles & Huberman (1984), the emphasis in qualitative analysis is 'sense making' or understanding a phenomenon, rather than predicting. This paper is not about the prediction of why President George Manneh Weah lost the election to former Vice President Joseph N. Boakai. Rather, it seeks to provide an understanding of the reasons behind President Weah's loss of re-election bid.

It analyzes materials collected from secondary sources from the internet through the Google Scholar Search Engine.

## **CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE**

As an academic write-up, this paper contributes to knowledge in two ways. First, it provides enlightenment, especially for political parties seeking state power in Liberia. Through intellectualization, it likens the defeat of President Weah in the runoff election to the omnipotent view of management probably used for the first time in politics. Finally, the paper may serve as guidance for further research to be carried out on the subject matter in areas it did not cover or address.

### **Theoretical Framework – Omnipotent View of Management**

The paper anchors on the omnipotent view of management as its theoretical framework. Studied as one of the noticeable and applicable theories in management as an academic discipline, the omnipotent view of management argues that managers are squarely or directly responsible for the success or failure of the organization (Robbins, & Coulter, 2014). To express in other words, the theory maintains when organizations perform poorly regardless of the reasons, someone must be held accountable, and according to the omnipotent perspective, that "someone" is the manager (Robbins & Coulter, 2014).

Understandably, the theory implies that managers have the responsibility to deal with obstacles or challenges and even if the challenges are traceable to employees, staff, or subordinates, managers must be decisive and resolute. This is because the excuse for failure cannot be blamed on the employees, subordinates, or staff. In other words, the manager should have acted to prevent imminent failure or poor performance. For example, in the 2022-23 season, 14 managers were sacked or departed the Premier League, including Thomas Tuchel, Antonio Conte, and Patrick Vieira for poor performance (Garganese, 2023). This explains how the players are not responsible for the team's poor performance.

Similarly, Yahoo's board of directors sacked or fired Chief Executive Officer Carol Bartz because the Company's revenue growth had stalled and because a significant disagreement with important Chinese partner Alibaba had not been resolved (Estes, 2011). Arguably, Bartz herself may not have directly

contributed to the problem. But her failure to have resolutely intervened earlier as a manager led to her dismissal.

In a related development, Sam Altman, who had been leading Open AI as CEO since 2019, was sacked by the company's board which claimed it "lost confidence in his ability to continue leading Open AI" (Thakur, 2023).

In these examples, it can be argued that fired managers were hired to deliver on the performance of the organization. Therefore, the responsibilities of managing the organizations were placed on their shoulders not the shoulders of their staff, players, supervisees, or those hired to manage the organization. Managers are under the obligation to take firm actions against any player, supervisee, or staff whose conduct or performance is repugnant to the goal or success of the organization. Failure to take firm action risks the success or performance of the organization.

### **Equating the Omnipotent View of Management to Politics**

Even though the omnipotent view of management is associated with the business environment or organizational studies. However, the theory runs parallel to politics. The CEO relies on the employees, supervisors, supervisees, staff, etc., to run or manage the affairs of the organization. He/she has the responsibility for their performance and productivity. His failure to take corrective measures about situations that have implications for failure risks him/her being fired or dismissed. Comparatively, this scenario is parallel to politics. The state governed by politicians can be equated to an organization managed by the President considered the CEO. He/she relies on appointees in government positions to help manage the affairs of the state. Just as the CEO is accountable to the board who hired him/her, so it is similar to the President hired by the people through popular or majority votes. The President has the responsibility to promptly intervene in situations that threaten the performance and productivity of the government or state, especially in situations decried and alarmed by the public or society. His/her failure to act decisively and firmly risks or threatens his re-election bid. In other words, the President's defeat is an indication of the people sacking him/her for poor performance.

The above comparative illustration or analysis also fits into the football organization managed by the coaches hired by the board or club owner to produce the desired results. To achieve the desired results, coaches as managers rely on the players in key positions. While on the field of play, when results are not in sight, the coach takes advantage of substitution to change the dynamics of the game germane to the desired results. Similarly, the office of the President can be equated to a coach. Ministers, Directors, Heads of agencies, or appointees in key positions are like the players crucial to producing the desired results. The inability of the coach to influence the desired results often frustrates and annoys the fans and supporters. Consequently, the board or owners of the club or team may hire a new manager. In the context of politics, the citizens or people can be equated to the fans or supporters who often complain and decry poor performances affecting the common interest of society. The failure of the President to address the legitimate concerns of the people risks his/her reelection bid.

In summation, in the same way, managers are directly responsible for the success or failure of their organization, so it is the same for the office of the President hired by the people to manage the affairs of the state. Therefore, he/she is like a manager responsible directly for the success or failure of the government. In the same way, the failure of the organization cannot be laid at the feet of the employees, supervisors, supervisees, staff, etc. so the same for the President. He/she takes full responsibility for success or failure.

### **The Omnipotent View of Management Take About President Weah's Defeat**

Guided by the theoretical framework, this segment considers the crux of the paper catalog some of the

reasons why incumbent President Weah was defeated in the 14 November 2023 run-off election. These reasons are directly linked to the theory. In other words, the reasons are what the theory says about the defeat of President Weah's defeat.

*The Mindset of "Da our Time"*; is a Liberian colloquial language meaning This is our time. Of course, staunch Partisans and supporters, especially government officials of the CDC branded themselves as 'CDCians' and 'Weahians' were not in any error for such a mindset that came right after the president's inauguration. Literally, it was their time to take over the mantle of power to manage the affairs of the State. However, their interpretation of their mindset of "da our time" did not define and direct behavior in the right direction. They came to power with the notion of enjoying themselves on the grounds of their 12 years of suffering and struggles in opposition. This mindset soon found expression in their behavior toward governance repugnant to the principles of good governance. All the early cases of corruption allegations kept under the carpet gave Liberian society the wrong impression of "da our time" mindset that the CDC came to power to enrich themselves and eat their own in the same way the UP government did at the expense of the masses positioned at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder or pyramid. This mindset led to their insensitivity and irresponsiveness to the people's sharp reaction toward 'da our time' mentality.

Interestingly, within the first year of the regime, instead of the CDC rolling off its sleeves to meet the demands of the ordinary people who gave them the overwhelming mandate, they became obsessed with the "do our time" mindset to the extent another slogan emerged as "da 12 years" meaning, like the UP, the CDC will govern Liberia for 12 years. Consequently, they care less about the "bread and butter" issues.

In summation, it is argued that George Manneh Weah loss of the re-election second term bid started just after the inauguration with a "da our time mentality" that blinded President Weah to the legitimate concerns flagged and decried by the people. As the Chief Executive Officer, the President was under the obligation to change the wrong interpretation of the "da our time" and "da 12 years mentality or mindset driving his government in the wrong direction despite the society's reaction. Instead, President Weah ignored the reactions.

## UNPREPAREDNESS

How can a major and vibrant political party that spent 12 years in opposition come to power unprepared? No doubt, this question sounds ironic. However, it is possible to go into a competition without adequate preparation. The defeat answers the question. One of the advantages of being in opposition is not only to criticize the weaknesses, loopholes, or shortcomings of the incumbent government. It is a place or position of learning and documenting workable solutions, strategies, and templates that become the embodiments of the party campaign manifesto.

Arguably, the CDC's defeat in the 14 November 2023 election runoff explains its unpreparedness to address some of the critical challenges. Below are some instances equated to the pieces of evidence to support the claim about the CDC coming to power without preparation.

While in opposition, the CDC vehemently criticized and staged protests against the UP government for its failure to fight corruption occasionally described by former President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as "Public enemy number 1" and (VOA, 2017) "Vampire" (Johnson, 2015).

Mindful about the impact of corruption on the development of Liberia, President Weah in his inaugural address emphatically vowed to end corruption. In verbatim, *"Those chosen to serve will and must be dedicated to the ideas of grassroots social transformation...persons looking to treat the Liberian people through menace of corruption will have no place in this administration."* (Seagbeh, 2017). During his presidency, the reality of fighting to end corruption spoke completely different. For example, the Head of

the Asset Investigation, Restitution, and Recovery Team established by the Weah administration to investigate and ensure the subsequent restitution and recovery of funds that were embezzled, and misappropriated resigned citing the lack of political will to function. Eventually, the Asset Investigation, Restitution, and Recovery Team went into a coma throughout the first term of the Weah presidency (Johnson, 2021).

Days after President Weah's congratulatory statement to the President-elect- Joseph N. Boakai, he cautioned the President-elect not to witch hunt him and his officials in the name of an audit because of maintaining the peace, his government decided not to conduct an audit on the Ellen and Boakai government the CDC vehemently criticized and staged protests for corruption allegations (Doodoo, 2023). Ironically, this is the same President who vowed in his inaugural address in 2018 to end corruption by prosecuting corrupt officials "to the full extent of the law" (VOA, 2022)

Interestingly, under the Weah administration, Transparency International's 2021 Corruption Index (CPI) ranked Liberia among the poor-performing countries in the fight against corruption. Out of 180 countries captured, Liberia ranked 136, with a score of 29, climbing just one step above the 2020 ranking of 28 (Harmon, 2023).

Another spectacular instance can be seen from the Weah administration's reluctance to prosecute the three suspended senior government officials namely Nathaniel McGill, Sayma Syrenius Cephus, and Bill Twehway sanctioned by the US for alleged ongoing public corruption in which President Weah as "grave" (Reuters, 2022).

What the George Manneh Weah government ignores is that the decision to suspend the three senior officials was an acknowledgment and endorsement of the credibility of the US report.

In another related instance, the reluctance of President Weah to have acted on the General Auditing Commission audit report by bringing to justice individuals involved in the mismanagement of the USD 25 million intended for the Mop-Up Exercise asked the question of his government's preparedness to end corruption in Liberia (Front page Africa, 2023).

What about the War and Economic Crimes Court that embodied the CDC campaign manifesto while in opposition embraced by the contractees? Despite the reasons to justify its failure (Peters, 2023) it still speaks to the CDC government's unpreparedness despite President Weah vowed to confront corruption in his inaugural address.

### **Not Listening to Legitimate Concerns/cries**

Leadership whether in politics, religion, military, law enforcement, etc. requires not only listening to legitimate concerns, noises, cries, etc. It essentially requires acting upon the concerns, noises, and cries in the right direction. It can be recalled that due to the way the government was proceeding in managing the affairs of the State, the people were making legitimate noise that "2023 is coming, you will see". The "2023 is coming you see" meant the 2023 elections are coming, "we will replace you and some of your lawmakers".

The noises or concerns were legitimate because of their criticality to the welfare of the people and by extension the society. The noises and concerns decried by the masses included the government's reluctance to fight corruption, tackle poverty, address price control of essential commodities, especially rice as a political commodity, poor health care system, the prevalence of drugs killing young people, low salaries often delayed, etc.



Before the defeat of the CDC candidate Paulita Wie by Abraham Darius Dillon in the 2019 Montserrado County Senatorial by-elections, the people or masses were making the same noise. The government's failure to listen and act decisively led to a protest vote against the CDC. Similarly, the same incumbent Senator Darius Dillon massively defeated the CDC Representative, Thomas P. Fallah in the 2020 Senatorial elections in Montserrado County (Mengonfia, 2020). These defeats were enough early warning indicators that could have been employed by the Weah government to shift the paradigms or gears in the right direction of the managing the country. Interestingly, it was only the Deputy Information Minister for Press and Public Affairs, Eugene Fahngon who mustered the courage to weigh on the massive defeat of Paulita Wie and Thomas P. Fallah to publicly tell President Weah that his popularity was declining. On his Facebook page, Fahngon posted *"If anyone tells you that the popularity of our President and the love the people have for him will get him elected in 2023 if the situation does not change, tell them Fahngon says, you damn lie; even if it means I'm booted out."* (Dodoo, 2020)

Again, Fahngon's post especially being part of the government was too important to have been treated with death ears. This is because the protest votes against the CDC in 2019 and 2020 came as wake-up calls to listen to the people's legitimate concerns and cries but continued to ignore the cries that "2023 is coming you will see". In summation, and judging from leadership responsibility, President Weah could have listened to the cries of the people.

### **Cherry Picking of Instilling Discipline in Officials**

Understandably, President Weah's hands were tied to discipline some of his officials who were reckless in their conduct and speeches in the discharge of their duties probably because they struggled to bring the revolution to fruition, or perhaps a connection to the president in some strong ways. Despite the voicing of the people's complaints or concerns about some of the reckless officials' conduct especially those that went viral on social media, President Weah kept his silence and took no action to convince the public about his disapproval. Therefore, it left the people with the assumption that the President was consciously in support of the recklessness. Take, for instance, the situation of a junior Minister in the office of President Weah videotape of splashing expensive champagne on a luxury vehicle he bought for his wife as a birthday gift that went viral (Nile Post, 2021). His behavior which was not criminally established still provoked public anger or outcries, especially among young supporters of the CDC describing it as "a reckless display of wealth" contrary to the principles and ideology of the CDC Pro-Poor Agenda that should be sensitive to the plight of the downtrodden masses (Nile Post, 2021). Comparatively, Julius Maada Bio, the president of Sierra Leone wasted no time in terminating the appointment of his Chief of Protocol Fatmata Kargbo, after showing photos of the luxury mansion she recently completed because of her appointment. Not only was she relieved of her job but subjected to the Anti-Corruption Commission investigation to explain how she got the money to complete her abandoned house (Punch, 2019).

At some points in time, President Weah was very selective in dealing with some of his officials for reckless postures. The case of the former Deputy Minister of Information for Press and Public Affairs, Eugene Fahngon suspended for an indefinite time due to a reckless statement following the US Embassy's condemnation of Fahngon's divisive statement was the only exception. (Mbayo, 2019). Moreover, President Weah was quick to dismiss some of his officials for breaking norms but at the same time unable to take punitive action against other officials who displayed reckless conduct decried by the public. Those dismissed were Deputy Commerce Minister Jemima Wolokollie for declaring her intention to contest the senatorial seat for Montserrado County and became vocal on what she believes are mishaps in the ruling CDC (The Independent Probe Newspaper, 2020), Deputy Information Minister for Press and Public Affairs at the Ministry of Information Culture and Tourism Eugene Fahngon for spreading false information regarding the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Front Page Africa, 2021), Post and Telecommunications Minister Cllr. Cooper Kruah on grounds of his party, Movement for Democracy and

Reconstruction cutting ties with the CDC government (Harmon, 2023), and Deputy Foreign Minister Henry Fahnbulleh for administrative reasons (Daily Observer, 2023)

Despite public outcries about the continuous reckless conduct of Monrovia City Mayor Jefferson Kojjee, President Weah besides a blanket warning to his officials did not take any action directed at Mayor Kojjee (Wesseh, 2019).

### **The Harmonization Salary Payment Scheme/Policy**

Inarguably, the harmonization salary policy or scheme of civil servants initiated by the Weah administration through the ingenuity of the Minister of Finance and Development Samuel Tweah will be among the key factors in any article examining the causes of President Weah rejection of the second term bid. Regardless of the intention to reduce the government's wage bill increased by the same Weah administration, this de facto policy unapproved by the 54<sup>th</sup> National Legislature was a complete disaster repugnant to the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development introduced to lift one million people out of poverty within six years. Moreover, it was completely contrary to the spirit of the social contract between the government and the citizens. This is because it can be argued that one of the possible ways to lift people out of poverty is through increment in salary. So, when you introduce a policy reducing civil servants, Police, Immigration officers, Teachers, Health practitioners, etc. salaries or wages already struggling to commensurate with the existing economic realities or paralysis, it is not a contradiction to the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development, the labor law of Liberia.

In his defense before the 54<sup>th</sup> National Legislature, Minister Tweah said that through the measure, the salaries of 9,000 civil servants who were "overpaid" are being cut, while 15,000 civil servants experience an increase in their salary. In addition, he said 55,000 government workers' pay remains constant (Koinyeneh, 2019). Moreover, in verbatim, the Minister said *"Fifty Thousand civil servants are not affected by this harmonization, 15,000 of those almost are going up and 9,000 are coming down who were paid high. Absolutely teachers are not affected here. Security people are benefitting. Doctors are benefitting. The 54th Legislature, along with the President raised doctors' salary"* (Koinyeneh, 2019).

Without being prejudiced to the Minister's assertion or defense, how come the continuous outcries throughout Liberia by civil servants, security officers, teachers, doctors, and nurses about their salaries being cut or slashed and inconsistent when it comes to exactness in terms of the actual amount? Consequently, the outcries led to the CDC defeat through a protest vote in the two Montserrado Senatorial elections that brought Abraham Darius Dillion from the opposition bloc on board. In fact, during the campaign, the message "You harmonize our salaries, we will harmonize your votes" from the civil servants, teachers, and others went clear to the CDC. This message was ignored or overlooked by the CDC re-echoes throughout President Weah's first term in office and became intense during the 7<sup>th</sup> October 2023 elections and the 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023 run-off election. Days after President Weah's concession statement, a group of civil servants indicated that their decision to harmonize President Weah's votes was a direct reaction to the government's policy of harmonizing their salaries. The group argues that the harsh impact of salary harmonization on their livelihoods demonstrated a lack of empathy from the Weah government towards its workforce. They expressed disappointment in the administration's failure to adequately address their concerns and provide relief measures to mitigate the hardships caused by the policy (Smart News, 2023).

### **Blinded to Existing Realities by Flatteries**

With specific reference to the considerable gains made from primary road construction projects, and other infrastructure projects, officials loyal to President Weah flattered him as the "Best President" since 1847 in or history of Liberia to have carried on development within three years. In acceptance of this acclimation,

the President himself bragged about being the best president in the history of Liberia while addressing thousands of supporters on his re-election campaign launch. In verbatim, this was the President's claim. *"My work in the past five years has made me the best president since the foundation of Liberia,"* President Weah said during his official campaign launch on Thursday, 7 September 2023 in Monrovia (Teh & Jipoh, 2023). Moreover, the President is also on record describing himself as "Bad Road medicine man" despite road connectivity in the country remaining a major challenge and deplorable evidenced by the Southeastern part of Liberia under his leadership (Gbayor, 2023).

The acclimation that President Weah accepted blinded him to the existing realities of economic hardship, insecurity, the prevalence of drugs, etc. More importantly, the flattery blocked President Weah's ears from listening to the cries of the people alarming "2023 is coming, you will see", "You harmonized our salaries, we will harmonize your votes."

His defeat in the 14 November 2023 run-off election explains the paradox or irony. How come a president whose works in the past five years that made him the "best president since the foundation of Liberia," lose re-election for his second term bid? More importantly, as mentioned not too long ago in this paper, Abraham Darius Dillion two times victories over the CDC in the Montserrado Senatorial by-election and elections was enough early warning indicator that could have opened President Weah eyes to the existing realities on the ground. Unfortunately, President Weah was blinded by the flattery of being the "best president since the foundation of Liberia". Arguably, had this acclimation come from the masses, it would have influenced the campaign motto of the CDC "1st round victory" (Garblah, 2023).

## **FAILURE TO MAKE CABINET RESHUFFLE/SUBSTITUTION BY ELIMINATION**

Given President Weah background as a soccer legend, the society expected him to reshuffle his cabinet through substitution by elimination especially for non-performance or poor performance cabinet or officials. Granted, a football manager is not obliged to make substitutions by elimination when the current players are on course with the game formula. On the other hand, the coach is under the obligation to make changes when necessary to influence the desired result. In the context of the Weah Presidency, there were public outcries about the poor performance of some of his officials. Some were accused of corruption. Despite these legitimate concerns, the President maintained that his team was doing well. On the contrary, President Weah defeat was a testimony or attestation of the people's claims against some of his non-performance or poor performance cabinets or officials.

## **CONCLUSION**

Inexhaustively, this article through the lens of the omnipotent view of management has intellectualized the reasons behind the defeat of President George M. Weah in the 14 November 2022 runoff election. In the opinion of the paper, the defeat is not about the total number of votes difference in percentage between Weah and Boakai that one way or the other suggests President Weah possible come back in 2029. It explains a paradox or irony for President Weah who won 60% in the 2017 runoff election and is considered the "best President" in the history of Liberia to drive development within five years. How could this had happened.

On the flip side of the same coin, the defeat of President Weah also shows that Liberians are politically mature enough to understand the difference between mere political rhetoric and tangibles. In other words, gone are the days of managing the affairs of the state on mere political rhetoric. This was the case of the Weah administration.



Conclusively, the defeat is not only a lesson for President Weah. It is also for the Up government under the leadership of Amb. Joseph N. Boakai directly responsible for the success or failure of his government.

## DISCLAIMER

The author's affiliation or attachment with any of the known organizations or institutions has nothing to do with this article, neither does it indirectly imply their consent. The author takes full responsibility for the views expressed herein.

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