
Book Reviews

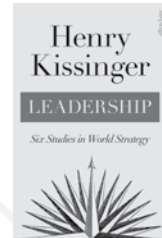
'Leadership: Six Studies in World Strategy'

Henry Kissinger

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Govind Nelika

“Leaders think and act at the intersection of two axes: the first, between the past and the future; the second, between the abiding values and aspirations of those they lead.”

Henry Kissinger

Introduction

‘Leadership: Six Studies in World Strategy’ is a book authored by Henry Alfred Kissinger, a renowned diplomat and strategist known for his tenure as the Secretary of State and National Security Advisor during the presidency of Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford. Kissinger played a pivotal role in shaping U.S. foreign policy at a critical time. He played a leading role in opening relations with China and in shaping foreign policy which utilised a détente approach towards the Soviet Union. During the Cold War era, he was an integral negotiator in the Paris Peace Accords, which aimed to end the Vietnam War. His efforts earned him a Nobel Peace Prize.

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Introducing the Leader

The author in the first section of the book gives a clear outline of the notion of leadership, how dynamic a leader must be, how effectively he must calculate probabilities of the coming future and learn from the past. He writes that the leader possesses attributes such as willingness to do what is necessary, and the strength of character and courage to see it through. The author compares a leader's chosen path to "traversing a tightrope", similar to an acrobat, as leaders will fall if they are far too timid or too audacious. The author warns excessive hubris of leaders to result in their exhaustion, while relying on past achievements will lead to decay. In the subsequent sections, the author looks like the account of six global leaders, all of whom learned from World War I and II or, the second thirty-year-old war. The author details what a leader is and the types of leaders. For this he quotes from history and classifies leaders into two categories: Statesmen and Prophets.

Konrad Adenauer: The Strategy of Humility

The chapter delves into Konrad Adenauer's remarkable journey from Cologne's mayor to post-Hitler Germany's first Chancellor. Adenauer's approach focuses on four key elements: accepting the consequences of defeat, regaining the victors' trust, building democracy, and fostering a unified European entity. It chronicles Adenauer's path, highlighting his commitment to nationalistic and Christian principles throughout Germany's revival. The Author adeptly details Adenauer's journey, culminating in lifting Germany from post-war partition, to gaining freedom from occupation and recognising the imperative of "moral and material reparations" for the Holocaust.

The words of Angela Merkel describe Adenauer's legacy on the fiftieth anniversary of his death.

"Today, we honour a great statesman who, with foresight and skill, gave our country perspective and stability after the failure of the Weimar

Republic and the horrors of National Socialism. We bow to Konrad Adenauer with great gratitude. We consider his merit an obligation for our tasks in a confusing, difficult world. Given what Konrad Adenauer and his contemporaries have achieved, we should have the courage to continue this work.”

Charles de Gaulle: The Strategy of Will

The author starts with De Gaulle’s pivotal role in resurrecting France after World War II. He underscores his resolute commitment to revitalising France’s prominence on the international stage and his transformative role in rebuilding post-war France to its strategic prowess in international affairs. De Gaulle’s Leadership is portrayed as a blend of visionary ideals and methodical implementation. Additionally, the content delves into the distinct nature of de Gaulle’s statesmanship, comparing it to Churchill’s. Ultimately, the chapter concludes with de Gaulle’s passing in 1970, depicted as a reflective moment in French history. The author brings out de Gaulle’s enduring impact and the enigmatic aura that encapsulated his historical significance in the global arena. The last part highlights his deeply cherished relationship with his disabled daughter, Anne, as described by De Gaulle himself when he said:

“Without Anne, maybe I never would have done what I did. She gave me the heart and the inspiration.”

Richard Nixon: The Strategy of Equilibrium

The author explains Nixon’s foreign policy and his leadership amid complex geopolitics. His key principle is considering national interest as the defining objective in the pursuit of strategy and foreign policy. His tactics and global strategy showcased a “Nixonian flexibility”.

Today, Nixon’s approach remains relevant, emphasising strategic priorities, alliances, and shared legitimacy. Despite tarnishing his legacy

by events of the Watergate scandal, Nixon underscores the importance of adept diplomacy and strategic adaptation in addressing contemporary global challenges. The essence of Nixon's diplomacy lay in his disciplined application of American power and national purpose after it had been on the verge of being consumed by domestic controversies.

Anwar Sadat: The Strategy of Transcendence

"The Strategy of Transcendence" comprehensively analyses Anwar Sadat's instrumental role in securing the 1979 Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty. It traces Sadat's journey from the 1952 revolution to his pursuit of peace and meticulously traces Sadat's life and presidency, including his historic visit to Jerusalem and negotiations at Camp David. The chapter aptly explores the intricate dynamics of Arab Israeli relations, external influences, and societal factors. Its well-structured narrative maintains a balanced perspective, providing a valuable resource for understanding the complexities of achieving peace in a turbulent Middle East. One could state that the section on the Tortuous Road to Peace on the challenges faced is quite aptly described. The chapter also showcases Anwar Sadat's thoughts through his quote:

"We will be judged not by the hard positions we took but by the wounds we heal, the souls we saved, and the suffering we eliminated."

Lee Kuan Yew: The Strategy of Excellence

The chapter details the Journey of Lee Kuan Yew, the founding father and first Prime Minister of Singapore, elevating Singapore from a disease-ridden slum into a first-world metropolis. The chapter details Lee Kuan Yew's approach to harmonising a country containing people from different cultural backgrounds, his rejection of rigid ideologies, and his focus on creating a pragmatic and competent government. His approach left a lasting impression on Singapore, even more so through his expert

engagement with the USA and China, where Lee could balance the relationship while furthering Singapore's national interest. The passage concludes by reflecting on the relevance of Lee's statesmanship in today's complex world order and the lessons his life offers for fostering progress, coexistence, and navigating a global world order. The chapter also describes Lee Kuan's character and unwavering commitment to his wife and family besides his country. The following quote by Lee Kuan Yew in the chapter encapsulates his approach towards community, showcasing his visionary mindset.

“And finally, let us, really Singaporeans—I cannot call myself a Malaysian now—we unite, regardless of race, language, religion, culture.”

Margaret Thatcher: The Strategy of Conviction

The part of the book deals with the leadership and legacy of Margaret Thatcher—dubbed the “Iron Lady”—the iconic Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. The chapter highlights her conservative principles and nature apart from her resolve to reverse Britain's economic decline in the late 1970s by opting for a liberal market, her complex relationship with the European Union, internal party conflicts, and eventual resignation in 1990. In the chapter, the authors attribute Thatcher's strength and Achilles' heel to her unwavering convictions or her notion of never yielding, leading to her fall from power due to European disputes and the poll tax. Her legacy includes reshaping the UK's economy, her stance on Europe, and her influence during the Cold War, making her a significant figure in British history. The author emphasises Thatcher's vision for a decentralised, pro-market European Union in the chapter.

The very last hymn to be sung at her funeral service in St Paul's Cathedral on April 17, 2013, captured her outlook:

“I vow to thee, my country, all earthly things above, Entire and whole and perfect, the service of my love: The love that asks no question, the love that stands the test, that lays upon the altar the dearest and the best.”

The Evolution of Leadership

In the concluding chapter, the author retrospect’s the effective leadership of the post World War II era, drawing insights from the experiences of six prominent twentieth-century leaders: Adenauer, de Gaulle, Nixon, Sadat, Lee Kuan Yew and Thatcher. It poses critical questions about the presence of essential qualities in today’s leaders, primarily focusing on their capacity for long-term policy planning and authentic leadership. In an ever-changing landscape of today the world has changed mainly in terms of standards, culture, traditions, and morals. The last standard has drastically changed globally. The legacy these leaders left behind has had a profound impact on the nature of their countries and in some manner, the world.

Which leader will scale the heights of being a true visionary and motivator is unpredictable. The nature of leadership is such that leaders often emerge from obscurity when confronted with significant challenges. Machiavellian observation of society and Max Weber’s criteria for transformational Leadership, emphasise the necessity for leaders who can maintain their vision and determination despite facing obstacles and scepticism. The six profiled leaders share common attributes, including a profound comprehension of their societies’ circumstances, an aptitude for formulating strategies for the present and future, adeptness in motivating their societies toward loftier objectives, and an unwavering commitment to addressing deficiencies.

The conclusion of the book is that leadership results from the interplay between inherent and nurtured qualities. Leaders play a pivotal role in guiding their societies’ responses to challenges, inspiring public service,

and fostering a spirit of sacrifice. The author underscores the ongoing relevance of character-driven leadership in a complex and evolving world by the following lines:

“We live in a time when leaders are often judged more by the stridency of their rhetoric and the coloration of their politics than by the success of their policies. Especially in the developing world, too many people have gone to bed at night with their ears full but their stomachs empty.”

The above quote serves as a poignant reflection on the current state of global leadership. It entails the author’s perspective, rooted in the aftermath of World Wars I and II, where some leaders rose to the occasion, leaving an indelible mark on history, while others laid the groundwork for the prosperity their nations enjoy today.

Conclusion

Herny Kissinger died at the age of 100 years and six months in November 2023. As we navigate the landscape of 2023, the author’s insights gain prominence, particularly in the context of shifting political dynamics. The once-dominant Western-centric global autonomy has given way to a more inclusive global order, where the Global South will play a pivotal role. The contemporary generation of leaders bear the weight of influencing the rise and fall of nations in an era marked by proxy wars.

The recent events coming up to 2023 have witnessed America’s withdrawal from Afghanistan and the ongoing conflicts of Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Hamas; the instances will serve as tangible indicators of how future generations will assess today’s leaders. The pivotal question revolves around the extent of change, prosperity, or downfall that these leaders may usher in, emphasising the urgency of international cooperation.

The Author’s exploration of six extraordinary leaders—or better said, visionaries—adds depth to the narrative, acknowledging that

their impact is a subject of both celebration and critique by the current generation. In a stark contrast reflecting the global shift in power politics, today's leaders will often be reminded that people have grown tired of ineffective policies and promises. The criterion for judgment extends beyond notions of caste, creed, gender, or race; the spotlight is on tangible outcomes.

