

## Leadership: Six Studies in World Strategy

Author: Henry Kissinger, Published by Allen Lane, Penguin Random House, United Kingdom, 2022: Pp 772

Maryum Tamoor<sup>1</sup>

Henry Kissinger, a doyen of realpolitik. As a statesman, and a foreign policy practitioner, he undertakes the arduous task of identifying the leadership traits that can act at the intersection of past and future. He navigates through the caprice of people's norms, mores, values, and aspirations. Education is the real driver of true leadership. The pinnacle of these traits is ushered in a taxonomy of two quintessential types of leaders: the statesman and the prophet. A portrait of six outstanding statesmen is sketched by highlighting their grasp of grand strategic concepts.

All six figures are drawn from the 20<sup>th</sup> century involving Konrad Adenauer, Charles de Gaulle, Richard Nixon, Anwar Sadat, Lee Kuan Yew, and Margaret Thatcher. Kissinger gives a glimpse of their biographies. He unveils the dialectical relationship between the historical stimuli and their personalities, the challenges they faced, and the response articulated by them.

Konrad Adenauer, Mayor of Cologne, Germany, took the reins of power in a country afflicted with war reparations by the world, moribund economy, global restrictions, divided state, baffled and dispirited public. He adopted a policy premised on traditionalism, fortitude, morality, democratic values, and alliance-building for the unification of

---

<sup>1</sup> Reviewer is an Assistant Research Associate at Islamabad Policy Research Institute, Pakistan.

*Maryum Tamoor*

Germany while reinvigorating it as a peaceful emerging power on the world stage.

Charles De Gaulle, on the other hand, embodies the strategy of will. Rising from the ranks of Brigadier General of the French Army during the Second World War to the leader of Free French officers, he entered the corridors of French power. He laid down the foundations of the Fifth French Republic. His restoring of the French state was characterized by a constitutional *modus operandi*, corrections of colonial aberrations and revival of the institutions, and the grandeur of France in the emerging world order.

Kissinger, being the national security advisor to President Richard Nixon presents the account of his boss's domestic and foreign policy triumphs very effectively. The strategy of equilibrium as per Kissinger, represented Nixon's approach. The pivotal position of national interest, cognizance of geo-political shifts, and abidance by the historic American value system are highlights of his statesmanship. Rapprochement with China, cessation of the Vietnam War, and scoring extra points for the United States in a bipolar competition with the Soviet Union are some of the successes attributed to President Richard Nixon.

The author also hints at the notable fallacies of Nixon's character such as insecurity and uncertainty of authority, albeit he inadequately presents the characteristics of Nixon along with a deficient case of Watergate while dubbing it as a 'tragedy.'

Anwar Sadat is the fourth leader who draws the attention of the author. His strategy of transcendence is elaborated through his life and achievements. While exploring the humble background of Sadat, Kissinger sketches the eleven years rule of Sadat until his assassination. His transcendent outlook on the Arab-Israel conflict was appropriately evaluated. He developed a diplomatic and military strategy leading to

return of the Sinai Peninsula, alliance with the United States by concluding a peace agreement with Israel called Camp David Accord.

A more nuanced case study dripping with personal details, signifying the strategy of excellence, is of a comparatively lesser-known personality of Lee Kuan Yew. Inspired by reason and reality, he remained the Prime Minister of Singapore for 25 years (1959-1990). His services inter alia include the withdrawal of his nation from the pit of ethnic segregation and identity-based factionalism. His achievements include promotion of unity in diversity, free trade, cultural promotion, and co-existence. The result was a cohesive multi-ethnic and prosperous state that showcased one of the outstanding stories of economic successes of the world.

The last exquisite portrait is of the Iron Lady of the Western Hemisphere, Margaret Thatcher. She is credited with the strategy of conviction. Being a complete outsider, she steered her way through the male dominant cadres of the Conservative Party and the British Parliament. With humble beginnings, she ascended the parliamentary ladder through her conviction and fortitude to become one of the greatest and the longest serving (1979-1990) prime ministers of Britain. Inheriting a country that was referred to as the 'sick man of Europe', she introduced the policies of credible deterrence as a pivot of peace, economic reforms to curb inflation, and further international engagement against all odds. Her response to the Argentinian aggression in the Falklands was formidable. Similarly, her other singular achievements include Hong Kong's autonomy, Anglo-Irish deal in 1985, that brought peace to Northern Ireland.

The pinnacle of the book is the concluding section. It describes the decay of meritocracy and the prevalence of polarization, cut-throat individualism, and materialistic ambitions. Such aspirations include white collar and gold collar jobs. In addition to this, there is a premonition of the metamorphosis of human consciousness due to rapid

*Maryum Tamoor*

technological advancements entailing implications for the world and leadership.

According to Kissinger, the age of images and social media is hindering the development of leadership capabilities by over emphasising the immediacy of information, and intensity of emotions through visualization. The resurgence of great power rivalry manifested by Sino-US competition and Russia's violation of international obligations in Ukraine, emphasize need for strong leadership during these transitional periods. The future presents a world marred with the triangular power struggle between the United States, China, and Russia, and Sisyphean attempts at arms reduction. However, leadership with the strength of analysis, character, sagacity, strategic vision, and boldness can steer the right course. It can lead to inter-state dialogue, and foster the principles of co-existence.

This book is nothing less than a remarkable combination of four different genres: history, biography, strategy, and politics. It gives a fascinating ride through history and a coherent narrative of true leadership. The case studies provide a model for aspiring leaders and students, based on solid research and evidence. A rich bibliography adds another pearl to the string. Highlighting the blessings and banes of future technology accompanied by socio-cultural, and political changes on a global stage marred by inter-state rivalries, the book is a valuable contribution and a thought-provoking read for students, politicians, businessmen, and decision-makers. ■