

BOOK REVIEW

Henry KISSINGER, Leadership: Six Studies in World Strategy (New York, Penguin Press, 2022)

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Leadership: Six Studies in World Strategy

Henry KISSINGER

New York, Penguin Press, 2022, 732 pages, ISBN (e-book): 9780593489451

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Henry Kissinger examines six national leaders in his recent book, *Leadership: Six Studies in World Strategy*. These leaders are Konrad Adenauer from West Germany, Charles de Gaulle from France, Richard Nixon from the United States of America (US), Anwar Sadat from Egypt, Lee Kuan Yew from Singapore, and Margaret Thatcher from the United Kingdom (UK). The book focuses on how the lives and political strategies of these influential leaders from the second half of the twentieth century redirected their nations and what made them effective in world politics. In addition, Kissinger's anecdotes explain the difficulties these leaders faced while rebuilding their countries after World War II and the qualities that caused them to have long-lasting effects.

Kissinger's diplomatic experience is as significant as the content of the book. Although famous worldwide, he is one of the most controversial diplomats. Kissinger, who fled the Nazis as a child and sought refuge in the US, worked as a national security advisor and Secretary of State during the Richard Nixon administration. Kissinger, who survived the Watergate Scandal and won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1973 for his role in ending the Vietnam War, served as Gerald Ford's Secretary of State. After completing these duties, he continued to advise many US presidents. Undoubtedly, critical assignments made him read world politics in depth. He has been a key figure in global politics since the Cold War. However, Kissinger has an approach that ignores human rights violations to keep the international balance and the vital interests of the US. He continues to place particular emphasis on power and national interest in politics.

Kissinger points out at the beginning of the book that courage, strong character, and taking risks between the past and the future are significant for leadership (p. 14). For him, good leaders are conscious of their limitations and capable of appreciating history and envisioning the future. In this context, Kissinger speaks of two archetypal leaders: the "prophet" who creates a new social order and the "statesmen" who improve and enhance current conditions (p. 23-25). Statesmen try to achieve the most incredible balance between vision and risk by analyzing requirements based on circumstances. Although statesmen manage change, they are conservative in preserving the core of their societies. On the other hand, prophets are ready to

break with the past, whatever the risks. Because the prophets believe that their political role in the realization of the values they defend is employing “good principles”. For these reasons, they effectuate significant historical transformations. Accordingly, Akhenaten, Jean d’Arc, Robespierre, Gandhi, and Lenin are prophetic historical leaders. At the same time, Palmerston, Gladstone, Disraeli, Bismarck, Roosevelt, Atatürk, and Nehru are considered statesmen.

Meanwhile, Kissinger chose leaders who did not conflict with the interests of the US and worked in harmony with these interests. According to him, these leaders were born outside the confines of the aristocratic elite that dominated politics and especially foreign policy (p. 509). Apart from the leader of Singapore, the religiosity of the other five leaders is a standard feature (p. 513). Another common feature is Kissinger’s belief that these leaders used history effectively and that they influenced people under their administration. Besides, all six leaders with modest qualities are appreciated by Kissinger. Despite this, Kissinger ignored the democratic sensitivities of the leaders in their own countries, how they handle the law, and their perspectives on how they use it.

The book is comprised of six chapters, apart from the introduction and conclusion. Drawing on Kissinger’s personal experiences, these chapters discuss different leaders. In the first chapter, Kissinger presents Konrad Adenauer who, with his “*strategy of humility*”, helped the Germans rise again after World War II. According to Kissinger, Adenauer made critical moves to regain the reputation and legitimacy of the Germans by acknowledging Germany’s reckoning with its past for a better future. In addition, Chancellor Adenauer made post-war West Germany essential to NATO and Europe. Kissinger then pays tribute to Charles De Gaulle’s willpower on the road to the Fifth Republic in France. He describes De Gaulle’s success in forming a government in exile, which, despite his weak political experience, enabled the transition from a divided country to a stable and prosperous state. He portrays a visionary leader who saved France from the disaster of Algeria and raised his country’s confidence.

In the chapter titled “*the strategy of equilibrium*”, Kissinger conveys the initiatives of Richard Nixon, with whom he worked between 1969 and 1974, from the expulsion of the US from Vietnam to developing relations with China and the promise of peace to the Middle East. He describes Nixon, the only US president who had to resign from his post, as a meticulous, courageous, and creative leader and portrays him as one of the key players in the Cold War. Yet, he sees the independence process in Bangladesh and the secret bombing of Cambodia as developments that served American national interests.

The fourth chapter covers Anwar Sadat, who had a different approach from other Arab allies due to his focus on peace negotiations with Israel. Kissinger says that these policies, which he describes as bold initiatives in the chapter titled “*the strategy of transcendence*”, brought Egypt away from the Soviet Union and closer to the US. In the next chapter, Lee Kwan Yew, who established a powerful city-state in Singapore, seems to have won Kissinger’s appreciation with “*the strategy of excellence*”. Kissinger praises Yew, who led Singapore from 1959 to 1990, for his vision of transforming a small island with cultural diversity and poverty into a global economic and financial center.

After five male leaders, the book examines Margaret Thatcher, whom Kissinger sees as a close friend. Kissinger sympathizes with Thatcher in the episode titled “*the strategy of conviction*” and believes she halted her country’s decades-long decline and boosted morale. He discussed her importance for the free market, her attitude in the Cold War, the Falklands War with Argentina in 1982, and her approach to the Irish Republican Army (IRA). Kissinger claims Thatcher was as influential in changing the British community as De Gaulle in France.

Overall, with the impact of an accomplished life and vast experience of almost a century behind him, Kissinger compellingly and persuasively presents his testimonies through the cases and political lives he witnessed after World War II. Besides the events and leaders discussed, the book’s narratives about Kissinger’s role in post-World War II history are abundant. According to Kissinger, it is not yet clear where excellent and effective leadership will come from today. In such a period, leaders seem detached from their communities and reluctant to take responsibility for the world’s problems. Kissinger states that a talented and unique leader like the six he discusses has yet to emerge. The book has powerful messages in understanding how international politics is shaped by leadership and diplomacy and the transformations created by unexpected changes. In his concluding remarks, he emphasizes the importance of leaders being aware of the changes brought about by the internet and the technology age, where visuality is essential. *Leadership: Six Studies in World Strategy* is a necessary read for anyone interested in global leadership, diplomacy, power relations, and problems in the world. Those who want to rethink leaders’ roles in future politics should read the book.