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## Leadership: Six Studies in World Strategy

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The *Leadership: Six Studies in World Strategy* is a recently published book by Henry Kissinger, internationally well-known as the United States Secretary of State and national security advisor under the presidential administrations of Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford—a recipient of awards and recognition, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom. In his latest book, Henry Kissinger has given the readers a perspective on leadership and leaders.

Leadership is a multifaceted subject eluding a neat, compact form of explanation. Leaders and leadership exist in any society, primitive or not. There is a need for guidance and governance in any society—and a small group, called elites, fills the void.

The six leaders—Konrad Adenauer, Charles de Gaulle, Richard Nixon, Anwar Sadat, Lee Kuan Yew, and Margaret Thatcher—portrayed in the book are based on his life experiences in Europe, and his experiences as a diplomat in the United States and abroad. The book itself is an enormous undertaking and a scholarly work that has value to worldwide readers and scholars. The sub-title, “Six Studies in World Strategy,” according to the author, reveals the times and circumstances of strategic decisions these leaders took. Yes, history might view these consequential decisions favorably or unfavorably, depending on the points of view of individuals around the world. The six leaders in the book were presidents, chancellor, and prime ministers of their nations. Thus, their major decisions implemented through their respective national governing bodies have both short-term and long-term global impacts.

The table of contents devotes a chapter to each of the six leaders. Readers wonder what made the author choose these six, while there are so many other leaders whose decisions have had a lasting impact on the world societies at large. In his introduction to the book, he writes: “I had the good fortune to encounter all six at the height of their influence.” He continues that these leaders inherited a world where certainties dissolved by war, they redefined national purposes, opened new vistas, and contributed a new structure to a world in transition.

The first chapter is about Konrad Adenauer, who served as the mayor of Cologne for sixteen years. Adenauer had experienced the unified German state’s three post-Bismark eras, and none of them were acceptable to him: under Kaiser, domestic uncertainty under the Weimar Republic, and disintegration under Hitler. So,

Adenauer's leadership focused on unifying German society with a philosophy of democracy, social conservatism, and European integration. He also strengthened Germany's relationship with the West, especially the United States. He strongly believed in commitment to democratic principles for Germany and the United Europe. The book describes his leadership as the strategy of humility.

Chapter 2 focuses on France's Charles de Gaulle, as a strategist and visionary. As a brigadier general during World War II, de Gaulle, soon after freeing Paris, was consumed with regaining France's historic position. He was convinced that without unity, and without the state, there would be chaos. So, his leadership focused on the theme of reconstructing a legitimate and powerful French state. His leadership achievements include replacing the Third and Fourth Republics, and their emphases on parliamentary supremacy, with the newly established Fifth Republic. His new constitution favored a presidential system, where the president was elected for a seven-year term by indirect suffrage via electors. The president appoints a prime minister, who is elected by the National Assembly, to lead the functioning government. Throughout his position as a French leader, he was visionary; however, he was also a diplomat in his execution.

In Chapter 3, Kissinger, while describing Richard Nixon's leadership, introduces the concept of the strategy of equilibrium. As president, Richard Nixon was consumed by the Cold War, domestic conflict over Vietnam, and the Middle East. The author, Henry Kissinger, was invited by President Nixon to serve as his national security advisor. According to Kissinger, President Nixon was extremely knowledgeable about foreign policy issues. He avoided face-to-face confrontations, but his leadership preferred transmitting orders through his trusted inner circle. President Nixon was skillful in eliciting information about potential courses of action. His leadership includes his ability to grasp the range of options, independent of his own personal preferences or departmental prerogatives. As vice president under President Eisenhower, Nixon traveled and met world leaders. So, he developed a worldview and a foreign policy far more nuanced than his critics' perception of them. Nixon's leadership viewed peace as a state of fragile and fluid equilibrium among the great powers. To this end, Nixon, and the author, among others, initiated détente in key aspects of the US-Soviet relationship.

Chapter 4 focuses on Anwar Sadat, who was the president of Egypt from 1970 to 1981. Egypt's history is exceptional in the sense of continuity and civilizational

wholeness. Despite its continuity, Egypt has, according to the author, vacillated between two civilizational identities: (1) as the ancient Mediterranean kingdom based in Egypt of the Ptolemaic dynasty, oriented toward Greece and Rome, and (2) the recent identity of an Islamic state, oriented toward Mecca, which has its origin from the Ottoman empire. Therefore, the spirit of Egyptian independence became intertwined with Western ideals. Saddled with debt and weakening Ottoman rule, Egypt sold its stake in the Suez Canal to the British, and soon Western powers took control of Egyptian finances. In 1882, Britain occupied Egypt, and shortly afterward, nationalism took hold in the country. Sadat joined the resistance movement, along with Nasser, to gain independence from Britain for Egypt. He served on President Nasser's cabinet and soon took on leadership responsibilities. The Suez Canal crisis became an issue between Egypt and Britain. Sadat's leadership, after the crisis, showed independence and caution. According to the author, he believed that a high degree of engagement in the Arab world was a tactical obligation, not a civilizational one. He sought a diplomatic relationship with the United States and peace with Israel. However, both were challenging tasks for Sadat, and the peace treaty with Israel was realized under his leadership.

Lee Kuan Yew is the subject of Chapter 5. He became the leader of independent Singapore in August 1965, a small city-state in Southeast Asia. Singapore's size is smaller than that of Chicago. His leadership centered on two things: (1) Singapore's national interest, and (2) to achieve economic viability and security. The true examination of Lee's leadership occurred in 1971 with the closure of the British naval base in Singapore and the withdrawal of British troops. This created a twenty percent loss of Gross National Product. Lee sought assistance from the United Nations Development Program, and a Dutch economist, Winsemius was part of the UN team. So, Lee provided conditions favorable to investments from multinational corporations, including labor. Lee's policies included high-quality services provided to visiting tourists and investors. The Changi Airport in Singapore became the cleanest modern airport in Asia, which created a first impression about the city-state. Fast forward, Lee's leadership vision has sustained Singapore today, as one of the richest nations in the world.

Chapter 6 is about Margaret Thatcher, who sought leadership of the Conservative Party by challenging Edward Heath. She became the first female Prime Minister in British History in May 1979. When asked by a journalist: "what quality would you most like the Tory Party display [sic] under your leadership?" She replied: "you

only win by being for things.” She advocated for the widespread distribution of private property among citizens and subjects, rather than concentrating it in the hands of the state. She successfully implemented her fundamental policy beliefs during her tenure as Prime Minister from 1979 to 1990.

In the last concluding chapter, Kissinger presents the evolution of leadership in historical circumstances. According to the author, each of the six leaders transformed his or her society, and all contributed to the emergence of a new world order. The six also faced the challenges of the Cold War and the disruptions brought by decolonization and globalization. They continue to challenge today’s world as well. The author quite aptly points out that six leaders had grown to be transformative since the West was changing from a hereditary and aristocratic model of leadership to a middle-class and meritocratic one. This change in thinking has broadened the base of societal creativity and expanded its scope.

According to the author, none of the six leaders chosen in this book came from an upper-class background. Konrad Adenauer had a standard education in the German Empire. Charles de Gaulle’s father was a schoolteacher. Richard Nixon came from a middle-class family. Anwar Sadat was the son of a clerk. Lee Kuan Yew received scholarships in Singapore and Britain to pursue his education. And finally, Margaret Thatcher was a grammar-school graduate with a middle-class background.

In the second half of the concluding chapter, Kissinger expresses his misgivings about meritocracy. He believes today’s leadership is more divisive and lacks diplomacy. Today, according to Henry Kissinger and Yuval Levin, an American Conservative Political Analyst and the founding editor of *National Affairs*, meritocracy is faltering. The “deep literacy and visual culture” section is insightful and provocative. In Kissinger’s view, the change—driven by innovative technologies, including the Internet and our acquisition of information without understanding its long-term implications, has profound effects on leaders and followers. The world today embraces a visual culture dominated by images without deep literacy, devoid of reading a complex book and engaging with it critically. For leadership, the combination of reflection and training in detailed and granular knowledge is essential.

The book concludes with futuristic thoughts on leadership. Great leadership results from the collision of the externalities and the leader’s choice from his or her

options. The author ends the book with a quote from the Stoic philosopher Epictetus, “We cannot choose our external circumstances, but we can always choose how we respond to them.” It is a valuable addition to leadership theory, especially in the areas of governance for a state and nations. Though the readers may have different viewpoints, the changes these leaders described in the book brought in their times are still evident in today’s world.