**RICHARD TEMPEST**

**WISDOM IN STATECRAFT,**

**OR,**

**WHY HISTORY ALWAYS, YET NEVER, REPEATS ITSELF**

Our world confronts a grim possibility. In the next years and decades force or the threat of force — in other words, war, but also traumatic non-lethal action such as cyberattacks and economic sanctions and blockades — may become normalized, and even the norm. The dynamic globalization of the last thirty years will, quite possibly, be superseded by a system (or, anti-system) of regional and transcontinental blocs and alliances. At the same time, scientific and technologic advances, including automation, quantum computing, and nanotech, are likely to transform the international economy and people’s daily lives — as well as the conduct, peaceful or violent, of international affairs. We are living in a rapidly evolving global environment that is increasingly defined by violent conflicts such Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the Islamic insurgency in the Sahel, or the civil war between Shia and Sunni that has split the Muslim world. At the same time, our planet is turning bipolar, with China the resurgent, revisionist power challenging what it sees as a deficient world order led by a declining United States. In these unsettled times, one’s thoughts turn to figures from the past who rose to the challenges of *their* world, such as Elizabeth Tudor, Peter the Great, Otto von Bismarck, Kemal Atatürk, FDR, Charles de Gaulle, JFK, Richard Nixon, Indira Gandhi, Deng Xiaoping, Margaret Thatcher, Mikhail Gorbachev, and Nelson Mandela. “Mankind will never see an end to trouble until lovers of wisdom come to hold political power, or the holders of power become lovers of wisdom,” wrote Plato. 23 centuries after he wrote those words, lovers of wisdom are still very much the exception among world leaders. And yet, a study of the past teaches us that occasionally, at critical moments in history, men and women of understanding, vision, and power were able to make a difference within and beyond their societies and national traditions. The personalities on my list, whatever their ideological or ethical stance, happened to display a measure of wisdom, pragmatic or philosophical or even martial, and responded to the challenges of their times.

The course structure will not be chronological but modular, in order to bring into focus the historical lessons and linkages that are the subject of these lectures.

**WEEK ONE**

What is the relevance to our unsettled and violent age — and the future course of world events — of the methodologies of governance and political action practiced by certain rulers, diplomatists, and military leaders of the last 500 years? And why go back 500 years, that is, to early modern times, but not, say, 1500 years? Or even 5000?

**WEEK TWO**

(Re)Establishing and institutionalizing the state. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, or MBS, Saudi Arabia’s visionary, ruthless leader, is endeavoring to reform his country. His program brings to mind the “window to Europe” carved out by Russia’s Peter the Great (1703), the Meiji Restoration in Japan (1868), the reforms of Kemal Atatürk (1924-35), the founding of the Fifth Republic by Charles de Gaulle (1958), and the creation of a post-apartheid South Africa under Nelson Mandela. All these were successful modernizing endeavors. Yet Mikhail Gorbachev’s attempt to democratize and enlighten the Soviet Union was a comprehensive, world-historical failure, even if it generated a number of positive outcomes.

**WEEK THREE**

France’s declaration of war against Prussia in 1870 and Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 were instances when an established power (France) and a revisionist power (Japan) fell into a strategic trap that resulted in comprehensive military defeat that doomed their governing regimes and led to revolutionary change in both societies. Will Russia’s invasion of Ukraine produce a similar outcome?

**WEEK FOUR**

From the Diplomatic Revolution of 1756 to Napoleon’s abortive alliances with Paul I and Alexander I of Russia, from Richard Nixon’s opening to China in 1972 to the United States’ twenty-first-century partnership with Vietnam, sensational *renversements des alliances*, or alliance reversals, have changed the course of international events. In light of the ongoing conflicts in different parts of the world, what is the likelihood of similarly spectacular developments taking place on the global stage in the near or medium-term future?

**WEEK FIVE**

Heavenly passion and earthly calculus. Does the Thirty Years’ War in the seventeenth century or the struggle against communism between 1917 and 1991 hold any lessons for (what remains of) the War on Terror?

**WEEK SIX**

Guiseppe Garibaldi, the unification of Italy, and the narratives and mythologies of twentieth- and twenty-first-century national liberation. Who are the liberators of the twenty-first century?

**WEEK SEVEN**

What FDR and Margaret Thatcher can tell us about the present state and long-term prospects of late-onset global capitalism.

**WEEK EIGHT**

Why history always, yet never, repeats itself. “Napoleon was twice defeated, and the Bourbons twice expelled. By repetition, that which at first appeared merely a matter of chance and contingency, becomes a real and ratified existence,” declared Hegel. So let us apply this dictum by the celebrated German philosopher to the world ca. 2022.

**RECOMMENDED READING**

**(Biographies listed in bold print)**

Ray Dalio, *Principles for Dealing with the Changing World Order: Why Nations Succeed and Fail* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2021)

**Jonathan Fenby, *The General: Charles de Gaulle and the France He Saved* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2013)**

**Niall Ferguson, *The Politics of Disaster* (New York: Penguin, 2021)**

**Adrian Goldsworthy, *Caesar: Life of a Colossus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006)**

**Pranay Gupte, *Mother India: A Political Biography of Indira Gandhi*, rev. edn. (New York: Penguin Books, 2012)**

Tom Holland, *Rubicon: The Last Years of the Roman Republic* (New York: Anchor Books, 2005)

Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997)

**Julian Jackson, *De Gaulle* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018)**

Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York: Vintage, 2015)

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

**Andrew Mango, *Atatürk: The Biography of the Founder of Modern Turkey* (New York: ABRAMS Press, 2002)**

**Robert K. Massie, *Peter the Great: His Life and World* (New York: Random House, 1980)**

**Charles Moore, Margaret Thatcher. The Authorized Biography, vols. 1-3 (New York: Vintage Books / Alfred A. Knopf, 2013-19)**

**Richard M. Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978)**

R.R. Palmer et al, A History of the Modern World, 10th edn. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007)

Nassim Taleb, *Incerto* (comprises *Fooled by Randomness, The Black Swan, The Bed of Procrustes, Antifragile, Skin in the Game*) (New York: Random House, 2001-19)

**Alexander V. Pantsov and Steven I. Levine, *Deng Xiaoping: A Revolutionary Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015)**

**Anne Somerset, *Elizabeth I* (New York: Anchor Books, 2003)**

**Jonathan Steinberg, *Bismarck: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011)**

**William Taubman, *Gorbachev: His Life and Times* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2017)**

**A.J.P. Taylor, *Bismarck: The Man and the Statesman* (New York: Vintage, 1967)**

**Alison Weir, *The Life of Elizabeth I* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2008)**