



Superclass: The Global Power Elite and the World They Are Making

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Each of them is one in a million. They number six thousand on planet of six billion. They run our government, our largest corporations, the powerhouses of international finance, the media, world religions, and, from the shadows, the world's most dangerous criminal and terrorist organizations. They are the global superclass, and they are shaping the history of our time.

Superclass: The Global Power Elite and the World They Are Making Details

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From Reader Review Superclass: The Global Power Elite and the World They Are Making for online ebook

Adam Snider says

The subject of this book is the "superclass" - a group of people only a few thousand strong, and including a range of figures from (mainly) corporate, governmental, religious and celebrity backgrounds, who are able to wield tremendous power over the lives of millions or billions of their fellow human beings around the globe. It's an interesting topic and the author certainly manages to keep it so throughout - mixing in biography, history, and personal anecdote in order to spice up what could have been a very dry description.

Rothkopf also (thankfully) manages to avoid the two extremes so often found in discussions of the superwealthy - the attempt to portray them as superhuman geniuses above the level of normal men, or as sociopathic monsters leeching off the sweat and toil of the common worker. He builds off the scholarship of writers such as Mill who were quite hostile to the superclass (as it existed in his time, anyway) while also dealing with the often quite self-congratulatory figures he's studying and their hangers-on without ever allowing either side to completely warp his perspective. It's quite an achievement.

At the same time, Rothkopf spends enough time with individual figures and specific, often (to my mind) marginal issues that I (and I doubt I'm the only one) got a bit frustrated at the absence of a broader perspective of how the superclass works and maintains itself over time. It's pretty obvious that the author is more interested in - perhaps even fascinated by - the individuals who hold power than the phenomenon they constitute as a group. There's also a tendency to wander a bit - the chapter on "How to Become a Member" of the superclass spends most of the first half of the chapter discussing conspiracy theories and secret societies, and only deals vaguely with the putative topic of the chapter (although to be fair, he did go into some more detail on these topics in previous chapters).

All in all, an interesting but definitely flawed read.

E says

In-depth exploration of the global elite

Conspiracy theories thrive on mystery, and no group is more mysterious than the planet's richest, most powerful people. Former U.S. Undersecretary of State David Rothkopf attempts to shed light on these shadowy figures using his experience with – and his detailed research into – their feeding habits and environments. Rothkopf deftly intersperses firsthand knowledge with hard data in describing the clout, backgrounds and goals of the people he identifies the “superclass.” The result is a thorough examination of the 6,000 members of the global elite, their sources of power and the staggering amounts of money they control. The book comes alive in its behind-the-scenes tales of how these movers and shakers really roll. Rothkopf coyly demurs from listing them, while name-dropping plenty – but he sometimes bogs down in theory and conjecture. *getAbstract* suggests his who's who of the rich and famous for those seeking a glimpse of how the superclass runs the world.

Taulant Ramabaja says

While an interesting collection of facts (albeit sometimes de-contextualized), there was no clear thread of thought here.

Terry Earley says

Although he almost lost me a couple of times in the early chapters where he describes the "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous", I am glad I persisted, because I have had this nagging question in my mind since the near fatal, world economic meltdown in 2009. That question was renewed in the summer and fall of 2011 when the Republican majority in the US House of Representatives caused the first US Treasury bond rating reduction ever by refusing to extend the US debt ceiling (as they did routinely for past Republican administrations).

That question was why in the world were the greedy, self-serving villains on Wall Street not punished for nearly bringing down the economy as they then further profited (and profiteered) from the painful, and still incomplete recovery?

Rothkopf makes it clear that big business now is international. Its interests do not necessarily align with national interests, but mainly with profit, and it corollary: power. Its senior executives rotate regularly in and out of US and other federal governments, influencing government decisions and priorities in favor of banks and business.

A discouraging read, but an important one the help understand where real power lies in our current and future world.

Jim says

Rothberg writes about the 6,000 who comprise the global elite--in government, in finance, in the media, in the military, and in religion-and crime. We can understand that they have achieved incredibly great wealth--and are rapidly increasing it--and that they have vast power on a global level. But Rothberg does not look very deeply into the problem and is certainly not very critical of the elite. As he is someone who worked for Kissinger Associates, I feel he is a wannabe member of the Superclass. The book is not without interest and is written in an engaging style, but leaves me with the feeling that our best hope is that the superclass knows what it's doing and can take care of (many of) the rest of us. I fear that, as our world one day crashes down around us, the supers will be able to save their own privileged skins--at the expense of the billions of long-suffering humanity.

Dawn says

I could barely read this book without vomiting all over it because the author is such a shameless fanboy of the so-called "superclass" that he and his wife nosh with at Darvos every year.

If you are really interested in reading about how 6000 or so way-too-rich psychopaths are gobbling up the planet's resources (like the amazing increase in demand for private Gulfstream jets!) all described in breathless admiration by fanboy, while the rest of us are doing things like biking to work, then waste your money on this book.

Andrea James says

For such a long book, I'm not sure there was any more depth than a magazine article albeit written by someone who goes to Davos and is part of the upper echelons of academia.

It has fun titbits about how much some people earn, how much people spend on planes and yachts, most of which I already knew, so even those bits did not really provide the light entertainment that it otherwise would have done.

Had it not been the audio version of book, I don't think I would have finished it. In fact, I only finished it last week and yet I'm struggling to think of what to include in this review. I guess it had the memory lifespan of a throwaway article in a Sunday newspaper supplement. Oh well.

Science (Fiction) Comedy Horror and Fantasy Geek/Nerd says

Authentic report of a wheel from the center of the clockwork of power

Please note that I put the original German text at the end of this review. Just if you might be interested.

It is very enlightening to see the development of world politics from a man with high offices and influential rope teams, who casually writes a book about his activities. Contrary to some, preferably based on hypotheses and allegations of not directly sitting at the source writers, the author can draw a credible picture of today's power relations based on his experience.

With the first and also in the logic of the text, again and again, a recognizable difference that he belongs to the dominant and the justifications of the ways of acting to maintain the current order as not necessarily firm feet. On earth sooner.

As if it were a matter of course, he describes in detail the practices, alliances, and procedures in the tangle of state, politics, business, and military. He uses autobiographical events to explain various realities and provides a gripping insight into an unattainable world for the average person. However, what makes this frightening number of thousands or even tens of thousands of people in their professional environment to make decisions and changes even more alarming is the casualness and self-evident, with which fundamental decisions are made.

Between charity event, election campaign spectacle and fundraising campaign to confirm their philanthropic sentiment, the top functionaries of the modern world, disappearing into ever higher spheres, lose themselves in ever greater alienation from the same.

The consciousness of the author and the guild represented by him escapes no trace of remorse, insecurity or reflection on their actions, on the contrary, the elite formation and the accompanying worldview seems legitimate and with all its consequences acceptable and worth striving for. This one-sided, advice-resistant worldview is especially disturbing for people with such high levels of education and influence.

Authentischer Bericht eines Rädchen aus dem Zentrum des Uhrwerks der Macht

Es ist sehr aufschlussreich, die weltpolitische Entwicklung aus der Sicht eines mit hohen Ämtern und einflussreichen Seilschaften ausgestatteten Mannes zu sehen, der über seine Aktivitäten so nebenbei ein Buch schreibt.

Im Gegensatz zu manchen, eher auf Hypothesen und Anschuldigungen aufgebauten Argumentationen von nicht direkt an der Quelle sitzenden Schriftstellern, kann der Autor aufgrund seiner Erfahrungen ein glaubwürdiges Bild der heutigen Machtverhältnisse zeichnen. Mit dem fundamentalen und auch in der Logik des Textes immer wieder erkennbaren Unterschied, dass er zu den Tonangebenden gehört und die Rechtfertigungen der Handlungsweisen zur Aufrechterhaltung der momentanen Ordnung als auf nicht unbedingt festen Füßen stehend erscheinen. Auf tönernen schon eher.

Als wäre es ein Ding der Selbstverständlichkeit schildert er ausführlich die Praktiken, Bündnisse und Vorgehensweisen in der Verfilzung von Staat, Politik, Wirtschaft und Militär. Er erläutert anhand autobiografischer Ereignisse verschiedene reale Begebenheiten und liefert einen packenden Einblick in eine für Durchschnittsbürger unerreichbare Welt. Doch was abgesehen davon, was diese verschwindend geringe Anzahl von einigen Tausend oder auch Zehntausend Menschen so in ihrem beruflichen Umfeld an Entscheidungen und Veränderungen bewirken, noch erschreckender wirkt, ist die Beiläufigkeit und Selbstverständlichkeit, mit der fundamentale Entscheidungen getroffen werden.

Zwischen Benefizveranstaltung, Wahlkampfspektakel und Spendensammelaktion zur Bestätigung der eigenen philanthropischischen Gesinnung verlieren die, sich in immer höhere Sphären entzweitenden, Spitzenfunktionäre der modernen Welt sich in immer weiterer Entfremdung von selbiger. Dem Bewusstsein des Autors und der durch ihn vertretenen Zunft entweicht kein Hauch von Reue, Unsicherheit oder Reflektion über das eigene Handeln, im Gegenteil scheint die Elitenbildung und das damit einhergehende Weltbild als legitimiert und mit all seinen Konsequenzen akzeptabel und erstrebenswert. Diese einseitige, beratungsresistente Weltsicht ist gerade bei Menschen mit so hoher Bildungsgrad und Einfluss höchst beunruhigend.

Kristiane says

Very interesting book about who really controls the world, the Superclass. Although the book mentions some powerful individuals, it could have been more concrete on who the Superclass is. When you write a book about that intents to give insight to this class there is no point in holding back. But it feels like the author is holding some information back, and only giving us a glimpse through the curtain. I want more.

Pooja says

Some parts read like US Weekly Does Davos-- which is fun and fine by me, by the way.

Richard Derus says

Pearl Ruled

Rating: 3.25* of five (p189)

The Publisher Says: Each of them is one in a million. They number six thousand on a planet of six billion. They run our governments, our largest corporations, the powerhouses of international finance, the media, world religions, and, from the shadows, the world's most dangerous criminal and terrorist organizations. They are the global superclass, and they are shaping the history of our time.

Today's superclass has achieved unprecedented levels of wealth and power. They have globalized more rapidly than any other group. But do they have more in common with one another than with their own countrymen, as nationalist critics have argued? They control globalization more than anyone else. But has their influence fed the growing economic and social inequity that divides the world? What happens behind closed-door meetings in Davos or aboard corporate jets at 41,000 feet? Conspiracy or collaboration? Deal-making or idle self-indulgence? What does the rise of Asia and Latin America mean for the conventional wisdom that shapes our destinies? Who sets the rules for a group that operates beyond national laws?

Drawn from scores of exclusive interviews and extensive original reporting, *Superclass* answers all of these questions and more. It draws back the curtain on a privileged society that most of us know little about, even though it profoundly affects our everyday lives. It is the first in-depth examination of the connections between the global communities of leaders who are at the helm of every major enterprise on the planet and control its greatest wealth. And it is an unprecedented examination of the trends within the superclass, which are likely to alter our politics, our institutions, and the shape of the world in which we live.

David Rothkopf is the author of *Running the World: The Inside Story of the National Security Council and the Architects of American Power*. He is the president and chief executive of Garten Rothkopf, an international advisory firm; a visiting scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; and a teacher of international affairs at Columbia University's Graduate School of International and Public Affairs.

My Review: I am on Outrage Overload. When next I am asked to declare citizenship, I'm going to say I am a denizen of Indignation. I just can not go further into this book, despite its enormous importance and its trenchant analysis of the world that so terrifyingly affirms that I'm correct to have nightmares of a world dominated by the contemptible and the greedy. The irredeemable people described in this book made me want to unswallow about every fifth paragraph.

It's election season here in the USA. I need not mention to any who have ever seen any of my posts before reading this review that I am a leftist, and more libertarian than authoritarian in my outlook. No candidate in US politics remotely approaches representing my viewpoint. REMOTELY. So I read books that explain the way these horrid people "think" in order to make the least bad decisions. I read books like *Superclass* to see what the politicos we-the-people end up sending into office are up against. (I do not count the president or his challenger among the ~6,000 Superclass members Rothkopf describes.)

But I've collapsed. I can't do any more. Yes I'll vote. No I won't vote for a theocrat with a mercantilist running mate. But I am all out of hope for the future, and all out of faith in the basic human decency of anyone who has more than \$1.59 in his bank account.

Never the chirpiest or most sanguine of men, I'm now more liable than ever to pick up a red-hot poker and jab it at an office-holder than to greet her warmly and offer a donation to her re-election campaign. As to business leaders, I herewith volunteer for the firing squads that will eliminate them come the Revolution. I know how to shoot, and the chance to blast a Walton or a Koch sounds just ducky to me.

But that, I am sadly certain, is only a lonely old man's dream. The sheeple of Murrika will never rise up.

They, too, will one day be the Rich and Powerful. If they work and pray and atone for their sins to the slitty-eyed vicious bastard of a gawd they've created, they will Be Winners!

Ha. As if. And reading this book would explain to the sheeple just exactly why that's such a crock of moldy cat poop. Which is why they won't, and why I had to stop.

Recommended to any and every one who wants to know why the world is how it is, and isn't yet terminally and cynically depressed already.

You will be.

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Ryan Chapman says

Chockablock with great statistics and wit. Rothkopf strenuously avoids any notion of conspiracy talk, and debunks them wherever they arrive. Since I'm pretty finance-illiterate and have the tiny business acumen to match, this was truly illuminating. Sure, he doesn't develop his point much beyond what he says in the first couple chapters. That's okay. The rest of the book is more or less a lot of great historical and anecdotal data. (Including things like the average income for a Goldman Sachs employee was \$600,000 in 2006, the highest per average in the world. Second place goes to Lehman Brothers at \$333,000.)

Crabby McGrouchpants says

David Rothkopf's work (along with Janine L. Weden's) provides a real "open door" to the reigns-holders of the Modern Era, as free from political cant as one could hope for (while not immune from noting how that cant itself can drive things). As always, knowing your political players is as essential as knowing your municipalities, state capitals, and major exports; only laziness of one form or another — including "throw your hands up" exasperation — exempts you from fully completing the task at hand (ever-shifting though it may be).

Who cares? *You* do.

The sort of petty jockeying-for-power that make certain photo- and novel-plays vaguely interesting, if not downright titillating, really drives things more than anybody like to think (or *advertise*, outwardly); meanwhile, the sort of "bubble" that bursts once that intrigue, once piqued in the audience during the brief interval the "wowee" afore-mentioned narratives holds one's attention, inevitably runs its course, is still humming along above us, as much on jet-airplanes as in guarded-towers, fueling things, itself, like another (sort of) electricity.

(Not that this is Rothkopf's agenda — *per se* — not even a *slightly* fair assessment of his tone; rather, he spends no-little-amount of time and his own personal life experience "connecting the dots" at the closer-to-the-top folks, to show how their power constellations take on their own "shape." Whether or not things get

lost in the shuffle is up to *them* — and, to the extent we become informed and equipped about it, maybe to *us!*)

Nils says

Like getting a free ride on a raconteur billionaire's private jet on the way to Davos. Rothkopf isn't shy about discussing the problems with the emergence of an unaccountable class of the superempowered (and their deviant analogs), but the narrative is almost entirely constructed from testimonials by members of that same class who Rothkopf has met or interviewed in his capacity as the publisher of FOREIGN POLICY and a principal in a consulting firm that caters to those same sorts of people. Indeed, Rothkopf might well be considered a member of the Superclass himself, though he's too modest to say so, and prefers to adopt a "Gee whiz, look who I was hanging out with" writerly persona. With that said, the book provides an excellent tour de horizon of who the Superclass are (preponderantly, older North Atlantic men), and how they got and how they wield their power. He's particularly interested in business and NGO elites, and the revolving door between the top echelons of business and government. Valuable, if not brilliant.

Gail says

"Each of them is one in a million. They number six thousand on a planet of six billion. They run our governments, our largest corporations, the powerhouses of international finance, the media, world religions, and, from the shadows, the world's most dangerous criminal and terrorist organizations. They are the global superclass, and they are shaping the history of our time. Today's superclass has achieved unprecedented levels of wealth and power. They have globalized more rapidly than any other group. But do they have more in common with one another than with their own countrymen, as nationalist critics have argued? They control globalization more than anyone else. But has their influence fed the growing economic and social inequity that divides the world? What happens behind closeddoor meetings in Davos or aboard corporate jets at 41,000 feet? Conspiracy or collaboration? Deal-making or idle self-indulgence? What does the rise of Asia and Latin America mean for the conventional wisdom that shapes our destinies? Who sets the rules for a group that operates beyond national laws? Drawn from scores of exclusive interviews and extensive original reporting, Superclass answers all of these questions and more. It draws back the curtain on a privileged society that most of us know little about, even though it profoundly affects our everyday lives. It is the first in-depth examination of the connections between the global communities of leaders who are at the helm of every major enterprise on the planet and control its greatest wealth. And it is an unprecedented examination of the trends within the superclass, which are likely to alter our politics, our institutions, and the shape of the world in which we live" AMAZON
