



## Want to Rule the World? Be Male, Go to Yale, Join 'Superclass'

Review by James Pressley

April 14 (Bloomberg) -- If you want to become as influential as **Bill Gates** or **Stephen Schwarzman**, follow these tips:

Be born a male baby boomer, preferably of European stock. Attend an elite college. And don't forget to be rich and lucky.

**David Rothkopf** offers that facetious yet accurate assessment in "'Superclass," a brainy guide to what the subtitle calls "'the global power elite and the world they are making."

Rothkopf is a Davos diehard. He is fascinated with the people who run governments and corporations, move financial markets, shape opinion through the media and religion, and deploy military forces -- be they NATO soldiers or suicide bombers.

No stranger to the high and mighty, he served as deputy undersecretary of commerce for international trade under U.S. President **Bill Clinton** and later did a stint as a managing director of Kissinger Associates.

The superclass, as defined here, consists of men (and far too few women) who have amassed so much wealth and power that they are driving globalization -- by default, not by conspiracy. This is the cadre of CEOs, bankers, politicians and billionaires whose Gulfstreams flit from one pocket of wealth and power to another --from the Upper East Side of Manhattan to London's South Kensington and on to Dubai.

"'Linked together by common interests, a common culture and private aircraft, these islands become a glittering, superpowered archipelago amid oceans of aspirants and of the disenfranchised," he writes somewhat breathlessly.

### One in a Million

Rothkopf and his researchers identified a little more than 6,000 such people worldwide. They range from the Pope and Bono to steel magnate **Lakshmi Mittal** and Schwarzman, the billionaire chairman of leveraged-buyout firm Blackstone Group LP. A shadow elite of criminals and terrorists includes **Osama bin Laden**.

On a planet of **6.6 billion** people, each superclass member is literally one in a million. They deeply influence how we are governed, taxed and treated.

Rothkopf refrains from providing a list of their names, arguing that the roster would be obsolete the day after publication. Yet the book in some ways resembles a roll call, albeit one fleshed out with anecdotes, interviews and history. (The wanax, or Mycenaean Greek lord, comes into play, as does cheese fondue.)

In a sense, the VIPs themselves matter less than the networks that allow them to rotate through government offices, boardrooms and banks. Rothkopf offers example after example.

### Revolving Door

Military men such as **Richard Myers**, former chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, join the boards of defense contractors. Goldman Sachs Group Inc. bankers like **Henry Paulson** become Treasury secretaries, while senior government officials such as **Robert Hormats** gravitate to Goldman.

"'The revolving door to the financial community is a phenomenon with global consequences," Rothkopf writes. "'It is no accident that this group is broadly predisposed to policy prescriptions such as open borders, less regulation and lower taxes." It also favors bailouts for bad loans, he notes.

In places, this book reads like an omnium gatherum of issues that interest the author: asymmetrical warfare, for example, and **George W. Bush's** "'War on Terror," which Rothkopf calls "'the first-ever military campaign against a feeling."

Another hitch is that Rothkopf can come across as star struck and almost obsequious. A chapter set at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, finds him gazing in awe as CEOs and government leaders stomp the snow off their shoes in what he calls "the mudroom of the global elite."

#### 'Corrupting Inequities'

Yet it would be wrong to consider Rothkopf an apologist. Though he remains a polite guest at high tables, he challenges his hosts. Early on, he chides Chile's privileged class for insisting that markets can solve any societal problem.

"There has to be a way that we can harness the power of markets, recognize the limitations of government, and still address the growing, glaring, unjust, and corrupting inequities in our world," he writes.

Rothkopf offers few solutions, though he notes that the haves and have nots have always bargained over the price that must be paid for stability.

"Who," he asks, "will make the first moves for change this time?"

"Superclass" is now available from **Farrar, Straus and Giroux** in the U.S. and will be published by **Little, Brown** in the U.K. on May 1 (376 pages, \$26, 20 pounds).

(**James Pressley** writes for Bloomberg News. The opinions expressed are his own.)

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