

Elizabeth I, CEO: Strategic Lessons from the Leader who Built an Empire,
By Alan Axelrod, author of “Patton on Leadership.”

The title says plenty – let us view the leadership of Queen Elizabeth the First of England (1533 to 1603) as though it is a lesson in how to run a large corporation. I have read only pages 235 to 261, and the cover, but they are enough for me to recommend this book to visitors to my website. That is, of course, if you wish to engage with the topics of leadership, power, and influence.

Axelrod explains how Elizabeth Tudor, an unlikely heir to the throne, consolidated her power and turned a “business in trouble” (a.k.a. country in trouble) into one of the most powerful empires known up to that time.

On pages 235-7, we see a discussion of the role of honesty in leadership. Elizabeth believed that honesty was the best policy, but not the only policy. Sometimes, when dealing with a Machiavellian leader of another great power, honesty was not the way to go, or not possible, in her judgment. Yet she needed her subjects to continue to trust her – to believe, in other words, that whatever she did was in their best interest. She also did not believe that “the ends justify the means.” If one brought about a desired outcome using unrighteous means, there would be a price to pay.

The chapter continues with more lessons in leadership having similar depth and pragmatism. For example, she also believed that she could be thrown out of power “in nothing but her petticoat” and that she had enough of a good character that she would be able to make her way in the world in her then-impoverished state.

There is no substitute for reading this yourself, but in case you don’t, I (Annie) wish to add that it was the Empire created by Elizabeth I to which the U.S. War for Independence was addressed. The Founding Fathers, having won that war despite the odds against them, wanted to build something better. Today, that “something better” is meeting some of the age-old challenges of human nature that the Founding Fathers tried very hard to avoid.

I dare to suggest that the issue is primarily income-inequality brought about by power differentials between ruling elites and the rest of the population. Queen Elizabeth handled runaway inflation by stabilizing the currency. How to handle money and the currency has been an issue in many civilizations. (See the scholarly book, “This Time is Different,” by Rogoff and Reinhart, for example.)

“Easy money” has worked, internationally, for a long time. I submit that it finances ruling elites (investors) at the expense of the rest of the global population. This monetary policy needs to be revisited, but not necessarily by armed insurrection or armed conquest. Population control (war?) is not my department. Jobs and migration are. If we can turn the world’s financial inequities around peacefully, with monetary policy, then perhaps we can work together to resolve some of the anger that leads to war, and some of the “specialist” policies of businesses that are not concerned with potential planetary destruction as they go about their daily tactics and strategies.