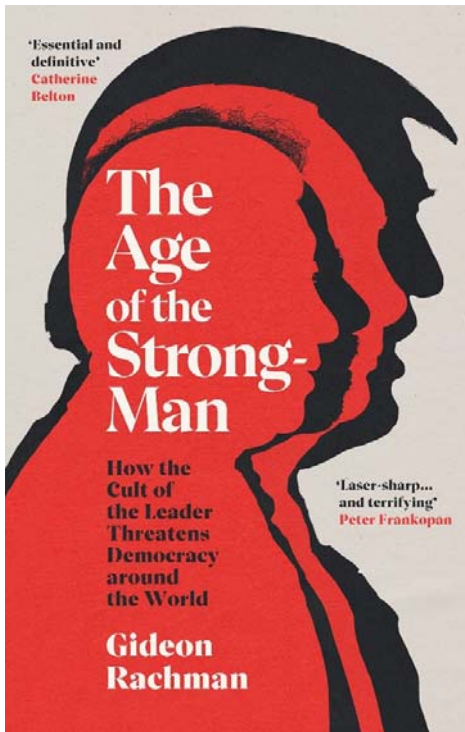


The Literacy Lowdown: The Age of the Strongman



A level geography students, remember, you should:

- undertake wider reading
- use factual texts, discursive / creative material

Summary

This book, written by the FT chief foreign affairs columnist Gideon Rachman, focuses on the current period of political turmoil and the emergence of the “Strongman”. Rachman examines a number of deeply flawed male world leaders, all of whom profess to be strong and indispensable.

The book observes a global trend of rising nationalism and the cult of personality. Each chapter is devoted to a different leader, President Bolsonaro of Brazil, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Turkey, even Prime Minister Boris Johnson is discussed vis-à-vis his ideological push to “get Brexit done”. On page 197 Marine Le Pen neatly states “we no longer have a left right split, but one between nationalism and globalism.”

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Specification links

AQA 3.2.5.2 The geopolitics of energy, ore mineral and water distribution, trade and management.
Edexcel Topic 7: Superpowers.

OCR Topic 2.2.4 Option D – Power and Borders.

WJEC Section B: Economic Growth and Challenge: India or China or Sub-Saharan Development.

Key quotes

“One of Trump’s aides remarked to me: ‘the president enjoys dealing face-to-face with authoritarian leaders’...The unspoken thought, left hanging in the air, was that Trump himself had introduced some of the habits of a dictatorship into the heart of the world’s greatest democracy.” (p1)

“Democratic erosion has set in. Freedom House, which reports annually on political liberty around the world, pointed out that 2020 was the fifteenth consecutive year of declines in global freedom.” (p2)

“The moment at which the Age of the Strongman became truly entrenched as a global phenomenon is best pinpointed to 2012: the year Xi Jinping took power in China.” (p5)

“By labelling an entire elite as corrupt and self-serving and the system as ‘rigged’ against the common man, the populists helped to create a demand for an outsider – a strongman.” (p18)

“The claim to be a champion of the faith is common among the new generation of strongman leaders. Vladimir Putin claims to see himself as the defender of 800 million Christians around the world.” (p48)

“Hello dictator is an unusual greeting to extend to the head of an EU member state”. (p89)