



# Beyond the Ruling Class: Strategic Elites in Modern Society

*Suzanne Keller*

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Influential minorities have existed in some form in all human societies. Throughout history, such elites have evoked varied responses—respect, hostility, fear, envy, imitation, but never indifference. While certain elite groups have been of only passing historical importance, strategic elites, whose members are national and international leaders, today are ultimately responsible for the realization of social goals and for the continuity of the social order in a swiftly changing world. This volume, which first appeared in 1963, marks a major advance in our theoretical understanding of these elites, why they are needed, how they operate, and what effect they have on society.

Drawing upon the work of such classical writers as Saint-Simon, Marx, Durkheim, Mosca, Pareto, and Michels, and such modern scholars as Mannheim, Lasswell, Aron, Mills, and Parsons, the author presents a challenging theory of elites that provides the framework for her examination of their coexistence, their social origins, and their rise and decline. The elites discussed here include political, diplomatic, economic, and military, as well as scientific, cultural, and religious ones. Systematically, the author surveys available empirical data concerning American society, and selected materials on Great Britain, Germany, the Soviet Union, and the developing nations of Asia and Africa.

Written with clarity and distinction, *Beyond the Ruling Class* remains a thorough and provocative treatment, rich in empirical insights, of a subject that will compel the attention of political scientists, sociologists, and historians concerned with themes of power, influence, and leadership in national and international life. Her new introduction to *Beyond the Ruling Class* is at once an appraisal of the current status of elite studies and a careful self-evaluation of her efforts.

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