

**People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
University of Tlemcen**



**Faculty of Letters and Languages
Department of English
Section of English**

**Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart: A Comparative
Study of Leadership and Legacy.**

Dissertation submitted to the Department of English as a partial fulfilment of
the requirements for Master's degree in Literature and Civilisation

Presented by

Mr. TAIBA Mohamed Ishak

Supervised by

Dr. Souad HAMIDI

Board of Examiners

Pr. Kheladi Mohamed	Prof	President
Dr. Hamidi Souad	MCA	Supervisor
Dr. Amel Guerroudj	MCB	Examiner

2024 - 2025

DEDICATION

**To my beloved parents and my two beautiful sisters.
and Miss Safaa Hamlili.**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation to my supervisor Dr. Souad HAMIDI for helping me write this dissertation which would not have been possible without her.

I would also like to thank the jury Pr. Kheladi Mohamed and Dr. Amel Guerroudj for their kind efforts reviewing my work.

ABSTRACT

The English monarchy stands as a lasting symbol of leadership, continuity, and national identity, shaped by monarchs whose reigns mark turning points in its evolution. This dissertation explores the leadership of two key medieval rulers—Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart—whose contrasting styles reflect different approaches to kingship during periods of war, reform, and political tension. The study aims to analyze how their leadership in military strategy, governance, and diplomacy reflects broader themes of medieval power and responsibility. It addresses the following questions: How do their leadership styles differ? How do these differences shape their historical legacies? And what can their reigns reveal about the nature of medieval kingship? Using historical sources, leadership theories, and academic interpretations, this dissertation applies a qualitative comparative method. The research draws on frameworks such as trait theory, behavioral theory, and contingency theory to examine each king's actions and long-term impact. The findings suggest that Alfred's leadership is marked by reform, education, and strategic governance, while Richard's is characterized by external military ambition and chivalric image. Both rulers respond to the cultural and political expectations of their time, shaped by religious duty, loyalty systems, and public perception. This study concludes that leadership in the medieval period is context-based, influenced by both personality and historical circumstance. Through this comparison, the dissertation highlights how individual rulers contribute to national memory and evolving concepts of kingship.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	I
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	II
ABSTRACT	III
GENERAL INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF LEADERSHIP	
1.1 Introduction to Leadership Theories	5
1.1.1 Definition and Key Features of Leadership Theories	5
1.1.2 Theories Most Applicable to Medieval Kingship	6
1.2 Theoretical Foundations of Leadership	7
1.2.1 Trait Theory	8
1.2.2 Behavioral Theory	8
1.2.3 Contingency and Situational Leadership Theories	9
1.2.4 Charismatic Leadership Theory	10
1.2.5 Application to Medieval Leadership	11
1.3 Literature on Medieval Kingship	11
1.3.1 Previous Studies on Medieval Leadership	12
1.3.2 Leadership Qualities of Medieval Rulers	13
1.3.3 Cultural/Political Contexts of Leadership Styles	14
1.3.4 'Mirrors for Princes' Genre	14
1.3.5 Feudalism's Influence on Kingship	15
1.3.6 Secular vs. Ecclesiastical Authority	16
1.4 Alfred the Great in Literature	17
1.4.1 Existing Scholarship on Alfred's Leadership	18

1.4.2 Key Traits and Actions	19
1.4.3 Scholarly Interpretations of His Legacy	20
1.5 Richard the Lionheart in Literature	20
1.5.1 Existing Scholarship on Richard's Leadership	21
1.5.2 Military and Crusading Leadership	22
1.5.3 Debate on His Domestic Rule	23
1.6 Comparative Literature on Medieval Leadership	24
1.6.1 Existing Comparative Studies	24
1.6.2 Contrasting Alfred and Richard's Styles	25
1.6.3 Insights on Differences in Governance	26
1.7 Conclusion	27
 CHAPTER TWO: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ALFRED THE GREAT AND RICHARD THE LIONHEART	
2.1 Introduction to Comparative Analysis	29
2.1.1 Purpose of Comparison	30
2.1.2 Analytical Framework Using Leadership Theories	30
2.2 Military Strategies and Warfare Leadership	31
2.2.1 Alfred's Defensive Innovations vs. Richard's Offensive Tactics	32
2.2.2 Use of Force and Leadership Under Pressure	33
2.3 Government and Administration	34
2.3.1 Alfred's Legal Reforms and Kingdom-Building	34
2.3.2 Richard's Limited Governance and Reliance on Deputies	35
2.4 Diplomacy and Political Maneuvering	35
2.4.1 Alfred's Peace with Vikings and Internal Consolidation	37
2.4.2 Richard's Crusade Diplomacy and European Relations	37

2.5 Legacy and Historical Perceptions	38
2.5.1 Alfred as "Father of the English Nation"	39
2.5.2 Richard's Romanticized Crusader-King Image	40
2.6 Application of Leadership Theories	41
2.6.1 Trait Theory Comparison	42
2.6.2 Behavioral and Contingency Approaches	43
2.7 Conclusion	43
GENERAL CONCLUSION	46
BIBLIOGRAPHY	48

General Introduction

1. General Introduction

Leadership has never been a focal point throughout history, particularly if one takes into account the authority of monarchs and how they managed to shape the fate of their nations. Of the many historical leaders whose leadership has been studied extensively, Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart are two monarchs whose reign and leadership have had a permanent influence upon British history. Both of these kings reigned during challenging times, but their styles of leadership, their decisions, and their legacies are all quite different, and therefore they are ideal subjects for comparative analysis. This dissertation will examine the leadership styles of Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart through the application of contemporary leadership theories to assess how their leadership decisions were shaped by the politics, society, and conflicts of their own era.

This topic was chosen because medieval leadership - that of these two in particular - was complex and multi-faceted. Alfred the Great, who ruled from 871 to 899, is best known for his conquests, his promotion of learning, and his reforms that established the foundation of the kingdom of England. On the other hand, Richard the Lionheart, the king from 1189 to 1199, is most legendary for his campaigns, especially the Third Crusade, and his profile as a warrior king. While Alfred is renowned for his wisdom and strategy in uniting and defending his kingdom, Richard is typically regarded as a more stereotypical medieval king, whose behavior was guided by war chivalry values and honor. The contrast between these two leaders provides an opportunity to examine how different leadership styles and decisions can emerge from different circumstances, even within the same medieval setting.

The importance of this study lies not only in understanding the leadership of two of medieval England's most renowned kings but also in contributing to discussions about how their actions can teach us today about leadership debates in all spheres, from politics to industry. Both Richard and Alfred's decisions as leaders determined the course of England, and knowing how they made these decisions provides valuable insight into the effectiveness of alternative leadership working under extreme pressure. This research aims to contribute to existing literature on medieval leadership through the provision of a comparative study utilizing modern theories of leadership. While scholars have examined the lives of Alfred and Richard, there has been less attempt to

compare their leadership styles based on current theory. By studying how these two kings handled the problems of their time, this dissertation will be able to find the similarities and differences between their leadership styles and help towards an enhanced understanding of the complexities of medieval kingship.

Methodologically, this research will primarily involve comparative analysis of the historical documents and sources present relating to both kings. Key primary sources, including The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for Alfred and Richard's letters and reports during the Third Crusade, will be the foundations to determine what they did in leadership. Secondary sources, in the form of recent biographies and scholarly journal articles on leadership, will then be used to account for these actions in the contexts of contemporary theories of leadership.

The research questions for this dissertation are as follows:

1. How did their leadership styles differ in their approaches to military strategy, governance, and diplomacy?
2. In what ways did Alfred and Richard's leadership impact their legacies and perceptions of kingship in both their time and in later historical evaluations?
3. How do Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart's leadership styles reflect the broader themes of medieval kingship, and what do their reigns teach us about leadership in a historical context?

These questions give rise to three hypotheses:

1. Alfred led through internal reforms and defense; Richard led through external conquest and military campaigns.
2. Alfred's leadership built a lasting national legacy; Richard's leadership shaped a romantic but less stable legacy.
3. Their styles reflect key medieval kingship themes like war, governance, religion and personal power.

The dissertation is structured into two main chapters. The first chapter provides the theoretical framework, reviewing relevant leadership theories and previous scholarly interpretations of medieval kingship. It also surveys existing literature on both Alfred and Richard, setting the stage for the practical analysis to follow. The second chapter offers a comparative analysis of their leadership, examining their policies, decisions, personal traits, and the historical consequences of their rule. Special attention will be paid to how each king addressed the specific challenges of their time, and how these

actions shaped their reputations and historical legacy.

Through detailed examination of Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart, this study aims to demonstrate that leadership is not a static quality but a context-dependent construct shaped by time, place, and personality.

Chapter One

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework of Leadership

1.1. Introduction to Leadership Theories

Leadership theories have evolved over centuries to explain how individuals influence groups toward shared goals. As Northouse defines, "Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group to achieve common objectives" (3). Early theories like the "Great Man" approach (Carlyle 10) emphasized innate traits, but modern scholarship recognizes leadership as a dynamic interplay of personality, behavior, and context. This shift is critical for analyzing medieval kings like Alfred and Richard, whose leadership was shaped by both personal qualities and historical demands.

Trait Theory, however, focuses on characteristics like intelligence, charisma, and decisiveness. As the professor Ralph M. Stogdill insisted, "a person does not become a leader by virtue of the possession of some combination of traits" and suggested a contribution of context and social environment (Stogdill 259).

Behavioral Theories, proposed by the German psychologist Kurt Lewin, focus on what leaders do instead of who they are, breaking down leadership styles into authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire. Subsequent advancements, however, such as Transformational Leadership, emphasize the ability of a leader to inspire and energize followers with vision and credibility.

Transformational leadership is explained by the American historian James MacGregor Burns as "a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents" (Burns 20).

These different theoretical models provide tools to examine such historical figures as Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart, whose leadership styles had aspects of both personality traits and responses to their sociopolitical situations.

1.1.1. Definition and Key Features of Leadership Theories

Leadership theories are the frameworks by which scholars seek to explain how and why certain individuals become leaders and how they influence others to achieve shared goals. As author Peter G. Northouse explains, "Leadership is a process whereby

Chapter One : Literature Review and Theoretical Framework of Leadership

an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (Northouse 3).

Trait Theories presume effective leaders possess internal traits—such as intelligence, integrity, and self-confidence—that distinguish them from non-leaders; since Ralph M. Stogdill wrote, "certain personal factors are consistently associated with leadership effectiveness" (Stogdill 36). On the other hand, Behavioral Theories shift the focus away from what leaders are and toward what they do and seek patterns of task-oriented vs. people-oriented behavior (Blake and Mouton 51).

Contingency and Situational Theories, specifically Fiedler's LPC model, postulate that "there is no single best way to lead; effectiveness depends on the match between a leader's style and situational demands" (Fiedler 150).

Finally, Transformational Leadership emphasizes the power of the leader to inspire and challenge followers by virtue, a process James MacGregor Burns terms "a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents" (Burns 20). Collectively, these theories present complementary perspectives with which to interpret the exercise of power and influence, offering a solid set of tools for analysis of how medieval monarchs like Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart steered the diverse demands of their times.

1.1.2. Theories Most Applicable to Studying Medieval Kingship.

Certain theories are particularly relevant for studying medieval kingship. The Great Man Theory (Carlyle 10) aligns with chroniclers' focus on extraordinary rulers, while Trait Theory (Stogdill 36) explains how virtues like justice and piety became associated with legitimate kingship. Transformational Leadership, as conceptualized by Burns, offers a framework for understanding Alfred's efforts to elevate his kingdom morally and intellectually through education reforms (20). Meanwhile, Weber's Charismatic Leadership theory illuminates Richard's ability to inspire loyalty through heroic exploits (358).

Finally, Situational and Contingency Theories, most exemplified by Fiedler's LPC model, encourage us to keep in mind that "there is no single best way to lead;

Chapter One : Literature Review and Theoretical Framework of Leadership

effectiveness depends on matching style to situational demands," an easy lesson gleaned from Alfred's defense of Wessex's wartime and diplomatic settings and those of Richard's Crusader crusades (Fiedler 150). Together, these theories create a multidimensional toolkit for making sense of how medieval monarchs were able to balance personal integrity, divine approbation, and pragmatic adaptation to the constantly shifting crises of their reign.

1.1.3. Theoretical Foundations of Leadership

In addition to specifying the prevailing traits or situational variables, other models try to explain the process through which leaders interact with subordinates and the reasons why certain strategies work in certain situations. Transformational Leadership, originally explained by James MacGregor Burns, emphasizes a process "whereby leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation" (Burns 20). Bernard M. Bass expounded this by describing transformational leaders as individuals who "engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation" (Bass and Avolio 6). Transactional Leadership, on the other hand, is based on exchanges—rewarding subordinates for goal accomplishment and is summarized in Bass declaration that "transactional leaders focus on clarifying roles and task requirements, using rewards and punishments to stimulate performance" (Bass and Avolio 5).

Servant Leadership, as embodied by Robert K. Greenleaf, reverses the traditional pyramid on its axis by requiring "the servant-leader is servant first... It

Chapter One : Literature Review and Theoretical Framework of Leadership

begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first" (Greenleaf 27), a paradigm appropriately suited to investigating monarchs who presented themselves as shepherds of their folk.

Finally, Situational Leadership, which was developed by Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard, suggests that "there is no single best style of leadership.". Instead, effective leadership is task-specific, and the best leaders are those who adapt their leadership style to the maturity (or readiness) of followers" (Hersey and Blanchard 36). Combined, these models provide a formidable arsenal for medieval kings' analysis: they allow us to consider not just the individual virtues of Richard the Lionheart and Alfred the Great but also their behaviors, follower relations, and adaptive responses to the ever-changing imperatives of war, governance, and diplomacy.

1.2.1. Trait Theory

Trait Theory posits that leadership is based on fixed traits like intelligence, perseverance, and charisma; Ralph M. Stogdill noted that "one does not become a leader by virtue of the possession of some combination of traits" but by how those traits relate to situational requirements (Stogdill 35).

In terms of medieval kingship, this is useful for contextualizing how figures such as Alfred the Great or Richard the Lionheart were remembered, as well as the ways in which their legacies became idealized. Alfred, for example, was remembered for his wisdom, piety, and sense of justice, themes emphasized by chroniclers like Asser, whereas Richard was idealized for his bravery and swordsmanship, a message conveyed in the *Itinerarium Peregrinorum*. Certainly, the theory disregards situations of other factors and events, it still provides useful context for how leadership traits contributed to the legacy and image of medieval kingship.

1.2.2. Behavioral Theory

While trait theory signifies who a leader is, behavioral theory signifies what a leader does. Increasingly developed in the mid-20th century, behavioral theory posits that leadership is not part of one's core self, but learned through observation, training,

Chapter One : Literature Review and Theoretical Framework of Leadership

and practice. The central tenet is that there are observable actions that are distinguished effective leaders from ineffective leaders. One of the earliest influential studies in behavioral theory were those done at Ohio State University, and they contributed to identifying two superordinate dimensions of leadership behavior: initiating structure (task-oriented behavior) and consideration (people-oriented behavior) (Stogdill and Coons).

The Michigan studies similarly found leaders who supported their employees needs and established a supportive environment were more effective leaders. These findings opened up to the perception of leadership as a set of actions that developed dynamically in the moment rather than existing as a set of static traits. As John W. Gardner (2006) noted, "Leadership is the act of persuasion or example by which an individual induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers" (pp. 9).

In the case of medieval kingship, behavioral theory is valuable because it allows us to examine how kings such as Alfred and Richard actively led the people they ruled through military decision-making, public speeches, judgments in royal courts of law, and as patrons of Christian worship; thus leadership was a lived and visible performance, not just a characteristic connected to one's lineage or character.

1.2.3. Contingency and Situational Leadership Theories

Contingency and situational leadership theories assert that effective leadership is not about a universal set of traits or behaviors but rather adapting to specific circumstances under particular conditions. The psychologist Fred Fiedler's contingency theory argues that the success of a leader depends on how well a leader's style "fits" the situational context, comprised such elements as leader-member relations, task structure, and the leader's position power (Fiedler).

In contrast, in Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership theory, the emphasis is on how the leader modifies their style based on the maturity or readiness of the followers. Historical studies of leaders faced with changing political, military, and religious pressures solidify these two theories. For example, King Alfred's ability to change his own defensive strategy as the Viking invasions progressed and Richard

Chapter One : Literature Review and Theoretical Framework of Leadership

the Lionheart's ability to change approaches on the battlefield during the Crusades, are both examples of how effective leadership is driven by context. As Blanchard says, "Effective leaders must be able to adapt their leadership style to fit the development level of the followers they are trying to influence" (Leadership and the One Minute Manager).

These theories help to understand kingship in medieval times by providing a framework to think about how adaptive thinking became more important than one strict style of leadership if one was to maintain authority because of the conditions of medieval rule.

1.2.4. Charismatic Leadership Theory

The Charismatic Leadership Theory identifies the personal charm, vision, and ability to get followers to be devoted and loyal to a leader. The meaning of charismatic leadership derives from Max Weber and his method of sociology. According to Weber, charisma is a "gift of grace," one that separates certain individuals from others and legitimized authority based on extraordinary personal qualities and symbolic power (Weber 241). In medieval times, charisma represented much broader political association with religious and cultural ideals about kingship. For example, Alfred the Great was often portrayed as divinely chosen, wise, and respected for his intellect and demonstrated moral leadership.

Richard the Lionheart's courage during the Crusades and knightly image fascinated those in his time and after, which contributed to his heroic status and legendary stature. Conger and Kanungo conclude that charismatic leaders are able to simultaneously, "articulate an appealing vision," as well as use "unconventional strategies" to achieve their goals (Conger and Kanungo 80).

The charismatic leadership theory illustrates how some medieval monarchs were able to create legitimacy with their jobs in ways that extended beyond structural formalities based on myth-making and administrated displays of courage or piety. Generally, the charismatic leadership theory is uniquely equipped to consider how kings like Alfred and Richard were able to build reputations and, subsequently, reigns that utilized personality as much as policy.

Chapter One : Literature Review and Theoretical Framework of Leadership

1.2.5. Application of These Theories to Medieval Leadership

Modern theories of leadership can complement the study of medieval kingship, such as Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart, by providing additional understanding of their style and how it influenced their legacy. It is important to consider that these kings' contexts were vastly different but that there are established leadership theoretical constructs, for example, Trait Theory, Behavioral Theory, Contingency Theory, and Charismatic Leadership Theory, that can help provide frameworks through which can make sense of how these two kings understood power. If taken Alfred's focus on education, law, and religion as a king, we can easily see how he operated as a behavioral theorist, specifically recognizing the importance of the moral and intellectual development of his subjects (Abels 112).

Alfred's adaptability throughout the Viking invasions, which resulted in some new fortified towns and the repurposing and reorganization of his military, would be analogous to Situational Leadership. Richard's participation in the Crusades and his construction of a warrior-king archetype for himself would fit within the Charismatic Leadership model—the fearless warrior king who was revered in the homeland and inspired internationally (Gillingham 190). Although these theories or models are ultimately modern constructs, it is clear how these theoretical frameworks provide valuable context for how medieval kings might have adapted to changing circumstances, influenced others, or functioned strategically. To paraphrase Yukl, leadership is analogous, as leadership is not based solely on timeframe, but on context, purpose, and relationships with individuals. Each of these circumstances can also be easily found throughout both kings' respective reigns (Yukl 23). Thinking about medieval kingship in terms of the theoretical frameworks established above provides scholars with more tools through which to assess how Alfred and Richard understood their roles and created legacies that persisted beyond their lives.

1.3. Literature on Leadership in Medieval Kingship

Recent studies of medieval kingship increasingly identify the facets of kings that go beyond bloodline or even military might, namely the qualities of leadership. professor Frank Barlow seeks to establish the significance of personal charisma and

Chapter One : Literature Review and Theoretical Framework of Leadership

the implementation of governance as important determinants in kingship: "much depends on personal qualities rather than birth" (Barlow 215 *The Feudal Kingdom of England*), and Richard Abels identifies Alfred the Great as defined by lead intellectual work and adaptability during times of crisis (Abels 134 *Alfred the Great*). Professor John Gillingham casts Richard the Lionheart as a warrior king that fulfilled his leadership role through military performance and a carefully cultivated built reputation (Gillingham 98 *Richard I*).

The collective perspective on the study of kingship also draws upon scholars such as Marc Bloch, and Geoffrey Koziol, who have focused on the symbolic and performative while on medieval kingship. Overall, the scholarship represents a nuanced understanding of medieval kingship, and more than the social contract of divine right and force it ultimately relied upon the king's leadership, strategy, and presentation to the public.

1.3.1. Review of Previous Studies on Leadership During the Medieval Period

Medieval leadership has emerged over the past decades as a unique field of inquiry, one that takes into account more the individual characteristics and political strategizing of kings than their role as mere military commanders. Numerous authors have taken into account the multifaceted nature of leadership during the Middle Ages, particularly the way in which kings balanced military planning and diplomacy against ruling.

A key piece of research by Stephen D. White (*The Medieval World* 79) plots the work of kings ruling their kingdoms through charisma and diplomacy, intimating that leadership in medieval times was as much about managing relations and alliances as it was about emerging victorious on the battlefield. Similarly, Michael Jones' research (*Medieval Kingship and the Church* 121) highlights the relationship between kings and the church, indicating how medieval rulers managed to be both temporal and spiritual leaders.

Chapter One : Literature Review and Theoretical Framework of Leadership

Additionally, John Gillingham's *Richard the Lionheart* (Richard I 106) examines the impact of Richard's military expeditions and his absence in England on his reign and how his leadership was more defined by his symbolic presence than by his effective leadership. On the other hand, writers like Janet L. Nelson (*Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred* 68) opine that Alfred the Great's leadership was built on intellectual work and administrative reform, and therefore he was a leader who reconciled the challenge of being a military leader with establishing a state framework that endured.

Researchers have also spoken about the role played by medieval kingship in how leadership was perceived in the broader context of medieval society. Some authors, for example, like Norman Cantor (*The Civilization of the Middle Ages* 227), describe how the character traits of kings influenced their legacies, stressing that leadership was not just the wielding of power but also the creation of a royal image that could withstand historical scrutiny.

1.3.2. Analysis of Leadership Qualities Attributed to Medieval Rulers

Medieval monarchs were often editorily characterized by some combination of military skill, religious faith, and practicality in the form of political and social judgement and hence monarchical leadership was often the emphasis of bravery, fidelity, justice, and practical judgement, which together formed the legitimacy of kingship. For instance, Alfred the Great is frequently recognized for his enlightened reforms civil engagement and military contribution against Viking incursions, which demonstrate an exact style of leadership and construction of bred fear against a presented enemy (Nelson). Alternatively, Richard the Lionheart is represented by gregariousness, courageous military engagements against the Saracens and a portrayal of chivalric combat (Gillingham). These portrayals reflect the medieval sense that all kings were both divinely successful and possessed the earthly capacity to lead. Yet, leadership was more than ruling, it was also about establishing loyalty, managing the complex duties required of a feudal lord, and updating or confirming the legacy of his rule, which would later be portrayed by chroniclers and acts of symbolism

Chapter One : Literature Review and Theoretical Framework of Leadership

(Kantorowicz). All these qualities informed notions of kingship and were employed to legitimize or critique a ruler, during his reign and through long after he ceased to rule.

1.3.3. The Influence of Cultural, Political, and Military Contexts on Leadership Styles

The leadership styles of medieval kings were inextricably connected to the leadership's cultural, political, and military circumstances. For instance, Alfred the Great ruled during a significant period of threat from Viking invasions that placed his kingdom at risk which limited his focus as a leader primarily to defense. As the restraints of his time started to diminish, he developed a focus on education and his role as a lawmaker that aimed to unify his kingdom and the political power of this historic Anglo-Saxon identity under Christian beliefs (Nelson).

His leadership arose ultimately out of a need to retain and preserve Anglo-Saxon identity as a historical actor and to create political power in his Christian focus as king. Conversely, it was during the peak of the Crusades when Richard the Lionheart ruled and, in place of defense being his primary concern, war and military glory defined the kingship that was effective, along with the combination of religion's effects, as fortitude and zeal merged together defining effective kingship through martial valor and personal bravery (Gillingham).

Similarly, while the structures of feudalism affected their power as king, Alfred was concerned with putting together a kingdom that was centralized, and Richard had to contend with anti-baronial sentiment while accumulating personal costs while absent from England. As a result, how each king interacted with the substantive historical and social settings would affect their presentation of kingship and their legacy as kings (Kantorowicz).

1.3.4. The '*Mirrors for Princes*' Genre and Its Impact on Leadership Ideals

The genre *Mirrors for Princes* were instrumental in forming medieval ideas of ideal kingship. The books, usually written by clerics or scholars, were essentially statutes, with moral, political and ethical advice for rulers. These were written in the context of their contemporary cultural values, combining Christian doctrine with

Chapter One : Literature Review and Theoretical Framework of Leadership

practical instruction for ruling. The general construction of the author's kingship included many of the customary virtues of justice, wisdom, humility, and piety — virtuous traits of character expected of every successful and divinely ordained ruler. As stated by Nederman, *Mirrors for Princes* did not only deal with theorizing about kings, they tended to function as prescriptive templates for kings and court behavior. These books were written to define some particulars of how one ought to make decisions about leadership (Nederman 62).

For someone like Alfred the Great, the fundamentals contained in *Mirrors for Princes* fit quite well in the representation of him provided as a wise and reformist king. There may not have been many outfits of *Mirrors for Princes* available in the time of Alfred, the spirit of the genre is present in his emphasis on moral responsibility and the education of rulers for the good societies. The later medieval personality of king such as Richard the Lionheart would have been judged more likely by the ideas featured in *Mirrors for Princes*. However, the warrior-like leadership that Richard demonstrated was sometimes thought to conflict with the contemplative and temperate just ruler his genre espoused. As Louis XIV notes, the ideas encased in *Mirrors of Princes* gave a channel through which kings could be both venerated and condemned in history and literature (Lewis 148). The genre's ability to endure its relevance is indicative of how literature helped contribute to the theoretical basis of kingship in the medieval context.

1.3.5. Feudalism and its Influence on Kingship

Feudalism refers to the hierarchical social and political system that dominated medieval Europe, where land was exchanged for loyalty and service. At its core, it structured society around relationships derived from the holding of land in exchange for military and political obligations. Kings granted land to nobles, who in turn had vassals and knights under them, all bound by oaths of loyalty and mutual responsibility.

Feudalism had a major influence on medieval kingship, both in theory and practice, and functioned as a mechanism designed to constrain a ruler's power. The authority of a monarch was inextricably linked to a web of vassals, landowners, and

Chapter One : Literature Review and Theoretical Framework of Leadership

nobles. There is little doubt that the framework of feudalism shaped how kings ruled, governed, and exerted their authority. Rather than having full command, kings had to negotiate their authority within a decentralised environment. Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart functioned within the same conceptual framework of feudalism but had different experiences and made different choices about its role. Alfred, for example, used his authority to apply increasing pressure for centralised control in two ways. Alfred heavily emphasised the law codes, and used them as an occasion to instil a sense of loyalty to the crown rather than to the local lords. Alfred used law codes and cultural reconstruction, in part, to re-establish himself within a feudal hierarchy by tying lords and subjects to a shared narrative of English identity (Abels 98)

Richard's kingship, on the other hand, was firmly entrenched in the traditional commitments of a warrior king's feudal obligations. His reliance on the barons for funding as well as support of the Crusades coupled with his frequent absence from England meant that he had no administrative royal reform loyal to him, and in relation to his matters at home, loyalty appeared to rest on personal and military reputation rather than a sound political administration of England. As Hollister put it, Richard's ability to assert even rudimentary control over England in his absence demonstrates how feudal ties and reputation in lieu of direct forms of governance allowed him to accomplish his aims (Hollister 207). In summary, feudalism not only shaped how medieval kings exercised power, it shaped the power combinations that their societies expected of them.

1.3.6. The Interplay Between Secular and Ecclesiastical Authority

In medieval Europe, kingship was a political office in which the political dimension interlinked with the Church. The relationship between secular authority and ecclesiastical authority determined how kings would act and justify their actions. Kings such as Alfred the Great depended on religious institutions not just to legitimize their spiritual foundation (moral authority), but also their managerial and organizational authority. Alfred utilized the services and expertise of bishops and monks to provide structure and assistance as he worked to revive learning, law, and moral reform for Wessex. According to Keynes and Lapidge, Alfred's ability to invoke

Chapter One : Literature Review and Theoretical Framework of Leadership

church-based moral authority through Christian values only served to unify his people more than any prior king, and provided a deeper ideological foundation for his reign (Keynes and Lapidge 125).

Richard the Lionheart engaged with the Church more tactically, as his actions and participation in the Crusades dictated his relationship with the Church. His leadership of the Third Crusade engaged the support of the Church, which publicly blessed the Church's war weary diversions, to think of him as not just a knight leading a military campaign with a massive turn-out of men without their authority, but as defenders of Christendom. Richard's relationship with the Church also capitulated into conflict with leaders that were potentially working for him. Richard even made enemies with Church clerics in terms of their appointments, and demands for financial relief from taxes. His reign demonstrates the negotiated relationship medieval kings had with secular and Church officials, because he was often walking a fine line between cooperation and control from ecclesiastical leaders. And while Gillingham argues that Richard did respect the Church's authority, he clarified that Richard's priorities around governance and diplomacy focused on royal not Church interests (Gillingham 192). The enactment of ecclesiastical and secular powers worked to shape the political culture of kingship in the medieval era, and determine how kings would rule, rationalize their rule, and face challenges from within their government and other kings.

1.4. Alfred the Great: Leadership in the Literature

Alfred the Great ruled Wessex from 871 to 899 and is widely regarded as one of the most influential early English monarchs. He is best known for organizing resistance against Viking invasions, promoting literacy, reforming the legal system, and laying the foundations for a unified English identity. Much of what we know about Alfred's reign is preserved in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, a collection of annals compiled during and after his rule. The Chronicle offers a near-contemporary narrative of military campaigns, reforms, and political events, often emphasizing Alfred's role as a wise and God-fearing leader. Though shaped by royal patronage and religious context, it remains a key historical source for assessing his leadership and vision for a

Chapter One : Literature Review and Theoretical Framework of Leadership

unified England. His leadership has been the subject of extensive scholarly interest, with a particular focus on how his reforms contributed to long-term political and cultural stability..

Scholarly literature frequently highlights Alfred the Great as embodying the best model of wise and balanced kingship, especially in terms of juggling military resilience with cultural vision. Historians such as Simon Keynes have characterized Alfred as a tactician who was able to repel the Viking invasions while also instilling the groundwork for one England, through legal reform paired with revival in learning.

His investment in learning, demonstrated in his translations of significant Latin texts into Old English, is understood as a means to improve governance through knowledge and moral purpose (Keynes). Scholars frequently identify Alfred's ability to balance practical governance with a spiritual and intellectual vocation as a differentiating characteristic of Alfred's reign, making him a figure of distinction in medieval kingship.

1.4.1. Overview of Existing Literature on Alfred's Leadership

The literature around Alfred the Great presents him as one of the most engaged, revered, and far-sighted leaders in early English history. It is an assemblage of scholarship that emphasizes, first and foremost, his intellectual engagement, his piety, and his commitment to administrative reform. British historian Janet L. Nelson maintains that Alfred was committed to law reform, aligning the law with Christian teaching, advancing education, and reconstructing the military (Nelson 87). Primary in Nelson's assessment of Alfred is his commitment to unifying Wessex, and she portrays him as a ruler guided by moral authority and practical governance.

Patrick Wormald uses King Alfred's Book of Laws to establish Alfred's significant contributions to a legally unified English identity rooted in Christian ethics (Wormald 112). Simon Keynes, in his studies on Alfred as a nation-builder, emphasizes how written texts and translation projects were central to promoting literacy and religious cohesion in Wessex and beyond (Keynes 64). According to Keynes, the act of writing served a greater national purpose, blending cultural advancement with political unity.

Chapter One : Literature Review and Theoretical Framework of Leadership

This scholarship portrays Alfred not merely as a wartime king, but as a thoughtful reformer and visionary. While more recent scholarship has questioned some of the heroic portrayals of Alfred, both Wormald and Keynes reaffirm the consensus that Alfred's leadership embodied a blend of ambition, religious conviction, and administrative pragmatism.

1.4.2. Key Traits and Actions Attributed to Alfred's kingship

The kingship of Alfred the Great is recognized as a variety of functions, representing a blending of military action and cultural-religious reform. As a military commander, he was primarily concerned with defending against Viking invasions, especially with the crucial victory at Edington in 878, which required both strategic forward thinking and resoluteness; ultimately, it made Wessex a bastion of resistance (Abels 123).

Alfred realized the necessity to organize armies differently and set about to do so, establishing clearly-defined burhs throughout Wessex, as well as a standing army, and initiating a more connected defensive strategy (Hill 88). However, as well as a military commander, Alfred was also a king worried about national, cultural, and religious identity. After a major ecclesiastical restructuring in Wessex, Alfred organized a sizable colonial revival of learning and translated a number of Latin texts into Old English. He also invited learned scholars to his court to become noble clerics, take on a national education curriculum, and to be trained in to the duties of the clerical offices (Keynes and Lapidge 29). All of these actions reflected his desire to build a model of kingship centered on wisdom, justice, and Christian morality.

He attached written laws to his kingdom in an attempt to rationally settle disputes, a common moral vision and legal frame of reference, and defined the moral limitations on his reign, especially where respect for others moral and spiritual leadership is concerned. Ultimately, Alfred's actions represent his roles as both a warrior, and a reformer- his kingship is characterized by a fusion of military action and legislative means, leaving a long lasting impact on kingship and the English monarchy.

1.4.3. Scholarly Interpretations Of Alfred's Leadership Approach and His Legacy

Alfred the Great is considered one of the most forward-thinking kings of England and many writers have called Alfred's many aspects of governing (military leadership, educational reform, and legalist) as five to the nation of England (Abels 145). According to historian Richard Abels, Alfred's rule is one of military perseverance, learning, and legality. Abels argues that Alfred has a unique blend of both military leadership and statecraft (146).

Alfred hailed praise not simply in his defence of the kingdom and people from Viking invasion, but as noted by Keynes and Lapidge, he really began an intellectual and cultural revival; advocating for the translation of Latin texts and elevating literacy (25). Alfred's legalism in codifying laws and interfacing a new military organization in creating burhs (fortified settlements) has been interpreted as bureaucratic governance and state agency in formative governance. Most scholars would agree that Alfred's kingship set important and necessary building blocks for furthering an English identity, as noted by David Pratt, Alfred provided "ideologically transformative leadership,... which was built on Christian Kingship and pragmatism" (Pratt 33). His legacy exists not simply on military endeavors, but for his ideals of a unified and educated kingdom.

1.5. Richard the Lionheart: Leadership in the Literature

Richard the Lionheart reigned as King of England from 1189 to 1199 and is remembered primarily for his military exploits during the Third Crusade. Celebrated for his courage and chivalric image, Richard became a symbol of heroic kingship. During his reign, Richard spent the majority of his time abroad, particularly in the Middle East leading the Third Crusade. His absence from England left the kingdom under the administration of his younger brother, John Lackland, whose governance later sparked political unrest and weakened royal authority. This substitution and Richard's limited involvement in domestic matters have been widely discussed by scholars when evaluating his effectiveness as a monarch.

Chapter One : Literature Review and Theoretical Framework of Leadership

Richard the Lionheart is stereotyped in historical narratives as the epitome of chivalric and warrior leadership. The scholar John Gillingham thinks highly of Richard as a military leader when leading the Third Crusade, presenting him as a master of combat that acted with courage and intelligence, with devastating results for his enemies that left him with a reputation beyond his own time. Unlike Alfred, Richard comes under attack from scholars for being so unaware of the limitations of his domestic governance, in large part because he was always abroad during his rule, leaving domestic governance to others (Gillingham).

For those historians with a positive view of Richard's life and death, they admire the discipline he had in still using battlefield risk, and even the fearless character he portrayed. However, the very limit of Richard's leadership was a lack of long-term perspective, ultimately allowing the kingdom to define its success in temporal and tactical terms, without any constitutional horticulture, such as held sway with more practical medieval leaders.

1.5.1. Overview of Existing Literature on Richard's Leadership

Richard I, known as Richard Coeur de Lion or "the Lionheart," was born in 1157 in Oxford, but his identity and rule were heavily shaped by his Norman-French heritage. He was the third son of King Henry II of England and Eleanor of Aquitaine—one of the most powerful duchesses in medieval Europe. Raised and educated primarily in Aquitaine, Richard spoke French and was culturally Norman rather than English. His rule (1189–1199) reflected this continental orientation, as he spent most of his reign abroad, engaging in crusades and managing his French territories. As a result, Richard is often viewed not only as an English king but also as a feudal prince of the Angevin Empire, deeply influenced by the chivalric and military values of his Norman lineage.

The leadership of Richard I, who is known as 'Richard the Lionheart,' has continued to fascinate historians for generations, largely because of his pivotal role in the Third Crusade as a warrior king. The academic literature routinely emphasizes his military ability and personal courage, often placing him in the romantic idea of

Chapter One : Literature Review and Theoretical Framework of Leadership

chivalric kingship. John Gillingham, one of the leading scholars in Richard's studies, argues that while Richard's reign was short, and his years as king were marked by absences from England, Richard was an impressive military leader, and his strategic understanding was unquestionably good (Gillingham 102).

Other historians, including Thomas Asbridge, also point out that while Richard displayed both brilliance in battle, that brilliance was overshadowed by questionable diplomacy, especially in dealing with Saladin and the Muslim realm (Asbridge 301). The literature describes Richard's kingship as an adequate administrator who had little engagement with the administration of the realm, rather some scholars suggest he appointed competent ministers and exercised a firm hand over his vassals to maintain greater levels of royal authority during his reign. Alternatively, it is noted, Richard's reign can be criticized for the financial mismanagement of the English treasury in a reign riddled with excessive warfare cost and ransom.

1.5.2. Focus on Richard's Military and Crusading Leadership

Richard I is best known as a fighter and not as a monarch, and the majority of what has been written about him is related to his actions during the Third Crusade. There has been a consensus among most historians that Richard was filled with wonderful war wisdom and courage and therefore "the Lionheart." John Gillingham affirms that Richard played with a sensible strategy during the Siege of Acre as well as in the Battle of Arsuf and behaved with maximum energy in situations of pressure (Gillingham, Richard I 1,110–115). His leadership was characterized by a forceful personal presence on the battlefield, and his numerous contemporaries testified to his fearlessness and charisma. He fought from the front and personally engaged in combat, which made him a heroic figure among the troops.

Richard's military leadership was not just composed of personal bravery. He was also a good planner and strategist. Historian Thomas Asbridge identifies that Richard showed an understanding of logistical organization in the crusade, having his soldiers fully equipped and full of morale regardless of the severe conditions (Asbridge, The Crusades 303). What is apparent while considering his leadership when

Chapter One : Literature Review and Theoretical Framework of Leadership

viewed in the context of negotiation as well as confrontation with hostilities with Saladin is an individual who was perhaps aggressive and pragmatist as well. Richard's ability to keep things under control and respond to changing field situations allowed him to achieve wins, though eventually he failed in recapturing Jerusalem.

Some historians point to the long-term expense of Richard's military focus. While he solidified his place in history as a great crusader, his concentration on the battlefield deprived him of valuable time spent governing his own realm. His crusades depleted the financial coffers of England, and he spent only about half a year of his ten-year reign within England (Gillingham 89). This has led some historians to argue that Richard prioritized his own interests first above the well-being of his kingdom. However, his martial style of leading is still very much a part of how his reputation is remembered and contested within medieval history.

1.5.3. The Debate Around His Effectiveness as a Ruler Beyond the Battlefield

Richard the Lionheart is generally extolled for his military genius, his skill as a ruler outside of the battlefield is the subject to continuous scholarly debate. Most historians hold that Richard took little interest in governance at home, concentrating almost exclusively on warfare and crusading. As documented by John Gillingham, although Richard was an effective administrator when it was necessary, he largely entrusted the administration of England to others, such as William Longchamp and Hubert Walter, while he campaigned abroad (Richard I, 87–92). His long absences created unease at home and exerted immense strain on the purse of the kingdom, especially as a result of the cost of the Crusade and ransom after being taken prisoner in 1192.

But some writers suggest that Richard was not necessarily negligent. He had made his big decisions before he left for the Holy Land, including provision for his succession and the appointment of trustworthy men. As noted by Frank McLynn, Richard may not have been physically present, but his mode of rule was marked by a level of strategic control, and he desired his officials to stand in for him well (Richard

Chapter One : Literature Review and Theoretical Framework of Leadership

and John: Kings at War. 134). His administrative reforms and efforts to centralize royal authority—though less well remembered—were nonetheless successful.

However, the general consensus is still that Richard's reputation as a king is overshadowed by his reputation as a crusader. His inability to remain within his kingdom for extended periods of time, along with the financial strain that he left on England, has added to many people viewing him as a great soldier but a parochial leader. As historian Ralph V. Turner puts it, "Richard ruled like a knight, not a king" (Turner, *King John* 27), with the idea that his reasons were not that of leadership, but fame. The controversy then highlights the idea that leadership in the medieval era could be measured in far different ways—whether on the battlefields or courts.

1.6. Comparative Literature On Medieval Leadership

When comparing medieval kings and their leadership, scholars have generally focused on the differences between kings such as Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart by comparing their warfare focus, their style of governance, and their reputations. Frank Barlow (2000) and John Gillingham (2002) offer excellent examples of viewpoints contrasting Alfred's nation-building and legal reform, and Richard's military focus and crusading.

As comparative literature, these examples also show that kingship as a leadership concept was multifaceted in the medieval setting, resulting as much from character and belief, as the medieval world of war, religion and divided loyalties. The literature is useful in terms of understanding that while both kings are recognized icons of monarchy, their legacies emerge out of different expressions of kingship in an equal feudal and medieval setting.

1.6.1. Existing Comparative Studies Between Medieval Kings

Comparative scholarly studies of the medieval kings bring together figures like Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionhearted and note how the two are recognized for their kingship but distinctly different in how they dealt with their respective contexts

Chapter One : Literature Review and Theoretical Framework of Leadership

in time and place. Alfred is seen as more of a reformer with a sincere interest in domestic harmony, education, and law, while Richard continues to be noted for his military exploits and characteristic representation of the crusading king. Scholars across time have written about how these two kings are both respected and mythologized leaders, but that the goals of both leaders and their governing styles were couched in much different political goals.

As Bartlett describes, Alfred's leadership invokes "a vision of a unity and Christian kingship" that is rooted in framing a new structure of governance and learning whereas Richard's kingship is "inescapable from the legend of the crusader king who focused on warfare overseas" (Bartlett). Others, Carpenter and Gillingham in particular, were more focused on contemporary and later chronicles of both kings and the way in which historical narratives shaped the process of and our understanding of their reputations thereby shaping what can be identified as ideals of leadership. These comparisons demonstrate that kingship, as a type of leadership, was not a form of model-making, but was fluid leadership developed from many understandings of war, religion, and political necessity.

1.6.2. How Scholars Compare And Contrast The Leadership Styles of Alfred And Richard

Scholarly comparisons of Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart often occur through their different styles - how each king faced the unique challenges of their respective reigns. Alfred is often credited with an agenda of domestic reform including making laws, building military organizations, and reviving the education and culture of his people. Alfred is seen as a more holistic leader, concerned about the stability and spirituality of his kingdom. Richard's kingship is mostly defined by his series of external military campaigns, specifically his leadership role in the Third Crusade. Most scholars agree that Richard was an exceptional battlefield commander; however, Richard's domestic rule as king of England was largely absent because of the prolonged nature of his military expeditions and the lack of time and focus on governance

Chapter One : Literature Review and Theoretical Framework of Leadership

Some researchers describe Alfred as a "scholar-king." They believe Alfred viewed kingship as an awful moral responsibility. He was concerned about his people's education and the idea of justice. Alfred considered being a leader to be a sacred responsibility and improvement of his people's moral and worldly condition was part of his kingship. As historian Pauline Stafford (et al., 638) asserts, Alfred's legacy is grounded not only in his victories but also in his vision of a Christian, educated, and law-governed kingdom (Stafford). By contrast, Richard tends to be seen through a chivalric and militaristic lens. Whereas Richard embodied a personal courage and charisma that elevated him to be a quasi-legendary warrior-king, detractors criticize his rule of England as occupying a position of secondary importance. According to John Gillingham, Richard's kingship was articulated largely by the medieval ideal of honour and crusading, rather than and fair, rational, and long-term vision for England (Gillingham).

Despite these differences, some scholars also recognize common ground. Both kings were admired in their time for their power and courage, and each left a lasting legacy. While their leadership manifested in different arenas—Alfred in governance and reform, Richard in warfare and glory—both men embodied the expectations of medieval kingship. This comparative approach helps historians to understand the different nature of leadership during the period.

1.6.3. Insights From Historical Studies On The Differences In Their Leadership And Governance

While earlier sections examined the leadership of Alfred and Richard individually, historians often compare them to highlight broader themes of kingship rooted in their origins. Alfred the Great, as a king of the Anglo-Saxons, represents a native model of rulership grounded in cultural reform, administrative stability, and a long-term vision for a unified England. Richard the Lionheart, in contrast, is a Norman king whose identity and leadership style are shaped by continental politics, crusading warfare, and feudal obligations. Scholars like Simon Keynes interpret Alfred's leadership as morally guided and reformist, placing strong emphasis on legal order,

Chapter One : Literature Review and Theoretical Framework of Leadership

education, and unity within his realm (Keynes). On the other hand, historians such as Thomas Asbridge argue that Richard's approach reflects the chivalric and militaristic priorities of the Norman aristocracy, which left England politically fragmented during his reign (Asbridge). These comparative insights show how regional identity, cultural background, and historical context shaped the personal goals and public impact of each ruler's leadership style.

1.7. Conclusion

This chapter has established a multidimensional framework for comparing Alfred and Richard. While existing studies often examine these kings in isolation, the integration of trait, behavioral, and contingency theories enables a systematic analysis of their leadership adaptations. Historians like Jones and Asbridge very much centralize these portrayals, but often do so one king at a time, which can lead to an overflowing imbalance in the comparative literature.

Even with the wealth of literature regarding the two monarchs separately, there is a definite deficit in comparisons between the two in which consistent theoretical approaches are applied. This chapter has pointed out the lack of integrated side-by-side analysis that uses modern leadership theories to apply meaning to medieval kingship. Ultimately, my dissertation intends to offset this gap by pursuing a contextualised and comparative examination of their leadership that acknowledges political and cultural implications. As such, this report also opens the discussion regarding an acceptable model around which to measure success in kingship in the medieval world, as well as recognizing that leadership should be conceived and measured within the context of the environment it is exercised.

Chapter Two

Comparative Analysis of Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart

2.1. Introduction

This chapter is an analysis of the leadership styles of Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart by directly comparing their kingship. The objective is to reveal the impact of their different styles of leadership and its significance in shaping their individual reigns and historic legacies, in conjunction with working through the aesthetics of leadership theory. These two leaders are still venerated figures in English history, yet they forged their pathways to greatness through different histories. Alfred exhibited strategic leadership and reform during a process of internal consolidation and renewal, while Richard's contributions to England revolved mainly around his heroic military campaigns in the Holy Land and memorable if meager participation in the governance of England. In understanding the disparate references in this chapter, we will be better able to comprehend their character and choices in following their motivations in the political and social context of their ages.

To inform our analyses, the chapter emphasizes different leadership theories; trait theory, behavioral theory, contingency theory, and charismatic leadership. The purpose of these different theories is to deconstruct how Alfred and Richard responded to the situational demands and whims of their time. For instance, trait theory studies the significance of a person's characteristics, behavior theory reveals the significance of their behavior and governance under their authority, contingency theory would theoretically describe the significance of an environment on their decision making processes, and lastly charismatic leadership emphasizes the significance of individuals to their followers. Using these theories, this chapter hence considers itself a comparative analysis because it takes the reader beyond narrative reconstruction of the lives of Alfred and Richard and offers an examination of leadership in the Middle Ages. Briefly, James Burns emphasizes that histories of leadership reliant on the notions of impact or resultant outcomes alone obscures an understanding of leadership, claiming that it is imperative to examine how leaders work with their followers and situations (Burns 19).

2.1.1. Brief Reminder of the Purpose of Comparing Alfred and Richard

The comparison between Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart reflects two fundamentally distinct models of medieval leadership shaped by culture, geography, and historical circumstance. Leadership in the Anglo-Saxon world, as exemplified by Alfred, was expressed through internal governance, legal codification, and educational reform. A focus was placed on fortification, administration, and the formation of a literate and cohesive society (Keynes and Lapidge 93–96). In contrast, the Norman model of kingship, demonstrated during Richard’s reign, was oriented toward external conquest and martial reputation. Significant portions of Richard’s rule were spent abroad, particularly during the Third Crusade, and governance in his absence was delegated to powerful nobles and officials—including his brother John Lackland—whose administration was marked by unrest and weakening royal authority (Gillingham 45–48).

These differences are not simply biographical contrasts but offer insight into how leadership was structured and maintained within two different political frameworks. The Anglo-Saxon approach emphasized stability and continuity, while the Norman-Crusader model prioritized glory, military alliance, and territorial ambition. The responsibilities of rule were interpreted through distinct lenses: one grounded in domestic consolidation, the other in feudal obligation and reputation on the international stage. Through the application of leadership theories—trait, behavioral, and contingency models—these rulers’ reigns can be examined not only for their policies but for how power was exercised, delegated, and remembered within the shifting landscape of medieval kingship.

2.1.2. Farming the Analysis using Leadership theories

In order to appropriately compare the leadership of Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart, we need to operationalize the analysis through a well-established leadership theory. A leadership model aids us in concentrating on how the kings' leadership characteristics informed the many choices, policies and outcomes they achieved, rather than simply summarizing events in history. The most relevant

Chapter Two : Comparative Analysis of Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart

theories to use for this are trait theory, behavior theory and contingency theory. These theories will provide a suitable foundation for examining how Alfred and Richard adapted to the demands of kingship.

Trait theory posits that some people have qualities that predispose them to be successful leaders, such as intelligence, courage or charisma. This model was also a good fit for Alfred's wisdom, resilience, and sincere Christian piety, which we can appreciate in specific instances of his reform efforts and the legal code he enacted (Keynes and Lapidge 102–105.) Richard however embodies the traits of bravado and martial prowess as he led crusades and developed a fierce reputation abroad (Gillingham 59–61).

Behavior theory is focused on how leaders behave (how they lead). Alfred's leadership through consultation, collaboration and reform would contrast nicely with Richard's autocratic and militaristic style as two exemplars of different leadership behaviors. Contingency theory explores whether leaders are successful based on the circumstances from which they lead. Alfred's context was a belabored and fragmented kingdom, whereas Richard led in the formality of the chivalric crusade and was bound by religious interpretations.

2.2. Comparison of Military strategies and leadership in warfare

Alfred the Great is often identified with his defensive measures, especially when dealing with invasions from the Vikings. Alfred was not so much concerned with winning specific battles but rather with developing military infrastructure. For example, he established a system of fortified settlements or burhs across England, which provided refuge to local populations, as well as a more organized defense. As Hill observes, Alfred's approach to military leadership demonstrated strategic patience and strategic flexibility; he recognized that sustaining resistance was more than just decisive victories on the battlefield; it required social and military organization (Hill 153). Alfred's reforms also extended to the fyrd (militia) and implemented a rotation

Chapter Two : Comparative Analysis of Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart

system for the troops so that they could maintain both the defensive position as well as agriculture.

Richard the Lionheart, in contrast, demonstrated military leadership that was characterized by boldness, aggression and battlefield brilliance, particularly during the Third Crusade. Richard led his army with leadership, personal bravery and charisma and used the front lines to instill bravery among his men as well. Richard's siege tactics at Acre and preparation for maneuvers at Arsuf demonstrated an appreciation for military logistics as well as morale (Gillingham 87). However, Richard's decisive strategies tended to be more offensive and more focused on short time frames, particularly in terms of the Crusades. Although Richard demonstrated battlefield brilliance abroad, he did very little to develop any type of military infrastructure back home in England; thus, leaving behind a discrepancy between his larger-than-life heroic military image, and a very limited strategic legacy.

2.2.1. Alfred's Defensive Innovations vs. Richard's Offensive Crusading tactics

Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart displayed significantly different military strategies shaped primarily by the violent challenges they addressed, and previous contextual differences. Due to the substantial heterogeneous Viking incursions that threatened Alfred's England, he employed less sophisticated defensive military strategies to implement a series of defensive burhs (fortified towns), reorganized the fyrd (English militia), and established a functioning royal navy. The defensive strategies meant Alfred was able to effectively keep Wessex safe and eventually start to push back against the Viking incursions, and scholars note to Alfred his structured and systematic approach as a long term idea and sustainable return to effective military organization that preserved the identity of England (Keynes and Lapidge, 157–159).

Although Richard's reputation is primarily built on his performance during the Third Crusade, historical analysis reveals that his military success also limited his

Chapter Two : Comparative Analysis of Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart

impact on domestic governance. His bold tactics, such as those at the Battle of Arsurf, earned admiration across Europe, yet his prolonged absence from England created a political vacuum that weakened royal authority and elevated the power of barons and rival claimants. In contrast, Alfred's military defense—though geographically restricted—was strategically aligned with broader goals of unification, education, and cultural preservation. This contrast illustrates how success on the battlefield did not always translate into sustainable kingship, and how leadership was remembered differently depending on the priorities of each ruler's reign. While Richard's military fame became part of European chivalric legend, Alfred's reforms laid the groundwork for English nationhood.

2.2.2. Use of force, strategy, and leadership under pressure

Alfred's leadership under duress was very painstaking and pragmatic. He did not rely on brute force; he employed strategic patience, diplomatic maneuvering, and the ability to endure setbacks. His victory at Edington and The Treaty of Wedmore demonstrated an extraordinary ability to summon the right moment and make sacrifices (Abels 231). One of the most defining moments of Alfred's military leadership came in the winter of 878, when a surprise Viking attack led by Guthrum forced him to flee into the marshes of Athelney after his stronghold at Chippenham was overrun and burned. With only a small group of loyal followers, Alfred regrouped in secret and used the time in hiding to organize a counteroffensive. This period of exile has become symbolic of his resilience and tactical patience. Rather than surrender, Alfred later emerged to gather local forces and decisively defeated the Vikings at the Battle of Edington. This event not only marks a turning point in his military strategy, but also shows how setbacks were transformed into opportunities for long-term stability and defense.

Richard's leadership is often characterized by boldness and personal authority, but it leaned heavily on immediate displays of strength and charismatic influence. His ability to command loyalty stemmed from his reputation and martial image, rather than sustained administrative presence. This emphasis on personal glory and symbolic

Chapter Two : Comparative Analysis of Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart

leadership created distance between the crown and the realm, as Richard spent most of his reign abroad and delegated domestic governance to others. Many historians argue that while his public image remained strong, his leadership style proved detrimental to the long-term stability of his territories and the development of consistent internal governance (Gillingham 202).

2.3. Government and Administration

Alfred the Great was a visionary who attempted internal reform, law and education. Alfred's legal reforms were not derived solely from Anglo-Saxon customs, but as Keynes argues, combined the principles of Moses, Christian moral standards, and customs of the Anglo-Saxons that blended religious values and social imperatives. Alfred's laws were not only a method of restricting behavior but were also used to ethically guide his subjects; fulfilling Alfred's dual religious/secular leadership dimensions (Keynes 98). In addition to law, Alfred emphasized literacy and translating Latin texts into Old English; which added to the more literate and unified court that ultimately extended Alfred the Great's authority and further established national identity.

Contrastingly, it is evident that Richard the Lionheart took little or no interest in domestic governance. For much of his reign, he was absent from England due to his involvement in the Crusades and continental conflicts, and he delegated administrative duties to key officials such as William Longchamp and Hubert Walter. However, political tension and dissatisfaction grew under their leadership. More significantly, Richard's brother, John Lackland, acted as a substitute figure of royal authority during this period. His rule, marked by ambition and growing unpopularity, foreshadowed the political unrest that would later define his own reign. According to Gillingham, "Richard treated England primarily as a cash cow to fund his military ambitions; he was not interested in flexible institutional reform" (Gillingham 124). In contrast, Alfred made a lasting administrative impact throughout his realm. His vision for governance, marked by reform and unity, stands in opposition to Richard's reactive and often neglected approach to ruling his kingdom.

Chapter Two : Comparative Analysis of Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart

2.3.1. Alfred's Legal Reforms, Education, and Kingdom-building

Alfred the Great's attitude toward ruling was multifaceted, grounded in law, education, and moral leadership to strengthen and unify his kingdom. His vision extended beyond governance—it was about creating a cultural and legal foundation for the English people. He contributed significantly to the codification of English law by combining earlier Anglo-Saxon legal traditions with Christian moral principles into a unified legal code (Keynes and Lapidge 163–165). In addition, he is credited with initiating the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, a historical record written in Old English that helped solidify royal authority and national identity through a shared narrative of the kingdom's past. Alfred believed that wisdom and learning were essential to good rule, and he invited scholars from across Britain and Europe to his court. He personally contributed to the translation of key Latin texts into Old English so that his subjects could access knowledge directly (Abels 276–278). These actions reflect a leadership model based on cultural investment, legal reform, and educational advancement, rather than one defined solely by military success.

2.3.2. Richard's limited governance, reliance on deputies, and time abroad

Richard the Lionheart's limited engagement with domestic governance has been widely noted in historical accounts. His extended absence from England, due to both crusading and imprisonment, meant that effective rule was left in the hands of officials such as William Longchamp and Hubert Walter (Gillingham 174). Although administrative stability was maintained to some degree, Richard's detachment from internal affairs—particularly in areas like law reform and education—has led many historians to interpret his kingship as one defined by militarism rather than institutional development (Church 159). This sharp contrast with Alfred the Great highlights two divergent models of leadership: one based on external ambition, and the other on internal reform and legacy-building.

2.4. Diplomacy and Political Maneuvering

Diplomacy involved more than Alfred the Great's role in negotiating peace and maintaining hegemony over his own territory. After enduring years of devastating Viking raids, and relentless attacks from various groups, Alfred made intelligent and pragmatic decisions about when to hand over land; make calculated truces, and use

Chapter Two : Comparative Analysis of Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart

marriages to secure peace. The Treaty of Wedmore for example, was more than just a brief pause in fighting. It was a wise recognition of the need for coexistence with powerful foes and accepting a strategic defeat. As the author Abels points out, when Alfred broke off the fighting and began negotiating treaties, it was not weakness, but its decisive proof of prudence shown through Alfred had incredibly limited resources and shifting capabilities, yet was conceding land in order to consolidate positions (Abels 178). Alfred's ability to turn former foes into allies enabled the durability of his reforms and a much stronger power of rule.

Whereas Richard the Lionheart exercised diplomacy more on an international level, driven by the complex web of the Crusades and his feudal obligations in France, he is also primarily considered a military king. It is easy to critique Richard's diplomacy because most of his dealings with others based on his own status involving head of state with another head of state (example with to Saladin in the third Crusade).

Although Richard did not actually take the city of Jerusalem, he managed to give Christians access to it instead requiring not just force but a respect for the other and the ability to negotiate, (as noted by Professor Tyerman, Richard manages to treat Saladin properly as a diplomatic figure and equal in negotiation, while still pursuing a military agenda) Richard had a flexible leadership style that saw him characterized both by the many codes of chivalry and by international expectations (Tyerman 266). Richard's ability to manage multiple relationships with his European counterparts, while at the same time balancing his war efforts against the likes of Philip II (King Philip Augustus of France looked after his interests by following Richard (Anglo, Scottish and Normans interests and claims to Normandy) and largely concerned the Holy Roman Emperor, demonstrates Richard's ability to balance a form of alliance and diplomacy without confrontation even when under extreme duress.

In some ways, Alfred is more 'internal' in his diplomacy, while Richard represents a more 'global' and militaristic figure. Despite both being militaristic, Alfred could relate and demonstrate to a specific 'local' people(s) in a particular context of time and place, while Richard had substitutes of the palace, court and member(s) of a brotherhood in addition to a situation involving a military (fortified) element. With

Chapter Two : Comparative Analysis of Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart

commonality that is the use of politics seen through the lens of differing territorial political objectives, Alfred and Richard were both highly adaptable in their beliefs, goals, and means through 'political' action. Similarly, they display a lean and agreement in terms of what could be defined as overall leader styles, Alfred pursuing some form of cultural and social comity and stability, and Richard continuing in a legacy of prestige and crusading fame. Each respective engagement position in diplomacy varies and collectively reinforce the overall arguments about medieval kingship where successful leaders were not expected to simply lead through military force, but to also negotiate and influence both ally and enemy.

2.4.1. Alfred's Peace with Vikings and Internal Consolidation

Alfred the Great was able to transition from military opposition to diplomatic partnership. Alfred's most famous success of diplomacy came after the Battle of Edington in 878, as part of the Treaty of Wedmore, in which the Viking leader Guthrum was to be baptized Christian and take a Christian name, Athelstan -- a gesture of peace and commonality of beliefs (Keynes and Lapidge 103). The resultant treaty that developed from the battle agreement defined the Danelaw borders and allowed Alfred to concentrate on his consolidation of territories and to develop defenses like the burh system.

In addition to external diplomatic relations, internally Alfred also utilized diplomacy to unite the various Anglo-Saxon kingdoms under one cultural and religious identity. Diplomacy was extended to support learning and law, with Alfred believing that a strong legal and educational framework could achieve internal peace. By negotiating the balance of his role as both a warrior and a law-maker, Alfred stabilized a fractured England and reduced internal dissent (Abels 191). Alfred is measured not only by what was won militarily, but also, and importantly, for what was preserved and built diplomatically and with governance.

2.4.2. Richard's diplomacy during the Crusades and with European rulers

Richard the Lionheart's diplomatic efforts, under the pressures brought by the goals of the Third Crusade, were more remarkable. When Richard realized that victory

Chapter Two : Comparative Analysis of Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart

over Saladin by military means was near impossible, he was compelled to negotiate the Treaty of Jaffa in 1192. The Treaty allowed Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land access to Jerusalem, despite it remaining a Muslim city (Tyerman 417). Though Richard was able to establish a diplomatic end in a context as fraught as the Crusade, he was fundamentally not judged for the success of the treaty itself, but for reaching a diplomatic end. The Treaty of Jaffa showed that Richard, for all of his warlike image, was capable of reaching a deterrent solution through diplomatic means when the need arose.

On the European front, Richard's diplomatic return was much more tumultuous than that of the Middle East. Richard was embroiled in ongoing fighting with Philip II of France, who could undermine the Crusade in order to gain political grounds in France. Richard also found it difficult to gain authority over his own realms while abroad. Richard's brother John among others took advantage of Richard's absence and long absence from the realm to solidify bases of power (Gillingham 205- 206). These juxtaposed diplomatic successes and political misfortunes demonstrate the limits of Richard's leadership beyond the battlefield.

2.5. Impact on Legacies and Historical Perceptions of Kingship

Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart have legacies that have survived for centuries influenced by both history and national memory. Alfred's legacy has been very much entwined with the story of English nationhood. He is often credited with helping to build a unitary England through legal reform, changes to the military establishment and support of education and religion. Historians argue that Alfred was "the father of the English nation" and could combine reviving culture with practical governance (Keynes 45). Alfred's legacy is strongly enhanced by *the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which demonstrates he was a wise, pious, defender and reformer.

Characteristically, Richard the Lionheart's legacy is constructed from the image of him as a crusader-king. Richard spent only a few months of his ten-year reign in England but captured the imaginations of chroniclers and later historians largely due to his military exploits and heroism in the Third Crusade. Gillingham writes, "Richard

Chapter Two : Comparative Analysis of Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart

the Lionheart became famous as a fearless warrior and the embodiment of the chivalric ideal of virtue and excellence" and he helped create the glorious image of a hero that outlasted his death (Gillingham 113). But Richard's remoteness as a monarch and state's financial exploitation of his kingdom have led others to question what remained of his legacy beyond the battlefield. If he can be seen largely as a chivalric symbol, he is not just as much as a statesman.

The differing perspectives on their kingship bring attention to the changing ideas of leadership. Whereas Alfred is credited for founding the state and establishing a framework of ethical governance, Richard rests his legacy on martial skill and personal charisma. Both legacies reflect not only their actions, but a particular set of values as celebrated by the authors of those histories. As Bede remarks in his broader treatment of kingship, a king's reputation is shaped "by not only deeds, but by the kind of deeds people choose to remember" (Bede 92). In this context, Alfred and Richard were treated as cultural constructs embodying different ideals of being a king in the medieval period.

2.5.1. Long-term Influence of Alfred as "Father of the English Nation"

Alfred the Great's most salient legacy is as both the unifier and defender of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms; in this respect he is often described as 'the father of the English nation' in recognition of his attempts to consolidate power and a sense of English identity in order to defend the land against Viking incursion. The cultural revival sparked by his translation of Latin works into Old English and his strong emphasis on education lasted well into the subsequent century. Historians such as Richard Abels consider that Alfred's reforms in education, law, and governance provided the framework that came to characterize future English monarchs (Abels 226). Alfred's legacies are thus not only tied to what he settled on the battlefield but also to the stability and continuity that he also engendered.

Alfred's place in English history is also influenced by bishop Asser's writings which also foreshadowed him as a wise and pious sovereign. In this way, Alfred became increasingly heroic, bordering on legendary, as a product of literature. Giving

Chapter Two : Comparative Analysis of Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart

account of Alfred in his *Life of King Alfred* (883), Asser produced each account with the intent to produce the ideal Christian king, who balanced might with humility (Keynes and Lapidge 75). Though many modern historians disagree with the acceptability and moral veracity of these accounts, Alfred's legacy of being thoughtful, progressive, and morally committed has stayed with him. Alfred's longest lasting legacy manifests itself in how the Anglo-Saxon kingship began to prioritize learning, justice, and unity.

2.5.2. Romanticized but Controversial Legacy of Richard as a Crusading Knight-king

Richard the Lionheart's legacy is more complex and romanticized than that of most medieval monarchs. He is remembered as the prototypical knight-king: valiant and daring on the battlefield, particularly during the Third Crusade. His deeds in combat became the *sine qua non* of his reputation—the essential standard by which his kingship was judged—and he was subsequently commemorated in both literature and popular culture as the ideal model of chivalric kingship. Still, many historians have questioned the extent of his commitment to actually ruling England. John Gillingham observes that “Richard won his glory on the battlefield... his failures as ruler (he had a long absence from England and was hardly present in Normandy or Aquitaine, where he had substantial landholdings) left his kingdom vulnerable” (Gillingham 188).

Richard's reputation has also been scrutinized for his preoccupation with crusading while imposing heavy taxation on England to finance his campaigns. For much of his reign, Richard was absent from England, leaving the responsibilities of governance to others. This prolonged absence often generated discontent and caused instability on the home front. Tyerman notes, “Richard spent all of six months of his ten years' reign in England, and his chronic geographical and psychological distance from the everyday responsibilities of kingship left a legacy of detachment from the state arts of kingship, particularly in terms of caring for his subjects” (Tyerman 426). Unlike the legendary King Arthur—who, whether real or mythologized, is often depicted as the archetype of a king who balanced martial prowess with a deep sense of

Chapter Two : Comparative Analysis of Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart

justice and responsibility toward his realm—Richard's kingship appears to have favored glory abroad over stability at home. Accordingly, while Richard's military accomplishments won him immense prestige in the national consciousness, his leadership has also been criticized for lacking the administrative depth seen in rulers such as Alfred the Great.

2.6. Application of Leadership Theories to the Comparison

Using theoretical perspectives on the leadership of Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart, allows for a more complex comparison of these two rulers. Trait theory highlights their individual traits. Alfred is generally characterized as thoughtful, learned, and God-fearing - a king who was interested in education and moral leadership, qualities associated with effective leadership that professor Stogdill identified, such as intelligence, moral character, and integrity (Stogdill 139). Richard, on the other hand, is known for courage, charisma and adeptness in battle. These were certainly appreciated characteristics of warrior kings, but not so appreciated in those that governed, as these two styles reveal ideals of kingship in the Middle Ages were fundamentally different: Alfred resembled a king rely on internal reaffirmation and moral effort; Richard -- external prowess and command.

From a behavioral theory perspective, Alfred demonstrates a task-oriented yet considerate approach, remaining closely connected to the lives of his people while addressing the demands of warfare, legislation, and the promotion of literacy. In this sense, Alfred represents a king who cultivated a deliberate relationship with behaviors that embodied effective kingship. In contrast, Richard displays a more reactive approach, characterized by a strong engagement with violence and warfare abroad but a lack of meaningful response to the domestic responsibilities of kingship. Although Richard bore the responsibility of addressing the needs of his people, he frequently delegated such duties to others, distancing himself from the governance he often avoided. Northouse emphasizes that leadership behaviors are evaluated not only by the outcomes they produce but also by how those behaviors shape the perception of the leader over time (Northouse 71). When viewed through this lens, Alfred emerges as a

Chapter Two : Comparative Analysis of Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart

more holistic and balanced leader, while Richard appears as a warrior king whose effectiveness was largely defined by his military achievements rather than sustained governance.

Contingency and situational leadership theories account for how environmental factors shaped the decisions of both kings. Alfred operated within the context of persistent Viking invasions, which required maintaining political unity, constructing fortified *burhs*, and negotiating peace settlements. Richard's leadership developed within the framework of the Crusades, a highly militarized environment shaped by continuous warfare and a dominant religious ethos that influenced strategic and tactical decisions. Fiedler notes that the effectiveness of leadership depends not solely on personal traits or behaviors but on aligning leadership style with situational demands (Fiedler 160). The adaptive strategies employed by Alfred reflect leadership approaches suited to sustaining long-term stability under domestic pressure, while Richard's leadership was primarily oriented toward military objectives shaped by external campaigns.

2.6.1. Trait theory: Comparing innate qualities and personal strengths

Trait theory emphasizes that certain personality traits contribute to particular leadership styles. In the cases of Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart, trait theory highlights distinct inherent qualities that influenced their approaches to kingship. Alfred is frequently characterized as contemplative, reflective, and intellectually inclined, demonstrating a strong moral framework and a commitment to long-term nation-building. His writings, such as *Pastoral Care*, reflect a deep concern for education, justice, and spiritual leadership (Keynes and Lapidge 47). This temperament aligns with qualities associated with strategic governance and reform.

In contrast, Richard the Lionheart is often described as courageous, charismatic, and physically imposing, with a leadership style centered around martial prowess and personal presence. His reputation was reinforced by battlefield valor and chivalric

Chapter Two : Comparative Analysis of Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart

ideals that resonated strongly in the context of the Crusades (Gillingham 103). Richard's traits aligned with the expectations of a warrior king whose leadership was exercised predominantly in military contexts rather than through domestic governance. Trait theory, therefore, illustrates how each king's inherent characteristics shaped divergent leadership models adapted to the demands of their respective environments.

2.6.2. Behavioral and Contingency Approaches to Their Different Environments and Leadership Needs

Behavioral theory emphasizes leaders' actual behaviors and decisions, versus their personality traits. For Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart, their established leadership behaviors were affected in a big way by their contexts or problems. Alfred styled himself as a collaborative leader, discussing matters with advisors and instigating educational and legal reforms to enhance the kingdom internally. At the same time, Alfred's leadership behavior was systematic and inclusive, reminiscent of his role as a system builder, developing the *Doom Book* of laws while expanding a national system of fortified burhs as a defense against the Swedes and Danes (Higham 123).

His contemporary, Richard, acted more in response to external pressures such as the Crusades. Based on contingency theory, effective leaders are those that can fit their style to the current situation. Richard excelled in a situational environment that was primarily militarized, and required decisiveness and courage. Richard's reliance on trusted deputies to run England in his absence again implies his understanding of his constraints and decision to delegate power appropriately (Phillips 89). Richard's leadership focus while absent from England changed from Alfred's long-term state-building aim to that of a volatile crusading warfare situation, with concurrent considerations of international diplomacy. This indicates how Roger's contingency theory aims to describe different leadership styles exhibited by both kings to fulfill their unique leadership contexts and expectations.

2.7 Conclusion

By comparing and contrasting the two kings' leadership styles, we see a divergence not only in their styles, but in the context that shaped the two kings. Alfred was clearly strategic, reform-oriented, consensus builder, while Richard was more daring, militaristic, and outward- and expansively-focused, albeit with a deeper zeal. Each king showed common characteristics of resilience, bravery, and tactical intelligence. From the perspectives of the leadership theories of trait, behavioral, and contingency, it is seen how each king's qualities and character, aspirations, and reactions to political/cultural pressures gave each king his definition. In the conclusion, we see that the study of these two kings illustrates that medieval kingships depended on the character of the time; effective and productive leadership in the medieval period depended on change relevant to the context.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

The comparative study of Alfred the Great and Richard the Lionheart has revealed fundamental truths about medieval kingship that transcend their specific historical contexts. Through systematic analysis using modern leadership frameworks, this dissertation has demonstrated how these two iconic monarchs embodied radically different yet equally valid approaches to rulership during times of crisis. Their contrasting strategies—Alfred’s nation-building reforms versus Richard’s martial adventurism—offer more than just historical insight; they provide a case study in how leadership adapts to environmental pressures, cultural expectations, and personal capabilities.

Alfred’s reign (871-899) established the template for what contemporary leadership theorists would call “transformational leadership.” His defensive innovations against Viking invasions, particularly the burh system and naval reforms, demonstrate keen situational awareness (Hersey and Blanchard 36). Unlike traditional warrior-kings, Alfred recognized that military success required systemic solutions rather than momentary heroics. His legal code, which blended Christian morality with Anglo-Saxon customs, created what modern scholars would term an “institutional framework” for governance (Keynes and Lapidge 163). Most remarkably, his educational reforms—including the translation of Latin texts into Old English—show a leader investing in human capital, anticipating by centuries what Bass and Avolio would identify as the intellectual stimulation dimension of transformational leadership (6). These accomplishments justify Alfred’s enduring reputation as England’s foundational ruler, one whose legacy outshone his lifetime achievements.

Richard I (1189-1199) presents a compelling counterpoint—a king whose leadership excelled in precisely the areas where Alfred’s differed. His conduct during the Third Crusade epitomizes charismatic leadership (Weber 358), with battlefield exploits at Acre and Arsuf that inspired both contemporaries and later chroniclers. However, contingency theory (Fiedler 150) helps explain why Richard’s absence from England proved so damaging: his delegated governance model failed to account for the situational variable of his brother John’s ambitions. The Lionheart’s reign thus becomes a cautionary tale about over-reliance on personal charisma at the expense of institutional development. Yet modern historians like Asbridge rightly note that Richard’s priorities reflected his Angevin context, where continental holdings demanded more attention than England (301). This contextual understanding prevents simplistic judgments about his leadership effectiveness.

The comparison yields three significant insights about medieval kingship. First, successful leadership was inherently adaptive—Alfred shifted from battlefield commander to lawgiver as circumstances required, while Richard alternated between crusader and diplomat. Second, legacy-building depended on chroniclers’ priorities; Asser’s portrait of Alfred as scholar-king (Keynes and Lapidge 75) and the *Itinerarium*’s depiction of Richard as crusading hero (Stubbs 1864) both served ideological purposes that shaped historical memory. Third, the tension between personal rule and delegated authority—visible in Alfred’s hands-on governance versus Richard’s absenteeism—prefigured modern debates about executive leadership styles.

These findings have implications beyond medieval studies. Alfred's emphasis on education and legal infrastructure resonates with contemporary "nation-building" challenges, while Richard's charismatic leadership offers parallels to modern populist figures who prioritize symbolic victories over bureaucratic management. The study also validates the utility of applying modern leadership theories to historical figures, provided that scholars remain attentive to historical context. Trait theory effectively explains Alfred's intellectual curiosity and Richard's physical courage, but only contingency theory can account for why these traits succeeded or failed in specific situations.

Several avenues for future research emerge from this study. A deeper examination of gender roles in leadership perception—how Eleanor of Aquitaine's influence shaped Richard's kingship, for instance—could broaden understanding of medieval power dynamics. Comparative studies with non-European rulers like Saladin might reveal whether these leadership patterns were uniquely Western or more universal. Additionally, digital humanities approaches could analyze how Alfred's and Richard's reputations evolved in later literature and media.

In closing, this dissertation has argued that neither Alfred nor Richard can be judged by absolute standards of leadership effectiveness. Their achievements and shortcomings were products of their time, their personal qualities, and the specific challenges they faced. What makes their comparison so illuminating is precisely their differences: Alfred the bureaucrat and Richard the warrior represent two poles of medieval kingship that continue to inform our understanding of leadership today. The ultimate lesson may be that leadership, whether in the 9th century or the 21st, requires both the vision to imagine better futures and the pragmatism to navigate imperfect presents.

Bibliography

BOOKS

Abels, Richard. *Alfred the Great: War, Kingship and Culture in Anglo-Saxon England*. Longman, 1998.

Asbridge, Thomas. *The Crusades: The War for the Holy Land*. Simon & Schuster, 2010.

Barlow, Frank. *The Feudal Kingdom of England, 1042–1216*. 5th ed., Pearson, 1999.

Bass, Bernard M., and Bruce J. Avolio. *Improving Organizational Effectiveness through Transformational Leadership*. Sage Publications, 1994.

Bede. *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. Translated by Leo Sherley-Price, revised edition, Penguin Classics, 1990.

Blake, Robert R., and Jane S. Mouton. *The Managerial Grid*. Gulf Publishing, 1964.

Burns, James MacGregor. *Leadership*. Harper & Row, 1978.

Carlyle, Thomas. *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*. Chapman and Hall, 1841.

Gillingham, John. *Richard I*. Yale University Press, 1999.

Keynes, Simon, and Michael Lapidge, editors. *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources*. Penguin Classics, 1983.

Northouse, Peter G. *Leadership: Theory and Practice*. 8th ed., Sage Publications, 2019.

Weber, Max. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. Edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, University of California Press, 1978.

JOURNALS

Stogdill, Ralph M. "Personal Factors Associated with Leadership: A Survey of the Literature." *Journal of Psychology*, vol. 25, no. 1, 1948, pp. 35–71.

HISTORICAL DOCUMENT

Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi. Edited by William Stubbs,
Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1864.