**Some people argue that successful leaders in government, industry, or other fields must be highly competitive. Other people claim that in order to be successful, a leader must be willing and able to cooperate with others.**

**Write a response in which you discuss which view more closely aligns with your own position and explain your reasoning for the position you take. In developing and supporting your position, you should address both of the views presented.**

Essay Response:

There are many different perspectives on what qualities make a successful leader. The views expressed in the prompt are primarily focused on competitiveness and cooperation. While both of these are relatively desirable qualities, in my opinion, I align more closely with the second view. Although a good balance of the two is ideal, an inability to cooperate with others would not lead to true ‘success,’ in the sense that they may not garner as much support by simply being competitive. There are three main points to consider in this issue.

First, competition, by itself, does not always lead to favourable outcomes. Consider a political party that has a competitive leader without the willingness to cooperate with other political groups. If they are part of a coalition, or if their own party has multiple factions, it would be necessary for them to be able to compromise and work out solutions. If they do not concede on any issues to their opponents or party members, then they run the risk of being alienated from the party. They may appear close-minded, failing to take any input or feedback for their work. The British Conservative party comes to mind, when talking about such competition – In the past few years, the party leader has changed numerous times, to such an extent that even the ‘Chief Mouser’ (a cat) that lives at 10 Downing Street has lived through five Prime Ministers’ regimes. Most of these intra-party issues were found to be a result of these leaders refusing to listen to everyone’s suggestions and demands, with a mindset bent towards winning against fellow party members. Hence, competition could lead to instability, which is something a leader would try their best to avoid.

Second, cooperation can build bridges and lead to leaders gaining support even from some traditionally oppositional groups. Take the example of current US President Joe Biden: He is known for always ‘reaching across the aisle’ and for listening to all other opinions before stating his own. Quite a few Republicans were in support of Biden during the 2020 election cycle, even though most of them had not ever voted for a Democrat. While the election was perceived as simply having to choose the lesser of two evils, it is undeniable that Biden’s flexibility and willingness to compromise with the opposition contributed to his 2020 win. While he did win by a margin of a few million votes, it is all the more remarkable that he could convince people to switch towards him. When leaders like him are able to address issues in ways that convince people with contrasting views, that does, indeed, lead to success. Therefore, the way in which cooperation brings people together is another reason why competitiveness is relatively ineffective; why risk breaking up your supporter base when you can get more?

Finally, there may be some situations where successful leaders should not negotiate or compromise. Consider the case of small political parties in various countries that have only handfuls of seats in their legislatures. For these parties to become more ‘national,’ it would not benefit them to make agreements with other parties to strategically run in a few districts. They would need to have a strong competitive spirit that gets them a significant enough number of supporters to help their party grow in the political system. Leaders of such parties have been successful only when they fought enough to reach the top; only then did they have the space to agree with other parties without fragmenting their own. Thus, for less well-known companies and political groups, competitiveness would be an important quality to have.

In conclusion, there are no easy and direct answers to this question, that cover all possible scenarios. Furthermore, there are some situations where having the perseverance to compete would be important, though cooperation may be required in others. While some aspects of the issue can be conceded in favour of the first view, the second view proves to be true in more cases than not.