

Henry Kissinger, the American Dream, and the Jewish Immigrant Experience in the Cold War

“Until I emigrated to America,” Henry Kissinger recounts, “my family and I endured progressive ostracism and discrimination. My father lost the teaching job for which he had worked all his life; the friends of my parents’ youth shunned them. I was forced to attend a segregated school.” “Even when I learned later that America, too, had massive problems,” Kissinger continues, “I could never forget what an inspiration it had been to the victims of persecution, to my family, and to me during cruel and degrading years. I always remembered the thrill when I first walked the streets of New York City. Seeing a group of boys, I began to cross to the other side to avoid being beaten up. And then I remembered where I was.” For Kissinger and many other twentieth-century immigrants, America was a land of salvation, defined by its “its idealism, its humanity, and its embodiment of mankind’s hopes.”¹

“The intellectual class” today, Kissinger contends, is too dismissive of this immigrant experience.² He is, no doubt, correct. For all the insightful work on identity produced in the last decade, very little has been written about how foreign-born citizens of the United States embraced their “Americanness.” Quite the contrary, most scholars have focused on how a narrow framework of nationhood—defined by gender and race hierarchies—was imposed upon recent arrivals. Immigrant groups receive attention for their resistance to this cultural and political hegemony, and their deconstruction of a common American identity. Contrary to Kissinger’s experiences, we are told that many twentieth-century arrivals to the United States never felt fully American.³

1. Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston, 1979), 228–29.

2. Author’s interview with Henry Kissinger, 26 October 2005.

3. For some of the best recent work on the history of American immigration that deconstructs the traditional narrative of the United States as a welcoming “immigrant nation,” see Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ, 2003); Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ, 2002); Donna R. Gabaccia, “Is Everywhere Nowhere? Nomads, Nations, and the Immigrant Paradigm of United States History,” *Journal of American History* 86 (December 1999): 1115–34; Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876–1917* (New York, 2001). For a thoughtful effort to draw attention to the inclusive elements of American nationalism, see David A. Hollinger, “How Wide the Circle of the ‘We’? American Intellectuals and the Problem of the Ethnos since World War II,” *American Historical Review* 98 (April 1993): 317–37.

This scholarly analysis effectively deflates clichés about an inclusive “immigrant nation,” but it leaves little space for the feelings expressed by Kissinger and others. Many recent arrivals to the United States in the twentieth century viewed their new nation of residence as a promised land—“our best, perhaps our last, hope” in a world of turmoil.⁴ Although Americans often mistreated immigrants, the political ideals and social environment of the nation’s life offered persecuted minorities from Europe, Asia, Latin America, and Africa a chance to survive and maybe prosper. The United States was filled with racism, sexism, and other injustices, but it also provided opportunities unavailable elsewhere. For a persecuted young German, facing the likely prospect of extermination with his family, America was a bright ray of sunshine amid dark storm clouds—it was a “possibility for renewal.” These qualities conferred a “great dignity, even beauty, on the American way of life,” even for someone unfamiliar with the nation’s language or public culture.⁵

At his emotional swearing-in as secretary of state on 22 September 1973, Kissinger emphasized the uniqueness—perhaps even the exceptionalism—of American society: “There is no country in the world where it is conceivable that a man of my origin could be standing here next to the president of the United States.”⁶ Kissinger’s parents, who brought the family to New York in 1938 from Nazi Germany, watched his accession to the nation’s highest foreign-policy office “as in a dream:” “They had been driven out of their native country; thirteen members of our family had become victims of man’s prejudices. They could hardly believe that thirty-five years later their son should have reached our nation’s highest appointive executive office” (Figure 1).⁷

The American dream of freedom, opportunity, justice, and order was very real for Kissinger. He had, in many ways, lived this dream. “My life,” he admitted, “has depended on so many accidents that I couldn’t control.”⁸ Kissinger was not a self-made man, but a man made by circumstances around him—circumstances he internalized and manipulated out of necessity as much as choice. He relied in the years after 1941 on new openings in American society to immigrants of his background, new government support for the education and employment of immigrants, and new patronage from powerful political figures who recognized, often despite their own cultural insularity, that

4. Henry A. Kissinger to Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., 8 September 1961, Box WH-13, Folder: Kissinger, Henry 4/19/61–12/2/61, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. Papers, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, Massachusetts (hereafter JFKL).

5. Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York, 1994), 833.

6. Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston, 1982), 432. On Kissinger’s display of emotion at the swearing-in, see David Binder, “Kissinger Sworn, Praised by Nixon,” *New York Times*, 23 September 1973, 11.

7. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 431.

8. Quotation from Henry Kissinger’s videotaped oral history interview with Louise Bobrow, 11 January 2001, Museum of Jewish Heritage, New York, New York.



Figure 1: Paula Kissinger and Richard Nixon watch as Henry Kissinger is sworn in as the first Jewish secretary of state for the United States on 22 September 1973. Kissinger's father, brother, and children also attended this emotional and unprecedented event. Photo: Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum.

immigrants could make important contributions to policy. Geopolitics after Pearl Harbor gave a new cohort of citizens access to power and privilege, despite their continued social exclusion. Kissinger became one of many “inside outsiders” in the Cold War.⁹

William Donovan, the head of the Office of Strategic Services (precursor to the CIA), said it best when he emphasized to other parts of government that they must cultivate the immigrants they traditionally excluded from public service as “specially qualified personnel.” Recent arrivals from Central Europe could interpret and infiltrate the societies that were the key battlegrounds in the global struggle against fascism and communism. They had critical language skills and cultural familiarity.¹⁰ McGeorge Bundy, a man filled with the arrogance and condescension of a proud Boston Brahmin, affirmed this position when he praised the “high measure of interpenetration between universities with area programs and the information-gathering agencies of the government”—both of which he encouraged during his tenure as dean at

9. These are all topics discussed at length in my book; see Jeremi Suri, *Henry Kissinger and the American Century* (Cambridge, MA, 2007).

10. Quotation in Guy Stern, “The Jewish Exiles in the Service of U.S. Intelligence: The Post-War Years,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 40 (1995): 52.

Harvard (1954–1961) to employ “specially qualified” immigrants for the assessment of foreign societies.¹¹

Kissinger was one of the “specially qualified” immigrants that Bundy had in mind. Bundy was his dean at Harvard, and later the man who hired him as a part-time consultant to John F. Kennedy’s National Security Council. Kissinger had linguistic skills, cultural knowledge, and political experience in Central Europe that were invaluable for American policy. The “president has asked me to talk with you at your early convenience about the possibility of joining up down here,” Bundy wrote Kissinger a week after Kennedy’s inauguration. “The only complication in the situation, from his point of view, is that more than one part of the government may want to get you. He does not want to seem to interfere with any particular department’s needs, but he does want you to know that if you should be interested, he himself would like to explore the notion of your joining the small group which Walt Rostow and I will be putting together for his direct use.” Bundy later added: “We count on having your help, particularly in the general area of weapons and policy and in the special field of thinking about all aspects of the problem of Germany.”¹²

Kissinger’s origins excluded him from the polished prep school Kennedy crowd, but his background made him a “specially qualified” figure whom they hoped to use for their purposes. The foreign-policy establishment condescended to Kissinger as it also empowered him. Kissinger recognized this dynamic, and he exploited it for his own personal advancement. His career highlights the complex interplay between outsiders and insiders, prejudice and privilege, in the making of foreign policy.

IMMIGRANT NATIONALISM

During the Second World War, Kissinger served admirably in U.S. Army counterintelligence, where he acquired extensive experience with local administration, political organization, economic reconstruction, and civil-military

11. McGeorge Bundy, “The Battlefields of Power and the Searchlights of the Academy,” in *The Dimensions of Diplomacy*, ed. E. A. J. Johnson (Baltimore, 1964), 3. A number of books document and describe the arrogance, self-confidence, and Boston Brahmin insularity that characterized McGeorge Bundy as a college dean and foreign policymaker. See David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* (New York, 1972); Kai Bird, *The Color of Truth: McGeorge Bundy and William Bundy, Brothers in Arms* (New York, 1998); Robert D. Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy* (Amherst, MA, 2001); Andrew Preston, *The War Council: McGeorge Bundy, the NSC, and Vietnam* (Cambridge, MA, 2006).

12. McGeorge Bundy to Henry Kissinger, 28 January 1961; Bundy to Kissinger, 18 February 1961, Folder: Staff Memoranda, Henry Kissinger, 5/61, Box 320, National Security Files, JFKL. See also McGeorge Bundy to President Kennedy, 8 February 1961, Folder: Staff Memoranda, Henry Kissinger, 1/61–4/61, Box 320, National Security Files, JFKL. For an excellent account of the prep school background that deeply influenced the social assumptions and policymaking of the Kennedy New Frontiersmen, see Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood*. For more on Kissinger’s relationship to Bundy, Kennedy, and others around them, see Suri, *Henry Kissinger and the American Century*, ch. 4.

relations before the age of twenty-five.¹³ Although he had only attended night school for about a year, he came to Harvard after the war as a young man with a proven aptitude for complex analysis and practical problem solving. He was a battle-hardened student driven to prevent a recurrence of the horrors he had personally witnessed. He was also ruthlessly ambitious for the professional success his family had been denied in Germany.

Segregated in crowded university living quarters for Jewish students—a Jewish ghetto at postwar Harvard—Kissinger’s fellow students remember that he was a grave and super-serious individual, a premature curmudgeon. Herbert Englehardt, who lived downstairs from him, recounts that Kissinger was an outcast among his peers, including other immigrant Jews: “He was deadly serious all the time. He never liked to chase after women. His famous wit and nuance were not in evidence when he was an undergraduate.”¹⁴ Kissinger confirms he had a firm sense of purpose at Harvard that did not match with the standard college experience of other students.¹⁵

As a student, a nontenured lecturer, and later a professor, Kissinger combined first-hand policy knowledge with intense academic study, writing extensively about how the United States should mobilize diplomatic and military capabilities for the protection of basic values. In a series of letters that he wrote as an early graduate student that his mentors conveyed to Paul Nitze, the director of the State Department Policy Planning Staff, Kissinger criticized the “fundamental timidity and at times superficiality of conception” behind American policy. He called for a mobilization of public will behind the use of force, perhaps including nuclear weapons, to affirm and protect the basic civilized institutions threatened by Communist expansion. To avoid the mistakes of appeasement, the United States needed to mix conspicuous displays of power with a steadfast commitment to a world free of extremist ideologies, according to Kissinger. Commenting on the Korean War after the devastating Chinese attack on U.S. forces north of the 38th parallel, he wrote:

All the statements about “settlements,” “conferences” and “negotiations” imply that the present crisis [around the Korean Peninsula] reflects a misunderstanding, or perhaps a grievance of a specific nature, to be resolved by reasonable men in a spirit of compromise. The stark fact of the situation is, however, that Soviet expansionism is directed *against our existence, not against our policies*. Any concession therefore would become merely a springboard for new sallies.¹⁶

13. See Suri, *Henry Kissinger and the American Century*, ch. 2.

14. Quotation from Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (New York, 1992), 61. See also *ibid.*, 59–62; Stephen R. Graubard, *Kissinger: Portrait of a Mind* (New York, 1973), 4.

15. See Ralph Blumenfeld and the staff and editors of the *New York Post*, *Henry Kissinger: The Private and Public Story* (New York, 1974), 80–86.

16. Henry Kissinger to William Elliott, 12 December 1950, Folder: Memos-U.S. Strategy-Kissinger, Henry, 1951, Box 27, Papers of William Y. Elliott, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, California (hereafter Elliott Papers). Emphasis in original. See also Kissinger to

At Harvard, Kissinger founded the famous International Seminar that brought young, politically ambitious individuals from Western Europe and other parts of the non-Communist world to campus to discuss common intellectual and governance challenges. Through this program, which he directed from 1951 to 1967, Kissinger created a special niche for himself as a figure who nurtured important policy links between different societies. He also established himself as a bridge between the intellectual and policy communities, bringing representatives from both groups together in his seminar. Kissinger continued to confront frequent prejudice from those who did not consider him a “real” scholar or a “real” policy practitioner, but he derived enormous power from his ability to move between communities. By the late 1950s, he became one of the most influential Cold War cosmopolitans.¹⁷

Cosmopolitanism was a source of intense nationalism for Kissinger. He defined himself as a figure who would build “spiritual links” between peoples and societies, affirming the power and righteousness of the American state in its global battle against extremism. He used his international experiences to highlight the exceptionalism of the American nation, in contrast to the violence and hatred of other societies. He also mobilized his international connections to promote the American dream against its critics, abroad and at home. The International Seminar, in Kissinger’s words, built “a spiritual link between a segment of the foreign youth and the U.S.”¹⁸

Drawing on his own background as a member of the new, troubled generation of global citizens—for whom “war has come to be a normal state”—Kissinger pledged to “create nuclei of understanding of the true values of a democracy and of spiritual resistance to Communism.” “A basis for international understanding would thus be created among groups of promising young individuals,” Kissinger predicted. On the American side, he called for the selection of a “committee of inwardly alive, interested U.S. students”—often recent immigrants, like himself—who would serve as partners and guides for visiting figures to the land of opportunity.¹⁹

Kissinger made himself into a political and cultural translator between the United States and other societies. He assessed foreign societies for Americans,

Elliott, 2 March 1951, Folder: Memos-U.S. Strategy-Kissinger, Henry, 1951, Box 27, Elliott Papers; Henry Kissinger, Memorandum to Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., 8 December 1954, Folder: Kissinger, Henry A., 1954–1957, Box 39, Hamilton Fish Armstrong Papers, Seeley Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey. For evidence that Kissinger’s ideas were conveyed to Paul Nitze and others in the State Department, see William Yandell Elliott to Paul Nitze, Policy Planning Staff, U.S. State Department, 11 December 1950, Folder: N, Box 55, Elliott Papers.

17. For a much more detailed discussion of the International Seminar, Kissinger’s networking, and cosmopolitanism in the Cold War, see Suri, *Henry Kissinger and the American Century*, ch. 3.

18. Kissinger to Elliott, fall 1950, Folder: International Seminar, Harvard, 1951–1959, Box 2, Elliott Papers.

19. *Ibid.*

explained U.S. aims to foreigners, and worked to build consensus around core American positions. Translation, in this sense, was about much more than the construction of wide personal networks. It involved the propagation of shared policy assumptions about the reconstruction of international order under the tutelage of strong leaders, the spread of American political and economic influence, and the forceful containment of Communist expansion. It involved building a set of common principles for effective foreign policy. Throughout his career, this is how Kissinger defined the task of “diplomacy.”²⁰

International agreements, according to Kissinger, required both flexibility and ballast. The statesman had to make compromises, but he also had to protect a central core of meaning. Diplomacy was about cross-cultural exchange, not cultural relativism. For Kissinger, the American state—as the greatest contemporary embodiment of “Western Civilization”—was the core for all diplomacy; it was the touchstone for all international values. There could be no human rights, no justice, and no social progress for Kissinger without a strong American state to support and protect these pursuits. Diplomatic agreements could only sustain improvements in international life if they strengthened the American state, according to this conception. Kissinger imbued the American state with a spiritual content that made it a means and an end for the goals he set out in his foreign-policy strategy.

Kissinger was personally and emotionally attached to the American dream, embodied in the U.S. government. His intense patriotic nationalism—quite common to other recent arrivals at the time—was the foundation on which he built the professional and policy bridges that would define his career. Kissinger proved almost incapable of criticizing the American state. His emotional connection to it, born of his immigration, overrode analytical judgment.²¹

Historians have become much too enamored with the assumption that nationalism is “constructed” and “imagined.” These labels make personal attachment to state and society sound ephemeral, superficial, and even plastic. This cliché perspective misses the true depth of feeling for the nation-state, exhibited by individuals like Kissinger. As a refugee from almost certain extermination, he was “born again” in the United States. The American government saved him, made him a citizen, and gave him professional opportunities. It became the fount for the values he would pursue. It was so foundational that it justified the violation of other values in its defense.

20. See “Recommended Position: U.S.-U.S.S.R.,” prepared by Kissinger for Nelson Rockefeller’s briefing book, 15 May 1968, Folder 8, Box 5, Series 35, Record Group 15, Nelson A. Rockefeller Papers, Gubernatorial, Rockefeller Archive Center, Pocantico Hills, New York; Henry Kissinger, “The Policymaker and the Intellectual,” *The Reporter* (5 March 1959): 30–35; Henry Kissinger, “Central Issues of American Foreign Policy,” in *Agenda for the Nation*, ed. Kermit Gordon (Washington, DC, 1968), 585–614.

21. For an extensive analysis of this issue, and Kissinger’s grand strategy as a whole, see Suri, *Henry Kissinger and the American Century*, ch. 4.

State leaders had to make tough choices among lesser evils, according to Kissinger. They had to sacrifice some deeply held principles for the protection of the core values embodied in the American state. "A country that demands moral perfection of itself as a test of its foreign policy," Kissinger warned, "will achieve neither perfection nor security." He advocated moral priority and hierarchy, not perfection or equality.²²

JEWISH IDENTITY

Powerful political observers recognized Kissinger as a loyal, perhaps even sycophantic, agent of the American government. He had only recently arrived in the United States, but he had received intensive training and indoctrination through the military during the Second World War. The Army, Kissinger frequently commented, "made me feel like an American." "It was an Americanization process."²³ It was also a process that did not end in 1945. Kissinger's key personal contacts continued to revolve around government figures. His most consistent personal support came from individuals—including his primary mentor at Harvard, Professor William Yandell Elliott—who worked extensively on government-sponsored projects. For Kissinger, as for many other immigrants at the time, social and professional mobility was sponsored primarily by the New Deal and now the Cold War state.

In a world still pervaded with anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance, the American government was the institution that offered the most opportunity, and therefore commanded the most loyalty, from an ambitious Jewish immigrant to the United States. No other entity expended more resources—through the G.I. Bill and the promotion of a "Judeo-Christian" ethic—to open new opportunities for Jewish men, particularly those returning from military service. It was the U.S. government that encouraged universities like Harvard to promote Jewish war veterans; it was the U.S. government that paid for their education and subsidized their access to homeownership; and it was the U.S. government that defined them as part of a common, "white" American race. As Jewish names became more evident in universities and government offices during the second half of the 1950s, traditional demarcations of a "Hebrew" race disappeared.²⁴

22. Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 471.

23. These quotations come from Walter Isaacson's 1988 interviews with Henry Kissinger. See Isaacson, *Kissinger*, 40, 56–57. See also Kissinger's videotaped oral history interview with Louise Bobrow, 11 January 2001.

24. On the creation of a "Judeo-Christian" ethic during the midtwentieth century, and its connection to government policy, see David A. Hollinger, *Science, Jews, and Secular Culture: Studies in Mid-Twentieth Century American Intellectual History* (Princeton, NJ, 1996), 17–41; Mark Silk, "Notes on the Judeo-Christian Tradition in America," *American Quarterly* 36 (Spring 1984); Deborah Dash Moore, "Jewish GIs and the Creation of the Judeo-Christian Tradition," *Religion and Culture* 8 (Winter 1998); Wendy Wall, *Inventing the "American Way": The Politics of Consensus from the New Deal to the Civil Rights Movement* (New York, 2007), especially chs. 5–6. On the emerging perception of Jews as part of a "white" American race after

This is the context in which historians of foreign relations must address the Jewish experience of the twentieth century, and its profound influence on American society and policy during the Cold War. It is remarkable, in fact, how studiously historians have avoided this topic. The personally threatening experiences that Kissinger confronted throughout his life—persecution, exile, war, and prejudice—emerged from and reinforced his identity as a Jew. The opportunities that allowed Kissinger to achieve professional success despite these threats—immigration, military service, university access, and contributions to Cold War strategy—did not erase his Jewishness. In many ways, they reinforced it through a combination of continued exclusion and special access to areas where powerful mainstream figures believed German-Jews held special skills. At Harvard, for example, Kissinger could build new programs for international study, but he remained socially segregated with other Jews. He never gained access to elite clubs on campus, even as a renowned professor. He lived the American dream, but he never escaped the nightmare of anti-Semitism. As late as 2006, after decades of Jewish integration into mainstream society and the formation of a broad American consensus on partnership with Israel, Kissinger continued to worry about anti-Semitism in the United States.²⁵

This concern was ever present throughout Kissinger's career. It was reinforced by his close work with a White House and a Congress where prejudice against Jews remained common, despite promotion of one as secretary of state. President Richard Nixon, in particular, gave Kissinger unprecedented foreign-policy power while he simultaneously referred to his adviser's disloyal and degenerate "Jewish" characteristics. Angry with the press and information leaks from his administration, Nixon invoked fears of a Jewish conspiracy. Referring to Max Frankel, an editor at the *New York Times*, he explained: "Henry is compulsive on Frankel. He's Jewish . . . Henry—the *New York Times*, see if he talked to Frankel."²⁶

Nixon was often more direct about his disdain for Kissinger's Jewish connections. When Kissinger received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1973 for his role in the Vietnam negotiations, a jealous Nixon called with advice about how he should donate the award money. Without warning, the president thundered: "I would not put any in for Israel." Taken aback, Kissinger responded: "Absolutely not. That would be out of the question. I never give to Israel." "You should not," Nixon repeated. "No. That is out of the question," Kissinger confirmed.

the Second World War, see Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton, NJ, 2006); Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, *Troubling the Waters: Black-Jewish Relations in the American Century* (Princeton, NJ, 2006).

25. Author's interview with Kissinger, 12 September 2006.

26. Transcript of the audio recording from Nixon's meeting with Charles Colson, 1 January 1973, in *Abuse of Power: The New Nixon Tapes*, ed. Stanley I. Kutler (New York, 1997), 191. Max Frankel was a German-Jewish immigrant to the United States, who spent his late teenage years in the Washington Heights section of New York City, like Kissinger. See Max Frankel, *Times of My Life, and My Life with the Times* (New York, 1999).

The sting of this dialogue remained with Kissinger more than three decades later, when he published the transcript of the conversation but excluded the material illustrating the president's suspicion about his aide's excessive loyalty to Israel.²⁷

Kissinger worried that anti-Semitic attitudes were growing more common among citizens and politicians during the 1970s. "I speak as a Jew," he explained to journalist C. L. Sulzberger: "I very much wonder what the President's own repercussions and reactions will be." Sulzberger recounts that Kissinger "was astonished at how many people in the Establishment told him of their own feelings, which were evidently although unconsciously anti-Semitic. Because of his high White House position they seem to forget that he is Jewish. One very important man had most recently said to him in confidence that he was convinced there was a Jewish-communist plot. Henry was appalled."²⁸

No one really forgot that Kissinger was Jewish, and he knew that. Leonard Garment, another Jew who served Nixon as a domestic-policy adviser and later legal counsel, recounts that Kissinger privately complained about the "goddamn anti-Semites" in the administration. Garment explains that "Kissinger was treated at the White House as an exotic wunderkind—a character, an outsider. His colleagues' regard for him was genuine, but so were the endless gibes at his accent and style, and so were the railings against Jewish power that were part of the casual conversation among Nixon's inner circle." "[J]ust as a black man can never change his skin," Garment observed, "Kissinger could never—in fact, would never—shed his Jewishness."²⁹

In his relationship with a prejudiced president and a prejudiced public, Kissinger worked hard to anticipate potential accusations about a worldwide Jewish conspiracy. He was in a permanently defensive position on this topic, ever fearful of the suspicion emanating from the Oval Office and other parts of society. Ironically, his attempts to preempt anti-Semitism meant that he had to address the issue directly, rather than avoid it as he had in the past. In October 1973, when Kissinger prepared to present a list of appointees to the U.S. Senate for confirmation, he noticed an overwhelming preponderance of Jewish names:

27. Transcript of Kissinger's telephone conversation with Nixon, 16 October 1973, available from the U.S. Department of State's Freedom of Information Act website, <http://foia.state.gov/SearchColls/CollsSearch.asp>, accessed 31 July 2006 (hereafter State FOIA). For Kissinger's incomplete published version of this transcript, see Henry Kissinger, *Crisis: The Anatomy of Two Major Foreign Policy Crises* (New York, 2003), 268.

28. C. L. Sulzberger's diary entries for his 26 February 1970 and 8 March 1971 meetings with Kissinger, reprinted in C. L. Sulzberger, *An Age of Mediocrity: Memoirs and Diaries, 1963–1972* (New York, 1973), 613, 714. I want to thank Salim Yaqub for drawing my attention to these diary entries.

29. Leonard Garment, *Crazy Rhythm: My Journey from Brooklyn, Jazz, and Wall Street to Nixon's White House, Watergate, and Beyond . . .* (New York, 1997), 186–87. Before serving in the White House, Garment was Nixon's law partner in New York. Garment's account of the anti-Semitism in the Nixon administration is particularly credible because he expresses a generally favorable judgment of Nixon. Garment is not recounting the anti-Semitism of the Nixon White House to condemn the president.

Kissinger: I've got to reserve one position for a Wasp on this. I know it takes 10 in the Jewish religion for a prayer service but I can't have them all on the 7th floor [of the State Department]. One Wasp. Am I entitled to that for Congressional reasons?

Assistant Secretary of State David Abshire: I'm trying. I've just come up with the wrong names.

Kissinger: Well you got me, [Joseph] Sisco, can you imagine the line up on the 7th floor, Kissinger, Sisco, [Helmut] Sonnenfeldt, [Henry] Wallich?

Abshire: You want people to keep a sense of humor.

Kissinger: It's a talented country, but there is a limit. And maybe a Negro.

Abshire: I'm going to the Baptist church to look around.³⁰

As an intellectual, a strategist, and a policymaker, Kissinger consistently worked in the shadow of anti-Semitism, and the violence that he had witnessed from its popular expression in Germany and other societies. The tolerant, rational, just, and orderly American state was the bright light that promised safety and salvation. It was not the Messiah, but it was the closest one could expect to come in the contemporary world. For all his later brooding about Spenglerian decline, Kissinger's attachment to America was always an article of faith, a touchstone for self-protection and personal advancement. It was like the Holy Land of the Hebrew Bible, imperfect but blessed and deserving of special preservation. Kissinger described the United States in these terms: a nation that refused "to be bound by history."³¹ As a policymaker he defined himself as a protector of "the stake that all men and women of goodwill had in America's strength and purpose."³²

Kissinger's identity as a Jewish immigrant to America matters for more than purely biographical reasons. It helps to explain his policy choices throughout his career. As more documents become available in the United States and other societies from Kissinger's years in office, we can expect an avalanche of detailed studies that will elucidate *what* he did. A number of excellent books have already provided thorough and compelling assessments of his actions and their consequences.³³ The most difficult and largely avoided question is why: *why* did he act as he did, *why* did so many people follow his counsel, and *why* does he draw so much more controversy than other, perhaps equally flawed, policymakers?

30. Transcript of Kissinger's telephone conversation with David Abshire, 3 October 1973, State FOIA. In this conversation, Kissinger is mistaken in his assumption that Joseph Sisco was Jewish. Sisco was the child of Italian immigrants, from a non-Jewish background. See his obituary in the *Washington Post*, 24 November 2004, B07. I want to thank John Tortorice for his insights about Sisco's background.

31. Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 833.

32. Kissinger, *White House Years*, 228–29.

33. See Robert Schulzinger, *Henry Kissinger: Doctor of Diplomacy* (New York, 1989); Jussi Hanhimäki, *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (New York, 2004); Margaret Macmillan, *Nixon in China: The Week that Changed the World* (Toronto, 2006); Isaacson, *Kissinger*; John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York, 2005), ch. 5; Robert Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power* (New York, 2007).

Diplomatic historians are very poor at answering these questions. We describe and assess policy with great empirical detail, but we rarely probe personal motives beyond general phrases about an economic “open door,” “national security,” “anticommunism,” and “racism.”

These explanations are often persuasive, but they are not sufficient. The human beings who make foreign policy, like those who make decisions of any kind, act for complicated personal reasons that include emotion, memory, and personal taste as much as traditional explanations. These influences do not mean that decision makers are “irrational,” but they force us to broaden our explanatory frame for understanding the roots of policy.³⁴

This is particularly true for Henry Kissinger. No twentieth-century figure approached foreign policy with a more reasoned, articulate, and informed perspective on international relations. Before he entered office, Kissinger wrote more books, articles, papers, and letters about foreign affairs than almost any contemporary. His energy has not flagged since he left office. Despite his many tactical shifts, he acted with remarkable consistency throughout his career, holding to a set of core assumptions and beliefs that allowed him to make sense of a complex world. This was, of course, one of his greatest strengths, commented upon by almost everyone who worked with him. Kissinger cultivated a talent for penetrating a mass of diverse information and offering what appeared to be simple, coherent, and practical proposals for action. “From the time we first met,” one of his closest friends in Europe from the mid-1950s commented, “I have always been listening to his analyses with the greatest admiration. They reach a level that you hardly ever come across. Never, in fact. . . . He is one of the most brilliant ‘minds’ of our generation. It sparkles with astonishing brilliance.”³⁵

34. On this point, Anders Stephanson, Andrew Rotter, and Frank Costigliola offer very instructive models to broaden the explanatory frame for policy analysis. See Anders Stephanson, *Kenan and the Art of Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, MA, 1989); Andrew Rotter, *Comrades at Odds: The United States and India, 1947–1964* (Ithaca, NY, 2000); Andrew Rotter, “Saidism without Said: Orientalism and U.S. Diplomatic History,” *American Historical Review* 105 (October 2000): 1205–17; Frank Costigliola, “‘Unceasing Pressure for Penetration’: Gender, Pathology, and Emotion in George Kennan’s Formation of the Cold War,” *Journal of American History* 83 (March 1997): 1309–39; Frank Costigliola, “‘Like Animals or Worse’: Narratives of Culture and Emotion by U.S. and British POWs and Airmen behind Soviet Lines, 1944–1945,” *Diplomatic History* 28 (November 2004): 749–80. For some of my own idiosyncratic reflections on broadening the explanatory frame for policy analysis, see Jeremi Suri, “The Cold War, Decolonization, and Global Social Awakenings: Historical Intersections,” *Cold War History* 6 (August 2006): 353–63.

35. Ernst Hans van der Beugel Oral History, ch. 7, Archive Location 2.21.183.08, Inventory 60-65, National Archive, The Netherlands. Van der Beugel oversaw Dutch administration of American Marshall Plan aid. He became deputy foreign minister in the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with special oversight for NATO matters. He also served as the president of KLM Royal Dutch Airlines and the secretary general of the Bilderberg Group, organizing annual meetings of influential transatlantic elites. More biographical information is available from <http://www.parlement.com/9291000/biof/01847>, accessed 10 July 2006. For similar comments from Hamilton Fish Armstrong, the long-time editor of *Foreign Affairs*, see Hamilton Fish Armstrong to the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, 2 December 1964,

Kissinger's brilliance and the policies that followed from it hinged on his fear of mass violence and intolerance, and his faith in the righteousness of the American dream. Throughout his career, Kissinger presumed that democracies were weak and prone to extremes of action and passivity, based on what he had seen and felt as a Jew in Weimar Germany. He did not simply opt for a world of order and authority, as other writers have claimed.³⁶ Instead, he looked to political arrangements that could assure the protection of values and security—social tolerance and a stable hierarchy of international power, with the United States at the top. This was how he translated his American dream into a workable global blueprint. This was how he fought, as a Jew, against what he viewed as the ever-present danger of civilization's descent into another Nazi (or Stalinist) darkness.³⁷

Commenting late in his life on what he learned of the “fragility of societies and the fragility of achievement” during his early years in Weimar Germany, an emotional Kissinger explained: I “saw the collapse of what was a very secure society, because the German Jews were very middle class, and they were actually more integrated into German life than American Jews on the whole.” What did the experience of the Holocaust teach Kissinger?

It affected my ideas about global issues importantly, for one thing, you know, it made me impatient with people who thought that all they needed to do was make a profound proclamation, that made them feel good. I mean, I had seen evil in the world, and I knew it was there, and I knew that there are some things you have to fight for, and that you can't insist that everything be to some ideal construction you have made.³⁸

Kissinger's experiences as an immigrant and a Jew structured his worldview. They made him uncomfortable with both the idealism of Woodrow Wilson and the realism of George Kennan. As a young man who had witnessed the depths of human brutality, Kissinger recognized the violence and hatred that permanently imperiled democracy, even in an “advanced” society like Germany. He also understood that brute power alone would not combat threats to the human condition. Citizens and leaders needed something transcendent to believe in, they needed hope, they needed inspiration. A strong, humane state—with charismatic, enlightened leaders—was the ballast that Kissinger looked to for protection against the difficulties he experienced as an immigrant and a Jew.

Box 39, Folder: Kissinger, Henry A., 1963–1972, Hamilton Fish Armstrong Papers, Seeley Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey. I want to thank Floris Kunert for helping me to use the Van der Beugel materials. I also want to thank Danielle Kleijwegt for her translation of the Van der Beugel Oral History. Quotations from this oral history are her translations.

36. See Isaacson, *Kissinger*; Bruce Mazlish, *Kissinger: The European Mind in American Policy* (New York, 1976); John G. Stoessinger, *Henry Kissinger: The Anguish of Power* (New York, 1976).

37. For more on this crucial point, see Suri, *Henry Kissinger and the American Century*, ch. 1.

38. Quotations from Kissinger's videotaped oral history interview with Louise Bobrow, 11 January 2001.

This description of Kissinger's thinking, and its origins, is not merely interpretive. One can find clear and consistent evidence of it throughout his life. It pervades his policymaking. In all regions of the world, he pursued diplomatic relationships that strengthened the United States through cooperation with strong, often undemocratic, regional partners. In all regions of the world, Kissinger's background as an immigrant and a Jew was a topic of diplomatic discussion, and an influence on policy outcomes. "Super K" was always an immigrant-Jewish-American figure of fascination.

Nowhere was this more evident than in the Middle East. In this part of the world, Kissinger's background threatened to implicate him in the Arab-Israeli conflict and undermine his efforts to dominate negotiations with all sides. During the 1970s, Kissinger confronted these issues head-on. He brilliantly turned his experiences as an immigrant and a Jew into sources of greater regional effectiveness with *both* Arabs and Israelis. Once again, he derived power from acting as a bridge figure between societies, making his contested identity a political asset. The scope and the content of Kissinger's influence in the Middle East—and its continuing controversy—reflect his background, and how he has translated it into policy leverage. The personal is political for Henry Kissinger. It is also especially useful in navigating diplomacy around the Holy Land.

THE YOM KIPPUR WAR

Kissinger was one of many observers to anticipate another Arab-Israeli war, but he was surprised to learn on the morning of 6 October 1973 that Egypt, Syria, and their allies were poised for attack. He did not believe that they could defeat Israeli forces on the battlefield. The 1967 War had made Arab weaknesses abundantly clear. Egypt and Syria were "insane," according to Kissinger, for starting another war they could not win. Israeli citizens were unprepared to fend off an attack on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish year, but the secretary of state was confident that the Israeli army would reverse the tide of battle in a few short days.³⁹

Before the outbreak of hostilities, Israeli leaders shared this underestimation of Arab military capabilities. They discounted the ability of their adversaries to challenge Israel's proven battlefield superiority. They also doubted the prospect of coordinated and effective action among the various Arab states. Even in the early-morning hours of 6 October 1973, when Egyptian and Syrian forces made their final preparations for attack, Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir ruled out the kind of preemptive military strike employed by her predecessors in the 1967

39. Transcript of Kissinger's telephone conversation with Alexander Haig, 6 October 1973, 8:35 am; transcript of Kissinger telephone conversation with Richard Nixon, 7 October 1973, 2:07 pm, State FOIA. See also "Indications of Arab Intentions to Initiate Hostilities" (circa summer 1973), Folder: Rabin/Kissinger (Dinitz) 1973, January–July (2 of 3), Box 135, Henry Kissinger Office Files, NSC Files, Nixon Presidential Materials Project, National Archives, College Park, Maryland (hereafter Nixon Papers).

War. She believed that Israel could repel an Arab attack, and she also recognized the importance of maintaining a defensive position. “If we strike first,” Meir explained to her advisers, “we won’t get help from anybody.” She sought to repulse Arab aggression and gain foreign support from the United States and other countries.⁴⁰

The Arab armies fought better than either the Americans or the Israelis expected. During the first day of the war, they drove deep into Israeli-held territory on the Sinai Peninsula (across the Suez Canal) and in the Golan Heights. They had momentum and they appeared ready to extend their gains. The Israeli army quickly lost its attitude of invincibility. It was on its heels, disorganized, and uncertain. Surveying his country’s early battlefield losses, Israel’s defense minister, Moshe Dayan, warned that the initial Arab successes would only mobilize more support within those societies. Soon his nation of three million Jews would confront eighty million confident and zealous Arab citizens. “This is the war of Israel against the Arabs,” he proclaimed. Dayan worried that Israel would now get smothered in a sea of enemies.⁴¹

Nixon and Kissinger recognized the Arab battlefield gains, but they were less alarmed by the military situation than their counterparts in Jerusalem. They believed that the Israelis would halt the Egyptian and Syrian advances, and eventually launch an effective counterattack. Instead of the details on the ground, they focused on how the United States could turn this crisis into a source of stability and influence in the region. Speaking with the president in the first hours of the war, Kissinger explained that “the primary problem is to get the fighting stopped and then use the opportunity to see whether a settlement could be enforced.”

Nixon: You mean a diplomatic settlement of the bigger problem?

Kissinger: That is right. . . . I think it is impossible now to keep maintaining the status quo ante.⁴²

Nixon and Kissinger agreed that they should adopt a “neutral approach” as they sought an end to hostilities. They also worked through diplomatic channels to bring an American-led peace to the region. Washington consulted with Moscow, but the United States moved to “take the initiative.” In a flurry of phone calls and meetings, Kissinger opened a series of intense discussions with Egyptian and Israeli representatives, as well as the Soviet ambassador to the United States, Anatoly Dobrynin. “Your Arab friends were terribly deceitful,”

40. Abraham Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War: The Epic Encounter that Transformed the Middle East* (New York, 2004), esp. 65–100, quotation on 89. See also Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (New York, 2000), 318–20.

41. Dayan quoted in Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War*, 219. Rabinovich reports that, after hearing Dayan’s remarks, Prime Minister Golda Meir contemplated suicide. *Ibid.*, 219–20.

42. Transcript of Kissinger’s telephone conversation with Nixon, 6 October 1973, 9:25 am, State FOIA.

Kissinger scolded Dobrynin. "We are taking this matter extremely seriously. If you will let your colleagues know we would appreciate it as quickly as possible."⁴³

American neutrality, as this last comment indicated, did not mean indifference to the outcome of the war. Nixon and Kissinger agreed that neither side should be allowed a clear and decisive victory. The United States initially stalled on aid requested by Israel. Kissinger spoke of letting the belligerents beat upon one another "for a day or two, and that will quiet them down." After more desperate requests from Jerusalem, particularly a personal appeal to the president from Meir, Nixon approved an emergency airlift of military supplies on 13 October 1973. This was also a reaction to the evidence of increased Soviet aid to the Arab countries, particularly Syria. During the course of the next month, the United States transported eleven thousand tons of ammunition, electronic equipment, and other matériel to Israel. Kissinger wanted to maintain a low profile for the relationship between Israel and the United States, but the pressures of the war forced a more decisive and obvious expression of Washington's support.⁴⁴

With the assistance of American supplies, Israel finally gained the upper hand over the attacking Arab armies. Forces under the command of General Ariel Sharon broke through Egyptian lines on 15 October 1973. During the night of 16 October, Israeli units began to cross the Suez Canal into Egypt. Israeli soldiers also pushed through the Arab-held sections of the Golan Heights, entering Syrian territory. After this turn of events, Kissinger reported to the president that "things may be breaking."⁴⁵

On the retreat, Arab leaders now looked to the United States for a diplomatic solution to the war. Through the course of the conflict, Washington acquired unique leverage. Israel felt beholden, at least in part, to the United States because of its reliance on American military assistance. The Soviet Union, in contrast, had discredited itself in many capitals through its support for another failed Arab war. Moscow also lacked serious relations with Israel. "Everyone," Kissinger explained, "knows in the Middle East that if they want a peace they have to go through us." He set out to exploit this position in the last days of the Yom Kippur War.⁴⁶

43. Ibid.; transcript of Kissinger's telephone conversation with Anatoly Dobrynin, 6 October 1973, State FOIA.

44. Transcript of Kissinger's telephone conversation with Haig, 6 October 1973, 12:45 pm, State FOIA; Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2002), 106; Hanhimäki, *The Flawed Architect*, 307–8; Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 507–15.

45. Transcript of Kissinger's telephone conversation with Nixon, 16 October 1973, State FOIA.

46. Memorandum of conversation between Kissinger, James Schlesinger, William Colby, Admiral Thomas Moorer, and Brent Scowcroft, 19 October 1973, Digital National Security Archive Document Database (hereafter NSA), available from <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com.ezproxy.library.wisc.edu>, accessed 10 August 2006. See also Kissinger's briefing at the

As he had long advocated, Kissinger mixed diplomacy with force—negotiations with nuclear weapons. On 24 October, when the Soviet Union threatened to send soldiers to the region, Kissinger ordered American forces to a heightened state of readiness. This maneuver signaled U.S. resolve and the possibility of “irrational” American actions if the Soviets challenged Washington. Kissinger followed the advice he gave former Israeli Ambassador Yitzhak Rabin: “I have learned that when you use force it is better to use 30 percent more than is necessary than five percent less than necessary . . . whenever we use force we have to do it slightly hysterically.”⁴⁷

Under Kissinger’s direction, the U.S. government brought its forces to “Defcon III”—an unusually high state of nuclear war preparation in peacetime.⁴⁸ When questioned, Kissinger spoke explicitly of the threat to regional stability: “The United States does not favor and will not approve the sending of a joint Soviet-United States force into the Middle East. . . . The United States is even more opposed to the unilateral introduction by any great power, especially by any nuclear power, of military forces into the Middle East in whatever guise those forces should be introduced.”⁴⁹

Most significant, Kissinger asserted that the United States would use its full power to pursue a settlement in the region—even at the risk of nuclear war. This was a major shift from the cautious American diplomacy before October 1973.

secretary of state’s staff meeting, 23 October 1973, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book 98, document 63, available from <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB98>, accessed 2 October 2006.

47. Memorandum of conversation between Kissinger, Rabin, and Peter Rodman, 24 January 1973, Folder: Rabin/Dinitz, Sensitive Memcons, 1973 (2 of 2), Box 135, Kissinger Office Files, Nixon Papers. On Kissinger’s advocacy for mixing diplomacy with force, including nuclear weapons, see Suri, *Henry Kissinger and the American Century*, ch. 4.

48. On the night of 24 October 1973, as Kissinger prepared to raise the American nuclear alert to “Defcon III” in response to Soviet threats in the Middle East, he told Alexander Haig: “You cannot be sure how much of this is due to our domestic crisis . . . I don’t think they would have taken on a functioning president.” Kissinger and Haig then discussed whether they should wake Nixon for the decision about raising the nuclear alert. In the end, the president did not attend the White House Situation Room meeting that decided on this extraordinary course of action. See transcript of telephone conversation between Kissinger and Haig, 24 October 1973, 10:20 pm, State FOIA; Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 585–88. On 25 October 1973, Kissinger and Haig discussed the alert and its aftermath with the clear understanding that they had made the key decisions, not the president:

Kissinger: You and I were the only ones for it. These other guys were wailing all over the place this morning.

Haig: You’re telling me. Last night it seemed like someone had taken their shoes away from them. You really handled that thing magnificently.

Kissinger: I think I did some good for the President.

Haig: More than you know.

Kissinger then called Nixon, who was evidently preoccupied with Watergate. See transcript of telephone conversation between Kissinger and Haig, 25 October 1973, 2:35 pm; transcript of telephone conversation between Kissinger and Nixon, 25 October 1973, 3:05 pm, State FOIA. I thank William Burr for clarifying my understanding of Defcon III.

49. Quoted in Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 594–95.

It was also an international “coming out” for Kissinger as the most prominent statesman in the Middle East. When Arab and Israeli forces halted their hostilities, all of the belligerents, as well as foreign observers, looked to him for a negotiated settlement. All of the belligerents accepted that he was uniquely situated—because of his influence in the U.S. government, his international standing, and his background—to steer the future course for the region. An embattled president in the Oval Office and a discredited leadership in the Kremlin left a vacuum that Kissinger energetically filled.

Less than a year after the cessation of the Yom Kippur War, Anwar Sadat—the leader of Egypt and the main strategist behind the Arab attack on Israel—looked to Kissinger as “a magician,” capable of building “a new image of America” in the Middle East. “I don’t want to be imaginative,” Sadat told Kissinger in confidence. “I want to be practical. I have confidence in you, you know.”⁵⁰

Kissinger understood the curious way in which conspiracy theories about Jewish influence boosted Arab expectations, and even respect for him. If Jews ran the world, as many anti-Semites wrongly presumed, then Kissinger—as the leading American *and* Jewish foreign-policy official—appeared to be an all-powerful figure. Prejudice against Jews, ironically, increased Kissinger’s ability to bribe, cajole, and threaten. Preparing for his first trip to the Arab countries of the Middle East in 1973, Kissinger noted Cairo’s anxious anticipation of his visit. Speaking with Brent Scowcroft, the deputy special assistant for national security affairs, he asked: “Have you heard about the Egyptians? They have already prepared for my arrival there.”

Scowcroft: That’s beautiful! They are something else.

Kissinger: In the nutty Arab world I am sort of a mythical figure. The Arabs think I am a magician.

Scowcroft: That’s right. Might not be possible right now.⁵¹

SADAT AND THE ARAB “MODERATES”

Sadat was the figure on whom Kissinger hinged his efforts to bring American-led stability to the Middle East. Sadat would open new diplomatic possibilities for Kissinger. In his memoirs, the former secretary of state recounts the admiration he developed for the Egyptian leader, dating to their first meeting on 7 November 1973—just two weeks after the cessation of Arab-Israeli military hostilities:

Sadat had emerged, dressed in a khaki military tunic, an overcoat slung carelessly over his shoulders. . . . He was taller, swarthier, and more imposing than I had expected. He exuded vitality and confidence. That son of peasants

50. Memorandum of conversation between Anwar Sadat, Ismail Fahmy, Henry Kissinger, Hermann Eilts, and Peter Rodman, Cairo, 30 May 1974, NSA.

51. Transcript of Kissinger’s telephone conversation with Brent Scowcroft, 18 October 1973, State FOIA.



Figure 2: Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger meet with Arab foreign ministers in the Oval Office, 19 February 1974. Kissinger participated in more intensive personal negotiations with Middle East leaders than any previous U.S. secretary of state. Photo: Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum.

radiated a natural dignity and aristocratic bearing as out of keeping with his revolutionary history as it was commanding and strangely calming. He affected nonchalance.⁵²

Sadat explained to Kissinger how he had planned the 6 October 1973 attack on Israel as an effort to restore Arab dignity and convince the Israelis that they could not dominate the region through force. The Egyptian leader was also frustrated by American passivity. He had expelled Soviet military personnel from his country in July 1972, hoping that the United States would play a mediating role between Israeli and Arab interests. Sadat understood that Arab belligerence and alliance with Moscow only reinforced U.S. support for Israel. Instead of antagonizing Washington, he wanted to turn America's influence to his advantage. Sadat pursued a strategy that encouraged U.S. leaders to press concessions on Jerusalem, in return for promises that Cairo would promote peace and pro-American sentiment in the region. "Egypt leads the Arab world," Sadat told Kissinger. "We started promoting better relations with the United States. The United States has all the cards in its hands and Israel should heed the United States."⁵³

52. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 636.

53. Memorandum of conversation between Anwar Sadat, Hosni Mubarak, Ismail Fahmy, Gerald Ford, Henry Kissinger, and Joseph Sisco, 1 June 1975, NSA.

In the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War, the Egyptian leader correctly surmised that his efforts to enhance his power through cooperation with the United States matched Kissinger's pursuit of a world order built around strong and stable regional figures. Washington did not seek to dominate the Middle East directly, nor did it want to build up Israel as a fortress nation, isolated from its Arab neighbors. The 1973 War made it clear to Kissinger that the Middle East needed a series of powerful states—Jewish and Arab, oil rich and desert poor—roughly balanced in military capabilities. The leaders of these states would recognize that victory in war was not conceivable, and they would seek cooperative relations instead. Following from his long-standing thoughts on how the United States should manage the “grey areas,” Kissinger sought to use American power to ensure military balance and stabilize Arab-Jewish relations. This is what the president meant when he explained to members of Congress: “If your goal is peace in the Middle East and the survival of Israel, we have to have some stake with Israeli neighbors.” The United States pushed for what Kissinger called “a diplomatic revolution” in the region predicated upon “a triumph for the moderates.”⁵⁴

Sadat was exactly the kind of Arab “moderate” Kissinger needed. He ruled a powerful and influential state in the region. He rejected extremist calls for socialist or religious proselytism. Instead, he desired a working partnership with the United States. Most significant, Sadat sought to build an enduring structure of relations in the Middle East that supported Egyptian interests but also accommodated the needs of Israel and the United States. He wanted to move beyond conflict.

Sadat fit Kissinger's definition of a transcendent leader. Referring to him in his memoirs, Kissinger proclaimed: “The great man has a vision of the future that enables him to put obstacles in perspective.” Echoing his assessment of his own position as an “inside outsider” in American society, Kissinger explained: “Sadat bore with fortitude the loneliness inseparable from moving the world from familiar categories toward where it has never been.” In place of religious intolerance and sectarian strife, Sadat and Kissinger sought to enforce diplomatic “normality”—including collegial state-to-state relations and political cooperation among diverse groups. Kissinger believed this was “the best chance to transcend frozen attitudes that the Middle East had known since the creation of the State of Israel.”⁵⁵

Sadat described Kissinger as “the real face of the United States, the one I had always wanted to see.” He and the American secretary of state became, in Sadat's words, “friends.” “There was no difficulty in understanding one another.” Both

54. Memorandum of conversation between Kissinger, Nixon, Brent Scowcroft, and a bipartisan congressional delegation, 31 May 1974, NSA. For Kissinger's analysis of the “grey areas,” see Henry Kissinger, “Military Policy and Defense of the ‘Grey Areas,’” *Foreign Affairs* 33 (April 1955): 416–28; Suri, *Henry Kissinger and the American Century*, ch. 4.

55. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 647, 638.

men sought to assure Egyptian strength as a bulwark against Arab extremism and Soviet meddling. Both men envisioned a stable Middle East dominated by roughly balanced regional powers in Cairo and Jerusalem that cooperated to restrain belligerent forces and work with the United States. “I want us to make progress; to make a complete peace,” Sadat told Kissinger and Nixon’s successor in the White House, Gerald Ford. “And I want the United States to achieve it, not the Soviet Union.”⁵⁶

Kissinger was the “real face of the United States,” according to Sadat, because he appreciated power and he was Jewish. The Egyptian leader assumed that Kissinger’s position as the most prominent international Jewish figure gave him unique leverage over Israel. Sadat pledged that he would manage the other Arab leaders, and he expected the United States to “put pressure” on Israel. Egyptian Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmy brushed aside Kissinger’s protestations about Israeli intransigence, exclaiming that Prime Minister “Rabin is your boy.”⁵⁷

Sadat expected Kissinger to make Israel accept territorial transfers to Egypt “pill by pill.” He did not merely anticipate that Washington would use its military and economic might to shape Israeli policy; he believed that the secretary of state could exert unique personal influence. Kissinger was an outsider to the region who could mediate between warring parties for Sadat, and he was also a Jewish insider who could move Israel from within. These “inside-outsider” qualities, once again, made Kissinger particularly valuable for a powerful leader—in this case, Sadat.⁵⁸

Kissinger did not deny his personal leverage over Israel. When Fahmy said “Rabin is your boy,” Kissinger responded: “I need a few months to work on him.” The secretary of state affirmed the asserted link between him and the Israeli prime minister. Earlier in the same conversation, Kissinger compared Rabin to his predecessor during the Yom Kippur War, Golda Meir: “He doesn’t have her guts. He’s more intellectual. But we can get him to move in the right direction. . . . We need a few months to work on him.”⁵⁹

Kissinger’s “shuttle diplomacy” between Cairo, Jerusalem, and other capitals followed the model of his transatlantic networking through the International

56. Anwar el-Sadat, *In Search of Identity: An Autobiography* (New York, 1978), 291; Memorandum of conversation between Sadat, Mubarak, Fahmy, Ford, Kissinger, Sisco, 1 June 1975, NSA.

57. Memorandum of conversation between Sadat, Mubarak, Fahmy, Ford, Kissinger, Sisco, 1 June 1975, NSA; Memorandum of conversation between Sadat, Fahmy, Kissinger, Eilts, Rodman, 30 May 1974, NSA.

58. Memorandum of conversation between Sadat, Fahmy, Kissinger, Eilts, Rodman, 30 May 1974, NSA; Sadat, *In Search of Identity*, 291. Edward R. F. Sheehan argues that the leaders of Saudi Arabia similarly believed that Kissinger had powerful personal leverage over Israel; see Edward R. F. Sheehan, *The Arabs, Israelis, and Kissinger: A Secret History of American Diplomacy in the Middle East* (New York, 1976), 75.

59. Memorandum of conversation between Sadat, Fahmy, Kissinger, Eilts, Rodman, 30 May 1974, NSA.

Seminar. He established himself as the closest and most effective link between different leaders. He turned their prejudices to his advantage. Most significant, he made himself indispensable to political negotiations. Kissinger needed Sadat for a “moderate” and American-influenced Middle East, but Sadat needed Kissinger as his effective go-between with Israel. Kissinger combined personal politics, skillful diplomacy, and a coherent grand strategy for regional stability. He made himself not just a “mythical figure” but also a bridge between warring societies.

He retains this unique position in the twenty-first century. No other person outside government wields comparable influence in *both* the Arab states and Israel. No other person outside government is so connected to the sources of power in multiple societies, yet so suspected for his multiple loyalties.

ISRAEL AND THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY

Kissinger could not control Israeli leaders or the opinions of the American Jewish community. Sadat overrated him, as he overrated the unity and power of Jews in general. In fact, Kissinger frequently complained about the opposition he confronted from Israeli and American Jews. “They are,” he told Brent Scowcroft, “as obnoxious as the Vietnamese.” In another conversation, Kissinger joked: “I’m going to be the first Jew accused of anti-Semitism.”⁶⁰

Israelis and American Jews feared that Kissinger was overcompensating for his background by making excessive concessions to the Arabs. He was, they feared, trading Israel’s security for his own international influence. Menachem Begin, the leader of Israel’s Likud party and future prime minister, reminded Kissinger: “You are a Jew. You are not the first [Jew] who has reached a high position in one’s country of residence. Remember the past. There were such Jews, who out of a complex feared non-Jews would charge them with acting for their people, and therefore did the opposite.” “Dr. Kissinger,” Begin warned, “should be careful about such a distortion in his seemingly objective thinking.”⁶¹

American Jews had similar concerns. Rabbi Daniel J. Silver of Cleveland accused Kissinger of trying too hard to show the Arabs that “being a Jew doesn’t count.” Gershon Jacobson, a Jewish literary figure in New York, explained that

60. Transcript of Kissinger’s telephone conversation with Brent Scowcroft, 18 October 1973, 10:45 pm; transcript of Kissinger’s telephone conversation with Mr. Jameson, 2 November 1973, State FOIA.

61. Menachem Begin’s 15 November 1973 speech in the Israeli Knesset, quoted in the Israeli newspaper, *Ha’aretz*, 16 November 1973, 5. After the Yom Kippur War, vituperative criticisms of Kissinger saturated the Israeli press. Critics focused on Kissinger’s alleged deference to the Arabs. See *Ha’aretz*, 2 November 1973, 7–8; 6 November 1973, 4; 7 November 1973, 6; 22 November 1973, 5; 6 December 1973, 7; *Ma’ariv*, 29 October 1973, 2; 2 November 1973, 13; 16 November 1973, 17; *Yediot Akhronot*, 2 November 1973, 8; 8 November 1973, 24. A group of Israeli right-wing extremists allegedly hired one or more foreign hit men to assassinate Kissinger. See “Bare Plot to Kill Kissinger,” *Chicago Tribune*, 14 January 1977, 1. I want to thank my research assistant, Gil Ribak, for helping to find and translate these materials.

“Kissinger was determined to gain the confidence of the Arabs as a Jew, and to do so at the expense of Israel.” Norman Podhoretz, the editor of *Commentary* magazine, told Kissinger that Israeli and American Jews feared he was an appeaser—a “Chamberlain”—seeking to conciliate enemies bent on destroying the Jewish people.⁶²

Fame and celebrity made Kissinger an international giant, but he remained all too human for those who felt closest to him in background. He disappointed those who expected the most of him. He seemed disloyal to those who demanded a champion for their group. Most of all, he refused to focus his energies on ethnic and religious claims separate from U.S. national interests in a stable Middle East. As Rabin remembered, Kissinger enraged those who wanted a Jewish representative in office, rather than an American secretary of state. He defined his Jewishness through the American state, not through Israel.⁶³

This was a major handicap for Kissinger, particularly when he negotiated with Israeli leaders, but it also had its advantages. Kissinger was a Jew, who had experienced the worst forms of anti-Semitism. None of his Jewish detractors ever forgot that. As much as they might criticize him for not doing enough on behalf of Jews, he was still one of them. He was still part of their family. This did not produce agreement on policy, but it did create a foundation for basic trust and empathy. Non-Jewish secretaries of state did not benefit from the same Israeli bond.

Henry Rosovsky, who participated in some of Kissinger’s meetings with American Jewish leaders after the Yom Kippur War, recalls the “comfort” and “mutual respect” that permeated these discussions. Despite the anxieties that Rosovsky voiced about insufficient U.S. support for Israel in December 1973, “this was an all-Jewish meeting, with a shared concern and commitment to Israel.” Rosovsky remembers that he and others who talked with the first Jewish secretary of state knew “Kissinger would not be a person to betray Israel.”⁶⁴

Rabbi Alexander Schindler, speaking on behalf of many American Jewish organizations, made the same point. He and other Jewish leaders paid tribute to Kissinger “because we sense in his depths, a commitment to Israel and the Jewish people. He may have been objective, but he was never detached.”⁶⁵

62. Quotations from Blumenfeld, *Henry Kissinger*, 254; Memorandum of conversation between Kissinger and American Jewish intellectuals, 6 December 1973, NSA. See also Blumenfeld, *Henry Kissinger*, 248–61; Joseph Kraft, “Secretary Henry,” *New York Times Magazine*, 28 October 1973.

63. Yitzhak Rabin with the assistance of Eithan Haber, *Yitzhak Rabin mesocheach im manbigim ve-rashey medinot* [Yitzhak Rabin converses with leaders and heads of state] (Giva’atayim, Israel, 1984). My research assistant, Gil Ribak, translated these passages from the Hebrew original.

64. Author’s interview with Henry Rosovsky, 7 July 2006.

65. Rabbi Alexander Schindler’s remarks at the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, 11 January 1977, quoted in *Washington Post*, 12 January 1977, A16.

Kissinger appealed to this sentiment. He asked for his fellow Jews “to understand what we’re trying to do” and “avoid slogans.” Warning that “Israel is in great danger” if it remains isolated and surrounded by belligerent enemies, he called for help in pursuing compromises on territory, particularly in the Sinai Peninsula, that would reduce conflict throughout the region. “With some wisdom in the Jewish community, and among friends of Israel, maybe we can manage it. . . . Certainly this government will never participate in anything that we believe involves any risk of its destruction.”⁶⁶

When negotiating directly with Israeli leaders, Kissinger similarly drew on a presumed bond. Meeting with Prime Minister Rabin one month after Nixon’s resignation of the presidency and during a particularly difficult moment in Middle East peace efforts, Kissinger explained: “We read often of disagreements. One, there are no disagreements. Two, if there are, they’re family disagreements. We are working for a common strategy, one element of which is a strong Israel.” Kissinger reminded the Israeli leader of their close personal relationship before 1973, when Rabin was ambassador to the United States. “We worked together for five years in an atmosphere of trust and confidence.”⁶⁷

Rabin reciprocated these sentiments, despite his evident anxiety about Kissinger’s calls for Israeli concessions to the Arab states: “We believe very much in Israel that there is friendship between our two countries. I have had the experience of this friendship, especially with you, and all our intentions are to continue this—to have the basis to speak frankly, but the basis is a common interest and a common understanding.” Following Kissinger’s prodding, Rabin agreed to push forward with further negotiations for territorial withdrawals from Egyptian-claimed lands, as well as discussions with Jordan and Syria. Kissinger, in turn, pledged to enhance American support for Israel—through an expanding list of military supplies and billions of dollars in foreign aid. Kissinger and Rabin trusted one another “to find a constructive solution” for mutual concerns.⁶⁸

Public controversy in Israel and the United States proliferated, but relations between the leaders of the two countries grew closest during the tenure

66. Memorandum of conversation between Kissinger and American Jewish intellectuals, 6 December 1973, NSA.

67. Memorandum of conversation between Yitzhak Rabin, Henry Kissinger et al., 11 September 1974, NSA. Between 1969 and 1973, Kissinger frequently met with Rabin in Washington, DC. The two men had an intense, frank, and trusting relationship. See the accounts of their meetings in Boxes 134–35, Henry Kissinger Office Files, NSC Files, Nixon Papers.

68. Memorandum of conversation between Yitzhak Rabin, Henry Kissinger et al., 11 September 1974, NSA. Between 1973 and 1974, annual U.S. assistance to Israel increased from \$492 million to \$2.6 billion. See Congressional Research Service report, “Israel: U.S. Foreign Assistance,” updated 26 April 2005; available from <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/IB85066.pdf#search=%22us%20foreign%20aid%20israel%201973%22>, accessed 4 October 2006.

of the first Jewish secretary of state. Yigal Allon, Israel's deputy prime minister and a former participant in Kissinger's International Seminar at Harvard, confirmed this point: "I trusted him to the extent that I could trust the foreign minister of any other country. I trusted his friendship, but not always his judgment. I never doubted I was talking to a friend of Israel. He was loyal to Israel in his way."⁶⁹

By the time Kissinger left office, in January 1977, he had succeeded in redrawing the map of the Middle East. Following a war that threatened to unleash years of armed conflict between the Arab states and Israel, with possible superpower participation, he created a framework for peace among some of the most powerful governments in the region—particularly those in Cairo and Jerusalem. He negotiated intensively for armed disengagement near their border, the exchange of territory occupied by Israel on the Sinai Peninsula, and a commitment to basic cooperation between the states. He used the full range of American pressure, pleading, and bribery to achieve this end. Most significant, Kissinger made the United States a trusted mediator for Egypt and Israel—the one government both Arabs and Jews could look to for assurance.

Kissinger's Middle East policy was a natural extension of the strategy he applied to other parts of the world. The regimes in Egypt and Israel provided local authority, supported and managed indirectly by the United States from afar. Peace in the region was not about justice or democracy. It focused on state-centered stability. Basic freedoms derived from enlightened and strong leadership rather than popular consensus. This was a vision for the region that self-consciously approximated Metternich or Bismarck's Europe much more than the religious prophecies of the Bible or the Koran. It was the well-considered worldview of a German Jew seeking to protect cherished values—and his heritage—from political extremes.

Speaking "from the heart" to a conference of presidents from American Jewish organizations in January 1977, Kissinger explained how his work for the American state and his Jewish background came together:

I thought it was important for the future of Israel and for the future of the Jewish people, that the actions that the U.S. Government took were not seen to be the result of a special, personal relationship; that the support we gave Israel reflected not my personal preferences alone but the basic national interests of the United States, transcending the accident of who might be in office at any particular period. I have never forgotten that thirteen members of my family died in concentration camps, nor could I ever fail to remember what it was like to live in Nazi Germany as a member of a persecuted minority. I believe, however, that the relationship of Israel to the United States transcends these personal considerations. I do not believe that it is compatible with the moral conscience of mankind to permit Israel to suffer in

69. Yigal Allon quoted in Richard Valeriani, *Travels with Henry* (Boston, 1979), 208.

the Middle East a ghetto existence that has been suffered by Jews in many individual countries throughout their history. The support for a free and democratic Israel in the Middle East is a moral necessity of our period to be pursued by every Administration, and with a claim to the support of all freedom-loving people all over the world.⁷⁰

Kissinger closed his remarks by invoking his own continued Jewish faith, and his attachment to Israel: "Throughout their history, Jews have been saying to themselves: 'Next year in Jerusalem.' I would like to think that sometime soon *we* can say this in its deepest sense—in an Israel that is secure, that is accepted, that is at peace."⁷¹

TROUBLED LEGACY

In many ways, Kissinger's vision became a reality. On the eve of 11 September 2001, Israel and Egypt remained at peace. Kissinger's map of the Middle East endured twenty-five years of continued low-scale Arab-Israeli fighting, in addition to other conflicts in the region. The United States served as a mediator between the sides, and a sponsor of "moderate" regimes. It was the dominant external power in the region—a fact it had proven by leading an international coalition of forces, including Arab states, to turn back Saddam Hussein's invasion of Iraq's oil-rich neighbor, Kuwait. An Islamic revolution in Iran had expelled U.S. influence from that country, and humiliated Americans through a prolonged seizure of hostages, but it had not changed the borders of the region or sparked a renewed Arab-Israeli war. American access to inexpensive oil seemed assured until the supply of hydrocarbons ran out.⁷²

Geopolitical stability in the Middle East masked deeper domestic disturbances. Kissinger's strategy had the effect of reinforcing dictatorship and discontent. His policies made the United States a visible sponsor of oppressors, including Sadat, his successor Hosni Mubarak, the Shah of Iran, King Faisal in Saudi Arabia, and Saddam Hussein before 1990. These men cooperated with Washington while they brutalized their populations. Kissinger's policies did not address the anger, resentment, and desires for political change voiced by citizens living in Arab societies and the territories occupied by Israel after 1967. In the latter case, Washington became an indirect financier for

70. Kissinger's address to the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, Hotel Pierre, New York City, 11 January 1977, in *Department of State Bulletin* 76 (31 January 1977): 90. See also "Kissinger Is Honored by U.S. Jewish Group," *New York Times*, 12 January 1977, A3; "An Emotional Kissinger Affirms Support of Israel," *Washington Post*, 12 January 1977, A16; "Kissinger Says 'Shalom' to Jewish Leaders," *Daily News* (New York), 12 January 1977, 13.

71. Kissinger's address to the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, 11 January 1977, 91. Emphasis added.

72. On the Iranian Revolution and the hostage crisis, see David Farber, *Taken Hostage: The Iran Hostage Crisis and America's First Encounter with Radical Islam* (Princeton, NJ, 2004).

new Israeli settlements on land claimed by Palestinians. The United States built peace in the Middle East on the backs of iron-fisted Arab and Israeli leaders.

Kissinger understood the nature of this policy, and its democratic shortcomings. It was not unique to his endeavors in the Middle East. He constructed his career around the presumption that in a cruel and violent world, powerful leaders, not democratic politics, offered the best protection for life and liberty. Statesmanship for Kissinger required the tolerance of brutality as a bulwark against worse suffering. Transcendent leaders needed the courage to make tough choices among lesser evils. This is how he interpreted recent history. During the 1940s the United States and Great Britain had to fight one of history's most destructive wars to rescue Europe from Nazi genocide. After Germany's surrender, the Western states had to deploy the most deadly weapons to assure the survival of civilization in the face of Communist expansion. In the Middle East, Kissinger believed that the United States had to follow similar logic. Washington would work closely with unsavory regimes to prevent the region from immolating itself in a fire of mass hatred.

More democracy in countries like Egypt and Saudi Arabia would only increase the urge to war, according to Kissinger. Anti-Semitism and other hatreds had popular appeal; violence was a simple and attractive option for angry citizens. Was it not better to work with figures like Sadat who ruled as dictators but also used their power to repress popular calls for war? Was it not better to acquiesce in Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories than allow those lands to become a base for renewed attacks on the Jewish state as a whole? The United States had to build a sustainable process for political stability in the region before it could pursue far-reaching reform. The Middle East, like other areas of the world, needed reliable and rational local authorities. Only after these authorities asserted themselves, with American support, could Washington "let history take its course."⁷³

ETHNICITY, IDENTITY, AND FOREIGN POLICY

Kissinger's experiences as a German-Jewish immigrant to the United States, and his emotional attachment to a particular vision of the American dream, did not determine his policies toward the Middle East, or other regions of the world. Ethnicity and identity are not "independent variables" that explain, in and of themselves, foreign-policy outcomes. They are not static sources of meaning, either. Kissinger's perception of his place in American society changed from his time in the Army, through his years at Harvard, and until his last days in the White House. At each stage of his career, he adapted to different pressures and incentives—world war, openings in higher education, and policymaking in the

73. Author's interview with Henry Kissinger, 26 October 2005.

shadow of Vietnam. Most significant, his assessments of threats and opportunities changed in reaction to different perceptions of violence, anti-Semitism, and popular opinion. Kissinger's personal identity, like his policies, was quite malleable for different circumstances.

That said, his background and experiences exerted a consistent influence throughout his career. As an immigrant, Kissinger always viewed the American state as a source of salvation. It had saved his family and it had made his professional advancement possible. He hinged all of his activities on the goal of strengthening the American state, protecting it from enemies (internal and external), and enhancing its image in the eyes of others. He defined the American state as the foundation for all values, even to the point of justifying the flagrant violation of basic principles in its defense. Kissinger's attachment to *raison d'état* was deeper than considerations of *realpolitik* alone; it reflected an immigrant's emotional connection to his newfound home.

Kissinger's experiences as a Jew in a world filled with anti-Semitism made him a permanent "outsider," even as he acquired access to foreign-policy "insiders." For all his fame and loyalty to the American state, Kissinger confronted social prejudice against Jews at all stages in his career—often from the very people who empowered him. His personal insecurity and sycophancy to powerful figures reflected his continual fear of exclusion. For a man who witnessed the depths of human cruelty, Kissinger could never feel comfortable in his professional or social position in American society. He always feared that he was surrounded by enemies. He always feared that he could lose everything.

In the Middle East and other regions, personal insecurity translated into a search for strong state leaders and a diversion from traditional democratic ideals and economic aims. Kissinger did not seek to make the world "safe for democracy," nor did he pursue an "open door." Instead, he sought to build stability on trust and cooperation between strong men, like Sadat, and permanent mediation by the American government. Order and justice were not organic developments, but conditions that required enforcement from a group of enlightened political elites. They were not absolute values, but policy choices to be made by a select few, and accepted by the mass of citizens. The pursuit of political goals through more democratic means was, intellectually and emotionally, too dangerous for a man who had experienced the popularity of violence and hatred directed against immigrants, Jews, and other "outsiders." The vulnerable, including Kissinger, needed strong leaders and strong states to protect their access to the American dream.

Kissinger's ethnicity as a German-Jewish immigrant to the United States helped to define his visions of political morality and policy efficacy—two topics that dominate all of his writings. He could not accept mainstream American assumptions about freedom, rationality, and individualism. Similarly, he could not accept mainstream presumptions about an American mission to democratize the world. America had saved Kissinger and his family through the exercise of

state power, not popular idealism. For Kissinger, morality and efficacy required an acceptance of imperfection and a selection among lesser evils.⁷⁴

All immigrants of Kissinger's background did not share his worldview. Similar experiences often produce divergent perceptions. Historians must recognize, however, that certain personal experiences are formative for policymakers in their aspirations and activities. For Kissinger, his experiences as a German-Jewish immigrant remained important because they were continually invoked by the powerful men with whom he worked—including Nixon, Sadat, and Rabin. He had to react to the ever-present nightmares of his personal past as he negotiated a Middle East settlement. Kissinger was a child of the Second World War, the Holocaust, and the hopes of postwar American society. He was a policymaker who carried these perceptions into the Vietnam War, Middle East diplomacy, and the contemporary war in Iraq.⁷⁵

74. Kissinger explained his long-standing position on political morality and policy efficacy most clearly in my interview with him, 26 October 2005. See also Suri, *Henry Kissinger and the American Century*, ch. 4.

75. This final point draws on the theoretical insights of political scientist Alexander George. See his classic article: Alexander George, "The 'Operational Code': A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making," *International Studies Quarterly* 13 (June 1969): 190–222.