Henry Kissinger and American Power

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Henry A. Kissinger
My alternate title: ...and were afraid to ask

Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About

Henry Kissinger
Recent Books – Differing interpretations of Kissinger – heroic statesman or war criminal?
Kissinger – Eulogy at McCain Funeral
Still controversial
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1.) Written – Kissinger papers, Memoirs, Writings
2.) Nixon Tapes
3.) Vanderbilt Television Archive
Argument

Centrality of politics – Kissinger as a political actor; self-presentation as an independent and non-partisan expert on foreign policy, but he recognized the centrality of politics and how deeply intertwined domestic and foreign politics are within the American system.
Kissinger’s appointment

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2-FmWpacHeQ
“A man of my origins”

1.) born in Fuerth, Germany, during the Weimar Republic; Orthodox Jewish upbringing; intense love for soccer

2.) Ten years old in 1933 when Hitler and the Nazis came to power

What was the impact of this?
Weimar Republic
Young Henry – growing up in Nazi Germany (1923-1938)
The Kissinger saga
Louis and Paula Kissinger
New York in 1940
Kissinger’s Army Career

1.) Drafted in 1943 – serves in Army Intelligence – first mentor Fritz Kraemer

2.) Liberated the concentration camp at Ahlem, April 10, 1945
Ahlem concentration camp
There were many articles written about me and they say I was traumatized by what happened in Nazi Germany as a child. That’s nonsense! When I was in Nazi Germany, they were not yet killing people. I left in ’38. But the traumatic event was to see Ahlem. That is when one saw the bestiality of the system and the degradation of human beings and there is nothing I am more proud of of my service to this country than having been one of those who had the honor of liberating the Ahlem Concentration Camp. And it is something we must not forget. It’s an obligation we all have. I don’t talk about it much, because people won’t understand it, who haven’t been through it. But I salute the survivors here, and I’d be honored if they came up here and had a picture taken with me. I want to thank you all.”
Concentration camps were not only mills of death. They were also testing grounds... The intellectuals, the idealists, the men of high morals had no chance... Having once made up one’s mind to survive, it was a necessity to follow through with a singleness of purpose... [which] broached no stopping in front of accepted sets of values, it had to disregard ordinary standards of morality. One could only survive through lies, tricks, and by somehow acquiring food to fill one’s belly. The weak, the old had no chance... Survivors have seen man from the most evil side, who can blame them for being suspicious.”
Kissinger in Military Government

1.) Took command in Krefeld, an industrial city
2.) Assigned to Counter-Intelligence Corps – rounded up Gestapo
3.) Ruler of Bensheim, small paper-making town near Frankfurt
4.) “Mr Henry”
Kissinger at Harvard

1.) Enters in 1947 under the GI Bill
2.) Marries Ann Fleischer in 1949

his mentor is William Yandell Elliott, Vanderbilt class 1917
Kissinger at Harvard: “Cold War University”

- 1.) creation of the journal “Confluence”
- Networking, international exchange of ideas, anti-communist persuasion
- 2.) International Seminar – bringing Europeans to the United States for seminar in American politics
- 3.) Harvard as a “Cold War University”
Psychological Strategy Board

1.) Kissinger’s role as consultant

2.) PSB – committee within the executive to coordinate psychological and information warfare programs

3.) Kissinger travels to Korea in 1951 and Germany in 1952, his first trip back.
Kissinger’s Dissertation

1.) Doctoral Dissertation and book *A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh, and the Problems of Peace 1812-1822* – Praise for Klemens von Metternich and the effort to craft stability after the Napoleonic wars
1.) International system is anarchic – no controlling entity

2.) States are the principal actors in the international system; States pursue their national interest – power and/or security

3.) Relations between states are determined by relative power, both military and economic

4.) Peace would come from a balance of power among states, an equilibrium within a generally accepted “legitimate” world order

5.) Realism as a policy for America between the extremes of isolationism and Wilsonianism

6.) Issues of human rights, democracy, freedom are secondary
Nelson Rockefeller

- Kissinger works for Nelson Rockefeller as head of his Special Studies project, 1955-1958 – Rockefeller as political mentor
Rockefeller’s Political Future

- [Link](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zwLC49oBVAM&list=PLrISWmDC_QZ86fhY1weUQ2iobozmWhwHp&index=93)

Sputnik – October 1957

Kissinger’s best seller, 1958

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=8SJikzUwwOY#t=894
Harvard Center for the Study of International Affairs

- Kissinger and Robert Bowie as Directors
- Bowie – head of Eisenhower’s Policy Planning Staff
Necessity for Choice – 1961 – job application to the Kennedy White House
McGeorge Bundy: Kennedy’s NSC
Germany and Berlin 1961

- Kissinger as part-time adviser, meets with Konrad Adenauer
- Works with Arthur Schlesinger
- Writes memo urging diplomatic approach to Berlin Crisis
The Berlin Wall – August 1961
Rockefeller Again

1.) Leaves Kennedy Administration at the end of 1961
2.) Rejoins Rockefeller as adviser
3.) Maintains ties to Schlesinger
4.) Reaction to JFK's death
Kissinger and LBJ

1.) Part-time adviser (despite continuing ties to Rockefeller)

2.) Active in attempting to get secret negotiations with the North Vietnamese – “Pennsylvania”

3.) Thought Moscow might be an intermediary

4.) Develops ties to both Republicans and Democrats
1968 election

1.) Kissinger works for Rockefeller – deeply disappointed with his defeat

2.) But stays involved in Paris negotiations – warns Nixon of bombing halt – “October Surprise”

Vietnam as an issue:


3.) Nixon tells South Vietnamese to not come to the negotiating table – Johnson considers this treason

4.) Criticized in “Trials of Henry Kissinger” by Christopher Hitchens
Nixon and Kissinger
Kissinger as National Security Adviser

1.) Responsible only to the President - Centralization of power in the White House

2.) Secrecy in policymaking

3.) Cutting out the bureaucracy, especially the State Department

4.) Credit for foreign policy success goes to the President - foreign policy as a domestic political asset