2008

h-diplo

H-Diplo Roundtable Reviews
www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables
Volume IX, No. 7 (2008)
17 April 2008

Jeremi Suri. ***Henry Kissinger and the American Century***. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, July 2007. 368 pp. $27.95 (hardback). ISBN: 978-0-674-02579-0.

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Stable URL: http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/Kissinger-AmericanCentury-Roundtable.pdf

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Introduction by Thomas Maddux, California State University, Northridge

In his review Professor Yafeng Xia notes that Henry Kissinger is a most popular subject in China with over 50 books by or about Kissinger in Chinese at the library of the Northeast Normal University in China (as well as forthcoming doctoral dissertations). If you add this to the publications that Jeremi Suri cites on Kissinger (pp. 278, no. 5, 282, no. 80), Kissinger's own memoirs and other publications including his articles and opinion columns, and the many studies on U.S. Cold War policies during the 1960s-1970s such as Suri's *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (2003), featured in a H-Diplo roundtable in 2004, you have far more than a full shelf row in rapidly disappearing library stacks.

This raises the question of the need and value for yet another study of Henry Kissinger's meteoric rise as Richard Nixon's National Security Council advisor and Secretary of State to cartoons and news magazine covers as the "Superman" of diplomacy. A roller coaster decline followed, highlighted by the Republican repudiation of Kissinger and his strategy of détente in 1976 and persistent efforts to prosecute him for Watergate and for perjury over his testimony on a variety of controversial foreign policy issues such as the Chilean coup in 1973. Every release of government documents through FOIA requests obtained by the National Security Archive that deals with Kissinger raises old emotions about Kissinger's role in Cold War issues and the reliability of his contemporary explanations and published memoir accounts. Christopher Hitchens' *The Trial of Henry Kissinger* (2001) provides the charges, jury, and conviction that so many on the contemporary left and right wanted.

The reviewers answer this question with a "yes" with respect to the strengths of Suri's study on Kissinger. In fact they suggest that the book should be longer or Suri should follow up with a second volume that provides more coverage after 1968 with at least a chapter on Kissinger after 1976. They do emphasize certain strengths in Suri's approach and analysis as well as reservations and challenges on some of his interpretations on policy issues including

1.) Every study on Kissinger mentions his origins as a German-Jewish immigrant who migrated with his family to New York City in 1938. Kissinger entered the U.S. Army in 1943, served in Germany, entered Harvard in 1947, and moved on to his more familiar academic and policy-making career. What is most informative in Suri's analysis is his use of Kissinger's experiences starting with coming of age in Nazi Germany and experiencing the weaknesses of democracy in Germany and the West culminating in WWII. Suri convincingly demonstrates these experiences as a most significant shaping force for Kissinger's perspective on strategy and tactics and on his personal role as an adviser to influential patrons.

2.) Although Kissinger has not discussed his Jewish background in his writings, Suri considers this most important in any evaluation of Kissinger: "Kissinger's Jewish background did not determine his policies, but it did shape his opportunities and his choices. It helped to define his hopes and his fears. Most significant, it influenced his

understanding of power and its appropriate uses." (p. 12) Starting with his experience of ostracism and discrimination in Germany and the contrast with what he encountered in America, Kissinger strived to defend his positive feelings about America against international communists and "domestic critics who sought to undermine the very institutions that made his career possible—the Army, the universities, and the government." (pp. 221-222) Remembering the mass politics of the 1930s and the absence of strong leaders before Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt led the WWII global confrontation, Kissinger preferred to exclude public interference and minimize Congressional oversight of the strong leader doing what was necessary to promote stability and defend America and western civilization. Yet James Sparrow questions why Kissinger's experiences with Nazi Germany did not lead him to resist the bombing of civilians in Cambodia and Vietnam and did not stir up memories when he backed support to the Argentinean dictatorship or General Pinochet in Chile. (6)

3.) Suri also effectively uses the concept of the insider and outsider for understanding Kissinger's perspective and career orientation, what James Sparrow refers to in his review as the "Marginal Man." (1) Starting with his experiences in Furth, Germany, Kissinger experienced popular, grass roots violence against Jews, and an intensified sense of being an outsider reinforced by difficult times in a German Jewish community in Washington Heights. As Kissinger began his Americanization through the U.S. Army, Suri notes that he remained an outsider, experiencing discrimination as a Jew such as denial of his application to be an Army doctor (p. 65). Even as Kissinger gained professional mobility, he remained an outsider with respect to the transatlantic elite that emerged during and after the war. Suri retains this concept and returns to it throughout his study, noting in his chapter on "The Cold War University," that Kissinger made significant advances at Harvard to become a Cold war insider but at the same time remained socially a Jewish outsider. (pp. 109-110) Later in the 1960s when Kissinger served as an advisor to Democrats and a leading Republican like Nelson Rockefeller, "Kissinger was a German Jew who contributed important ideas but did not belong among the optimistic, privileged men of America's best clubs. He was an outsider. His clear recognition of this fact made him acutely sensitive about his position." (p. 175)

4.) Suri situates the United States and Kissinger at the center of post-WWII globalism in which Kissinger emerges as a power broker in the foreign policy establishment and as a mediator-negotiator-strategist among all the nations after 1968. Sparrow notes many strengths in Suri's approach but would welcome "a more cohort-oriented analysis of Kissinger [that] might have provided a clearer sense of just how much the globalizing Marginal Men shaped the trajectory of postwar strategy, and how much it shaped them." (3) Sparrow suggests that instead of globalism shaping Kissinger, "his cosmopolitan roots allowed him to pursue unconventional strategies, but his abiding commitment to realpolitik ensured these departures would always reinforce raison d'etat." (3)

5.) In assessing Kissinger's thoughts and record as a grand strategist, Suri is not as critical as Jussi Hanhimäki in *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (2004), but he does advance a multisided perspective of "Kissinger's supreme genius: his ability to connect diverse phenomena and to formulate practical policy

options." Kissinger offered not only very useful strategic plans in the Cold War but also "deepened the blind spots in American interactions with a rapidly changing world. (pp. 143-144) What Suri emphasizes is Kissinger's sense of limits in a thermonuclear environment, his persistent stress on the need to mix force and diplomacy, to make nuclear force useful and not just rely on deterrence in containment strategy, the importance of negotiations linked with a flexible military posture, and an overall federalist foreign policy that "meant an acceptance of limits on unilateral power, a commitment to negotiations, and a creative search for mutual gains among adversaries." (pp. 168-169) In the 1960s Kissinger envisioned a multi-polar framework of the U.S., the Soviet Union, and China with the U.S. as the global manager and consensus builder. Suri's strongest criticism of Kissinger's strategic thinking focuses on his hierarchal view placing the trans-Atlantic community at the center of his international system with the Soviet Union, China and Japan near the top. "Kissinger's federalist framework was static in its cultural elitism," Suri emphasizes, reflecting Kissinger's worldview based on his German Jewish values and experiences. Human rights, morality, justice were all subordinated to difficult decisions about greater and lesser evils. Principles of international conduct to promote stability and accommodation had the highest importance for Kissinger. But when the biggest challenge came in the 1960s in Vietnam, Suri finds Kissinger, a leading strategist, relatively silent. (pp. 187-191), and suggests that Kissinger "deserves deepest criticism" for his silences. Suri attributes this to Kissinger's neglect of three transformations: the proliferation of nonstate actors, his preference for a transcendent statesman, a Metternich or Bismarck, to master both the strategic concepts and tactical applications, i.e., Kissinger after 1968; and his failure to examine critically his own assumptions about cultural hierarchy, the moral content of state interests, and American benevolence. (pp. 192-196)

6.) Suri carries forward the insider/outsider concept on Kissinger into his relationship with Richard Nixon and his preferred role as the behind the scenes negotiator/manager. Before Nixon, Kissinger had been most successful at managing diverse people with international connections from his supervision of the International Seminar at Harvard, to his service as an adviser for patrons like Rockefeller. Suri typically places this in the context of traditional Jewish roles as "unseen advisors, shadow figures, secret agents. Kissinger defined his diplomacy in these terms—working in the shadows, away from public oversight and among a small group of individuals empowered in different societies." (p. 222) But Nixon was not a patron like Nelson Rockefeller who rewarded Kissinger for his dedicated service with $50,000 in January 1969, suggesting that more service would be expected. Suri has a brief but fascinating account which emphasizes their turning to each other as a marriage of convenience, reflecting ambition, suspicion, hostility, jealousy; clearly, a dysfunctional relationship, but one that reflected a shared sense of crisis, fear of democratic chaos, anxieties about their enemies, and of being outsiders. Suri uses the metaphor of the gangster and business manager to capture their relationship: "Nixon barked orders, and Kissinger dutifully listened. He then had to interpret the chief's intemperate remarks in ways that would serve intended purposes and address neglected issues …. Like all gangsters, Nixon refused to respect the boundaries of his servant's personal space. Kissinger worked for a man who demanded that he remain 'on call' at all hours, ever ready to bear the brunt of his boss's angry outbursts and to bolster his fragile self-esteem" and to put up with Nixon's anti-Semitic outbursts. (pp, 206-211)

7.) Why would Kissinger put up with this? Suri skillfully lays the groundwork for the relationship with his emphasis on Kissinger's insider/outsider stance and exposure to anti-Semitism and discrimination throughout his career and with his account of Kissinger's ambition to be the transcendent manager at a time of maximum crisis—January 1969—with deterioration and disarray everywhere from the home front to Vietnam to the absence of effective relations with major adversaries. Barbara Keys, however, suggests that Suri should have explored in more depth Kissinger's personality and other less than desirable traits that contributed to both his relationship with Nixon, his own management style with subordinates, and his policy choices.

8.) Suri devotes Chapter Five "A Statesman's Revolution" to Kissinger's attempt to implement a "coherent and transformative grand strategy into action" that would transcend the domestic crisis, reshape international relations through détente diplomacy with the Soviet Union and China to a more stable system, and restore U.S. credibility by extricating the U.S. from the Vietnam conflict. The reviewers would have welcomed more than a chapter that ranges from Kissinger's relations with Nixon to Vietnam, China, Africa and Latin America briefly, and human rights issues. Suri successfully integrates Kissinger's insider/outsider approach to the major issues by noting how Kissinger developed the back channel as his preferred method of negotiation which enabled him to have maximum influence and bring to bear his skills at bringing people together to make connections. (pp. 222-223) In terms of results, Suri does suggest that Kissinger fell short of his objectives. As a revolutionary rather than a war criminal, Suri argues that Kissinger "transformed the conduct of foreign policy in enduring ways," most notably in negotiating the U.S. out of Vietnam, in shifting containment to negotiations and compromise, and in making the U.S. "the indispensable negotiating partner." Suri also notes Kissinger's redefinition of the use of force in international affairs and his successful removal of the management of foreign policy from public interference in a time of crisis. "Kissinger created a foreign-policy revolution that set the course for the rest of the century," Suri concludes, pointing out that even Ronald Reagan, who denounced Kissinger and détente, drew on the "diplomatic networks and the maneuvers of force that he pioneered." (pp. 246-248) Suri recognizes the costs and limits in Kissinger's strategy and management style. In a recent H-Diplo roundtable on Bruce Kuklick's *Blind Oracles: Intellectuals and War from Kennan to Kissinger*, Kuklick is less enthused about Kissinger's record but, like Suri, gives Kissinger credit for the development and implementation of a strategic concept. (pp. 182-203)

9.) The reviewers express a range of reservations on Suri's assessment of Kissinger's policy contributions and his methods. Yafeng Xia, for example, suggests that Suri exaggerates Kissinger's interest in and role in the China initiative. Priscilla Roberts asks for more extensive analysis of Kissinger's time in power and his methods; and Barbara Keys, who focuses on the issue of "how much does the book help us to understand the particular choices Kissinger made while in office," concludes that Suri gives insufficient attention to Kissinger as an agent of policy making, bringing his personality, ambitions, and beliefs to the making of policy decisions with more serious, destructive consequences than Suri suggests in a range of countries from Vietnam to Angola to Chile.

10.) In his final chapter on the Middle East, "From Germany to Jerusalem," Suri brings together all of his major themes on Kissinger: his German Jewish background and concern about attacks on political authority; his desire to assert leadership in the face of weakness; his role as an insider who kept silent about his German Jewish background and stayed away from the Middle East until October 1973; his familiar role as a bridge figure carrying out shuttle negotiations; his effort to move the belligerents toward a compromise, negotiated settlement in which stability would be enhanced among a number of Middle Eastern states including Israel with the U.S. to stabilize the military balance. Suri concludes that Kissinger's strategy remained intact until September 11th, 2001, although it contributed to increased extremism and anger directed at the U.S. Suri, however, views President George Bush as returning to Kissinger's emphasis on stability and reliance on strongmen versus pushing for elections and steps toward democracy.

Participants:

Jeremi Suri is a professor of history at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a senior fellow at the University of Wisconsin Center for World Affairs and the Global Economy. He is the author of *Henry Kissinger and the American Century* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007); *The Global Revolutions of 1968* (W.W. Norton, 2006); and *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Harvard University Press, 2003). .He is also the author of numerous articles on international history, social change, and nuclear strategy including "The Cold War, Decolonizaition, and Global Social Awakenings: Historical Intersections," *Cold War History* 6 (August 2006), 353-363; "The Promise and Failure of 'Developed Socialism:' The Soviet 'Thaw" and the Crucible of the Prague Spring, 1964-1972," *Contemporary European History* 15(May 2006), 133-58; and "Explaining the End of the Cold War: A New Historical Consensus?," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 4 (Fall 2002), 60-92. Professor Suri was recently honored as one of America's "Top Young Innovators" by the Smithsonian Institution. Professor Suri received his Ph.D. from Yale University, his M.A. from Ohio University, and his B.A. from Stanford University.

Barbara Keys teaches U.S. history at the University of Melbourne. She received her Ph.D. in International History from Harvard University. She is currently writing two books, on the origins of the "human rights revolution" of the 1970s and on the United States and torture in the 1970s. In the longer term she is planning a study of Soviet views of Henry Kissinger in the era of detente, using Russian archives and interviews. She has previously written extensively on sport and international relations. Her first book, *Globalizing Sport: National Rivalry and International Community in the 1930s* (Harvard University Press, 2006), examined the cultural and political ramifications of the rise of international sports competitions before the Second World War. She has also published on sport in the Cold War.

Priscilla Roberts received her undergraduate and doctoral degrees from King's College, Cambridge. Since 1984 she has taught at the University of Hong Kong, where she an Associate Professor of History and also honorary director of the Centre of American Studies. She has published numerous articles on twentieth-century diplomatic and international history, with a special interest in Anglo-American relations, in the *Business*

History Review, *Journal of American Studies*, *Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, and other periodicals. She is the author of *The Cold War* (Sutton, 2000); and the editor of *Sino-American Relations Since 1900* (Hong Kong, 1991); *Window on the Forbidden City: The Beijing Diaries of David Bruce, 1973-1974* (Hong Kong, 2001); *Behind the Bamboo Curtain: China, Vietnam, and the World Beyond Asia* (Stanford, 2006); (with He Peiqun) *Bonds Across Borders: Women, China, and International Relations in the Modern World* (Newcastle, 2007); and *Bridging the Sino-American Divide: American Studies with Chinese Characteristics* (Newcastle, 2007). She is associate editor of several encyclopedias published by ABC-CLIO, including the *Encyclopedia of the Korean War* (2000); *Encyclopedia of World War II* (2004); *World War II: A Student Encyclopedia* (2005); *Encyclopedia of World War I* (2005); *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (2005); and the *Encyclopedia of the Cold War*. She is currently working on a biography of Frank Altschul, and a major study of the development and influence of the twentieth-century trans-Atlantic foreign policy Establishment.

James T. Sparrow is an assistant professor in the Department of History at the University of Chicago with a Ph.D. from Brown University in 2002. His research and teaching focus on the state and social citizenship in the modern United States. His current manuscript, *Americanism and Entitlements: Authorizing Big Government in an Age of Total War*, is a history of the social politics of the national state as its foundations shifted from welfare to warfare at mid-century. He has published several articles including "'Buying Our Boys Back': The Mass Foundations of Fiscal Citizenship, 1942-1954," *Journal of Policy History*, Spring 2008; "A Nation in Motion: Regional Reconfiguration and the Nationalization of American Political Culture, 1941-54," in *The End of Southern History? Integrating the Modern South and the Nation*, forthcoming; and "Hot War, Cold War: The Structures of Sociological Action, 1940-1955," co-authored with Andrew Abbott, in *Sociology in Action: The American Sociological Association Centennial History* (2007).

Yafeng Xia is an assistant professor of East Asian and Diplomatic history at Long Island University, Brooklyn. He is the author of *Negotiating with the Enemy: U.S.-China Talks during the Cold War, 1949-72* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006). He has also published numerous articles in such publications as *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, *Journal of Cold War Studies*, *The Chinese Historical Review* among others. He is currently working on a monograph on the history of the PRC's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, tentatively entitled *Burying the "Diplomacy of Humiliation": New China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1949-1956.*

Review by Barbara Keys, University of Melbourne

Kissinger as "One of Us"

If academia has superstars, Jeremi Suri is surely one of them. On the heels of his prize-winning first book, hailed as "an instant classic," he was made a full professor at one of the nation's top universities. The *Smithsonian Magazine* recently named him one of the nation's 37 top "innovators" in arts and sciences under the age of 36.[1] Not only is Suri one of the rare academics who has a literary agent, he has the best known and most respected agent in the United States and Europe: Andrew Wylie, whose other clients have included such luminaries as Philip Roth, Saul Bellow, Norman Mailer, Salman Rushdie, and Martin Amis.[2] Stanford's David Kennedy lauds Suri as "the premier scholar of a wholly original—and unusually demanding—approach to the study of international affairs."[3] The acclaim is well-deserved: Suri's first book, *Power and Protest,* with its bold new reading of détente as a conservative response to the domestic upheavals of the 1960s, was a tour de force that has reshaped the landscape of international history.

***Barbara Keys** teaches U.S. history at the University of Melbourne. She received her Ph.D. in International History from Harvard University. She is currently writing two books, on the origins of the "human rights revolution" of the 1970s and on the United States and torture in the 1970s. In the longer term she is planning a study of Soviet views of Henry Kissinger in the era of detente, using Russian archives and interviews. She has previously written extensively on sport and international relations. Her first book, Globalizing Sport: National Rivalry and International Community in the 1930s (Harvard University Press, 2006), examined the cultural and political ramifications of the rise of international sports competitions before the Second World War. She has also published on sport in the Cold War.*

Although Henry Kissinger took a low profile in *Power and Protest*, the architect of détente was unhappy with the way Suri had portrayed his achievement. After reading the book and learning that Suri was now working on a study of his career, Kissinger issued an unusual summons: he invited the young historian to come to his Park Avenue office to talk. According to Suri's description of the meeting, Kissinger grilled him for an hour and a half on his research. Suri argued and, he says, "lost every point." The relationship might have ended there, if not for Suri's boldness and a bit of luck. A few months later, when Suri was doing research in Kissinger's hometown of Fürth, Germany, he learned that Kissinger, too, was coming to town. On a hunch, Suri parked himself in front of the old Kissinger family apartment, sat on the stoop, and waited. His persistence paid off, for Kissinger did show up; the former globetrotting diplomat recognized Suri and invited him to chat at a local

[1] Brian Mattmiller, "UW Historian Named One of Smithsonian's Top Young Innovators," *University of Wisconsin-Madison News*, 4 October 2007, at http://www.news.wisc.edu/14260 [accessed 12/1/07].

[2] "Andrew Wylie, 'Je plaiderai toujours pour la complexité,'" Interview in *Le Monde*, 6 October 2006. On Wylie's other clients, see Emma Brockes, "A Poacher with Great Snob Value," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 December 2003.

[3] Quoted in Heather Laroi, "The Big Picture," *Smithsonian Magazine*, October 2007.

restaurant. The encounter in Fürth marked the beginning of a process in which the aging statesman wooed the young scholar with lunch dates every few months in New York.[4]

What Suri has now produced is, as he bills it, "the first stab at trying to understand [Kissinger]," one that was "deeply influenced" by all those lunch conversations.[5] "Understanding" Kissinger means that Suri has attempted to situate the statesman's career, views, and policies in the context of his times. Just as, in his first book, Suri explained détente as driven by larger social forces, in this book he sees Kissinger's beliefs and policy decisions as the products of deep social and political developments.

The author devotes successive chapters to Kissinger's formative experiences as a Jew in Nazi Germany, an immigrant in the U.S. Army in postwar occupied Germany, and a rising star in the context of the "Cold War University" that put intellectuals at the service of policymakers. The longest chapter showcases Suri's deft grasp of Cold War nuclear policy and ends by concisely laying out what Suri sees as the core elements of Kissinger's worldview and the factors (such as the rise of nonstate actors) it overlooked. The final 70 or so pages survey Kissinger's eight years in office. Along the way Suri tosses out virtuosic summaries of an extraordinary range of historical events and developments, from the Marshall Plan to Konrad Adenauer's career.

Suri develops a remarkable range of useful insights with his usual finesse. Discussions of the role that Kissinger's Jewishness played in his career, of the social and political changes that enabled a Jewish immigrant to rise to such heights of power, and of Kissinger's role as a "bridge figure," for example, are perceptive and compelling. Many of the hallmarks of Suri's brilliant first book are evident in the second: bold thinking, originality, and dazzling breadth. The book succeeds admirably in illuminating some of the key "experiences and influences [that] shaped [Kissinger's] worldview and provided the framework for his approach to international relations," as Suri describes one of the book's aims on the dustjacket.

In title and conception, the book claims to be as much about "the American century" as about Henry Kissinger. The book, Suri explains, "is a narrative of global change, a study of how social and political transformations across multiple societies created our contemporary world." Kissinger is relevant to this undertaking because he provides "a window into the complex international vectors of the period" and "a natural focus for understanding the intersection of different, seemingly contradictory, developments." "The

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[4] Jeremi Suri, "Encounters with Henry Kissinger," *University of Wisconsin-Madison History Department News*, Fall 2007, 3; Brian Mattmiller, "Historian Takes on a Weighty Task: Understanding Kissinger," 15 November 2005, *University of Wisconsin-Madison News*, 15 November 2005, at http://www.news.wisc.edu/11839 [accessed 12/15/07]. According to one source, Suri had "over a dozen" interviews with Kissinger; "Global Villain or Strategic Genius? Neither, Asserts New Book on Henry Kissinger," *University of Wisconsin-Madison News*, June 18, 2007, at http://www.news.wisc.edu/13875. In his newsletter contribution, Suri says it was "more than half a dozen": Suri, "Encounters," 3.

[5] The "first stab" quotation comes from Mattmiller, "Historian." The "deeply influenced" remark is in Suri's account of the origins of his relationship with Kissinger; Suri, "Encounters," 3.

main argument of the book," Suri writes, "is that we must understand the experiences of Henry Kissinger and American power as processes of *globalization*" (p. 4).

But the book also promises to explain Kissinger's policies—indeed it promises to explain them better than previous studies that have focused on Kissinger's years in power, where, according to Suri, one "loses the forest for the trees" (p. 5). Taking advantage of the division of labor the roundtable format offers, I would like to leave extended discussion of other aspects of the book in the capable hands of my fellow reviewers, and focus my attention on one issue: how much does the book help us to understand the particular choices Kissinger made while in office? Does the book help us answer the question that Suri says he set out to answer: "how can someone who is so smart—and entered politics for moral reasons, because the experience of the Holocaust loomed so large in his life—how does someone like that produce results such as the bombing of Vietnam?"[6]

It is unquestionably true that Kissinger's experiences—as a Jew in Nazi Germany, for example—played an important role in shaping his views. Suri is quite right to place emphasis on these experiences, and as an examination of "the social history that influenced [Kissinger's] policies," as Suri described his aim to Kissinger himself, the book offers valuable insights.[7] But on the whole the book's approach to understanding why Kissinger did what he did greatly overemphasizes historical circumstances and sweeps the role of personality, contingency, and choice under the rug. Both its framework and its contents minimize Kissinger's personal failings; indeed Suri says Kissinger's failures "were rarely personal" (p. 7). The result is a portrayal of Kissinger that has a strangely deterministic feel and an overwhelmingly exculpatory net result. By focusing on historical experience and circumstance and diminishing the role of individual choice and agency, Suri gives us a Kissinger who looks like a product, even a mere victim, of sweeping historical processes.

Suri is careful not to call his book a biography, and in fact the book is something of an anti-biography.[8] Biography, as Robert Darnton has defined it, "by focusing on one life ... eliminates the complications that weigh down accounts of entire societies, and it adheres to a narrative line that shows individuals in action. It restores agency to history, giving readers a sense of closeness to the men and women who shaped events. It deals with motivations and emotions. It even answers a voyeuristic desire to see through keyholes and into private lives."[9] Biography is about the relationship between the circumstances of an individual's life and what the individual did, with the emphasis on what is unique about the individual.

Suri's aim is the opposite: it is to show us what is not unique about Kissinger. It is a kind of realist approach applied to intellectual biography, one that seems to imply that individuals are rational, almost interchangeable beings whose views and choices are conditioned by

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[6] "Global Villain."

[7] Suri, "Encounters," 3.

[8] Suri himself has described the book as "an international history of Kissinger's career." *Palgrave Advances in International History*, ed. Patrick Finney (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), x.

[9] Robert Darnton, "Looking the Devil in the Face,' *New York Review of Books*, 10 February 2000, 14.

externalities. In Suri's view "historical context matter[s] enormously" (p. 3)--so enormously that it is all that needs to be discussed. Psychology is irrelevant; the assumption is that people react to the same circumstances in the same way. Suri acknowledges the importance of Kissinger's talent and hard work, but the emphasis is on Kissinger as product, not agent. We can understand Kissinger, Suri tells us, as "part of" the American century (p. 10). "Kissinger was a child of his times" (p. 55); Kissinger was a "product of his times" (p. 2); Kissinger "was a tragic figure of his times" (p. 144). "Attacks on Kissinger are attacks on a generation formed from the experiences and lessons of the Second World War" (p. 91), Suri writes, referring to challenges to the primacy of transatlantic ties. The book is peppered with phrases such as "Kissinger and others," "Kissinger and many others," "Kissinger, like most people," and "Kissinger, like many others."

In perhaps the book's most telling phrase, Suri claims that "for all his distinctive characteristics, Kissinger is one of us—a product of the remarkable social and political transformations since the 1930s" (p. 14). In one sense, this statement is banal: everyone everywhere is shaped in important ways by the era they live in. In a deeper sense, though, to suggest that Kissinger is a "product" just like the rest of "us" is to elide any distinction between those who had power and those who were killed by the application of that power. It is to deny the significance of agency in human affairs and to abjure the task of assigning responsibility to individuals for their actions.

The same forces that "produced" Kissinger also shaped people whose views were very different from his. The human rights movement, for example, was partly a reaction to Kissinger and his disdain for "universal codes of good and evil," but it was also spawned by some of the same events that Suri sees as ineluctably bringing Kissinger to his worldview, including the Holocaust and the struggle against communism. Indeed in many ways what is striking about Kissinger is not how well he "reflects" the "American century," but what an anomaly he was in the American tradition of foreign policymaking, with its hunger for the kind of moral absolutes that Kissinger railed against.

In contrast to scholars who see personality, psychology, and emotion as critical to understanding the choices policymakers make, Suri ignores such factors. Kissinger's career, Suri claims, "like the American Century as a whole, was not inwardly driven" (p. 2). As a result, we get to know Kissinger as a person very little in this book. "Emotions, faiths, and sentiments" are the stuff of politics, Suri writes, noting that Kissinger failed to take account of them (p. 196). Yet Suri fails to take account of Kissinger's emotional life, of the irrational, subterranean impulses that shaped his choices. Only once do we see Kissinger as emotional: in the two-page description of his elevation to Secretary of State, when his voice cracked with emotion (pp. 250-1). But Kissinger's often brutal policies were shaped not just by "rational" calculations of the national interest but also by his inability to empathize with the people who would be affected—sometimes killed or tortured—as a result of their implementation. Again and again Kissinger privately professed sympathy with dictators who cold-bloodedly murdered their own citizens. "We are sympathetic with what you are trying to do," he told Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet. Never did he show such sympathy to the victims. Suri's account sees Kissinger's "moral" quest for "global

stability" as what mattered, but self-interest, vanity, and a willingness to pursue fame and glory at the expense of the suffering of others mattered just as much.

Suri is not unaware of the role of personality in history. He characterizes Nixon as a "gangster" prone to "angry outbursts" and handicapped by "fragile self-esteem" (p. 206). Reading emotion into a transcript that tells us nothing about tone of voice, Suri tells us that Nixon "thundered" at Kissinger (p. 208). He says nothing, however, about Kissinger's own deep insecurities or his own angry outbursts. We learn that Kissinger had a difficult boss, but not that he was himself a notoriously difficult boss. Instead, he is likened to "a skilled business manager" (p. 206). His famous temper, his manipulativeness, his overweening vanity: these traits simply do not appear. We learn again and again that Kissinger was an outsider but not that this status induced in him a powerful craving for acceptance. For Kissinger at least, personality is erased from the picture; only cold, hard historical circumstances matter.

Morality is the issue on which Kissinger has been subjected to the most vigorous criticism, both in office and after. Suri has little sympathy for Kissinger's critics on this score. He dismisses outright the idea that Kissinger is a "war criminal," labeling the notion "intellectually bankrupt" (p. 6). His efforts to grapple with Kissinger's morality, however, are the most problematic aspects of the book. In contrast to standard portrayals of the man as a practitioner of a cold-blooded Realpolitik that explicitly excluded moral considerations, Suri sees Kissinger as deeply moral. In Suri's view, Kissinger was a good man with a strong "moral compass" who "sought to do good in the world" (pp. 7, 14). He implicitly endorses Kissinger's version of morality: "not a universal code for right and wrong" but a flexible set of "basic principles" admirably suited to the "real world," where life is too complex for "abstract ethical standards" (p. 186).

Suri dismisses critiques of Kissinger's "morally questionable deeds" as simplistic and self-serving. "Of course," Suri says impatiently, "the brutalities committed in Vietnam, Cambodia, Chile, and Angola during Kissinger's time in office deserve condemnation. Of course his policies in these areas frequently failed to limit, and sometimes exacerbated, local suffering." Such criticisms are "easy judgments," scoffs Suri (p. 5). The real question, however, is not whether we should condemn "brutalities"—that surely *is* an easy judgment—but how to assess the responsibility of a man who abetted, encouraged, directed, or funded them, and who surely was not trying to "limit … local suffering" when he bombed Cambodia and Vietnam, winked at Pinochet's torture and murder, and fueled civil war in Angola.

Suri quotes a remarkable exchange in one of his interviews. "What are your core moral principles—the principles you would not violate?" Suri asked. Kissinger replied, "I am not prepared to share that yet" (p. 15). Here is a breathtaking response: a man hailed as one of the 20th century's greatest statesman, a man who spent nearly a decade making life-and-death decisions affecting millions of people across the globe, who in his eighties has yet to articulate core moral principles? Suri's take on Kissinger's admission is sympathetic:

"Kissinger is a man struggling with this question. He entered politics for moral reasons, and he worked feverishly to make the world a better place. His actions, however, did not always contribute to a world of greater freedom and justice. Frequently, the opposite was the case. Like all of us, Kissinger confronts the realization that good intentions often produce bad results. He contends with his own complicity in unintended consequences" (p. 15).

Like all of us? Surely historians must make moral distinctions between ordinary people and statesmen whose decisions affect the lives of millions. The thrust of Suri's remarks—"good intentions often produce bad results"—suggests that Kissinger's intentions were always good. Perhaps they were, in the sense that he could always justify to himself that he was pursuing some larger good. But this can be said of anyone. The idea that no one does wrong intentionally, but only out of ignorance or delusion, has ancient philosophical roots.[10] To have good intentions, in itself, tells us nothing meaningful. Nor were the nasty, brutal consequences of Kissinger's actions always "unintended." The goal of large-scale bombing is precisely to kill many people.

Suri makes similar claims about Kissinger's morality, and draws similar parallels to "us," in relating a revealing incident in which Kissinger, heading the International Seminar at Harvard in 1953, broke the law by opening a participant's mail. When Kissinger found a flyer criticizing "the American atomic bomb project and the broader military policies of the country" and calling for dedication to peaceful endeavor, he reported it to the FBI. It was an act one might easily attribute to unique aspects of Kissinger's personality, in particular his driving ambition, his penchant for subterfuge, and his willingness to cause others to suffer in his quest for power. Yet Suri explains Kissinger's lawbreaking as patriotic and entirely understandable, again likening Kissinger to the rest of us: Kissinger, Suri says, "did what one would expect from almost anyone in his time and place" (p. 128).

Suri's unwillingness to question Kissinger's moral framework becomes especially problematic when he discusses specific policy choices. Suri criticizes Kissinger's disregard for democratization and notes that racial and cultural prejudices helped produce Kissinger's hierarchical view of the international system, in which the Third World ranked at the bottom (p. 185). But often Suri's accounts of Kissinger's policies are described in ways that minimize their negative effects or explain them away in deterministic fashion. Suri chides Kissinger for his "neglect" of concerns about human rights, for example, but then goes on to explain that the statesman's "basic assumptions and experiences" had not "prepared" him for such ideas (p. 248).

In Suri's portrayal, Kissinger was a courageous and hard-nosed "revolutionary" who made tough choices based on admirably flexible moral criteria. In words that elide any distinction between his analysis and Kissinger's own views, Suri repeatedly draws a sharp contrast between fluffy ideals and cold, hard, messy reality. Kissinger had to make "imperfect, sometimes distasteful, decisions" (p. 70) instead of espousing "high-minded proclamations," because power requires "compromise and choices among lesser evils" (p.

[10] See Ron Rosenbaum, *Explaining Hitler* (New York: Random House, 1998), xxii.

76). Talk of human rights is "somewhat simplistic," Suri says (p. 246), whereas Kissinger "provided a path for policy beyond slogans" (p. 274). Suri repeatedly contrasts Kissinger's "tough choices" with straw-man alternatives. On Angola, for example, Suri suggests that Kissinger's push to fund two sides in a three-way civil war was the logical result of a choice between keeping U.S. leverage in the region, on the one hand, and "hinging policy on abstract notions of democracy or good government," on the other (p. 238). In fact there were other options consonant with a hard-nosed assessment of U.S. interests, such as the nonengagement Defense Secretary James Schlesinger proposed. Suri summarizes the issue—one that became a major concern of Kissinger's tenure as Secretary of State—as part of a discussion about Africa in general:

"When the Portuguese finally retreated from Angola and other parts of southern Africa in 1975, Kissinger encouraged President Ford to use covert aid as a mechanism for encouraging a 'peaceful transition' to independent governments…. Kissinger made it clear that, in the case of Angola, this approach involved supporting a thuggish nationalist fighter, Jonas Savimbi …. Africa had become a cockpit of international conflict…. Amidst this postcolonial chaos, Kissinger felt compelled to identify a friendly influence. Hinging policy on abstract notions of democracy or good government made little sense. Kissinger acted to ensure that the United States did not lose leverage in the region as violence spread" (pp. 237-238).

The term "civil war" never comes up; "violence [spreads]" of its own accord while Kissinger advocates "peaceful" transitions and is "compelled" to "support" thugs. Compare Jussi Hanhimäki's assessment of the Angolan fiasco: "From almost any perspective—regional, global, domestic, moral, strategic—the course of action that Ford and Kissinger approved was the worst possible one. With each passing day, bloodshed in Angola increased and foreign involvement escalated."[11] Suri offers no hint that Kissinger's policy of funneling tens of millions of dollars to the belligerents resulted in dramatic failure, one that undermined the very goals Kissinger sought to uphold. In Walter Isaacson's unstinting judgment, the result of Kissinger's policy was "a total Soviet-Cuban victory, an unnecessary loss of American credibility, a political debacle at home, and a costly program that pointlessly fueled a distant war."[12] Suri's desire to keep his eye on the big picture without getting bogged down in details is understandable, but too often the picture that emerges is misleadingly incomplete.

As to the widespread torture and murder committed by the "strong and reliable" military leaders Kissinger cultivated in Latin America, Suri tells us that Kissinger "did not extol" such practices, but he cannot bring himself to say that Kissinger condoned and encouraged them (p. 239). As in Kissinger's own writings, policy choices are described in dispassionate terms, and while the human suffering that resulted is mentioned a couple of times, its extent is often minimized. "Thousands of people died because of Kissinger's activities" is Suri's tame assessment (p. 248). One might more accurately write: Kissinger's activities

[11] Jussi Hanhimäki, *Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 413.

[12] Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 685.

led to the deaths of *hundreds* of thousands of people, and many more maimed, rendered homeless, uprooted, or tortured.

Suri's silences are also telling. He approvingly quotes Kissinger's critique of Nixon's untrammeled use of executive power: "such tactics were inappropriate," Kissinger commented, without apparent irony (p. 205). Suri, however, ignores Kissinger's own role in the illegal wiretapping of White House staff. In discussing the Argentine junta, which was using electric shock on pregnant women and dropping innocents into the sea from helicopters, Suri quotes from Kissinger's June 1976 conversation with the Argentine foreign minister but leaves out the more gut-churning remarks from an October meeting, at which Kissinger chillingly told his counterpart, "We would like you to succeed. We read about human rights problems but not the context. The quicker you succeed the better…. If you can finish before Congress gets back, the better."[13] Although the book finds room for an entire paragraph on Bavarian monarch Maximilian II, there is not a line on the 1975 Indonesian invasion of East Timor and the 200,000 East Timorese killed, although Kissinger and Ford gave the green light for the invasion and then worked to keep the arms flowing to Indonesia in contravention of U.S. law. (Kissinger could not find space for East Timor, either, in his 1151-page volume of memoirs on this period, *Years of Renewal*).

The overall picture Suri gives us is of a heroic statesman who accomplished much and whose failings were primarily the result of the very trying circumstances in which he operated. Depicting Kissinger almost as a victim, Suri notes: "He ended his career ... beset by multiplying crises that he could not satisfactorily resolve .... Kissinger and other statesmen remained subjects of larger revolutionary forces they could not control" (pp. 200-1). "[Kissinger] was, like all strategists, a captive of his particular history." He was, indeed, a victim: "a victim of his own limits" (p. 196).

It comes as no great surprise that Kissinger likes the book "quite a lot" (in Suri's words). The former diplomat naturally has some quibbles, but as Suri reports, Kissinger thinks the book comes "closest to capturing his thinking" and is "fair" in its contextualization of his career.[14] Coming from a man described as "almost maniacal" about guarding his reputation, this is high praise indeed.[15] The book thus succeeds in one remarkable feat: it is one of the few whose publication has not resulted in an abrupt end to its author's relationship with the great man. The New York lunch dates will presumably continue. Despite the insights this book offers, for the rest of "us," so, too, will the quest to understand Kissinger, his policies, and his legacy.

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[13] Memorandum of Conversation, "Secretary's Meeting with Argentine Foreign Minister Guzzetti," 7 October 1976, at the National Security Archive website: http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB104/index.htm [accessed 11/15/07].

[14] Harvard University Press Author Interview Podcasts, at http://www.hup.harvard.edu/audio/index.html [accessed 12/20/07].

[15] Hanhimäki, *Flawed Architect*, 458.

Review by Priscilla Roberts, University of Hong Kong

Jeremi Suri's new study of Henry Kissinger is not a biography, but a fascinating yet ultimately rather frustrating interpretive essay, which raises at least as many questions as it answers. Suri is one of the brightest and most provocative of a new generation of young American historians who have no personal memories of the turmoil, upheavals, and sometimes inexpungeable conflicts and legacy of bitterness that the turbulent decade of the 1960s generated for those who lived through it, in the United States and beyond.

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Kissinger, now well into his ninth decade but still a prolific writer and commentator on current affairs, remains one of the most controversial figures in recent US history. He was—unless one counts Dean Rusk, a former dean of Mills College during the 1930s—the first academic to serve as US secretary of state. Often lionized during the Nixon administration as the one saving grace in a presidency otherwise deeply mired in corruption and scandal, by many his reputation is nonetheless viewed as ineradicably tarnished. Right and left alike deplored what they often perceived as his failure to recognize any considerations other than those of *realpolitik*. Even during his tenure as secretary of state under Gerald R. Ford, conservatives already charged Kissinger of being willing to compromise with communism in both China and, most saliently, Russia, and to trade US security and compromise his country's ideological and moral principles in the search for détente with the Soviet Union. Liberals, for their part, assailed what they saw as the unscrupulous means Kissinger used to pursue what he defined as American national interests: his readiness to continue the war in Vietnam for four years after he became national security adviser and even to broaden it by bombing and invading Cambodia and Laos; his unconcern for human rights; and his embrace of unsavory and dictatorial regimes in much of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Such accusations reached their acme in 2001, when the British journalist Christopher Hitchens

published *The Trial of Henry Kissinger*, a volume arguing that Kissinger was a war criminal who should face prosecution before an international tribunal for crimes against humanity.[1] His reputation was sufficiently controversial that he was forced to withdraw from the chairmanship of a US government commission to investigate the events of September 11, 2001. Yet Kissinger also possesses many admirers, both within and outside the United States. In Asia especially, his diplomatic accomplishments have made him, as one young Hong Kong Chinese academic described him, a "hero" to many.

Besides publishing voluminously since he left office, Kissinger has parlayed his abilities and connections into founding a global consulting firm, Kissinger Associates, known for its wide network of ties to political and business elites throughout the world. In three massive volumes of memoirs and several other books, he has tried to give his own version of his time in power, an undertaking many view as an attempt by Kissinger to pre-empt and even pervert the historical record. Yet such efforts can prove counter-productive, and Kissinger's highly detailed account of his years in office has given enemies a tempting target several thousand pages long. At times, indeed, it might seem that testing Kissinger's descriptions of past episodes against the revelations of newly opened materials from that period's archives, both in the United States and abroad, has become something of a new academic cottage industry. "Oh that mine enemy would write a book," the afflicted Job once pleaded. Kissinger has given his antagonists at least five narratives of his own career.[2]

The polarized views of Kissinger, especially in his own country, are perhaps one of the many still lingering legacies from the bitter political and social disputes of the 1960s and the Vietnam War. For many, especially Americans, who remember the battles of that period, the memories have had an intense and lifelong impact. Feelings against Kissinger perhaps run particularly high in part because he has never expressed any remorse for the policies he followed while in power, and also because, in career terms, he emerged unscathed from his service under Nixon and Ford, which proved a springboard for further worldly gains. While he never again held public office after 1977, Kissinger has regularly given advice to political and business leaders, and parlayed his government service into worldly success, winning both wealth and influence among global power brokers, as well as public respect, even honor and esteem. He is a regular fixture at the Trilateral, Bilderberg, and Aspen meetings of the international great and good. Robert McNamara, a figure who provokes passions equally intense among contemporaries from the 1960s, has engaged in very public soul searching and regrets over Vietnam over the past two decades, and was well known to have tormented himself over the war far earlier. Kissinger, by contrast, doggedly, even cheerfully, defends his own policies toward Vietnam and on other matters as justified by the situation at the time. And, unlike such contemporaries as Dean Rusk, Walt W. Rostow, or the brothers William and McGeorge Bundy, he did not emerge from office with his career permanently blighted by Vietnam, or in Richard Nixon's case by

[1] Christopher Hitchens, *The Trial of Henry Kissinger* (New York: Verso, 2001).

[2] Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979); Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1982); Kissinger, *Years of Renewal* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999); Kissinger, *Crisis: The Anatomy of Two Major Foreign Policy Crises* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003); and Kissinger, *Ending the Vietnam War: A History of America's Involvement In and Extrication From the Vietnam War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003).

Watergate. Rather, Kissinger—by then perceived as one of the few assets of the Nixon administration—won the Nobel Peace Prize for his share in negotiating at least a shaky truce in hostilities and extricating the United States from that entanglement.

Although several American journalists, including Marvin and Bernard Kalb and Walter Isaacson, have provided relatively evenhanded pictures of Kissinger, for many other American journalists, Seymour Hersh, for example, and such academics as Robert Schulzinger and Jeffrey Kimball, both Kissinger and Nixon are apparently irretrievably tainted figures, whom they find it very difficult to regard with any degree of dispassion.[3] Yet it is at least arguable that, in terms of policies and behavior, Kissinger differed very little—if at all—from any other Cold War statesman. Throughout the Cold War, endorsing or even organizing destabilizing coups against left-wing governments, support for unsavory authoritarian regimes allied with the United States, covert operations, and targeting innocent civilians during military operations were all standard practice for American policymakers, not to mention top officials of other nations. While there may be serious inaccuracies in Kissinger's memoirs, few historians read the recollections of any president, prime minister, secretary of state, or other top government leader—perhaps not even those of Saint Jimmy Carter—with the expectation of being told the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Fixing the historical record in one's own favor is almost a given when a statesman pens his or her memoirs. The acrimonious condemnation Kissinger so often attracts is perhaps as much about the past half-century of American history as it is about the man himself. It is far from coincidental that the scholar who has provided the most detached and coolly analytical study of Kissinger's policies to date is a European academic, Jussi Hanhimäki.[4]

Suri's provocative and original new study is therefore particularly welcome. Suri delves deeply into Kissinger's background, a full understanding of which he considers vital to any informed assessment of Kissinger's intellectual outlook and policies. Suri—himself from a family of recent immigrants—views Kissinger's German Jewish roots as fundamental to the formulation of his entire worldview. Much influenced by the German cultural tradition of *Bildung*, a heritage he passed on to his son, in the 1930s Kissinger's schoolteacher father nonetheless lost his job under the Nazis and ultimately chose exile in the United States, settling in Brooklyn with his family. Kissinger, who always retained his German accent, was acculturated by wartime service in the US army, which brought him back to Germany as a youthful American administrator of territories under occupation. After the war Kissinger embarked on undergraduate and then graduate study at Harvard University, an institution where he won intellectual respect but was largely excluded from its top social circles. Suri argues that the developing Cold War gave new academic opportunities to Jewish (often refugee) intellectuals, whose cosmopolitan expertise made them particularly valuable to American elites who—as with Kissinger's military career—utilized their

[3] Marvin and Bernard Kalb, *Kissinger* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974); Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992); Seymour Hersh, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (New York: Summit Books, 1983); Henry Kissinger, *Doctor of Diplomacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989); Jeffrey Kimball, *Nixon's Vietnam War* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1998).

[4] Jussi Hanhimäki, *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

services as intermediaries and interpreters between the United States and its new European allies and clients. Eschewing traditional university career goals of becoming a department head, dean, or president, Kissinger focused instead on winning recognition and friends among American and international policymakers, existing or potential. His ability to make such connections was greatly facilitated through the International Seminar he ran at Harvard throughout the 1950s, an annual CIA-funded gathering of selected rising foreign leaders in various fields, who gathered together, under Kissinger's tutelage, to listen to leading political and other figures and to network with each other and with their American counterparts. By the mid-1950s, the still youthful Kissinger already possessed a remarkably broad web of connections, especially among transatlantic elites, that would stand him in good stead for the rest of his life.

Well into his forties, much of Kissinger's influence depended upon his ability to win powerful patrons who respected his undoubted intellectual skills. He acquired his first mentor while serving in the army, an eccentric German émigré named Fritz Kraemer. At Harvard Kissinger became a protégé of William Yarnell Elliott, a professor of government with close ties to officials in Washington and such establishment institutions as the Council on Foreign Relations. Like many academics writing about politics and government, Kissinger longed not merely to comment on policies but to make them. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, his ability to do so depended on attracting the right patrons and putting his formidable talents, intellectual, analytical, and administrative, at their service. By the mid-1950s, he had made himself almost indispensable to the wealthy Republican politician Nelson A. Rockefeller, who depended on Kissinger to organize major foreign policy studies for him, financed and run through the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. On behalf of the elite think tank the Council on Foreign Relations, in the mid-1950s Kissinger also headed up a major study group on nuclear weapons and policy, whose disturbing report, written by him, became an unlikely bestseller. Intellectually formidable but socially insecure, his obvious Jewishness still effectively a barrier to him in the most rarefied circles of power, Kissinger was, Suri suggests, modifying the traditional tactics of the "court Jews" of the nineteenth century by making himself indispensable to elite leaders. Seen by them as an "exotic," he was also allowed a certain latitude in his behavior. Notoriously vain, thin-skinned, and self-centered, for close to forty years Kissinger has deliberately courted public attention, and during his time in office drew media coverage of himself by ostentatiously squiring an assortment of highly photogenic Hollywood starlets.

Suri gives a perceptive analysis of Kissinger's thinking and writing on foreign policy, using as an epigraph Kissinger's own well-known words: "The convictions that leaders have formed before reaching high office are the intellectual capital they will consume as long as they continue in office." Suri is at pains to depict Kissinger as an honest and moral man who believed deeply in western civilization and the need to defend it at almost all costs, even when the means used were unpleasant and seemingly immoral. He traces Kissinger's own emphasis on *realpolitik*, the need for nations to make difficult and sometimes unpalatable choices, and his preoccupation above all else to maintain stability and order, to Kissinger's early experiences in Germany, where he encountered firsthand and very personally, as a child and then a decade later as a young soldier-administrator, the consequences for all involved when instability and disorder took hold. Throughout his

career, Kissinger preferred to work with elite leaders, sometimes as an adviser to such figures, later as partners, while demonstrating considerable suspicion of democracy and popular participation in diplomacy. Kissinger's predilection for counseling top officials and others and his fondness for back-channels sprang at least in part from the methods he used to win power and influence people, while his distaste for democracy is related, in Suri's analysis, to his early exposure to the brutality of anti-semitic popular politics while still in Germany.

Suri delves in depth into Kissinger's own writings, which he has read with close attention. These won him broad public attention and ultimately gave him the credentials to enter policymaking circles in his own right, not just as a counselor to influential politicians. Suri points to Kissinger's studies on nuclear policy, in which he recommended the development and if necessary use of small-scale—what would now be called "tactical"—nuclear weapons as a means of breaking out of the strategic stalemate consequent on practical unusability of large-scale nuclear weapons. Given the reservations the majority of strategists expressed over employing nuclear force under even the most limited conditions, one has to wonder whether here, pure ivory tower logic trumped political pragmatism, something that might go far to explain both Kissinger's ordering of at least two nuclear alerts while in office, and his readiness to expand the Vietnam War into Cambodia and Laos in order to end it.

Suri also highlights Kissinger's admiration for several conservative statesmen whom he nonetheless considered revolutionaries in their ability to meet existing challenges and when appropriate to reorder the existing international system: the Austrian Prince Klement von Metternich, German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. In Suri's opinion, these figures served as Kissinger's own models while he was in power. Kissinger's world was one in need of enlightened leadership from a dynamic, perceptive, and charismatic statesman. Suri considers Kissinger a "revolutionary statesman," one who sought to be a "transcendent leader" (p. 194) who could manage and remodel the existing international system. His failures sprang from the limitation that, facing multiple crises and demands, from Vietnam, Russia, China, the Middle East, and elsewhere, it was physically impossible for one man to deal with and juggle all the policy and other elements involved. Suri also criticizes Kissinger for sharing many of the underlying "conventional assumptions" (p. 192) of other Cold War thinkers and officials, while failing to appreciate the growing importance in international affairs of non-state actors and movements, and considering only a narrow range of policy options, most of them derived from European models. Kissinger's horizons were largely limited to the Atlantic world, and he had little understanding or sympathy for new developments in Asia, Latin America, or Africa, viewing these from a European perspective.

Unfortunately, Suri fails to cover Kissinger's time in office in anything like the detail he gives to the making of Henry Kissinger. To devote two-thirds of his book to the pre-1969 Kissinger seems somewhat perverse. Suri gallops through Kissinger's time in power at breakneck speed, making rather little effort to relate the themes he so ably highlights for Kissinger's early decades to the man's eight years in office. His two chapters on Kissinger's

official career are skimpy and rely far too heavily on assertions. Was Kissinger indeed a "revolutionary statesman," as Suri avers? More evidence for or against would be welcome. And—given his work for détente, not to mention the opening to China, and his efforts to adjust US foreign policy to a time of limits—should we really consider Kissinger's Middle Eastern policies his greatest achievement, even if they laid the foundation for subsequent Arab-Israeli agreements under Jimmy Carter and beyond? Here, the focus on Kissinger's Jewish antecedents, though interesting in terms of the details Suri provides of his position during negotiations, perhaps becomes excessive. Suri may well be correct in arguing that the upheavals of Kissinger's early years, which forced him to flee Germany, and the ringside seat from which he viewed the consequences for Germany itself immediately after the war, instilled in him a permanent, perhaps even obsessive, concern to preserve stability and order at almost any cost. Yet other German Jewish refugees, the Realist political scientist Hans Morgenthau being one notable example, endured similar formative experiences yet became outspoken critics of the Vietnam War. Can one genuinely ascribe to Kissinger by far the greatest responsibility for the foreign policies embraced by Richard Nixon, a president Suri blithely characterizes as a "gangster" (p. 206)? It is at least arguable that Nixon was as complex and intellectually interesting a character as Kissinger, and that each man contributed a great deal to policies sometimes been described as "Nixingerism." Given Suri's earlier analysis of Kissinger's adaptation of the role of "court Jew" in his dealings with such powerful patrons as Rockefeller, would it not be useful to discuss at greater length how he modified or continued such behavioral patterns when dealing with the abuse, much of it anti-semitic, that he tolerated as the price of power when working with Nixon, and the psychological impact of this upon both men?

Suri is by no means uncritical of Kissinger's policies, especially his readiness to support exceptionally unsavory dictatorships in numerous developing countries and his tolerance of racism in South Africa and elsewhere. He is perhaps too accepting of Kissinger's widening of the war in Vietnam to Cambodia and his readiness to fight more aggressively in order to end the conflict, a tactic he relates to Kissinger's own writings on the need to employ force when force is not expected. Suri does argue trenchantly that Kissinger's faults were merely those writ large of the transatlantic elites to whom he aspired to belong, and that criticisms of Kissinger's policies from the 1970s onward reflected a larger dissatisfaction among those voicing them with the policies of the largely Atlantic-oriented foreign policy establishment that had directed US foreign affairs since World War II. In a SHAFR conference panel last June, Suri also spoke eloquently on this theme, arguing that those who sought to attack Kissinger in particular were making him the scapegoat for all those American Cold War policymakers who had pushed policies closely resembling those Kissinger espoused. Such personification of the evils of American foreign policy and demonization of one among many protagonists was, he suggested, both unfair and counterproductive. On this occasion, Suri also strongly defended Kissinger against charges that he was a war criminal. In this volume, Suri further suggests that persistent allegations that, in the run-up to the presidential election of 1968, in order to facilitate a Republican victory Kissinger deliberately undercut Vietnamese peace negotiations then in progress have been overblown, since it was most unlikely that the South Vietnamese, fully aware that they might receive a better deal under a new incumbent, would have made any meaningful commitments prior to the election.

Many of Suri's points are valid. Yet—especially given his focus on Kissinger's rise to power and the methods he used to ingratiate himself with the powerful—one feels that more extended discussion of the methods Kissinger used to further his ambitions might be useful. Perhaps the only two individuals of whom Kissinger always spoke warmly, not just to their faces but behind their backs, were his patron Nelson Rockefeller, who in 1968 gave him $50,000 in gratitude for his services over the years, and David Bruce, an eminent diplomat of impeccable elite credentials who genuinely admired and liked Kissinger, and whose wife's Georgetown salon provided Kissinger with the entrée to the Establishment social circles whose acceptance he craved. In his memoirs, Kissinger wrote with considerable admiration of the "the American foreign policy Establishment . . . . [t]he leadership group in America that had won the battle against isolationism in the 1940s and sustained a responsible American involvement in the world throughout the postwar period."[5] Later commentators on the foreign policy Establishment, however, highlighted how the blatant and naked ambition of Kissinger and other power-hungry non-elite figures undermined many of the practices and values of the old-line Establishment, especially the personal standards, mores, and loyalties of the group Kissinger and similar rising intellectuals aspired to join.[6] Kissinger's assiduous flattery of those whose favor he needed to court, not least Richard Nixon throughout the latter's presidency, balanced with simultaneous denigration of such individuals behind their backs, and his often abusive treatment of inferiors, is not just a subject for interesting gossip and warrants further discussion.

Given the context, Suri might have focused rather more upon some of these admittedly unattractive behavioral patterns that Kissinger displayed while attaining and exercising power, and discussed at greater length whether they played their part in vitiating his effectiveness in office. Were the methods Kissinger chose to employ themselves self-defeating in denying him the real greatness as a statesman that he coveted?

Ultimately, however, one regrets that Suri has only written half a book. His work is invariably stimulating, insightful, and original. He has given us the best, fullest, and most perceptive account to date of Kissinger's early career and thinking and the strategies he followed to attain power. It is all the more unfortunate that, after so ably setting the stage for his hero's big moments and setpieces, Suri scrambles through a few high points and sends the disappointed audience out with far more than enough time to catch the last train home. Many books would benefit greatly if cut by half. With Jeremi Suri, my complaint is that his book should have been longer.

[5] Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 86-87.

[6] I. M. Destler, Leslie H. Gelb and Anthony Lake, *Our Own Worst Enemy: The Unmaking of American Foreign Policy*, revised and updated ed. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), esp. 24-25, 91-93.

Review by James T. Sparrow, University of Chicago

Jeremi Suri's new biography of Henry Kissinger deepens and extends the story he began in his first book, *Power and Protest*. As he observed there, the "strains of nuclear destruction" evident by the late 1950s made the Soviet and American superpowers "at once more powerful and more constrained," producing an opening toward globalism. The Weberian cage of modern bureaucratic rationality, rigid enough when cast in Bismarck's iron, had become positively unyielding when forged of plutonium. Postwar leaders groped for ways to break this impasse, only to find themselves unable to ride the tiger of transcendent charismatic leadership for very long. Consequently, by the late 1960s great power statesmen sought discreet, stable solutions that would preserve sovereign prerogative in the face of global uprisings.[1]

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Enter Henry Kissinger, dauntless nuclear strategist and denizen of international back channels: "the perfect outsider for insiders who wanted to transform conventional Cold War wisdom from within." (163) No other figure more completely personified (and abetted) the momentous transformation of world politics spawned by nuclear brinksmanship and its resolution in détente. Yet "Kissinger did not transcend his times like some Olympian 'great man,'" notwithstanding his pretensions to precisely that status. This was because "his influence came from the social margins... not from the traditional centers of 'established' authority." (4-5)

Hard as it is to imagine Henry Kissinger in the role of the "Marginal Man,"[2] this point is central to Suri's analysis of Kissinger as paragon of globalization. His "career, like the

[1] Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), chs. 1-2, esp. pp. 7-8, 44-5; ch. 6.

[2] Robert E. Park, "Human Migration and the Marginal Man," *American Journal of Sociology* 33.6 (May 1928): 881-893. Consider this passage: "When, however, the walls of the medieval ghetto were torn down and the Jew was permitted to participate in the cultural life of the peoples among whom he lived, there appeared a new type of personality, namely, a cultural hybrid, a man living and sharing intimately in the cultural life and traditions of two distinct peoples; never quite willing to break, even if he were permitted to do so, with his past and his traditions, and not quite accepted, because of racial prejudice, in the new society in which he now sought to find a place. He was a man on the margin of two cultures and two societies, which never completely interpenetrated and fused ... The

American Century as a whole, was not inwardly driven," Suri argues, but was instead the product of "external" transformations attending American hegemony that allowed Kissinger to become one of its most creative exponents. (2) As he traversed the extremes of world power, he never shed the insecurity of his early tenure on its treacherous periphery. When he arrived at its center, the brand of hegemony he engineered there bore the mark of his origins. Fully half of the book is devoted to the experiences that made Kissinger into what Suri calls a "trans-Atlantic bridge figure" (55-7, 175): Jewish family life in Nazi Germany; émigré existence in Washington Heights; military service and early leadership as a governor in the American Zone of the conquered Reich; college and graduate school on the GI Bill at Harvard. The second half of the book follows Kissinger's globe-striding ascent to power, in which he applied the lessons of his worldly, peripatetic life to policies that would shape the global order: first as nuclear strategist, then as advisor to Nelson Rockefeller, next as National Security Advisor and Secretary of State to Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, and finally, as the éminence grise of world affairs. This is biography as global history. To use the sort of Hegelian locution Herr Doktor himself might have indulged had he written his honors thesis at the end of his career instead of at its beginning, the history of Kissinger-in-the-World cannot be understood without also following the evolution of the-World-in-Kissinger.

Seen this way, Kissinger was a sort of global everyman -- or, more plausibly, a new kind of great man whose significance derived not from any exceptional character or powers of will or discernment, but from his fortuitous cosmopolitanism, which uniquely suited him to brokering power both within the society of the new hegemon and among its global contenders. Strategically located institutions and networks of influence, all bolstered and energized by America's rise to globalism, opened at least their antechambers to Kissinger because he was the right man at the right time. Despite Suri's clear disavowal of the "great man" approach, one puts the book down with a sense that while "Super K" may have been the vessel of greater historical forces, he was clearly also the agent of historical changes that few figures are privileged to enact in history.[3] Yet situating such a broad analytical agenda within the confines of a single life, no matter how capacious, poses limitations that are unavoidable for any biography. Though the focus on cosmopolitanism as a globalizing open sesame to international networks and institutions is insightful, providing a rich and necessary context in which to view Kissinger's career, Suri never pushes very hard on the underlying causal claims such a focus implicitly makes. Were strategic nukes or the notion of an Atlantic confederacy the kinds of ideas that could have been concocted and sold to policy-makers only by a German-Jewish refugee recently admitted as a junior member to the old boys' clubs at Harvard and Foggy Bottom? Were back channels and diplomatic

autobiographies of Jewish immigrants, of which a great number have been published in America in recent years, are all different versions of the same story -- the story of the marginal man ..." (891-2)

[3] Indeed, globalizing Kissinger appears only to enhance the explanatory power of the great man approach, whether it is embraced in name or not. This is an original move to make in today's historiography, rising as it does to the mandate to locate global, transnational and international processes in the actions of concrete historical agents. It appears to flow from Suri's neo-Weberian pursuit of charismatic leadership in the modern world of statecraft; see, e.g., *Power and Protest*, ch. 2. In *Henry Kissinger and the American Century*, Suri does not invoke Weber explicitly, but he does foreground Kissinger's related preoccupation with the need for "transcendent" leaders in modern, democratic societies; e.g., see 8, 37-8, 81-2, 113-14.

shuttle routes open only to the same? Probably not. But if not, then how dispositive is Kissinger's status as a paragon of globalism?

On this question, the argument's strengths are most obvious when explaining the breakthroughs Kissinger brokered in the Middle East (Chapter 6). Kissinger's career-long yearning to replicate the Concert of Europe found its target in a settlement that sought to balance and thus contain Arab as well as Israeli designs on the region. Israelis and Arabs alike acknowledged Kissinger's in-between status as the foundation for their trust in him. Even the fundamental flaws in Kissinger's approach to the Middle East bore the distinctive mark of Kissinger's distrust of democratic forces beyond his control. His preference for order and hierarchy over social and political change, Suri convincingly shows, was the hallmark of a career forged in the mid-century crisis of democracy.[4] Suri waxes eloquent as he concludes his study of Kissinger with a clear-sighted analysis of how the order he brokered with Sadat and others resolved the deadlock of the cold war in the Middle East in the 1970s, only to create new geopolitical conundrums that haunt us to this day. (269-74)

Kissinger's academic entrepreneurship within the cold war university also appears to have hung on his cosmopolitanism, although it is less clear how central it was to the resonance of his scholarship. His work on nuclear strategy was noted less for its originality than for its effectiveness in situating him at the center of important policy-making circles. (Although, as Suri notes in the long footnote on pp. 310-11, he was far more original than later critics admitted.) Whether the ideas in which he traded were strategic (e.g., limited war), or tactical (e.g., the battlefield use of "small" nuclear arms), they were concepts that had been developed and honed within a network of scholars and policymakers. Although the originality of Kissinger's thought is not really at stake in Suri's argument, the grounding of its success in cosmopolitanism certainly is. Suri's ample documentation and supple argument convince the reader that men like Elliott at Harvard relied on Kissinger to run or shape key institutions such as the International Seminar and the Center for International Affairs precisely because he played the trans-Atlantic broker so well (116-134). But were analysts at RAND or policymakers like Paul Nitze and George Kennan persuaded (as Elliott appears to have been) that Kissinger's intellectual leadership held the key to a new kind of global hegemony? And where are the other new men of influence at Harvard (or at RAND, for that matter)? The limitations of biography leave them mostly offstage, while Suri's emphasis on Kissinger's outsider status obscures the precise nature of his access to and acceptance by policy-making insiders. When one thinks of the influence wielded by men like Hans Morgenthau and Edward Teller in shaping postwar strategy, it is clear that Suri's argument has great explanatory potential. Yet Kissinger's relationship to such figures goes largely unremarked in the book. This is unfortunate, since a more cohort-oriented analysis of Kissinger might have provided a clearer sense of just how much the globalizing Marginal Men shaped the trajectory of postwar strategy, and how much it shaped them. By the time

[4] Kissinger was hardly alone in his abiding concern regarding the challenge posed to liberal democracy by mass movements in an age of totalitarianism, nor was this concern restricted to German emigré intellectuals, although they clearly played a major role in articulating this problematic. See Edward A. Purcell, Jr., *The Crisis of Democratic Theory: Scientific Naturalism and the Problem of Value* (Louisville: University Press of Kentucky, 1979).

the reader arrives at the ambiguous response of Eisenhower to Kissinger's book, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* -- "interesting and worth reading at least this much of the book" (156) -- the problem of determining the direction of influence (from the global inwards or the White House outwards) becomes evident. Concluding that Kissinger's "strategic analysis was provocative and influential nonetheless" begs the question of both influence and globalization.

When it comes to the diplomacy for which Kissinger is best known -- the conclusion of the Vietnam War, the opening of China, triangular diplomacy, the SALT talks -- the evidence of globalization's impact is less direct. Suri has covered his bases here, as everywhere else in this carefully argued book. In the introduction he notes that he is less concerned with the arcana of what Kissinger accomplished than with "how the nature of global power changed during his career," and "why so many people invested this German-Jewish immigrant with so much power." (5) The simple fact of Kissinger's position of influence during the Nixon and Ford administrations fits with this broad mandate, and Suri does an outstanding job situating him within that extraordinary moment of opportunity for intellectual German Jews and other "unmeltable ethnics" demanding a place at the table of public recognition.[5] Although here, too, the argument would have been strengthened by coverage of Kissinger's relationship with his cohort, most notably the neoconservatives who shared important aspects of Kissinger's background, yet sharply critiqued his foreign policy.[6]

Other more domestic factors also require closer attention. Take the example of Kissinger's ability to shift patrons, from Nelson Rockefeller to his nemesis, Richard Nixon, without batting an eye. Suri explores the personal dimensions of this shift, emphasizing their shared outsider mentality (an intriguing and poignant insight, esp. on 202-204), but passing quickly over the political dimensions of their alliance, which had everything to do with domestic power struggles. Given the exquisite hostility liberals and many moderates harbored toward the Nixon Administration (particularly over foreign relations) and the fratricidal rage that rising conservatives cultivated toward Kissinger's former patron, Rockefeller, and his brand of Republicanism, it may have been that short-sighted calculations of domestic politics did far more to shape Kissinger's statecraft in Paris and elsewhere than did his globalized skill set and temperament. Globalization may have accounted for the influence of the anti-war Left, as Suri argued in *Power and Protest*,[7] but it is unclear how it would have factored into the politically more consequential concerns of mainstream Democrats, much less those of the New Right, whose critique of détente would become a rallying point throughout the seventies, figuring centrally in Reagan's 1976 and 1980 campaigns, and influencing his nomination in the latter year.[8] Without a close analysis of the politics of Kissinger's diplomacy, and an explicit comparison of domestic versus transnational or international factors, it is hard to evaluate precisely how heavily

[5] Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).
[6] Jim Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet* (New York: Viking, 2004), esp. ch. 4.
[7] Suri, *Power and Protest*, chs. 1, 6, and passim.
[8] Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans*, ch. 6, esp. 103-5.

shaped by globalization Kissinger's pursuit of foreign relations really was during his 1970s ascendancy.

Given Kissinger's abiding faith in realpolitik, with its naturalization of national interest, one has to wonder if it wasn't the centripetal force of American nationalism, with its global ambit, that called the shots, rather than globalization. This possibility is not necessarily in conflict with Suri's framework. In *Power and Protest*, he concluded that the pressures of global dissent only served to harden the international state system in the end.[9] Presumably other facets of globalization had similar effects. Suri indicates as much in this book, most suggestively when he observes that Kissinger was "a revolutionary strategist, but also a conservative thinker." (248) His cosmopolitan roots allowed him to pursue unconventional strategies, but his abiding commitment to realpolitik ensured these departures would always reinforce raison d'état. Taking on containment and other State Department shibboleths may have been audacious (though perhaps not quite a "statesman's revolution"), but never did Kissinger strike at the roots of foreign relations. He always and everywhere sought to reinforce them to serve American interests -- searching for ways to make nuclear weapons more useful despite the international rigor-mortis they induced, or acting to squelch popular movements in the Third World even when they had democratic roots. The very notion of human rights offended his sense of how the world works (and his sense of amour-propre) -- denying, as it did, the supreme prerogatives of sovereignty. Does this dogged, even obsessive, devotion to the revanchist vision of national interest in foreign relations square with Suri's claims for Kissinger as a paragon of globalization?

Suri's answer emerges from some of the strongest chapters of the book, covering Kissinger's early experiences in Nazi Bavaria, New Deal New York, and the U.S. Army during and after WWII. Only such a sequence of profound dislocations could have produced an historical figure as paradoxical as Kissinger. "Americanization did not erase, but in many ways heightened, his ties to his country of birth," Suri observes, and then proceeds with a revealing quote from Kissinger stating that his lifelong "emotional and practical" connection to Germany, the land of his birth, dated "primarily from the time of occupation onward," when he was twenty-one years old. (67) The ramifications of this understatement are substantial, and get to the heart of Suri's claim that Kissinger's rise within in the Army, like his later successes, depended on his "relative marginality in two societies." (69) This marginality forged his lifelong identification with American power, even as it fundamentally complicated his sense of national identity, and thus of national interest. The seeds of postwar hegemony grew at the margins of state power as it was renegotiated in WWII -- and one of those seeds was located in the developing mind of a young Henry Kissinger. As the sociologist Robert Park wrote eighty years ago in his seminal essay on "Human Migration and the Marginal Man":

> It is in the mind of the marginal man that the conflicting cultures meet and fuse. It is, therefore, in the mind of the marginal man that the process of civilization is visibly going

[9] Suri, *Power and Protest*, 263: "Détente protected a state-centered world and forestalled hopes for the creation of truly independent international authorities."

> on, and it is in the mind of the marginal man that the process of civilization may best be studied.[10]

By painstakingly reconstructing Kissinger's Jewish background as no other scholar has, Suri suggests a paradoxical link between the modern condition and the constitution of world power. If only an outsider could become the ultimate insider whose high statecraft could determine the direction of the postwar world -- and if this Marginal Man was modernity's ultimate outsider whose non-personhood under the Nuremberg Laws was proclaimed in the archetypal state of exception -- then what does that say about the way that power worked in the American Century? Clearly, Suri persuades us, it says a great deal, especially about the ways in which American institutions of power had to democratize their mobilization (and their ideologies) of merit in order to perfect a system of realpolitik that would secure sovereign control and foreclose any democratic challenges that might threaten it. Democracy, like cold war credibility, was hollowed out from within by the effort to project its image everywhere the U.S. flag might be planted.

There is another side to Kissinger's paradoxical character that raises questions for further research. Suri does not shrink from full disclosure of this dark side, but neither does he probe it (at least not explicitly). In order to rescue Kissinger from the unproductive binary debate that casts him alternately as villain or hero, Suri prefers an approach that seeks understanding in broad historical context, both local and global, rather than accepting the narrow confines of anachronistic moralizing. (5-6) While this is a defensible and perhaps even necessary approach to such a controversial and contemporary figure, it is not so easy to sustain a disinterested stance for very long. Despite his own best instincts even Suri succumbs to the urge to take a side, here and there. At one point in the book he feels compelled to assert that Kissinger was "not a war criminal" -- and not in some marginal aside, but as the summation of his brief for Kissinger as the author of "a statesman's revolution." (248) At the book's outset he puts his intellectual commitments on the line with admirable frankness: "Good men made policy during the American Century, and Kissinger was one of them. Their accomplishments and failures were not genetic. They were rarely personal." (7)

Yet it is hard to see how Kissinger's most widely criticized failings can be understood outside of the very personal context Suri has so convincingly reconstructed. How was it possible for Kissinger to authorize carpet bombing in Cambodia without recalling the Nazi blitzkrieg that so often began with the bombing of civilians? How could he send aid, advisors, and all manner of support to dictatorships like the one that ruled Argentina, without having flashbacks to the formative years he spent in the Third Reich, watching neighbors and relatives disappear? When he posed for the press conference with Pinochet (241-2), didn't the click of heels and the smell of patent leather ring a bell? In short, how could Kissinger allow himself to pursue the ghost of Bismarck without remembering the fate of Bleichröder and his children?[11] These are questions of his memory, world-view, and motivation, not of our anachronistic righteousness. They are just as relevant to Kissinger's realpolitik are as those pertaining to his feelings of being an "outsider." One does not have

[10] Park, "Human Migration and the Marginal Man," 881.

[11] Fritz Stern, *Gold and Iron: Bismarck, Bleichröder, and the Building of the German Empire* (New York: Random House, 1977), esp. 542-9.

to equate Kissinger's most execrable deeds with fascism, nor label Kissinger a war criminal, to see how critical it is to address such questions. But they probe issues that lie several layers deeper than Kissinger or his available papers will allow scholars to penetrate -- at least while he still has a say.[12]

[12] See Bruce Mazlish, *Kissinger: The European Mind in American Policy* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 46-7 and all of ch. 8, for a probing but highly speculative exploration of this problem in relation to Kissinger's psyche.

Review by Yafeng Xia, Long Island University

Jixinge (Henry Kissinger in Chinese) has been a household name in China since 1971. He has visited China more than 40 times, and met with all Chinese top leaders from Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai to the current Chinese leader Hu Jintao. In China, Kissinger is known as a man of great wisdom. A quick check on the library holdings of Northeast Normal University in China shows a collection of more than 50 books by or on Kissinger published in Chinese, including the first two volumes of his memoirs (The third volume of his memoir, *Years of Renewal* has not yet been published in Chinese) and many of his books. There are also several biographies of Kissinger and doctoral dissertations on Kissinger in Chinese from many different Chinese universities.

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While many books have been written about Kissinger, Jeremy Suri, a University of Wisconsin-Madison history professor, has more to tell us. This book is the first to offer a deeper understanding of Kissinger based on his remarkable life history starting with his birth and teenage years as a German Jew. Suri regards Kissinger as a man highly influenced and shaped by his experiences and circumstances "created for him by society at large." His thesis is that Kissinger is not so much a great man as a "child of his times" (p. 55). It was the changing world around him—the Cold War and the United States' increasing global reach—that provided a stage on which Kissinger succeeded. Drafted into the U.S. Army in early 1943, Kissinger served in counterintelligence in Europe during and just after World War II. His keen mind and familiarity with German society were crucial to his success. In 1946 with one year of night college in accounting, he was lecturing American officers on German society (p. 57). That was his entrée into Harvard and it sets his career on an academic and political path that would never have been possible if he was from a non-Western cultural background (pp. 78-81). Suri contends, Kissinger's "genius was not his originality, but his ability to recognize the changed circumstances around him and take advantage of them" (p. 55).

This book, in particular, examines how Kissinger's Jewishness impacted the way he viewed the world and its threats. Growing up as a teenager in a setting of virulent anti-Semitism in Weimar and Nazi Germany, Kissinger "was consistently moved by a fear of democratic weakness and democratic violence." Suri observes, "His experience from his earliest days in Weimar Germany through his time in office through his discussion of Iraq today are deeply motivated by a belief that democracies are not bad, but 'weak'" (p. 8). Suri notes, "Kissinger's policies reflected the accumulated wisdom and experience of his formative years. They were keyed to his early and lasting skepticism of democracy, his sense of cultural hierarchy, his faith in state power, and his fear of political chaos." (p. 246). Despite

the intense criticism of Kissinger's legacy, critics have failed to offer a more effective foreign policy alternative. Suri concludes, "The 21st Century awaits Kissinger's successor" (p. 274).

This book is well written, very insightful and original. It is a true effort of using multi-archival and multilingual sources in writing diplomatic history, and a significant contribution to the study of U.S. foreign relations during the Cold War in general and Henry Kissinger in particular. This book may serve as a supplementary reading for courses on modern diplomatic history and American foreign relations. The reviewer wants to bring up two points of disagreement on Kissinger and China to share with Suri and the readers:

The first issue is Kissinger's role in initiating U.S.-China rapprochement in early months of the Nixon administration. Suri writes, "From his first months in office, Kissinger made a series of secret overtures to Beijing—many without Nixon's knowledge—in hopes of creating a useful back channel" (p. 235). It appears to be an exaggeration of the role Kissinger played in achieving Sino-American rapprochement. At the outset of the new administration, it was by all accounts Nixon, not Kissinger, who seized the initiative on China.[1] In direct contrast to his reputation as a bitter anti-communist cold warrior, Nixon made reconciliation with China an early and high priority.[2] It was one of the subjects on his mind even during the transition period before he moved into the White House. Vernon Walters, who was then serving as the army attaché at the American embassy in Paris, called on Nixon at the Pierre Hotel in New York City. According to Walters' memoirs, Nixon told him that "among the various things he hoped to do in office was to open the door to the Chinese Communists… He felt it was not good for the world to have the most populous nation on earth completely without contact with the most powerful nation on earth."[3] In his own memoirs, Nixon said that at the time he interviewed Kissinger for the job of national security adviser, he asked Kissinger to read his *Foreign Affairs* article and spoke to him of the need to reevaluate America's China policy.[4] At this time, Kissinger did not see any short-term likelihood of a move toward China. According to Harry R. Haldeman, Nixon's chief of staff, when he told Kissinger on one early trip that Nixon "seriously intends to visit China before the end of the second term," Kissinger responded sardonically, "Fat chance."[5] Suri's sources also indicate that Kissinger started to play a more active role in secret U.S.-China communications only in early 1970 which was about a year after the Nixon administration took office.

The second issue is U.S.-China relations from Nixon's visit to China to the end of the Ford administration. Suri writes, "Secret arrangements with figure like Zhou Enlai in China, Augusto Pinochet in Chile, and John Vorster in South Africa helped skirt what Kissinger

[1] See Mr. and Mrs. Strober's interviews with Alexander Haig and H.R. Haldeman in Deborah H. Strober and Gerald S. Strober, *The Nixon Presidency: An Oral History of the Era* (Washington D.C.: Brassey's, Inc. 2003), p. 130.

[2] Yafeng Xia, *Negotiating with the Enemy, U.S.-China Talks during the Cold War, 1949-1972* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), p. 139.

[3] Vernon Walters, *Silent Missions* (Garden City: N.Y.: Doubleday, 1978), p. 525.

[4] Richard Nixon, The Memoirs of Richard Nixon (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978), p. 257.

[5] H. R. Haldeman with Joseph DiMona, *The Ends of Power* (New York: Times Books, 1978), p. 91.

perceived as the limits on American power, especially during a period of domestic turmoil" (p. 240). Suri writes, "the continued brutality of communist rule in China during the Nixon and Ford administrations" has much to do with Kissinger's secret arrangements with Zhou Enlai (pp. 240-241). This is obviously contrary to the status of U.S.-China relations in those years. The U.S. government had very little influence on China's domestic politics in the 1970s when Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai were in power. The same applies to post-Mao China. George H. W. Bush, who had cultivated close relations with senior Chinese leaders including Deng Xiaoping was not able to utilize any meaningful venue to pressure Beijing leaders in the midst of the Tiananmen Massacre in 1989.

Previous studies on Sino-American relations all confirm that Sino-American relations suffered "stagnation" and "complications" from the time of Nixon's visit to China in 1972 to the time when the Carter administration decided to normalize relations with China in 1978. During Kissinger's visit to China in February 1973, Zhou Enlai and Kissinger agreed that normalization of U.S.-China relations would be attained by a two-step process during Nixon's second term. First, the two countries agreed to establish a liaison office in each other's capital. The second phase was to achieve normalization of U.S.-China relations at the opportune moment. During his meeting with Kissinger on 17 February, Mao suggested that the United States and China should "work together to commonly deal with a bastard [the Soviet Union]." Mao also proposed his strategy of establishing "a horizontal line—the U.S.—Japan—Pakistan—Iran—Turkey and Europe" in order to jointly counter Soviet hegemony.[6]

However, whether Mao Zedong's view on U.S.-Soviet relations fitted to reality or not, his strategic design of "alliance with the U.S. to deter the Soviets," "a horizontal line," and "a big terrain" could not come to fruition. Mao was disheartened to see the frequent U.S.-Soviet summits and the subsequent signing of treaties in 1973. During Kissinger's sixth visit to China (his first time as secretary of state) from 10-14 November 1973, in a meeting with Kissinger on 12 November, Mao came to realize that the U.S. was in a very advantageous position and no longer in dire need of the China card after its withdrawal from the Vietnam quagmire. Mao began the conversation by discussing the Soviet threat to China. Kissinger seized the opportunity to emphasize a possible Soviet attack on China and declared that the U.S. would not allow a violation of China's security. Mao, a man with a strong sense of self-respect, felt he was being forced into passivity, and was resentful and humiliated.[7]

In a hastily arranged meeting with Kissinger on the evening of 13 November, Kissinger discussed Sino-U.S. military cooperation with Zhou Enlai. He suggested that the U.S. and China "sign between us an agreement on accidental nuclear war," and "also establish a

[6] William Burr, *The Kissinger Transcripts: The Top Secret Talks with Beijing and Moscow* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), pp. 88, 94; Gong Li, *Deng Xiaoping yu Meiguo* [Deng Xiaoping and the United States] (Beijing: Zhongyang Dangshi Chubanshe, 2004), pp. 104-109.

[7] Burr, *The Kissinger Transcripts*, pp. 183-84; Pang Xianzhi and Jin Chongji, chief eds. *Mao Zedong zhuan, 1949-1976* [A Biography of Mao Zedong, 1949-1976] (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 2003), vol. 2: pp. 1669-1670.

hotline."[8] Zhou didn't make a firm commitment as he had to ask for Mao's approval. But he was told that Mao was asleep and could not be disturbed. The next day at the time of Kissinger's departure, Zhou told the Americans that the two sides would each appoint a representative to explore further the issue of Sino-American military cooperation. Zhou said, "We will ask Ambassador Huang Zhen (who was then director of PRC's Liaison Office in Washington) to contact you."[9] When Zhou's interpreter Tang Wensheng and assistant Wang Hairong reported to Mao that Zhou was too weak and incompetent in his talk with Kissinger, Mao suspected that Zhou had departed from the correct stand, and accepted U.S. nuclear protection in the event of Soviet nuclear attack.[10]

From 21 November to early December, in about two weeks, several sessions of enlarged Politburo meetings were held to vilify Zhou, which was unprecedented. The purpose was to disclose and criticize the so-called "Right Capitulationism" of Zhou while he presided over diplomacy toward the United States in the last several years. Zhou accepted all the extreme humiliation and acknowledged all charges against him. Only then did Mao call a temporary halt to further persecution of Zhou. But after such an organized internal political struggle and criticism of Zhou, it is hardly difficult to predict China's perception and attitude toward the United States.

Zhou had suffered from serious bladder cancer since early 1973 and was on his deathbed. From 1974 to early 1976, Deng Xiaoping was put in charge of China's foreign relations, especially China's relations with the United States. However, Deng was constantly ambushed by the "Gang of Four," who regarded him as the main obstacle to their road to the supreme power. During this period, Deng was the caretaker of China's policy toward the United States. He couldn't do more than that Mao's theory stipulated.

President Gerald Ford, who succeeded Nixon was more cautious in handling U.S.-China relations. Obviously, China was unhappy with U.S.-Soviet détente. The U.S. and China made an effort to maintain its relations at a strategic level. After the fall of Saigon, "China's strategic importance had increased. Ford believed that China was a 'critical' aspect of the administration's effort to offset American setback in Asia."[11] During this period, Kissinger kept making his bi-annual trips to Beijing. For the U.S. side, the domestic political cost was too high for normalization with the PRC. Neither Kissinger nor Ford was willing to take the

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[8] Burr, *The Kissinger Transcripts*, p. 204. However, the Chinese did not respond to Kissinger's offer. It was not until 1998 that they would sign a hot line agreement with the United States. Kissinger hints, "Some voices in Peking may have asserted that China was 'tilting' too far toward the United States." He believed that Mao's policy was coming under great pressure; whether his proposal and Zhou's interested response encouraged some influential Chinese to conclude that the leadership was going too far is not known. This was not the case. It was Mao himself who rejected the U.S. offer. Burr, *The Kissinger Transcripts*, p. 206.

[9] Burr, *The Kissinger Transcripts*, p. 211.

[10] Gao Wenqian, *Wannian Zhou Enlai* [Zhou Enlai's Later Years] (Hong Kong: Mirror Books, 2003), pp. 460-461; Ma Jisen, *Waijiaobu wenge jishi* [The Cultural Revolution in the Foreign Ministry] (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2003), pp. 330-331.

[11] Robert S. Ross, *Negotiating Cooperation: The United States and China, 1969--1989* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 71-72.

risk of breaking with Taiwan without a guarantee that Beijing would not conquer that island by force.[12]

Since Kissinger's November 1973 trip to China, Beijing had toughened its rhetoric toward the unification of Taiwan. Mao criticized Zhou Enlai's line that China sought to liberate Taiwan by peaceful means, saying "it can only be attacked."[13] Mao's words about the prospective violence against Taiwan became the "mantra of the Chinese bureaucracy." In October 1975, during Kissinger's advance trip to China to make arrangements for President Ford's visit to Beijing, Deng Xiaoping "delivered a blistering and contemptuous review of the Ford-Kissinger policy."[14] Deng's tough attitude was in reality directed to shoring up and protecting his own declining status in the elite political struggle. Ford's visit did not solve any substantial problems and did not set a timetable for normalization. It was impossible for the Ford administration to agree to a normalization agreement under the threat of violence. Immediately after Ford's visit[15], to show China's dissatisfaction with the status of Sino-American relations and alleged U.S. appeasement of the Soviet Union, the Chinese government announced the release of three crew members of a Soviet helicopter that had penetrated Chinese airspace in March 1974.[16]

The above analysis clearly indicates that Zhou Enlai was not in charge of China's foreign policy making from mid-1973 until his death in early 1976. There were no "secret arrangements" between Kissinger and Zhou vis-à-vis China's domestic politics, and U.S.-China policy during the Nixon and Ford administration had little to do with "the continued brutality of communist rule in China." In fact, Kissinger had an uneasy relationship with Chinese leaders because he failed to deliver the promised normalization in those years.

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[12] Patrick Tyler, *A Great Wall, Six Presidents and China: An Investigative History* (New York: Public Affairs, 1999) p. 184.

[13] Tyler, *A Great Wall*, p. 174.

[14] Tyler, *A Great Wall*, pp. 187, 206-207.

[15] Ford's visit proved disappointing. The trip was cut from seven days to four, and Ford added stops in Indonesia and Philippines to give his tour greater substance. Although the Americans wanted to issue a joint statement at the end of the meeting to give the impression of headway, the Chinese refused on the grounds that no concrete progress toward normalization had been made. See Harry Harding, *A Fragile Relationship: The United States and China since 1972* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1992), p. 48.

[16] Harry Harding, "The Domestic Politics of China's Global Posture, 1973-1978," in Thomas Fingar, *China's Quest for Independence: Policy Evolution in the 1970s* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1980), pp. 105-106.

Author's Response by Jeremi Suri, University of Wisconsin-Madison

What is Policy?

I want to thank Barbara Keys, Priscilla Roberts, James Sparrow, and Yafeng Xia for their careful readings of my book and their very insightful comments. I agree with much of what they say. In particular, I share their fascination with the complexities of Kissinger's personality and its often damaging effects on his policies. Kissinger's vanity, insecurity, self-righteousness, and callousness were surely at work in the expansion of the Vietnam War, the Chilean coup, the civil war in Angola, and the U.S. toleration of the Indonesian invasion of East Timor. Similarly, Yafeng Xia reminds us that even Sino-American relations stagnated, in part, because of Kissinger's personal failings. Kissinger was a deeply flawed decision-maker.

Jeremi Suri *is a professor of history at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a senior fellow at the University of Wisconsin Center for World Affairs and the Global Economy. He is the author of Henry Kissinger and the American Century (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007); The Global Revolutions of 1968 (W.W. Norton, 2006); and Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente (Harvard University Press, 2003). He is also the author of numerous articles on international history, social change, and nuclear strategy including "The Cold War, Decolonizaition, and Global Social Awakenings: Historical Intersections," Cold War History 6 (August 2006), 353-363; "The Promise and Failure of 'Developed Socialism:' The Soviet 'Thaw" and the Crucible of the Prague Spring, 1964-1972," Contemporary European History 15(May 2006), 133-58; and "Explaining the End of the Cold War: A New Historical Consensus?," Journal of Cold War Studies 4 (Fall 2002), 60-92. Professor Suri was recently honored as one of America's "Top Young Innovators" by the Smithsonian Institution. Professor Suri received his Ph.D. from Yale University, his M.A. from Ohio University, and his B.A. from Stanford University.*

Keys and Roberts would clearly like to read more about Kissinger's flaws and the details of their workings through the policy process in the 1970s. As they know, Jussi Hanhimäki, Jeffrey Kimball, and others have covered much of this ground. Many other historians – especially a very talented group of emerging Ph.D.s – will surely enhance our understandings. I am delighted to see so much exciting work in this area, and I look forward to reading many more books on the subject, from diverse perspectives.[1]

Henry Kissinger and the American Century is an effort to analyze the roots of policy, not the day-to-day practice. Both, it seems to me, are legitimate and necessary topics. One cannot understand why governments do certain things if one neglects the daily interplay of action and reaction. Anyone who has spent significant time in government archives recognizes the overwhelming pressures of crises, meetings, telephone conversations, and now emails that dominate the modern policy-

[1] See Jussi Hanhimäki, *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Jeffrey Kimball, *Nixon's Vietnam War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998). See also Fredrick Logevall and Andrew Preston, eds., *Nixon in the World: American Foreign Relations, 1969-1977* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming 2008).

maker's waking hours. As a professor I feel this myself, and I am struck by how much worse it is for a president, a foreign minister, and a national security advisor.

I would not, however, want anyone to judge me solely by my reactions to the pressures of my daily life. Professors and policy-makers are moved by big ideas and ambitious strategies, as much as immediate stimuli. The most interesting question for me is not why someone did something mistaken or foolish – everyone does those things – but how mistaken and foolish actions fit into a larger pattern of thought. What are the assumptions that guided action under pressure? What are the insights and blind spots that recurred in diverse circumstances? What can we learn from these insights and blind spots?

Those are the questions in the case of Henry Kissinger, and the Cold War more generally, that my book seeks to address. James Sparrow appropriately suggests that a broader "cohort-oriented analysis" might offer great insight on these questions. Priscilla Roberts makes a similar point in her well-researched reflections on the "foreign policy Establishment." I agree, and I hope my work on Kissinger opens new perspectives on the commonalities among the many figures, like him, who transformed policy after the Second World War. That is what biographical analysis in the context of *both* diplomatic and social history can offer. How did the context of society at a given time shape policy-makers? How did policy-makers shape society? I am struck by how infrequently historians ask those questions about the figures – diplomats or subalterns – that they study.

Barbara Keys provocatively calls this "anti-biography" because it allegedly asserts a "deterministic feel" when the individual under study is made to appear "rational" and "conditioned by externalities." Here I must disagree. To argue that a figure like Kissinger is a product of his time, as I do indeed argue, is not to say that his actions were predetermined. Context explains; it does not predict. Kissinger's self-conscious experiences as a German-Jewish refugee, an "outsider" in American society (a "marginal man" as Sparrow calls him, invoking Robert Park), and a Cold War policy intellectual shaped his assumptions about power. They made certain choices – militant anti-communism, reliance on nuclear posturing, and military escalation in Vietnam – attractive. They made other choices – respect for student protesters, promotion of racial diversity, and acceptance of anti-American regimes in the "third world" – less attractive. In the end, Kissinger and others like him made choices and they often disagreed. The point is not that choices were determined, but that they were biased by experience and context in certain directions. Although it took a man of great fortitude and intelligence to rise from refugee to secretary of state, it would have taken an individual of even greater introspection and insight to avoid the temptations of excessive anti-communism and militarism in the Cold War. Perhaps such people existed, and perhaps they would have been better policy-makers. Kissinger was not one of them.

Should we condemn Kissinger for flawed – maybe even criminal – acts that reflected his experiences and his understanding of them? Maybe we should. If we adopt that approach (it seems so easy, doesn't it?), we might pause at least briefly to assess causes. Did Kissinger make bad decisions because he was a bad person? Or did he make bad decisions because his intellectual and experiential background prepared him to acquire power, but

not exercise it successfully in a world of decolonization, declining political legitimacy, and Middle East disaster?

My book chooses to focus on the reasons rather than the actions, not because the actions are unimportant or excusable. Kissinger's reasons, it seems to me, tells us a lot about why his mistakes recurred so often in the history of the American Century. Good reasons produced bad policies because they were poorly attuned to the world they sought to navigate. Good reasons encouraged inattention to other important perspectives and alternatives. Good reasons frequently became self-defeating. Those are the useful historical and contemporary lessons that I draw from Kissinger's career, as much as the chest-thumping outrage at his misdeeds.

As the thoughtful reviews in this roundtable note, I do praise Kissinger's intellectual rigor and his policy efforts as a whole. That is because I strongly believe that one can only make policy if one begins with good reasons – before the chaos of daily pressures takes over. Kissinger's good reasons gave his actions a focus and a practical direction that allowed him to operate consistently and sometimes effectively. His good reasons did not insure positive outcomes, and they often allowed him to explain away the suffering he caused. (In response to Barbara Keys, yes, of course I know that many thousands of people suffered.) Nonetheless, good reasons are better than bad reasons or poorly formulated reasons. Policy requires articulate purpose and skilled application. If we get beyond condemnation alone, I am convinced that attention to Kissinger's career as whole can offer useful lessons for a better translation of purpose into application, or as Kissinger would put it, strategy into tactics.

My interest in policy-making from experience and concept to application and action explains why I wrote *Henry Kissinger and the American Century*. It is the source of the passion that I am happy the reviewers observed in the book. It is also the reason I focused on Kissinger's life – rather than Richard Nixon's or someone else's. Kissinger should have done better, but he didn't. I believe he is haunted by this realization, even on his own terms. Understanding where he went wrong in concept as well as daily detail is absolutely vital if we, as an international society, hope to do better in the future.

We have not begun the twenty-first century very well. I wrote *Henry Kissinger and the American Century* because I believe historical understanding can improve policy. I tried to make the book accessible to a broad audience – not just scholars and Kissinger junkies – so that people could actually read it and think about it. I sincerely thank the reviewers for doing just that.

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