The Search for Purpose:
Henry Kissinger's Early Philosophy and American Foreign Policy

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ABSTRACT

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The thesis, "The Search for Purpose: Henry Kissinger's Early Philosophy and American Foreign Policy," argues that while Kissinger's decisions post-1968 were incredibly important in shaping the United States' position in the world and his own reputation, these decisions are contingent upon the “intellectual capital” he developed before joining the Nixon administration. This "intellectual capital" is well-documented in written form and includes Kissinger's sophisticated undergraduate honors thesis, his graduate dissertation later published as the book *A World Restored*, and the numerous scholarly books and articles he wrote on American foreign policy before his appointment as Nixon's national security advisor.

This thesis argues that an understanding of Kissinger's early writings is important because they reveal an embrace of an idealistic philosophy that overshadowed the political realism he is more well-known for. His constant calls for vision, purpose, inspiration and intuition were concepts deeply rooted in the idealistic philosophy through which he understood the world. Kissinger's philosophy pervaded each of his early works—from his writings as student and academic to critiques of American foreign policy as a scholar, and memos and letters as a member of President John F. Kennedy's administration. The aim of this thesis is to point out a commonly misinterpreted or ignored aspect of Kissinger's worldview as expressed in these early writings. This aspect is one that deeply contrasts with Kissinger's reputation as a cold-blooded practitioner of *Realpolitik* and an enthusiast of the political philosophy of realism. The analysis of Kissinger's early writings will highlight four strains of his idealistic thought which can be traced through “The Meaning of History,” *A World Restored*, and his writings on
American foreign policy: optimism for human nature, agency of the individual, the struggle towards ideals within limits, and purposeful action. This thesis concludes that Kissinger's early idealistic thoughts contrast sharply to his reputation as a practitioner of Realpolitik.
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Introduction

“There has been no one like Henry Kissinger in a high governmental position in the United States at any time in its history,” Stephen Graubard, biographer and colleague of former national security advisor and Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, once wrote. The fact that Graubard wrote this in 1973, only mid-way through Kissinger's career in the U.S. government, further proves his point that Kissinger is one of the most unique and influential figures in modern American history.¹ Kissinger's longevity in the government from his appointment as President Richard M. Nixon's national security advisor in 1968 to the end of his full-time governmental career as President Gerald Ford's Secretary of State in 1977, as well as his unusually high position of power (one could argue that he was more powerful than President Nixon during the Watergate scandal), his presence in the government through some of the most influential events of the twentieth century, and his unusual background as a German Jewish refugee make Henry Kissinger a figure to not only be studied, but understood.

In order to understand Kissinger, one must consider his statement that “It is an illusion to believe that leaders gain in profundity while they gain experience....the convictions that leaders have formed before reaching high office are the intellectual capital they will consume as long as they continue in office.”² If one agrees with Kissinger, this means that while Kissinger's decisions post-1968 were incredibly important in shaping the United States' position in the world as well as his own reputation, these decisions are contingent upon the “intellectual capital” he developed

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² Henry A. Kissinger, White House Years, 1st ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), 56.
before joining the Nixon administration. Fortunately, this material is well-documented in written form and includes Kissinger's sophisticated undergraduate honors thesis at Harvard (close to 400 pages in length and titled “The Meaning of History,” it was not the typical undergraduate capstone), his graduate dissertation later published as the book *A World Restored*, and the numerous scholarly books and articles he wrote on American foreign policy before his appointment as Nixon's national security advisor.

In this thesis I will argue that Kissinger's early writings reveal an embrace of an idealistic philosophy that overshadowed the political realism he is more well-known for. His constant calls for vision, purpose, inspiration and intuition were not rhetorical devices to garner domestic support. Instead, these concepts were deeply rooted in the idealistic philosophy through which Kissinger understood the world and encouraged Americans to perceive the world. This idealistic philosophy was not idealism in the sense of political utopianism; rather it was the belief in human purpose and creativity through action. This philosophy pervaded each of Kissinger's early works—from his writings as student and academic to critiques of American foreign policy as a scholar, and memos and letters as a member of President John F. Kennedy's administration.

I do not intend to analyze the specific influence of Kissinger's ideas on his later policies in the Nixon and Ford administrations, but to point out a commonly misinterpreted or ignored aspect of his worldview as expressed in these early writings. This aspect is one that deeply contrasts with Kissinger's reputation as a cold-blooded practitioner of *Realpolitik* and an enthusiast of the political philosophy of realism. Kissinger's early works instead reveal strains of idealistic thought. One of these strains is
optimism for human nature. While realism typically emphasizes the negative aspects of human nature, Kissinger is optimistic about the capability of humanity to strive towards ideals. Indeed, he trusts them with the responsibility of morality. Another of these strains is the agency of the individual. Related to optimism for human nature, the agency of the individual in Kissinger's writings represented a belief in the capacity of men and women to do great things, leading progressively to a better world. Another strain of idealism within Kissinger's thought is the importance he gives to the struggle towards ideals within limits. Within this concept is the most apparent reconciliation of realistic and idealistic thought. In all of Kissinger's early works, he emphasized the importance first on the definition of ideals, and then on striving towards those ideals. His concern was not that they be reached, but that they be progressed toward, preferably in a strategically outlined plan of action. Lastly, Kissinger emphasized that ideals could only be reached through purposeful action. The definition of purpose and activism for this purpose would enable an individual or nation to make the most of its opportunities and pave the way towards long-term goals.

The development and application of these concepts can be traced through “The Meaning of History,” A World Restored, and Kissinger's writings on American foreign policy. Each era of these works is progressively more concrete than the one preceding it, yet each retains strong elements of the philosophical concepts first outlined in “The Meaning of History.” The failure of other historians to pick up on this pattern has much to do with the typically casual consideration of “The Meaning of History,” either because of its philosophical complexity or its presumed irrelevance to Kissinger's later thought.
Yet I will argue that the concepts first expressed in this work were major components of Kissinger's later writings.

One major point to note is that the ideas Kissinger deals with in “The Meaning of History” were not necessarily original to him. Much of his thesis was a contribution to a ongoing philosophical debate concerning the importance of metaphysics. I deeply regret my inability to engage this debate on more than a surface level. As my educational background does not allow me to delve deeply into these concepts, my analysis will point out the appearance of Kissinger's philosophical thought in his works but will not debate the the validity of these concepts or contribute to the conversation in which Kissinger was participating.

In this thesis I will hold to the definitions of realism and idealism as outlined by Thomas G. Paterson and and Bruce W. Jentleson in the Encyclopedia of U.S. Foreign Relations. Idealism is the idea “that the purpose of U.S. foreign policy should be the promotion of universal human ideals” and the “belief that foreign policy should be guided by...fundamental values.” Part of idealism is also “the core belief that the United States has a special mission to reform the system of international relations: power is to be used for a moral purpose” or in the words of Woodrow Wilson, ““America was established not to create wealth but to realize a vision, to realize an ideal...””

Paterson and Jentleson contrast the “concept of transcendent national purpose” in idealism to the political philosophy of realism. Realism “argues that morality should be made subservient to raison d'etre and national interest, that in a contest between principle

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and power, power must be paramount. Advocates of realism stress an obligation for the
U.S. government to put its national prosperity, power, and international position ahead of
the pursuit of universal values or any other grand ideal...” Rather than thinking of
international affairs in human terms, “Realist thinkers and statesmen regarded the state
essentially as a closed structure embedded in a system of impersonal forces of contending
interests and power balances...Both power and interest, like physical forces, were
regarded as measurable quantities that could serve as an objective basis for political
calculation and policy formulation.” Most importantly, realism is “based on a conception
of human nature as being corrupt and self-centered.”

While realists defined national interests in terms of power, Kissinger defined the
national interest in terms of values and purposes. Unlike realist thinkers, Kissinger
believed that power could not be purposeful without principle. To him the national
interest equaled cooperation with a nation's allies and the integrity of its people through
the purposefulness of its actions. His early writings show that his political worldview
was not traditional realism; it defined the world in different terms, used a different
language, and conceived of different dimensions of interest. Kissinger saw realism as
empiricism, or the adjustment to facts, and just as one-sided and imbalanced as
utopianism. Rather than follow the realist paradigm, he promoted progress towards long-
term ideals through a plan of specific and concrete steps.

Historians have taken many atypical approaches to the complex figure of Henry
Kissinger. Jeremi Suri's most recent work, for example, places Kissinger in a global
context and takes a serious look at the connection between Kissinger's upbringing in Nazi

4 Ibid., v2, 342-345; v3, 462-465.
Germany and his political attitudes. In an older work, Harvey Starr takes into account Kissinger's perceptions and operational code using quantitative techniques to understand his policies in the Nixon administration. Another historian, Bruce Mazlish, attempted a psychoanalysis of Kissinger to explain his actions and policies.\textsuperscript{5} While these works contribute to the understanding of Kissinger, they make little attempt to understand how Kissinger's philosophical outlook shaped his views. Many acknowledge Kissinger's unique “philosophy of history,” but few link this philosophy to his political conceptions.

Other historians have taken a look at this fundamental link between Kissinger's ideas as expressed in his early writings and his political philosophy. A notable example is Peter Dickson's \textit{Kissinger and the Meaning of History}, which is a close-analysis of the text of “The Meaning of History,” with an emphasis on Kissinger's perception of Kantian concepts. Another is Stephen R. Graubard's \textit{Kissinger: Portrait of a Mind}, which is an excellent companion tool for understanding Kissinger's pre-1968 writings. However, neither Dickson nor Graubard draw out the continuities of philosophical thought between Kissinger's early texts. Dickson focuses too closely on the details of “The Meaning of History” while Graubard looks more broadly at Kissinger's works on American foreign policy.\textsuperscript{6} I am aiming to show a continuity of Kissinger's philosophical thought in a way that neither of these historians have elaborated on.

More important to the understanding of Kissinger than any other aspect of his life, I believe, is a serious understanding of the philosophy which he consciously created and


actively followed. By analyzing Kissinger through the lens of his personal philosophy, I will show that his political conceptions are contingent on the surprisingly optimistic and often idealistic philosophy he first outlined in “The Meaning of History.”
Chapter One:

Reaching for Ideals: Kissinger's Philosophy of the Individual

Henry Kissinger's earliest writing revealed his optimistic view of human nature through a reconciliation of realist and idealist thought. Numbering over three hundred eighty pages in length, his undergraduate honors thesis at Harvard, entitled “The Meaning of History,” represented more than a capstone on a bachelor's degree. He wrote it as the sum of the philosophy he developed during the tragedies of his past twenty-seven years: his childhood in Germany, the wretchedness of the holocaust, the discomfort of being a refugee in a foreign country, and the horrors of fighting in the Second World War. Despite all of this suffering, Kissinger's personal philosophy represented a surprisingly optimistic worldview. His writing displayed a belief in the possibility of good in human nature, the importance of individual action and choice, and the necessity for constant striving towards ideals. Kissinger hoped that humanity could continue to progress in history through a recognition of both its freedom and its limits.

Kissinger first introduced his worldview as a reconciliation of realism and idealism in “The Meaning of History.” He outlined the contradiction between necessity, or irrevocable action of the past, and freedom, the concept that action is conducted by choice. A good illustration of the contradiction between freedom and necessity is in C.S. Lewis' description of a hero who “traveled into the past, and there, very properly, found raindrops that would pierce him like bullets and sandwiches that no strength could bite—because, of course, nothing in the past can be altered.”

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7 C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*, 1st ed. (HarperOne, 2009), x.
between necessity and freedom was also the problem of conjecture, or the need yet inability to understand the future consequences of one's actions. He probed this paradox in order to understand the meaning of freedom in the midst of inevitability, and in doing so, to discover meaning in history.

Kissinger was certainly not the first to ask this question. His thesis was a mere footnote in the tradition of philosophy, and German philosophy in particular. German philosophers such as Hegel and Kant asked similar questions concerning purpose and meaning in life, and the tradition of German idealism posed the possibility that objects in reality are perceived by the individual and do not necessarily hold importance in themselves. This theory is often contrasted with the philosophies of positivism, pragmatism, or empiricism, which look to the external reality, rather than metaphysics, for knowledge.

Kissinger separated his analysis into two levels that represented the paradox of necessity and freedom. One level consisted of empiricism, an analytical approach which wrested potential from human purpose by suggesting that history was only a composite of patterns and cycles. The second level of historical analysis, the ethical level, promoted history as a “key to action” and emphasized the power of individuals to give meaning to their own existence. Kissinger reflected these levels of historical analysis in the structure of his thesis, which he divided into sections titled “History as Intuition,” analyzing the philosophy of Oswald Spengler, “History as an Empirical-Science,” analyzing the philosophy of Arnold Toynbee, “History and Man's Experience of Morality,” in which he contemplated Kant's categorical imperative, and “The Sense of Responsibility,” in which
he made his own conclusions concerning meaning in history. His definition of the levels of historical analysis and the corresponding sections of his thesis revealed a tension in thought that he would deal with throughout his career as both a scholar and a policymaker. In this thesis and in later works, he aimed to prove the efficacy of the ethical level of historical analysis, which opposed the institutions of bureaucracy and the creation of policy through an empirical approach.

In “History as an Empirical-Science,” Kissinger put forth an argument against the empirical approach to history. He claimed that empiricists attempted to employ an accumulation of knowledge to find meaning in history, neglecting the crucial dimension of the human spirit. As external reality is more than meets the eye and each individual constructs his own vision of this reality, so an empirical approach could not grasp all of the elements that compose meaning in history.8 History is not only the flow of time, but the composite of human interaction, and thus the study of history should involve not only an analysis of the external dimension of human behavior, but also a portrait of the inward dimension of humanity. Because man is not solely a thinking being, the essence of human nature and therefore the meaning of history, cannot be defined by reason, science, and empirical studies.

Kissinger's distaste for empiricism revealed a break with realist thought. His philosophy eschewed the immediate importance of external reality by insisting that meaning transcended knowledge and history transcended facts. He yearned for another dimension to historical analysis that would incorporate an element of human spirituality,

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writing that a focus on external reality could “never satisfy the totality of man's desire for meaning.” 9 An understanding of the meaning of history, and therefore the potential for freedom and purposeful human action, would not focus on studies of concrete data or historical events, but would rather “grasp of the totality of life, instead of just its appearances.” 10

Kissinger's argument against empiricism formed the foundation for his criticism of modern policy-making systems. In “The Meaning of History,” he briefly touched on the connection between his personal philosophy and the modern American political system by condemning political scientists for trying to find technical solutions to “matters of the soul” and insisting that because objective knowledge is limited and cannot create purpose or “relieve man from his ultimate responsibility, from giving his own meaning to life,” policy-makers must also create policy as a reflection of an inward experience through the projection of a nation's purpose and long-term goals. 11 These criticisms revealed a strain of idealism in Kissinger's belief system, and fell far from the typical definition of realism. His emphasis on the necessity of the inward experience would later lead him to make similar claims when criticizing American foreign policy during the Cold War. His argument that American statesmen did not fully grasp the consequences of their actions by contemplating how they related to their visions of the future linked back to his emphasis on the concept of conjecture and the futility of empiricism in “The Meaning of History.”

Kissinger overcame the limits of empiricism by giving agency to the individual

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9 Ibid., 22.
10 Ibid., 11.
11 Ibid., 341-342.
and the inward dimension in the study of history. He believed that because each action is accomplished with the conviction of an individual personality, each person imposes their own meaning on history through their actions. In order to understand history, one must peer into the inward realm of humanity. Kissinger depicted this inward realm or “inward experience” as the crucial part of the “moments in every person's life, when the tensions fall away and the unity of all creation appears as a sudden vision. These are the occasions when time stands still and man partakes of eternity.”12 His acknowledgment of the superiority of spirituality over matter, that “matter can defeat only those who have no spirituality to impart to it,” reinforced the spiritual dimension of his worldview.13 He defined humankind's ability to transcend the external reality through an inward experience as the requirement for the recognition of both freedom and limits.

One crucial problem with Kissinger's philosophy is that this inward experience cannot be easily defined or described. The inward experience can only approximate definition through a study by analogy of objects that “utilize the infinite as a foil,” such as poetry, physics, or astronomy.14 Kissinger's vagueness made it difficult or even impossible to follow his personal philosophy or implement his version of historical analysis. The ambiguity of his ideas further underscored the idealistic strain in his philosophy for its lack of realistic possibilities.

Although Kissinger placed great importance on the inward experience, he did not intend it to dictate all meaning in history. In “History as Intuition,” Kissinger found that an overemphasis of the concept of intuitive perception would muddle meaning in history.

12 Ibid., 324.
13 Ibid., 333.
14 Ibid., 249.
just as much as it would illuminate it. An imbalanced focus on intuition and the internal experience could only be as perceptive and just as lacking as empiricism. Kissinger sought a layering of the two, a reconciliation that would allow him both a study of the nature of the human spirit as well as an analysis of human action over time that would represent a balance between facts and intuition, the real and the ideal. He found this reconciliation by encouraging individuals to act purposefully in the external reality as a reflection of their inward state.

Kissinger's view of morality stemmed from this reconciliation of freedom and necessity. “Resignation as to the purpose of the universe serves as the first step towards ethical activity,” he wrote, “and the realization ensues that the meaning of history is not confined to its mere manifestations and that no causal analysis can absolve Man from giving his own content to his own existence.”15 This meant that Kissinger's definition of ethics and morality depended first on the recognition of limits, and second on one's responsibility to use one's freedom to give meaning to his or her actions. Because his idea of morality stemmed from the product of the inward experience, Kissinger's definition of moral law could only be found inwardly, not in external reality, and held individuals accountable for taking part in history and recognizing the impact of their actions on the flow of history through vision and conjecture.

Kissinger's definition of morality gave agency to the individual and presented an optimistic view of human nature. Because his vision of morality derived from the inward experience, “each man is both subject and legislator” of his morals and ideals. The law that kept man's own definition of morals in check, then, was a recognition of limits.

15 Ibid., 14.
Kissinger gave the example of the oracle of Delphi's advice “Know thyself” to mean “Know that you are a man and not God.”

When man experiences inward transcendence, he also recognizes that he is only a small part of a bigger picture. This leads to tolerance, the recognition of others' individuality, and morality.

Kissinger's definition of freedom was rooted in the recognition of the limits of humanity and of the ephemeral nature of life. He claimed that morality could only be found through this acknowledgment of freedom within limits. Because man is not God, limits are essential. Man can only triumph, or experience true freedom, through the process of an inward experience, for “peace is not an external state of things,” but an inward reconciliation of limits and freedom. Kissinger concluded that the acceptance of one's limits was the only way to achieve both freedom and morality.

Kissinger's idea of tolerance as an answer to the problem of ethics revealed an almost blindly optimistic view of human nature. He defined the problem of ethics as “the reconciliation of an ultimate, but personal, vision with universal applicability.” His solution to this problem was that a recognition of limits would lead to tolerance for others and compromise conflicting visions. He would later provide the same answer for the problem of conflicting national visions in international relations by insisting that only through a peaceful adjustment of national visions could the international structure remain both stable and legitimate. While he did recognize that “differences between ideologies or political systems or individuals may be so fundamental as to be unbridgeable,” he gave no other alternative for a resolution of conflict or guide to ethics.

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16 Ibid., 26.
17 Ibid., 335.
18 Ibid., 346.
19 Ibid., 347 fn 1.
Kissinger portrayed his reconciliation of the paradox of limits and freedom not as a passive acceptance of fate but an active realization of limits that gave power to the individual and portrayed optimism for mankind's ability to accept this responsibility. According to his philosophy, without the recognition of limits one could not truly be free, for freedom is to know one's potential and fulfill it. Freedom enables humanity to boldly confront the unending flow of history and the limits of mortality by providing mankind with choice to use the resources in the physical reality to construct its vision in the external environment. Mankind's freedom enables it to change the direction of events through vision and action. Actions that will seem in the future to have been an inevitable and irreversible chain of events are really actions that were accomplished with the freedom of choice and intentional purpose. By presenting purposeful choice as the answer to the paradox of freedom and necessity, Kissinger displayed an optimistic view of the power of individual action and the potential of humankind to construct in reality its internal visions despite the limits of time and mortality.

Kissinger's emphasis on purpose was part of his reconciliation of necessity and freedom. He defined purpose as the reflection of a soul's tasks to be completed which can “describe the immanence of a soul, the visions that man imparts to his determined surroundings, the hopes which condition activity, the dreams which make life possible.” Purposes are the evidence of a transcendent experience and illuminate the meaning of history outside of causal events. Because they are the individual's imposition of him or herself on events, purposes also represented Kissinger's definition of meaning in history. Kissinger assumed that without the visions, hopes, and dreams that allow the soul to

20 Ibid., 323-324.
express its freedom through action in the inevitable flow of history, life would be meaningless. His reconciliation again trusted mankind with the responsibility to create its own meaning in history.

In the context of a nation, as he would expand upon in his later works, Kissinger defined purpose as the need for a nation to look inward to find its own values and visions for the future and to reflect this outward by imposing its purposes through action and choice. By reflecting on its purpose, a nation contemplates long-term policies, considering whether or not each immediate action will aid the achievement of these long-term goals. Without an inward reflection on its purpose, the choices of a nation are inconsistent and lack an underlying strategic vision and conjecture of consequences. Kissinger would later elaborate on this concept by condemning the American nation for a lack of purpose in its actions. In this thesis, however, he focused on the definitions of these concepts.

His concluding section, entitled “A Clue from Poetry,” reenforced Kissinger's optimism for human nature and the importance he placed on individual freedom and action. Kissinger's definition of poetry as an expression of the inward state further illuminated his assertion that meaning is found within man, not in external events. “Poetry is truer than history,” he quoted Aristotle. To Kissinger, this meant the hopes of man embedded in poetry show more about human nature than historical fact. Poetry encapsulates the most central elements of Kissinger's philosophy of history. It “testifies to humanity's longing in the face of the fatedness of existence, to the unique which each man imparts to his determined surrounding. Poetry is truer than history for it exhibits the
spirituality with which man meets the inexorability of events.” Within this statement, Kissinger revealed the essence of his worldview: both tragic and optimistic, it implied that humankind is helpless in a universe bound by time and in a nature fated to mortality, while simultaneously giving humankind the ultimate power of choice and the freedom to determine the direction of its steps on the path of history.

Kissinger used tragedy and mythology, a frequent topic in poetry, to express his fascination with mankind's struggle towards its ideals. Tragedy in itself became representative of an ideal, a reminder of the process of striving. “Mythology, however, describes an inner state, not an objective condition,” he wrote, “it represents man's attempt to apprehend the fatedness of life and in that recognition of necessity to transcend it. It expresses humanity's hope and not its actualization, man's creative essence not the material conditions of success.” Kissinger considered tragedy to be about an inward struggle, the recognition of choice and freedom, creativity and personality, and ability and action in the face of limits. In their concentrations on human striving, mythology, tragedy, and poetry represented the essence of human nature and thus the essence of history.

Kissinger's emphasis on the power of striving towards ideals related to his insistence that peace is found in the inward experience. He described the importance of striving for “certain goals, not dependent on immediate success” with the story of Don Quixote. Ideals are to humanity as Lady Dulcinea was to Don Quixote, “the motive-force of his activity, the symbol of that purity for which alone the dream of the Golden Age

21 Ibid., 330.
22 Ibid., 256.
becomes worthwhile.” The aspirations of humanity are, therefore, a part of the pursuit of peace. But outward peace is not an attainable goal—the true achievement is inward peace, which is an acknowledgment of limits and the recognition of freedom within necessity. “Every individual has his Dulcinea or Beatrice and becomes a Don Quixote in the hopes of his creativity,” Kissinger explained. “Only he must learn that the Golden Age is the state of a soul, not in the first instance to be derived from the physical world.” Kissinger insisted that one must find peace inwardly, not through the objective reality. His belief that this was achievable for humanity again revealed an element of idealism in his worldview.

His emphasis on the power of the individual further supports the idea that Kissinger held an optimistic worldview. He quoted Oliver Wendell Holmes to more vividly explain his concept of individuality and the inward experience: “Twenty men of genius looking out of the same window will paint twenty canvases each unlike all the others.” In these words, Holmes captured Kissinger's idea that individuals impose purpose on the external reality to reflect the purpose found in their personal inward experience. Holmes went on to say that “the best service we can do for our country and for ourselves [is]: To see as far as one may and to feel the great forces behind every detail—for that makes all the difference between philosophy and gossip, between great action and small.” Holmes' words again depicted the concept of Kissinger's inward experience and emphasized the power behind purposeful action.

Kissinger's conclusions revealed a reconciliation of idealism and tragedy that

23 Ibid., 256-257.
24 Ibid., 344.
resulted in an optimistic view of human nature. He quoted Whitehead in the last lines of his thesis, precisely describing the essence of his philosophy: “As soon as high consciousness is reached, the enjoyment of existence is entwined with pain, frustration, loss, tragedy. Amid the passing of so much beauty, so much heroism, so much daring, Peace is then the intuition of permanence. It keeps vivid the sensitiveness to the tragedy; and it sees the tragedy as a living agent persuading the world to aim at fineness beyond the faded level of surrounding fact. Each tragedy is the disclosure of an ideal: - What might have been and what was not: What can be. The tragedy was not in vain. This survival power in motive force marks the difference between the tragic evil and the gross evil. The inner feeling belonging to this grasp of the service of tragedy is Peace – the purification of emotions.”

Whitehead's words suggest that Kissinger viewed tragedies not in the common sense, but as the essence of striving for ideals. The “service of tragedy,” then, was to help humanity to understand that all individuals are part of the tragedy of mortality, but in making peace with limits they could fulfill their ultimate potential through the freedom of choice and action.

Kissinger's philosophy as he articulated it in “The Meaning of History” displayed his belief in the ability of humanity to impart its own meaning on history. Ultimately, Kissinger acknowledged that because each individual acts based on his or her own inward experience, humanity is unpredictable. Historians cannot assume human nature to be greedy or giving, active or passive. As “man must act and each action represents his biography,” each individual shapes the world in a different way.26 While many realists

25 Ibid., 349.
26 Ibid., 258.
and idealists assume a uniform view of human nature, humankind cannot be assumed to act in a pattern because there is no equation to predict its actions. This is how Kissinger reconciled the two schools of thought in personal philosophy: he acknowledged the individuality within humanity, and accepted the notion of freedom of action and purpose within the realistic limits of mortality and human nature. This made Kissinger's worldview both optimistic and tragic, realistic and idealistic.

These philosophical ideas remained deeply ingrained in Kissinger's worldview, as they became the foundation for his graduate dissertation, *A World Restored*. In *A World Restored*, he played upon the concept of individual action and choice by employing the historical figures Prince Metternich and Lord Castlereagh as a physical dichotomy representing the dichotomy of realism and idealism. His use of these philosophical ideas as an interpretive framework to impose on a historical topic suggests their importance to his worldview and lends credence to the argument that the ideas he articulated in this undergraduate thesis composed his personal philosophy.

Although “The Meaning of History” is not specifically about foreign policy, it is the intellectual foundation upon which Kissinger would both write and act as a scholar and policymaker. He would continue to employ the language of purpose, creativity, and vision that he formed in this thesis as a scholar and policymaker. These ideas so fundamentally shaped his outlook on foreign policy that he would often repeat them verbatim in many of his publications in the hopes that they would influence the existing policy-making structure. He would even go on as an advisor to president John F. Kennedy to weave the essence of these ideas into his policy suggestions and critiques.
While historians often categorize Kissinger as a disciple of Realpolitik, “The Meaning of History” suggests that traditional political realism influenced his worldview much less than philosophical idealism. His embrace of an idealistic vision of human nature pointed to a more nuanced worldview which recognized that an overemphasis on realism, pragmatism, or empiricism would result in conclusions just as blind as utopianism. By labeling realists as merely “dreamers with materialistic hopes,” Kissinger reconciled the constructs realism and idealism in his personal philosophy.\(^\text{27}\) He sought to take his worldview one step further than either of these perspectives through an emphasis on the power of human individuality within the framework of limits.

While Kissinger's philosophy may or may not have represented a valid interpretation of history or the musings of a confused soul, the interpretive framework outlined in “The Meaning of History” would go on to become the map which guided him throughout his studies as a scholar and his work as a policy-maker. He used this philosophy to navigate the early Cold War world in way that separated him from his colleagues. This worldview showed that he believed that morality, ideals, creativity, freedom of action, hope, spirituality, and purpose had a place in policy, for he defined politics in the same way he defined life and history—as the composite of the multiple dimensions of human nature.

\(^{27}\) Ibid., 342.
Chapter Two

Ideals and Statesmanship:
Kissinger's Philosophy of Statesmanship

Kissinger's personal philosophy as he expressed it in “The Meaning of History” translated easily to his philosophy of statesmanship. His most prominent work on statesmanship was his graduate dissertation, *A World Restored*. However, many of his ideas of statesmanship first appeared in “The Meaning of History.” These ideas translated his philosophy of individual action to statesmanship, giving weight to the importance of the visions, purposes, and actions of statesmen. His portrayal of statesmanship in this work depicted statesmen as creative individuals with the authority to guide their nations through an almost divine inspiration. These individuals appeared infrequently in history, but created extraordinary change and innovation within their societies. They represented the essence of progress, the “leaven which galvanizes society into creativity” and movement forward in history through their vision and action.28

Kissinger presented the statesman's ability to see beyond the present reality as the elements of intuition and inspiration, which enabled statesmen to envision the future they wanted to create. Intuition, he wrote, allowed statesmen to understand the interrelatedness of events, the “majestic unfolding” of history. Through his intuition, the statesman was connected to the “extended,” a realm transcending the natural world and seen only through the mind’s eye. This connection permitted the statesman to step back

and view the mechanics of time and the workings of history.\textsuperscript{29} This state of reflection, much like the inward experience, gave the statesman a more concrete understanding for the creation of a strategy to reach his long-term goals.

Kissinger frequently compared the great statesman to the masterful artist in order to emphasize the necessity of vision and inspiration in statesmanship. The statesman shared an acute perception of destiny and intuition with the artist, as destiny “is felt by the great artist in his moment of contemplation, it is embodied by the statesman in action.”\textsuperscript{30} The artist senses destiny as he envisions his masterpiece. He feels the pull of something unworldly, sees what does not exist in reality, and knows the shape of what he will create before he creates it. The artist uses inspiration to envision his next series of moves and to conceive of the form that will result from his actions. He can translate his vision onto paper, into marble, or upon the walls of the Sistine Chapel.

In the same way the artist knows destiny in his moment of inspiration, the statesman embodies destiny through his actions. Unlike the artist, however, he does not have precise control over his medium. The statesman’s art is the construction of policy; his task is to sculpt the international structure and the destination of history through his policies. The statesman is the mode through which history unfolds; he is destiny’s middleman. He contemplates the interrelatedness of events and the underlying current of destiny before he makes decisions, transforming his intuition of destiny into reality through action. But as Michelangelo carved the struggle of his soul, his “yearning for infinity” into stone, the statesman struggles to transcend the inertia of his circumstances.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 15.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 36.
He works to translate his vision of the international structure into a policy that can be implemented in reality.31

Kissinger’s depiction of the great statesman embodied the intuition and inspiration of the artist, but also represented a person who perceived the world as a poet. The great statesman would see the events of history as a unified vision in the same way a poet grasps the essence of a moment. The statesman understood the relationships between occurrences and comprehended the danger of judging each event without acknowledging its past and future connections. His encompassing vision kept him from becoming shortsighted and entangled in details. Kissinger wrote that “the ultimate mysteries of life are perhaps not approachable by dissection” in the way that a scientist would analyze events, “but may require the poet’s view who grasps the unity of life, which is greater than any, however painstaking analysis of its manifestations.”32 The statesman grasped this unity in his vision of the future, and sought to implement his vision through a plan of action that acknowledged the deeper pattern of events. Rather than solving problems as they arose, he would create a structure to prevent these problems. The statesman’s understanding of the interrelatedness of events allowed him to envision the consequences of his actions and make decisions with confidence, two important elements of Kissinger’s philosophy of the individual.

Kissinger viewed the statesman’s greatest struggle as articulating his vision in a way that the public could understand it. This made politics the “eternal conflict between blood and concept,” the task of interpreting an intangible vision to those in the physical

31 Ibid., 39, 73.
32 Ibid., 12.
realm. Because the statesman’s vision could not be directly discerned by or translated to his domestic supporters, this struggle was often the cause of the statesman’s tragic fate. Most importantly, it represented the struggle between the intangible and the physical reality, the necessity of transcending circumstances through both vision and action. Like Kissinger's philosophy of the individual, Kissinger's philosophy of statesmanship made vision and action imperative and inseparable.

Because Kissinger's ideal statesman had an acute intuition and keen ability to see a deeper pattern in events, he acted as a bridge between his people and the unknown. Kissinger's use of this bridge image again represented his call for transcendence—a bridge allows people to walk across the unwalkable, to travel to places they otherwise could not. A statesman enabled his countrymen to transcend their present circumstances into their imagined future through his vision and action. He bridged the chasm between the present and the seemingly unreachable ideals of the future through a vision that incorporated his understanding of the interrelatedness of events in a strategy that would enable him to create this vision of the future into reality.

The problem with the statesman's duty to act as a bridge and visionary was that the significance of his ideas was often only recognized in retrospect. The statesman risked living misunderstood and dying with his greatness unrecognized. Kissinger quoted Otto von Bismarck to exemplify the anguished life of a statesman as that of “a fallen angel who is beautiful but without peace, great in his conceptions and exertions but without success, proud and lonely.” These lines illuminate how Kissinger viewed the

33 Ibid., 90; 290-291.
35 Henry A. Kissinger, “The White Revolutionary: Reflections on Bismarck,” Daedalus 97, no. 3 (Summer
burden of statesmanship and the tragedy that characterized the statesman’s life.

The tragedy inherent in statesmanship was inseparable from the success of statesmanship. Statesmen could not predict the future or fully know the consequences of their actions. Much like Kissinger's philosophy of the individual, which emphasized the possibilities of freedom within the tragedy of limits, Kissinger's philosophy of statesmanship acknowledged the impossibility of fully succeeding in the statesman's task. Ultimately the statesman could only work with the materials he had, and to Kissinger the effort was more important than anything else. He viewed the statesman's task in the same way that he saw humanity's struggle towards its ideals as more important than the fulfillment of those ideals.

Kissinger further defined his philosophy of statesmanship by contrasting the statesman to the philosopher and the prophet in his studies of nineteenth century statesmen. Kissinger saw the statesman as neither a philosopher nor a prophet, but as his own species. The statesman had the intuition of an artist, the soul of a poet, and the responsibility of a politician. He would prefer to contemplate truth like the philosopher, but instead had to implement it.36 The statesman’s burden was greater than that of both the philosopher and the prophet: he needed not only to contemplate, but to create. He did not divine a vision of the future in the way that a prophet would, but was struck with inspiration to create a vision of the future in his imagination and to construct it in reality. The statesman, philosopher, and prophet all looked to the future, but the statesman pursued his opportunities in the present. He sought to influence his circumstances

through a vision of the world he wished to bring about, which would animate him to
action.37 He was concerned with the possible; the prophet and philosopher were only
concerned with what was “true.” This contrast again revealed Kissinger's common theme
of struggling towards ideals within limits. The prophet and philosopher's ideal was
“truth” in its purest essence; the statesman could only attain “truth” within the physical
reality. He had to work with the materials at hand, struggling to reach his ideals and
come as close to his version of “truth” as he could within the limits of his reality.

Kissinger wrote his graduate dissertation, *A World Restored*, as a historical
account of the statesmanship of two nineteenth century European statesmen, Lord
Castlereagh of Britain and Prince Metternich of Austria. These two men worked together
to rebuild the structure of Europe following the revolution of Napoleon. Kissinger had
two aims in conducting this project. One was to take away lessons from this
revolutionary point in history that politicians could selectively apply to the Cold War. He
often equated revolutionary France with the Soviet Union and uncommitted nineteenth-
century Britain with twentieth-century United States. He saw Metternich's statesmanship
as “continental statesmanship,” which approached relations on the continent with the idea
that Austria, a nation in the middle of the European continent, would be greatly
influenced by the substance of continental decisions. In contrast, Castlereagh at first
approached the situation through “insular statesmanship,” hoping only to stabilize
relations on the continent so that Britain would not have to intervene. The actual

37 Henry A. Kissinger, *A World Restored; Metternich, Castlereagh, and the Problems of Peace, 1812-22*
substance of the agreement did not matter much to Castlereagh, as long as the situation did not threaten British security. Metternich eventually persuaded Castlereagh to see matters through the continental perspective, ensuring him that continental affairs would, in the long run, always affect British security. With this new perspective, Castlereagh created a fantastic vision of British participation in continental affairs. The British people, however, did not have the same transformation of vision as Castlereagh and would not accept his attempts to tie Britain to continental affairs, despite Castlereagh's assurances that he was securing Britain's long-term well-being.

Many historians have approached an analysis of *A World Restored* by focusing on the contrast between Castlereagh and Metternich's statesmanship as that between the “insular” and “continental” perspectives. Instead, I will interpret the two characters using concepts Kissinger first articulated in “The Meaning of History” that were integral to his personal philosophy. For example, in *A World Restored*, Kissinger interpreted the character of Metternich to represent not only continental statesmanship, but also the negative influence of empiricism on the formation of policy. While many historians portray Metternich as Kissinger's nineteenth-century “hero,” they are missing the fundamental message of *A World Restored*. This account of the creation of a lasting peace in Europe is meant not only as an example of the creation of a structure of peace, but also the flaws in this particular structure. Although Metternich succeeded in establishing a structure of peace, he did not solve the underlying problems that made the structure necessary.

38 For elaboration on this contrast, see Gregory D. Cleva, *Henry Kissinger and the American approach to foreign policy* (Bucknell University Press, 1989).
While Kissinger presented Metternich as an empiricist, he depicted Metternich's British counterpart, Castlereagh, as an idealist. Where Metternich lacked vision, Castlereagh clung to his vision so tightly that he failed to take into account the force of an opposing public opinion. By showing how both of these approaches failed, Kissinger underscores that neither extreme is the answer as an approach to international relations. Instead, *A World Restored* promoted Kissinger's own brand of creative realism, highlighting the importance of long-term ideals achieved through the specific steps of a constructed program.

In addition to being a work of history and political theory, Kissinger's second aim for *A World Restored* was to produce a well thought out explanation of his personal philosophy. He used the historical framework of nineteenth century Europe to more concretely show the reasoning behind his philosophy. Kissinger's in-depth analysis of Castlereagh and Metternich and their nations led him to conclude that both approaches to international relations were too extreme and failed in the long run. By showing the failure of the two statesmen, he in turn advocated a reconciliation of their approaches to foreign policy. This reconciliation suggested reaching for ideals in realistic steps through the use of bureaucracy for everyday tasks and the employment of creative leadership for more complex situations, in essence the same conclusions he made in “The Meaning of History.”

Kissinger's criticisms of Metternich had much to do with Metternich's lack of underlying purpose, an important theme in “The Meaning of History.” “He was a Rococo
Kissinger wrote, “complex, finely carved, all surface, like an intricately cut prism. His face was delicate but without depth, his conversation brilliant but without ultimate seriousness.” This meant that Metternich's actions lacked a deeper purpose; they did not represent a vision of the future or foresee opportunities in the unknown.

Metternich fought vigorously to maintain the status quo in Europe and to prolong the stability of the Austrian empire. In order to do this, he played the politics of Europe as a chess game, basing his decisions on the skill of his maneuvers and faith in his ability to manipulate his adversaries. Yet this method did not work in a battle with revolutionaries, as Metternich soon realized. He emphasized the futility of his rationality when he described communicating with Napoleon “as if at a game of chess, carefully watching each other; I to checkmate him, he to crush me together with the chess figures.”

Kissinger, too, understood that without an underlying purpose, Metternich's policy “for all its intricate subtlety...was as fragile as a spider's web, as ephemeral as a house of cards.”

These skills of manipulation and maneuver would typically be the strengths of a good realist, but Kissinger interpreted Metternich's skills as flaws because they blinded him to intuition, inspiration, and ability to conceptualize. Metternich’s “genius was instrumental, not creative; he excelled at manipulation, not construction.” Instead of creating a new reality to fulfill his purposes, Metternich manipulated his present circumstances. While he could maneuver tough situations brilliantly, his genius in tactics could not substitute for an overarching conception of his purpose. He conducted policy

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40 Ibid., 26.
41 Ibid., 310.
42 Ibid., 11.
artfully, but did not have the inspiration of an artist. Kissinger called him “a ‘scientist’ of politics, coolly and unemotionally arranging his combinations.”\textsuperscript{43} He lacked the vision of possibilities and spark of inspiration that Kissinger held as integral to success.

Metternich’s failure to act with creativity and inspiration stemmed from his inability to conceptualize a vision of the future that would become a new path for the Austrian empire. “Lacking in Metternich,” Kissinger wrote, “is the attribute which has enabled the spirit to transcend an impasse at so many crises of history: the ability to contemplate an abyss, not with the detachment of a scientist, but as a challenge to overcome—or to perish in the process. Instead one finds a bitter-sweet resignation which was not without its own grandeur, but which doomed the statesman”\textsuperscript{44} Rather than contemplate the unknown future before him and use its possibilities to create a new reality, Metternich relied on his ability to manipulate his circumstances. His statesmanship became barren because he could only ponder the circumstances of the present, not the possibilities of the future. His opportunities withered in the absence of an extended vision.

Kissinger emphasized that a successful statesman must look beyond the present reality through a vision of the future in order to fulfill his ultimate purpose. Metternich’s vision sought the maintenance of the status quo; he did not transcend the experience of his society to conceive of new possibilities and opportunities for Austria. He failed to contemplate the inspiration inside of him or the abyss in front of him, to turn the risks of the future into opportunities.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 319.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 322.
Kissinger's criticism of Metternich is his indistinguishable from his criticism of empiricism in “The Meaning of History.” Metternich saw the universe as a “great clockwork,” a mechanism based on inviolable laws. He would not reconcile his insistence on reason and law with the new revolutionary nature of the world. He called himself “a man of prose and not of poetry,” and thought that “one must act cold-bloodedly based on observation.” Metternich's words reveal that like other empiricists, he neglected the inward dimension of human nature. He was blind to the possibilities of humanity that escaped rational law.  

Metternich pursued a policy of the status quo for Austria in order to maintain its status as an empire. But the status quo for Austria was the continuation of a form of government which lacked a progression towards long-term goals. Austria was imprisoned, physically by the European continent and morally by its anachronistic insistence on empire in the emerging age of nationalism. It needed a leader to transcend its circumstances through a vision of new possibilities. Yet Metternich's leadership would only push Austria to the edge of the present; he would not act as Austria's bridge to the future.

Kissinger disdained Metternich's lack of the inward experience he claimed to be so important in “The Meaning of History.” “There are two ways of defeating turbulence, by standing above it or by swimming with the tide; by principle or by manipulation,” Kissinger wrote. Metternich chose the latter, guaranteeing that he would be relentlessly maintaining his manipulations and averting crises. Kissinger did not approve of this type
of unimaginative statesmanship.

Complimenting Kissinger's argument against empiricism in _A World Restored_ was his argument against the Austrian bureaucracy. He claimed that the Austrian bureaucracy was unable to deal with the increasing problems of industrialization, nationalism, and liberalism. It confused success with the management of mediocrity, rather than the progression towards long-term goals. It could not push its country through the new revolutionary era of self-determination and nationalism because it lacked an underlying conception. Bureaucracy “prides itself on objectivity which is a denial of the necessity of great conception” and lacked the depth in vision and ability to impose purpose on actions of statesmanship.  

While Metternich lacked conception, he also lived during a generation in flux; his two hands could only do so much to shape the continent of Europe. He succeeded in his task “to represent his country abroad, to cover its weaknesses, to delay the inevitable as long as possible.” Yet at the same time his diplomacy was “pure manipulation...that it lacked ultimate stature was due as much to the force of circumstances as to the lack of creativity of Metternich.” “In what times have I lived?” Metternich wrote, “Let anyone look at the situations...and let him ask himself whether one man's insight could have transformed these crises into help. I claim to have recognized the situation, but also the impossibility to erect a new structure in our Empire...and for this reason all my care was directed to conserving that which existed.” Despite Kissinger's complaints about Metternich's deviousness, and his inability to grasp a vision of the future, Kissinger also recognized that Metternich had limits. “History is greater than the individual,” Kissinger

wrote, “...the statement also marks the limits of Metternich's abilities. For statesmen must be judged not only by their actions but also by their conception of alternatives” The problem was that Metternich did not conceive of alternatives.\footnote{Ibid., 213.}

Metternich was too caught up in the vulnerabilities of Austria to envision the future possibilities of the nation. He was, to use one of Kissinger's favorite phrases, a “prisoner of circumstances.” “Metternich was aware not of power, nor of glory, but of weakness, of danger, of impeding disaster...Unwilling to adapt its domestic structure, unable to survive with it in a century of nationalism, even Austria's most successful policies amounted to no more than a reprieve, to a desperate grasping to commit allies, not to a work of construction, but to deflect part of the inevitable holocaust.”\footnote{Ibid., 281.} Metternich could hold his finger in the dike for only so long. His policies left the underlying problems unsolved. His diplomacy “was sterile in an era of constant flux...Whenever he was forced to create his own objectives, there was about him an aura of futility. Because he sought tranquility in the manipulation of factors he treated as given, the statesman of repose became the prisoner of events...He understood the forces at work...but this knowledge proved of little avail, because he used it almost exclusively to deflect their inexorable march, instead of placing it into his service for a task of construction Thus the last vestige of the eighteenth century had to prove the fallacy of one of the maxims of the Enlightenment, that knowledge was power.”\footnote{Ibid., 323.} Indeed, Metternich's failure illustrated Kissinger's ultimate claim in “The Meaning of History” that knowledge in the form of empirical facts was not enough to understand the world. Multi-dimensional human
action required a more perceptive understanding of different realities.

Kissinger contrasted skillful Metternich to a more aloof, yet more visionary, Castlereagh. “Icy and reserved,” he was “as humanly unapproachable as his policy came to be incomprehensible to the majority of his countrymen.” Castlereagh’s awkward personality kept him from communicating well, amplifying his dilemma of possessing an intuition that transcended the experience of his countrymen. “Motivated by an instinct always surer than his capacity for expression,” Castlereagh struggled with the inability to translate his vision of the future to the public. The British people’s insular conception of international relations also inhibited them from comprehending the importance of Castlereagh’s conceptions. Instead of taking the easy way out, though, Castlereagh embraced the courage to endure the “tragic isolation of the hero, who because he cannot communicate, must walk in solitude.” This description evokes the same tragedy as Bismarck’s expression of the great statesman as a “fallen angel” and conveys Kissinger’s sympathy for the “tragic hero.”

While Castlereagh had the courage to follow his intuition, he did not have the domestic support to implement his plans. Unlike Metternich, who did not push his vision far enough, Castlereagh’s vision too far outran the experience of his people. His strength and failure was “the proud assertion of responsibility, not for the mechanical execution of the popular will, but for the evaluation of interests not apparent to the multitude; and the refusal or inability to influence the public sentiment.” His distaste for concessions to the public was a reflection of his view of the responsibility of a statesman, which he

51 Ibid., 30.
52 Ibid., 180.
53 Ibid., 124.
54 Ibid., 183.
defined as the “grave task of providing for the peace and security of those interests immediately committed to his care.”

He did not make decisions based on instructions given to him by the British Cabinet, but in response to the opportunities that presented themselves to him during negotiations.

Castlereagh fulfilled many elements of Kissinger's ideal statesmanship concerning the use of opportunities and the creation of possibilities. However, his denial of domestic opinion prevented him from making any use of this conceptual ability. Not only did he ignore instructions of the British Cabinet, but he also went so far as to violate them, justifying his actions on his belief that the Cabinet supported his basic views. Kissinger applauded Castlereagh’s courage in transcending the tradition of British foreign policy, but recognized that Castlereagh failed because of his apathy toward public opinion. Castlereagh did not allow his vision for Britain to correspond with the British people’s vision of themselves.

Castlereagh’s inability to bridge the chasm between his vision for Britain and the British historical experience led to his ultimate failure in Kissinger's eyes. Because Kissinger's definition of statesmanship was to bridge the gap between the future and the public’s experience, the statesman must act as an educator, painting his vision in a way that the public can comprehend. The public, however, does not always accept the risk of trusting the vision of its statesmen, especially if it diverges from the nation’s tradition.

In a way, Castlereagh and Britain betrayed each other. Castlereagh betrayed his countrymen by violating their instructions. Britain betrayed Castlereagh by not allowing

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55 Ibid., 299.
56 Ibid., 168.
57 Ibid., 329.
him to fulfill his conception of statesmanship. Castlereagh’s experience represents the relentless tension between statesmen and the public that causes a country to stagnate and become irrelevant in the international realm. If a country and its leaders cannot agree on a common vision and goal, internal chaos will distract them from seeking to influence international events. Kissinger condemned both Castlereagh and Britain for their failure to cooperate with each other. Through this situation, Kissinger saw the relationship between the domestic public and leadership to be the key to success in international relations, and would later use this lesson to encourage Americans to conceptualize with their statesmen.

Kissinger depicted Castlereagh’s fate as the more tragic of the two statesmen. Like Metternich, Castlereagh resigned from his task. Yet he did not merely resign from office, he also took his life. When he failed to translate his vision into a policy his countrymen could comprehend, Castlereagh felt that he could not fulfill his duty as a statesman. “It is necessary to say good-bye to Europe,” Castlereagh said four days before he committed suicide, “no one after me understands the affairs of the Continent.”

Castlereagh saw himself as Britain’s only hope, the only one who had the foresight to keep the country safe. He could not bear to watch it unknowingly seal its downfall.

Kissinger explained his philosophy of history in the context of his study of history by asking “What then is the role of statesmanship? A scholarship of social determinism has reduced the statesman to a lever on a machine called 'history,' to the agent of a fate which he may dimly discern but which he accomplishes regardless of his will. And this belief in the pervasiveness of circumstance and the impotence of the individual extends to

58 Ibid., 311.
the notion of policy-making. One hears a great deal about the contingency of planning because of the unavailability of fact, about the difficulty of action because of the limitation of knowledge... However 'self-evident' the national interest may appear in retrospect, contemporaries were oppressed by the multiplicity of available policies, counseling contradictory courses of action.” These assertions underscore Kissinger's emphasis on the importance of individual action and choice. They also show that Kissinger perceived national interest as subjective—not empirically calculated. This is why he would later put such emphasis on the need for a national purpose in planning and decision-making.59

While Metternich was the ultimate realist searching for a legitimizing principle on which to base his world order, Castlereagh grasped at ideals while his country demanded realistic interests for which to act. The two represented the dichotomy of empiricism versus idealism. The lessons that Kissinger drew from the stories of Castlereagh and Metternich were that each of their approaches to statesmanship and international relations failed. From these stories Kissinger understood that a statesman should lead towards a vision of the future, constantly struggling to create that vision into reality, and that the statesman and domestic public must work together towards these ideals in order to reach them. He saw the need for a middle way between their approaches. This middle way was essentially his personal philosophy as defined in “The Meaning of History”: a reconciliation of realism and idealism that combined the acknowledgment of limits of with the progression towards ideals.

Kissinger's application of philosophy to reality did not stop with nineteenth

59 Ibid., 324.
century history. Following the publication of his dissertation, Kissinger began teaching at
Harvard University as a professor of Government, while also writing scholarly books and
articles about contemporary politics. These articles, many of them harsh critiques of the
Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations, reflected the themes of visionary
statesmanship and individual action in “The Meaning of History” and *A World Restored*.
These books and articles provide further evidence that Kissinger’s personal philosophy
included a reconciliation of realism and idealism, as well as an optimistic emphasis on
individual vision and action.
Chapter Three

Ideals and American Foreign Policy:
Kissinger's Philosophy of National Purpose

Kissinger's personal philosophy as articulated in “The Meaning of History” and his historical studies in *A World Restored* were the foundation of his critiques of American foreign policy as a statesman and later an advisor to President John F. Kennedy's administration. Kissinger viewed policy decisions through the lens of his personal philosophy, which led him to criticize the lack of purpose and individual action within the American policy-making system. Kissinger's main problems with the American policy-making mindset were that it labeled peace as a static and achievable aim, approached problems pragmatically with the certainty of a final solution, and put off long-term decisions in favor of ad-hoc crisis management. These characteristics stood in stark contrast to Kissinger's ideal of a creative and dynamic policy-making process making progress towards a nation's ideals and led by a visionary leader rather than a mediocre bureaucracy. Kissinger's emphasis on the need for statesmanship focused on the attainment of American values and ideals again revealed a strain of optimism within his worldview that he would infuse in his policy critiques.

Kissinger offered many suggestions to resolve the problems of American foreign policy in the Cold War. He made his opinions and policy suggestions public in numerous books and articles in hopes that they would influence American policy-makers to approach the creation of policy in a more dynamic way. Four themes appear prominently in his policy critiques. First, Kissinger encouraged Americans to develop a sense of the
tragic in order to sympathize with, and therefore work with, the rest of the world. In addition, the precariousness of their own position as a nuclear power in the midst of a Cold War called for a more cautious and tragic attitude. Second, Kissinger emphasized the importance of creative leadership, free from the shackles of the bureaucracy, advisers, and an overabundance of data. A release from these shackles would broaden the leaders' spectrum of choices and give them the opportunity to conceptualize new paths for the nation and create innovative and inspired strategies for the future. Third, Kissinger suggested that intellectuals be incorporated into the policy-making system in a way that would allow them to aid leaders without losing their own creativity. They could do this by making sure that leaders were asking the right questions in order to get the right answers. Fourth, Kissinger called for a clear conception of the nation's purpose and a translation of this purpose into concrete terms. This would allow leaders to create specific steps to reach these long-term ideals.

Most of Kissinger's critiques of American foreign policy stemmed from its grounding in an insular and exceptionalist mindset. The American sense of exceptionalism, its youthfulness, and lack of tragic experience enabled American statesmen to believe that problems could be solved with a sufficient application of knowledge. Kissinger associated this mindset with an overemphasis on crisis management, as policy-makers would wait until “all the facts are in” to discuss a problem, rather than create a strategy for problem-solving in advance to prevent crises. The American reliance on crisis management hindered serious reflection upon long-term goals and purposes. While Americans generally had a sense of what they stood for, they
refused to define their long-term goals or have a strategy for reaching them. Without goals, their actions were purposeless. Rather than acting as a stepping stone towards the ultimate ideal, each epiphenomenal decision had the potential of shifting policy in a different direction.

Further, Americans' lack of tragic experience kept them from understanding the consequences of their actions and the potential power of individual action. The failure to understand the interrelatedness of events also inhibited them from undergoing the process of conjecture, or conceiving of a vision of the future, because they did not understand how their actions in the present would shape the future. As conjecture formed a crucial part of Kissinger's philosophy, he blamed many American foreign policy problems on the inability of its statesmen to conceive of a vision of the future and take purposeful steps towards those ideals.60

Kissinger attributed the pragmatic tradition in American foreign policy partially to the prevalence of lawyers and businessmen in the policy-making system. Lawyers and businessmen generally approached problem-solving as a matter of applying knowledge to form solutions, rather than understanding the interrelation of events within the flow of history. These individuals excelled at solving immediate problems, but their process did not include a reflection upon the future consequences of their decisions. Their focus on the present also meant that they understood negotiations and agreements with other nations to be set in stone as in a law or business contract, and did not always take into account the futility of rhetoric between heads of state. This assumption opened up problems with the Soviets, who would abuse this tendency by making promises and not

following through with them. The business-lawyer types of executives would then assume they had solved a problem, but would only be left with empty words.\textsuperscript{61}

Kissinger also related the problems of the American tradition of foreign policy to its reliance on bureaucracy. There were many good reasons to employ a bureaucracy. For example, it was excellent for dealing with routine or mediocre problems. If it could efficiently take care of day-to-day tasks, it would free up leaders' time and mental space and allow individual leaders to deal with larger problems. Yet instead of taking advantage of these positives, the American bureaucracy tried to make policy itself. Kissinger saw the spirit of bureaucracy and the spirit of policy as diametrically opposed: one required organization, the other inspiration. When policy is created within a bureaucracy, it becomes a hard-earned compromise, rather than a representation of the nation's goals. When the bureaucracy takes over the process of policy-making, the leader becomes the referee among his advisers. He aims only for a compromise among conflicting ideas, rather than following his own intuition. The leader's initial job, which is to represent the nation through his own conceptions, is negated by those who are supposed to provide him with background knowledge and support. This explains why Kissinger would often say that leaders become prisoners of knowledge; too much knowledge, too many accounts of experiences, can narrow an individual's conception of options and alternatives. Facts, while important, do not represent total reality. An overabundance of them in the policy-making process only make the process more cumbersome.\textsuperscript{62}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[62] For example, see Kissinger, “Reflections on Cuba,” 24.
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Within Kissinger's criticism of bureaucracy was an emphasis on the importance of the individual in the policy-making process. He disliked the tradition of American pragmatism because it did not acknowledge the individual's ability to shape the future; instead it focused on the maintenance of the status quo. Kissinger implied that if America had a more tragic past like that of Europe, Americans would understand the importance of individual conception, action, and creativity. Here a strain of Kissinger's idealism peeks through. Rather than praising Americans for their realism, he criticized them for their inability to grasp the world beyond the present. He encouraged them to dream bigger and reach farther than the status quo.

Kissinger's criticism of lawyers and businessmen as statesmen also underscored his idealistic vision of human individuality. He preferred the kind of statesmen who thought like philosophers over those who solved problems empirically. Philosophers look beneath the surface to underlying problems, while empiricists seek to maintain the appearance of a smooth surface. Instead of praising American statesmen for their ability to solve problems pragmatically and empirically, he chastised them for not considering other dimensions of knowledge such as the influence of spirit and morality, individual purpose, and the power of a vision of the future.

Many of Kissinger's books and articles appeared during the Eisenhower administration and criticized Eisenhower's style of leadership, nuclear policy, Third World relations, and European relations. These critiques related back to his insistence on purpose through action. He argued that past policies like the Marshall Plan had been
purposeful, creative policies, and reflected the American acceptance of its position as leader of the free world. Eisenhower, by shrugging back from the international scene and trying to “buy security on the cheap,” was allowing Americans to relinquish the initiative in the Cold War, and the fight for their values, to their communist enemy. To remedy this, Americans needed to more clearly define their purposes and interests in the international realm and actively pursue their fulfillment.

Kissinger's critiques of Eisenhower's nuclear policies first launched his career as an influential intellectual. In the mid-1950's, the Council on Foreign Relations asked Kissinger to compile its research into a book on nuclear policy. The final product, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, offered a cohesive critique of the Eisenhower's nuclear policies as well as suggestions for how the administration should approach its position in a nuclear age.

One of Kissinger's main problems with Eisenhower's nuclear policy as outlined in *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* was its contradictory slogans of “massive retaliation” and “no alternative to peace.” First, Kissinger claimed that the assertion that there was no alternative to peace amounted to the Americans writing the Soviets a blank check to do whatever they wanted. If there was “no alternative to peace,” then no Soviet action would warrant violent consequences. Yet at the same time, Eisenhower warned the Soviets that any misbehavior would result in “massive retaliation.” “Massive retaliation,” then, was a near guarantee of nuclear war. Kissinger noted that, in addition to the contradictory nature of these policies, each of these was an extreme. If there was no alternative to all-out nuclear war, or all-out “peace” in which the Soviets could do as
they wished without consequence, then there was no “choice,” no opportunity, and no option for progress.

One aspect of Kissinger's dislike of massive retaliation was its implications of all-out war. His definition of all-out war was war without political objectives, a divorce between military policy and diplomacy. Especially in the nuclear era, the notion of all-out war was too dangerous to toy with. “Never have the consequences of all-out war been so unambiguous, never have the gains seemed so out of relation with the sacrifices,” he wrote in *Nuclear Weapons*. He related the tendency of Americans to think in terms of all-out war to several factors: the democratic nature of its politics, its history of being involved mainly in all-out wars, and the American pragmatic mindset that searched for final solutions or, in this case, total victory.

Kissinger used the example of the war in Korea to demonstrate the failure of massive retaliation and the need for a more flexible strategy. American policy-makers had not devised a strategy for dealing with peripheral areas and had not defined which regions' security would be vital to the fulfillment of the nation's goals. Because of this lack of forethought, and despite its relative unimportance, American policy-makers approached the Korean War as an all-out war. Kissinger noted that “had the Korean War not actually taken place, we would never have believed that it could,” to show the absurdity of all-out war without political purposes.

Kissinger also viewed the concept of deterrence as a fatal flaw in Eisenhower's policies. As deterrence is a psychological concept, its results cannot effectively be

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64 Ibid., 43.
measured. Further, deterrence was the result of the reliance on all-out war as a threat. Not only did deterrence not prevent such crises as the Korean War, but it was also a policy which made American allies uncomfortable. Deterrence's lack of concrete results made those stuck in between the two superpowers, especially Europe, feel less protected by the United States and more likely to be open to one-on-one negotiations with the Soviets.  

These criticisms demonstrate that Kissinger's underlying critique of the Eisenhower administration's nuclear policy was its inherent lack of a flexible strategic doctrine. Strategic doctrine provides a plan for action in advance of crises so that most problems can be dealt with as a matter of routine, while more challenging problems are left to the leadership, which is freed up by an efficient bureaucracy. While strategic doctrine plans in advance for typical situations, it also “enables us to act purposefully in the face of challenges which will inevitably confront us,” showing the connection between Kissinger's call for a strategic doctrine and the development of purpose as outlined in “The Meaning of History.”

Kissinger's insistence on the importance of strategic doctrine bought him back to the issue of purpose in his critique of the Eisenhower administration. The administration's lack of strategic doctrine and dependence on the threat of all-out war to deter its enemies led to a lack of underlying purpose and constructive creativity. By threatening all-out war the United States appeared the aggressor, undermining its alliances and giving the Soviets the moral upperhand. Lastly, the Eisenhower administration's lack of strategic doctrine and dependence on the threat of all-out war to deter its enemies led to a lack of underlying purpose and constructive creativity. By threatening all-out war the United States appeared the aggressor, undermining its alliances and giving the Soviets the moral upperhand.

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65 Ibid., 115.
66 Ibid., 224.
administration hindered its progress towards peace by assuming that there could be a final solution to such problems as nuclear power. Instead of thinking creatively to understand how to use its new power, it was paralyzed by it. The Eisenhower administration “rested on its oars” and allowed the Soviets to gain the strategic and moral edge in the Cold War.

Kissinger's solution to Eisenhower's nuclear problems lay in the concept of limited war, which he discussed at length in *Nuclear Weapons* and in other scholarly articles. According to Kissinger, limited war would provide for local and regional defense without requiring all-out war. Limited war reestablished the marriage between political and military strategies by aiming for specific political objectives rather than total victory. Leadership and diplomacy were especially important during a limited war because they acted as the vessels through which these political objectives and demands were articulated, and defined a concrete endpoint for the war. Further, limited war was more flexible than the reliance on the threat of all-out war because it made room for multiple options of mode and means. While broadening the spectrum of options, limited war was simultaneously limiting (hence its name). A limited war would be limited geographically and instrumentally, lessening the chance for a nuclear armageddon. Instead of the total victory of all-out war, limited war would “make the conditions to be imposed more attractive than continued resistance,” giving limited war a concrete political dimension.67

Kissinger's argument for limited war relied on the rationality of the two opposing forces to assure that the war remained limited. While he would later amend his argument

67 Ibid., 140.
for nuclear war based on this problem, it is still important to note that he supported
limited war both for its broadening of choices and opportunities, as well as its imposition
of limits on an otherwise extremely risky process. In addition, the necessity of
diplomacy, political leadership, and the definition of concrete purposes and objectives in
limited war again referred back to Kissinger's personal philosophy as well as his main
critique of American foreign policy. Whether or not limited war was an effective tool for
the management of the nuclear age, it represented the inadequacies of massive retaliation
and deterrence, including the lack of flexibility, creativity, and purpose in American
foreign policy.

Kissinger's arguments in *Nuclear Weapons* sparked a heated debate over the future
direction of nuclear policy. The greatest influence of Kissinger's thought was on
Kennedy's strategy of “flexible response,” which allowed for a greater choice among
weapons systems and placed more emphasis on conventional forces and non-nuclear
methods of force. While flexible response represented the essence of Kissinger's idea of
limited war, it did not change much of Kissinger's criticisms of American foreign policy.
The change in strategy did not reflect a change in the American attitude towards war and
international relations. “Only the purposeful can be flexible,” Kissinger explained.68
Flexible response lessened the reliance on all-out war, but it still failed to define
American purposes and political objectives in its military offensives.

In addition to critiquing Eisenhower's nuclear policy, Kissinger also disagreed
with Eisenhower's management of relations worldwide. These criticisms fell into three

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categories of relations: relations with the Soviet Union, European allies, and the
developing world. Kissinger placed his analysis of Eisenhower's relations with these
areas within the context of his paradigm of a revolutionary period, first outlined in A
*World Restored*.

Kissinger's critiques of Eisenhower's policies towards the Soviet Union were
rooted in his belief that the Soviet Union, because of its intentions to overthrow the
current world order, was a revolutionary power. According to Kissinger, Soviet leaders
perceived events as part the inevitable flow of history, and human actors merely as
puppets in the scheme. Because of this, they gave little importance to the process of
diplomacy, except to use it against the United States. This made diplomatic negotiations
with the Soviets virtually meaningless, as the Soviets believed they merely “ratified” an
already present situation dictated by history. This also meant that the Soviets were
unlikely to make concessions and likely to take advantage of strategic opportunities.
“He task of the Communist leadership is to tilt the scale by constant if imperceptible
pressure in the direction predetermined by the forces of history,” Kissinger wrote. He
repeatedly called this Soviet challenge intentionally “ambiguous,” an effort to make
discreet gains as the West reacted to only overt challenges.69

Kissinger's argument that the Soviets would not compromise appeared out of
place with his insistence on the importance of negotiations. His solution to this
contradiction was the idea that American leaders had to go into negotiations with a clear
plan in mind, rather than letting the Soviets dominate the direction of discussion. This
would also prevent celebration over small and, typically irrelevant, Soviet compromises

69 Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, 57.
and shift American focus to long-term goals.

Despite Kissinger's belief that negotiations meant little in reality to the Soviets, he stressed the importance of negotiations not only because negotiations would create the space for possible agreement, but also to display to the watching world the American desire for progress towards peace in the Cold War. The longer Americans allowed the Soviets to take the initiative in negotiations, the more the Soviets could turn the tables and accuse American statesmen of not compromising. The practice of negotiating would also make American foreign policy proactive and positive, rather than reactive and negative. It would allow Americans to actively stand for something, rather than be passively against something. It would also require Americans to define this “something,” and in doing so, come closer to achieving its ideals. As an activist foreign policy was especially important in the nuclear age, when leaders could not leave matters to chance, Kissinger encouraged Americans to actively pursue conditions that would result not only in stability and agreement, but also in the representation of American purpose.

Kissinger attributed Soviet gains in the Cold War to the Soviet Union's toughness in propaganda and purpose, rather than its economic or military might. This again connected back to his personal philosophy and idealistic critiques of American foreign policy. He saw Soviet gains, especially in the third world, as relating to the ability of Soviet doctrine to acquire the interest of developing nations. The problem with the philosophical challenge of the Soviet Union, then, was a battle of purposes. Surveying Soviet successes in the third world, Kissinger called the United States to not shirk from its role in the international arena and to stand up for its values as leader of the free world.

70 Ibid., 222.
He wanted the United States to take the opportunity to support developing nations not only economically but also morally, and was disappointed that the Soviets showed more willingness to take this opportunity than the Americans.

Kissinger saw the containment of Soviet communism as a passive foreign policy. He suggested that the United States take an active role in its relationship with the Soviet Union, rather than merely contain it. While he perceived both American and Soviet ideologies as believing in the inevitable dominance of their own systems, Kissinger thought that the Soviet Union used history as an incentive, not a substitute, for action.

“History for Communism is an incentive for action, a guarantee of the meaningfulness of sacrifice. The West, on the other hand...waiting for history to do its work for it, it stands in danger of being engulfed by the currents of our time,” he wrote in his second book, *The Necessity of Choice*.71 Kissinger repeatedly brought up this fear of American irrelevance in his writings, and insisted that only through creative and confident action could the United States gain the initiative in the Cold War.

Kissinger also attributed the failures of the American approach to foreign policy to the American misunderstanding of Soviet intentions. To him, containment enabled the mindset that “a problem deferred was a problem solved.”72 He wanted American statesmen to realize that because the Soviet Union was a revolutionary power and would try to overthrow the status quo, it could not be passively contained.

In addition to Eisenhower's relations with the Soviet Union, Kissinger also had qualms with the administration's approach to the Atlantic alliance. He labeled the

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72 Ibid., 174.
alliance “the troubled partnership” because of Eisenhower's difficulty maintaining stable relations with European nations. The possibility of a supranational institution to govern the European continent, akin to a “United States of Europe” dominated the discourse of American-European relations. Kissinger fought fiercely against this concept, arguing that individual nationalities were very important to Europe. He sided with French leader, Charles de Gaulle, who also fought vigorously against the loss of national sovereignty among the European nation-states. While many Americans grew frustrated with de Gaulle's intransigence, Kissinger admired his ability to stand firmly for the ideals of France.

Kissinger's concern with American-European relations focused particularly on the lack of underlying purpose within NATO. He noted that one problem inhibiting successful relations within the alliance was the American refusal to share technical information on nuclear weapons with its European allies. This secrecy “inhibited the growth of a sense of common purpose,” which Kissinger saw as the ultimate aim and key to success of NATO. The ultimate solution to this problem depended on the “ability of the West to harmonize its need for security with its positive goals.” The United States needed its European allies not only for military security, but also in order to show the desirability of western values to uncommitted nations. If the alliance fell apart over relatively insignificant issues, this would display to its communist enemies and the watching world the inability of the western value system to effectively govern

relationships. Kissinger also insisted upon the importance of the Atlantic alliance because he realized that the United States could not manage the revolutionary age alone; it needed physical and spiritual allies. He urged that “unless the North Atlantic group of nations develops a clearer purpose it will be doomed.”

Another problem that inhibited closeness between the two continents was the issue of the defense of Europe against the Soviet Union. Kissinger's ultimate argument for the local defense of Europe had several important aspects: one, that a build-up of conventional forces would allow for options other than all-out nuclear war as demanded by massive retaliation; two, Europeans and Americans needed to communicate and collaborate more effectively to form a common purpose and strategy; three, it was in the best interest of the United States to be sensitive to European fears. Kissinger insisted upon the relevance of a strong Atlantic alliance in the Cold War because “once it becomes clear that even a minor threat against Europe will engage the United States as fully as a minor threat against Alaska, temptations for Soviet pressure will be substantially reduced.”

In his critiques, Kissinger focused on the need for local defense of Europe that did not rely upon Eisenhower's method of deterrence or all-out war. One way to do this was to build-up conventional forces on the European continent. Many opposed this for the fear that a military build-up would only instigate Soviet aggression; at the same time, Soviet aggression could not be stymied without a build-up of forces. Europeans also feared that a build-up of its own conventional forces would allow the United States to

77 Ibid., 101.
78 Ibid., 121.
withdraw from the continent, leaving Europe to the defense of its own security. Kissinger asserted that the removal of American forces would only lessen the number of forces available, which was the opposite of the objective. While he admitted that Europeans had reason to fear American withdrawal, he also assured them that withdrawal would be an irresponsible move for the United States. American forces on the European continent would cause a greater risk to an attack by an aggressor, and would alleviate European fears of being left alone with its communist neighbor.  

Kissinger's personal philosophy appeared prominently in relation to his argument concerning the reunification of Germany. He thought that a unified Germany strong enough to defend itself but not strong enough to attack its neighbors would be the ideal aim, and asserted that the creation of a unified Germany should be a major component of Western policy. At the same time, he did not think that such a policy was necessarily realistic. His main point was that American leaders needed to stop assuming that the status quo was “fact” and start creating its own facts, or its own future reality.

Kissinger believed that American statesmen still had the moral strength to overcome this emphasis on present reality by acting creatively and constructively. “Stalin regularly offered the West a division of the world into spheres of influence, and he failed largely because the West was not yet prepared to adjust to a reality which involved surrendering other peoples' rights.”  

Kissinger's issue over German reunification had less to do with the probability of reunifying Germany, as “no brilliant plan is likely to produce unification,” and more to do with the significance of the American reaction to

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79 Ibid., 109.
80 Ibid., 129.
81 Ibid., 129-130.
the problem. “The issue,” he wrote, “is not only whether unification can be achieved but what attitude the West should take toward this 'fact.'” Kissinger used the problem of Germany mainly to demonstrate the inadequacy of American leadership in its vision and conception of long-term ideals.

Kissinger's idealism also came through when he wrote about U.S. relations with the developing world. These critiques had much of the same flavor as his criticisms of Eisenhower's nuclear policy and European relations. In these early years of scholarship, Kissinger put forth the argument that the United States needed to focus on demonstrating the moral superiority of its system, rather than helping uncommitted nations economically, in order to most effectively aid their political progression. This moral support would rival that of the Soviet Union's communism, whose psychological strategies had gained the advantage of moral relevance in the third world.

Kissinger insisted that while developing nations struggled for their independence, they also sought a new identity and needed the political and moral influence of the United States to foster liberal values in their new identities. Kissinger acknowledged that economic aid would propel these countries on the path towards political development by easing certain areas of suffering. However, he argued against the “stages of growth” and development theories that offered a deterministic view of development. Kissinger countered that development was based on a nation's historical experience, its values and choices, and its environment. His argument gave agency to the character of the nation in creating its own identity through choice—not by following the laws of a predetermined

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82 Ibid., 130.
83 Ibid., 305.
history. He concluded that moral support trumped economic aid when he wrote that “the challenge of the new nations is that they cannot live by bread alone; to offer nothing but bread is to leave the arena to those who are sufficiently dynamic to define their purpose.”

Thus, the central need of developing nations was not the development of a capitalist economic system, but the creation of new political identities and definition of moral purposes.

Kissinger emphasized that the United States and developing nations shared a “spiritual kinship” because of the United States' colonial past. For this reason, he thought Americans should be more sympathetic to the idea of nonalignment among these new nations, responding to Secretary of State John Foster Dulles' attack on nonalignment. Kissinger thought that rather than dictating the political development of new nations, the most productive approach was to make American values relevant and meaningful to the new nations who were searching for a moral foundation on which to build the political identity of their new nations. He feared that if the United States did not make its values, purposes, or moral support apparent, the Soviets would.

Allowing new nations to develop politically according to their own national character and own choices required self-restraint and activism on the part of the United States. It required self-restraint from dictating the development of third world nations, which would appear as a form of colonialism. Most importantly, the United States needed to show self-restraint in order to display the effectiveness of its democratic system, for democracy in itself is a faith in the self-restraint of others. “To be

84 Ibid., 321.
85 Kissinger, Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy, 260.
meaningful, self-restraint must set limits even to the exercise of righteous power,” Kissinger wrote. Although the United States thought its system to be superior, it had to demonstrate this through its actions.

While acknowledging its limits through self-restraint, the United States could actively demonstrate its sincere purposes and convictions by making its domestic society more dynamic and true to its values. Kissinger wrote passionately that “the future of freedom abroad will depend importantly on the conviction with which we can confirm freedom at home...for too long our affirmations of human dignity have been mere incantations, our search for purpose a mechanical repetition of patterns of the past.” In order to change this, the most important step for Americans to take would not be to change their policies, but to change their attitudes. “We will finally be judged not so much by the cleverness of our arguments as by the purposefulness and conviction, indeed the majesty, of our conduct,” he wrote. While Kissinger believed in the superiority of the American value system and way of life, he had doubts that Americans could summon the will or wisdom to take the opportunity to make this evident to the watching world.

Kissinger saw the explosion of post-colonial revolutions around the world as a tide similar to the revolution of nation-states that Metternich faced in the nineteenth century. Kissinger's background in this kind of history enabled him to understand the consequences of the inability to act creatively and constructively in an atmosphere of worldwide revolution. He could recall that Metternich's inability to do this, and his focus on the maintenance of the status quo, led to his failure. Kissinger applied this knowledge

87 Ibid., 321.
88 Ibid., 339.
of the past to the Cold War in an effort to encourage Americans not to suppress the development of new nations, but to actively make known what they stood for and create a plan for the future that represented more than the status quo. Only by transcending the status quo could they take the opportunity to purposefully shape the future of the world.

In addition to his critiques of Eisenhower's nuclear policies and worldwide relations, Kissinger also criticized the Eisenhower administration's reliance on summit meetings with the Soviet Union. Kissinger articulated this criticism in *A Necessity for Choice* as well as in his articles “The Khrushchev Visit—Dangers and Hopes” and “The Next Summit Meeting.” These works argued that the United States should not attend summit conferences with the Soviet Union if its statesmen did not have a clear conception of its strategic vision and goals. Kissinger asserted that summit meetings could be productive only if statesmen approached them purposefully, returning to the philosophical ideas he first expressed in “The Meaning of History.”

Kissinger thought that summit meetings were often pointless because Americans conceived of the Cold War as a misunderstanding with the Soviet Union or a clash of personalities between heads of state. In contrast, Kissinger defined the Cold War as the result of Soviet policies in Eastern Europe, Berlin, and in peripheral nations such as Laos. The Cold War could not end until these fundamental disagreements with the Soviet Union were resolved. Therefore, a summit or conference meeting with the Soviet heads of state would only be beneficial if it aimed to solve these problems—not if it aimed to momentarily “clear the atmosphere” between the two nations. If statesmen did not approach summits in a purposeful way to resolve specific issues, Kissinger feared that the
United States would only demonstrate its lack of purpose and clear conception to its allies and developing nations. In order to make summit meetings more meaningful, Kissinger encouraged American statesmen to stop obsessing over the divination of Soviet intentions and start defining its own purposes.89 If Western statesmen did not approach summit meetings with a clear conception of their own policies and especially a definition of peaceful and stable conditions, they would fall prey to more prepared Soviet statesmen.

Kissinger elaborated on the risks of unpurposeful summit meetings to emphasize the importance of purpose. One of these risks included “euphoria,” the possibility that American statesmen would succumb to overoptimism and the illusion of relaxation. He asserted that the Soviets' goals were to encourage this illusion and to make disagreements appear as a misunderstanding of the heads of state, rather than the result of their own policies. Accepting the illusion of overoptimism would defer the West from reexamining its diplomatic and military policies, something Kissinger thought to be of the utmost importance, and allowing it to think that summits, not clear definitions of policy goals, could solve the complex problems of the Cold War. Because summits often caused Western statesmen to “confuse personal affability with a change of attitude,” Kissinger thought that they should attend summits only with a clear conception of their policies and celebrate them only if specific adjustments were made towards the enactment of these policies.90

Another risk of unpurposeful summits that Kissinger noted was the possibility of weakening allied ties. If American statesmen met with the Soviet heads of state to

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90 Ibid.
discuss issues in Europe, for example, the unity of the Atlantic alliance could be undermined because of the European fear that the United States would make an agreement with the Soviets that would not take into account European attitudes, feelings, or historical experiences. Kissinger was especially sensitive to this possibility because of his belief that only with the aid of its Atlantic allies could the United States prevail in the Cold War.

Kissinger's fear of weakening allied ties related back to his concern that unpurposeful summits would demoralize the free world. Kissinger believed that achieving Soviet approval on issues “in principle” was easy—hence the fear that American statesmen would succumb too easily to overoptimism. However, he thought that achieving Soviet approval “in action,” that is, making tangible adjustments to the Cold War structure, was a rare accomplishment. Only if the West “develop[ed] a much clearer conception of our purpose in the world” could its statesmen make lasting progress at summits. 91 A “clearer conception of our purpose” included policies in the areas of nuclear weapons, Berlin, peripheral nations, and Western values. The best approach to take during a summit to avoid demoralization would be to tell the Soviet heads of state clearly and concretely the American perception of the conditions of a stable world, and invite them to detailed negotiations with U.S. allies. This would allow statesmen to make progress towards clearly defined conditions of peace with the participation of the Atlantic alliance, and would consolidate the views of the West. This process would encourage Western statesmen to develop positive goals for their policies and stop focusing on Soviet intentions rather than their own. Instead of “confusing flexibility with bargaining

91 Ibid.
technique,” as Kissinger feared Western statesmen did at summit meetings, they would make progress towards their purposes. Americans would have to be supportive in these definitions by realizing that the task of diplomacy in the Cold War was more complex than summitry conveyed. “They must understand that the cold war cannot be ended by a smile; that it requires specific adjustments expressed in a concrete program,” Kissinger wrote.92

Another problem with summits was the tendency for the meetings to lead to agreement on irrelevant issues for the sake of agreement. Much like its bureaucracy, which took so much effort to achieve any kind of agreement, American statesmen rejoiced when the Soviets showed willingness to agree on trivial issues, or even agree to attend a summit meeting. This absolved the Soviets of responsibility in negotiating larger, more concrete, issues.93 “Agreements, rather than contributing to a solution of the real issues, become a means to postpone coming to grips with them. They do not end the Cold War; they perpetuate it,” Kissinger wrote. He thought that summit meetings were dangerous not because they initiated conversation with the Soviets, for this was a good thing, but because they tended to lead to an unfounded enthusiasm for a detente in the Cold War which did not actually exist. When this happened, summits became “not a forum for negotiations but a substitute for them; not an expression of a policy but a means of obscuring its absence.”94 As Kissinger often repeated, the only way to remedy this was to approach summits purposefully, with a concrete notion of policy and clear definition of peace.

92 Ibid.
93 Kissinger, “Next Summit Meeting,” 64.
94 Ibid., 66.
Kissinger hoped that the Western world would open its eyes to the opportunities outside of the usual paradigm of Cold War relations: the itch to get ahead in the arms race, the need to reach audiences through desirable goods or to display superiority to communism through higher living standards. “The ultimate problem far transcends that of communism,” he wrote, “many opportunities await only our dedication and imagination. A policy concerned primarily with equilibrium and normalcy is not equal to the challenge of a revolutionary period. Deeper values are at stake than the ability to produce consumer goods.” Instead of focusing on the overplayed elements of the Cold War, Kissinger urged the Western world to acknowledge the intangibles that formed Cold War tensions. By doing so, the Western world would also realize its purpose not only in the Cold War, but in domestic and foreign policy as well. He declared that “our task, as that of every generation, is to make our belief in freedom and human dignity relevant to our times. To do this, it is necessary that we end the obsession with Soviet intentions and seek to become clear about our own.” While Kissinger thought it necessary for Americans to give up their illusions concerning the possibilities of summits, he hoped that they would embrace instead what they stood for and turn these values into concrete policies.95

Kissinger's critiques of the Eisenhower administration brought him notice and popularity among foreign policy intellectuals and officials. Following the election of President John F. Kennedy, Kissinger was offered a position as an advisor on the administration's National Security Council. Kissinger's connections with his Harvard

95 Kissinger, “The Khrushchev Visit--Dangers and Hopes.”
colleagues, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. and McGeorge Bundy, who were involved in the Kennedy administration, also helped him in getting the position. Despite their distinct political differences, Kissinger came to be very close with Schlesinger, writing him many personal letters throughout his short career in the White House. His relationship with Bundy, however, only further deteriorated from its already rocky state at Harvard. Kissinger blamed this mostly on personal competitiveness and Bundy's desire to get ahead. This strained relationship made Kissinger's experience in the White House quite “unhappy,” as he would later say in his memoirs. Yet the experience was also invaluable for him. Not only did it prepare him for his central role in the Nixon administration years later, but it also served to underscore his already negative views of bureaucracy and the American policy-making system.

Kissinger's position as an advisor to the Kennedy administration provides us with an invaluable window through which we can view his critiques of American foreign policy. When Kissinger wrote on the Eisenhower administration, his evidence was the negative consequences of its policies. Now, as a participant in the policy-making process, Kissinger could better understand how American foreign-policy was created and how the system resulted in failed policies.

Kissinger's eventual disappointment with the administration's policies is especially telling because he had very high hopes for the Kennedy administration. Kissinger's hopes for the new administration revealed his belief in the possibility of American leaders with creative vision and initiative. Although Kennedy's policy of

flexible response essentially paralleled Kissinger's policy suggestions, Kissinger would ultimately be disappointed in Kennedy's inability to change the American attitude towards international relations. The cause of Kissinger's disappointment shows the importance of purpose and attitude in his personal philosophy. Even if Kennedy changed his policies, if he did not approach these new policies with an attitude prepared to impose meaning on events through action, then little had changed but the name of the policy.

Kissinger arrived at the White House with deeply held convictions about the faults of the American policy-making system, which he expressed in his writings on the Eisenhower administration. He hoped that his appointment to the NSC would allow him to help construct a more effective, purposeful approach to foreign policy. Kissinger's expectations were immediately crushed. His first assignment was to discuss a volume of fifty policy recommendations after reviewing them for less than an hour. He recalled that, after the volume had been taken away, he stayed up until four in the morning writing a memorandum on the policy recommendations he barely had a chance to read. Following this pointless assignment, Kissinger was not asked to do much of anything at all. “Indeed, I had so little to do that I spent most of my time reading incoming cables from all over the world...(I must be one of the better-informed people on the White House staff by now—though my English is, I fear, permanently ruined.),” he confided to Schlesinger. Although Kissinger spent his time twiddling his thumbs or reading cables, he was also soaking up the environment of the White House, noticing how its members communicated, and learning its inner workings. Not only would this help him navigate the Nixon White House, but it also gave him evidence to strengthen his arguments on the
problems of the American policy-making system.98

Excluded from policy-making activities, Kissinger's only contribution to policy-making was writing memoranda which were rarely acknowledged and even more rarely read. He was not only frustrated with the absence of recognition for his work, but was also frustrated with the very process of writing memoranda. He thought that the bureaucratic process of distributing memoranda as a form of discourse on policy-making represented a lack of conception and cohesion within the White House. “These memoranda deal with individual tactical problems, while the chief requirement is to master their interrelationship and to develop an over-all concept. They tend, therefore, to accept its criteria and confirm its momentum,” he complained to Schlesinger In his thoughts on memoranda, Kissinger again brought in the philosophical significance of understanding the interrelations of events and the necessity of overcoming facts and circumstances through vision and creative action. “I am worried about the lack of an over-all strategy which makes us prisoners of events,” he wrote to Schlesinger “I am distressed by an attitude on the part of and towards the bureaucracy which produces too many warmed-over versions of the policies of the previous Administration. The result has been an overconcern with tactics and a lack of a guiding concept which have been responsible for most of our difficulties.”99

Kissinger was deeply troubled that he could not contribute to the administration more effectively, and that he was only asked to do technical tasks irrelevant to the actual spirit of policy. “There are essentially two ways in which an outsider can contribute to

98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
the policy making process,” he wrote to Bundy. “One is to furnish new ideas. The other is to help in developing a sense of proportion and direction. Of these, the latter seems to me by far the most important...Much more frequently the difference between success and failure is a nuance...The real need, therefore, seems to me to lie in the relationship of measures to each other and in timing.”

He feared that rather than providing perspective, his role was “that of a kibitzer shouting random comments from the sidelines...I am in the position of a man riding next to a driver heading for a precipice who is being asked to make sure that the gas tank is full and the oil pressure adequate.”

Not only did Kissinger feel unheard and irrelevant, he also feared that any advice he was able to give would be misinterpreted or misused without the proper context. This was “like being asked in the middle of a chess game to suggest a move without having been in a position to study the development of the game or being allowed to explain the rationale for the suggestion.”

Overall, Kissinger knew that his work in the White House was benefiting neither him nor the Kennedy administration.

Kissinger's complaints had more to do with his desire to see an improvement in American foreign policy than in his own quest for power in Washington. “My frustration,” he wrote to Schlesinger, “has not been caused by the fact that I am being overruled, but that there exists no opportunity to bring about a consideration of the real options as I see them.” He ultimately wanted to change the attitude and direction of policy out of fear of what he saw as the increasing American irrelevance in the Cold War. “These conditions are all the more unbearable because what I have seen of our planning

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100 Kissinger quoted this letter to Bundy in Ibid.
101 Ibid.
seems to me largely irrelevant to the perils ahead of us. We are heading for a major crisis, perhaps a disaster, while the bureaucracy continues to treat orderly procedure as the chief purpose of government...”

Had Kissinger wanted to climb the ladder of power in Washington, he probably would have forgone his position at Harvard in favor of the full-time position at the White House that McGeorge Bundy offered him on several occasions. Kissinger preferred to remain an ad hoc consultant so that he could maintain his intellectual integrity and creativity. Further, had Kissinger merely wanted to gain power in the White House, he probably would have changed himself to fit the system, rather than resigning.

Kissinger was very concerned with the lack of choice that the bureaucracy created, despite its multiplicity of committees formed to produce a broader range of technical responses. He was frustrated that the President had little authority in the policy-making process, writing that “the President is given plans which do not define his options properly and which in the event will prove hollow.” This relates back to the importance of individual choice in “The Meaning of History.” The thought that the President, one of the most influential individuals in the world, could not make well thought out choices and instead had to settle on a bureaucratic compromise gravely demoralized Kissinger. Most importantly, the retraction of the individual from the policy-making process inhibited the development of a sense of purpose within policy. “Too often,” Kissinger wrote, “the President is confronted with faits accomplis by the bureaucracy which he can ratify or modify but which preclude a real consideration of alternatives. To make matters worse, the issues brought up for decision are usually tactical and therefore take energy from the

102 Ibid.
overriding task of developing a basic purpose.” By living in a world of memoranda and hierarchy, the bureaucracy had lost touch with its ultimate purpose: to aid in the creation of creative policy. When translated to the real world, bureaucratic policies failed to grasp any sort of underlying concept or understanding of the interrelationship of events. “This is simply another way of saying that our concepts have no adequate relationship to reality,” Kissinger wrote. All of this amounted to a “curious reappearance of the administrative practices of the Eisenhower years,” or in other words, a continuity of flaws within the traditional mindset of American foreign policy.\footnote{Ibid.}

In his reflective letter to Schlesinger, Kissinger outlined not only his qualms with the inner workings of the Kennedy administration, but also its outward policies. Not surprisingly, many of these issues had less to do with technical aspects of policy and more to do with Kissinger's hope that a more purposeful foreign policy could make the United States the spiritual leader of the free world. Kissinger's thoughts on Kennedy's attitude toward the Berlin Crisis is one example of Kissinger's encouragement of purposeful policy. He saw the Berlin Crisis not as a physical implication of Soviet intransigence, but as an intangible struggle over the hearts and minds of the free world. Kissinger believed that the Kennedy administration “defined the issue of Berlin incorrectly. The problem is not simply free access to Berlin—as is so often maintained—but the hopes and expectations of the peoples of Berlin, the Federal Republic, and Western Europe. If they lose confidence in us, the current crises will turn into a major defeat even should we obtain some kind of guarantee of access for Berlin.”\footnote{Ibid.}
problem was not only the need to increase the perception of the United States' power, but its ability to stand up for its allies and, in the process, its own values.

Kissinger was also concerned that the views that came across in his memoranda did not accurately reflect his true opinions. He suspected that Bundy set up his position to make the President think that Kissinger was participating in policy discussion, while limiting the extent to which Kissinger could vocalize his suggestions. Kissinger thought of Bundy's actions mainly as petty personal competitiveness, but was disappointed that he could not aid the administration on the field he was most passionate about. He was “convinced, painful as this thought is to me, that my contribution to national policy was infinitely greater when I was a private citizen than it has been since I joined the White House.” These thoughts underscored his argument in a later article called “Policy-Maker and the Intellectual,” which claimed that an adviser should either be very close to the President, or far removed from the policy-making system in order to retain his creativity and individuality and not give up his original concepts to fit into the bureaucratic system.

Although Kissinger decided it would be best for him to quietly resign from his position in the White House, he had much trouble actually doing so. Bundy tried to offer him a more extensive position, but Kissinger was convinced that “Mac's proposal can serve only one purpose: to give the president the impression of my participation while continuing to exclude me from even the most trivial responsibilities” Kissinger's time

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105Ibid.
in the Kennedy administration ended unhappily and with no outcome other than evidence
to strengthen his views on the American policy-making system. He resigned not because
he did not agree with the administration's policy, but because he found the system
unworkable and felt he could better aid the administration as a private citizen.

Years before Kissinger began working with the Kennedy administration, he wrote
about the problem of intellectuals in the policy-making system in an article called
“Policymaker and the Intellectual.” Kissinger's arguments in this article seem almost
prophetic considering his later experience and resignation from the Kennedy
administration.

Kissinger began his argument in “Policy-Maker and the Intellectual” by
explaining that the lifestyle and personality of the typical executive in the American
government was a business or lawyer type who sought the immediate solutions to
problems and whose busy lifestyle did not provide space for reflection. The skills of
specialization that brought these executives to their positions in the government did not
actually translate into leadership skills. For example, the ability to comprehend
information quickly or to present materials articulately did not translate into the ability to
lead with conception and vision. Kissinger thought that, although these were highly
skilled men, they were failing at their task “to infuse and occasionally transcend routine
with purpose.” Referring back to a theme he first expressed in “The Meaning of
History,” Kissinger held policy-makers to a standard not of technical skill but of
conceptual ability.

Another reason Kissinger gave for American executives' lack of conception was

the traditional American attitude of pragmatism. This mindset sought ultimate reality in
the “objective” environment of facts, statistics, and other empirical data. Executives
valued “experience” as a form of knowledge or fact. In order to bring the most
“experience” and “knowledge” to the solution of a problem, executives preferred
problem-solving and policy-making within committees. These committees took
individual conception and personal judgment out of the policy-making equation, labeling
it “subjective” and therefore invalid. Kissinger thought that a minimalization of
subjectivity and overemphasis on objectivity created the “illusion...that we can avoid
recourse to personal judgment and responsibility as the final determinant of policy.”

On the contrary, Kissinger argued that individuals were ultimately responsible for
government decisions and could not escape this responsibility through committee
decision-making. Because of the traditional American distrust of individual choice and
conceptualization, Kissinger called the committee approach to decision-making “less an
organizational device than a spiritual necessity.” This again leads back to the
importance of conjecture and conceptualization in both “The Meaning of History” and A

World Restored. From his research in history and philosophy, Kissinger understood the
importance of conceptual vision and applied that to the American policy-making system's
lack of individual judgment and responsibility.

While the structure of the system allowed executives to avoid personal
responsibility, the busyness of committees caused policy-makers to confuse momentum
with purpose. While momentum is often a sign of progress, the busyness of committees

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109 Ibid., 31.
110 Ibid.
was movement in an undefined direction, or even multiple different directions. Committees typically inhibited progress through innovation because innovation required risk. The committee system sought to avoid risk through the maintenance of the status quo, for “the status quo has at least the advantage of familiarity,” rather than embrace the “boldness of conception” which would enable innovation creation of purposeful direction.\textsuperscript{111} Without a clear definition of purpose, the momentum and apparent progress of committees was meaningless.

The committee approach to policy-making also led to the fragmentation of policy, resulting in a lack of underlying conception and purpose. Because committees worked separately and on different but interconnected issues, they did not share a sense of direction with one another other than the maintenance of the status quo. Kissinger thought that this process of fragmentation led to the distortion of the spirit of policy by encouraging policy-makers to focus on individual moves, rather than understanding the interrelation of events. Like Kissinger expressed while working in the Kennedy administration, focusing on individual moves out of the context of a sequence of events is like making a move in the middle of a chess game without having watched the development of the game. Thinking of policy-making in this way showed that this method of specialization within committees was irrational if it did not contribute to the overall progression of policy toward an end goal. “It is as if in commissioning a painting,” Kissinger wrote, “a patron would ask one artist to draw the face, another the body, another the hands, and still another the feet, simply because each artist is particularly good in one category. Such a procedure would lose the meaning of the

\textsuperscript{111}Ibid., 32.
Kissinger's use of the chess game and portrait analogies again revealed that he put the most importance on the spirit of policy and its underlying purpose, rather than technicalities. These abstract elements are the same ideals he first identified in “The Meaning of History” and A World Restored.

Kissinger argued that an incorporation of intellectuals into the policy-making system was not necessarily the solution to the problem of bureaucratic policy-making. In fact, as Kissinger pointed out, there were more intellectuals than ever in the system and it still had major flaws. The problem then was not the lack of intellectuals, but the lack of understanding concerning their roles in policy-making. Instead of incorporating intellectuals as decision-makers, the system incorporated them as advisors. While the system's main problems were with purpose and conception, executives only asked intellectuals to solve immediate or technical problems instead of helping to define long-term goals. Executives viewed intellectuals as specialists on technical problems rather than outside perspectives. Even worse, executives often perceived intellectuals as a weight on the scale in an argument between committee members, or essentially an endorsement of certain policies. Intellectuals were asked to accept criteria as the executives had already defined it, and to solve the technical problems given only that criteria. The area that Kissinger thought the executives needed help in, defining criteria, they kept intellectuals out of.113

The bureaucratic system also pressured intellectuals to sacrifice their creativity and individuality in favor of bureaucratic processes, such as the memoranda writing

112Ibid., 31.
113Ibid., 34.
Kissinger disliked so much. If intellectuals did not think within the bureaucratic box, their ideas would be discarded. Kissinger pointed out that many intellectuals, eager to retain an “active life” would change themselves to fit the system. Yet this only worked against them and the administration by sapping them of the very quality they were brought in for: their position as outsiders.114

Another problem with intellectuals in the policy-making system had to do with intellectuals' misperception of policy-making. Kissinger acknowledged that intellectuals had a tendency to simplify problems theoretically that were not so simple in reality. Many intellectuals “have refused to recognize that policy-making involves not only the clear conception of ideas but also the management of men. In the process analysis has been too often identified with policy-making.” Kissinger referred to this as the confusion of analysis with policy. The difference between the two has much to do with perspective and pace. Policy looks towards the future, but must make decisions in the immediate present. In contrast, analysis happens at the pace of reflection, through the absorption of a large set of facts. Policy cannot wait for all the “facts to be in,” because by the time this happens, “the future has been reduced to an aspect of the past.”115 This meant that policy cannot be created with certainty and must rely on the process of conjecture. More intellectuals in the policy-making system is not the answer to bureaucratic issues with conjecture, because intellectuals can be just as hesitant as executives to make decisions that are not based on certainty.

Kissinger ended his article with a reminder that the over-bureaucratization of

114Ibid., 33.
115Ibid., 34.
policy is a dangerous and immediate problem. “The stakes could hardly be higher,” he wrote, “the deepest cause of the inhumanity of our time is probably the pedantic application of administrative norms.” The symbol of this “pedantic application” was the “commissar,” the ideal bureaucrat “who condemns thousands without love and without hatred simply in pursuance of an abstract duty.” To get the attention of his American audience, sure in its cause for humanity and in its superiority over the Soviets, Kissinger compared American officials to their arch enemy, the heartless communist who is concerned only with regulations, and whose reality remains only within his governmental circle.\footnote{Ibid., 35.}

Kissinger hoped that Americans would respond to his pleas by shifting the process of policy-making to focus onto the individual “Our challenge is to rescue the individual from this process...The way we face this challenge will be the ultimate test of our long-proclaimed belief in the dignity of the individual.” Kissinger’s emphasis on the individual in policy-making traces back to his philosophy of the agency of the individual in “The Meaning of History” and \textit{A World Restored}. Indeed, he noted that for members of the policy-making system, “our challenge is to rescue the individual from this process.”\footnote{Ibid.} To make his assertions more relevant to Americans, he related a return to emphasis on the individual to the American value of respect for the “dignity of the individual.”\footnote{Ibid.} By connecting the two issues, he showed that if Americans stood for freedom, independence, and the other intangible purposes of liberty and democracy, they needed to represent this within their policy-making system rather than displaying the

\footnote{Ibid.}
values of the Soviet commissar.

After Kissinger resigned from the Kennedy administration for the reasons he expressed in his letters to Schlesinger as well as in the reasons he outlined in “Policy-Maker and the Intellectual,” Kissinger went back to publishing his views as an outsider in books and articles. Kissinger's disappointment with the Kennedy administration as well as his close ties to the people there made at least the first article he wrote after his resignation “the hardest thing I have ever had to write.” Yet Kissinger felt that it was his duty to make clear the problems within the administration, and within American policy-making in general, writing that he “did so only after all other means of presenting my views had proved futile.”

While Kissinger would make these negative criticisms in articles such as “Unsolved Problems of European Defense” and “Domestic Structure and Foreign Policy,” he had something positive to say about Kennedy's actions during the Cuban missile crisis. Kissinger's views of the Kennedy during the Cuban missile crisis reflect a positive reinforcement of Kennedy's actions, an outline for future action, and a layer of Kissinger's own personal philosophy. In the article “Reflections on Cuba,” he focused on the importance of personal action and initiative, as well as the creation of a national purpose and the need for conjecture and imagination in policy-making.

Kissinger praised Kennedy for acting boldly with the opportunity given him through the Cuban missile crisis: the opportunity “to change the course of events by one dramatic move.” Kissinger's praise was rooted in his personal philosophy which emphasized the ability of individuals to shape the flow of history through purposeful
action. “The President's stroke demonstrated that a great power leads not so much by its words as by its actions, that initiative creates its own consensus.” he wrote. By praising the President's actions, Kissinger was chiefly praising his activism and imagination. Most importantly, he was grateful that Kennedy “exploded the myth” that the Soviets would take greater risks than the United States, again showing the activism and initiative of the United States to push beyond the status quo in this situation.¹¹⁹

While Kissinger gave Kennedy the credit for victory in the Cuban missile crisis, he was also shocked by the Soviets' stupidity in initiating the crisis, calling their mistake a “colossal blunder.” Interestingly, he attributed the mistake to Soviet leadership falling victim to its own propaganda. He called this problem, when those on top are told only what they want to hear, the “disease of dictatorships.” Kissinger contrasted this failure on the part of the Soviet leadership to Kennedy's victory. Not only did Khrushchev mistake his own propaganda for the truth, but he also misread “the character of the President and the mood of the country,” which was to stand triumphantly in the face of risk.¹²⁰

This rare positive account of American action in the Cold War displayed Kissinger's belief that the country could indeed succeed in the Cold War if it mustered the initiative to act with purpose and conviction. Further, he showed that despite the President's position in the midst of a controlling bureaucracy, he still had the power to make important decisions and to use his character and will to lead the nation towards its long-term goals. While Kissinger would often implicate that the Soviet system of leadership was superior to the American system its flexibility, in this case he emphasized

¹²⁰Ibid.
his preference for the democratic system because of the character of its leaders.\textsuperscript{121}

Kennedy's actions not only displayed to the Soviet Union the confidence and boldness of the United States, but also illustrated to European allies and uncommitted nations the American capacity for leadership. As Kissinger expressed in earlier works, he feared that European allies and developing nations were beginning to lose confidence in the United States and would turn to the Soviet Union on their own terms. Now, he saw Kennedy's boldness in Cuba as a "chance to vindicate the leadership of the West" and an opportunity to create a stronger Western alliance. The time was especially opportune because it had a "moral basis," or underlying purpose that would allow the alliance to pursue their aims "with greater moral conviction."\textsuperscript{122}

The victory of the United States in the Cuban missile crisis would also allow for fresh dialogue among its citizens on its hopes for the future. Kissinger encouraged Americans to discard the empty adjectives "tough" and "soft" policy in these conversations, and to focus on defining the substance of their policies.\textsuperscript{123} Again, Kissinger's suggestions revealed an emphasis on the necessity of conception and purpose over technicalities in American policy-making.

Kissinger thought that Americans could only fulfill the new opportunity for leadership if they dropped their insistence on certainty in policy-making and realized that they needed to learn how to deal with the unexpected, like the Cuban missile crisis, by creating a strategy in advance. Rather than returning to the "weary treadmill of proposals" that he had witnessed in the Kennedy administration, Kissinger encouraged

\textsuperscript{121}Ibid., 22.
\textsuperscript{122}Ibid., 24.
\textsuperscript{123}Ibid., 23.
American leaders to take the opportunity presented to them to define what they stood for, and not what they thought the Soviets might agree on.\textsuperscript{124}

The ability of Americans to take up this opportunity especially depended on a change in attitude of American leaders towards conjecture. Kissinger expressed that “the dilemma of any statesman is that he can never be certain about the probable course of events. In reaching a decision, he must inevitably act on the basis of an intuition that is inherently unprovable. If he insists on certainty, he runs the danger of becoming a prisoner of events. His resolution must reside not in ’facts’ as commonly conceived but in his vision of the future.” This statement reveals a repetition of the themes of leadership from \textit{A World Restored} and “The Meaning of History.” These thoughts on leadership reflected his philosophy of human action, purpose, and conviction now translated to the leadership of a nation. Kissinger reconciled his idealism with the technical talents of the administration when he wrote that “most situations will prove more ambiguous, most opportunities will appear less clear. The challenge, then, is to couple the prudence, calculation, and skill of a government of experts with an act of imagination that encompasses the opportunities before us,” articulating a middle way that would allow the nation more flexibility without completely renovating its policy-making system.\textsuperscript{125}

Two months after writing on the Cuban missile crisis, Kissinger analyzed in another article how the Kennedy administration had used its opportunities in the Skybolt affair. After its victory in Cuba, Kissinger was disappointed in the administration's actions during the Skybolt affair. The affair concerned an American agreement to provide

\textsuperscript{124}Ibid., 24.  
\textsuperscript{125}Ibid.
Skybolt missiles to Britain, which the Americans did not follow through with because they discontinued the Skybolt missile. This broken promise caused a flutter of dissent in Britain. The affair dominated the conversation between British Prime Minister Macmillan and President Kennedy at their next meeting, although they initially planned to spend the time reassessing the world situation after the Cuban crisis. Kissinger complained that the resulting Nassau agreement, a plan in which the United States would supply Great Britain with Polaris missiles in place of the promised Skybolt missiles, was of “extraordinary ambiguity.” Kissinger saw that American statesmen had once again slipped into the habit of not clearly defining their strategies or goals.126

While the administration prided itself that the Nassau agreement was a “historic step toward Atlantic partnership,” Kissinger saw the affair as a step backwards in the making of an Atlantic alliance. Kennedy perceived the decision as a technical one, but Kissinger understood it as a political decision with wide-ranging consequences for other European nations. “This difference in approach,” he wrote, “is at the heart of the problems of the Atlantic Alliance.” He was first upset with the ambiguity of the document, writing that “we have changed our proposals to NATO so often that no one can tell any more what we want or believe,” again arguing for a clarification of doctrine in order to ensure progress towards ideals.127

Kissinger was also concerned with the impression the Nassau agreement left on other European allies. The American victory in the Cuban missile crisis showed the nation's allies that the United States had a capacity for bold leadership. Kissinger feared

127Ibid., 15-17.
that the Skybolt affair only underscored its earlier ambiguity and lack of sensitivity towards its European allies, diminishing the psychological victory of the Cuba crisis. For example, Kissinger thought that the French would “reason that if we behave so brutally even to Britain, which subordinated almost everything to its special relationship with us, what prospects are there for the Continental countries?” 128 Kissinger was again concerned with the lack of cohesion among the Atlantic alliance, for to him the restoration of the alliance was also the restoration of Western purpose. Only through a revival of the Atlantic alliance and a definition of its ideals could the United States purposefully counter the Soviet Union in the Cold War. He wrote that the Nassau agreement created “the urgency of reconsidering the assumptions and, even more, the spirit underlying our strategy,” hoping that Americans would go forth with a “less hectoring spirit.” This change in attitude would free American allies from their lack of confidence in American leadership and would restrain American statesmen from accusing its allies of irresponsibility. In this way, new opportunities could arise that would allow the alliance to discuss NATO strategy from the perspective of “what the alliance as a whole should really want.” 129 Kissinger hoped that despite the fumble of the Skybolt affair, a change of attitude could restore the purpose of the Atlantic alliance.

The same month he wrote on the Skybolt affair, Kissinger published an article in *Foreign Affairs* titled “Strains on the Alliance.” “Strains” went into further detail on the need for unity in the Atlantic alliance. Kissinger thought that many obstacles stood in the way of the consolidation of the alliance including internal division, allies' skepticism of

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128 Ibid., 16.
129 Ibid., 18.

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U.S. intentions, and especially French and German distrust of American negotiations on Berlin.\textsuperscript{130} In “Strains,” Kissinger argued that the United States could only benefit from the credibility it gained after the Cuban missile crisis if it made “an effort to understand recent European attitudes towards our policies.”\textsuperscript{131} He stressed the importance of understanding and sympathizing with European attitudes, again pointing out the importance of intangibles in policy. As he expressed in his comments on Cuba and Skybolt, he thought that only through a unified spirit and attitude could the Western alliance create a common strategy.

The first section of “Strains” dealt with the problem of the Berlin crisis. Kissinger criticized the Kennedy administration's acceptance of the status quo in Berlin, referring to a theme in \textit{A World Restored} about a nation's historical vision or historical experience to describe the situation in Europe. “The perspective of nations differs with the obligations, their geography, their history, and their power,” he wrote.\textsuperscript{132} In order to function as an alliance, its members needed to consider and not contradict the “deepest aspirations” of their partners. Kissinger asserted that the American hesitation during the Berlin crisis shocked the German people and sacrificed their basic interests as a people. The division of Germany would only further embitter the German people and feed the cycle of resentment that led to the Second World War. “The younger generation in Germany will not be forever content to pay for the sins of its fathers by being considered morally second-class.” Instead, Germany's historical experience, its “deepest aspirations,” needed to be considered in the creation of Western policy. The only way that the West could

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\textsuperscript{131}Ibid., 263.
\textsuperscript{132}Ibid.

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include Germany as a reliable member of the alliance would be to “treat her like one.”133 This intangible change in attitude would not only benefit the Western alliance, but would also keep the Soviet Union from appealing to German nationalism in bilateral negotiations.

Kissinger saw the bilateral negotiations of American leaders as especially harmful to the Atlantic alliance because U.S. allies could interpret the negotiations to mean that American statesmen were collaborating with the enemy at the expense of their allies. He was especially concerned that American statesmen did not use the talks to “define the West's conception of the future of Germany” or to “advance a program either for eventual German unification or for ameliorating conditions in East Germany.” Instead, American leaders let the Soviets call the shots by giving them the initiative to define the situation. “This set up a pattern of negotiations in which, in return for Western concessions, the Soviets would withdraw the threat which they themselves had initiated.”134 These complaints amounted to a lack of American activism, initiative, creativity, construction, and vision in the world scene.

Although Kissinger placed great importance on the Atlantic alliance, he saw the United States as its leader and expected the country to actively pursue its ideals, especially in the consequential area of Berlin. Again, the United States failed to live up to Kissinger's philosophy of reaching long-term ideals through specific steps. “Those who extol flexibility in the abstract, the political realists whose expertise consists in finding ways of adjusting to immediate pressures, are not always the most reliable allies

133Ibid., 269.
134Ibid., 267.
in time of crisis. We must take care lest in the effort to achieve short-range objectives we encourage a political style which in the long run may prove demoralizing for the West,” he wrote.135 This was a condemnation of the American strain of realism which adjusted to, rather than created, facts.

Kennedy's flexible response was also an issue that caused problems with allied nations. Flexible response represented Kissinger's thoughts in theory, but missed the point of being flexible by becoming caught up in technicalities. The most important thing for the Kennedy administration to do at the time was to not focus on technical solutions, but on over-all strategy to lead the alliance in the right direction. “We should be more concerned with political coordination than with technical safeguards,” he wrote of Alliance relations. This again defines Kissinger's philosophy: first conceiving of vision and purpose, then framing specific steps in order to reach those ideals. The Alliance first had to “define what Atlantic relationships should be like five or ten years from now.” Then, “leaders on both sides of the Atlantic” would need to “have the vision to develop common purposes and a structure to give them effect.” Whatever agreement the nations came to, Kissinger insisted that “a generous approach to our allies will in the long run prove the most productive.” A “generous approach” meant one in which the Americans relaxed their insistence on technicalities and began having an attitude more sympathetic to the desires of the European nations.136

In emphasizing the development of over-all strategy within the alliance, Kissinger was most concerned with confidence on both sides of the Atlantic in order to promote

135Ibid., 271.
136Ibid., 271; 280-281.
unity of vision and action and to guarantee the longevity of the Alliance. Technical problems could only be resolved within the development of a larger framework with a fully developed purpose, vision, and long-term goals. “If we wish to shape events, we can no longer rely on time to do our work for us,” he wrote. This again outlined Kissinger's philosophical concept of first conceiving of long-term ideals and then actively outlining specific steps to reach them.

While encouraging active statesmanship, Kissinger discouraged what he called “excessive realism.” “Excessive realism may well be the chief obstacle to realizing the opportunities before the West,” he wrote. This kind of realism kept leaders from recognizing the opportunities before them because they were inclined to working with the existing framework instead of constructing a new one. If they did not recognize this, they could confuse creativity with projecting the status quo into the future. To assert the need for statesmen to not get stuck in an overemphasis on realism, Kissinger wrote that “today we stand in danger of being mired by the prudent, the tactical or the expedient. What is needed now is an assertion of our future goals to give us perspective.”

Kissinger contrasted the difference between American and European leaders in order to highlight the American tendency towards excessive realism. Whereas American leaders' concept of reality were their daily cables and memos, these aspects of policy seemed particularly ephemeral to European leaders like Adenauer and de Gaulle. The reality of these European leaders was “their concept of the future or of the structure of the world they wish to bring about.” Americans' excessive pragmatism without purpose

137 Ibid., 281; 283.
138 Ibid., 285.
139 Ibid.
seemed pointless the European statesmen who created policy with the future in mind.

In order to be more like the Europeans, the United States would “have to lift its sights to encompass a more embracing concept than that which is today fashionable.” They would have to see the larger version of reality that Kissinger expressed in his undergraduate thesis, one that acknowledged purpose over technique and vision of the future over adjustment to the present. “There are two kinds of realists,” Kissinger wrote as a conclusion to “Strains,” “those who manipulate facts and those who create them. The West requires nothing so much as men able to create their own reality.”

Kissinger further elaborated on this concept in an article entitled “NATO's Nuclear Dilemma.” He described flexible response as changing the position of nuclear weapons from “sword” to “shield” and conventional forces from “shield” to “sword.” By switching the “sword” and the “shield,” flexible response heightened the tension between the allies. Europeans wanted to build up their own nuclear stockpiles to ensure their safety, while Americans wanted supreme command over nuclear weapons in the alliance. Kissinger asserted that the American desire for supreme control over nuclear weapons was unjustified, and that Americans needed to be more sympathetic to the political and psychological fears of their European allies. For example, if the Soviet Union attacked Europe, only the United States could decide when, where, and if to bomb. Europe did not want such an ambiguity of options after the second World War; they wanted to have a say in their own fate. “Europeans, living on a continent covered with ruins testifying to the fallibility of human foresight feel in their bones that history is more complicated than systems analysis...They do not believe that they must be able to describe the exact...

140 Ibid.
circumstances in which they might have to rely on their nuclear forces in order to wish to reserve some degree of control over their destiny,” Kissinger wrote. Further, the switch to flexible response caused Europeans to doubt the credibility of the American nuclear threat, and they began to fear the possibility that the United States might not counter attack if the Soviet Union bombed Europe.

Kissinger highlighted that the tensions between allies reflected the contrast between the European philosophy of history and the American preoccupation with the present. He equated American reluctance to grant European weapons for their own defense to thinking that they were “too irresponsible to be entrusted with the ultimate means for their protection.” This is how NATO’s problem was political and psychological, not technical. The two sides of the Atlantic needed to solve these problems of conception before they could be unified in their specific steps.

In many of his writings, Kissinger presented de Gaulle as a foil to American leadership. Unlike the Americans, who treated the problem of Germany as a technical problem, de Gaulle grasped that if the Germans felt like outsiders, they would not be reliable partners in the Atlantic alliance. Kissinger wrote that to de Gaulle “devising negotiation formulas on Berlin is less important than making the Germans feel that when under stress they do not stand alone.” In contrast, American leaders approached the problem with a “somewhat schoolmasterish” attitude, increasing the chances for irritation between the nations of the alliance and acting with a technical attitude and lack of sympathy for the European countries. The main difference between de Gaulle and

142Ibid.
143Kissinger, “Strains on the Alliance,” 266.
American statesmen was that of attitude. While de Gaulle understood the intangible elements inhibiting positive German relations, the Americans saw only the technical differences between the two and could not understand the existence of a reality beyond facts.

Kissinger pointed out that de Gaulle approached matters concerning his own country differently than American statesmen. “He has pursued a tactic of announcing a goal and then moving toward it without further discussion—regardless of the views or feelings of his allies.” Kissinger acknowledged this as an extreme, indeed “irritating,” approach to policy, and would eventually suggest that this attitude kept de Gaulle from achieving his goals because of its abrasiveness. Yet, Kissinger also found the essence of what he was asking the Americans to do in de Gaulle's actions. De Gaulle clearly defined his goals and actively moved towards them. This was the same “strength of character and vision” which he encouraged American statesmen to emulate.144

Kissinger depicted de Gaulle as a foil to American statesmen in order to show the creation of purposeful policy in action, and the flip side of the empiricism-idealism dichotomy. While American statesmen focused on the pragmatic conception of policy, de Gaulle saw his task as restoring the identity of France through his policies, approaching them with a more visionary mindset. Kissinger called de Gaulle an “illusionist” for his ability to do this so well. “In the face of all evidence to the contrary, he has striven to restore France's greatness by his passionate belief in it.” Policy for de Gaulle was pointless if it did not restore the soul of his nation or promote the “rediscovery of a

144Ibid., 271-272.
specifically French sense of purpose.” De Gaulle's conceptual policy-making thus created conflict between the pragmatic and visionary approaches to foreign policy.

Kissinger claimed that one reason for de Gaulle's intransigence with the United States was part of his strategy to recreate and nurture the sense of purpose in his country. De Gaulle's objective was pedagogical, as he strove to teach his demoralized country attitudes of self-sufficiency and independence after decades of fear and impotence. Kissinger admired de Gaulle's ability to shepherd the attitudes of his countrymen. A true leader, as Kissinger outlined in *A World Restored*, should be an educator for his people and a bridge to their future. Kissinger saw de Gaulle as a modern manifestation of this ideal leader. By saying that American statesmen “misread de Gaulle,” Kissinger implied that there was more to the French statesman than his frustrating personality. While the United States did not typically agree with de Gaulle's policies, Kissinger wanted Americans to see past these technicalities in order to realize a more important aspect of de Gaulle: his ability to lead his nation and create policy purposefully through an understanding of the interrelatedness of events and the intangibles of attitude, and purpose.

In order to restore the vitality of France, de Gaulle had to be a visionary and create his own reality. “De Gaulle has chosen to revitalize France by an act of faith powerful enough to override a seemingly contrary reality,” Kissinger wrote. He did this through vision, action, and the important element of inward purpose. “Grandeur is not simply physical power but strength reinforced by moral purpose,” Kissinger said of these

145Kissinger, “Illusionist: Why We Misread de Gaulle,” 70.
146Ibid.
elements. He then quoted de Gaulle to show de Gaulle's assessment of the necessity of a
human aspect, not abstract realism. “Yes, international life, like life in general, is a battle.
The battle which our country is waging tends to unite and not to divide, to honor and not
to debase, to liberate and not to dominate. Thus it is faithful to its mission, which always
was and which remains human and universal.”

The most important difference between de Gaulle and American statesmen, then,
was their differing perceptions of reality. De Gaulle was “the leader of a country...to
which the unforeseen is the most elemental-fact of history. American leaders while
personally humble are much more confident that they can chart the future. What cannot
be described concretely has little reality for them. Involved, ultimately, are differing
conceptions of truth. The United States, with its technical, pragmatic approach, often has
analytical truth on its side. De Gaulle, with his consciousness of the trials of France for
the past generation, is frequently closer to the historical truth.” In his praise for de
Gaulle's vision, Kissinger asserted that only through an incorporation of intangible, and
often idealistic, elements of humanity could foreign policy purposefully lead to the
fulfillment of a nation's ideals.

147Ibid., 70, 73.
148Ibid., 73.
Conclusion

A close reading of Henry Kissinger's early writings, including his undergraduate thesis “The Meaning of History,” his graduate dissertation on the statesmanship of Castlereagh and Metternich published as *A World Restored*, and his critiques of Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy's foreign policies, reveals a continuity of thought and a surprisingly optimistic worldview. This worldview manifested itself as Kissinger's philosophy of the individual in “The Meaning of History,” his ideals of statesmanship in *A World Restored*, and his call for American purpose in his modern foreign policy critiques.

Kissinger's belief in the progress of humanity towards ideals and the potential of individual action stands in stark contrast to many historians' conception of him as a cold-blooded practitioner of *Realpolitik* and a disciple of such realist statesmen as Metternich and Bismarck. A closer look at Kissinger's works shows that Kissinger eschewed an overemphasis on realism and thought that Metternich's statesmanship failed because of its lack of vision. Reflecting on the “Metternich theory,” or the accusation that he strove to be like the nineteenth century statesman in his own policies, Kissinger said in a 1978 interview that “Contrary to popular belief, a policy based on pure balance of power,” a central concept of realism, “is the most difficult foreign policy to conduct...it demands a total ruthlessness and means that statesmen must be able to ignore friendship, loyalty, and anything other than the national interest.”149 Rather than follow this paradigm, Kissinger

encouraged American statesmen to place emphasis on those seemingly “soft” or idealistic aspects of foreign policy such as friendship and loyalty.

In his books and articles on American foreign policy, including *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, *The Necessity for Choice*, and *The Troubled Partnership*, Kissinger argued that one of the United States' main problems was its inability to understand “soft” or idealistic concepts and to sympathize with those, especially Europeans and developing nations, to whom the intangibles of attitude, purpose, and a vision of the future were most important. Even as late as this 1978 interview, Kissinger acknowledged that balance of power was important, but thought that “if a balance of power becomes an end in itself it becomes self-destructive.”\(^{150}\) His priorities in foreign policy lay outside a calculable national interest and inside national purpose.

In 1968, Henry Kissinger agreed to act as national security advisor to incoming President Richard M. Nixon. This decision would forever change his life. Kissinger went from Harvard professor and public intellectual to one of the most powerful men in the world, with closer access to the President and hands-on policy-making opportunities than even Nixon's Secretary of State, William Rogers. Kissinger eventually replaced Rogers as Secretary of State and held his position through President Gerald Ford's administration. Kissinger's position in the White House allowed him to be an active participant in one of the most dangerous periods of American history. He created influential policies and dramatically changed relations with Asian and Latin American nations, the Soviet Union, and Europe. In addition, his consolidation of power within the White House, combined with the Nixon's Watergate scandal, caused many Americans to

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\(^{150}\)Ibid.
question the integrity of their governmental leaders. According to historian Jeremi Suri, Kissinger's policies and his wielding of power contributed to the turning away of a whole generation of Americans from politics.\footnote{Jeremi Suri, \textit{Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Detente} (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2003).} Kissinger's decisions as national security advisor and Secretary of State not only influenced the Cold War world, but continue to affect global relations and American politics today.

To agree with Kissinger's assertion that “the convictions that leaders have formed before reaching high office are the intellectual capital they will consume as long as they continue in office” is to agree that the the ideas outlined in this thesis were fundamental to Kissinger's later foreign policy decisions.\footnote{Henry A. Kissinger, \textit{White House Years}, 1st ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), 56.} This argument complicates the historical narrative of Henry Kissinger as the prototype of a realist statesman. It also prompts several questions that remain unanswered: What do these findings mean in light of Kissinger's actions while in office? How did his philosophy shape specific policies? Did his philosophical ideas change at any point in his career? How does he reflect upon these early philosophical musings now? While I regret that I could not address these questions due to the scope of this project, I look forward to resolving them in the future. In the meantime, I intend for the conclusions of this thesis to shed a new light on the mysterious figure of Henry Kissinger. Not only should they add to the understanding of Kissinger, but they also question generally held assumptions and clear up widespread misconceptions concerning the nature of his ideas, worldview, and early writings.
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