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Abstract: Following a brief summary of Henry A. Kissinger's career, this paper describes six of his most pivotal negotiations: the historic establishment of U.S. diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, the easing of geopolitical tension with the Soviet Union, symbolized by the signing of the first Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty ("SALT I"), the limited success of the SALT II negotiations, the mediation after the 1973 Arab-Israeli war of the agreement on Sinai disengagement between Egypt and Israel and of the Israel-Syria Separation of Forces Agreement, and the Paris Peace Accords to end the Vietnam War. An appendix lists other important negotiations in which Kissinger played key roles. In subsequent papers (forthcoming), the authors will examine these and other major negotiations in which Henry Kissinger played leading roles in order to extract their most important insights into the principles and practice of effective negotiation.

Keywords: Kissinger, negotiation, bargaining, diplomacy, coercive diplomacy, multiparty negotiations, dispute resolution, mediation, international relations

Hosted in 2014 by the Harvard-based Program on Negotiation and the Future of Diplomacy Program's American Secretaries of State Project, Henry Kissinger is a statesman, scholar, and public intellectual. Born in 1923 to a German Jewish family in Fürth, Henry Kissinger emigrated from Germany to the United States in 1938 to avoid "state sanctioned anti-Semitism" by the Nazi government.¹ He became a naturalized United States citizen in 1943 and served in the Army from 1943 to 1946. After completing his education at Harvard (BA *summa cum laude* 1950, M.A. 1952, and Ph.D. 1954), he served as a faculty member in Harvard's Department of Government and its Center for International Affairs from 1954 to 1969.² As an academic, two of his early books are widely regarded as pathbreaking both conceptually and for their policy implications: *A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace, 1812–22* (1957) and *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* (1957).

Kissinger served as foreign policy advisor to New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller, who three times sought the Republican nomination for President.³ Despite his support of Rockefeller, a political rival, President Richard Nixon selected Kissinger, a prominent advocate of *realpolitik*, to serve as his Advisor for National Security Affairs from January 20, 1969 to November 3, 1975. While National Security Advisor, Kissinger was also sworn in as the 56th Secretary of State on September 22, 1973.⁴ After the Watergate scandal led to Nixon's resignation, Kissinger continued to serve as Secretary of State under President Gerald Ford until January 20, 1977. In this role, he flew 565,000 miles, once visiting 17 countries in 18 days.⁵

Throughout his time as National Security Advisor and Secretary of State, Kissinger exerted a strong influence on American foreign policy. He took the lead in conceptualizing and implementing the policy of détente with the Soviet Union, intended to relax dangerous tensions between the two nuclear superpowers.⁶ As part of this process, he negotiated the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (resulting in the SALT I treaty, elaborated below) and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.

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In tandem with working for détente with the Soviet Union, he played a central role (elaborated below) in helping to end 23 years of diplomatic isolation and mutual suspicion between the United States and China. Culminating in the 1972 summit among Richard Nixon, Chou (often transliterated as “Zhou”) Enlai, and Mao Zedong, this initiative led to formal relations between the two countries, helped the United States make progress in extricating itself from Vietnam, and transformed U.S.-Chinese-Soviet relations into a form of “triangular diplomacy.”

By 1973, following prolonged secret negotiations between Kissinger and Le Duc Tho, North Vietnamese politburo member, the Paris Peace Accords were signed. Intended to end the Vietnam war, this agreement led to a (temporary) ceasefire and was followed by the cessation of direct U.S. military involvement—though its major provisions were never implemented as intended.

Following the October 1973 Yom Kippur war among Israel, Egypt, and Syria, Kissinger engaged in an intensive process of “shuttle diplomacy.” His efforts over eight days in January 1974 led to an initial Egyptian-Israeli disengagement accord, followed by a Syrian-Israeli disengagement in May of that year, and a second Egyptian-Israeli disengagement agreement in September 1975.

Involved in many other foreign policy initiatives and negotiations, some of which are briefly described in the appendix of this paper, Dr. Kissinger received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1973 for his work on the Paris Peace Accords.⁷ Among other awards he has received are the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1977 and the Medal of Liberty in 1986. Since leaving office, Kissinger has served as Chairman of Kissinger Associates, a strategy consulting firm, and has been in demand publicly and by a range of national leaders around the globe for his analysis and advice on challenging foreign policy issues.⁸

A prolific author of 21 books and many articles, he is especially notable for his three-volume set of memoirs that chronicle his time in office, the first volume of which, *White House Years*, won the National Book Award.⁹ These volumes contain invaluable and detailed discussions of the many negotiations in which Kissinger was involved. His 1994 book, *Diplomacy*, offers a panoramic view of international relations, negotiations, and diplomacy, with special concentrations on the 20th century and the West. The book articulates Kissinger’s realist orientation, argues for the importance of the balance of power and the concept of “national interest,” and critiques both the practice of “collective security” and an overly idealistic foreign policy.¹⁰ From a realist perspective, *On China* (2011) examines Chinese history and Kissinger’s own experience with a forward look especially at U.S.-Chinese relations.¹¹ Most recently *World Order* (2014), published in Kissinger’s 91st year, offers a far more global and historical perspective on his traditional themes. This latest book explores the evolution, interaction, and possible futures of four “world order” conceptions. These include the Westphalian model, originating in Europe, of nominally equal sovereign states; the Chinese system envisioning the Middle Kingdom at its center with outlying tributary states; an expansive Islamic idea of a world community or *ummah*; and an American order heavily informed by the supposedly universal ideals articulated by Woodrow Wilson that both dominates the world and is under siege from many quarters.¹²

To offer a more granular sense of Kissinger as statesman, diplomat, and negotiator, the following sections will look in more depth at six key negotiations that took place within Kissinger’s overarching conception of statecraft and world order. These include the opening to China, SALT I in the context of détente, Sinai disengagement, Israel-Syria disengagement, SALT II, and the Paris Peace Accords to end the Vietnam War. In a subsequent paper (forthcoming), the authors will examine these and other major events in which Henry Kissinger played leading roles in order to extract their most important insights into the principles and practice of effective negotiation.

Opening to China (1969-72)

On July 9, 1971, Henry Kissinger stepped off of a plane borrowed from the president of Pakistan, onto the tarmac in Beijing.¹³ Arriving in secret, the first senior American official to engage in talks with the Chinese government in two decades, he was greeted with warmth and hospitality, and taken to the State Guesthouse to await the arrival of Premier Chou Enlai.¹⁴ It was a far cry from the initial attempts at fostering negotiations between the United States and China, which had broken off formal relations from one another a generation earlier. The two nations' delegates had been so isolated from one another for so long that an American diplomat's (authorized) attempt at outreach caused his panicked Chinese counterpart to flee a fashion show, pursued by the American, who shouted his hope to establish a channel for high-level talks on behalf of the President of the United States.¹⁵

By the time Kissinger became Richard Nixon's National Security Advisor in January 1969, the United States had been engaged in largely formulaic talks with People's Republic of China (PRC) for a number of years.¹⁶ In over 134 sessions periodically held in Warsaw, U.S. support for an independent Taiwan, vehemently opposed by China, was publicly declared to be the reason for both sides' entrenchment. Over time the talks had devolved to the statement and re-statement of unchanging positions on both sides.

An array of significant issues compounded and exacerbated the isolation of one nation from the other. The United States ideologically opposed the Communist leadership of China, and believed that the PRC was intent on spreading communism across the region. American leaders found affirmation for this suspicion in Chinese support for the North Vietnamese regime, whose resistance to the American-supported South Vietnam had resulted in a military quagmire that caused growing domestic instability in the United States. The Cultural Revolution, a series of violent social and political policies implemented by PRC Chairman Mao Zedong further fed American fears that the Chinese leadership would sacrifice millions of its own people – and consequently people of other nations – to impose its vision of communism on the world.

In the Americans, Beijing saw an equally ideologically driven opponent, willing to undertake brutal means to achieve its ends. Mao, Chou, and other PRC leaders found support for their beliefs in the Vietnamese conflict, which they related to the Korean War that had led to the rupture in diplomatic ties between the two nations in the early 1950s.¹⁷

Yet the Americans did not know the full extent to which relations between the PRC and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) had been deteriorating, and this widening Sino-Soviet rift proved fateful for a thaw in relations. Both Communist in ideology, the PRC and USSR comprised a formidable alliance in opposition to the United States, but relations between the two nations had begun to worsen in the early 1960s. The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, which caused serious concern in the United States, also outraged the PRC, which believed it signaled the beginning of Soviet aggression against fellow communist nations. Soviet justification for the move, announced in November 1968 as the "Brezhnev Doctrine," further confirmed Chinese suspicions by formally asserting the Soviet Union's right to intervene in Communist countries in order to suppress opposition movements.¹⁸

Suspicion exploded into outright conflict when skirmishes broke out between Chinese and Soviet forces along the Ussuri River in Siberia from March to May 1969. Tensions escalated further when the Chinese counterattacked to signal that it would defend its borders. Intended to warn the Soviets off, the move resulted in the complete opposite effect. The largest two Communist countries in the world were now locked in a military standoff – some 658,000 Soviet troops confronted 814,000 Chinese troops along the border – that led to clashes with significant casualties on both sides.¹⁹

Pressured to declare an American stance on the Sino-Soviet split, Kissinger and Nixon reflected on the right policy, should the conflict widen between the two countries. Paramount among their objectives was

constraining the expansion of Soviet influence. To that end, Kissinger and Nixon supported leaning in favor of the Chinese, something Nixon had already largely favored.

Little did they know that Mao was simultaneously attempting to signal a willingness to negotiate a significant thaw in relations between the two nations, which had often mainly consisted in insults hurled at each other. Taking stock of the geopolitical situation, Mao feared that only a few shifts in the international order could result in war on nearly every one of China's borders. He looked to the United States as a potential ally, and like his American counterparts, believed that a substantive, public agreement would offset the significant pressures against his regime, especially from the Soviets. In September 1969, Mao's advisors produced a report confirming this position and suggesting that despite its outward hostility toward Beijing, the United States would not want to see China destroyed in a Sino-Soviet war because it would result in accumulation of geopolitical power in Moscow.

In the context of these barriers, the two sides warily and somewhat blindly approached one another. Overly subtle and occasionally dismissed too hastily, Chinese overtures to the Americans often went unnoticed. American attempts, as the Warsaw fashion show revealed, were unsuccessful, and the Warsaw talk channel collapsed as a useful conduit not long after.²⁰ Kissinger realized that a limited number of secure interlocutors were needed for relaying a more overt message to the Chinese leadership. He quickly identified Romania, a communist country, and Pakistan as ideal nations through which to send messages. Neither nation was aligned with the United States, but both also had some contact with China and would not be seen as unconditional Soviet allies. In a series of preliminary exchanges, the United States communicated through Romania and Pakistan, and the PRC replied through Norway and Afghanistan.²¹ Within a matter of months, a message came through from Premier Chou, inviting the United States to send a representative to Beijing. A subsequent message conveyed an invitation to Nixon. Chou wished to discuss Taiwan, but Nixon and Kissinger read more into his letter.²²

They replied, testing to see if Chou would be open to a broader agenda and received positive signs. Seeing the need for absolute secrecy, and fearful of the ideological objections of Secretary of State William Rogers and a range of likely domestic opponents, Kissinger boarded a plane in early July with a handful of aides and Secret Service agents, and set off on a routine diplomatic mission that would end in Pakistan.²³ At each stop the press lost interest in their mission, until the party, only some of whom knew more than part of what was up, could quietly board the president of Pakistan's plane and slip into China on July 9.²⁴

Meeting with Chou, he swiftly abandoned his prevailing assumption of Chinese hostility as his counterparts made great efforts to put him at ease. Initially concerned by the lack of scheduled time for negotiations, Kissinger realized that Mao and Chou's approach was not meant to placate him, but rather to signal a willingness to learn more about each other, especially fundamental views of the international system, after many years without direct communication.

In the formal negotiating sessions that followed, Kissinger and Chou discussed the two most pressing issues—Taiwan and Vietnam—but in terms favorable to both. Kissinger found an easy counterpart in Chou. Both negotiated their most important issues largely by talking around them, linking them to major priorities they both knew to be most significant. Kissinger tested Chou's desire to negotiate matters other than Taiwan, and received a favorable reply. Chou would negotiate Taiwan, but was not concerned by the order in which it would be negotiated. Other issues could come first. Kissinger saw an opportunity to link concessions on Vietnam to concessions on Taiwan, dubbing Chou's position, "linkage in reverse."²⁵

As his visit came to a close, Kissinger drafted an agreement with Chou, to be announced by the leaders of both nations. Knowing of Nixon's longstanding interest in China, Mao would extend an offer for a state visit. Richard Nixon would agree. The normalization of relations between the United States and the People's Republic of China was a prospect for the first time in twenty years. On July 15, both nations made the announcement.²⁶

Kissinger immediately set about planning an interim trip, during which the significant details of a communiqué would be prepared in advance of Nixon and Mao's formal negotiations. Returning to China in October, he found a much less harmonious capital. A shakeup in the leadership of the PRC had raised tensions as he set about negotiating the basis of the agreement. Kissinger reflected on his negotiations with Chou:

I soon found that the best way to deal with him was to present a reasonable position, explain it meticulously, and then stick to it. I sometimes went so far as to let him see the internal studies that supported our conclusions. Chou acted the same way; the suicidal method was sharp trading. On one occasion when negotiating the Shanghai Communiqué I objected to two sentences in the section of the communiqué explaining the Chinese point of view. Though we were not responsible for what the Chinese said, I thought that it would lead to controversy in a joint communiqué. I offered to give up two sentences in the section stating the American position in return. "Give your two sentences to your President if you wish," said Chou impatiently. "I do not want them. You do not have to trade; all you have to do is to convince me why our language is embarrassing." He was as good as his word; the most egregious passages disappeared.²⁷

At the outset, Kissinger proposed a relatively bland, formal unified statement on the shared positions of both nations. In return, he left the statement of a position on Taiwan blank to signal a willingness to shift the American position in order to find agreement with the PRC. Chou's reply was a firm rebuke. He demanded that each side state its positions, both common and conflicting, on key issues. Stunned at first, Kissinger realized that Chou's demand would not substantively alter either side's position going forward, but could limit internal dissent from hardliners. Kissinger later remarked on the unprecedented structure of the Shanghai Communiqué, completely unlike the relatively anodyne joint statements that often followed U.S.-Soviet meetings:

[The] Shanghai Communiqué . . . was to provide a road map for Sino-American relations for the next decade. The Communiqué had an unprecedented feature: more than half of it was devoted to stating the conflicting views of the two sides on ideology, international affairs, Vietnam, and Taiwan. In a curious way, the catalogue of disagreements conferred greater significance on those subjects on which the two sides agreed. . . . Stripped of diplomatic jargon, these agreements meant, at a minimum, that China would do nothing to exacerbate the situation in Indochina or Korea, that neither China nor the United States would cooperate with the Soviet bloc, and that both would oppose any attempt by any country to achieve domination of Asia. Since the Soviet Union was the only country capable of dominating Asia, a tacit alliance to block Soviet expansionism in Asia was coming into being.²⁸

Four months later, Nixon and Kissinger followed the preliminary meeting with a five-point statement on Taiwan, setting the stage for Nixon's state visit. Arriving in Beijing in late February, Nixon and Kissinger proceeded to the residence of Mao Zedong, and were greeted effusively by the ailing leader. Speaking in circuitous parables, questions, and statements, Mao invited negotiation with Nixon, signaling that no further agreement would be needed than the visit itself, should an agreement fail to be reached. In the long term, he conveyed, the two nations would draw together.

In the ensuing negotiations, Nixon and Mao talked extensively, educating one another about each other's positions, while leaving the detailed negotiations to Kissinger and Zhao. Within days, the Shanghai Communiqué was finally agreed upon, stating each side's positions, an agreed position, and a way forward on Taiwan.²⁹

In five points, the United States pledged to support a unified China with Taiwan, significantly reduce support for Taiwanese independence groups, gradually reduce U.S. military personnel in Taiwan, and

encourage regional peace and security.³⁰ Moreover, both sides agreed to open formal diplomatic ties, and to avoid the pursuit of regional hegemony at all costs.³¹

Kissinger later wrote that, “[d]espite occasional tensions, the Shanghai Communiqué has served its purpose.”³² Nixon’s visit and the communiqué succeeded in achieving Kissinger’s immediate goals, linking an agreement on Taiwan to a tacit agreement by the Chinese to cease supporting the North Vietnamese. Both sides stood to gain by checking the aggression of the Soviet Union, and by doing so in a way that de-escalated a growing military crisis.

Not without its costs, the agreement necessitated an uncomfortable reorientation of American and Chinese interests away from allies in order to pursue long-term stability, and that stability remains tenuous four decades later. Nevertheless, Kissinger could confidently reflect that his efforts had a substantial long-ranging effect on relations between two of the world’s largest nations.³³ The opening of China was, he later wrote, “one of the few occasions were a state visit brought about a seminal change in international affairs. The reentry of China into the global diplomatic game, and the increased strategic options for the United States, gave a new vitality and flexibility to the international system.”³⁴

Negotiating SALT I Within Détente

On January 20, 1969 Henry Kissinger assumed the post as National Security Advisor. That afternoon, President Richard M. Nixon had been sworn in to his first term. The task of crafting American national security policy was now Kissinger’s responsibility. Of the many issues before him, nearly all connected to the bitter, decades-long ideological tensions between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Epitomized by the nuclear arms race, the Cold War imperiled all of human existence. As Kissinger reflected on the challenges ahead, the Soviets unexpectedly seemed to signal a willingness to begin negotiations on the mutual reduction of nuclear arsenals. For the first time in a generation, a Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) appeared to be conceivable.³⁵ It would fall to Kissinger to make it a reality.

Negotiating SALT was an unprecedented opportunity and also an unenviable task. Over the preceding years, the United States had slipped behind the USSR in the arms race. In 1967, President Lyndon Johnson’s administration had imposed a cap, limiting the American arsenal to 1054 Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) and 656 Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs).³⁶ Research and development for new weapons systems continued, but most projects would take years to produce tangible results. Out of concern that a Soviet strike could eliminate the potential for a counter-attack, the United States continued to develop defense systems, specifically Anti-Ballistic Missile Defense Systems (ABMs), but little else. While American weapons production stalled, the Soviets deployed new weapons at a growing pace.³⁷ It was evident to Kissinger that the Soviet arsenal could soon surpass the American one.

How to deal with the growing disparity remained a contentious issue within the government. Liberal leaders demanded that the United States unilaterally draw down its existing stockpiles of weapons and cancel expensive research and development programs. By contrast, conservatives and military leaders sought rapid expansion of the U.S. arsenal.³⁸ The dichotomy between the two sides reflected a larger Cold War political dynamic.

In late 1949, the Soviets had broken the American nuclear monopoly, succeeding in producing an atomic bomb, precipitating the arms race. Thereafter the relationship between the two powers had been characterized by the wholesale creation of weapons stockpiles and an escalation of tensions amidst a global standoff between both sides’ proxies and allies.³⁹ Jockeying directly and indirectly for influence with other countries, the standoff sometimes exploded into open warfare, as in the case of the Korean War (1950-53), which claimed millions of lives.⁴⁰

By 1969 the distance and communication gap between the Soviets and Americans was so great that Kissinger remarked, "We had no good evidence concerning the attitudes of Soviet leaders [...] and the distribution of power within the Soviet leadership."⁴¹ He believed that a new way forward was needed, even if it meant going against prevailing wisdom, but the United States was in a difficult position.

Providing massive arms supplies to the North Vietnamese, the Soviets were contributing to a costly military quagmire in Southeast Asia that had radically destabilized the American political and social landscape at home.⁴² Soviet support for Egypt threatened American allies and strategic energy interests in the Middle East. Moreover, each year the United States Congress reviewed the defense budget, including financial appropriations for nuclear weapons. With a Republican president in power, the Democratic-controlled Congress appeared eager to cut the budget one program at a time, tying Nixon's hands as he contemplated negotiations. Kissinger believed that there was only a small window of time to negotiate before Congress began to defund programs needed for bargaining with the Soviets.⁴³ He also feared that the United States' was increasingly limited in its ability to counter a powerful Soviet advance.

In the face of these challenges, Kissinger proposed a deceptively simple strategy to Nixon. Unlike previous administrations, the United States would no longer rely on sending signals to the Soviets through unilateral actions, belligerent or otherwise. Nor would policies focus on influencing the internal power structure of the Soviets in order to gain advantage.⁴⁴ Instead, the United States would engage in a policy of *détente*; a systematic attempt to reduce tension between the U.S. and Soviets. To do so, the United States would pursue concrete agreements on a range of substantive issues at once. "The Soviet leadership," he later wrote, "would find the new Administration prepared to negotiate lasting settlements reflecting real interests."⁴⁵

Kissinger recognized that the Soviets had little desire to help the Americans find peace in Vietnam or reduce the threat of energy instability caused by ongoing disputes in the Middle East. Yet there were other issues where he saw that settling particular disputes was possible and could create opportunities for progress on negotiations that were deadlocked. He called this approach "linkage."⁴⁶ Visiting and re-visiting the possibility for openings on various fronts, and using linkage to advance *détente*, Kissinger believed the United States could effectively deal with the Soviets.⁴⁷

Within weeks of the Soviet overture on SALT, Kissinger replied to his counterparts, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko and Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin, but their response was cool and cautious.⁴⁸ Their apparent willingness to negotiate increasingly seemed to have been an attempt to sow discord among the Americans. In reality, fearful that a failed resumption of talks might encourage Nixon initiate a renewed U.S. commitment to producing weapons, the Soviets were concerned that an arms escalation would destabilize their already economically weakened government. In Kissinger's view, they had paid a price for their gains abroad and might benefit from agreements that would reduce higher long-term spending and bring much-needed revenue into their treasury.

In the face of Soviet reluctance, Kissinger pursued SALT, spearheading a newly created presidential panel on arms reduction in order to consolidate control over his many disparate and often disruptive American counterparts. He had frequent back and forth exchanges with Dobrynin and Gromyko.⁴⁹ A round of preliminary talks followed in November, 1970 in Helsinki, Finland, with the purpose of clarifying the two sides' positions.⁵⁰ The communication between both sides was encouraging, but Kissinger believed that firm proposals for an agreement continued to be too elusive.

Kissinger wanted an agreement to limit or freeze production and deployment of existing weapons and defense systems for five years, in part to allow the United States to develop new technologies and eliminate any Soviet military advantage. The Soviets wanted an agreement only on defensive Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems, so that they could continue to deploy offensive weapons. Kissinger refused, but faced a significant problem.⁵¹ The Soviets would not negotiate both issues in tandem, but wanted to negotiate ABMs first so

that they could reach an agreement and then stall subsequent negotiations over offensive weapons production. After months of negotiating, Kissinger was able to get a Soviet agreement to consider negotiating the two issues as a *de facto* package in close proximity.⁵² From there, the conversations stalled yet again, delayed by the Soviets, who felt that they could wait him out while U.S. domestic pressure built for “progress.”⁵³ Even repeated attempts to arrange a date for a substantive negotiating summit proved elusive. Kissinger recognized that a different approach was needed.

In order to reach a satisfactory agreement, Kissinger began looking for issues of interest to the Soviets, for the purpose of linking them back to the SALT talks in ways that might precipitate movement. Where the United States was weakened by Vietnam and had only precarious access to key foreign oil sources, the Soviets were in desperate need of financial stability that could only come from increased trade with Europe and the United States. To Kissinger this meant that the most promising issue to link to SALT appeared to be the long-simmering dispute between the Soviets and the western Allies over the status of Germany.⁵⁴

Following the end of World War II, the four Allied powers—America, the Soviet Union, France, and Britain—maintained military control over Germany. In the subsequent decade, a democratic West German state emerged alongside a pro-communist, Soviet-backed East German state, and tensions quickly grew between the two. Berlin became the focus of these hostilities.⁵⁵

To ensure security, the three non-Soviet powers retained military control over West Berlin while East Berlin was walled off by the Soviets. As a military protectorate, West Berliners were not recognized as citizens of the Bonn-based Federal Republic of Germany.⁵⁶ Throughout the 1960s, with Berlin surrounded and supported by endangered supply lines, the West Germans and Allies refused to settle significant territorial disputes and wartime claims with the USSR. In turn, without a settlement, the Soviets’ ability to trade with the Allies was severely restricted.

In 1969, West German Prime Minister Willy Brandt began a concerted effort to break the impasse with the East, proposing a series of treaties focused on reducing tensions by opening trade agreements, resolving disputed territorial claims, clarifying military arrangements, largely in an effort to keep the future possibility of a unified German state alive.⁵⁷ Brandt’s *Ostpolitik* would earn him the Nobel Peace Prize, but as Kissinger looked to dislodge the Soviets from their position on SALT, the United States opposed Brandt’s strategy. Now Kissinger realized that it could be time to carefully lift American opposition to *Ostpolitik*, reaching an accord on the status of Berlin, ways to supply it, and possibilities to open trade with the East.⁵⁸

Negotiating quietly with Dobrynin, Kissinger created a back channel in order to test ideas and agreements and prevent disruption from other senior Nixon administration officials, especially William Rogers’ State Department.⁵⁹ Only U.S. Ambassador Kenneth Rush, West German minister Egon Bahr, and Soviet Ambassadors Valentin Falin and Pyotr Abrasimov knew of the private discussions. Once items were settled in this back channel, these interlocutors would formally introduce them in public talks on Berlin. The “Channel,” as it came to be known, was quite effective. The Soviets proved eager to negotiate on Berlin and West Germany, quickly seeking agreement and displaying a willingness to discuss SALT in return. Throughout the spring of 1971, the two sides negotiated ways to reach agreement while saving face, crafting solutions like granting West German passports to West Berliners in lieu of fully recognizing the territory as part of the Federal Republic.⁶⁰

Yet there were setbacks to Channel negotiations. In May, 1970, without sufficient trust between the two sides, the Soviets attempted to destabilize Kissinger’s position by having Abrasimov reveal back channel matters during open negotiations. Kissinger was furious. Confronting Dobrynin, he warned that Nixon preferred the back channel and would be enraged by their actions. As a punishment, he slowed negotiations at a critical moment, refusing to communicate with the Soviets to prove the point. If the Soviets tried it again, he told them the Americans would stop negotiating on Germany.⁶¹

By early summer, the negotiations were once again on track and an agreement looked increasingly likely. The Soviets seemed eager, ceding most points on the status of Berlin. Yet when secretly agreed terms from the Channel were surfaced openly, U.S. officials treated the proposal as a starting place for negotiation, unaware that they were modifying a settled agreement. Kissinger and Dobrynin swiftly intervened, halted the negotiations, and reintroduced the Channel agreement, which was signed in September 3, 1971. Reaching the agreement, however, meant that Kissinger had to reveal the existence of the Channel to his U.S. Government counterparts.

Indirectly related to SALT, the Berlin negotiations became a significant parallel track that had a noticeable impact on accelerating substantive nuclear arms talks. "Linkage was working," Kissinger reflected, "only amateurs believe in one-sided deals."⁶² As the Berlin track of negotiations proceeded, more progress could be made on SALT.

By the summer of 1971, the Berlin talks had helped nudge the Soviets to agree to the *de facto* package, negotiating an offensive nuclear weapons treaty slightly prior to an ABM treaty. A summit was now needed in order to resolve three significant remaining issues: the duration of SALT's effectiveness, the number of SLBMs the Soviets would be required to dismantle, and the number of ABMs to be allowed. All of these required face-to-face negotiations. With each success on the German track, Kissinger urged the Soviets to set a summit date, but believing they had the, the Soviets stalled instead, steadfastly refusing to arrange a Moscow meeting.⁶³

In mid-July, the Soviets replied to Kissinger's most recent request for a summit date by making two demands while continuing to withhold a date. They told him that the United States must reach agreement on Berlin and must demonstrate a willingness to reduce tensions.⁶⁴ They did not know that Kissinger was in Beijing, preparing to reach an historic agreement to restore relations with the Chinese. When he replied to the new Soviet demands, it was thirty minutes before his public announcement of success in China. He told the Soviets that he had met their demands. An agreement on Berlin was coming, and now the United States was beginning to normalize relations with China, a significant counterpart, in order to de-escalate hostilities. It just so happened that the China deal threatened Soviet dominance. Kissinger had introduced China as yet another link; in short order, the Soviets proposed a date for the summit for the following year.⁶⁵

In the spring of 1972, Kissinger travelled to Moscow to prepare for the summit. For the first time he met directly with Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev, who had emerged from a power struggle as the most senior of the Soviet Union's powerful governing *troika*. To Kissinger's surprise, Brezhnev agreed to a five-year treaty, a reasonable negotiation of ABMs and the same limit on SLBMs as Kissinger's team had initially hoped to negotiate. As Kissinger departed for home, Brezhnev even provided him with a formal statement reiterating the basic framework for the May 23 Moscow summit.⁶⁶

Kissinger returned to the United States having advanced the SALT negotiations to a final round. Using the Channel, he had consolidated bureaucratic and political control of the negotiations on the U.S. side, managing the flow of critical information through his own team and crafting proposals outside of conventional thinking while maintaining a close connection with the President Nixon. In so doing, he prevented others, especially his rivals in Congress, political opponents, and Secretary of State Rogers from upsetting the delicate links he had forged between each set of issues. Increasingly, he was free to make decisions without intervention, even when his decisions raised alarm among fellow foreign policy officials and domestic constituencies.⁶⁷

The negotiation of SLBMs was perhaps most emblematic of Kissinger's freedom within the process. To many within the American foreign policy leadership, he appeared to make a terrible blunder early in negotiations with the Soviets, accepting the notion of a provision for freezing the production of offensive

SLBMs. Senior American military leaders were appalled, because they saw the production of SLBMs as vital. In actuality, Kissinger had made no mistake at all.

The Soviets were deploying one hundred new SLBMs each year. The United States was not deploying any. With a new SLBM program in development, the United States would not be able to deploy new weapons until 1978, one year after agreed end date of the treaty. Where others saw a miscalculation, Kissinger realized that, “for [the United States] the sacrifice was theoretical,” and the gain was significant.⁶⁸ The United States would fall no further behind the Soviets in the production of actual armaments, while retaining the right to plan the development of new weapons that could be built after the expiration of SALT.⁶⁹

Negotiating in Moscow, agreement was steadily reached on the freezing of ICBM development, dismantling of SLBMs and other weapons, and a limitation on ABMs. As agreed, the treaty would last for five years. All that remained was agreement on limiting the size of missile silos. At a critical moment, Kissinger reminded his Soviet counterparts that any delay would go against the previously expressed views of their own Premier. Brezhnev had asked that the negotiations conclude by May 26. The last impasse was quickly surmounted and an agreement on SALT was reached in time for a Soviet state dinner on Friday, May 26, 1972.⁷⁰

In a negotiation lasting over two and a half years, Kissinger created potential for a deal by allowing the implicit threat of increased U.S. arms production to persist while linking SALT to negotiations in over trade, the status of Germany, and relations with China where none had previously existed. There were certainly drawbacks to his approach. He later reflected that the process, especially the Channel was imperfect. It freed him from the cumbersome, overly-ideological, and slow-moving bureaucracy of government, but also placed a large burden on him and his staff, and made it difficult for him to gain the support—or potentially useful perspectives—from other government officials on matters that ultimately required public, official assent.⁷¹

Yet the outcomes also affirmed the success of his efforts. SALT I was a defining agreement of the Cold War and one of the most significant disarmament treaties in modern history. Its stipulations ultimately paved the way for future treaties on nuclear disarmament, including SALT II, an agreement signed by President Jimmy Carter in 1979, though not ratified by the U.S. Congress, banning most new missile production by the United States and the Soviet Union.⁷²

Kissinger’s approach to linkage and the resulting SALT agreement generated significant opposition both among conservatives and liberals in the United States, but achieved the fundamental aims of *détente*. As a result, his actions reconfigured a previously unsuccessful American foreign policy that had been mired in recriminations over Vietnam, redefined black and white conceptions that had dominated U.S.-Soviet as well as U.S. Chinese relations, and froze substantial Soviet weapons development. Kissinger could reflect that, “Never before have the world’s two most powerful nations, divided by ideology, history and conflicting interests, placed their central armaments under formally agreed limitation and restraint.”⁷³ These actions, set in motion by SALT and Berlin, and boosted by the Nixon-Kissinger Chinese initiative, set the stage for the United States ultimately to take a dominant role in ending the Cold War.⁷⁴

SALT II

Given the successes of *détente* and the SALT I negotiations, there was momentum and support for continued SALT II negotiations by senior American officials in the late spring of 1972. Despite support for continued talks, there were significant divisions within the Nixon Administration regarding the formal position the United States should put forward.

Defense Department officials favored an agreement that would equalize American and Soviet weapons development. State Department officials preferred a position urging freezes on weapons development. Facing the beginning stages of the Watergate controversy that would lead to his resignation, Richard Nixon delegated the decision-making to a reluctant National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger, whose task to resolve the positions and put forward a unified opening position.⁷⁵

Kissinger refused to take the onus entirely upon himself, noting that, "Presidential assistants can be powerful in influencing Presidential decisions; they cannot make the decisions, especially when major departments have strong convictions."⁷⁶ The convictions of the departments were particularly strong due to Kissinger's mounting record of achieving major negotiated agreements largely in secret. As result, the two positions Kissinger was confronted with were maximalist, and in his view, largely irreconcilable.⁷⁷

The State Department's proposal to ban multiple independently targetable reentry vehicle (MIRV) weapons testing would, in his opinion, be unacceptable to the Soviets at the outset, since they had not yet had the chance to develop one. The position would also endanger American development of the Trident missile.⁷⁸ This was particularly concerning to Kissinger because conventional forces were already in steep decline, giving the Soviets a natural advantage.⁷⁹

Kissinger believed that the Defense Department position was equally untenable. For years, the United States had pursued asymmetrical warfare strategies in their nuclear and related development programs. The department's new proposal, calling for an equalization of weapons on a weapon-by-weapon basis was tantamount to a complete reversal of this policy. Kissinger saw it as foolhardy and impossible, especially given the department's demand that no firm accounting of American weapons be presented to the Soviets for negotiation. With no numbers on the table, he could not conceive of how to achieve the equalization they sought.⁸⁰ Moreover, Kissinger was alarmed to discover that the Defense Department was simultaneously decommissioning weapons that could be used for bargaining in the SALT talks, effectively giving concessions to the Soviets that created a disincentive for a strong agreement.

Nevertheless, negotiations commenced in October 1972 with the Soviets putting forward an opening offer to restrict weapons development and have the United States pull ballistic missiles from its forward bases.⁸¹ Unable to come up with a reasonable counteroffer, Kissinger stalled for time. He asked for a November 8 "exploratory" meeting with the Soviets to better understand their position. For six months thereafter, he and his team avoided returning to negotiations while they attempted to come up with a position.⁸²

As pressure mounted on Nixon, Kissinger was dismayed to find the president unable to broker a compromise between his secretaries. To his relief, however, he came to realize that the Soviets seemed equally disinterested in renewed SALT negotiations.⁸³ Instead, Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev was placing all of his energy into negotiations to reach an Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear war. Kissinger observed that Brezhnev only appeared to care for the SALT negotiations when and where they might create leverage for the other nuclear agreement.⁸⁴

The Soviets put forward a renewed offer in the spring of 1973, calling for a ban on all new strategic weapons development, but allowing for improvements to existing technology, which they claimed included all of their current test missiles.⁸⁵ Still unable to put forward a credible counter-offer, Kissinger chose instead to put forward a document that reflected the interests of all of the stakeholders. His May 3, 1973 offer called on the Soviets to stop all forms of weapons development while placing no restrictions on the United States. In addition, the proposal called for the Soviets to give up more than 5,000 warheads in return for only 450 American missiles. The Soviets made no reply to the offer.⁸⁶

Having traded offers in April and May, the talks stalled with no agreement. Instead, the two sides issued a joint statement of "general principles" in which they affirmed the right of both nations to pursue "equal security," and agreed to reach an agreement on strategic arms by the end of 1974, a condition that was

ultimately satisfied by the Vladivostok agreement.⁸⁷ SALT II was ultimately negotiated and signed by President Jimmy Carter and Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev in July 1977, however it was never ratified, by mutual agreement of Carter and the United States Congress.⁸⁸

Kissinger reflected that the failure to negotiate SALT II came about because, "Our deliberations neither rose to a true analysis of our long-term strategy nor addressed the fundamental question of whether a SALT negotiation was the right way to deal with our emerging security problems."⁸⁹ In the end, it was not a failure to reach an agreement with the Soviets that had doomed his efforts. Rather, he wrote, "we had explicitly failed to reach an internal agreement."⁹⁰

Sinai I and Mideast Peace

In October 1973, Egyptian and Syrian forces launched a full-scale military attack against Israel six years after their humiliating defeat in the 1967 War. Caught by surprise on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish year, Israeli forces were steadily pushed back from their positions. Many Israelis feared the destruction of their state before their armed forces regained ground and defeated both Arab armies. In the east, Israeli troops reached the outskirts of the Syrian capitol, Damascus. In the west, they surrounded Egypt's entire Third Army, only 101 kilometers from Cairo. By the end of the month, two resolutions passed by the United Nations Security Council resulted in a ceasefire. Egyptian and Israeli generals met at the front to discuss disengagement. For both sides the war was a partial victory at best: partially redeeming their near-total defeat in the 1967 war, the Arab armies had surprised Israel and inflicted heavy losses while the Israeli counterattack eventually prevailed.⁹¹ For Henry Kissinger, U.S. Secretary of State, this situation presented a major opportunity.⁹²

Following the ceasefire, multi-party talks convened in Geneva to hammer out a long-term solution to the Mideast conflict. Egyptian and Israeli negotiators were joined by their Cold War patrons, the Soviet Union and the United States, but Syrian leaders refused to participate and the talks collapsed in early January 1974.⁹³ Kissinger had correctly anticipated that multi-party talks would fail. Since early November, he had believed that an agreement for long-term stability in the region was possible only if the United States single-handedly brokered small, meaningful, incremental agreements between the Israelis and Egyptians.⁹⁴ Prepared to take the precarious role of sole mediator, Kissinger planned to use the process not only to reach agreements among the combatants, but to achieve a major geopolitical objective: to displace the Soviet Union from its Middle Eastern sphere of influence. Until the outbreak of war, the Soviets had used the years-long stalemate between the Arabs and Israelis to cultivate alliances with Arab nations, encouraging a status quo that effectively blocked the United States from gaining influence in the region. The war had suddenly dislodged the Arabs and Israelis from their positions. In its wake, Kissinger sensed an emerging opportunity if he could successfully pursue an agreement that largely met both sides' interests. He later explained

If the United States played its cards carefully, either the Soviet Union would be obliged to contribute to a genuine solution or one of its Arab clients would break ranks and begin moving toward the United States. In either case, Soviet influence among the radical Arab states would be reduced. This was why, early in Nixon's first term, I felt confident enough to tell a journalist that the new administration would seek to expel Soviet influence from the Middle East. Though that incautious remark created a furor, it accurately described the strategy the Nixon Administration was about to implement.⁹⁵

Kissinger's optimism about realizing these audacious goals was based on a careful assessment of each side's strengths and weaknesses. Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat were powerful and effective leaders and both had made gains in the October war. Despite the subsequent losses, Sadat showed that he was the *de facto* leader of the Arab Middle East, capable of coordinating a

multinational military assault that unified Arab nations, catching the Israelis entirely by surprise. In turn, Meir proved that Israel could defeat its enemies and even gain territory in the face of such a stunning initial setback. Israel now held the entirety of the Sinai desert, which had belonged to Egypt until the 1967 war. Despite these successes, Kissinger knew that both sides had emerged from the war in precarious positions.

The Israelis prided themselves on a robust policy of pre-emptive warfare, and were deeply shaken by the effectiveness of the Syrian and Egyptian surprise attack. Sadat had lost vital territory, and needed to grapple with issues that facing the long-term stability of a nation already beset upon by significant economic difficulties. Humbled by the inconclusive outcome, both sides faced long-term unrest within and across their borders, unless they could arrive at a diplomatic easing of relations.

In a moment of crisis following the war, Golda Meir's formerly powerful government coalition collapsed. A new government and parliament (Knesset) would take office at the end of January. Often comprised of unstable coalitions, Israeli cabinets were notoriously unstable and difficult to work with, but Kissinger observed that during times of transition, factionalism might give way to near-unanimity on significant issues. If the Israelis could be induced to make an offer on Sinai disengagement, he believed that Sadat would agree in the interests of long-term stability.⁹⁶

Meeting with Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan, Kissinger explored the possibility of an Israeli disengagement proposal. Dayan obliged, offering a hard line proposal, but one that Kissinger felt he could deliver to Sadat, albeit uncomfortably, in order to determine whether the Egyptian President would be amenable to further talks.⁹⁷ Arriving at Sadat's winter residence in Aswan late in the evening on January 11, he was quickly ushered in to meet with the President. Little more than two months earlier, Kissinger had set foot on the soil of an Arab nation for the first time.⁹⁸ Now, he and the Egyptian president spoke frankly with one another. Weeks earlier in Geneva, Sadat had hinted that if presented with a suitable agreement, he might go so far as re-opening the long-closed Suez Canal, a major concession to the Israelis. Now, he was prepared to do even more.⁹⁹

Beyond a disengagement proposal, Sadat told Kissinger that he intended to travel internationally on the 18th of January. He hoped to have a diplomatic victory in hand and to link it to his initial military success in the October war. He told Kissinger that he would support every effort to reach an agreement in just seven days, and hoped the Secretary of State would act as the intermediary. In return, he offered to pressure Arab leaders to ease their oil embargo of the United States, begun during the October war.¹⁰⁰

Kissinger was surprised, pleased, and wary all at once. He later reflected, "In my view, the Secretary of State should not, as a general rule, go abroad on a serious negotiation unless the odds are heavily in his favor. Since in diplomacy the margins of decisions are narrow, the psychological element can be of great consequence. A reputation for success tends to be self-fulfilling. Equally, failure feeds on itself: A Secretary of State who undertakes too many journeys that lead nowhere depreciates his coin. And it is dangerous to rely on personality or negotiating skill to break deadlocks; they cannot redeem the shortcomings of an ill-considered strategy."¹⁰¹ Despite the risks, the window of opportunity was too great. Kissinger accepted Sadat's proposal.

Kissinger returned to Israel with Sadat's offer in hand. In return he requested that the Israelis make a new proposal, more forthcoming than Dayan's original demands. The Israelis obliged, but handed Kissinger an even more austere proposal, telling him that the Dayan plan could be their fallback position. Kissinger was not amused. He argued that any proposal that could not be sold to a nation's people should not be seriously proposed to their leader. Access to Sadat, without the impediment of intermediaries, was already a concession. He would convey either side's proposals honestly, but he would not be set up to fail and be blamed.¹⁰²

Returning to the Tel Aviv airport, Undersecretary of State Joe Sisco joked with Kissinger, "Welcome to the Egyptian-Israeli shuttle!"¹⁰³ Shuttle diplomacy, in which a negotiator moves back and forth between

parties who will not or cannot meet face-to-face, ensued. Kissinger used the shuttle to create momentum for an agreement. He arrived late in the evening, often intentionally too late to negotiate, worked even later into the night, presented plans early in the mornings, and indefatigably wrote, revised, and redrafted proposals and agreements.¹⁰⁴ He encouraged a sense of momentum to develop between the parties, pushing beyond exhaustion, seeking the exact moments to withhold and reveal each side's demands and concessions. Focused on details as minute as individual troop placements, Kissinger even delayed landing his plane in Egypt while he worked, circling above the airport, to ensure the proper preparation of a proposal.¹⁰⁵

Fearful of any disruption, Kissinger sometimes even kept the White House at bay. When President Nixon, embattled by the Watergate scandal, got word that an agreement might be close, he requested that Kissinger return to the United States in order to publicly announce the potential impending agreement. Kissinger refused, telling the President that he would not leave until an agreement was signed.¹⁰⁶

As he travelled back and forth, Kissinger also steadfastly maintained an eye on his own standing. The fact that October war had ended in need of a diplomatic outcome—rather than in a bloody fight to the finish—was testament to the success of *détente*, which had curtailed military support from the Americans and Soviets to the Israelis and Egyptians respectively. Now Kissinger used the shuttle and the weakened ties between the Soviets and Egyptians to dislodge the U.S.S.R. completely from that part of the region. He avoided arousing undue suspicion by sending non-descript updates to the Soviets by way of a senior national security aide, Brent Scowcroft.¹⁰⁷

As January 18th neared, Kissinger narrowed the terms of an agreement. Both sides made significant concessions and a final proposal emerged. Egypt gained concessions to retain troops east of the Nile. Israel maintained control of the only major north-south road from its territory into the Sinai. Both sides agreed to an uneasy 30 km buffer zone, nearly out of easy striking distance for either military.¹⁰⁸

With documents shuttling back and forth in the hands of the Secretary of State, both sides allowed Kissinger to arrange two tracks of agreement. A formal, detailed document was developed for both sides to sign. Simultaneously, Kissinger secured Nixon's agreement to draft letters to both sides confirming Israeli and Egyptian commitments to significant concessions that could not be fully detailed without both sides losing face with their own constituencies.¹⁰⁹ Most importantly these included an Egyptian willingness to clear the Suez Canal and an Israeli agreement to reduce or cease hostilities.¹¹⁰

On January 17th, Kissinger arrived in Jerusalem during the first snowfall in decades.¹¹¹ He went to Golda Meir's residence with a proposal, approved by her cabinet. The ailing Prime Minister promised to take the agreement to conclusion personally and drafted a letter of gratitude to her Egyptian counterpart. For the first time in two decades, Israel had ceded land for peace.¹¹²

The next morning, seven days after Sadat's ultimatum, Kissinger delivered the agreement at Aswan while representatives of both governments signed it at the 101 kilometer marker where the war had ended. Reading Meir's letter, Sadat turned to Kissinger saying, "I am today taking off my military uniform—I never expect to wear it again except for ceremonial occasions. Tell her [Golda] that is the answer to her letter."¹¹³

Significant issues remained unresolved, most importantly an agreement for formal cessation of hostilities between Israel and Egypt. Yet the Sinai accords set in motion a series of agreements and commitments between Israel and Egypt that continued over the ensuing six years. Undertaken at significant cost, sometimes with deep misgivings, those agreements would directly lead to the assassination of Sadat in 1981. Despite the evident threat to their lives as they proceeded, they did so nonetheless, at many points affirming Kissinger's initial inclination that peace could be found, and culminating half a decade later with the 1978 Camp David Accords and the 1979 Egypt-Israel peace treaty.

The Israel-Syria Separation of Forces Agreement (1974)

With the signing of the January 1974 Sinai disengagement agreement, Egypt and Israel agreed to terms that would foster a lasting peace on that front in the wake of the Yom Kippur War. Yet violence continued along Israel's northern border, where Syria and Israel remained locked in a simmering standoff.

Syria's territorial losses from the October War were significant, compounded by a prior defeat during the 1967 war with Israel.¹¹⁴ After suffering early setbacks, Israeli troops had poured back across the Golan Heights along the border, and were now at a standstill, poised as close as twenty miles from the Syria's capitol, Damascus.¹¹⁵ When Syria refused an Israeli demand for the release of prisoners of war, Israel refused to concede territory that Syria wanted back.¹¹⁶ Amidst fears of renewed open warfare, skirmishes were on the rise.

Henry Kissinger understood that a peace agreement between Syria and Israel was necessary in order to stabilize the region and reduce tensions. Israel would have to concede many of its gains and Syria would have to match those concessions through direct negotiations, after more than a quarter century of refusing to recognize the Jewish state's existence. Yet, Kissinger knew that both countries had powerful constituencies who could pressure their weakened leaders to oppose negotiations.

Hailed at first for having won the war and for reaching the accord with Egypt, Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir was now blamed for having missed early warnings of the surprise attack. In early March, Meir resigned her post only to be called back, but she remained embattled.¹¹⁷

Across the border, the powerful and savvy Syrian President Hafez al-Assad was under pressure as well, having sustained a humiliating military defeat. Assad governed ruthlessly, later killing 10-25,000 of his own citizens in the city of Hama, but he was also a prominent figure among Arab leaders and known for his shrewd understanding of international politics.¹¹⁸ Even so, Kissinger was unsure whether the Syrian leader would accept conditions for a negotiation.

It was an equally challenging time for Kissinger. President Richard Nixon's attempts to spy on his opponents had been discovered during a botched break-in at the Watergate complex in Washington, D.C. His actions, and the subsequent cover-up, were the subject of a growing national uproar and a congressional investigation that increasingly threatened to lead to impeachment proceedings.¹¹⁹

Kissinger nevertheless sought to capitalize on the momentum of his successful shuttle negotiations in the Sinai, putting forward a plan to end the Syrian standoff. The plan included proposals for each side to provide a list of prisoners of war and the creation of a framework for multilateral security negotiations to take place in Geneva.¹²⁰ In return for his participation, Kissinger hoped to persuade Arab oil ministers to end a punishing embargo they had initiated through the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) during the Yom Kippur War.¹²¹

In February, Kissinger returned to the Middle East to gauge conditions for a negotiation. While there, and in subsequent meetings in Washington D.C., he found that both sides were cautiously amenable to a direct shuttle conducted personally by him. Kissinger was surprised. Syria was a close client state of the Soviet Union and the Soviet Ambassador to the United States had been very clear that he expected Soviet participation to be a cornerstone of any negotiations.¹²² He understood that the stakes would be higher for a lone American mediator, but that it was also an opportunity to further achieve the goal of reducing Soviet influence in the region.

On March 18, the oil embargo was temporarily lifted, and with it, Kissinger flung himself into his second shuttle in a year.¹²³ As he considered how to approach the negotiations, Kissinger was wary of mimicking the Sinai shuttle. "The Sinai disengagement had worked rapidly," he later reflected, "because both sides were eager for an accord."

“Neither the compulsions nor the convictions existed on the Syrian front. Both Syria and Israel – certainly Israel – considered the military situation quite tolerable. Neither believed that it was starting a new, much less an irreversible, process. [...] Assad was claiming in the negotiation what he had not achieved on the battlefield. To the Israelis, a Golan disengagement looked suspiciously like a unilateral withdrawal to enable Assad to proclaim that Syria had not fought in vain – not a compelling goal for the victim of surprise attack.”¹²⁴

With only a few months’ time until the oil embargo might be renewed, Kissinger’s window of opportunity to negotiate an agreement was not without its risks. As he made his preparations, Meir’s government collapsed again. In mid-April she announced that she would step down for good, pending the formation of a new government. She would conduct negotiations as a lame duck.¹²⁵ In the United States, Nixon’s situation grew more precarious with the release of the Watergate tapes.¹²⁶ Yet Kissinger continued to see the possibility for a sustainable agreement based on a careful and deliberate Israeli withdrawal.

Israel’s willingness to pull back was constrained by the presence of Israeli settlements and farmland that had been constructed on formerly Syrian territory, lost in the 1967 war. Israel would not consider giving them up, but Kissinger found potential for agreement if Israel withdrew from lands captured in 1973 and also included the now-abandoned Syrian border town of Quneitra, which had been taken in 1967.¹²⁷ The regional Syrian capitol, Quneitra had been home to tens of thousands of now-displaced Syrians. Located along the Syrian border, the town and the area surrounding it could provide the basis for a symbolically and strategically significant compromise for both sides.

If Israeli troops pulled back, they could continue to occupy nearby Mount Hermon, a militarily advantageous range of nearby hills and mountains overlooking the plateau of Syrian territory to the East. Meanwhile, the return of Syrian refugees to their homes could give Assad a symbolically meaningful victory. Along with an agreement to control the flow of weapons to either side, a similar balance as the one reached in the Sinai might be possible. Significant questions remained about whether the Israelis would be willing to give up land, whether it would be enough to satisfy the Syrians, and whether or not a means of exchanging prisoners could be reached even if territorial concessions were made.

Before travelling to Israel, he flew to Algeria and Egypt, consulting with the presidents of both countries.¹²⁸ With their encouragement, he remained hopeful as he entered the first round of negotiations with Meir on May 2.¹²⁹

Instead, Kissinger found Meir surrounded by aides and advisors, many of whom, he surmised, were opponents of any negotiated deal with Syria.¹³⁰ Meir agreed, in principle, to many of the initial terms of an agreement, but insisted on splitting control of Quneitra with a separation line. Kissinger was pleased that the Israelis would consider discussing Quneitra, but also knew that Assad would reject the proposal to split the city outright, so he suggested an approach drawn from the Sinai shuttle. He asked that the Israelis come up with a better offer. Until they did, he promised to tell Assad that they had not yet reached a point of having a specific position to put forward.¹³¹

When he arrived in Syria, Kissinger was equally challenged by Assad, whose lengthy negotiating sessions touched on dozens of issues but rarely those of importance in any substantial or direct fashion until very late in the conversations.¹³² Like Meir, Assad drove a hard bargain, demanding that Israel give up half the Golan Heights.¹³³

For weeks, Kissinger shuttled back-and-forth, trying to draw together the hardened positions of each side, yet no agreement emerged. In Israel, protestors assailed Meir and Kissinger alike.¹³⁴ In Syria, Assad warned Kissinger that he was in a precarious position for negotiating with the Israelis at all.¹³⁵

Two weeks into the negotiations, Kissinger had succeeded in narrowing the focus of the negotiations to the fate of Quneitra, but could not get either side to agree on what that fate might be. One of his aides,

diplomat Harold Saunders, recounted the exhausting preparations made in advance of each shuttle, so that Kissinger could respond to the unique challenges that might arise in any given discussion. In order to persuade Meir, Saunders recalled, “[Kissinger] stopped being the Secretary of State of the United States, who was trying to mediate an agreement. He became Doctor Kissinger, an American professor serving as a consultant to the State of Israel, who, incidentally, had shared the Jewish experience. This metamorphosis was done in a very impressive, subtle and admirable fashion. Everything he did was perfectly proper, but somehow he managed to change from his official role as a mediator to that of a counselor.”¹³⁶

Nixon, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, and others, supported his efforts, but despite the painstaking progress, he was ready to give up.¹³⁷ On May 15, an attack by the Palestinian Liberation Organization in the northern Israeli town of Ma’alot led to a standoff in which 16 Israelis children were killed by the terrorists.¹³⁸ Meir’s cabinet was consumed by the attack.

Just as a deal seemed completely out of reach, however, Assad asked Kissinger to stay on. At the same time, Meir’s aide, Simcha Dinitz paid the secretary a private visit and confided in him a piece of crucial information. Dinitz informed Kissinger that the reason the Israelis were refusing to fully evacuate Quneitra was because of its strategic location, which allowed them to maintain a military advantage over the Syrians without having to acknowledge that they otherwise lacked sufficient troops to maintain security along the border.¹³⁹

Kissinger reflected, “how much better it would have been,” if the Israelis had been forthcoming at the outset, but it was enough to persuade him to continue at an important moment.¹⁴⁰ He decided to jumpstart the negotiations by presenting, for the first time, a “United States proposal,” instead of presenting Israeli and Syrian offers and counter-offers to each side.¹⁴¹

The proposal moved the parties closer to an agreement, and persuaded the Israelis to consider, at long last, a withdrawal beyond the outskirts of Quneitra. For the first time in its history, Israel would cede cultivated fields and lands, but would retain three strategically important hills overlooking the city.¹⁴² Still, the two sides remained divided over how to handle cross-border terror and attacks, should they occur. Kissinger aggressively lobbied both sides, doing everything at his disposal to reach an agreement.¹⁴³ Yet he was also careful to ensure his credibility, presenting equal offers to each side, trying to find how, “why an agreed goal [could] be in the *common* interest for *different* purposes.”¹⁴⁴

The negotiations continued – a test of wills more than an argument over substance. In five days at the end of May, Kissinger spent fifty hours in talks with Israelis and Syrians.¹⁴⁵ By May 26, an agreement was within reach. Kissinger proposed a cease-fire that would include an American-backed provision for opposing “guerilla actions.” Twenty-four hours later, an agreement was drafted, including provisions for Israel’s withdrawal to the outskirts of Quneitra, a timeline, and requirements for limitation of arms. In a final, hours-long negotiation with Assad, concessions were made, and an agreement was reached.¹⁴⁶

Meir presented the proposal to the Israeli parliament, the Knesset, on May 30, and despite some objections, it was approved and signed by Israel and Syria on May 31, 1974.¹⁴⁷ Within days, a new cabinet was formed and Golda Meir stepped down as Prime Minister.¹⁴⁸ Henry Kissinger returned to the United States having been abroad for the longest continuous period of time of any Secretary of State since the end of World War I.¹⁴⁹ The provisions of the agreement allowed for an exchange for prisoners, and a buffer zone, in addition to setting the line outside Quneitra and allowing for Israeli positions at Mount Hermon.¹⁵⁰ Four decades after it was signed, it remains in effect.

Nixon reveled in the news of Kissinger’s success. Throughout the negotiations he had tried to insert himself in the details, in part as a distraction from his ongoing troubles at home, and also out jealousy and resentment for Kissinger’s success. As the negotiations came to a close, however, impeachment proceedings were underway in the United States House of Representatives. By the end of the summer, the president was forced to resign from office, handing the reins to Vice President Gerald Ford.¹⁵¹

The Paris Peace Accords (1973)

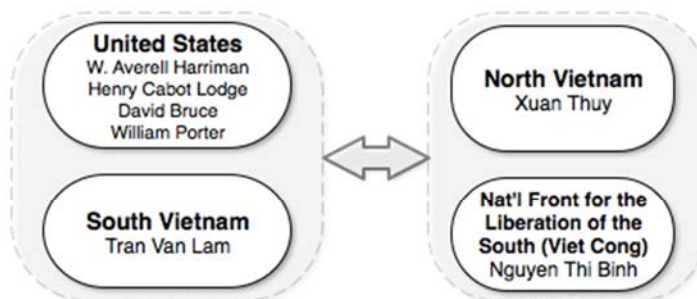
The signing of the Paris Peace Accords, officially called the “Agreement Ending the War and Restoring the Peace in Vietnam,” on January 27, 1973 marked a formal end to the agonizing war, which had claimed over 58,000 American and roughly 1,000,000 Vietnamese lives, left several hundred thousand Americans wounded, and deeply divided American society.¹⁵²

Two series of separate negotiations – one public, one secret – focused on ending the Vietnam War. The public sessions were attended by representatives of four parties: (1) the United States, (2) North Vietnam, (3) South Vietnam, and (4) the National Front for the Liberation of the South (or Vietcong).¹⁵³ These sessions convened for the first time in January 1969.¹⁵⁴ The signing of the Paris Peace Accords was one of the few productive sessions of these public peace talks; the previous 174 plenary meetings yielded virtually no results.¹⁵⁵

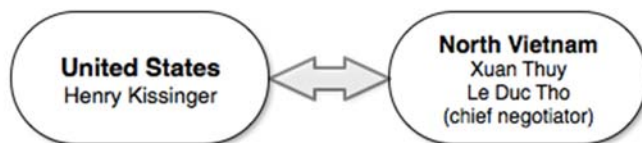
In parallel with these public talks, secret negotiations commenced in Paris, starting in February 1970. U.S. National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger and North Vietnamese Politburo member Le Duc Tho served as the dominant negotiators.¹⁵⁶ These secret negotiations ultimately produced the substantive breakthroughs that led to the Paris Peace Accords. (See Table 1 for a schematic of the public and secret talks.)

Table 1: Party Map--Paris Negotiations

Public Negotiations (May 1968 to January 1973)



Secret Negotiations (February 1970 to January 1973)



Along with President Nixon, Kissinger confronted three broad challenges as he led a “negotiation campaign” to achieve an acceptable outcome to the Vietnam War.¹⁵⁷ First, he had to overcome unrelenting military efforts by the North Vietnamese to vanquish South Vietnam and persuade that party that genuine negotiations were in its interest. Second, he sought to respond to increasingly insistent pressure from Congress and domestic anti-war protesters to withdraw entirely from Indochina.¹⁵⁸ Third, for any agreement short of the military victory the South Vietnamese fervently pursued, Kissinger would have to persuade a most reluctant South Vietnamese President Thieu to accept it.

From Truman to Johnson

Occupied by Japan during the Second World War, Indochina was a French colony of some 42 million people. With post-war Vietnam back under French rule, communist guerillas waged an anti-colonial struggle for independence with support from Communist China.¹⁵⁹

After the onset of the Korean War in 1950 and following what came to be known as “domino theory,” President Harry Truman began aiding France in the war in Indochina. In the context of the Cold War, this theory suggested that once one country fell under Communist control, other Communist “dominoes” in the region would follow. The strategic implication was that the spread of Communist influence had to be resisted even in areas that did not otherwise have significant strategic importance to the United States. Following its defeat at Dien Bien Phu, France withdrew from Vietnam upon the signing of the July 20, 1954 Geneva Accords, which divided Vietnam at the 17th parallel.¹⁶⁰ In October 1955, Ngo Dinh Diem was elected President of South Vietnam. The United States recognized South Vietnam and by the end of the Eisenhower Administration had provided over \$1 billion in assistance, with 692 U.S. military advisors helping train the South Vietnamese Army.¹⁶¹ Seeking to contain the spread of communism—by then, the guiding principle of U.S. foreign policy—President John F. Kennedy increased the U.S. presence in Vietnam from 900 to 16,263 military advisors.¹⁶² By 1963, Diem was deposed and killed in a U.S.-condoned coup.¹⁶³ General Nguyen Van Thieu, one of the coup leaders, became President of South Vietnam in 1967.¹⁶⁴

Following John F. Kennedy’s assassination, Lyndon Johnson was elected President in 1964 with the largest popular vote in U.S. history. In August 1964 Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which later became quite controversial, authorizing President Johnson to use force to restore peace in Indochina.¹⁶⁵

Although the U.S. public and policymaking community had generally regarded Communist countries as monolithic during the 1950s and 60s, relations between the USSR and China became increasingly tense through the 1960s.¹⁶⁶ The “Sino-Soviet split” worked mostly in Hanoi’s favor as the Soviet Union and China competed for the position of North Vietnam’s primary supporter.¹⁶⁷ For a decade after the French defeat in 1954, China provided Hanoi with \$670 million of aid, and increased support from \$110 million in 1965 to \$225 million in 1967. China’s aid averaged between \$150 and \$200 million per year during the remaining years of the war.¹⁶⁸

Chinese Premier Mao Zedong personally assured Ho Chi Minh, North Vietnam’s leader, of China’s support after the August 1964 Gulf of Tonkin resolution. From 1965 to 1969, Beijing sent 320,000 personnel to Vietnam to help operate military equipment and to build and repair transportation links.¹⁶⁹ The Soviet Union’s support—\$365 million—from 1954 to 1964 was more modest than Beijing’s, reflecting Soviet General Secretary Nikita Khrushchev’s belief that Indochina was a low strategic priority compared to the post-war settlement of Germany and the emerging China challenge.¹⁷⁰ Leonid Brezhnev’s assumption of power in October 1964 marked a change in Moscow’s approach.¹⁷¹ As the Sino-Soviet split deepened, it became “critically important [for Moscow] to reverse the pro-Chinese trend in Hanoi.”¹⁷² Embroiling the United States in a protracted struggle that drained its resources and attention was an added advantage that the Soviet leadership sought to exploit.¹⁷³

In 1965, Hanoi rejected Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai’s request that North Vietnam dissociate itself from Moscow, and accepted some \$550 million-worth of Soviet military assistance.¹⁷⁴ In 1965, reassured of continued Soviet and Chinese support, Ho Chi Minh launched the offensive against the South Vietnamese city of Pleiku, which marked the beginning of the U.S. war in Vietnam by triggering the U.S. “Rolling Thunder” bombing campaign, arguably authorized by the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution.¹⁷⁵ The first U.S. combat troops were also deployed to Vietnam that year.¹⁷⁶ A wave of public anti-war protests greeted the bombing campaign and escalation of the U.S. military role.¹⁷⁷ Frustrated by his inability to bring the conflict to an end and facing a huge domestic backlash against the war President Johnson announced in March 1968 that he would not seek reelection.

Nixon and Kissinger. Richard Nixon was elected President in 1968 in the widespread expectation that he would end the deeply unpopular war in which almost 550,000 Americans were serving and 35,000 had already died.¹⁷⁸

On December 20, 1968, the United States expressed readiness to seek a settlement.¹⁷⁹ The North Vietnamese responded with an ultimatum: all U.S. forces were to leave Vietnam, after the United States forcibly deposed the South Vietnamese government.¹⁸⁰ As President Nixon's National Security Adviser, Kissinger judged that, if fulfilled, Hanoi's demand to turn on an ally would deal a severe blow to the U.S. credibility worldwide.

In tandem with these opening negotiation moves, Nixon approved Operation Menu—a bombing campaign against North Vietnamese sanctuaries and supply lines in neighboring Cambodia from which Hanoi's attacks were weekly inflicting hundreds of casualties on American soldiers.¹⁸¹ Starting on March 18, 1969, B-52s bombed within several miles of Cambodian border.¹⁸² Kissinger maintained that this bombing took place in largely unpopulated areas.¹⁸³ Lasting until May 26, 1970, these and similar measures undertaken later were deeply controversial at the time and have remained so for decades. All the criticisms of the Cambodian operations were magnified by the secrecy with which they were allegedly surrounded; Kissinger maintains that appropriate parties were properly informed throughout.¹⁸⁴

At home, Kissinger confronted potent anti-war forces. Numerous public and Congressional critics demanded prompt disengagement from Vietnam in return for the release of the American prisoners of war. On October 15 of that year, massive demonstrations took place around the country—20,000 in New York, 30,000 in New Haven, and 100,000 in Boston.¹⁸⁵ In 1971 and 1972, Congress passed, respectively, 72 and 35 non-binding resolutions demanding U.S. withdrawal.¹⁸⁶

Responding to the potent domestic backlash against the war, the Nixon Administration initiated regular troop withdrawals, hoping to keep the public united enough not to actively undercut the military efforts in Vietnam. President Nixon made the first decision to withdraw 25,000 troops on June 7, 1969, followed by 40,500 troops on September 16, 1969, 50,000 on December 15, 1969, and 150,000 on April 20, 1970. More withdrawals followed: 70,000 troops on January 13, 1972 and 12,000 on August 29, 1972, which left 27,000 American soldiers in Vietnam.¹⁸⁷

Kissinger was convinced that Hanoi would seek to take battlefield advantage of the troop cuts that continually reduced U.S. military presence in Vietnam. He stated: "An enemy determined on protracted struggle could only be brought to compromise by being confronted by insuperable obstacles on the ground."¹⁸⁸ The North Vietnamese would draw out the negotiations while seeking a military victory.¹⁸⁹ In Nixon and Kissinger's judgment, the only way to keep up the military pressure on Hanoi, while satisfying the domestic demands for troop withdrawal, was to replace the departing troops with air and naval forces that were not included in the total troop numbers.¹⁹⁰

Kissinger negotiated for the first time with Le Duc Tho during three secret Paris meetings from February 20 to April 4, 1970. During the last of these sessions, Kissinger proposed a mutual U.S.-North Vietnamese withdrawal from South Vietnam within sixteen months.¹⁹¹ On September 7, 1970, he went much farther than the April proposal: unlike the previous proposal, the U.S. was now prepared to leave *no* residual U.S. presence in South Vietnam.¹⁹² Hanoi was unmoved, continuing to insist on U.S. complicity in effecting regime change in Saigon.¹⁹³

President Nixon's speech to the nation on October 7, 1970 positioned the United States as forthcoming and persistently seeking a negotiated settlement (at the public negotiating sessions, while, for the time being, keeping secret the Kissinger-Le Duc Tho talks), while accusing Hanoi as obstructing peace.¹⁹⁴ The President offered a cease-fire, including a halt to ongoing bombing, and a negotiation to agree on the timing and mode of U.S. withdrawal. The North Vietnamese quickly turned down the proposal.¹⁹⁵

The United States now took much more extensive steps to cut off the Vietcong insurgency's supply lines and sanctuaries in neighboring Cambodia and Laos. Hanoi had been using these routes and locations since the late 1950s to supply the Vietcong guerillas and to attack and kill thousands of South Vietnamese and American troops.¹⁹⁶ The United States invaded North Vietnamese sanctuaries in Cambodia in May 1970 and those in Laos in February and March 1971.

Kissinger regarded the ground invasions of Cambodian and Laotian sanctuaries as strategically necessary to starve the Vietcong insurgency of support and to stop the attacks on American and South Vietnamese soldiers. U.S. anti-war critics, by contrast, condemned these actions as an unprovoked expansion of the war into neutral countries with dire long-term consequences for the region. Such critiques, often virulent, continue to the present day.¹⁹⁷

They further argue that the Cambodian invasion was militarily pointless and counterproductive by provoking the North Vietnamese into further aggression within Cambodia, undermining the Cambodian government, and eventually resulting in the brutal rule by the Khmer Rouge.¹⁹⁸ A corollary of this view is that Nixon and Kissinger purposefully misrepresented the efficacy of their Cambodia policy, keeping much of it secret.¹⁹⁹

By contrast, Kissinger believed a key front in the Vietnam War was Cambodia in which the North Vietnamese had been massively involved for years. One of the aims of the Cambodia operation was to signal to the North Vietnamese and its superpower supporters in Moscow and Beijing that the U.S. had the will and capacity to resist Hanoi's aggression by cutting off supplies to the Vietcong guerillas.²⁰⁰ "We needed a strategy that made continuation of the war seem less attractive to Hanoi than a settlement," Kissinger reflected.²⁰¹ Kissinger likewise argues that the North Vietnamese expanded their Cambodian operation on their own irrespective of America's actions.²⁰²

While previous offers envisioned a mutual U.S.-North Vietnamese withdrawal from South Vietnam, on May 31, 1971, Kissinger told Le Duc Tho that the United States was prepared to withdraw unilaterally in return for an end to North Vietnamese infiltration of Cambodia and Laos, which meant leaving the existing Vietcong and regular North Vietnamese formations in the South intact.²⁰³ Again, Hanoi summarily rejected the offer.

Kissinger soon offered another concession. While in previous meetings he demanded that American prisoners be released before U.S. withdrawal, on August 16 he offered to withdraw U.S. troops at the same time as the prisoners were released as long as this did not involve the United States removing Saigon's government on the way out.²⁰⁴ Hanoi rejected the offer.

Foreseeing a major North Vietnamese offensive against the South, Nixon and Kissinger sought to prepare the diplomatic ground for a powerful U.S. military response that they felt was necessary.²⁰⁵ To accomplish this, Nixon needed to establish a record of reasonableness in negotiations. In his January 25, 1972 address to the nation, the President for the first time revealed the secret talks between Kissinger and Le Duc Tho. After indicting Hanoi for rejecting the extremely forthcoming American peace proposals, Nixon offered to withdraw U.S. troops within six months.²⁰⁶ However, he once again refused to overthrow the government in Saigon.²⁰⁷

Kissinger shared the text of Nixon's January 25 speech with Moscow and Beijing, warning that the U.S. patience with North Vietnam was running low.²⁰⁸ As expected, Hanoi launched a major offensive against the South on March 30, 1972. Nixon and Kissinger decided to respond forcefully, by mining North Vietnam's Haiphong harbor, thus starving Hanoi of Soviet supplies, and by undertaking a massive bombing of the roads and rail lines from China, which would be the preferred alternative route for supplies.²⁰⁹

Beyond direct military action with U.S. and South Vietnamese troops to counter the North Vietnamese offensive, Nixon and Kissinger sought new sources of pressure on Hanoi. Given that both Communist giants provided extensive diplomatic and military support for North Vietnam, Nixon and Kissinger sought to reduce or eliminate it. To do so, they consciously linked the U.S. policy in Vietnam to the developing détente with Moscow and the nascent rapprochement with Beijing.

Seeking Chinese Assistance on Vietnam. Soon after coming into office, President Nixon and Kissinger acted on a historic opportunity to explore positive relations with Beijing, hoping to overcome the mutual hostility of the preceding years.²¹⁰ They capitalized on the deteriorating Sino-Soviet relationship, which had continued to sour since the mid-1960s with the Soviets increasing troop numbers from 12 to 40 divisions along the Sino-Soviet border.²¹¹ In August 1969, indications appeared that the Soviets were considering bombing China's early-stage nuclear facilities.²¹²

A U.S. message to Moscow in early September 1969 warning against attacking China was a key early part of the effort to dispel Mao's original fear that the U.S. would cooperate with the USSR against China.²¹³ Yet, Kissinger needed to confirm that, at a minimum, China's close links to North Vietnam would not preclude a U.S.-Chinese rapprochement. As the relationship developed, Kissinger increasingly made clear to his Chinese interlocutors that U.S.-Chinese strategic cooperation was partially linked to China's assistance in reining in its North Vietnamese client—a point that was not lost on the Chinese. During the first meeting between Zhou Enlai and Kissinger, Zhou remarked about North Vietnam: "we still feel a deep and full sympathy for them." Kissinger noted afterwards: "Sympathy, of course, was not the same as political or military support; it was a delicate way to convey that China would not become involved militarily or press us diplomatically."²¹⁴

Kissinger judged better U.S.-Chinese relations to be intrinsically worthwhile. Yet a U.S. rapprochement with Beijing could also induce the Soviets to moderate their foreign policy behavior, especially their support of North Vietnam, in order to avoid provoking a closer Sino-U.S. collaboration against Moscow. Ideally, a U.S. move toward China would provide enough incentives to the Chinese to be cooperative (e.g., moderate their material support for North Vietnam, help to diplomatically isolate Hanoi), but not so much as to allow them to take the U.S. cooperation for granted. Since the U.S. attitude included both the prospect of improving relations and a possibility of reverting to the status quo, it tended to institutionalize the strategic dependence of the Chinese.²¹⁵

In practice, American diplomacy with China had three distinct effects on efforts to negotiate a settlement to the Vietnam conflict. First, unlike the Korean War, in which Chinese troops became directly involved in battles with American forces, China gave tacit (and true) assurances to Kissinger that its forces would not become similarly involved. Second, to an extent that is still debated, China softened its support for Hanoi and helped to isolate North Vietnam diplomatically.²¹⁶ Third, the threat of a developing U.S.-China axis led the Soviets to moderate their support for Hanoi.

Seeking Soviet Cooperation on Vietnam. Building on the developing rapprochement with China, Kissinger sought to persuade the Soviets to sharply reduce their diplomatic and military support for North Vietnam by threatening Moscow with abandoning détente and risking its potential benefits.²¹⁷ During the Johnson Administration, Kissinger assessed, the Soviets had not cooperated in helping to end the war because they had not borne meaningful costs for their support of North Vietnam.²¹⁸ Kissinger calculated that détente had already built up the Soviet "stake" in its bilateral relationship with the United States (which, Kissinger recognized, Moscow cultivated in part to counterbalance the burgeoning U.S. relationship with China) and that improvement thus far had whetted Moscow's appetite for further progress.²¹⁹

But how might this Soviet appetite be useful both with respect to arms control (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks or SALT) and Vietnam? Kissinger saw a further potential source of U.S. leverage in its

ability to offer (or block) progress toward resolving the long-simmering dispute between the Soviets and the western Allies over the status of Germany. This dispute had hampered Soviet efforts to expand valuable trade and diplomatic efforts with Europe.²²⁰

This was the case since, after World War II, the four Allied powers—the United States, Soviet Union, France, and Britain—maintained military control over Germany. As a democratic West German state emerged alongside a pro-communist, Soviet-backed East German state, tensions had mounted between the two with the status of Berlin as its focus.²²¹

The three non-Soviet powers retained military control over West Berlin while the Soviets had walled off East Berlin. West Berliners were not recognized as citizens of the Bonn-based Federal Republic of Germany (“West Germany”).²²² Throughout the 1960s, with Berlin surrounded by East German territory and supported by vulnerable supply lines from the West, the West Germans and Allies refused to settle significant territorial disputes and wartime claims with the Soviets. Without a settlement, the Soviets’ ability to trade, especially with West Europeans, was severely restricted.

In 1969, West German Prime Minister Willy Brandt began a concerted effort (“*Ostpolitik*”)—largely independent of Washington—to break the impasse with the Soviets. Brandt proposed a series of treaties to reduce tensions by opening trade agreements, resolving disputed territorial claims, and clarifying military arrangements. Brandt’s initiative was largely motivated by his goal of keeping the dream of a unified German state alive (through engendering Soviet flexibility on this issue).⁵⁷ Brandt’s *Ostpolitik* would earn him the Nobel Peace Prize, but Washington was deeply concerned that this policy might lead toward a neutral—possibly nationalist—Germany. Now Kissinger realized that it could be time to carefully soften American reservations about *Ostpolitik* (which the Soviets eagerly sought) in order to gain potential U.S. leverage on arms control and Vietnam.

A tangible opportunity for such leverage flowed from the so-called “Eastern Treaties,” which would enable Moscow to relax its tensions with West Germany and, more broadly, in Europe.²²³ Under the Eastern Treaties championed by Brandt—notably, the 1970 Treaty of Moscow between West Germany and the USSR—the signatories would normalize relations and renounce the use of military force. West Germany and the USSR signed the Moscow on August 12, 1970, though Germany still had to ratify it for the treaty to come into force. Given Brandt’s somewhat shaky political situation, Moscow sought the U.S. help in pressing Bonn for prompt ratification (which Kissinger linked to a deal on Berlin).²²⁴ Privately, Kissinger doubted that the U.S. could effectively intervene in West Germany’s domestic politics. Publicly, however, he took advantage of Moscow’s assumption that the American support was crucial to achieve German ratification.

During a conversation with Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin, Kissinger accused Moscow of “complicity” in Hanoi’s March 1972 offensive against South Vietnam, and stated explicitly that the Soviet support for North Vietnam now posed grave difficulties for Washington to cooperate with Moscow on the Eastern treaties.²²⁵ Lest the Soviets fail to get the seriousness of this message, Kissinger communicated the same point to Egon Bahr, Brandt’s adviser, with the expectation that Bahr would pass the message to the Soviet Ambassador in Bonn.²²⁶

Nixon’s public revelations about American negotiating flexibility and major concessions in the Paris talks contrasted with North Vietnamese intransigence. At one point, Kissinger told Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin that, “the Soviets had put themselves into the position where a miserable little country [North Vietnam] could jeopardize everything that had been negotiated for years.”²²⁷

Georgy Arbatov, a Soviet expert on American politics, advised five General Secretaries of the Soviet Union. “Kissinger thinks it was China that played the decisive role in getting us to feel the need to preserve our relationship with the U.S.A.” Arbatov reflected, “But Berlin actually played a much bigger role, almost

a decisive one. Having the East German situation settled was most important to us, and we did not want to jeopardize that."²²⁸

Kissinger used the impending May 1972 Soviet-American presidential summit in Moscow—which would include the signing of the SALT agreement—as another forcing point. During a pre-summit meeting with Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev in Moscow, he pointedly complained about the continued stalling tactics by the North Vietnamese and ended with a stern warning: “If this process is maintained we will act unilaterally at whatever risk to whatever relationship.”²²⁹ Kissinger knew, however, that Moscow was unlikely to exert decisive pressure on Hanoi.²³⁰

At the same time, he explicitly articulated a major American concession to the Soviet leader that mirrored what he had been quietly signaling to Le Duc Tho: the United States would not demand a complete withdrawal of the regular North Vietnamese forces from South Vietnam in return for the North Vietnamese relinquishing their demand to forcibly remove Thieu from power.²³¹

On May 9, Nixon announced the U.S. response to North Vietnam’s March 1972 offensive against the South: the mining of the Haiphong harbor and the bombing of the transportation links from China. Along with these powerful military actions, he offered to withdraw all troops within four months.²³² In a tacit but clear concession of immense significance both to North Vietnam and Moscow, the President did not demand that the North Vietnamese regular forces withdraw as a condition for the end of bombing and mining.²³³ Renewed domestic protests greeted Nixon’s decision.²³⁴

On the diplomatic front, major progress ensued. The Moscow summit took place, SALT Treaty was signed, and the USSR assumed a more restrained public posture vis-à-vis Hanoi. Privately, the Soviets did not meaningfully object to the American military actions while exerting a degree of pressure on Hanoi to be more forthcoming in negotiations.²³⁵

Persuading South Vietnamese President Thieu to Agree. Expecting a breakthrough in the negotiations, Kissinger kept in contact with President Nguyen Van Thieu in Saigon.²³⁶ He did not, however, reveal the full extent of American concessions to Hanoi. Al Haig, Kissinger’s military assistant, briefed Thieu in Saigon on August 17 on the emerging agreement and gave him a letter of reassurance from Nixon, who pledged continued support for Saigon after the war.²³⁷ But it was not clear whether the South Vietnamese leader would eventually accept the agreement.

On October 8, 1972, Le Duc Tho dropped North Vietnam’s longstanding demand for the United States to force regime change in Saigon as a condition for the deal. The provisional agreement included a cease-fire, the withdrawal of American forces, cessation of North Vietnamese infiltration of South Vietnam from Laos and Cambodia, and the release of the American prisoners of war.²³⁸ Kissinger and his associates were privately jubilant at what finally appeared as the breakthrough they had sought.²³⁹

Almost immediately, persuading President Thieu—using both threats and assurances—to accept the negotiated outcome became Kissinger's top priority. The threats—delivered orally and in writing—centered on the possibility of the complete cut-off of American aid in case Saigon refused to go along with the negotiated framework.²⁴⁰ Along with the threats, Kissinger frequently communicated Nixon’s assurances, which revolved around the President’s stated determination to stand by its ally in Saigon in responding to the massive violations of the agreement by the North Vietnamese.²⁴¹

Nixon embodied the credibility of these promises and threats. Reelected in a massive 1972 landslide against the anti-war candidate George McGovern, he enjoyed a significant popular mandate.²⁴² “Our thinking,” Kissinger remembered, “was that the agreement could be preserved unless the North Vietnamese launched another all-out offensive, in which case we believed that a combination of American air power and existing South Vietnamese ground forces could repeat the experience of ’72 [the successful American and South Vietnamese military response to the March 30, 1972 North Vietnamese offensive].”²⁴³

From early October until mid-November 1972, Thieu artfully postponed his acceptance of the agreement, requesting a number of changes.²⁴⁴ It was becoming increasingly clear to Kissinger that Saigon was interested not in a negotiated compromise, but in a total U.S. victory over Hanoi.²⁴⁵

Nonetheless, Kissinger negotiated with Le Duc Tho from November 20 to 25 and from December 4 to 13 in order to achieve the changes Thieu sought.²⁴⁶ Le Duc Tho dragged out the negotiations without any substantive results.²⁴⁷ To force Hanoi's hand and help persuade Thieu of American resolve to settle the war, Kissinger and Nixon decided on a short, but powerful military response: on December 17, the United States again mined the Haiphong Harbor, and bombed North Vietnam from December 18 to 29.²⁴⁸ On the same day that this so-called "Christmas bombing" began, Washington proposed renewed negotiations. Kissinger met Tho on January 8 who, on January 9, agreed to sign the agreement, which was largely unchanged from the pre-Christmas version.²⁴⁹ From January 14 to 21, there were final efforts to persuade a deeply reluctant Thieu to sign the accord, which he did and that came into effect on January 27, 1973.²⁵⁰

The Aftermath. Hanoi proceeded to "immediately and grossly" violate the Paris Peace Accords, continuing the infiltration and attacks against South Vietnam.²⁵¹ Kissinger reflected years later: "had Nixon stayed in office, we would surely have attacked their [North Vietnamese] supply lines [through Cambodia and Laos]." ²⁵² The United States responded with focused bombing campaigns – on March 22-23 and April 16-17, 1973 – but it was clear to Kissinger that President Nixon was too preoccupied by Watergate to pursue this as forcefully as he had previously done.

Amid Watergate investigations and with the American public largely sick of the seemingly endless involvement in Vietnam, Congress voted in June 1973 to prohibit further U.S. military involvement in Indochina after August 15.²⁵³ The "stick of bombing was lost by our own domestic incapacity. ...the 'window' we had in those few months of early 1973 [before the June cut off] was closed by Watergate's enfeeblements."²⁵⁴

On September 22, 1973, Kissinger was sworn in as the 56th Secretary of State, and on October 16, 1973, he and Le Duc Tho were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for the negotiation of the Paris Peace Accords. Le Duc Tho refused to accept the prize. Kissinger donated the monetary proceeds of the award to a scholarship fund for the children of American soldiers killed or missing in Vietnam, and later sought, unsuccessfully, to return the prize.

Amid Watergate, Nixon resigned in August 1974 – the first U.S. President to do so. North Vietnam conquered South Vietnam on April, 30 1975. After the last U.S. personnel flew out of Saigon, Kissinger said that "only a feeling of emptiness remained."²⁵⁵ According to Alistair Horne, one of Kissinger's biographers, the failure in Vietnam is "the outstanding disappointment of his [Kissinger's] life – a source of never-ending regret."²⁵⁶ "It was, to me," Kissinger reflected, "the saddest point in my governmental experience."²⁵⁷

Appendix 1: Selected Negotiations

Henry Kissinger played key roles in many important diplomatic negotiations, a selection of which are very briefly described below.[†]

[†] A full list of Kissinger's negotiations can be found in his three-volume biography: *White House Years* (1979), *Years of Upheaval* (1982), *Years of Renewal* (1999).

ABM Treaty, 1972

Originally negotiated as part of the preliminary talks which led to the SALT I agreement, the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty was ultimately separated from the larger agreement as a strategic concession in order to circumvent significant impediments to an overarching arms reduction agreement. Nevertheless, Kissinger negotiated the ABM in a roughly parallel fashion with SALT, reaching an accord with the USSR to limit both nations to two Anti-Ballistic Missile complexes with limitations of 100 ABMs per site.

China, 1971-2 (see above)

Détente

Détente is the easing of political and military tensions between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the United States of America. The policy gained prominence in 1969 as an explicit strategy employed by Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon to address the nuclear weapons stalemate between both countries. During Kissinger's time as National Security Adviser and Secretary of State, the doctrine of détente formed the philosophical underpinning for the strategies that resulted in the SALT I and ABM treaties, the Helsinki Accords, and other significant agreements between the United States and USSR.

Helsinki Accords

A series of significant agreements on wide-ranging issues of importance between the USSR, the United States, and nearly three dozen European states, the Helsinki Accords were the result of a significant long-running series of incremental forums and agreements begun in 1969. Directly a result of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) negotiations, the Accords, which were reached after a month-long negotiation from July 1-August 1, 1975. Though not a binding treaty, the Helsinki Accords addressed a substantial number of military, economic, political, and human rights disagreements between the Eastern Bloc of Soviet-aligned nations and the participant members of NATO.

Israel-Syria Separation of Forces Agreement (1974) (see above)

Nonproliferation Negotiations with Israel, South Korea and Pakistan

An ardent believer in the importance of nonproliferation of nuclear weapons, Kissinger expressly undertook efforts to hinder the development and proliferation of nuclear weapons across the globe. Both as National Security Adviser and Secretary of State, Kissinger confronted Israeli, South Korean, and Pakistani leaders, opposing their attempts develop weapons. To do so, Kissinger employed all efforts at his disposal including sanctions, offers of incentives, and even threats to remove U.S. military protection for allies.

Panama Canal Negotiations

Disagreement between the United States and Panama over future control of the Panama Canal culminated in a growing diplomatic crisis between the two nations in the early 1970s. At issue was an agreement on terms that would satisfactorily transfer control of the Canal Zone to Panama, while guaranteeing certain future rights of passage for the United States. In 1974, Kissinger and Panamanian Foreign Minister Juan Antonio Tack agreed to a set of principles that would guide subsequent negotiations, and ultimately the agreement of a timeframe for transfer of the canal. Negotiated in subsequent years, the United States and Panama reached an agreement in 1977.

Paris Peace Accords (see above)

SALT I, 1972 (see above)

SALT II, 1972-4 (see above)

Sinai II

The Sinai Interim Agreement was signed by Egypt and Israel on September 4, 1975 in Geneva. The agreement reinforced the significant, largely symbolic concessions that formed the basis of the Sinai I agreement, reached in the wake of the 1973 Yom Kippur War (see body text above). The Sinai Interim Agreement further strengthened the provisions of the Sinai I agreement, affirming Israel's intent to cede further territory that had been seized from Egypt during the Yom Kippur War. The agreement directly set the stage for the Camp David Accords, a sweeping peace agreement between Israel and Egypt, reached three years later. However, the Sinai Interim Agreement also angered significant constituencies in the Arab and Israeli worlds, leading to future discord, and the assassinations of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat as well as Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Yom Kippur War Ceasefire (see above)

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²⁶ White House Years, 758-59.

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²⁸ Ibid., Locations: 13670, 13678.

²⁹ White House Years, 1084-87.

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³⁷ Ibid., 124.

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¹⁵² Between 791,000 and 1,141,000 Vietnamese died in the war between 1965 and 1975. See, Charles Hirschman, Samuel Preston, and Vu Manh Loi, "Vietnamese Casualties During the American War: A New Estimate," *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 21, No. 4, December 1995, p. 807.

On divisions in American society, see, *White House Years*, p. 1473; *Years of Upheaval*, p. 83. All the forthcoming abbreviated references, are to the following works by Henry Kissinger (listed in chronological order by year of publication): *White House Years* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979); *Years of Upheaval* (New York: Little Brown and Company, 1982); *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994); *Years of Renewal* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999); *On China* (New York: Penguin, 2012).

¹⁵³ In May 1959, the leadership of North Vietnam's Communist party formally decided to overthrow the government of South Vietnam through Maoist insurgent warfare to be conducted by the 5,500-man-strong Vietcong guerilla force, which would operate within South Vietnam. See, William H. Mott, IV, *Soviet Military Assistance: An Empirical Perspective* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), pp. 244-245. Also see, *Diplomacy*, pp. 639-640. In doing so, Hanoi decided to abandon the outcome of the 1954 Geneva Accords which envisioned an electoral process to decide the political future of South Vietnam. Interview with John Negroponete at Yale University, November 30, 2015. (But Hanoi only committed regular North Vietnamese forces to fight in the South in September 1964. See, Niall Ferguson, *Kissinger, Volume 1: The Idealist* [New York: Penguin, 2015], p. 611.) The National Liberation Front for the Liberation of the South (NLF), a political representative of the insurgency, was founded in early 1961 and would represent the guerillas at the plenary Paris peace negotiations from 1968 to 1973. See, William H. Mott, IV, *Soviet Military Assistance: An Empirical Perspective* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), p. 241. In addition, the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam (PRG) was established as the Vietcong's government-in-waiting in 1969. See, Truong Nhu Tang, *Vietcong Memoir* (New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1985), p. xi. The PRG was the political arm of the Vietcong, and, essentially, a new name for the NLF, which represented the Vietcong at the public peace negotiations in Paris.

¹⁵⁴ Interview with John Negroponete at Yale University, November 30, 2015.

¹⁵⁵ *White House Years*, pp. 1106-1107.

¹⁵⁶ While the first secret negotiation took place in August 1969 between Kissinger and Xuan Thuy (a North Vietnamese Foreign Ministry official), it soon became clear to Kissinger that Le Duc Tho—not Thuy—was the real negotiator. The Kissinger-Tho meetings produced all of the substantive progress at the secret talks.

¹⁵⁷ A “negotiation campaign” consists of several “individual but linked negotiations involving an array of parties over time and across borders.” See, James K. Sebenius, “Beyond the Deal: Wage a ‘Negotiation Campaign,’” *Negotiation* 13, no. 11 (November 2010), p. 2. See also, David A. Lax and James K. Sebenius, “From Single Deals to Negotiation Campaigns,” Harvard Business School Working Paper 12-046, December 17, 2011.

¹⁵⁸ There was a de facto commonality of interest between Hanoi and the anti-war protesters. Consider, for instance, Le Duc Tho’s comment to Kissinger in September 1971: “I really don’t know why I am negotiating anything with you. I have just spent several hours with Senator [George] McGovern and your opposition will force you to give me what I want...” Vernon Walters, who accompanied Kissinger, recalled about Le Duc Tho: “The note of triumph in his voice was grinding.” See, Alastair Horne, *Kissinger: 1973, The Crucial Year* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009), p. 51.

¹⁵⁹ “[From China’s perspective] As long as [North Vietnamese leader] Ho [Chi Minh] continued fighting, anti-communist forces would be distracted from tightening the noose around China itself.” See, Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 166.

¹⁶⁰ It was at this conference that Secretary of State John Foster Dulles refused to shake hands with Zhou Enlai—an affront that Zhou recalled in July 1971 when Kissinger arrived in Beijing for the first time. See *Diplomacy*, p. 719. A divided—and thus dependent—Vietnam was in China’s interest. See, *Diplomacy*, p. 635. For example, Historian Adam Ulam argues: “For China...the [1954 Geneva] settlement represented an unqualified diplomatic success. Continued fighting would have meant the probability of American bases and soldiers on China’s frontiers. Now there would be a Communist buffer state, and the very incompleteness of Ho Chi Minh’s success would make him more dependent on China than would otherwise be the case.” See, Adam B. Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence: The History of Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-67* (New York: Praeger, 1968), p. 553.

¹⁶¹ *Diplomacy*, p. 639.

¹⁶² *Diplomacy*, p. 653.

¹⁶³ Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 172. Kissinger pointedly draws a distinction between Nixon’s and Kennedy’s approach to South Vietnam: “Nixon persisted in his course [in the Vietnam War] and I in my defense of it, not because we wanted to continue the war but because we could not agree that we should overthrow a friendly government (put into office by our predecessors) and mock the sacrifice of millions who had relied on us, as the price for getting out.” See, *White House Years*, p. 1013. Elsewhere, he expounded on his opposition to regime change in Saigon: “The chief object of any guerilla war is to demoralize the existing government. If we undermine the Diem regime, we are really doing the Viet Cong’s work for them.” Quoted in Niall Ferguson, *Kissinger, Volume 1: The Idealist* (New York: Penguin, 2015), p. 592.

¹⁶⁴ Fox Butterfield, “Nguyen Van Thieu Is Dead at 76; Last President of South Vietnam,” *New York Times*, October 1, 2001, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/10/01/us/nguyen-van-thieu-is-dead-at-76-last-president-of-south-vietnam.html?sec=&spon=&pagewanted=3>.

¹⁶⁵ The Gulf of Tonkin resolution is controversial and a number of scholars argue that the Johnson Administration used the Gulf of Tonkin incident as a pretext to unleash the war in Indochina. See, for example, Edwin E. Moise, *Tonkin Gulf and the Escalation of the Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). Kissinger acknowledges that by 1965, he was part of the “silent majority” in supporting the deployment of U.S. troops to Vietnam. See, *White House Years*, p. 231. For a review of the issues of fact, law, and policy relating to the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and its subsequent application to the President’s power to make war in Vietnam, see William W. Van Alstyne, “Congress, the President, and the Power to Declare War: A Requiem for Vietnam,” *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* (1972) vol. 121, no. 1, pp. 1-28.

¹⁶⁶ Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was the formal name of the Soviet Union.

¹⁶⁷ Isolated incidents notwithstanding, China unenthusiastically agreed to allow the Soviet aid to be transported by rail through Chinese territory. See, Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 177. For example, Adam Ulam references an instance in 1965 where Beijing declined Moscow’s request to allow 4,000 Soviet troops to pass through Chinese territory, and to establish air bases in China in order to transport war

- supplies for the North Vietnamese. See, Adam B. Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence: The History of Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-67* (New York: Praeger, 1968), p. 705. With the intensification of the Sino-Soviet split, after 1968, Soviet planes had to fly through Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and Burma. See, Oleg Sarin and Lev Dvoretzky, *Alien Wars: The Soviet Union's Aggressions Against the World, 1919 to 1989* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1996), p. 96.
- ¹⁶⁸ Michael Lee Lanning and Dan Cragg, *Inside the VC and the NVA: The Real Story of North Vietnam's Armed Forces* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1992), p. 119.
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- ¹⁷¹ Oleg Sarin and Lev Dvoretzky, *Alien Wars: The Soviet Union's Aggressions Against the World, 1919 to 1989* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1996), p. 91.
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- ¹⁷³ Adam B. Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence: The History of Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-67* (New York: Praeger, 1968), p. 741.
- ¹⁷⁴ Brantly Womack, *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 177. William H. Mott, IV, *Soviet Military Assistance: An Empirical Perspective* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), p. 240.
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- ¹⁷⁸ *White House Years*, p. 481. Also, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 83.
- ¹⁷⁹ *White House Years*, p. 237.
- ¹⁸⁰ *White House Years*, pp. 258-9. See also *Years of Renewal*, p. 468. In its December 31, 1968 message Hanoi called for the "replacement of ... the 'Thieu-Ky-Huong' clique, its pet phrase for the leadership in Saigon with which Hanoi was supposed to be negotiating." See, *White House Years*, p. 259. Nguyen Van Thieu, Nguyen Cao Ky and Tran Van Huong were, respectively, President, Vice President and Prime Minister of South Vietnam. See, *White House Years*, p. 444. Indeed, Kissinger recalled, "our refusal to overthrow an allied government [in Saigon] remained the single and crucial issue that deadlocked all negotiation until October 8, 1972, when Hanoi withdrew the demand." See, *White House Years*, p. 282. Kissinger explained: "Our definition of honor was not extravagant: We would withdraw, but we would not overthrow an allied government. We were prepared to accept the outcome of a truly free political process in South Vietnam even if it meant the replacement of the personalities and institutions that we favored. What we were not willing to do was to accept the unconditional surrender Hanoi was in effect demanding, to mock our people's sacrifices by collaborating in the imposition of Communist rule, betraying those who had believed the assurances of our predecessors and thereby putting at risk global confidence in the United States.
- But a *free political process* was precisely what Hanoi was determined to prevent. Its dour and fanatical leaders had not fought and suffered for all their adult lives to entrust the outcome to an electoral procedure that they had never practiced in their own country." See, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 83, emphasis added. Kissinger concludes: "The [Vietnam] war concerned not the support of a particular government [in South Vietnam] but the legitimacy of any non-Communist structure." See, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 85, emphasis in original.
- ¹⁸¹ *White House Years*, p. 240. Also, "Vietnam War and the Presidency: Inside the White House II," March 10-11, 2006, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_YCdFIOB3E [6.36 - 11.18].

¹⁸² Douglas Brinkley, *Tour of Duty: John Kerry and the Vietnam War* (New York: William Morrow, 2004), p. 323. Kissinger argues that the bombing was performed within 5-6 miles of the border. See, *White House Years*, p. 254; *Years of Renewal*, p. 497. Another source suggests it was 10 miles. See, Marvin Kalb and Bernard Kalb, *Kissinger* (New York: Little Brown & Company, 1974), p. 131.

¹⁸³ *White House Years*, p. 240.

¹⁸⁴ Critics argue that the operation was secret and that Kissinger “approved a plan to conceal the Cambodian bombing missions from military records. See “The Trials of Henry Kissinger,” 2002, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PmOb6DRrLWg&t=27m42s> [27.42 – 28.15]. “From the very start,” writes Walter Isaacson, “the plans contained provisions for handling press inquiries: ‘Spokesman will confirm that B-52s did strike on routine missions adjacent to the Cambodian border but state that he has no details and will look into it.’” See, Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), p. 179. Responding to Kissinger’s argument that Congress was informed about the bombing, Isaacson writes: “The air force secretary and other top officials were not informed of the raids at all, and even the State Department was kept in the dark. A few selected congressmen were informed of the initial raid, but there was no effort to consult with Congress formally or to be frank about the extent of the operations—something that Kissinger later admitted he regretted. Even in 1971, a year after the secret bombing program had ended and well after Cambodia had been plunged into an open war, the Senate Armed Services Committee in a closed hearing on bombing targets was told by military officials that there ‘was no B-52 bombing in Cambodia of any kind during the entire year of 1969.’” See, Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), pp. 176-177. By contrast, Kissinger said “Key members of Congress were briefed, including the chairmen of the Armed Services and Appropriations Committees, the Speaker—all of them Democrats—and other congressional leaders. I recall no objections nor any urging to widen the circle of those privy to the information.” See, *Years of Renewal*, p. 497. Al Haig emphatically re-affirms that Congress was “fully informed” about the Cambodia operation. See, “Vietnam War and the Presidency: Inside the White House II,” March 10-11, 2006, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_YCdFIOB3E&t=10m55s [10.55 – 11.18]. Kalb and Kalb confirm that the bombings received press coverage. See, Marvin Kalb and Bernard Kalb, *Kissinger* (New York: Little Brown & Company, 1974), p. 133. Critics also posit that this “carpet bombing” produced significant civilian casualties, prompted an expansion of North Vietnamese forces within Cambodia, and ultimately led to the horrors of the Khmer Rouge. See “The Vietnam War Summit,” April 26, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CsFYSC86bU&list=PLE4ezrXJCEOQo_8kvdscLVJ8dysb8tQVC&index=5 [1.10.39 – 1.10.53].

¹⁸⁵ *White House Years*, p. 291.

¹⁸⁶ *Diplomacy*, p. 689.

¹⁸⁷ *White House Years*, p. 271, 283, 475, 481, 1101, 1329.

¹⁸⁸ *White House Years*, p. 436.

¹⁸⁹ *White House Years*, p. 275. Kissinger further reflected: “No negotiator, least of all the hard-boiled revolutionaries from Hanoi, will settle so long as he knows that his opposite number will be prevented from sticking to a position by constantly escalating domestic pressures.” See, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 86.

¹⁹⁰ *White House Years*, p. 1101.

¹⁹¹ *White House Years*, pp. 440-448, esp., p. 445. Seeking to induce Hanoi to compromise, Kissinger told Le Duc Tho that the U.S. did not require the North Vietnamese to withdraw its troops publicly—i.e., the U.S. would not make an effort to humiliate Hanoi. See, *White House Years*, p. 443. Yet, Hanoi repeatedly denied having troops within South Vietnam. See, Tad Szulc, “How Kissinger Did It: Behind the Vietnam Cease-Fire Agreement,” *Foreign Policy*, Summer, 1974, p. 25.

¹⁹² *White House Years*, p. 976, 1018.

¹⁹³ In fact, Le Duc Tho made repeatedly clear that “even if we [U.S.] withdrew, Hanoi would stop fighting only if there were a political settlement” that included the overthrow of the Thieu government. See, *White House Years*, p. 444. At one point, Le Duc Tho advised Kissinger that Thieu did not have to be removed publicly; this could be done secretly—for example, through assassination. This suggestion elicited such a strong response from Kissinger that even the usually imperturbable Tho was “temporarily flustered. He obviously had trouble understanding what I was getting so excited about.” See, *White House Years*, pp. 1030-1031.

¹⁹⁴ The Kissinger-Le Duc Tho secret negotiations would only be made public in January 1972.

¹⁹⁵ *White House Years*, pp. 980-981.

¹⁹⁶ *Years of Upheaval*, p. 86. When leaving office, President Dwight Eisenhower warned President John Kennedy that the situation in Laos was “the most important problem facing the U.S.” Quoted in Niall Ferguson, *Kissinger, Volume 1: The Idealist* (New York: Penguin, 2015), p. 585.

¹⁹⁷ Seymour M. Hersh, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (New York: Summit Books, 1983), pp. 121-122. See also, Greg Grandin, “Henry Kissinger, Hillary Clinton’s Tutor in War and Peace,” *The Nation*, February 5, 2016, <https://www.thenation.com/article/henry-kissinger-hillary-clintons-tutor-in-war-and-peace/>. According to Grandin, Kissinger is responsible for some 3-4 millions of deaths through his international policies. Also see, Greg Grandin, “How Henry Kissinger Helped Create Our ‘Proliferated’ World,” *TomDispatch.com*, September 27, 2015, http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/176049/tomgram%3A_greg_grandin,_henry_of_arabia/; Greg Grandin, “The Obama Administration Just Granted Henry Kissinger a Distinguished Public Service Award,” *The Nation*, May 10, 2016, <https://www.thenation.com/article/the-obama-administration-just-granted-henry-kissinger-a-distinguished-public-service-award/>; Seymour M. Hersh, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (New York: Summit Books, 1983), p. 177; Christopher Hitchens, *The Trial of Henry Kissinger* (London: Verso, 2001), pp. 38-39.

¹⁹⁸ Seymour M. Hersh, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (New York: Summit Books, 1983), p. 186. Also see, Todd Gitlin, “Kissinger Was a Courtier to Atrocity,” *New York Times* “Room for Debate,” February 13, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2016/02/13/henry-kissinger-sage-or-pariah/kissinger-was-a-courtier-to-atrocity>. See William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon and the Destruction of Cambodia* (New York: Pocket Books, 1979), p. 28, 93. Walter Isaacson has a more balanced view: “Although the North Vietnamese had violated Cambodia’s neutrality, their camps had not yet disrupted the lives of the Cambodian peasants and fishermen. But that delicate balance began to falter when the American bombing campaign caused the communist camps to disperse over a larger area. The bombing may not have been the main cause of Cambodia’s plunge toward chaos a year later, but it did not make Sihanouk’s balancing act any easier.” See, Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), p. 177. In a much harsher assessment, Greg Grandin says: “Kissinger didn’t create the Khmer Rouge, but his mad and illegal bombing of Cambodia created the conditions where the most genocidal, militant faction of a broad and diverse insurgency could seize control of first the insurgency and then the state.” See, Greg Grandin, “Henry Kissinger’s ‘mad and illegal’ bombing: What you need to know about his real history—and why the Sanders/Clinton exchange matters,” *Salon*, February 12, 2016 at http://www.salon.com/2016/02/12/henry_kissingers_mad_and_illegal_bombing_what_you_need_to_know_about_his_real_history_and_why_the_sandersclinton_exchange_matters/.

¹⁹⁹ William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon and the destruction of Cambodia* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), p. 172.

²⁰⁰ Marvin Kalb and Bernard Kalb, *Kissinger* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974), p. 172; also, p. 158. Also see, Niall Ferguson, *Kissinger*, (New York: Penguin Press, 2015), pp. 36-37; *White House Years*, p. 486; *Years of Upheaval*, p. 35.

²⁰¹ *White House Years*, p. 262; also p. 311 (“Hanoi’s perception of its possibilities”).

²⁰² “When the new [Cambodian] government insisted on the withdrawal of all North Vietnamese troops from Cambodian territory, Hanoi reacted by increasing its blatant and menacing violations of Cambodian neutrality. Its forces left the sanctuaries, pushed deep into Cambodia, and threatened to take over the country.” See, *Years of Renewal*, p. 498.

²⁰³ *White House Years*, p. 1017. This concession was not made public.

²⁰⁴ *White House Years*, p. 1035.

²⁰⁵ *White House Years*, p. 1099. Kissinger notes that the Cambodia and Laos operations in 1970 and 1971, respectively, aimed to disrupt the timetable of this offensive.

²⁰⁶ *White House Years*, pp. 1043-1044. This was, Kissinger noted, an improvement by one month on the last secret offer Kissinger had made to Le Duc Tho.

²⁰⁷ *White House Years*, pp. 1043-1044.

²⁰⁸ *White House Years*, p. 1045.

²⁰⁹ *White House Years*, p. 1178. “A blockade [by intercepting ships, as opposed to mines], in contrast, would produce daily confrontations with the Soviets. Every time a ship was stopped we would see a repetition of the drama of the Cuban missile

crisis; our challenge and the Soviet reaction to it would have to be acted out over and over again, probably on television. The danger of some slip or of a pretext for serious incident would be too great." See, *White House Years*, p. 1179.

Kissinger originally proposed this two-fold plan of attack in a memorandum dated September 11, 1969. At the time, he reflected that he sought to "make the most sweeping and generous proposal of which we were capable, short of overthrowing an allied government but ensuring a free political contest. If it were refused, we would halt troop withdrawals and quarantine North Vietnam by mining its ports and perhaps bombing its rail links to China. The goal would be a rapid negotiated compromise." See, *White House Years*, p. 284. Kissinger's logic is worth considering in full: "I have always believed that the optimum moment for negotiations is when things appear to be going well. To yield to pressures is to invite them; to acquire the reputation for short staying power is to give the other side a powerful incentive for protracting negotiations. When a concession is made voluntarily it provides the greatest incentive for reciprocity. It also provides the best guarantee for staying power. In the negotiations that I conducted I always tried to determine the most reasonable outcome and then get there rapidly in one or two moves. This was derided as a strategy of 'preemptive concession' by those who like to make their moves in dribbles and at the last moment. But I consider that strategy useful primarily for placating bureaucracies and salving consciences. It impresses novices as a demonstration of toughness. Usually it proves to be self-defeating; shaving the salami encourages the other side to hold on to see what the next concession is likely to be, never sure that one has really reached the rock-bottom position. Thus, *in the many negotiations I undertook – with the Vietnamese and others – I favored big steps taken when they were least expected, when there was a minimum of pressure, and creating the presumption that we would stick to that position.*" See, *White House Years*, pp. 436-437, emphasis added.

²¹⁰ Hence Kissinger writes about the "ideological truce" and "ideological armistice" with China. See, *On China*, p. 270, 284. After all, he wrote in 1966: "Tactical intransigence and ideological vitality should not be confused with structural rigidity." Quoted in Niall Ferguson, *Kissinger, Volume 1: The Idealist* (New York: Penguin, 2015), p. 726. Kissinger "began to discern that, despite its obviously revolutionary character, the People's Republic of China could also be brought into the pale of the balance of power." See, Niall Ferguson, *Kissinger, Volume 1: The Idealist* (New York: Penguin, 2015), p. 704.

²¹¹ *White House Years*, p. 167.

²¹² China exploded its first nuclear bomb in 1964.

²¹³ *On China*, p. 219.

²¹⁴ *On China*, p. 250. Kissinger dissected one Soviet statement in a similarly fastidious fashion: "the Soviet 'people' (that is, not the government [Kissinger commented]) 'associates itself' with the struggle [by Hanoi versus the U.S.]. The Soviet 'people' would continue to give the Vietnamese people 'the necessary support' (not 'increased' support, as Hanoi asked [Kissinger commented]). The statement reeked of procrastination and hesitation." See, *White House Years*, p. 1194, emphasis in the original.

²¹⁵ See, *Diplomacy*, p. 746.

²¹⁶ Kissinger argues that linkage played an important role in restraining Beijing's reactions to the American actions against North Vietnam: "Peking...demonstrated that it had its priorities straight. In a conversation with me in New York on May 16 [1972], UN Ambassador Huang Hua repeated the official line that China stood behind its friends. But he did not demur when I pointed out that we had warned Peking at least half a dozen times of our determination to react strongly if Hanoi sought to impose a military solution. Nor did our actions in Vietnam prevent Huang Hua from encouraging a visit by me to Peking in June. We had not only achieved a *free hand* in Vietnam; we would be able to continue at the same time the construction of the larger design of our foreign policy." See, *White House Years*, p. 1197, emphasis added. It was "certainly true," Kissinger recently clarified, that China did not assist the U.S. in the actual negotiations with the North Vietnamese, but Beijing's contribution was to "isolate Hanoi": "China played a role in the atmosphere that was created – not in pressing them [Hanoi] on specific points." See, "The Week that Changed the World," March 7, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/v/fmwJAWNEG_U?start=6549&end=6621. Winston Lord, Kissinger's close associate on China, later clarified: "I don't think the China equation had a major impact on Hanoi. However, this was certainly one of the reasons that we opened up to China and tried to improve relations with Russia, although this was not the main reason." See, "Oral History Interview with Winston Lord," April 28, 1998, Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, <http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Lord,%20Winston.pdf>.

²¹⁷ See, *White House Years*, p. 1116, and also p. 1113. Kissinger elaborated on this logic of isolating an adversary by comparing it to chess: "One elementary lesson for students of chess is that, in choosing among moves, one can do worse than to count the number of squares dominated by each choice. Generally, the more squares a player dominates, the greater his options and the more constrained become those of his opponent. Similarly, in diplomacy, the more options one side has, the fewer will be available to the other side and the more careful it will have to be in pursuing its objectives. Indeed, such a state of affairs may in time provide an incentive for the adversary to seek to end his adversarial role." See, *Diplomacy*, p. 719. Or, as

Kissinger put it elsewhere, “the demonstration of options is almost always an asset.” See, *White House Years*, p. 725. He echoed this in his interview with Harvard’s American Secretaries of State Project, when discussing the triangular relationship he devised between the United States, Soviet Union and China: “the mere existence of these American options gave us a bargaining weapon.” See, SOSP interview, p. 4.

²¹⁸ *White House Years*, p. 160.

²¹⁹ Kissinger uses the term “stake” on a number of occasions when discussing the dynamics of combining pressure and incentives in devising détente with the Soviet Union and rapprochement with China. For example, see *Diplomacy*, p. 714, 740, and *White House Years*, p. 192, 1164-5, 1200.

Kissinger remained on guard against permitting the U.S. interest in détente and rapprochement to be used by Moscow and Beijing as levers to rein in American policy in Vietnam. America would not “permit itself to become emotionally dependent on relations with the Soviet Union.” See, *Diplomacy*, p. 712.

²²⁰ *White House Years*, p. 528, 529-34.

²²¹ For a fuller analysis see, David M. Keithly, *Breakthrough in the Ostpolitik: The 1971 Quadripartite Agreement* (Boulder and London: Westview Special Studies in International Relations, 1986).

²²² *White House Years*, pp. 529-34, 824.

²²³ West Germany and USSR (Treaty of Moscow, August 1970); West Germany and Poland (Treaty of Warsaw, December 1970); United States, Soviet Union, France and United Kingdom (Four Power Agreement, September 1971); United States, Soviet Union, France and United Kingdom (Transit Agreement, May 1972); West Germany and East Germany (Basic Treaty, December 1972); West Germany and Czechoslovakia (Treaty of Prague, December 1973). See, “Germany, a Country Study,” Federal Research Division, p. 107. Library of Congress, 1996, <http://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/ga5-710903.htm>.

²²⁴ *Diplomacy*, p. 737. Also see, *White House Years*, p. 533. Initially skeptical of Brandt’s initiative, Nixon and Kissinger came to see his diplomacy as advantageous by linking Brandt’s negotiations to the separate U.S.-Soviet negotiations over Berlin (see, *White House Years*, pp. 530 – 534), as well as creating additional linkage with Soviet policy in Vietnam. Kissinger wrote: “Nixon and his advisers...came to accept *Ostpolitik* as necessary even while they believed that Brandt—unlike Adenauer—never had an emotional attachment to the Atlantic Alliance.” See, *Diplomacy*, p. 735.

²²⁵ *White House Years*, p. 1114, 1150.

²²⁶ *White House Years*, p. 1117.

²²⁷ *White House Years*, p. 1120.

²²⁸ Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), p. 422.

Anatoly Dobrynin provides additional evidence on the Soviet decision not to cancel the 1972 Moscow Summit in view of the mining and bombing of Haiphong Harbor: “the agreements with the Federal Republic of Germany were to be ratified several days before Nixon’s arrival, and a cancellation of the summit could exacerbate relations and block ratification, giving weight to the arguments to the ultra right in West Germany who opposed the agreements. Moscow was fully aware of this. Moreover, it also realized that refusing to receive Nixon would complicate our relations with the American administration for a long period, putting off the summit indefinitely, jeopardizing the ABM and SALT agreements, and promoting another round of the arms race.” See, Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow’s Ambassador to America’s Six Cold War Presidents* (1962 – 1986) (New York: Random House, 1995), p. 248.

²²⁹ *White House Years*, p. 1145.

²³⁰ The U.S. policy towards Moscow was to persuade the Soviets at least to stay neutral in Vietnam by ceasing criticism of the U.S. policy, thus giving Washington a “free hand” to pursue the coercive negotiations, while protecting the broader détente from damage. In the following quotes—especially, the first one on p. 1135—from *White House Years* (1979), Kissinger lays out this logic very explicitly by specifying the limits of Soviet influence and the purposes that he sought the Soviets to serve in the Vietnam negotiations:

p. 1135: “I was convinced that negotiations were inevitable once Hanoi’s offensive was blunted. On the other hand, *I did not think Moscow could halt the war by ukase, or be expected to turn openly against its ally.* The dedicated revolutionaries in Hanoi had fought all their lives; by now they had accumulated enough supplies to see the offensive through regardless of pressures

from Moscow. They had staked the war's outcome on its success; *it was now too late for Moscow to order them to stop*. It was up to the South Vietnamese – and the United States – to take the steps necessary to defeat it. *Moscow could not act as our surrogate, though its acquiescence in our reaction would ease our job*" (emphasis added).

p. 1177: "For a month I had been pursuing a strategy of *seeking Soviet acquiescence* in our military moves by enhancing the prospect of a successful summit; after nursing matters to this point it made no sense to refuse even to test the efficacy of what we had labored so hard over" (emphasis added).

p. 1190: "Every statement was part of an effort to persuade Moscow and Peking to *acquiesce* in our course and thus to move Hanoi, by isolating it, to meaningful negotiations" (emphasis added).

p. 1201: "Our strategy of *détente* – posing risks and dangling benefits before the Soviets – made possible an *unfettered* attempt to bring our involvement in the Vietnam war to an honorable close" (emphasis added).

²³¹ Tad Szulc, "How Kissinger Did It: Behind the Vietnam Cease-Fire Agreement," *Foreign Policy*, Summer, 1974, pp. 36-37.

There were two types of "communist" forces in South Vietnam: first, Vietcong insurgents, directed by Hanoi since May 1959, and, second, regular North Vietnamese troops first deployed in September 1964. Kissinger first raised the issue for mutual (U.S.-North Vietnamese) withdrawal from South Vietnam during his April 4, 1970 meeting with Le Duc Tho.

It was understood that the Vietcong would remain within South Vietnam, whose government would have to confront it. As early as September 1965, Kissinger noted that the "only outcome is limited one...in which VC have some kind of role." In any event, Kissinger assessed that "in many areas government survives only by means of a tacit agreement with the Vietcong whereby both sides coexist without getting into each other's way." See, Niall Ferguson, *Kissinger, Volume 1: The Idealist* (New York: Penguin, 2015), p. 683, 663. "In some areas the civil government was in cahoots with the Vietcong," Kissinger pointedly observed. See, Niall Ferguson, *Kissinger, Volume 1: The Idealist* (New York: Penguin, 2015), p. 668.

How could Kissinger justify leaving North Vietnamese forces intact within South Vietnam (*White House Years*, p. 1354)? One possible explanation: the communist forces would dwindle by "attrition." "Hanoi was accepting our own compromise formula prohibiting any further infiltration of personnel. This would gradually eliminate North Vietnamese forces in the South through attrition, assuming that the provisions were observed by Hanoi or enforced by us. (That caveat applied to the entire agreement; if doubts as to compliance were to be allowed to block a satisfactory agreement, then the war could never come to a negotiated end; it would have to be fought to the finish.)" See, *White House Years*, p. 1354, 1373. Yet, Kissinger recognized these were "dangerous waters" and Saigon was "vulnerable." See, *White House Years*, p. 1317. In 1969, he wrote that "the introduction of communist military forces into the chief bastion of governmental strength would change the balance of political forces in South Viet Nam. The danger of a coalition government is that it would decouple the non-communist elements from effective control over their armed forces and police, leaving them unable to defend themselves adequately." Henry Kissinger, "The Viet Nam Negotiations," *Foreign Affairs*, January 1, 1969.

Second possible explanation: some communist presence was an irreversible *fait accompli*. Tad Szulc argues that Kissinger had been convinced since early 1970 that the North Vietnamese could not be forced to withdraw their regular troops. See, Tad Szulc, "How Kissinger Did It: Behind the Vietnam Cease-Fire Agreement," *Foreign Policy*, Summer, 1974, p. 41.

²³² *White House Years*, p. 1189.

²³³ Tad Szulc, "How Kissinger Did It: Behind the Vietnam Cease-Fire Agreement," *Foreign Policy*, Summer, 1974, p. 40.

²³⁴ Joseph A. Fry, "Unpopular Messengers: Student Opposition to the Vietnam War." In David L. Anderson and John Ernst, eds., *The War That Never Ends: New Perspectives on the Vietnam War* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007), p. 238.

²³⁵ For example, Marvin and Bernard Kalb offered a positive assessment: "On June 15 [1972], President [Nikolai] Podgorny flew to Hanoi. The North Vietnamese, feeling betrayed by Russia's hospitality to Nixon, were nevertheless dependent on Moscow as the chief supplier of their war matériel, and they listened carefully to Podgorny's message. It was simple but fundamental: he suggested it was time to switch tactics, time for serious negotiations with the United States. The risk, he argued, would not be critical; after all, Nixon seemed serious about withdrawing, and the new U.S. position no longer demanded a North Vietnamese troop pullout from the south.... It was a new vocabulary for the Russians – the first time they had so openly committed their prestige to a resumption of negotiations. It clearly reflected the Soviet conclusion that the advantages of dealing with Washington on such matters as trade, credits, and SALT were important enough for Moscow to lend Nixon a hand in settling the Vietnam war." Marvin L. Kalb and Bernard Kalb, *Kissinger* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974), 336-37. By contrast, Alistair Horne in his generally admiring account of Kissinger's diplomacy, indicated that "Both Nixon and Kissinger placed great hope in using their opening to China as well as *détente* with Moscow, to put pressure on North Vietnam... As far as Vietnam was concerned, however, the success with either of these communist behemoths was sorely limited – the line being from Moscow and Beijing: 'we won't interfere with Vietnam's affairs;' though the flow of Soviet

arms was reduced." See, Horne, *Kissinger: 1973, the Crucial Year* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), p. 155. Winston Lord, who was directly involved in the negotiations with China, the Soviets, and the North Vietnamese observed that "we thought that by our dealing with both giants in the Communist world we would have some psychological impact on Hanoi. This showed Hanoi that Moscow and Beijing cared more about their bilateral relations with the U.S. than they did about their relations with Hanoi. They wouldn't snub Hanoi, but psychologically this would help to isolate Hanoi, e.g. holding summits in Beijing and Moscow while we had some of our meetings with Hanoi in the winter and spring of 1972, in the middle of Hanoi's offensive in South Vietnam. Neither Moscow nor Beijing went so far as to cut off aid to North Vietnam or really lean on Hanoi. However, both Moscow and Beijing had a stake in our trying to get the Vietnam War behind us. . . . We believed that both Russia and China talked to Hanoi and suggested to North Vietnam that, in its own self-interest, they ought to settle for a military solution. . . ." See, "Ambassador Winston Lord interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy and Nancy Bernkopf Tucker," Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project. Initial interview date: April 28, 1998, p. 271.

²³⁶ Nixon and Kissinger originally raised the possibility of high-level U.S.-North Vietnam contacts with Thieu during a meeting at Midway Island in the Pacific on June 8, 1969. "Thieu agreed," Kissinger remembered, "provided he was informed about any political discussions." See, *White House Years*, p. 274. Al Haig, Kissinger's military aide, also briefed Thieu on July 3, 1972. See, *White House Years*, p. 1310.

While keeping Thieu generally informed, Kissinger's preference clearly was to keep Thieu away from the specifics of the negotiation because of the need to dissociate the military (withdrawal) and political (structure of South Vietnamese government) aspects of the negotiation. Writing in 1969, Kissinger stated: "The United States...should concentrate on the subject of the mutual withdrawal of external forces and avoid negotiating about the internal structure of South Viet Nam for as long as possible. ...The participation of Saigon and the NLF [in earlier negotiations] raised issues...that would have been better deferred; it made discussion of the internal structure of South Viet Nam hard to avoid." Henry Kissinger, "The Viet Nam Negotiations," *Foreign Affairs*, January 1, 1969.

²³⁷ *White House Years*, p. 1319, 1327.

²³⁸ *White House Years*, p. 1345 and, also, see p. 1317.

²³⁹ Kissinger reflected: "And I turned to Winston [Lord] and said 'we've done it' and shook hands with him. So it was a great moment." See, SOSP interview, p. 8. However, this was strictly a private reaction: "negotiators must not betray emotion; it becomes a weapon in the hands of the other side." See, *White House Years*, digital edition, p. 659. Furthermore, as the negotiations were nearing conclusion in January 1973, Kissinger confided in Nixon: "The slightest hint of eagerness could prove suicidal." See, *White House Years*, p. 1464, and also p. 438, on the dangers of giving an "unnecessary impression of eagerness" in a negotiation.

²⁴⁰ The threats were communicated on October 22, 24, 28, November 10, 29, December 17, 1972, and January 5, 16, 17 and 20, 1973. See, *White House Years*, p. 1382, 1396, 1402, 1412, 1426, 1459, 1462, 1469 - 1470.

²⁴¹ The assurances were communicated on October 19, 24, 28, November 14, 29, 1972, and January 5, 14 and 21, 1973. See, *White House Years*, p. 1369, 1396, 1402, 1412, 1426, 1462, 1470. "American air power was thus always seen as an essential deterrent to the resumption of all-out war. Nixon gave assurances on this score to South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu to persuade Thieu to accept the Paris Agreement." Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982), p. 303.

²⁴² SOSP interview, p. 11.

²⁴³ SOSP interview, p. 11. Douglas Brinkley quotes Kissinger aide John Negroponte as admitting (in Michael Maclear's TV series *Vietnam: The Ten Thousand Day War* [1980-1981]) that "The peace treaty did nothing for Saigon. We got our prisoners back; we were able to end our direct military involvement. But there were no ostensible benefits for Saigon to justify all of the enormous effort and bloodshed of the previous years." See, Douglas Brinkley, *Tour of Duty: John Kerry and the Vietnam War* (New York: William Morrow, 2004), p. 426. When considering such statements, it is important to keep in mind the difference between *ex ante* objectives (Kissinger's expectation that the agreement would be enforced) and *ex post* assessments (Negroponte's statement).

²⁴⁴ *White House Years*, p. 1411.

²⁴⁵ This was the same situation as before 1968 when, as Clark Clifford, Lyndon Johnson's Secretary of Defense said, "The South Vietnamese did not want to end the war - not while they were protected by over five hundred thousand American troops and a gold flow of money." Quoted in Douglas Brinkley, *Tour of Duty: John Kerry and the Vietnam War* (New York: William Morrow, 2004), p. 131. Or, as Kissinger assessed during his own negotiations with Thieu in 1972, the South Vietnamese

“were not satisfied with survival; they wanted a guarantee that they would prevail.” See, *White House Years*, pp. 1323-1324. Yet, this stood in direct opposition to the U.S. objectives: “We had to fight the war and simultaneously strengthen the South Vietnamese to survive without us – in other words, to make ourselves dispensable.” See, *White House Years*, p. 232. Indeed, Kissinger argued, “we had no duty to them to guarantee them a total victory that we were unable to define, whose achievement required an open-ended commitment extending over many years more, and that we had publicly forsworn for the past three years.” See, *White House Years*, p. 1349.

In the following passages, Kissinger reflects on the barriers to a negotiated agreement between the two Vietnams, and the cultural differences that prevented the United States from promptly grasping the seriousness of these obstacles: “Our constant search for some compromise formula illuminated the cultural gap between us and the Vietnamese because the very concept of compromise was alien to both Vietnamese parties.

We had no way of understanding the primeval hatred that animated the two sides. They had fought each other for a generation. They had assassinated each other’s officials, tortured each other’s prisoners. The chasm of distrust and mutually inflicted suffering was unbridgeable by goodwill or the sort of compromise formulas toward which Americans incline. Each Vietnamese party saw in a settlement the starting point of a new struggle sometime in the not too distant future. Every deliberately vague formula I put forward was tested by each side to determine to what extent it represented an opportunity to inflict a humiliation on the despised opponent. And both sides were marvelously subtle and ingenious in changing phraseology to score such victories, particularly in the Vietnamese language with its finely shaded meanings quite beyond our grasp.” See, *White House Years*, p. 1325. Likewise, Kissinger observed succinctly elsewhere, the North Vietnamese “had not fought for forty years to achieve a compromise.” See, *White House Years*, p. 259, 1367.

²⁴⁶ *White House Years*, pp. 1416 – 1422, 1428 – 1443.

²⁴⁷ “I had come to Paris on December 4 with instructions from Nixon to settle. Le Duc Tho had kept me there ten days, our longest negotiating session ever, and each day we seemed farther away from an agreement. ... Each day several issues that we thought had been settled in the agreement emerged again in loaded North Vietnamese drafts of either the understandings or the protocols. Le Duc Tho would then yield on most of these in a long day of negotiation, but made sure that enough were left over, or new ones reopened, to prevent a conclusion. ... This was the insoluble problem over which we began the Christmas bombing five days later.” See, *White House Years*, pp. 1444-1445.

²⁴⁸ *White House Years*, p. 1448, 1459. The destructive capacity of this bombing campaign—called Operational Linebacker II—was larger than that of all of the bombs used against North Vietnam from 1969 to 1971. At the time, Vietnam veteran John Kerry was “flabbergasted” (in the words of historian Douglas Brinkley) by the “monstrous brutality” of the bombing campaign, and Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield called the attacks a “Stone Age tactic.” See, Douglas Brinkley, *Tour of Duty: John Kerry and the Vietnam War* (New York: William Morrow, 2004), pp. 425-428.

²⁴⁹ *White House Years*, p. 1463. Douglas Brinkley agrees that the “Christmas bombings had worked” in forcing Hanoi to negotiate. See, Douglas Brinkley, *Tour of Duty: John Kerry and the Vietnam War* (New York: William Morrow, 2004), p. 427.

²⁵⁰ *White House Years*, pp. 1469 – 1470.

²⁵¹ SOSP interview, p. 11.

²⁵² SOSP interview, p. 11.

²⁵³ *Diplomacy*, p. 696.

²⁵⁴ *Years of Upheaval*, p. 327. In addition, Kissinger notes, “I was fighting a desperate but losing struggle against the Pentagon’s desire to redeploy air and naval forces out of Southeast Asia in order to devote scarce funds to the procurement of new weapons.” See, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 329.

²⁵⁵ *Years of Renewal*, p. 546.

²⁵⁶ Alistair Horne, “The Case for Henry Kissinger,” *The Independent*, August 18, 2009, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/the-case-for-henry-kissinger-1773365.html>.

²⁵⁷ SOSP interview, p. 12.