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A Self-Inflicted Wound? Henry Kissinger and the Ending of the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War

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ABSTRACT

Claims about Soviet policy at the end of the October 1973 Arab-Israeli war played a key role in discrediting *détente* in the mid- and late 1970s. This analysis considers the part that Henry Kissinger played in triggering the Soviet actions at the end of the war to which the critics of *détente* pointed. Contrary to what Kissinger claimed, he essentially reneged on the agreement he had reached with the Soviet leadership to end the war and instead directly encouraged the Israelis to continue military operations well after the ceasefire was supposed to take effect. That, in turn, led to a crisis that had a profound effect on Soviet-American relations for years to come.

The United States and the Soviet Union seemed determined in 1972 to put the Cold War behind them. The American president, Richard Nixon, flew to Moscow that year and signed a number of important agreements with his Soviet counterpart, Leonid Brezhnev – important above all for what they symbolised. At Moscow, Nixon declared, a foundation had been laid 'for a new relationship between the two most powerful nations of the world'; a process had begun that could lead to a lasting peace.[1] But the great hopes of 1972 faded rapidly and, by the end of 1973, many Americans had begun to turn against the Nixon Administration's *détente* policy. By 1976, Nixon's successor, Gerald Ford, so embarrassed by the word '*détente*', announced he would stop using it.[2] By 1980, *détente* 'was almost universally regarded as having failed'.[3]

But *why* exactly had it failed? The many critics of *détente* policy would not have found that question hard to answer. It had failed, in their view, because *détente* was based on an illusion – that the Soviet Union was now willing to coexist peacefully with the United States.[4] But fundamental Soviet goals, the

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A longer and more fully footnoted version of this paper, with direct links to most of the sources cited, is available at: http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/polisci/faculty/trachtenberg/cv/selfinflicted.pdf. That version includes an appendix containing translated extracts from the collection of *Telegrams sent from the Israeli Embassy in Washington to the Prime Minister's Office during the Yom Kippur War, October 5–31, 1973*, posted mostly in Hebrew on the Israel State Archives webpage on the Yom Kippur War (http://www.archives.gov.il/chapter/telegram-ykw/). Cited below, that source is '*Israeli Telegrams*'. Documents included in the Appendix are marked in the notes with an asterisk.

argument ran, had not changed. The Soviets still sought to bring about a 'decisive shift in the world balance of power' in their favour. And *détente* had merely served to blind the western Powers to that core reality: 'the Soviet Union saw it as an opportunity to lull Western public opinion into a lack of vigilance towards the perils it was facing'.[5] From that point of view, the collapse of *détente* was easy to explain: the policy was abandoned when the American people came to see Soviet policy for what it was and realised that a very different kind of policy was needed.

The champions of *détente* – especially Nixon's national security advisor, Henry Kissinger, who, with Nixon, was the main architect of the policy – naturally took a very different view. As they saw it, the policy failed not because it was politically or morally defective but rather because anti-*détente* forces overwhelmed it at home. As Kissinger put it when about to leave office in late 1976, 'our difficulties have been almost entirely domestic' in nature.[6] The Nixon Administration had tried to pursue a policy better attuned to the nuances and ambiguities of international political life, but that kind of policy did not sit well with the American public; and many scholars take much the same view. 'The Nixon-Kissinger variant of détente', one writes, 'failed for primarily domestic political reasons'.[7] Or for another: 'the foreign policy of détente drowned in the turbulent waters of domestic politics in the 1970s'.[8] In one telling view, whereas Nixon and Kissinger had a 'sophisticated and far-sighted strategy', despite their generally honest efforts to explain what it was, 'they never really succeeded in putting it across, whether to their own bureaucracies, the Congress, or the public as a whole'.[9] But there is one basic problem with that line of argument: the country had no trouble supporting *détente* in 1972; opinion only later turned against it; and one cannot explain a change by a constant. Something must have caused the shift. Specific events must have played a major role in this process.

The evidence strongly suggests that events surrounding the October 1973 Arab-Israeli war were of fundamental importance in that regard. Attitudes towards *détente*, reflected in the press, shifted quite sharply at that point. Indeed, by the end of 1973, some observers were already talking about how *détente* had failed.[10] The critics pointed above all to Soviet behaviour in the Middle East. The Soviet Union supposedly had played a key role in bringing on the October 1973 Arab-Israeli war; one early attack on *détente* referred, for example, to the 'incendiary Soviet role' before the war, a charge that remained a staple of the anti-*détente* literature well into the 1980s.[11] The Soviet leadership also suffered blame for threatening to intervene unilaterally at the end of that war. Brezhnev made that threat in a famous letter sent to Nixon on 24 October 1973, the same day the ceasefire decreed by the United Nations [UN] Security Council finally took hold.[12] That threat led the United States to put its military forces around the world on alert. But if Washington, the argument ran, had been forced to make that kind of move, the provocation

must have been quite extraordinary; the Soviets, it seemed, were as aggressive as ever and could only be restrained by a tough American policy.[13]

What are we to make of arguments of that sort? Kissinger at the time characterised the claim that the Soviets had instigated the October 1973 war as 'absolutely preposterous'.[14] And the evidence now available makes it abundantly clear that the Soviets had tried hard to work with the Americans in reaching a settlement that would have made the war unnecessary, had very much wanted to avoid a new Middle East war, and had warned United States leaders repeatedly that if nothing were done, an armed conflict was unavoidable.[15] The implication is that if the Americans had been more forthcoming and more willing to work with the Soviets in dealing with the problem – that is, if they had pursued a policy more in line with what *détente* was supposed to be – the war would not have broken out in the first place.

As for the narrower issue of the Brezhnev threat, the real question has to do with the degree to which the American government was directly responsible for creating the situation that led the Soviet leader to send Nixon the letter. Kissinger, after all, had worked out a ceasefire agreement with Brezhnev during a visit to Moscow on 21 October. The ceasefire was supposed to go into effect the next day, and Kissinger flew directly from Moscow to Israel for talks with Israeli leaders that day. But the ceasefire did not take hold, mainly because the Israelis very much wanted to continue military operations. Indeed, on 23 October, as Kissinger put it the next day, the Israelis 'grabbed a hunk of territory and cut the last supply line' for Egypt's Third Army.[16] Brezhnev threatened to intervene unilaterally only after Israeli policy had become clear. If Kissinger had encouraged Israel to ignore the ceasefire, as many people including the Soviets suspected, then the Brezhnev threat was scarcely an act of aggression pure and simple. It would in turn imply that Kissinger held responsibility for triggering the chain of events that led to the Brezhnev threat and American alert, with all their consequences, especially in terms of how people at home came to view *détente*.

Therefore, it is important to understand what actually happened at the end of the Arab-Israeli war in October 1973. Had Kissinger in fact given the Israelis a green light to continue their advance? For many years, in dealing with that issue, scholars have tended to accept Kissinger's claim of not deliberately encouraging the Israelis to violate the ceasefire, at least not in any major way. An account of the crisis given in 1994 is a good case in point. In a passage dealing with Kissinger's meetings with the Israeli leaders on 22 October, some officials who took part in those talks claimed 'Kissinger quietly encouraged Israel to violate the ceasefire and continue its offensive, at least for several hours', whilst other participants 'insist that Kissinger was tough and emphasised the importance of the cease-fire'. Then appears the argument that Kissinger 'adamantly denies that he encouraged Israel to violate the cease-fire' based on a 1991 interview:

> I did not encourage the Israelis. I did not want to see the Third [Egyptian] Army destroyed. I thought that they [the Israelis] were emotionally exhausted and did not need a big sales pitch for a cease-fire. After all, they had gotten the direct negotiations they had always wanted. I didn't press them hard because I didn't think that they needed to be pressed. I did not encourage the Israelis with more than minor adjustments. It is quite possible that the commanders in the field ran away with [Israel Prime Minister] Golda [Meir].[17]

Largely on the basis of that testimony came the conclusion that Kissinger had not intentionally encouraged the Israelis to continue their advance. For example, Kissinger '*inadvertently* created false expectations amongst Israel's leaders about' how much extra time they had for military operations; and 'Brezhnev suspected, *wrongly*, that Kissinger had deliberately deceived him and encouraged Israel to violate the cease-fire'.[18]

But important evidence at odds with Kissinger's account came out a few years after this analysis emerged. Indeed, a number of writers concluded based on new sources that Kissinger had done more to sanction Israeli violations than he had suggested in that 1991 interview, in his memoirs, and elsewhere.[19] Even then, there was a certain tendency to minimise the importance of that evidence and essentially accept Kissinger's story. One document, for example, recorded a meeting Kissinger had with Meir just after he had worked out the ceasefire agreement with Brezhnev in Moscow. Meir said that if the Egyptians did not stop military operations, Israel would not either; Kissinger replied – 'most tellingly', as one scholar put it: "even if they do . . . ".[20] But that comment is generally not taken too seriously. As one of Kissinger's biographers put it in 2004, it was an 'almost off-handed' remark. Even his assurance that the Israelis would not get 'violent protests' if the fighting continued during the night is not seen as very important. It had been 'designed reflexively to sweeten the ever-suspicious Israeli leader', another historian wrote, and Kissinger would soon regret what he had said.[21] Even scholars who say that Kissinger deliberately gave the Israelis a green light to violate the ceasefire are often quick to qualify that conclusion. They suggest, for example, that the message he was giving was not explicit, that he was agreeing to only minor, short-term violations of the agreement, or that he quickly changed his mind and demanded that the Israelis put a stop to their offensive.[22]

What about Kissinger's reliability as an historical source? To get at that issue, there are four claims that he made on matters not directly related to the issue at hand. The first relates to his position on the Vietnam War. In an August 1968 *New York Review of Books* article, Hans Morgenthau identified Kissinger as one of a number of supporters of the war who were now trying to 'cover their tracks' and make it seem that their real position had been very different. That charge led to a private exchange of correspondence between the two men. In one letter, written just before Nixon asked him to serve as his national security advisor, Kissinger stated flatly that he had 'never supported

the war in public'.[23] What was extraordinary here is that he had in fact defended America's Vietnam policy in a televised debate in December 1965 and, the same month, along with a large number of other academics, had signed a petition supporting the Administration's conduct of the war.[24] Not just that, but in 1966 he published a short opinion piece in *Look* magazine arguing that America had to prevent a communist victory in Vietnam.[25] That same year he told a group in North Carolina: 'We have no choice now but to maintain our commitment to prevent a Communist takeover in the south'.[26] Accordingly, it is hard to understand why Kissinger would simply deny that he had ever supported the war in public. The fact that he did so certainly says something about his commitment to the truth as an end in itself.

The remaining three cases relate directly to the Middle East. Kissinger claimed, first, that on the eve of the October war, he had not urged Israel not to attack pre-emptively. Rumours to the effect that he had insisted that the Israelis not strike first began circulating very early on, but Kissinger from the start strongly denied that he had done any such thing. Meeting with a group of Jewish leaders a few weeks after the war, for example, he referred to 'the great myth' that Washington had 'pressured them not to preempt'.[27] But the 'myth' did not disappear. It re-surfaced in two apparently well-researched books by respected journalists that appeared in the next few years. Kissinger, their authors argued, made it clear to the Israelis, just as the war was about to break out, that they were not to strike first.[28]

Kissinger, however, did not give an inch and over the years has repeatedly denied that America was in any way responsible for Israel's decision not to attack early. In the second volume of his memoirs, for example, he quoted from a message Meir sent him on 7 October, the second day of the war. Meir strongly implied that because of American pressure, the Israelis had not taken 'preemptive action' and their failure to do so was 'the reason for our situation now'. That claim clearly irritated Kissinger. Yes, it was true, he wrote, that 'in years past' he had expressed his 'personal view' to the Israelis that 'America's ability to help Israel in any war would be impaired if Israel struck first'. But in the run-up to the October war, 'the subject of preemption had not been discussed'. Meir, he said merely 'volunteered' to the American ambassador, 'Israel would not preempt. The decision had been her own, without benefit of recent American advice'.[29] That claim was not just for public consumption. In meetings with his staff at the time, he denied having warned the Israelis not to strike first. 'Since there will be all sorts of legends when this is over', he said on 10 October, 'one legend that has absolutely no foundation in fact is that we prevented an Israeli pre-emptive attack. We were authorised by the Israelis to inform the Arabs and the Soviets that they were not planning a pre-emptive attack, in order to comply with their wish that we prevent the war. But we made no recommendation to the Israelis about any course of action'.[30] He

made the same point in another high-level meeting in 1975: 'We didn't keep them from pre-empting. That's a myth'.[31]

What is to be made of that line of argument? On one hand, the Israelis certainly did tell the Americans that they did not intend to strike first as soon as they learned that an Arab attack was imminent. They did ask Kissinger to let the Soviets and the Arabs know their intentions, since they thought Arab military preparations might have been rooted in an honest but mistaken fear that Israel planned to take military action against them.[32] Any direct American pressure related to this specific situation had not prompted these assurances; they came well before the United States government believed war was imminent or even likely. So that part of the story is certainly in line with Kissinger's account.

What Kissinger failed to note is that he disbelieved the Israeli report about an imminent Arab attack when he received it at around 6:00 AM on 6 October. That report, he thought, might have been concocted as a cover for an Israeli attack, even though that attack would be launched on Yom Kippur. As he told White House chief of staff Alexander Haig that morning, when he received the report he thought at first 'it was an Israeli trick for them to be able to launch an attack although this is the holiest day'. He therefore 'called the Israelis and warned them to restrain' and soon 'got a return call from the Israelis giving us assurances that no pre-emptive Israeli [action] would be taken'.[33] In fact, he had urged the Israelis just before 7:00 AM that morning 'not to take any preemptive action'.[34] In reporting to Nixon a couple of hours later, he emphasised 'the essentiality of restraint on the Israeli part, and said there must be no preemptive action'.[35] As he told a high-level meeting that evening, he had made it clear that morning to the Soviets, the Egyptians, and the Israelis – including the Israeli foreign minister then in New York – that 'if Israel took preemptive action, we would oppose them'.[36] All this, of course, is very much at odds with his claim that Washington 'made no recommendation to the Israelis about any course of action'.

Those warnings, although issued after the key Israeli decision had been made, reflected a basic American attitude, one that played a much more important role in shaping Israeli policy on this issue than Kissinger seemed willing to admit. As one well-informed writer has pointed out, the Americans 'consistently warned Israel that it must not be responsible for initiating a Middle East war'.[37] It is quite clear from Israeli sources that in considering whether to attack pre-emptively, concerns about how the Americans would react played a fundamental role.[38] Kissinger clearly knew that this was the case. The Israeli ambassador, Simcha Dinitz, who had just flown back from Israel, briefed him on the evening of 7 October about the Israeli leadership's discussion of the pre-emption issue on the eve of the Arab attack. Dinitz reported one particularly striking remark made by Meir. He had reminded her that Kissinger always told him that 'whatever happens, don't be the one that strikes

first'. She had answered: 'You think I forgot?'[39] All this has a direct bearing on interpreting Meir's 7 October letter to Kissinger. When saying he knew the reasons 'why we took no preemptive action', she was almost certainly alluding to the general American attitude and not to specific warnings issued on the eve of the war. But if that was the case, then Meir's point that the Israelis had held back in large part because the Americans had made their opposition clear was absolutely correct; in dismissing that point, it was Kissinger himself, and not Meir, who was giving a very misleading impression.

The next case has to do with an offer that Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko made to Nixon and Kissinger in two important meetings in September 1971. According to Kissinger's later account, Gromyko made what was 'on the surface' an attractive proposal. 'In the event of a comprehensive settlement', Gromyko said, the Soviets 'were prepared to withdraw their forces from the Middle East, join in an arms embargo to the area, and participate in guarantees of a settlement'. But in reality, Kissinger argued, 'there was less to these proposals than met the eye'. The basic problem was that the Soviets insisted that a comprehensive settlement would have to 'involve total Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories of all Arab states'. Since they were 'still backing the maximum Arab position' with 'no sign' that they were willing to press their 'clients toward flexibility', America 'had no incentive to proceed jointly with Moscow'. The procedure Gromyko had in mind was also unacceptable: 'the promised withdrawal of Soviet forces would come at the *end* of the entire process; in other words, we would have to execute our entire contribution to this arrangement before the Soviets had to do anything'. 'And even then', Kissinger said, 'the Soviets made their withdrawal from Egypt conditional on the withdrawal of American advisers from Iran'.[40]

What is to be made of those claims? The first point is that whereas in his memoirs Kissinger minimised the importance of the Soviet offer, at the time both he and Nixon thought it very significant. Kissinger's first reaction, when Nixon briefed him on what Gromyko had said, was that this was a 'tremendous step' on the Soviets' part. After meeting with Gromyko to confirm the terms of the offer, he told the president that the Soviets had made 'a major concession', and these proposals were 'the biggest steps forward in the [Middle East] that have been made in your administration'.[41] Even after having time to reflect on the Gromyko offer, Nixon still thought it attractive. Getting the Soviets to withdraw their forces in exchange for an Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders, he said a few months later, was 'a damn good deal for just a few hunks of desert'.[42] The documentation now available fully supports that positive appraisal.

That material shows that contrary to what Kissinger suggested in his memoirs, the two major Powers saw things in much the same way regarding the terms of the final settlement.[43] The evidence on this point is quite

overwhelming. In his one-on-one meeting with Nixon on 29 September, Gromyko said that 'if some kind of framework' was reached to provide for the 'withdrawal of Israeli troops from all occupied territories', the Soviet Union, for its part, 'would agree on the limitation, or, if you wish, even on stoppage' of arms deliveries to the area. It would also be willing to withdraw its military units from the Middle East, leaving only a small number of advisors there, 'like you have in Iran'. The Soviets, he added, were also prepared, together with the United States and other Powers, in the context of a general agreement, to work out security arrangements for Israel.[44] Importantly, this was very much in line with the course of action Kissinger laid out a year earlier: 'We would require Israel's assurance that it would return essentially to her prewar borders, in exchange for Arab commitments and an enforceable peace. We would tell both the Soviets and Nasser [the Egyptian president at the time] that Soviet combat personnel would have to be withdrawn after an agreement'.[45] Indeed, both he and other top American leaders said many times both before and after September 1971 that as part of a settlement, Israel would have to pull back to its 1967 borders with only minor modifications.[46] That latter provision, incidentally, was no problem for their Soviet counterparts: Moscow agreed that minor territorial changes, at least on the border with Jordan, were not out of the question.[47]

In the Soviet view, moreover, once the border issue was resolved, everything else – as Brezhnev later put it – would 'fall into place'.[48] His government was now taking an accommodating position on all the other issues involved in a settlement: refugees, the Golan Heights, direct Arab-Israeli talks, and Israeli passage through the Straits of Tiran via a permanent international presence at Sharm el-Sheikh.[49] So now, in agreeing to remove their military forces from the area as part of a settlement, the Soviets felt they had taken a very important step forward. Their ambassador in Washington, Anatoly Dobrynin, called it 'the most generous offer the Soviet Union would ever make'.[50] They were offering to withdraw their forces, limit arms shipments to the region, and guarantee the settlement: 'What more could Israel possibly want?' The Soviets, he said, 'would agree to almost anything' the Americans proposed by way of guarantees; and the Soviet Union would be 'extremely flexible' in negotiating the settlement; only on the border issue did it have a fixed position – and even on that point, its position was not fundamentally different from what the Americans had in mind. The Politburo, Dobrynin told Kissinger, had in effect accepted the conditions for a peace agreement that Nixon and Kissinger had laid down in July 1970: they were willing to withdraw Soviet forces from the area and 'accept almost any settlement in terms of guarantees and other requirements in return for a solution'.[51] It was thus scarcely the case, as Kissinger had claimed in his memoirs, that the Soviets were 'still backing the maximum Arab position', that Gromyko had given 'no sign of the Soviet

Union's willingness to press its clients towards flexibility', or that he had given America 'no incentive to proceed jointly with Moscow'.[52]

Indeed, regarding Kissinger's comment in his memoirs that 'there was no possibility of agreeing now on the shape of the final settlement', it is important to note that he told Gromyko explicitly at the time that the two Powers could move ahead based on the Soviet foreign minister's proposal.[53] Nixon and Brezhnev, he suggested, might be able to 'agree on the nature of the ultimate settlement' at their meeting in Moscow in May 1972. Nevertheless, this agreement would have to remain secret since Nixon could not run the risk of a leak that year before the presidential election in November. There certainly was 'no possibility of implementing a final agreement before the American election'.[54] It implied that implementation would take place in 1973, and Kissinger confirmed this point in a meeting with Dobrynin a month later. His understanding 'was that we would not begin implementing the agreement on our side until after the elections; I had made this point clear to Gromyko that we could come to an understanding which of course on our side would have to be very binding, but that the actual implementation would be left until 1973'.[55] In April 1972, telling Gromyko that implementation would take place 'within the first six months' of 1973, he went on to specify that implementation could not 'begin until January', implying that it *would* begin at the start of the year.[56] All this is very much at odds with the impression a reader would glean from the passage in his memoirs dealing with the September 1971 meetings with Gromyko that clearly suggested that given Soviet policy, joint action of this sort was impossible.

There are, moreover, two other points where the documents contradict Kissinger's account of this episode. His memoirs claim that the 'promised withdrawal of Soviet forces would come at the *end* of the entire process' – that is, after full Israeli withdrawal. Yet, in the record of his meeting with Gromyko, the Soviet foreign minister agreed that all the measures he had proposed, including withdrawing Soviet forces, 'would go into effect as part of an interim settlement' – it would *not* have to wait until completing the entire process.[57] Kissinger also said that the Soviets had made withdrawal from Egypt 'conditional on the withdrawal of American advisors from Iran'. In reality, however, the point about Iran was rather different. The advisors from Iran would *not* have to leave; all Gromyko said was that after the agreement took effect, the Soviets could keep about the same number of advisors in Egypt as America had in Iran. So Kissinger's account of this episode is not very accurate.

The final but perhaps most interesting example has to do with Kissinger's account of his meetings with his Egyptian counterpart, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's national security advisor, Hafiz Ismail. The two men met in February 1973 for two days of intense discussion. According to Kissinger's memoirs, the Egyptians were uncompromising. Ismail had come 'less to discuss mediation – and therefore compromise – than to put forward

a polite ultimatum for terms beyond our capacity to fulfill'. 'Above all', he wrote, "Israel had to agree, before anything else happened, that it would return to its 1967 borders with *all* neighbors, with some margin for adjustment, perhaps, on the West Bank. Only on that basis would Egypt agree to join the negotiating process, and then only to discuss security arrangements'. If an Israeli-Egyptian agreement were reached, his country would only agree to end the state of war. Full peace 'would have to await a comprehensive settlement with *all* the other parties, including Syria and the Palestinians', thus giving 'the most intractable parties a veto, in effect, over the whole process'. The Egyptian proposal, he wrote, 'left us with little reason for optimism'. The policy Ismail had laid out was 'not essentially different' from the one that had produced the present deadlock, and he had little hope that it could lead to a negotiated settlement.[58]

Again, it is clear from the documentary evidence now available that the account Kissinger gave in his memoirs was deeply misleading. As he told Nixon at the time, Ismail had in fact laid out a very new policy. 'I thought the most important thing', he noted – and this was something Sadat 'had never said to anyone and won't say to anybody' – was that the Egyptians were 'willing to make a separate Egyptian-Israeli deal, because they know that afterwards the Jordanians and Syrians are going to follow the same procedure'. This was the 'first time' that the Egyptians had said anything of the sort. 'Up to now' they had taken the view 'that the whole package must be done as one: Syria, Jordan and Egypt'.[59] To be sure, a comprehensive peace was still Egypt's long-term goal, but the connexion with the Egyptian part of the settlement was, at least initially, to be minimal. As one of the Egyptians taking part in the talks with Kissinger pointed out, there had to be some indication in the Egyptian settlement 'that we are going forward to a whole settlement' – just 'some paragraphs' laying out basic principles of the sort contained 'in the 242 document'. This document was the basic UN Security Council resolution that had laid out in general language the terms of settlement, which Kissinger did not take seriously.[60]

As the lengthy transcripts of his meetings with Kissinger make clear, Ismail *was* interested in serious negotiations under mainly American auspices. He certainly never said that Israel would first have to agree to return to its pre-1967 borders – with perhaps some modifications in its border with Jordan – before there could be any negotiations. One could begin, in Ismail's view, by working out what he called 'heads of agreement', basic principles that would govern the *Egyptian* part of the settlement, negotiated in talks with the Americans, with the Israelis somehow brought in at some point.[61] Fleshing out the 'heads of agreement' could then occur to produce a more detailed written agreement; the Israelis would be more deeply involved in this stage. Then talks about implementation would follow. After working out the 'heads of agreement' with Egypt, efforts could engage Jordan and Syria. The same

basic process would unfold on those fronts, but 'a step behind'.[62] If Syria refused, that problem could be left for later. Ismail certainly did not suggest that Egypt would be held back forever by a Syrian veto, and he probably felt that after both Egypt and Jordan had made their own agreements with Israel, it would be hard for Syria to refuse to settle on similar terms. As for the Palestinians, he at one point told Kissinger that once Israel and Jordan reached an agreement, that would 'bring down the curtain' on the whole Palestinian issue, at least as an international problem; it would then be a matter for King Hussein of Jordan and the Palestinians to settle internally.[63] Nonetheless, Kissinger could scarcely believe that Egypt could wash its hands of the Palestinians in that way and, when pressing Ismail on that issue, the Egyptian agreed to give more thought to the problem. The one point that comes across from this exchange, however, is that Egypt would not allow the Palestinians to prevent it from moving forward towards at least a partial peace agreement with Israel.

Ismail's basic plan, moreover, was not too different from the kind of strategy the Americans had favoured for some time. After September 1971, at least in theory, the policy had been to move quickly after the November 1972 elections towards a settlement, at least with Egypt and Jordan, based on the principles Washington and Moscow already shared – principles which had more or less been agreed upon in the 1972 Moscow talks. Further talks involving the regional actors would work out that settlement, with the big Powers helping move matters forward behind the scenes. The Egyptian plan was much in line with that basic approach, although it emphasised the American role in pressing Israel and played down any expected Soviet actions. In substantive terms, the Americans had for some time accepted the principle that Israel would have to return to its 1967 borders, with only minor modifications; here, too, they saw eye-to-eye with the Egyptians. The Americans had proposed, however, that whilst Egyptian sovereignty over the whole Sinai peninsula could be recognised, Israel's security needs in that area could not be ignored and maybe a temporary Israeli presence in the Sinai could be part of the agreement. Cairo seemed willing to work out some sort of compromise on that basis.[64]

One thus comes away from the lengthy transcripts of the February 1973 Kissinger-Ismail meetings with the sense that the Egyptians were serious about moving towards peace, that Kissinger had no fundamental objection to their proposed course of action, and that Ismail and Kissinger in fact had reached a near understanding about how matters were to proceed. That point is particularly clear from the way Kissinger summed up matters at the end of the talks: he had no problem with Ismail's general approach and seemed mainly concerned with how to flesh it out in practice.[65] One certainly does not get the impression that Ismail had merely 'put forward a polite ultimatum for terms beyond our capacity to fulfill'[66]; and in various specific ways, Kissinger's account in his memoirs of Ismail's proposal is simply not

supported by those documents. Ismail, for example, had not insisted that Israel agree to withdraw from all the occupied territories 'before anything else happened'. The process, in fact, was to begin before bringing in Israel. Nor had he insisted that 'full peace' with Israel would have to 'await a comprehensive settlement with *all* the other parties, including Syria and the Palestinians'. Regarding the Palestinians, at least, he simply agreed that the Egyptians needed to think more about the issue, and much of what he said had in fact suggested that if the other issues were resolved, the Palestinian question would not be a stumbling block to 'full peace' with Egypt. So, again, Kissinger's later account did not give a good sense of what had happened in his meetings with Ismail.

Some general conclusions emerge from the analysis of these four claims. The first and most obvious is that the accounts Kissinger later gave have to be taken with a grain of salt. This is not to say, of course, that his three enormous volumes of memoirs, along with his other writings and utterances dealing with these matters, are devoid of historical value. Those three volumes are, in fact, perhaps the most extraordinary political memoir ever written, and no historian interested in the period would ever dream of ignoring them. The point is simply not accepting what he says on faith and the importance of assessing his claims against other evidence now available.

A second point is perhaps a bit less obvious: the distortions were by no means random. In all three Middle East cases, the effect was to minimise America's responsibility – and especially Kissinger's personal responsibility – for what happened. The message in his passage dealing with the Gromyko offer was that the Soviets were still impossible – they continued to 'back the maximum Arab position' – so there was no point in trying to co-operate with them in working out a settlement. The message in the passage dealing with the Ismail meetings was that the Egyptians were still impossible: all Ismail had done was to 'put forward a polite ultimatum for terms beyond our capacity to fulfill'. His account of the pre-emption issue on the eve of the 1973 war also suggested that America's ability to influence what happened was severely limited. Israel, the argument ran, made the decision not to pre-empt entirely on its own; the subtext was that Washington had little control over what Israel did. A clear pattern exists here that says something about Kissinger's purposes in presenting things the way he did. He wanted to give the impression that America's room for manoeuvre was limited and, therefore, he personally remained blameless for the way events unfolded. But having identified the bias, allows for effective analysis of Kissinger's account of the main issue here: American policy at the end of the October 1973 war.

As the tide of battle in October 1973 turned against the Arabs, the Soviets pressed for a ceasefire and Kissinger agreed to go to Moscow to look for a solution. Contrary to several claims, however, he was no longer particularly interested in holding the Israelis back.[67] As he later pointed out, 'what we

wanted was the most massive Arab defeat possible so that it would be clear to the Arabs that they would get nowhere with dependence on the Soviets'.[68] For that reason, he now sought to give the Israelis more time to complete their military operations and, in fact, one of the main reasons he agreed to go to Moscow was to give Israel another couple of days of operations.[69] However, on 21 October, he negotiated a ceasefire agreement with Brezhnev and Gromyko that led to a UN Security Council resolution adopted just before 1 AM on 22 October. The resolution was supposed to go into effect 12 hours later equivalent to just before 7 PM Israeli time.[70] According to Kissinger's later account, the Israelis did not learn of the decision as promptly as the Americans intended because of a communications problem in Moscow. He therefore indicated to the Israelis when meeting them on 22 October that he 'would understand if there was a few hours' "slippage" in the cease-fire deadline'.[71] When the ceasefire began unravelling next day, Kissinger wrote, he had the 'sinking feeling' that his remarks might have 'emboldened' the Israelis.[72]

Given the above discussion, neither Kissinger's own accounts nor historical works based on his testimony should be accepted uncritically. They all need evaluation in light of the massive and quite extraordinary body of evidence now available, and when one examines these sources, it becomes clear that there are problems with the interpretation of this episode. First, Kissinger did *not* tell the Israelis in his 22 October meetings that they had to stop their offensive, allowing only a four-hour delay. Everything he said, in fact, pointed in the opposite direction. 'You won't get violent protests from Washington', he told Meir, 'if something happens during the night, while I'm flying. Nothing can happen in Washington until noon tomorrow'.[73] And 'noon tomorrow' implied at least a 16-hour delay beyond the ceasefire deadline – if Israeli time – or perhaps a 22-hour delay – if, as is more likely, he meant Washington time – not the mere four-hour delay that Kissinger admitted he had been willing to give the Israelis to compensate for the communications breakdown.[74] In another conversation, moreover, this time with Israeli military leaders, he might have gone further; according to Israeli sources, Kissinger spoke in terms not of hours but days.[75] When asked how long it would take 'to complete the encirclement of the two Egyptian armies on the east bank of the Suez Canal', the Air Force chief answered that there destruction could occur 'in two or three days'. 'Two or three days?', Kissinger supposedly replied. 'That's all? Well, in Vietnam the cease-fire didn't go into effect at the exact time that was agreed on'. To the Israelis, it sounded like Kissinger was giving them a green light to continue operations for two or three days more. Still, these Israeli sources are not a very reliable historical source, and this particular story should not carry much evidentiary weight.[76]

One does not need, however, to rely on sources of that kind to conclude that the green lighting of Israel was part of a deliberate strategy. Kissinger's basic idea, as a number of documents show, was that the Israelis could take

advantage of the fact that no one would really know how far they had actually advanced at the time the ceasefire was supposed to go into effect. It meant that no matter where they were at the time the shooting actually stopped, they would not have to withdraw to any particular line – Kissinger pointed this out to Dinitz in a telephone conversation at noon on 23 October.[77] In line with that idea, he had encouraged Israeli leaders the previous day to 'just say' they would stop where they were at the time the ceasefire was supposed to take effect provided the other side also did so, taking care to note that whether offensive operations actually continued lay within Israeli 'domestic jurisdiction' and that 'reality' – presumably meaning, 'and not UN resolutions' – would determine where the ceasefire lines actually were.[78]

Kissinger was more explicit when meeting Dinitz later that afternoon. He told the ambassador that he wanted Israel to improve its position in the field as much as possible; indeed, he said, he made this clear to Meir when he saw her in Israel. But for diplomatic reasons, it would be helpful if the Israelis accepted a UN resolution calling for a return to the original ceasefire line. That resolution, he thought, would have no substantive effect; the Israelis would not be expected 'to return to the positions from which' they had started. He asked only that they find '200–300 unimportant and insignificant yards from which' to withdraw, so that they could claim they were complying with the UN resolution. There were no threats, no demands, no criticism even of the Israeli offensive – an attitude very much at odds with the much harder line Nixon was taking with the Israelis at the time.[79]

He reiterated the point, and indeed went a bit further, in two telephone conversations with Dinitz that evening. 'When the pressure starts', he said, the Israelis could withdraw a bit – a 'few hundred yards' from where they would be at that point, which was well beyond the original ceasefire line – but 'not right now'. 'The time to make moves', he indicated, 'is just a little bit before you are forced to'. Israel, he thought, should continue military operations for another day: the fighting should only stop 'tomorrow', that is, two days after the ceasefire was supposed to go into effect. Then someone should announce that Israel was returning to the original ceasefire line; the assumption was that since no one knew where that line was, there would be no way to prove that the Israelis, in withdrawing a few hundred yards, were not making a legitimate pull back. In terms of tactics, the idea was that the Israelis should say one thing and do another, but the Israelis were unwilling to go along with what they viewed as an unnecessarily dishonest policy and refused to accept what Kissinger called his 'strong tactical advice'. In their view, the fact that some Egyptian commanders continued to fight past the deadline – and were supposedly the first ones to violate the ceasefire – gave them all the justification they needed to do what it wanted to do anyway: cut off the Egyptian Third Army in the Sinai. Kissinger was irritated by Israel's response; not by Israeli refusal to stop fighting, but their unwillingness to defend their actions by making false

claims about where their forces were when the 22 October ceasefire was supposed to take effect. 'The trouble with your people', he told Dinitz on the evening of 23 October, 'is they have too much integrity'. He had clearly not given up on his plan. 'In my personal opinion', he said according to the Israeli account of these conversations, 'if you could buy some time by discussing the 200–300 yards, why not give up some of your integrity? After all, within a short while it will become clear that 25,000 Egyptians do not have water or supplies and then you have the upper hand anyway'. The next day he complained to Dinitz that because of Israeli boasting – he was particularly annoyed with some remarks the Israeli defence minister, Moshe Dayan, had just made – 'the strategy which I had proposed is no longer possible'. 'The Israelis are not only obnoxious', he complained to other American officials a little later that morning, 'they're also boastful. If they had kept their mouths shut, no one would have known where the ceasefire line was'.[80]

The real problem, however, was not that the Israelis were too honest. The real problem lay with the Arabs and their Soviet friends. The Egyptians especially were becoming increasingly desperate as the Israelis threatened to cut off their Third Army in the Sinai, and the Soviets were enraged by the Israelis' refusal to comply with the ceasefire – and by what they viewed as America's unwillingness to make them do so. The Soviet leadership had by no means been eager to intervene in the conflict. Kissinger understood how reluctant the Soviets were to confront the United States in this crisis. Brezhnev had told him in Moscow that 'détente was the most important thing and he wouldn't give it up for the Middle East'; and he apparently took that statement at face value.[81] Nevertheless, what that meant was that America could go rather far before triggering Soviet military action of any sort. The question was how far, and by 23 October, Soviet patience was wearing thin. There were even certain indications that the Soviets were preparing to send troops to Egypt.[82] So on the morning of 24 October, nearly two full days after the ceasefire was supposed to take effect, the Americans slammed on the brakes. The Israelis were told clearly to stop military operations: 'we cannot', Kissinger said, 'make Brezhnev look like a Goddamn fool in front of his own colleagues'.[83] Washington had thus shifted course about 12 hours before receiving the famous Brezhnev letter threatening unilateral Soviet intervention – just a bit too late to prevent that threat from being issued.[84]

The key point is that Israeli flouting of the ceasefire directly provoked the Brezhnev threat and Soviet moves that had preceded it. Kissinger had no problem recognising, at the late night meeting, where the decision on how to respond to the Brezhnev threat came. The 'Israeli violation' of the ceasefire agreement 'broke the camel's back'; it was only then, he pointed out, that 'the Soviets decided to move'.[85] Indeed, he later admitted to the Israelis that Brezhnev's claim about being tricked was 'not unreasonable'.[86] Kissinger

certainly recognised that he had pushed the envelope a bit too far – that he was in large measure responsible for creating the situation that had led to the Brezhnev threat. 'If the Soviets have decided to go in', Kissinger remarked to Dinitz when he telephoned him on the evening of 24 October to tell him about the Brezhnev threat, 'I just think we turned the wheel yesterday one screw too much'.[87] The 'we' is very much worth noting. That single two-letter word is a kind of 'smoking gun' showing that the Israelis had not acted on their own and that Kissinger had given the green light for the Israeli offensive.

It is also important to note that in reacting to the Brezhnev threat the way he did, Kissinger deliberately engaged in a bit of overkill.[88] 'Although at the time all the Russians were going to do was to put a division at the Cairo airport', he later remarked, in ordering the alert, he wanted 'to teach them that they could not operate far from home'.[89] He had learned, he said at the time, 'that when you decide to use force you must use plenty of it'.[90] The decision to order the alert was in line with the basic philosophy he outlined a week earlier: 'If we get into a confrontation, we have to show that we are a giant! We have to win!'[91] To be sure, the whole 'crisis' of 24–25 October was somewhat artificial, since the Americans did not intend to resist the basic Soviet demand that Israel stop its advance; they had actually taken the necessary actions to force Israel into line about 12 hours before receiving the Brezhnev letter. But the purpose of the alert was not to confront the Soviets on that issue. It was instead essentially an exercise in image making. The whole world needed to be shown that America was the top dog, that the Soviets had backed down, and that Washington would determine how things ran their course in the Middle East. Egypt was now at Israel's mercy, and Israel utterly depended on the United States; America, Kissinger said, was thus 'in the catbird's seat',[92] and the Soviets would play a purely secondary role. On 24 October, for example, he explained what had been agreed to in Moscow and outlined how America intended to proceed: 'The only thing agreed is that the Arabs sit down with Israel, initially with the United States and Soviet Union to get them talking. We privately will tell the Arabs to screw the Russians and come to us for any deals'.[93] He realised that he should not overdo it. Thinking it important not to 'humiliate the Soviet Union too much',[94] he was prepared to throw it a bone or two to help it save face and keep it from making trouble. But he wanted to humiliate the Soviets just the right amount and, above all, make sure that on the real issues, America would call the shots.

In his Walgreen lectures in 1951, the diplomat/scholar George Kennan suggested that democracies were like those 'prehistoric monsters with a body as long as this room and a brain the size of a pin'. Their foreign policies had a certain mindless quality. They tended to think too much in terms of abstract moral principles and too little in terms of what would make for a stable international system. They would be much better off, he thought, if they

lowered their sights and dealt with other countries in a less ideological and more business-like way. They should avoid 'moralistic slogans' and refrain from picturing their 'effort as a crusade'; they should keep their 'lines of negotiation to the enemy' open and settle for a reasonable accommodation rather than insist on total victory. But Kennan understood that because of its own internal political culture, the United States found it hard to pursue that sort of policy – he was worried that unless it found a way around that problem it might be headed for real trouble down the road.[95]

Kennan was by no means the only observer to see things that way and the failure of *détente* in the 1970s in the 1970s often interpreted in those terms. Kissinger, the argument runs, sought to pursue the kind of policy Kennan had in mind, a policy based on realist principles. Nonetheless, his approach was too subtle, too European, for the unsophisticated Americans, who insisted that the country's foreign policy reflect its moral sensibilities and ideological beliefs. Of course, Kissinger often took that view. Reading his memoirs, the subtext is clear: it was not his fault if the policy was not successful. To be sure, much of the problem had to do with the external situation, especially in the Middle East. The Soviets were impossible; he had not seen 'one shred of evidence' that they 'were willing to separate themselves from the hardline Arab program'.[96] The Arabs were also impossible; even in February 1973, he claimed, Ismail had merely presented 'a polite ultimatum for terms beyond our capacity to fulfill'. As for the Israelis, they made their own decisions, with America's ability to influence their behaviour quite limited. But internal problems in the final analysis turned out to be more daunting. Given America's political culture, it was impossible even for a statesman of his undoubted ability to pursue the sort of realist policy he felt was in America's interest. Indeed, as pointed out earlier, he went so far as to say as he left office that the problem had 'been almost entirely domestic' in nature.

That whole interpretation of the failure of *détente* is deeply misleading. It was not because the country would never support a realist policy that things ran their course the way they did in the 1970s. The policy of reaching an accommodation with the Soviets remained generally welcomed in 1972. If the very idea of improving relations with a major communist Power were simply unacceptable for ideological reasons, the reaction to *détente* policy at that point would have been very different. The shift in attitudes at home after 1972 was real enough and obviously played an important role in the story, but it did not happen on its own; that shift had a good deal to do with Soviet behaviour from 1973 on, or at least with the way it was commonly interpreted. In looking at how, and especially when, that shift took place, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that in large part the particular interpretation placed on Soviet policy during the October war triggered it. The view that the Soviet Union played a major role in instigating that conflict was crucial in that regard, but the events that took place at the end of the war also mattered a great deal. With

the United States forced to take the extraordinary step of ordering a worldwide military alert – a step seeming to suggest a real risk of general nuclear war – then the provocation must have been enormous. The Soviets had actually threatened to send troops to the Middle East, indicating that they were as aggressive as ever; *détente*, therefore, had been a fraud. Moreover, the events of October 1973 did not just affect American opinion. The Soviets assumed that Kissinger had not dealt honestly with them, and Washington had somehow given the green light for Israeli violations of the ceasefire; what happened at the end of the war thus also tended to discredit *détente* in Soviet eyes, something helping explain Soviet policy in the Third World in the mid- and late 1970s.[97]

None of this had to happen. If Kissinger had played it straight with the Soviets in October 1973 and not encouraged Israel to violate the ceasefire he had just negotiated in Moscow, there would have been no Brezhnev threat and no American alert. More generally, if American policy had differed – been more willing to work with the Soviets in dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict, a policy more in keeping with what was supposed to be the spirit of *détente* – events might well have run their course in the post-1973 period in a very different way. Feelings within America would have differed, and Soviet policy, too, would probably have altered. What that suggests is that the *détente* policy as such was not the problem. It was not that a country like the United States was simply incapable, for domestic political reasons, of pursuing a policy based on realist principles. The essential problem was that the American government chose to pursue a policy at the time cut from a different cloth. The goal in theory might have been to build a world where the United States and Soviet Union could put ideology aside and deal with each other on a relatively co-operative, business-like basis. Yet, if Kissinger had taken that goal seriously, would he really have pursued the policy he did in late October 1973? By green lighting the Israeli ceasefire violations, he was undermining the basic policy his government was supposed to be pursuing. That effect, however, was entirely foreseeable, and that in turn makes one wonder about how serious he was in pursuing that policy in the first place – about whether all the talk about building a 'lasting structure of peace' was just so much wool to be pulled over people's eyes for much less noble political purposes.

Notes

1 Richard Nixon, "Address to a Joint Session of the Congress." *Public Papers of the Presidents: Nixon*, June 1, 1972, 661.
2 See H.W. Brands, "The World in a Word: The Rise and Fall of Détente," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, 1, no. 1 (1998): 55.
3 John Lewis Gaddis, "The Rise, Fall and Future of Détente," *Foreign Affairs*, 62, no. 2 (1983): 362.
4 Coalition for a Democratic Majority, Foreign Policy Task Force, "The Quest for Détente." July 1974, 2.

5 Robert Conquest, Brian Crozier, John Erickson, Joseph Godson, Gregory Grossman, Leopold Labetz, Bernard Lewis, Richard Pipes, Leonard Schapiro, Edward Shils, and P.J. Vatikiotis, "Détente: An Evaluation," *International Review*, 1 (1974); and Cf. John Rosenberg, "The Quest against Détente: Eugene Rostow, the October War, and the Origins of the Anti-Détente Movement, 1969–1976," *Diplomatic History*, 39, no. 4 (2015): 741, for Rostow's claim in 1974 that Kissinger was '"lull[ing] Western public opinion" into a false sense of security'.

6 Quoted in Murrey Marder, "The Kissinger Years: A Search for Control in a Disordered World." *Washington Post* November 14, 1976, 27.

7 Dan Caldwell, "U.S. Domestic Politics and the Demise of Détente," in *The Fall of Détente: Soviet-American Relations during the Carter Years*, ed. Odd Arne Westad, (Oslo, 1997), 105.

8 Julian Zelizer, "Détente and Domestic Politics," *Diplomatic History*, 33, no. 4 (2009): 653.

9 Gaddis, "Future of Détente," 365.

10 See, for example, Walter Laqueur, "Détente: What's Left of It?" *NY Times Magazine*, December 16, 1973.

11 Coalition for a Democratic Majority, "Quest for Détente," 3.

12 Brezhnev to Nixon, October 24, 1973, Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976* [hereafter *FRUS*], Volume XXV, 735.

13 See, for example, Robert Keatley, "U.S. Stares Down Middle East Threat by Soviet Union As Suspicions of Moscow's Interest in Peace Increase." *Wall Street Journal*, October 26, 1973, 2 – note especially quoted Muskie comment; David Binder, "An Implied Soviet Threat Spurred U.S. Forces' Alert." *NY Times*, November 21, 1973, 1; Michael Getler, "Soviet Moves Caused U.S. Military Alert." *Washington Post*, October 26, 1973, A1; and Robert Keatley, "Diplomatic Rx: Only Major Accords by Kissinger, Soviet May Salvage Détente." *Wall Street Journal*, March 27, 1974, 1 – note especially quoted Cranston comment.

14 Kissinger meeting with Sonnenfeldt et al., August 1, 1974, Digital National Security Archive [DNSA]/KT01268, 1, 4–5. Note Kissinger's discussion of this issue at the time in Secretary of State's Staff Meeting, October 23, 1973, *FRUS 1969–76*, XXV, 693.

15 See Galen Jackson, "The Lost Peace: Great Power Politics and the Arab-Israeli Problem, 1967–1979" (PhD Dissertation, UCLA, 2016), Chapter 4 and sources cited. Cf. Galia Golan, "The Soviet Union and the October War," in Asaf Siniver, *The Yom Kippur War: Politics, Legacy, Diplomacy* (Oxford, 2013); and Victor Israelyan, *Inside the Kremlin during the Yom Kippur War* (University Park, PA, 1995).

16 Kissinger-Haig telephone conversation, October 24, 1973, 10:20 PM, U.S. Department of State, Virtual Reading Room, Henry Kissinger Telephone Conversations collection [DOSKTC].

17 Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, *We All Lost the Cold War* (Princeton, NJ, 1994), 216, were not the only ones to make this kind of argument. See also Marvin Kalb and Bernard Kalb, *Kissinger* (Boston, MA, 1974), 486–87; Edward Sheehan, *The Arabs, Israelis, and Kissinger: A Secret History of American Diplomacy in the Middle East* (NY, 1976), 36–37; and Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (NY, 1992), 527–28.

18 Lebow and Stein, *We All Lost the Cold War*, 218, 243 – emphasis added. For another example, see William Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967* (Berkeley, CA, 1993), 171–72. In his 22 October meetings with the Israelis, Quandt wrote, Kissinger 'was insistent that Israel move into defensive positions and not violate the cease-fire'.

19 For Kissinger's account, see Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 552–613, especially 569; idem., and *Crisis: The Anatomy of Two Major Foreign Policy Crises* (NY, 2003), 308.

20 Asaf Siniver, "US Foreign Policy and the Kissinger Stratagem," in Siniver, *Yom Kippur War*, 95.

21 Jussi Hanhimäki, *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (Oxford, 2004), 314; Alistair Horne, *Kissinger: 1973, The Crucial Year* (NY, 2009), 290. See also Zach Levey, "Anatomy of an Airlift: United States Military Assistance to Israel during the 1973 War," *Cold War History*, 8, no. 4 (2008): 492.

22 On the first point, see Siniver, "Kissinger Stratagem," 95. On the second point, for example, see National Security Archive [NSA] press release, 'Kissinger Gave Green Light for Israeli Offensive Violating 1973 Cease-Fire; U.S.-Israeli Decisions Touched Off Crisis Leading to 1973 U.S. Nuclear Alert; New Documents Correct Previous Accounts in Kissinger Books' October 7, 2003. The press release began by pointing out that newly released documents showed that Kissinger had given the Israelis 'a green light to breach a cease-fire agreement arranged with the Soviet Union'. But in the next paragraph, it went on to note that he had only told the Israelis that he could accept them 'taking [a] slightly longer' time to comply with the ceasefire resolution, which was not really at odds with the story Kissinger had himself told in his memoirs. The press release announced the publication of the NSA's Electronic Briefing Book No. 98 [NSAEBB98], 'The October War and U.S. Policy'; as the summaries of the two key documents – 51 and 52 – in the briefing book dealing with this issue show, the editors still believed Kissinger had inadvertently encouraged the Israelis and soon regretted having done so. On the point about Kissinger quickly changing his mind soon after his return to Washington on October 23, see Craig Daigle, *The Limits of Détente: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1969–1973* (New Haven, CT, 2012), 318–19.

23 Hans Morgenthau, "A Talk with Senator McCarthy." *NY Review of Books*, August 22, 1968. Kissinger to Morgenthau, 9 October 1968; Morgenthau to Kissinger, October 22, 1968, Kissinger to Morgenthau, November 13, 1968 – for the quotation – all Morgenthau [Hans Morgenthau Collection, Leo Baeck Institute, NY] Box 4, Folder 1.

24 See Isaacson, *Kissinger*, 119. See also Niall Ferguson, *Kissinger*, Volume 1*: 1923–1968: The Idealist* (NY, 2015), 670–72, 822.

25 Henry Kissinger, "What Should We Do Now?" *Look*, August 9, 1966.

26 Ferguson, *Kissinger*, 672.

27 Kissinger meeting with Jewish intellectuals, December 6, 1973, reproduced in Zaki Shalom, "Kissinger and the American Jewish Leadership after the 1973 War," *Israel Studies*, 7, no. 1 (2002): 199.

28 See Kalb and Kalb, *Kissinger*, 459, Sheehan, *Arabs, Israelis, and Kissinger*, 31.

29 Henry A. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston, MA, 1982), 477. For the message itself, see Meir to Kissinger, in Shalev-Kissinger meeting, October 7, 1973, *FRUS 1969–76*, XXV, 340–41.

30 Secretary of State's Staff Meeting, October 10, 1973, *Ibid*., 428.

31 Washington Special Actions Group [WSAG] meeting, January 14, 1975, *Ibid*., 26, 483.

32 See Meir to Kissinger, October 5, 1973, Quandt summary of Keating's report of his meeting with Meir, October 6, 1973, both *Ibid*., XXV, 284–85, 287, 287n2.

33 Kissinger-Haig phone conversation, October 6, 1973, 8:35 AM., in Kissinger, *Crisis*, 27. Kissinger's reaction was not as idiosyncratic as one might think. At the first meeting of the high-level WSAG held in Kissinger's absence after the war broke out, some people, including Secretary of Defence James Schlesinger, assumed that 'the Israelis had jumped the gun and had started the fighting'; it took a while before anyone at the meeting took issue with that assessment. Ambassador Alfred L. Atherton oral history, Association for

Diplomatic Studies and Training, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project (Summer 1990), 150. The WSAG meeting record supports that view: *FRUS 1969–76*, XXV, 295–96.

34 Kissinger-Shalev phone conversation, October 6, 1973, 6:55 AM., in Kissinger, *Crisis*, 18.

35 Kissinger to Nixon, October 6, 1973, 8:50 AM (for delivery at 9:00 AM), NSAEBB98, Document 10.

36 WSAG meeting, October 6, 1973, 7:22 PM, *FRUS 1969–76*, XXV, 331.

37 Quandt, *Peace Process*, 151. Quandt served under Kissinger at the NSC from 1972 to 1974.

38 See Jeremy Pressman, *Warring Friends: Alliance Restraint in International Politics* (Ithaca, NY, 2008), 100–04.

39 Kissinger-Dinitz meeting, October 7, 1973, 8:20 PM, NSAEBB98, Document 18.

40 Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston, MA, 1979), 1288. Emphasis in original text.

41 Nixon-Kissinger meeting and phone conversation, September 30, October 1, 1971, *FRUS 1969–76*, XIII, 1060, 1079.

42 Kissinger-Nixon meeting, March 18, 1972, in editorial note, *FRUS 1969–76*, XIV, 214.

43 Jackson, "Lost Peace," especially 260–62, has this as a major theme.

44 Transcript of Nixon-Gromyko meeting, September 29, 1971, *FRUS 1969–76*, XIII, 1051–55. See also Kissinger-Gromyko meeting, September 20, 1971, *Ibid*., 1072.

45 Kissinger to Nixon, June 16, 1970, *Ibid*., 441.

46 See Nixon speech to the UN, September 18, 1969, *Public Papers of the Presidents: Nixon 1969*, 727; Saunders to Kissinger, July 2, 1970, *FRUS 1969–76*, XII, 542; Nixon-Gromyko -Rogers meeting, September 29, 1971, *Ibid*., XIII, 1040n8 – Rogers and Nixon on borders; Kissinger-Nixon meeting, March 18, 1972, summarised in editorial note, Kissinger-Gromyko meetings, May 28, 1972 all *Ibid*., XIV, 214, 1191–93, 1195, 1203, 1211–12. See also Kissinger-Gromyko meeting, May 8, 1973, *Ibid*., XV, 437; Kissinger-Gromyko meeting, June 23, 1973, *Ibid*., XXV, 216; Kissinger-Dobrynin meeting, March 1, 1972 [Soviet account], in David Geyer and Douglas Selvage, eds., *Soviet-American Relations: The Détente Years, 1969–1972* (Washington, DC, 2007), 601; Kissinger-Ismail meeting, May 20, 1973, 22, DNSA/KT00732. Cf., finally, Jackson, 'Lost Peace', 93–94.

47 Kissinger to Nixon, June 13, 1969, *FRUS 1969–76*, XII: 179; Gromyko in meeting with Nixon and Rogers, September 29, 1971, *Ibid*., XIII, 1041; Kissinger-Dobrynin meeting, March 1, 1972, *Ibid*., XIV, 188; NSC meeting, April 25, 1969, *Ibid*., XXIII, 90.

48 Nixon-Brezhnev meeting, June 23, 1973, *Ibid*., XV, 539; *Ibid*., XXV, 221. See also Dobrynin to Kissinger, January 28, 1973, *Ibid*., 21.

49 On the refugee question, see Kissinger-Gromyko meetings, May 28, June 23, 1973, *Ibid*., XIV, 1189; *Ibid*., XXV, 213. As Dobrynin pointed out in that latter meeting, the two sides had reached agreement on this issue in 1969. On Sharm el-Sheikh see, for example, Kissinger-Dobrynin meeting, March 10, 1970, in Geyer and Selvage, *Détente Years*, 134; Kissinger-Dobrynin meeting, May 18, 1972, *FRUS 1969–76*, XIV, 941. On the Golan Heights, see Kissinger-Dobrynin meeting, April 14, 1969, in Geyer and Selvage, *Détente Years*, 51. On direct talks, see, for example, Kissinger-Gromyko meeting, May 28, 1972, *FRUS 1969–76*, XIV, 1206.

50 Kissinger-Dobrynin meeting, October 15, 1971, *Ibid*., 14–15.

51 Kissinger-Dobrynin meeting, October 30, 1971, *Ibid*., 26.

52 Kissinger, *White House Years*, 1288.

53 *Ibid.*

54 Kissinger-Gromyko meeting, September 30, 1971, *FRUS 1969–76*, XIII, 1073–74.

55 Kissinger-Dobrynin meeting, October 30, 1971, *Ibid*., XIV, 26.

56 Kissinger-Gromyko meeting, April 23, 1972, *Ibid*., 578.
57 Kissinger-Gromyko meeting, September 30, 1971, *Ibid*., XIII, 1072.
58 Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 215–16. Emphasis in original text.
59 Nixon-Kissinger conversation, February 26, 1973, quoted in editorial note, *FRUS 1969–76*, XXV, 85. Note also his characterisation of the Egyptian proposal in his meeting with the Israeli ambassador the next day: Kissinger-Rabin meeting, February 27, 1973, *Ibid*., 97.
60 Kissinger-Ismail meeting, February 25, 1973, 20, DNSA/KT00681. In his talks with the Israelis, Kissinger exaggerated the degree to which the Egyptians were thinking in terms of a separate peace with Israel. 'This time it is completely clear', he later told the Israeli ambassador. 'The Egyptians are only concerned about themselves and do not tie an agreement with them to the other Arab countries': Kissinger to Dinitz, June 2, 1973, quoted in Yigal Kipnis, *1973: The Road to War* (Charlottesville, VA, 2013), 68.
61 Kissinger-Ismail meeting, February 26, 1973, 8, 11, especially 22–23, DNSA/KT00682. Ismail, in fact, wanted to bring the Israelis in relatively quickly. There were no preconditions mentioned here. *Ibid*., 4.
62 *Ibid*., 7.
63 *Ibid*., 14–15, 36.
64 Dr. Muhammad Ghanim, another high Egyptian official who took part in the talks, was quite explicit in this regard. 'We feel the basic obstacle to an Egyptian settlement', he said, 'is to find how to compromise, how to reconcile the needs of the security of Israel with our sovereignty over Arab land'. Kissinger-Ismail meeting, February 25, 1973, 20, DNSA/KT00681. With regard to the rest of the settlement, the Egyptians were clearly open to compromise. See Kissinger-Ismail meeting, February 26, 1973, 32, DNSA/KT00682.
65 Kissinger-Ismail meeting, February 26, 1973, 35–37, DNSA/KTOO682.
66 Kipnis, *1973*, 64–72, draws the same conclusion in discussing this episode.
67 For the argument that Kissinger still sought to limit the Israeli victory, see, for example, Sheehan, *Arabs, Israelis, and Kissinger*, 36. It is important to realise, however, that Kissinger's attitude on this issue had shifted dramatically in the course of the war, and in its first phase, his position had been very different, much more in line with what Sheehan and many others – including Kissinger himself at points – have claimed.
68 Kissinger meeting with Jewish leaders, June 15, 1975, *FRUS 1969–76*, XVI, 712.
69 Kissinger-Schlesinger-Colby-Moorer meeting, October 19, 1973, *Ibid*., XXV, 622; Kissinger meeting with Jewish leaders, June 15, 1975, *Ibid*., XVI, 712. See also Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 542. He was also irritated when Nixon told Brezhnev, just before Kissinger arrived in Moscow, that Kissinger had 'full authority' to reach a ceasefire agreement with the Soviets; Nixon's letter, Kissinger later wrote, deprived him of 'any capacity to stall'. See, for example, Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 546–47. Note also his discussion of this episode in his talk with James Hoge, 19:07: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXm07F_OaG8: 'I wanted to drag out this negotiation [over the ceasefire] in order to strengthen our bargaining position'. He took much the same line in the PBS documentary, 'The 50 Years War: Israel and the Arabs' (1999), Part 2, 22:45 to 23:30.
70 See *FRUS 1969–76*, XV, 652n3.
71 Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 556–58, 569. Cf. Kissinger to Scowcroft, October 21, 1973, summarised in *FRUS 1969–76*, XXV, 647n2; Kissinger–Meir meeting, October 22, 1973, *Ibid*., 657.
72 Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 569.
73 Kissinger–Meir meeting, October 22, 1973, 1:35 p.m., *FRUS 1969–76*, XXV, 658.

74 As is sometimes suggested, he did not impulsively give the Israelis these assurances during his stopover in Israel to soothe their ruffled feathers about the presentation of the ceasefire resolution as a Great Power *fait accompli*. The message about how the Israelis could have a little extra time to comply with the ceasefire – because of the communications breakdown – went to them the previous evening. See Kissinger to Scowcroft, October 21, 1973, 4:05 PM Washington time, Scowcroft to Kissinger, October 21, 1973 8:42 PM Washington time, both HAKOF [Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Yorba Linda, CA] Box 39.

75 Matti Golan, *The Secret Conversations of Henry Kissinger: Step-by-Step Diplomacy in the Middle East* (NY, 1976), 86–87.

76 *Ibid*., 75–76 claimed, for example, that Kissinger, prior to his trip to Moscow, had assured the Israelis, who very much wanted to continue their military offensive, that they had 'had nothing to fear'. But it had been clear to the Israelis from the outset that the purpose of Kissinger's Moscow trip was to arrange a ceasefire, and Kissinger had not promised that no ceasefire agreement would be negotiated in Moscow. See Kissinger-Dinitz phone conversations, October 19, 1973, 7:09 and 7:40 PM, *FRUS 1969–76*, XXV, 619–20. See also Shalev to Gazit, October 18 and 19, 1973, *Israeli Telegrams*, frames 202, 222.

77 Kissinger-Dinitz phone conversation, October 23, 1973, *FRUS 1969–76*, 25:683–84. For the Israeli account of the conversation, see *Dinitz to Gazit, October 23, 1973, 1:10 PM [reporting on 12:05 PM conversation with Kissinger], *Israeli Telegrams*, frames 276–77. According to that account, when Dinitz said that there was no way of knowing where the ceasefire line was, Kissinger replied, 'If so, and there's no way of knowing, what do you care if a resolution is passed calling for a return to the lines that existed when the ceasefire went into effect?'

78 Kissinger meeting with Israeli leaders, October 22, 1973, 2:30 PM, *FRUS 1969–76*, XXV, 663.

79 *Dinitz to Gazit, October 23, 1973, 6 PM [reporting 3 PM meeting], *Israeli Telegrams*, frames 281–82. See also *Shalev to Gazit, October 23, 1973, 6:30 PM, *Ibid*., frames 283–286. For Nixon's insistence that the offensive cease, see *Dinitz to Gazit, October 23, 1973, 1:15 PM [reporting Dinitz 12:40 PM conversation with Scowcroft], *Ibid*., frames 277–78.

80 Kissinger-Dinitz telephone conversations, October 23, 1973, 7:20 PM, 8:30 PM, DOSKTC; for the Israeli account, see *Dinitz to Meir, October 23, 1973, *Israeli Telegrams*, frames 291–92. See also Kissinger, *Crisis*, 322–23, which did not include the latter part of the transcript of the first of those calls where Kissinger complained about the Israelis having too much integrity.

81 Kissinger-Schlesinger-Moorer-Colby meeting, October 24, 1973, *Ibid*., 722–23.

82 See especi0ally the record of the meeting at which the decision the American military alert was made: NSC/JCS meeting, October 24/25, 1973, *Ibid*., 738–39. Most of the scholarly works dealing with the crisis discuss the indicators: for example, William Quandt, "Soviet Policy in the October Middle East War-II," *International Affairs* 53, no. 4 (1977): 596–97; Barry Blechman and Douglas Hart, "The Political Utility of Nuclear Weapons: The 1973 Middle East Crisis," *International Security*, 7, no. 1 (1982): 136–38. On Soviet naval activities at this point, see Lyle Goldstein and Yuri Zhukov, "A Tale of Two Fleets – A Russian Perspective on the 1973 Naval Standoff in the Mediterranean," *Naval War College Review* 57, no. 2 (2004), 51–52. We now know, incidentally, that the Soviets never intended to push things to the point of a full-scale confrontation with the United States and that the military steps they had taken were essentially for political effect. See Golan, "October War," 112–13; Anatoly Dobrynin, *In*

Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents (1962–1986) (NY, 1995), 296; Israelyan, *Inside the Kremlin*, 97, 148, 168, 173, 180–81, 190, 193; Jackson, "Lost Peace," 207–13.

83 Kissinger-Dinitz phone conversations, October 24, 1973, 9:22, 9:32 AM, *FRUS 1969–76*, XXV, 705, 706. Nixon also had his chief of staff call Dinitz and threaten 'drastic action, disassociating self from Israelis' if the Israelis did not stop. See holograph note for Kissinger's deputy Brent Scowcroft, and 'Ambassador Dinitz Situation Report [as dictated by Larry Eagleburger],' October 24, 1973, both HAKOF Box 136, Folder Dinitz: June 4-October 31, 1973.

84 Brezhnev to Nixon, October 24, 1973, received 10 PM, *FRUS 1969–76*, XXV, 734–35.

85 NSC/JCS meeting, October 24–25, 1973, *Ibid*., 741.

86 Kissinger–Meir meeting, November 2, 1973, *Ibid*., 860–61. On the Soviet belief that they had been deceived, see the sources cited in Jackson, "Lost Peace," 216n144. Note also Kissinger's comment in a phone conversation with Haig on the evening of 24 October that the Soviets 'realize they were taken'. The fact that he used 'realize', rather than 'believe' or 'suspect', shows that in Kissinger's view the Soviets were justified in feeling not dealt with honestly. Kissinger-Haig phone conversation, October 24, 1973, 7:50 p.m., DOSKTC.

87 Kissinger-Dinitz phone conversation, October 24, 1973 (10 p.m.), DOSKTC. He made much the same point in a more indirect way in a meeting the next morning with other top American officials: WSAG meeting, October 25, 1973, 10:16 AM, CIA Electronic Reading Room [CIAERR].

88 Kissinger, in fact, later referred to the alert as a 'deliberate overreaction'. See Sheehan, *Arabs, Israelis, and Kissinger*, 38; Stein, *Heroic Diplomacy*, 94–95, quoting an interview Stein had with Kissinger's assistant, Peter Rodman, in 1992.

89 Kissinger meeting with Jewish intellectuals, March 31, 1975, *FRUS 1969–76*, XXVI, 604.

90 NSC/JCS meeting, October 24–25, 1973, *Ibid*., XXV 741.

91 WSAG meeting, October 15, 1973, *Ibid*., 531.

92 For the point about Israel's dependence on the United States, see Secretary of State's Staff Meeting, October 23, 1973, Kissinger-Schlesinger-Moorer-Colby meeting, October 24, 1973, both *Ibid*., 697, 724. For the point about America being in the key position, see *Ibid*., 697; WSAG meetings, October 24, November 2, 1973, *Ibid*., 714, 841.

93 Kissinger meeting with Clements, Moorer, and Scowcroft, October 24, 1973, CIAERR.

94 Kissinger–Schlesinger–Moorer–Colby meeting, October 19, 1973, Kissinger–Meir meeting, November 2, 1973, *FRUS 1969–76*, XXV, 622, 863. See also Jackson, "Lost Peace," 268.

95 George Kennan, *American Diplomacy, 1900–1950* (Chicago, IL, 1951), especially 66, 72–73.

96 Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 551. A claim repeated many times in that book but, in reality, Soviet policy was much more reasonable than Kissinger made out. This is one of the basic themes in Jackson, "Lost Peace."

97 For a good summary of the evidence on the Soviet reaction, see Lebow and Stein, *We All Lost the Cold War*, 243–44. See also Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, 295, 297, 299–301.

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