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Kissinger Is the Wrong Man **by Sheldon Richman**

Henry Kissinger personifies all that is wrong with government in America, particularly the making of foreign policy. So it is no surprise that President Bush wanted him to chair the commission looking into the monumental U.S. intelligence failures that gave us 9/11. We can be grateful that Kissinger has resigned even before he got started.

Throughout his career Kissinger has been of that school of politics which holds that it's better if the people don't know too much. Public scrutiny interferes with the policymakers' work.

"Work," of course, means instigating coups against rulers they don't like, supporting tyrants they do like, fighting proxy and direct wars, and, as a matter of principle, being ready to intervene anywhere to show the locals who's boss.

In other words, it's people like Kissinger who helped give us 9/11. They acquire enemies for America, some of whom seek vengeance.

Kissinger's conduct in the Middle East, first as Richard Nixon's national security advisor and later as his and Gerald Ford's secretary of state, was particularly appalling. To him the region was little more than an arena in the U.S. global struggle for dominance against the Soviet Union. Every person living there was a pawn in that gambit. Whether war broke out or did not, whether a cease-fire occurred or did not, whether an oppressed group was encouraged to rebel or was oppressed further with U.S. assistance — it was all a question of what would score points against the Russians. It was geopolitics at its most cynical.

Kissinger began his "service" in the first Nixon administration as national security advisor. But he clearly overshadowed Secretary of State William Rogers. While Kissinger was busy with Vietnam (his horrendous record there has been elaborated by others) and China, Rogers formulated a plan designed to reconcile Israel, which he saw as intransigent, and the Arabs. That would not have fitted Kissinger's Cold War strategy. As he wrote in his memoirs, "The [State Department] bureaucracy wanted to embark on substantive talks as rapidly as possible because it feared that a deteriorating situation would increase Soviet influence. I thought delay was on the whole in our interest because it demonstrated even to radical Arabs that we were indispensable to

any progress and that it could not be extorted from us by Soviet pressure.... By the end of 1971, the division within our government ... had produced a stalemate for which I had striven by design.”

I can imagine what the common people on both sides of the Arab-Israeli bloody conflict would have thought about Kissinger’s striving for “delay” and “stalemate” in a settlement in order to serve “our interest.” That’s the Kissingerian way of seeing things.

Kissinger assumed more control over Middle East policy as the 1972 election approached. He later wrote that Nixon had feared that the State Department might offer proposals that everyone in the region opposed. So, “My principal assignment was to make sure that no explosion occurred to complicate the 1972 election — which meant in effect that I was to stall.”

This was a time of turbulence in the Middle East. Kissinger’s obstructionism, eagerly embraced by the Israeli government, was no favor to the innocent Arabs and Israelis caught in the crossfire of either the Big Power rivalry or the Arab-Israeli conflict. Ironically, it was also a time of hope. In 1970 Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser said that peace and full relations with Israel were feasible. (He’d said that before.) In 1971 his successor, Anwar Sadat, proposed a full peace treaty and a year later expelled his Soviet advisors. Jordan’s King Hussein made similar proposals. But Israel, recipient of massive U.S. military aid, spurned the offers and the Rogers plan. They were no doubt aware of Kissinger’s striving for delay.

All this set the stage for the Yom Kippur War in 1973, when the Arab governments tried to regain militarily the occupied territories they could not regain diplomatically. As Sadat, later hailed as a great peacemaker, said then, “Every door I have opened has been slammed in my face by Israel — with American blessings.... The Americans have left us no way out.” He was talking about Kissinger.

This was never the man to get to the bottom of the government’s 9/11 failures — and to let the American people in on them.

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