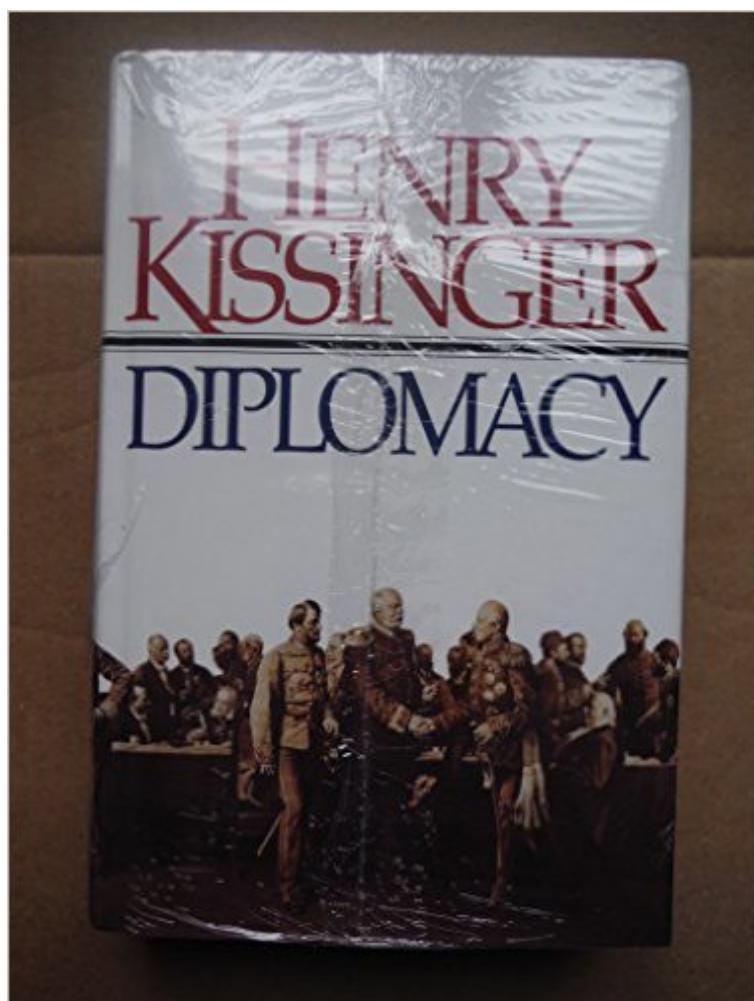


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Diplomacy



Synopsis

In this brilliant, controversial, and monumental book, former Secretary-of-State Henry Kissinger explains, based on his own experience, what diplomacy is, and why, historically, Americans, from our presidents down to the man in the street, have always distrusted the whole idea. 30 photos. 6 maps. Index.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Dr. Kissinger has written a marvelous book that takes a reader on an enlightening path through history. Beginning with the Peace of Westphalia (the advent of international relations), the author uses his keen sense of perception to analyze the actions of world leaders and explain how those actions shaped the further development of the international system. He masterfully shows how the experiences of previous generations influenced the diplomacy of the current generation. The most interesting part of the book is when Dr. Kissinger details the international system since the United States entered into global politics. He argues that the unique American political development correlated into a diplomatic style unlike the world had ever seen. American diplomacy was based upon democratic ideals that rejected states acting for individual gain. Instead Americans believed that the expansion of democratic ideals to all people would result in a natural state of harmony among nations. With this basis, Kissinger outlines 20th century history showing how American idealism helped and hindered in different situations. Dr. Kissinger draws extensively on his personal experience in the field, providing a more complete picture for the reader. The author's style is easy

to read and captivating without excessive detail and theory. A must read for any serious student of international politics and history, and an enlightening read for others with an interest in global relations.

As much as I despise the policies and actions of Henry Kissinger, I must confess that I found this book to be a very well thought out look at the major historical events of the past century. Kissinger's central premise seems to be that the United States has swung back and forth between Wilsonian Idealism and a more pragmatic/Realpolitik perspective in which a nation is primarily responsible for looking out for its own best interests. While I deplore the lack of conscience or justice that Kissinger stands for, I found the book very helpful in understanding his position and in looking at world events through that particular lense. Certainly, he makes many valid and interesting points in addressing the relative pro's and con's of each approach. Also, the book is very readable - ideas are expressed clearly and it kept my interest throughout. If you're interested in understanding the Realpolitik logic that has led to so many atrocities around the world, and how one might intellectually justify these actions, this book is an invaluable resource. Ultimately, whether you agree with Kissinger or not, I think it's important to understand him. The man is not simply "evil" or "insane" and the ideas that he represents are central to current U.S. policies around the world. Important stuff, well articulated.

"Diplomacy" is a very interesting book, that should be read by all those who are interested in either International Relations, History, or even merely in good books. It covers the period that goes from the Peace of Westphalia, in 1648, to the early 1990's. Somehow, this book manages to give us a very good idea of what happened in that time span, without boring us to death at the same time, and that is not a small merit. "Diplomacy" was written from the point of view of Henry Kissinger, a controversial man who was Secretary of State of USA. Whatever might be said about him, something cannot be denied: he knows his craft. And in "Diplomacy" he makes that evident, exactly as he had done previously in other books, for example in "The World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh, and the Problems of Peace". His prose is quite elegant, but at the same time easy to read. Kissinger mixes historical facts with his personal opinions, dissecting what happened and trying to draw conclusions that allow the reader to discern long term trends in history, thus enabling him/her to really understand what happened. I bought this book a long time ago, but I still consider it a keeper. It isn't exhaustive, but it doesn't pretend to be so... On the whole, a book worth buying and having. Recommended :)

In order to fully appreciate this book, I think you should temporarily suspend your feelings about Kissinger as a Secretary of State and consider him as Kissinger the historian. Once you've finished, you can bring in all of what you know of his controversial career. I found this book extremely helpful and insightful. Kissinger goes through much of the history of "Western" (i.e. European) diplomacy, from the Peace of Westphalia to the fall of the Soviet Union (it was originally published in 1994, and hence is out of date, though two areas Kissinger predicted as being important have manifested themselves-fundamentalist Islam and China). His thesis or perspective throughout is that international relations and diplomacy are in equilibrium when all nations strive to address properly their national interest and balance that against the national interest of their adversaries (this interpretation of international relations has often been called realism). Kissinger does not put much stock in the moral pronouncements of men like President Woodrow Wilson, who believe that peace is the norm, and not the exception of IR. He instead admires Teddy Roosevelt and Richard Nixon. Despite what you may think of the overarching framework, this is an excellent history covering every conceivable facet of diplomatic history. I was especially impressed with his chapters on World War II and Franklin Roosevelt (who is the President I most admire; I was surprised at the amount of credit Kissinger, who is always deemed a "conservative" gave to FDR, the quintessential liberal). The only downside to the book is its length (over 800 pages paperback) and Kissinger's writing style, which is filled with large words not suitable to every reading level. If, for example, you don't know what inchoate means, I would suggest having a dictionary handy. Overall, a good read for wanna be historians and international relations experts.

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