

through the analysis of their committee membership.

As he develops his analysis of the German electoral system, Manow tries to offer straightforward explanations in order to make the subject matter more accessible to a wider readership, unfamiliar with specialist jargon. The author offers a clear and compelling narrative, and support his arguments with relevant data on the various effects of different electoral models on party systems and party competition. Although this book does assume some basic to moderate prior knowledge about both psephology and OLS regression, it is nonetheless a highly recommendable read for both students (at the graduate and postgraduate levels) and scholars. Finally, scholars who have a special interest in electoral systems in general and mixed-member electoral systems in particular will truly enjoy reading this book and will surely find it very useful for their own teaching and research.

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Review

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**Niall Ferguson**  
**Kissinger: 1923-1968: The Idealist**

Penguin Press, London, 2015, 1008 pp.

Late last year another biography of Henry Kissinger was published. It is titled *Kissinger: 1923-1968: The Idealist*, penned by the acclaimed British historian and Harvard professor Niall Ferguson. In over a thousand pages, the symbolic title covers Kissinger's extraordinary career, from the times of his youth as an émigré from the Nazi Germany to the US, to the high positions of National Security Advisor and Secretary of State in the White House, under the Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford administrations. Not least, Kissinger was the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize.

After graduating from Harvard, thanks to his acquaintance with David Rockefeller, Kissinger was able to begin demonstrating his political skills and intuitive application of *realpolitik* principles in foreign policy practice. The event that threw Kissinger into the limelight was the Russian launch of the first Earth satellite, *Sputnik*, which unpleasantly surprised the American public. Only a few months earlier, Kissinger had published his first book *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* in which he elaborated his views on the operation of the Eisenhower administration

and “limited nuclear war”. The author emphasizes the tension between Kissinger’s hard power-politics and his own idealistic belief in the power of diplomatic dialogue, expressed in his mastery of shuttle diplomacy.

This intriguing tension is, however, overturned by the title of the biography that suggests exclusively Kissinger’s idealism. It should not go unnoticed, however, that criticism from intellectuals such as Christopher Hitchens disclosed a controversial and dark side of Kissinger, especially in relation to his foreign policy conduct in Vietnam, Argentina, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Chile, Cyprus, and East Timor. Ferguson, who obviously privileges Kissinger’s constructive foreign policies towards China, the USSR and Western Europe over these controversial cases, was prone to conclude that it is a general rule that great statesmen are usually subjugated to harsh criticism. Thus, according to Ferguson, critics like these are mostly motivated by mere envy, personal animosity, opportunism or anti-Semitism.

However, due to the fact that Kissinger is a complex personality, Ferguson’s biography is the valuable testimony of that other, more idealist, side of Kissinger. Thus Ferguson pays considerable attention to Kissinger’s theoretical thought. In one of his academic papers, Kissinger pointed out that freedom reflects the inner experience of life and should be seen as a process in which decisions, to be meaningful, should be reached on the principle of measuring possibilities. Regardless of one’s understanding of the contemporary events, they are essentially unpredictable, and there is no philosophical system that

could offer any guide for the actor’s behavior. Thus Kissinger believed that all decisions could only be explained in retrospect, while their success lay in the deep belief in justification of choice for right action. It is precisely the possibility of choice that made Kissinger a strong believer in democracy, and, as Ferguson points out, Kissinger was in that regard never Machiavellian, nor a liberal idealist, like Woodrow Wilson. Kissinger’s actions should be interpreted in light of his awareness of the inherency of the only moral act – choosing between lesser and greater evils. The roots of Kissinger’s idealism are to be searched for in the critical and practical understanding of agency, which can be traced back to the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. Alongside Metternich, in whom he saw the inspiration for practical policy, Kant was for Kissinger a great inspiration.

Furthermore, Ferguson details Kissinger family members’ experiences before they immigrated to the US in 1938; he identified about 23 family members who lost their lives in the Holocaust. Ferguson also described Kissinger’s life in late 1930s and early 1940s in New York City’s Washington Heights section of upper Manhattan, where the German Jewish immigrant community resided; he wished to highlight the fact that Kissinger was the first foreign-born person who served as the US Secretary of State.

Henry Kissinger enjoys a star status, both in academic and political circles and world government. He has built his status thanks to his active work in promoting diplomacy and dialogue. One of his most cited quotes is that power is the ultimate aphrodisiac (he was paraphrasing Napo-

leon Bonaparte). The validity of that quote is not questioned in the book.

The author, Niall Ferguson, is an award-winning British historian and professor at Harvard University. He focuses on economic and political history. Ferguson is also a columnist and writes regularly for some of the renowned world newspapers and magazines. While writing this book, he had the opportunity to talk to Kissinger, so the book helps us understand the work and activities of one of the most influential players in US foreign policy.

The author also used parts of Kissinger's previously published autobiography. Ferguson's book is without a doubt an interesting read, recommended for all admirers of Henry Kissinger.

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Review

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**Gregory Sholette  
and Oliver Ressler  
It's the Political Economy,  
Stupid: The Global Financial  
Crisis in Art and Theory**

University of Chicago, Pluto Press, 2013, 192 pp.

The book *It's the Political Economy, Stupid*, edited by Gregory Sholette and Oliver Ressler, reflects the impact of the 2008 economic crisis and global recession on society and art, featuring a number of colorful illustrations. It is a mixture of different perspectives; from dry empirical studies, philosophical observations to artistically written essays, but altogether expressing neo-Marxist and critical (even anarchist) sentiments. Thus, the central theme that makes this collection a sensible whole is that people are interconnected through the global system of capitalist globalization, which reflects all spheres of social activity, including art.

The first essay, *Unspeaking the Grammar of Finance* by editors Gregory Sholette and Oliver Ressler, deals with the capitalist modes of art today. Their central argument is that in order to "exist" in the contemporary world one necessarily has to be capable of making a profit. Therefore, even artists are conditioned by the market oriented rules of modern capitalistic existence, trying to capitalize on their work. Furthermore, the authors criticize modern