



A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh, and the Problems of Peace, 1812-22

Henry Kissinger

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Originally published in 1957—years before he was Secretary of State and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize—, Henry Kissinger wrote *A World Restored*, to understand and explain one of history’s most important and dramatic periods; a time when Europe went from political chaos to a balanced peace that lasted for almost a hundred years.

After the fall of Napoleon, European diplomats gathered in a festive Vienna with the task of restoring stability following the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, and the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire. The central figures at the Congress of Vienna were the Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom, Viscount Castlereagh and the Foreign Minister of Austria Klemens Wenzel von Metternich. Castlereagh was primarily concerned with maintaining balanced powers, while Metternich based his diplomacy on the idea of legitimacy—that is, establishing and working with governments that citizens accept without force. The peace they brokered lasted until the outbreak of World War I.

Through trenchant analysis of the history and forces that create stability, *A World Restored* gives insight into how to create long-lasting geopolitical peace-lessons that Kissinger saw as applicable to the period immediately following World War II, when he was writing this book.

But the lessons don’t stop there. Like all good insights, the book’s wisdom transcends any single political period. Kissinger’s understanding of coalitions and balance of power can be applied to personal and professional situations, such as dealing with a tyrannical boss or co-worker or formulating business or organizational tactics.

Regardless of his ideology, Henry Kissinger has had an important impact on modern politics and few would dispute his brilliance as a strategist. For anyone interested in Western history, the tactics of diplomacy, or political strategy, this volume will provide deep understanding of a pivotal time.

A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh, and the Problems of Peace, 1812-22 **Details**

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Sunil says

I read this book when I had an immense dislike to Realpolitik. I realized later that that's why I never had a good appreciation for the work. This book I need to reread, since my own opinions around international politics has evolved over time.

Richard Ripamonti says

Bisects the Congress of Vienna and beyond to show the brilliance and shortcomings of the Concert of Nations as created by Castlereagh and legitimised by Metternich. Kissinger gets nuance where other historians have missed it. Instead of labelling the new International Order which followed the Napoleonic Wars as something which stifled liberty, Kissinger shows how Castlereagh's Congress system gave Europe the stability it needed to achieve actual social progress.

Great argumentation throughout, Kissinger is a great teacher on diplomacy not least because he is one of the 20th century's greatest statesmen himself.

Reading says

I never actually finished the book. It is just hard for me to complete it. My impression is that the book is tedious, stuffed with tons of information that are not necessarily relevant. It is more like writing a thesis. The lit review longueur must be there, so as to get the piece of work approved!

Will James says

I doubt many people actually read this book to get an understanding of post-Napoleonic Europe or to gain any particular biographical insights into its two main protagonists (Metternich and Castlereagh). Instead, this book is best read to gain an understanding of its famous author, a man who would come to dominate American foreign policy between 1969 and 1977, and whose influence on American thinking has been even more profound since. 'A World Restored' is Kissinger's manifesto; an outline of how he understands geopolitics and how great states should conduct themselves.

It is a difficult book, not because of the subject matter, but mostly because of Kissinger's often turgid prose. However, it is worth the effort if you either want to learn more about Kissinger's understanding of global politics, or if you are particularly in need of an authentically 1950s realist analysis of the dynamics of the international system.

Bill Manzi says

Kissinger, in his unmistakable style, gives us a seminar on Castlereagh and Metternich, with the emphasis on Metternich. Dr. Kissinger is an unabashed admirer of Prince Metternich, and he shows us how Metternich used his guile, and superior understanding of his diplomatic opponents (allies) to achieve policy goals that helped extend the life of the Austrian Empire while keeping at bay the forces of "revolution". Kissinger admires Metternich's understated finesse, and although lightly critical of the eventual results he shows how Metternich constructed a system that stood the test of time, balancing divergent national interests to produce a European equilibrium that lasted for decades. A bit thick at times, and not for anyone not interested in diplomatic history. Metternich's approach certainly contrasts with the blunt force trauma advocated by so many today.

Lea says

Very dense, but worth it for people who want to delve deeper (way deeper) into the diplomatic and political intricacies of the end of the Napoleonic era.

Clem says

.....the balancing of the phrases like flying over the continent of Europe give to consider the author has his sympathy at the right winged side, but much to the deception of the many readers he keeps the objectiv of the student in the matter and a distance towards his subject: the problems of peace in an era of moving around spaces and the damnation of the past like 'an-error-we-have-always-seen'.....it couldn't be different that the author has been reproached for his arrogance, though this one has not been 'his', serving him in the secretarial occupations of unlashed government taking-in for the outreachings....and I can only add to the analysis published from the bookshelves out of the dark spider rags-surrounded shelves too, the author of this review had his thoughts, his sympathies, his dislikes in a personal treating....facing destiny I could never have expected a today of joy but just by the exemplaric the book got me out of 'the dried-up well' and made me joining the caravan without asking for the destination out of a free choice....the strived for we can never sufficiently identify....but in an idea of philosophic detail.

<http://arthouse-cinesite.blogspot.com>

Greg says

This is a fantastic book on the Congress of Vienna and the two principal figures who forged the post-Napoleonic international order in Europe. Metternich and Castlereagh. When you get past the bombastic language of Kissinger, you find some amazing insights into the diplomatic maneuvering that went on. This is the benefit of reading a history by a practicing diplomat rather than an academic historian studying the period.

Russel Henderson says

Important, insightful work describing Metternich and Castlereagh at the end of the Napoleonic Era and beyond. Metternich is Kissinger's hero and occasionally he overstates the case, ascribing genius to every machination, but Metternich's inability to parlay a poor hand into fifty years of stability and a hundred of survival is a testament to his skill. One need not admire Kissinger (though one can) to understand why his experiences with WWII and the Shoah convinced him an amoral peace was preferable to large-scale conflict.

Aaron Liebman says

A profound study of leading diplomats Metternich (Austro-Hungarian Empire) and Castlereagh (Great Britain) as effective actors in the decade 1812-1822 which included the defeat of Napoleon, the Treaty of Paris, The Bourbon Restoration, and the re-organization of states in Europe towards a balance of power that came to be called (perhaps unjustly) 'The Metternich System'. Treacherous maneuvers in defining borders and governing structures for Poland, Prussia, and the German principalities are acknowledged. There is no forgetting that the events under discussion set the stage for World War I even while reflecting on the almost century long European peace viewed as an achievement of this diplomacy. Kissinger teaches his readers how to conceptualize events. Terms such as 'legitimate regime,' and 'revolutionary regime,' take on a technical aspect. Legitimacy: defining it, controlling who gains and who loses it, allows political actors to seize the moral high ground and increase the freedom of action enjoyed by their state in international arena. Kissinger read all the relevant diplomatic statements and correspondences (in English, German, and French) from the period. These he interprets with the aid of categories from his diplomacy vocabulary. He articulates the means by which successful diplomats shape events. Kissinger explains how at times the 'conference system' became a de facto governing mechanism for Europe with Metternich its de facto Prime Minister. He depicts how Czar Alexander became to an extent Metternich's dupe. The motives and manipulations come to life in the narrative without exaggerating Metternich's role and lapsing into 'hero worship.' Kissinger avoids this error partly by acknowledging Metternich's flaws and partly by admitting the importance of other actors and factors besides diplomacy. Kissinger wrote in his conclusion: "It is fortunate for the lessons posterity may draw from this period that its chief protagonists were men of marked individuality, each in his own way symbolizing an answer to the problem of order: Napoleon of the claims of power; Alexander of the indeterminacy of a policy of absolute moral claims; Castlereagh of the conception of an equilibrium maintained by the recognition of the self-evident advantages of peace; Metternich of an equilibrium maintained by an agreement on a legitimizing principle." The revolutionary impulses of the period were often liberal (or nationalistic) while the reorganization of states advocated by Metternich in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars consolidated power in a conservative (and multi-national because imperial) direction. Metternich has a reputation as a conservative ideologue comparable in stature to Edmund Burke but coming out of the tradition of continental idealism, but his writings as a conservative ideologue Kissinger mostly dismisses. The profundity of Kissinger's presentation arises from its detailed and precise, but mostly implicit, explanation of how some individuals 'make history' consolidating power even while laboring under formidable political disadvantages and despite the chaos events.

Mansoor Azam says

This ain't an ordinary read that one picks up on travels and finishes in a scoop. This one demands attention. And once attention is drawn it's a masterly work by Henry Kissinger.

If one wants to learn about the politics and times of Europe taken up in this book, one is advised to turn away. Because this one, though claims to be about two master statesmen of the era and their efforts at peace, is a far more complex tale full of Maxim's.

One reads, rereads and then falls in love with it. It's a superlative work on diplomacy. The moments, the issues, the thoughts, the moves confronting giants of diplomacy like Metternich, Castlereagh, Hardenberg & Talleyrand are discussed in detail laying bare the courses open to them at critical moments and the one they chose with analysis of why and how...

Not only this book gives a tale in detail but gives the reader so many lessons in the art or problem of diplomacy that I recommend this to be a must keep for all diplomats. There's just so much learning in offering.

It's a well researched work drawing from first sources and tries to analyse the actions in retrospect. The language is by far one of the most difficult I've come across. May be it owes its difficulty to the fact that while writing this Kissinger was teaching at Harvard, a teacher is not an easy writer, using bombastic words.

For those looking for pure history of the specified era (1812-1822) this ain't the book. This one Problems of peace, dealt with diplomacy, by giants of those times, planning the downfall of Napoleon along with the contemplated divisions of the spoil, need for an equilibrium & its creation, creation of alliances & counter alliances, the in-house fights amongst Allies, the Europe as it was, as viewed by the main allied foreign ministers, and the conciliation of these thoughts.

Wm says

This is amazing subject matter for the time it was written. Most political scientists were focused on nuclear diplomacy, while Kissinger reached all the way back to the Napoleonic Wars.

P. says

I wasn't quite sure that this was really the work of Henry Kissinger when I first got a copy of it... but after reading it is (I guess) obvious.

It starts slow, and it took me a good month or so of having it sitting around looking at me before I got though the first chapter, but after that it went fairly quickly.... definitely some parts that drag. However, a very interesting book for two reasons.

First, the narrative that Kissinger writes makes it sound as if diplomats were the only movers in the twilight of Napoleonic Europe, and that diplomacy was the only means by which a new order was established. To the extent that war is just politics by other means, I suppose this is true, but when reading this one gets the impression that Henry believes that Metternich could for instance nullify the presence of the Czar's 100k troops on the Rhine with a well timed note or judiciously dropped morsel of disinformation. Not surprising that a diplomat might somewhat overstate the importance of diplomacy, but interesting to read nonetheless.

Secondly, I really developed an... appreciation of the motives of the conservatives of the period. Previously I

was pro-revolution, and then pro-empire, and then pro-revolution again come the 1830-40s. I got good perspective though on what exactly the conservatives may have been thinking though, in their defense of monarchy and (often) squelching of liberalization.

Cristina says

Very interesting with great insight into the mindset of countries after a revolution. Worth the read if you're looking for a book about post-Napoleon Europe and a great theory on how the politics after allowed WWI to happen nearly 100 years later.

Will Ogilvie says

What is truly remarkable about this book is that the main reflections in this book transcend this historical moment and are repeated in *Diplomacy* and *World Order*. If you can write this type of book at 30, you certainly deserve a spot with the best thinkers of politics and international relations. While many are right to criticize Kissinger the politician, his reflections as an intellectual are unmatched. This will be read in the centuries to come, *A World Restored* is a testament to it.
