

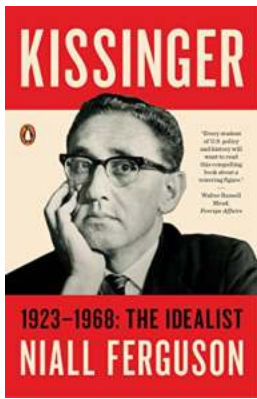
Kissinger: 1923-1968 - The Idealist

Henry Kissinger, one of the most influential political figures of the 20th century, has often been depicted as a Machiavellian realist, a cunning diplomat operating in the shadows of power. However, Niall Ferguson's groundbreaking biography, "Kissinger: 1923-1968 - The Idealist," challenges this prevalent narrative and sheds light on the lesser-known early years of Kissinger's life. In this meticulously researched and engaging account, Ferguson introduces us to the complexity and idealism that shaped the man who would go on to redefine American foreign policy.

Ferguson, renowned historian and author, unravels the enigma surrounding Kissinger's formative years, effectively showcasing his transformation from a bright young scholar to a strategic thinker at the heart of American politics. By delving deep into Kissinger's intellectual development and early experiences, Ferguson manages to capture the essence of the idealistic young man who possessed an unwavering commitment to democracy, liberty, and the pursuit of a just international order.

The Early Years: A Refugee's Journey

To truly understand Kissinger's trajectory, we must first explore his early life as a German-Jewish refugee in the tumultuous period leading up to World War II. Ferguson chronicles Kissinger's childhood in Fürth, Germany, his family's escape from Nazi persecution, and their eventual settlement in New York City. This dramatic backdrop forms the foundation of Kissinger's passionate commitment to preventing the horrors of war, fascism, and totalitarianism. It was during these formative years that the seeds of his idealism were sown.



Kissinger: 1923-1968: The Idealist

by Niall Ferguson (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 30660 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 1004 pages



As the reader accompanies Kissinger on his intellectual journey, Ferguson masterfully illustrates how Kissinger's early experiences influenced his worldview. Kissinger's encounters with the writings of Enlightenment philosophers, such as Immanuel Kant and Thomas Hobbes, planted the seeds of political theory that would shape his later thinking. These intellectual nourishments, alongside a strong belief in American exceptionalism, propelled Kissinger forward in his pursuit of international relations.

A Scholar's Quest for Knowledge

Niall Ferguson's biography skillfully traces Kissinger's academic journey, highlighting his thirst for knowledge and the influential mentors who shaped his ideas. From his early days at City College of New York to his doctoral studies at Harvard University, Kissinger's insatiable curiosity and commitment to understanding the world thoroughly impressed his professors and peers alike.

Under the tutelage of distinguished scholars like William Yandell Elliot and Fritz Stern, Kissinger honed his analytical skills and embarked upon a relentless investigation of history and geopolitics. Ferguson's meticulous research uncovers

the foundations of Kissinger's belief in the necessity of a balance of power and his deep understanding of the intricate dynamics that govern international relations.

From Idealism to Realpolitik

While the title of Ferguson's biography may seem overtly idealistic, it is through tracing Kissinger's intellectual evolution that we witness the gradual transformation of the idealist into a realist. As Kissinger becomes more immersed in the intricacies of global politics, his approach begins to shift, influenced by the harsh realities and power struggles he encounters.

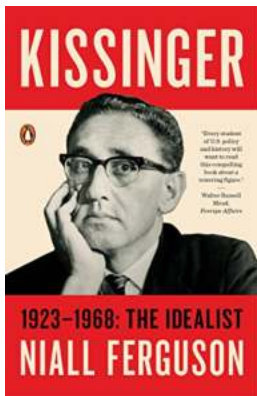
Ferguson skillfully navigates through Kissinger's experiences as a Harvard professor, his involvement in the Council on Foreign Relations, and his interactions with prominent politicians and policymakers. It is within these contexts that we witness the inner conflict within Kissinger as he grapples with the transition from idealism to the realistic pursuit of American national interests.

Unveiling the Idealist

Niall Ferguson's biography provides a refreshing alternative perspective to Henry Kissinger's iconic image as a cold-hearted realist. By shining a light on the idealist within him, the author humanizes Kissinger and enables readers to glimpse the convictions and principles that guided this influential figure.

Ferguson's narrative comes alive through his meticulous research, extensive interviews, and perceptive analysis. "Kissinger: 1923-1968 - The Idealist" offers a captivating portrayal of Kissinger's early journey, allowing readers to understand the complex man behind the strategic mastermind.

As we reflect on the life of Henry Kissinger, it becomes evident that he is not just a figure cloaked in realpolitik but also a person driven by a genuine desire to strengthen democracy, foster peace, and promote justice. Niall Ferguson's biography succeeds in unraveling the enigma of Kissinger's early years and presents us with a more complete understanding of this intriguing statesman.



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From the bestselling author of *The Ascent of Money* and *The Square and the Tower*, the definitive biography of Henry Kissinger, based on unprecedented access to his private papers.

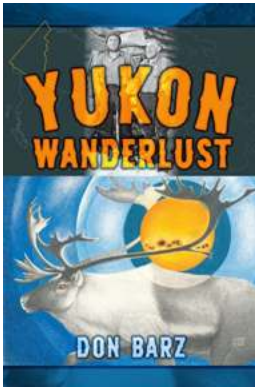
Winner of the Council on Foreign Relations Arthur Ross Book Award

No American statesman has been as revered or as reviled as Henry Kissinger. Once hailed as “Super K”—the “indispensable man” whose advice has been sought by every president from Kennedy to Obama—he has also been hounded by conspiracy theorists, scouring his every “telcon” for evidence of Machiavellian malfeasance. Yet as Niall Ferguson shows in this magisterial two-volume biography, drawing not only on Kissinger’s hitherto closed private papers but also

on documents from more than a hundred archives around the world, the idea of Kissinger as the ruthless arch-realist is based on a profound misunderstanding.

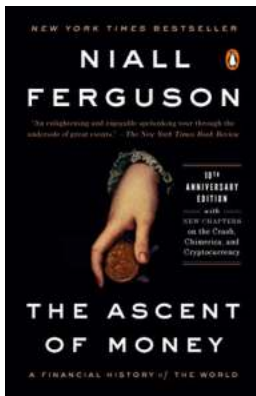
The first half of Kissinger's life is usually skimmed over as a quintessential tale of American ascent: the Jewish refugee from Hitler's Germany who made it to the White House. But in this first of two volumes, Ferguson shows that what Kissinger achieved before his appointment as Richard Nixon's national security adviser was astonishing in its own right. Toiling as a teenager in a New York factory, he studied indefatigably at night. He was drafted into the U.S. infantry and saw action at the Battle of the Bulge—as well as the liberation of a concentration camp—but ended his army career interrogating Nazis. It was at Harvard that Kissinger found his vocation. Having immersed himself in the philosophy of Kant and the diplomacy of Metternich, he shot to celebrity by arguing for “limited nuclear war.” Nelson Rockefeller hired him. Kennedy called him to Camelot. Yet Kissinger's rise was anything but irresistible. Dogged by press gaffes and disappointed by “Rocky,” Kissinger seemed stuck—until a trip to Vietnam changed everything.

The Idealist is the story of one of the most important strategic thinkers America has ever produced. It is also a political Bildungsroman, explaining how “Dr. Strangelove” ended up as consigliere to a politician he had always abhorred. Like Ferguson's classic two-volume history of the House of Rothschild, Kissinger sheds dazzling new light on an entire era. The essential account of an extraordinary life, it recasts the Cold War world.



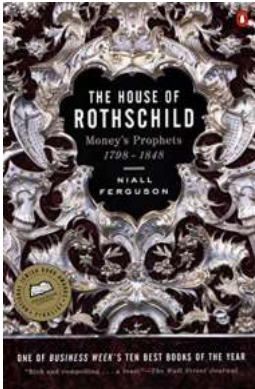
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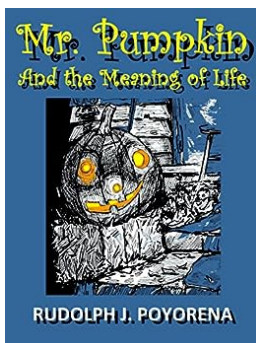
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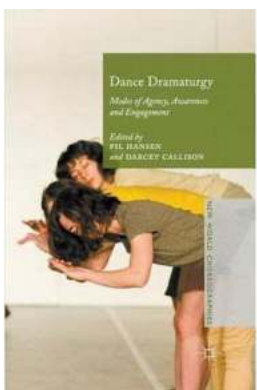
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