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毛泽东主席会见基辛格

KISSINGER:

A CASE STUDY FROM THE CHINESE PERSPECTIVE
&
PROPOSAL TO EXPAND THE AMERICAN
SECRETARIES OF STATE DATA VISUALIZATION PROJECT

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Final Seminar Paper

Harvard Law School 3061 Negotiation Lessons from American Secretaries of State

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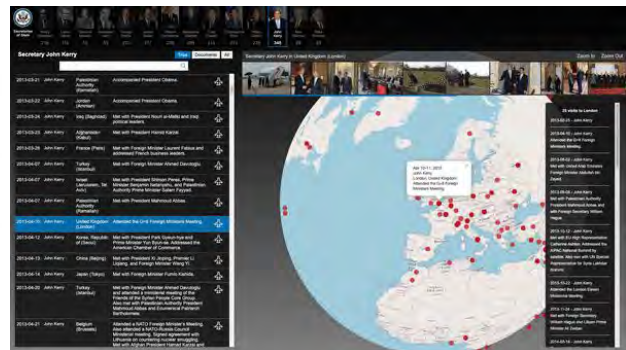
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Acknowledgements

Data visualization proof-of-concepts created for the preparation of this paper:



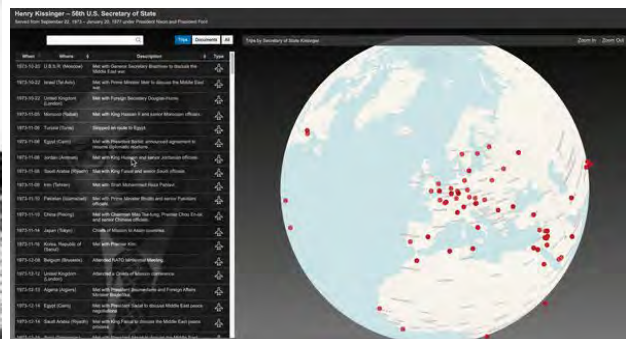
All secretaries video demo (CLICK [HERE](#))



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Kissinger video demo (CLICK [HERE](#))



Kissinger interface (CLICK [HERE](#))

Introduction

This paper is a one-half Kissinger case study and one-half proposal for the next step of the American Secretaries of State Project visualization integrated in one. Henry Kissinger's example is used as the vehicle through which I demonstrate the utility of why and how the American Secretaries of State Project interactive visualization interface could develop and expand.

Given the enormous English literature that already exists on Kissinger including Professor Sebenius, Burns, and Mnookin's own *Kissinger the Negotiator*, the analysis in this paper primarily uses Chinese-language sources. After careful study of Henry Kissinger's interviews, books, biographies, and transcripts of all types through the lens of Chinese diplomats and scholars, three specific attributes have emerged in further explaining why Henry Kissinger was arguably the most successful Secretary of State—humor, networks, and the canvas.

Each attribute explanation is immediately followed by a proposal to expand the data visualization project. They are: (1) improving documents/multimedia to discover and compare diplomatic negotiation techniques like humor, (2) adding interactive 3D force-directed graphs to visualize each secretary's network of relationships, and (3) adding a multilevel timeline to replicate the large canvas of diplomatic negotiation. This paper on Kissinger took one semester to write, but if these proposed features were added, any user of the visualization project could gain these same insights quickly. These features are intended to be useful for studying *all* secretaries, not just limited to Kissinger.

1. Kissinger's Humor

Kissinger's wit and humor is widely considered by many to be a testament to his high intellect, but also a sign of his unparalleled emotional intelligence as a negotiator. Professors Sebenius, Burns, and Mnookin in Ch. 10 *Relationships and Rapport* already detail how "humorous points and counterpoints were legion in Kissinger's dealings" and how his humor would "lighten the atmosphere and sometimes defuse tense

moments.”¹ Reading firsthand accounts from Chinese counterparts has illuminated four benefits of his strategic humor: opening up space for counterparts, humanizing his persona, allowing him to escape uncomfortable situations, and test bold hypothetical solutions.

First, his humor gives the emotional impression that somehow Kissinger was a separate and distinct entity from the U.S. government—a loose maverick who didn’t always espouse the positions he was assigned. A consistent theme is that many of Kissinger’s comments are strategically self-deprecating toward himself and the U.S. government. Such remarks may have helped Kissinger open up space for counterparts to put forth proposals that otherwise would clearly have fallen into an area of non-negotiation with other secretaries. With a style that almost elevated Kissinger the individual above the government he was working for, others must have felt that perhaps Kissinger was smarter than his own superiors and Kissinger’s style of humor were constructed in such a way as if to send a signal that he was open to bold proposals.

Second, Kissinger’s classically self-deprecating humor must have aided in helping to contradict and humanize what normally must have been an intimidating larger-than-life persona prior to any meeting. In my own research, I’ve found that Kissinger rarely pokes fun at the other party directly. In most non-self-deprecating examples, he targets the joke toward a third-party not present (i.e. if he’s talking with the Russians, he’ll make a joke about the Chinese). This is all perhaps a deliberate decision to avoid cultural misunderstanding and errors lost in translation. Many Chinese observers find his self-deprecation endearing and several notable examples repeatedly appear in the Chinese literature. Perhaps the most well known to Chinese audiences was in Pakistan when a Chinese delegation was escorting Kissinger via helicopter to fly to China together in 1971. The head of the Chinese delegation was carefully instructed by Premier Zhou Enlai to take the initiative and be cordial, but the atmosphere was described as simply “too

¹ James K. Sebenius, R. Nicholas Burns, and Robert Harris Mnookin, *Kissinger the Negotiator: Lessons from Dealmaking at the Highest Level* (Harper, 2018).

intense.” With decades of isolation since the last time negotiators between the two countries had met, the Chinese recalled that a single joke from Kissinger broke through. Kissinger remarked that the Chinese interpreter for Mao, Tang Wensheng (born in the United States) could run for President, but *he* was unqualified.² Other examples poke fun at himself—mentally and physically. In 2009, upon seeing the former Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing, Dr. Kissinger explained how he had just had a surgical operation on his eyes. When the Chinese colleague showed grave concern, Dr. Kissinger said, “no... there was an unexpected gain: I can now study problems with far greater precision and focus.”³ As a culture that highly values education and with Harvard in particular attaining an almost mythical status in China, another story has been widely circulated on Chinese media: in the middle of a press conference in Moscow, a knock on the door disrupted Kissinger’s remarks.⁴ After a long delay, Kissinger chuckled and said, “it must be a Harvard student who was late for my class.”⁵

Third, Kissinger’s humor allows him to pre-emptively escape uncomfortable situations in moments where he anticipates criticism, especially from journalists. Such a tactic quickly disarms critics and leaves those guessing what the honest answer must have been. When reporters asked Kissinger what he was doing in the White House all day, he responded, “I was planning a war in the situation room just now!”⁶

Kissinger’s keen sense of self-awareness about potential critique also helps him to defuse otherwise compromising situations. When a reporter asked whether Kissinger was replacing President Nixon, Kissinger replied, “I haven’t been arrogant to that level. I’m developing in that direction, but not yet.”⁷

The final example which is widely cited in Chinese media occurred at the end of his public service. When President Ford awarded Kissinger with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, a decision that was kept secret

² Gu Yue [古越], “Master of Humor: Kissinger [幽默大师基辛格]” (Xinxiang Review [新湘评论], August 2010).

Chinese text: 1971年, 基辛格第一次访问中国, 他对中方翻译、出生在美国的唐闻生开玩笑说, 南茜·唐 (唐闻生在美国时的名字) 可以竞选美国总统, 而他自己则没有资格, 因为唐闻生出生在美国, 而他不是。

³ Li Zhaoxing [李肇星], “My Happy Diplomacy [我的快乐外交]” (Fringe Interest [边缘趣味], July 2014).

Chinese text: 2009年, 基辛格来北京参加中国人民外交学会举办的中美关系研讨会, 基辛格说, “你看我的眼睛, 我有只眼睛动过手术, 现在看不见了... 现在精力更集中, 看问题更准确了”

⁴ It was tradition in the Soviet Union that a knocking on the door in the middle of the night was a portent for disaster

⁵ Gu Yue [古越], “Master of Humor: Kissinger [幽默大师基辛格].”

Chinese text: 基辛格继续讲下去。几分钟后, 敲门声又响起来了。大家一声不响, 过了几秒钟后, 基辛格嘿嘿笑了, 他说: “一定是个哈佛学生听我的课迟到了。”

⁶ Gu Yue [古越].

Chinese text: “我刚才还在情况室里策划战争呢!” 于是引起一阵大笑。

⁷ Gu Yue [古越].

Chinese text: 基辛格自我解嘲地补充说: “我还没有狂妄到那个程度。是在朝那方面发展, 但还不到那个程度。”

from Kissinger in advance, Kissinger responded in surprise: “I have been in Washington for 8 years and we finally kept a secret.”⁸

Fourth, Kissinger’s humor becomes an overlooked negotiation weapon. By proposing ideas obviously meant to be interpreted as a joke—Kissinger uses such opportunities to test hypothetical propositions and gather information in seeing how counterparts react. In a 1975 meeting between Kissinger and Gromyko, the pair are discussing options for how to deal with an uncooperative Maltese Prime Minister when Kissinger jokingly whispers: “assassination—what do you think, Mr. Foreign Minister?” Gromyko responds sternly: “I think we must be serious about this. We are doing a serious piece of business and we can’t let it turn into a children’s game.”⁹ Kissinger cleverly uses unpredictable humor to “test out” the unproven counterfactual. Similarly, the Chinese diplomatic community are especially fond of Kissinger’s tactic of using rhetorical questions (反问的办法) to see if the other party knows information he does not by positioning it as a joke.¹⁰

Leonid Brezhnev put it best when he told Kissinger himself: “I feel when people can joke with each other, they are in a good mood and can do business with each other. A man who can’t joke isn’t a good man.”¹¹ And indeed the Russians were on par with Kissinger’s humor. Using data analysis, I compared how often the word [laughter] appeared in a sampling of conversational transcripts between Kissinger and Russian vs. Chinese counterparts. I found that not only were Russian counterparts funnier on average with Kissinger than Chinese counterparts, but on the whole, Kissinger was responsible for most of the humor in conversations with the Chinese. The Russians and Kissinger were far more balanced in who brought about “more laughter.” Judge John C. H. Wu put it best when he said, “whereas Westerners are seriously humorous, the Chinese are humorously serious.”¹² Another reading is that Kissinger was trying hard to

⁸ Gu Yue [古越].

Chinese text: “我在华盛顿待了8年，我们最后总算保守了一个秘密。”

⁹ “July 10-11, 1975 - Kissinger/Gromyko Meetings in Geneva,” 1975, 41.

¹⁰ Gu Yue [古越], “Master of Humor: Kissinger [幽默大师基辛格].”

¹¹ “January 21-23, 1976 - Kissinger Moscow Trip,” January 21, 1976.

¹² George Kao, *Chinese Wit & Humor* (Sterling Pub. Co, 1946).

break through to the Chinese with humor (4.9 average laughs produced *by* Kissinger with the Russians vs. 9.8 average laughs produced *by* Kissinger with the Chinese).

USSR Memcons and Reports	# Pages	Kissinger Funny	Other Funny	Total Laugh Count
October 24-27, 1974 - Kissinger/Brezhnev Talks in Moscow (1)	62	4	5	9
October 24-27, 1974 - Kissinger/Brezhnev Talks in Moscow (2)	54	5	3	8
October 24-27, 1974 - Kissinger/Brezhnev Talks in Moscow (3)	40	2	0	2
November 23-24, 1974 - Vladivostok Summit (1)	42	0	0	0
November 23-24, 1974 - Vladivostok Summit (2)	33	0	0	0
May 19-20, 1975 - Kissinger/Gromyko Meetings in Vienna (1)	57	9	5	14
May 19-20, 1975 - Kissinger/Gromyko Meetings in Vienna (2)	52	8	5	13
July 10-11, 1975 - Kissinger/Gromyko Meetings in Geneva (1)	41	4	1	5
July 10-11, 1975 - Kissinger/Gromyko Meetings in Geneva (2)	51	8	3	11
July 30-August 2, 1975 - Ford/Brezhnev Meetings in Helsinki	46	6	9	15
September 18-21, 1975 - Talks with Gromyko	74	7	9	16
January 21-23, 1976 - Kissinger Moscow Trip (1)	55	5	8	13
January 21-23, 1976 - Kissinger Moscow Trip (2)	51	9	6	15
January 21-23, 1976 - Kissinger Moscow Trip (3)	28	2	2	4
Total	686	69	56	125
Average Per Meeting	49	4.9	4	8.9
China Memcons and Reports				
November 25-29, 1974 - Kissinger's Trip (1)	50	11	3	14
November 25-29, 1974 - Kissinger's Trip (2)	51	6	3	9
November 25-29, 1974 - Kissinger's Trip (3)	46	19	6	25
November 25-29, 1974 - Kissinger's Trip (4)	49	15	7	22
September 28, 1975 - Kissinger's Meeting with PRC Officials in New York	32	7	3	10
October 19-23, 1975 - Kissinger's Trip (1)	39	3	4	7
October 19-23, 1975 - Kissinger's Trip (2)	54	3	0	3
October 19-23, 1975 - Kissinger's Trip (3)	36	12	3	15
October 19-23, 1975 - Kissinger's Trip (4)	38	15	3	18
October 19-23, 1975 - Kissinger's Trip (5)	36	6	2	8
December 1-5, 1975 - President Ford's Visit to Peking (1)	55	5	6	11
December 1-5, 1975 - President Ford's Visit to Peking (2)	40	16	7	23
Total	526	118	47	165
Average Per Meeting	43.8	9.8	3.9	13.8

“Laugh count” comparing sampling of Kissinger’s conversations with Russians and Chinese

On the whole, Kissinger’s humor deserves a more nuanced study to appreciate how much of a negotiating asset it can be—in signalling reception, humanization, disarming critics, and testing out potential solutions.

1a. Documents & Multimedia (data visualization)

Pivoting to the American Secretaries of State visualization project, humor is just one of many negotiation techniques that could be researched through an expanded, improved, and integrated documents collection. Users should be able to conduct a search similar to the humor case study on *any* search criteria in an instant, and for all secretaries, not just Kissinger. To accomplish such a goal, two features would need to be added.

First, far more documents for each secretary would need to be added in order to provide the level of detail that one would need to analyze how each secretary deployed different negotiation techniques (like humor). Second, the relatively limited search feature now must be improved to support *universal search*—the ability to search beyond just metadata, but also the actual raw body text of the documents themselves.

These advancements introduce technical challenges, but the benefit to these improvements would be crucial from a negotiations study perspective. Users of the interface could theoretically conduct their own big data text analysis right there from inside the tool. While studying how and when humor is strategically deployed by a secretary is just a single niche example, one could imagine how with more documents and a universal search feature, a researcher could spend hours discovering countless new insights and patterns.

Also currently missing is the ability to explore the negotiation “from the other side of the table.” In situations where possible, acquiring the declassified documents from foreign archives that intersect with the secretary’s negotiations when appropriate would be an invaluable resource for students trying to understand how the Chinese, Russians, or Egyptians prepared for and viewed the American Secretary of State. For when such documents do not exist, a possible alternative and/or addition could be coverage from the foreign press. Not only would this serve to help place the secretary’s trip in historical context, but also provide a lens into that country’s attitude toward the United States in that snapshot of time. The same could easily be done to include select domestic American press coverage to provide perspective into domestic sentiment. With the press being such a critical player in foreign policy—being able to read how the domestic and foreign press covered the secretary may be a valuable insight into understanding a secretary’s state of mind on their way to a meeting.

Beyond text-based sources, it would be a mistake to neglect multimedia—photos, voice recordings, and videos—which brings diplomacy to life and makes the interface more engaging for general audiences.

Watching secretaries deliver a speech, land in a foreign capital, or take questions from the press offers users a glimpse into that secretary's personal feel—something that is difficult to attain from just document-based research. To this end, the interface could also perhaps host the recorded Secretaries of State Project interviews conducted by Professors Burns, Mnookin, and Sebenius.

Already, documents constitute a major component of the existing interface. For Kissinger in particular, the U.S. Department of State Bulletin (discontinued in 1989) was available as a consistent publication that provides structure—covering in detail the secretary's remarks, speeches, schedule, and toasts while also doubling as the secretary's mouthpiece for their own written remarks. But to truly be useful to a scholar of American foreign policy, the documents collection should be upgraded through an exponential increase in quantity and with improved universal search.

2. Kissinger's Networks

Sebenius et al. describe “Kissinger’s exceptional ability to build an eclectic network of relationships, not only to colleagues in the Nixon and Ford administrations, but also to people outside government: journalists, newspaper proprietors, foreign ambassadors, and heads of state—even Hollywood producers.”¹³ Indeed, others like Niall Ferguson agree and halfway through writing his first volume of Kissinger’s biography, the British historian expounds upon this idea in an article titled “The Secret to Henry Kissinger’s Success.”¹⁴ But more than just building a diverse network, Ferguson’s hypothesis is that Kissinger “understood that networks were [specifically] more powerful than the hierarchies of the federal government” and “informal networks could provide diplomatic channels *superior* to foreign ministries and embassies.”¹⁵ Kissinger’s multidirectional networking power has allowed him to separate himself from the exclusive American interest, become a mentor to statesmen globally on world order, and continue to exercise influence in diplomatic backchannels in times of distress.

¹³ Sebenius, Burns, and Mnookin, *Kissinger the Negotiator: Lessons from Dealmaking at the Highest Level*.

¹⁴ Niall Ferguson, “The Secret to Henry Kissinger’s Success,” *POLITICO Magazine*, n.d., <http://politi.co/2Bh1qy4>.

¹⁵ Ferguson.

Why is it that no other American Secretary of State besides Kissinger is able to so regularly pay visits to foreign heads of state after retirement? Secretary Albright and Secretary Rice both maintain similar consulting firms akin to Kissinger's, but as far as public information can reveal, Madeleine Albright and Condoleezza Rice do not regularly offer counsel to Xi Jinping, Narendra Modi, or Vladimir Putin.¹⁶ After studying the Chinese literature on this hypothesis, it is this idea—that Kissinger's power and influence was not derived from formal *vertical* hierarchies of structure, but from multidirectional networks—that still gives Kissinger the influence he commands today at age 97.

When Kissinger was National Security Adviser and Secretary of State, he was already building backchannels horizontally outside of the formal hierarchies of diplomacy to foreign governments, a tactic that made it seem like at times, Kissinger only answered to his direct superior, the President, as a formality. Coupled with his humor from the first section and his talent of appearing to disclose more information to you than anyone else, Kissinger gives the impression that he is not completely bound by the U.S. government, but is a distinct entity and perhaps even one level above. It would be unimaginable to see James Baker, Colin Powell, or any other American Secretary of State received with such honor in Moscow, New Delhi, or Beijing offering counsel about how to conduct relations with the American President without making it seem as if they were interfering with the current Secretary of State's agenda. His influence has also allowed him to remain a powerful backchannel diplomat, especially in times of distress. In the Chinese case, he served as an essential conduit after the events in Tiananmen (1989) at the invitation of General Secretary Jiang Zemin when official channels of communication were cut off.¹⁷

¹⁶ Shi Jiangtao, "Do China's Cosy Meetings with Kissinger Actually Do Any Good?," South China Morning Post, December 1, 2019, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3040063/do-chinas-cosy-meetings-us-statesman-henry-kissinger-actually>.

¹⁷ Tong Shanshan [仝珊珊], "Research on Kissinger's China Activities from the Perspective of Non-Traditional Diplomacy (1979-1992) [非传统外交视阈下的基辛格对华活动研究(1979-1992)]," April 3, 2017, <http://www.doc88.com/p-8008495217706.html>.

Ferguson elaborates how Kissinger institutionalized this “networking power” after he left government in 1977 in the advisory firm Kissinger Associates.¹⁸ The idea behind any social network is that the central node is privy to information, resources, and contacts inaccessible to others in and outside the network. By codifying himself as the central node in the network he developed in government, he has nurtured relationships with all types of leaders at all levels foreign and domestic. In the words of a Chinese academic, “even many provincial officials who visit the United States are still proud to visit Kissinger.”¹⁹ In the internal Chinese discourse, Kissinger’s consulting firm is cited as being the model for others to follow and even encourages former Chinese diplomats to emulate Kissinger in adopting a similar business practice leveraging diplomatic networks.²⁰

After Kissinger retired from public service, his image has been carefully crafted so as to maintain the networks he commanded in government. In public discourse like the many books he has authored, he has carefully chosen their topics in a way so as not to exclusively bind him to advising on the American interest. Instead he is an advisor on *world order* and *balance of power*. Kissinger’s language is cleverly crafted around these abstract ideas, seldom tying them to individual nations. And when he does speak of individual countries, he is careful not to explicitly take the American side. In his most recent comments on U.S.-China tensions, he only diplomatically says: “it is important for each side to understand the sensitivities of the other, and not necessarily to solve the problem, but to alleviate it to a point where further progress is possible.”²¹

¹⁸ Ferguson, “The Secret to Henry Kissinger’s Success.”

¹⁹ Ye Bian [叶边], “Kissinger: 38 Years Have Passed (Full Text) [基辛格:38年过去(全文)],” October 13, 2019, <https://www.wenmi.com/article/pz9wt0006ezw.html> <https://www.wenmi.com/article/pz9wt0006ezw.html> Ye Bian [叶边], “Kissinger: 38 Years Have Passed (Full Text) [基辛格:38年过去(全文)],” October 13, 2019, <https://www.wenmi.com/article/pz9wt0006ezw.html>.

Chinese text: 至于基辛格, 研究国际问题的中国学者直到现在依然重视他对国际事务的见解, 甚至许多省级官员到美国访问, 也仍以拜会基辛格为荣

²⁰ Tong Shanshan [仝珊珊], “Research on Kissinger’s China Activities from the Perspective of Non-Traditional Diplomacy (1979-1992) [非传统外交视阈下的基辛格对华活动研究(1979-1992)],” April 3, 2017, <http://www.doc88.com/p-8008495217706.html>.

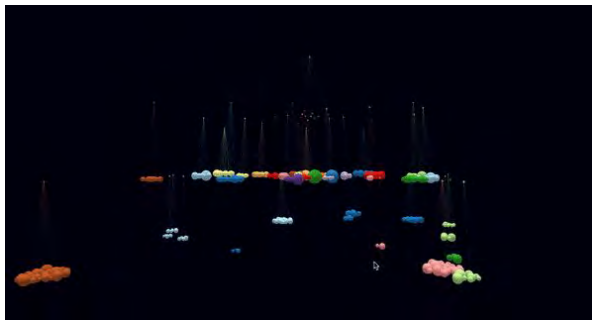
Chinese text: 基辛格在帮助美国公司进入中国市场方面已取得十分显著的成功, 为中国退休官员推动中国企业走向世界市场提供了借鉴经验。已故外交官吴建民长期倡导“外交资源经济化”, 希望建立一种新的外交模式, 组织一些退休的外交官成立公司, 一方面帮助中国企业走出去的时候分析所在国的政治, 经济环境, 提供咨询; 另一方面利用外交优势, 帮助这些企业在海外“找人”--包括当地的官员和其他要人。推动经济外交的发展, 这些非官方的渠道利用退任官员的身份和地位, 以某种有效的形式推动中美之间的双边活动, 促进中美关系进一步发展

²¹ “Kissinger Warns Biden of U.S.-China Catastrophe on Scale of WWI,” *Bloomberg.Com*, November 16, 2020, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-11-16/kissinger-warns-biden-of-u-s-china-catastrophe-on-scale-of-wwi>.

Sebenius et al. are spot on when they conclude that “Kissinger’s capacity to forge emotional and intellectual connections in a vast network of his own construction was key to his formidable success as a negotiator.”²² But more than that, Kissinger is unique amongst American secretaries and statesmen for subverting the traditional hierarchical pyramid of power and using multidirectional networks to maintain his influence once he retired from atop his pyramid in the State Department and National Security Council.

2a. 3D Force-Directed Graphs (data visualization)

Pivoting to implementation in the data visualization, networks of relationships lend themselves to big data analysis and present the perfect opportunity to build an interactive relationships network explorer, which visually maps, in 3D, any given secretary’s web of relationships. In prior research under the guidance of our very own Ambassador Nicholas Burns, I have already built networks mapping [China’s ambassadors](#), the [CCP Central Committee](#), and the [global arms trade](#). As described above, the difference between a vertical hierarchical structure and multi-directional network can be shown in contrasting the two force-directed graphs:



Hierarchical Network (CLICK [HERE](#))



Multidirectional Network (CLICK [HERE](#))

Niall Ferguson and Micki Kaufman’s prior work on “ego networks” and the “Quantifying Kissinger Project” provide an excellent intellectual foundation to build from by using text analysis as the basis for

²² James K. Sebenius, R. Nicholas Burns, and Robert Harris Mnookin, *Kissinger the Negotiator: Lessons from Dealmaking at the Highest Level* (Harper, 2018).

determining “links.”²³ ²⁴ Both use memoirs and other documents to scale the relative prominence that different individuals have inside Kissinger’s network.

For any secretary, clusters of connections in different spheres—academia, business, Hollywood, journalism, the military, etc.—could be highlighted and compared across secretaries. Ultimately, all secretaries are a complex web of aides, advisors, friends, deputies, assistants, family members, etc. who occupy their orbit. But secretaries are too often isolated and understood as lone individuals. Such a limited understanding neglects a major aspect of the role, and thus the use of 3D network visualizations is ripe for innovation.

3. *Kissinger’s Canvas*

During Kissinger’s recorded interview, Professor Sebenius evoked the idea of the “canvas.”²⁵ As an academic historian, Kissinger’s appreciation of the expanse of history arguably made him the most successful secretary at “painting mutually” on this canvas or in his own words, “relat[ing] events to each other, to create incentives or pressures in one part of the world to influence events in another.”²⁶ In practice, this meant requiring his young aides to articulate in their memos exactly how “that particular trip was to move the negotiations forward along the long range path.”²⁷ As he asked his team daily, “what are we trying to do? what is our strategy in the world?”²⁸ Kissinger’s unwavering view of the big picture as a historian mitigated the Western tendency to prioritize singular acts of brilliance, taught him about the integration of power, and allowed him to adjust or create negotiations in response to external events. All three examples are derived from widespread Chinese thought, noting ironically that Kissinger thinks and behaves as if he were a Chinese sage instead of a Western strategist.

²³ Niall Ferguson, “The Secret to Henry Kissinger’s Success,” POLITICO Magazine, n.d., <http://politi.co/2BhIqy4>.

²⁴ “‘Everything on Paper Will Be Used Against Me’: Quantifying Kissinger | Text Analysis, Visualization and Historical Interpretation of the National Security Archive’s Kissinger Correspondence,” accessed December 15, 2020, <https://blog.quantifyingkissinger.com/>.

²⁵ Henry Kissinger, Interview Transcript - American Secretaries of State Project (Nicholas Burns, Robert Mnookin, Jim Sebenius), November 6, 2014.

²⁶ Sebenius, Burns, and Mnookin, *Kissinger the Negotiator: Lessons from Dealmaking at the Highest Level*.

²⁷ Sebenius, Burns, and Mnookin.

²⁸ Sebenius, Burns, and Mnookin.

First, in the view of Chinese diplomats and scholars, Kissinger's approach to negotiation was atypical of the Western standard, but rather far more resembled the Chinese approach—with a focus on the long-term and the big picture. As is often communicated in edicts from *The Art of War*, Chinese diplomats generally view American strategy as placing a higher value on the concept of the “breakthrough”—the risky and unpredictable invention, the heroic victory on the battlefield, or a stroke of brilliance at precisely the right time. In diplomatic negotiation, the equivalent might be the masterful deployment of rhetoric at the negotiating table that succeeds in changing the counterpart's mind. The Chinese counter approach is best articulated by Sun Tzu himself when he says that “the supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting.”²⁹ This is described by Sebenius et al. as Kissinger “negotiating away from the table” so that at the table, an “intellectual breakthrough” is not even required because the negotiation's outcome has already been determined before anyone sits down.³⁰

Chinese scholars note with curiosity that Kissinger is unlike many of his American contemporaries in that very few other American statesmen have fully appreciated the downsides of relying on the “singular stroke of brilliance at the table” or as Sebenius et al. put it, “a narrow focus on the purely ‘talking part’ of the process.”³¹ For as eloquent, witty, and sharp Kissinger was at the table, he understood that in negotiations particularly with the Chinese, American short-termism is a disadvantage when long-term strategy is the goal. To this end, Kissinger reserves his highest praise for Chinese leadership for their command of history.³² He is famous in China for having said, “a cultural feature often displayed by Chinese leaders is that they consider issues from a historical perspective... China's long history and large scale have enabled Chinese leaders to use China's almost endless history to make negotiating opponents feel humble.”³³ The cultural difference in respect for history as identified by Kissinger is partially

²⁹ Chinese text: 战争的最高艺术是不战而屈敌

³⁰ Sebenius, Burns, and Mnookin, *Kissinger the Negotiator: Lessons from Dealmaking at the Highest Level*.

³¹ Sebenius, Burns, and Mnookin.

³² Sebenius, Burns, and Mnookin.

³³ He Hui [何辉], “China in Kissinger's Heart [基辛格心中的中国]” (Western Opinions [西方世界的中国观念], March 2016).

Chinese text: 基辛格认为, “中国领导人经常表现出的一个文化特点是, 他们是从历史角度考虑问题的。”他指出, “中国的历史之悠久, 规模之宏大, 使中国领导人能用中国几乎永无尽头的历史, 让谈判对手油然而生一种谦恭之心。”

attributable to China and the United States' length of national histories. Without a vast historical background of their own country, Americans are forced to look elsewhere intellectually to study the long arc of history and thus, Chinese sources point to Kissinger's education in European affairs as what endows him with an unusual historical depth amongst Americans. Chinese scholars describe Kissinger's historical approach to problem-solving: "the more complex a problem, the more history should be used to look at the problem through a thorough and holistic perspective and find out the connections between various problems."³⁴

Second, Chinese diplomats conclude from Kissinger that "the interconnection between things can become a source of power."³⁵ Chinese sources abstract Kissinger's concept of linkage (联系战略 or 连锁政策) away from Soviet policy and in their view, represents "the interconnection of events around the world—political, economic, and military."³⁶ One Chinese scholar says of Kissinger's distinct strategy: "connections exist everywhere and the role of a politician is to find the inner connections between things and turn it into a kind of power to restrict the other party. Kissinger advocates a historical approach to various issues and regional issues, and in his view, ties are not only horizontal, but also vertical."³⁷

Kissinger may have been the foremost teacher to the Chinese on this principle. China today is unmatched in its ability to coordinate what it calls "comprehensive national power" (综合国力) across the political, economic, and military domains when negotiating with another country. But interestingly enough, China in its modern history has nearly eliminated lethal force from its arsenal of negotiation tools, forcing Chinese leaders and diplomats to become even more creative in how power is integrated. In response to Professor Sebenius's question about the relationship between American military power and diplomatic power, Kissinger remained skeptical of the understanding that diplomacy could be separated into distinct

³⁴ He Hui [何辉], "China in Kissinger's Heart [基辛格心中的中国]" (Western Opinions [西方世界的中国观念], March 2016).
Chinese text: 一个问题越是复杂, 就越是应该运用历史的、整体的眼光看问题, 并找出各种问题之间的联系。

³⁵ He Hui [何辉].

Chinese text: 事物之间的相互联系可以成为权力之源

³⁶ He Hui [何辉], "China in Kissinger's Heart [基辛格心中的中国]."

³⁷ He Hui [何辉].

Chinese text: 总的来说, 基辛格联系战略的提出, 是基于事物之间普遍存在的联系, 而政治家的作用在于找出事物之间的内在联系, 并把它转化为一种权力, 以制约对方。基辛格主张历史地看待各种问题和各地区的问题, 在他看来, 联系不仅是横向的, 也是纵向的。

periods of pressure and negotiation. He even went so far as to say that it is a real challenge for Americans to “deploy pressure and incentives in an integrated way” because of the United States’ “uniquely unconstrained position.”³⁸ Without the duality of force and diplomacy, Chinese diplomats have had to become even more creative in adopting and adapting Kissinger’s own methods of “linkage.”

Third, perhaps no other secretary created or adapted ongoing negotiations as gracefully as Secretary Kissinger did. In his interview, he explicitly verbalized this challenge for him and for all American diplomats: “it was not a question ever of saying ‘now, we deal with Russia, now, we deal with China.’ We tried to have a coherent policy... but then of course, events could happen, like you mentioned the Middle East war. We hadn’t expected the Middle East war.”³⁹ One advantage of viewing the world as a single canvas is the ability to see and act on latent opportunities like Kissinger’s triangulation strategy with China and the USSR. The timeline of events leading up to and during what we now call the “Sino-Soviet split” might seem obvious in retrospect, but it was not so clear at the time. To string together border skirmishes, escalatory domestic rhetoric, divergent ideological differences, and other domestic developments in each country required a wide-angle lens to contextualize and frame such a strategy. Other unexpected events (and perhaps signals) built Kissinger’s case—China abruptly released two Americans who had sailed into Chinese waters and the invitation of the American table tennis team to China. Timelines are only constructed looking backward and this grouping of events into an overarching theme is the work of historians—the intellectual discipline most familiar to Dr. Kissinger whose mind is trained to think of the world as a series of overlapping, intersecting timelines.

Ultimately, in the words of the late General Scowcroft, “he could balance a whole lot of disparate issues and interrelate them all a year or two on. That was rare. Several years later, all the strands would come

³⁸ Kissinger, Interview Transcript - American Secretaries of State Project (Nicholas Burns, Robert Mnookin, Jim Sebenius).

³⁹ Kissinger.

together.”⁴⁰ To Dr. Kissinger, every issue, leader, and challenge was not its distinct entity, but rather all interlocking pieces of a much larger puzzle.

3a. Multilevel Timeline (data visualization)

Turning toward the visualization, Kissinger’s ability to see diplomatic negotiation as this canvas of interconnectedness is a direct contrast to how negotiations are visualized now: as a singular thread. Seeing negotiations as a linear form unfortunately inhibits one’s ability to comprehend the challenges *and* opportunities presented by developments that happen outside the scope of the negotiation. Thus, a multilevel timeline incorporating world events, domestic developments, progress on other negotiations happening in parallel, the passing of other world leaders, chronology of ongoing conflicts, etc. would be instrumental in doing two things. First, contextualizing negotiations in the environment and circumstances in which they happened, and second, facilitating an understanding of how the Secretary of State may have creatively adapted their negotiations in response to outside developments and/or in conjunction with other negotiations they were involved in. Users would be able to add or remove negotiation-specific timelines (Paris Peace, SALT I, etc.) and by default, national timelines of involved parties (United States, Soviet Union, etc.) would display key events necessary to understanding the negotiation(s) in question. Documents, multimedia, etc. would all be sorted chronologically on the timelines with the ability to “zoom in” and “zoom out” to switch back and forth from the micro and the macro views, just as Kissinger “zoomed in and out” of a negotiation.⁴¹

Complex timelines are an innovation from text. Although books and other written materials (including interview transcripts) are able to communicate complexity and nuance when learning about negotiations, text can be limiting because the burden of actively contextualizing a given negotiation to broader historical events is placed on the student. A downside of text is that events are retroactively introduced

⁴⁰ Sebenius, Burns, and Mnookin, *Kissinger the Negotiator: Lessons from Dealmaking at the Highest Level*.

⁴¹ Sebenius, Burns, and Mnookin.

and explained in such a way that forces storylines to become linear, when they are certainly not linear at the time. When something happens that influences the trajectory of a negotiation, such an event should not by default incidentally also inject an element of inevitability into the storyline. Thus, the goal of the multilevel timeline should be to allow students to put themselves into the shoes of any secretary and face the same kinds of dilemmas and ponder the same questions—all from the same vantage point in time.

In *Kissinger the Negotiator*, Sebenius et al. rightly preface the book by acknowledging that it would be wrong to conclude that negotiation itself or one man’s actions were responsible for producing results: “many complementary policies and actions were involved... other parties, as well as chance, plainly influenced outcomes.”⁴² Perhaps by building this multilevel timeline to communicate temporal overlap, will such an idea come across more clearly to audiences, both beginner and advanced in their understanding of diplomacy in all dimensions. The Secretary of State is the quintessential model for innovating how negotiations are studied. In the words of John Kerry, “the United States of America deals with more issues simultaneously than any other country in the world.”⁴³ And to the outside observer—the Secretary of State’s agenda is one where intersecting events and negotiations come together and mix in unusually interesting ways. The ability to visualize negotiations with multilevel digital timelines is an area ripe for development.

Conclusion

The written literature on each secretary, and particularly Henry Kissinger, is extensive. But the utilization of big data visualization offers a unique opportunity to create a comprehensive digital interface that currently does not exist. In fact, just several years ago, the creation of such an interface would not be possible given technical limitations. The ideas explained in this paper represent just three possibilities for how the interface can continue to develop; we have only scratched the surface of what is possible.

⁴² Sebenius, Burns, and Mnookin, *Kissinger the Negotiator: Lessons from Dealmaking at the Highest Level*.

⁴³ John Kerry, Interview Transcript - American Secretaries of State Project (Nicholas Burns, Robert Mnookin, Jim Sebenius, Torrey Taussig), March 13, 2020.

The American Secretaries of State Project has the potential to become the leading hub of research and scholarship on diplomatic negotiation. As Secretary Kissinger said upon seeing his own version:

“... you are the very first to use technology to render me a great kindness. My staff has walked me through the remarkable interface you have assembled on my travels as Secretary of State. It is a delightful resource for students and scholars of American foreign policy. I am amazed and grateful.”

Building the interface thus far has been an enriching intellectual challenge for myself, but it is my hope that when complete, such a project can be an innovative educational resource for students and scholars of all levels of knowledge. The interface should be designed in such a way that it renders accessible American diplomacy to the general public, but also contributes new insights to experienced diplomats and negotiators. After all, in introducing the project before Kissinger’s interview, Professor Mnookin said that *“our goal is to produce materials that might be used now and in the future to train and teach generations of students, not just at Harvard but really, we hope, all around the world.”*⁴⁴ Such a noble goal is what should drive the core mission of this visualization project.

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⁴⁴ Kissinger, Interview Transcript - American Secretaries of State Project (Nicholas Burns, Robert Mnookin, Jim Sebenius).