

# Asking What Kissinger Thinks-but Not What He Did

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Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#), [Media Disinformation](#)

On [September 22](#), **CBS Face the Nation** host Bob Schieffer had a long interview with Henry Kissinger.

Take a look at the intro:

In the long history of America, few men have had the influence of Henry Kissinger. For at least 60 years, powerful people have asked: "What does Henry think?" And he has never been shy about telling them....

Kissinger would go on to be Richard Nixon's national security adviser. He received the Nobel Prize for getting peace talks started on Vietnam, was point man for the opening to China, and guided the effort to forge new arms agreements with the Soviet Union. The media loved him. He became secretary of State and as Watergate exploded, kept American foreign policy together at a time when America had never been more vulnerable.

One part about this—"the media loved him"—is undeniably true. And it's certainly true that powerful people ask Kissinger for advice.

But the idea that Kissinger "kept American foreign policy together at a time when America had never been more vulnerable" deserves a rebuttal.



The war crimes arrest Kissinger was discussing on MSNBC was Ratko Mladic's—not his own.

A more apt description of Kissinger's record might skip the part about bringing peace to Vietnam and instead reference the massive aerial bombardment of Cambodia—"a massive bombing campaign in Cambodia. Anything that flies or anything that moves," as he himself put it (**New York Times**, [5/27/04](#))—in addition to the heavy bombings of Vietnam and Laos.

Kissinger's tenure including support for the military coup that overthrew the Allende government in Chile and support for the murderous Indonesian dictator Suharto's policies in East Timor (FAIR Action Alert, [9/1/99](#)).

One could go on, and in much greater detail, but you see the point.

Kissinger's record haunts him; every so often there are reports about how it interrupts his international travel plans, like in 2001 when a French magistrate sent Kissinger a summons at a Paris hotel, inquiring about Kissinger's role in the notorious Operation Condor programs of the 1970s. Kissinger promptly left town—and did a series of high-profile media interviews, none of which mentioned the French attempt to question him about human rights abuses (**Extra!**, [8/01](#)).

Kissinger counts on his friends in the elite media to not bother him with questions about his past. At a 2001 National Press Club event, journalists Russell Mokhiber and Robert Weissman wondered why Kissinger was not asked about these very relevant controversies. The event moderator, [Richard Koonce](#), told them that there was, in fact, an agreement not to entertain audience questions about certain subjects (**CommonDreams.org**, [6/22/01](#)):

“Was there an agreement with Dr. Kissinger not to ask questions related to Christopher Hitchens and allegations of war crimes?”

To our surprise, Koonce did not deny it.

“There was a definite sensitivity to that,” Koonce said. “He [Kissinger] was afraid that if we got into a discussion of that, for the vast majority of people that, it would take so much time to explain all of the context, that you know, he preferred to avoid that, and so....”

And so Kissinger's wishes were accommodated and the questions were avoided.

It's hard to know what Schieffer means when he says that Kissinger “kept American foreign policy together” at a difficult time. But it's clear that he, like so many others in the media, greatly admires Kissinger. There's no doubt they are aware of his record. Either they find that record laudable, or they think it's best not to talk about. Neither option is journalistically defensible.

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