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Trends. The 9/11 Commission: Personnel Selection and The Problem of Caesar's Wife

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Abstract: This Trends article discussed the controversial appointment of Henry Kissinger to the Commission to investigate and make recommendations concerning the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and his subsequent resignation from it. Of particular emphasis: the idea of being above reproach.

Both supporters and opponents of Henry Kissinger may have missed the main point in the recent controversy over his selection and resignation from the Commission to investigate and make recommendations concerning the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Supporters pushed his long-term service to the United States, his extensive international and security experience, and his intelligence. Ironically, opponents focused on the same attributes, but then reframed the three as respectively suggesting he is an "insider" unable to critique other insiders, has contacts impeding discernment of the facts, and bears an intelligence unbalanced with ethical and moral sensitivity. Supporters would then counter that "outsiders" don't know what's inside, that not having contacts can impede discernment of the facts, and that ethical and moral sensitivity can lead to unethical and immoral consequences.

An overriding issue among supporters and opponents was the paean to being above reproach. The problem with a reproach criterion, however, is that no one can be beyond reproach by virtue of being human. In fact, the reproach criterion serves as a vehicle for supporters and opponents to project onto candidates for public office, to establish and nurture transference and countertransference reactions with the candidates, and to exploit candidate images for professional and personal gain.

None of the committee members are beyond reproach, nor will be the committee's final products. However--even recognizing the generally worthless impact of various blue-ribbon panels--much of value can still be garnered for the benefit of those who have been, are, or will be terrorist targets. (See Bonasia, E. (Slotkin, P. (Trans)). (2001). *The countertransference: Erotic, erotised and perverse*. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 82, 249-262; Firestone, D. (December 14, 2002). Kissinger pulls out as chief of inquiry into 9/11 attacks. *The New York Times*, p. A1,A12; Glasser, J.K. (2002). Factors related to consultant credibility. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice & Research*, 54, 28-42; Gross, S. (2001). On integrity. *Psychodynamic Counselling*, 7, 207-216; Hansen, H. K., Langer, R., & Salskov-Iversen, D. (2001). Managing political communication. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 4, 167-184.) (Keywords: 9-11 Commission, Henry Kissinger, Terrorism.)