

The Need for Imagination in International Affairs

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There is a clear awareness reflected in twentieth-century literature that imagination is a powerful and desirable faculty. Albert Einstein remarked that “imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world.”¹

The term “imagination” evokes different associations. For example, the late Italian journalist and author Oriana Fallaci wrote that “with our progress we have destroyed our only weapon against tedium: that rare weakness we call imagination.” Some recently published advertising copy for Filippo Berio Olive Oil proclaimed that “imagination is the ability to envision vivid images, objects and events in your mind even though they are not apparent through the senses. When you add imagination to your cooking, it opens the door to powerful and unexpected possibilities.”² While the exercise of imagination may stave off boredom and please the palette, for the purpose of this essay it is understood as a vital component in the conduct of public affairs which permits us to draw on past experience in order to intuit and anticipate the unknown future. Several historians have noted that the inability to make use of imagination can be costly. The basic penalties for lack of imagination are the failure to recognize danger—with a corresponding increase of vulnerability to strategic surprise, and a narrowing of “the menu of policy options.”

Some commentators have identified a correlation between lack of imagination and poor political judgment. Describing the interwar period of the 1930s, several British men of public affairs wrote that lack of imagination (and general knowledge) was one of the causes for Neville Chamberlain’s serious failure. Similarly, the distinguished French medievalist, Marc Bloch (1886–1944), in his famous monograph, *Strange Defeat*, attributed the fall of France to its leaders’ inability to grasp that the coming war would be different from the previous one. More

recently, the *9/11 Commission Report* stated outright that one reason for America's vulnerability was a failure of imagination.³ Although politicians and scholars have occasionally noted the importance of imagination, the subject deserves more attention. One does not usually find mention of this subject in the history books. Nevertheless, references to the need for imagination continuously reappear. This reveals an unmistakable awareness of a disconcerting cultural tendency—the disinclination to draw on past experience in decision making and a general decline of the study of history.

As mentioned, the function of imagination is to provide the means of anticipating (and coping with) an unknown future, but sometimes there are limits. For example, Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom explained that despite considerable personal preparation, he was totally unprepared for his visit to Auschwitz: “I have read so much about the Shoah, watched so many films and documentaries, had the enormous privilege of speaking with survivors and educators. I thought I was ready for my visit, but I now know that I wasn't and couldn't have been, because imagination helps us prepare by linking what we are about to experience to something we have experienced before.”⁴

I

Duff Cooper (1890–1954), First Lord of the Admiralty in Neville Chamberlain's cabinet, who resigned in 1938 in protest against the Munich Agreement, described the vital importance of imagination. He explained that broad horizons and extensive personal experience helped make the exercise of imagination effective, something which Prime Minister Chamberlain lacked:

Chamberlain had many good qualities but he lacked experience of the world, and he lacked also the imagination which can fill the gaps of inexperience. He had never moved in the great world of politics or of finance, and the continent of Europe was for him a closed book. He had been a successful Lord Mayor of Birmingham and for him the Dictators of Germany and of Italy were like the Lord Mayors of Liverpool and Manchester, who might belong to different political parties and have different interests, but who must desire the welfare of humanity, and be fundamentally reasonable, decent men like himself. This profound misconception lay at the root of his policy and explains his mistakes.⁵

Other contemporaries observed that Chamberlain's lack of background and imagination hampered his ability to lead. The following is the withering judgment of the conservative politician Leo Amery (1873–1955). Amery also explained that this disability prevented Chamberlain from understanding the world around him, hindering his ability to absorb and act on new information:

....Where he [Chamberlain] was destined to fail was in his inability to grasp the character and ambitions of the men with whom he had to deal, the inter-relations of strategy and policy and the scale and immanence of the impending danger.⁶

.... [He was] prepared to do his patriotic duty and to urge others to do it, within the relatively modest limits of what he thought possible, he had no conception either of the daemonic drive behind the enemy or of the heights of sacrifice and achievement to which our own people were ready to rise if rightly led. He had "never heard the sound of the trumpets," and could give no inspiring trumpet call to others.⁷

George Orwell (1903-1950), writing in his famous essay, "England Your England," which appeared on February 19, 1941, took a broader view of the problem. He argued that the English ruling class was in decline and no longer served a useful function in British society. This group was, in his words, "less useful to society than his fleas are to a dog."⁸ The fact that Orwell was a committed socialist undoubtedly influenced his views. Nonetheless, his observations help us appreciate the cultural dimension and the contradictions which produced an untenable situation for this class. He explained that while this elite may have been well-meaning, it was ineffectual. The attitudes which many members shared rendered this group incapable of standing up to the great danger of fascism:

One thing that has always shown that the English ruling class are morally fairly sound, is that in time of war they are ready enough to get themselves killed. Several dukes, earls and what-nots were killed in the recent campaign in Flanders. That could not happen if these people were the cynical scoundrels that they are sometimes declared to be. It is important not to misunderstand their motives, or one cannot predict their actions. What is to be expected of them is not treachery, or physical cowardice, but stupidity, unconscious sabotage, an infallible instinct for doing the wrong thing. They are not wicked, or not altogether wicked; they are merely unteachable. Only when their money and power are gone will the younger among them begin to grasp what century they are living in.⁹

After the war, Alfred Leslie Rowse, a well-known British historian and member of All Souls College, who opposed the policy of appeasement, published a monograph in which he tried to analyze the mindset of its advocates. Some members of All Souls had been proponents of appeasement, so, in his personal statement, *Appeasement; A Study in Political Decline 1933-1939*, Rowse tried to place the problem

within its wider social and cultural context. Like Orwell, Rowse made no pretense of objectivity. Nevertheless, his observations are trenchant:

These men came at the end of an age; they were late Victorians by birth and upbringing, sharing to the full the standards of that era, with all their limitations, public-spirited and respectable, conventional and unimaginative. Indeed, they distrusted imagination and intellectualism; it was not good form to hammer things out in discussion, perhaps even to think things out. The contrast here with Churchill is very marked.¹⁰

An appreciation of imagination and its desirability must have been widespread in England during the thirties because it reappears in other contexts, particularly with regard to behavior suited to the political class. The issue of the moment was whether civil service exams produced the best candidates for the diplomatic service. Duff Cooper wrote that the successful candidates to the Foreign Service of his time were those who scored well in the civil service exams, but the traditional method of "private influence" had actually worked better in bringing quality to the top.¹¹ Thus, the question was raised as to whether society rewards or penalizes the resourceful use of personal initiative and talent. Bruce Lockhart (1887–1970), a British subject who had been a secret agent at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution, and later a journalist, author and senior civil servant,¹² put the problem in a slightly different perspective: "Seventy-five years ago and even less, individuality, ambition, self-reliance, a sense of adventure, and even an able eccentricity could bring a diplomat right to the top. Today these virtues are frowned on and, if practiced, would be more likely to bring a young hopeful down than exalt him. This is an age of safety first in a bureaucratic career."¹³

After the war, Harold Nicolson (1886–1968), a former British diplomat, member of Parliament and author, contributed to the discussion when he explained that imagination was essential for success in diplomacy. An effective negotiator had to be able to place himself (or herself) in the shoes of his (or her) counterpart. According to Nicolson, vanity, mental laziness and rigidity of spirit were dangerous impediments because they hindered the exercise of imagination:

Among the misfortunes into which personal vanity drives the frail spirit of man there is one which has a more specific bearing upon the practice of negotiation. It is self-satisfaction. It leads first to a loss of adaptability, and second to a decline of imagination.

...It is this rigidity of spirit which, as it settles upon the less gifted diplomatist, deprives him of his adaptability. He fails to respond with his former elasticity to conditions of which he disapproves or to ideas with which he is not familiar. The fault is of course common to all those who surrender themselves without a struggle to later middle age. Yet in a diplomat it entails a real diminution

of efficiency, since adaptability—or the power of putting oneself in another’s place—is an essential element in a successful negotiation.¹⁴

British thinkers were not alone in noting the importance of imagination. In *Strange Defeat*, Marc Bloch attributed the fall of France to the failure of its leaders to grasp that the next war would be different from the First World War, and it was their misfortune that the Germans exploited this weakness. Bloch also described the German advantages of “methodical opportunism” and use of speed:

What drove our armies to disaster was the cumulative effect of a great number of mistakes. One glaring characteristic is, however, common to all of them. Our leaders or those who acted for them were incapable of thinking in terms of a new war. In other words, the German triumph was essentially a triumph of the intellect—and it is that which makes it so particularly serious.¹⁵

Bloch’s succinct statement stands out in its searing brilliance. He attributes France’s defeat to its leaders’ failure of imagination: their inability to perceive the situation, to understand the enemy’s purpose and to defend their country. At the same time, Bloch introduced the idea that this shortcoming had increased France’s vulnerability. His statement represents a breakthrough in historical interpretation because Bloch explains the fall of France primarily as an *intellectual* rather than a military failure. Indeed, the fall of France represented a reverse of the same order as the American failure to anticipate Pearl Harbor and Stalin’s refusal to believe that Hitler would invade Russia.

II

The late Ernest R. May, a professor of history at Harvard University,¹⁶ liked Marc Bloch’s famous interpretation so much that he undertook a reexamination of the subject in the form of a case study entitled *Strange Victory*, which appeared in 2000. May documented the German invasion and conquest of France and analyzed the cultural reasons for this unexpected outcome. The French possessed considerable military advantages. Had they acted on an accurate understanding of the enemy’s motives and tactics and fought resourcefully, they could well have stopped the Germans. But they did not evaluate the situation and correctly correlate knowledge with effective action. Finally, it took the French four days to discover that the Germans had won. While Bloch wrote his essay in the confines of prison (he was captured and imprisoned by the Germans for his role in the French Resistance and later executed), May had access to the archives of the participants, solid financial backing and the benefit of hindsight. His interpretation identifies imagination as being crucial to self-defense:

In sum, the essential thread in the story of Germany's victory over France hangs on the imaginativeness of German war planning and the corresponding lack of imaginativeness on the Allied side. Hitler and his generals perceived that the weakness of their otherwise powerful enemies resided in habits and routines that made their reaction times slow. They developed a plan that capitalized on this weakness. French and British leaders made no effort to understand how or why German thinking might differ from theirs. They neglected to prepare for the possibility of surprise, and, as the German analysts and planners predicted, they could not react promptly once events began to be at odds with expectations....¹⁷

Ernest May pursued his study of history not only as an academic endeavor, but also for the concrete lessons he could derive from a case study of one of the most shocking defeats of the twentieth century. May wrote that "the surprise experienced by the French and British leaders in 1940, though due in part to individual failings, is traceable more to characteristics of their systems of collecting and analyzing intelligence and to their lack of a system in relating this intelligence to their decision-making. These procedural attributes of the two governments stand in sharp contrast to those of the German government, where more than anything else the system for mating intelligence and decision-making generated the final version of Plan Yellow." Writing in 2000, May prophetically observed: "And it must be added that, in these respects, the United States and most other democracies today resemble France and Britain of 1940, not Germany."¹⁸ In due course, the events of 9/11 would validate his ominous premonition.

May produced *Strange Victory* under the auspices of Harvard's Kennedy School of Public Affairs, which administered the Intelligence and Policy Program from 1986 to 2002. This program was the brainchild of Robert M. Gates, "who in 1986 had just become Deputy Director of Central Intelligence."¹⁹ As part of this remarkable initiative, the participants researched more than forty cases, which included Ernest R. May's and Philip D. Zelikow's publication of the Kennedy tapes relating to the 1962 missile crisis.²⁰ This group formed a disciplined school of thought, based on the historical case study (an approach first developed at Harvard Business School). Their enterprise gave new impetus to the empirical study of history for the purpose of practical application.

May and his colleague Richard E. Neustadt also endeavored to develop a practical approach that would serve as a bridge between the past and the future. Through an examination of various case studies they proposed different approaches for the systematic use of past history with a view to deriving knowledge that could be applied to decision-making and the formation of public policy. Their cooperative efforts also resulted in the 1986 publication of *Thinking in Time*.²¹ They argued that an active awareness of the past was necessary in the successful formulation

of policy and that “...good political judgment rests, we suspect, on historical understanding, even if that understanding is largely intuitive or unconscious.”²² Conversely, May and Neustadt noted that there was a correlation between the ahistorical outlook and policy failure. Several leaders exemplify this problem. For example, Jimmy Carter’s former speechwriter, James Fallows described the thirty-ninth president’s “cast of mind: his view of problems as technical, not historical, his lack of curiosity about how the story turned out before.”²³ Separately, George F. Will, in his obituary of Robert McNamara, described “The McNamara Mentality,” which reflected the belief that “behavioralism had finally made possible a science of politics.” Thus, by using the methods of the behavioral sciences, one could quantify and solve political problems.²⁴ May and Neustadt diagnosed another symptom of the ahistorical cast of mind, one that was particularly American: “ebullient can-doism”²⁵ (e.g., “Yes we can!”). Thus, the authors identified the ahistorical malady and devised a way to recognize its distinctive signs, which in its own right represents a valuable contribution.

Another problem that captured the attention of this study group was “catastrophic terrorism.”²⁶ Within this framework, Ashton B. Carter, John M. Deutsch and Philip D. Zelikow published the study, “Catastrophic Terrorism: Elements of a National Policy,” which appeared in 1998. This significant document identified the danger of mass terrorism against American society. The authors explained that the only limitation on the capability of America’s enemies to do harm was the limits of their imagination:

Readers should imagine the possibilities for themselves, because the most serious constraint on current policy is lack of imagination. An act of catastrophic terrorism that killed thousands or tens of thousands of people and/or disrupted the necessities of life for hundreds of thousands, or even millions, would be a watershed event in America’s history. It could involve loss of life and property unprecedented for peacetime and undermine Americans’ fundamental sense of security within their own borders in a manner akin to the 1949 Soviet atomic bomb test, or perhaps even worse. Constitutional liberties would be challenged as the United States sought to protect itself from further attacks by pressing against allowable limits in surveillance of citizens, detention of suspects, and the use of deadly force. More violence would follow, either as other terrorists seek to imitate this great “success” or as the United States strikes out at those considered responsible. Like Pearl Harbor, such an event would divide our past and future into a “before” and “after.” The effort and resources we devote to averting or containing this threat now, in the “before” period, will seem woeful, even pathetic, when compared to what will happen “after.” Our leaders will be judged negligent for not addressing catastrophic terrorism more urgently.²⁷

Using known historical information, the three authors foresaw the possibility of a mass terror attack on the United States. It is not a coincidence that the language of this passage, its perspective and logic resembled that of the *9/11 Commission Report*. One of its authors was Zelikow, a participant in the Intelligence and Policy Program, a faculty member at Harvard and a professor of history at the University of Virginia. Zelikow also served as counselor of the Department of State, and in January 2003, received the appointment of executive director of the 9/11 Commission. He, in turn, invited his mentor and colleague, Ernest May, to serve as the senior adviser.²⁸ Ultimately, the drafters of the 9/11 report defined the problem in a manner nearly identical to the passage cited from the paper on catastrophic terrorism. They could do so because they already had devised an effective analytical approach and methodology.

III

The 9/11 Commission defined the problem by posing the logical historical question: "If the government's leaders understood the gravity of the threat they faced and understood at the same time that their policies to eliminate it were not likely to succeed any time soon, then history's judgment will be harsh. Did they understand the gravity of the threat?"²⁹ The answer to this question is clear. Thomas H. Kean, the committee chair, and Lee H. Hamilton, stated in the preface, "We learned that the institutions charged with protecting our borders, civil aviation and national security did not understand how grave this threat could be, and did not adjust their policies, plans, and practices to deter or defeat it."³⁰ Having failed to appreciate and anticipate the gravity of the threat of a new form of terrorism, America's leaders and governmental defense agencies were taken by surprise. They experienced an *intellectual* defeat analogous to that which in 1940 had resulted in the fall of France.

In Chapter 11 of the *9/11 Commission Report*, "Foresight—and Hindsight," its authors wrote that they considered that "the 9/11 attacks revealed four kinds of failures: in imagination, policy, capabilities and management." Of these four types, they considered imagination failure to be the most grave. In their statement of the problem, the authors attributed the failure to understand the danger America faced to the inability to perceive the dangers of Islamic terror, to identify al-Qa'ida as the enemy, and to anticipate that America's enemies could use commercial passenger airplanes as weapons of mass destruction. While the authors began their discussion by posing the open question stated above, their conclusion is unmistakably clear: "...the possibility [of a suicide aircraft hijacking] was imaginable, and imagined."³¹ The cover of the *9/11 Commission Report* summed up the consequences: "Nearly three thousand people died in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. In Lower Manhattan, on a field in Pennsylvania, and

along the banks of the Potomac, the United States suffered the single largest loss of life from an enemy attack on its soil."³²

In a subsection of Chapter 11, entitled "Institutionalizing Imagination: The Case of Aircraft as Weapons," the commission dealt with the need to devise a remedy. They wrote:

Imagination is not a gift usually associated with bureaucracies....It is therefore crucial to find a way of routinizing, even bureaucratizing, the exercise of imagination. Doing so requires more than finding an expert who can imagine that aircraft could be used as weapons. Indeed, since al-Qa'ida and other groups had already used suicide vehicles, namely truck bombs, the leap to use of other vehicles such as boats (the Cole attack) or planes is not far-fetched.³³

The commission probed the subject in some detail and found that the challenge for the future would be to identify the tell-tale signs that would reveal preparations for a surprise terrorist attack. Thus, the 9/11 Commission explicitly emphasized the correlation between the effective exercise of imagination and national self-defense.

IV

The exercise of imagination, that is, the ability to draw on past experience and to intuit the future, is not only a *desideratum*; in public affairs it can be a matter of survival as well.

Depending on the social and institutional environment, the creative exercise of imagination may be fostered or inhibited. The British observers cited above noted that imagination was an asset in the conduct of affairs of state, particularly with regard to the Foreign Service. The authors of the *9/11 Commission Report* added that persons and institutions should be judged identically: "We mention many personalities in this report. As in any study of the US government, some of the most important characters are institutions...."³⁴ From this perspective, the authors could write that "imagination is not a gift usually associated with bureaucracies," and thus go on to evaluate institutions and individuals according to uniform criteria.

If one considers the function of imagination in policy making essentially as a bridge linking the present and past with the future (it is generally understood as such), it is critically important that its function neither be sabotaged nor disrupted. Harold Nicolson listed vanity, mental laziness, and inflexibility as character defects that prevented the effective use of imagination. George Orwell, when describing the

English ruling class of his time, spoke brutally of an escape into stupidity.³⁵ To this list one may add the unrelenting pressure of conformist and egalitarian society, the intimidation of totalitarian ideology, the falsification of the historical record and the dictates of political correctness penalize independent thought.

The effective exercise of imagination requires accurate observation and the management of information.³⁶ In order to draw on past experience, therefore, one must first possess a rich backlog of experience. Therefore, some educational background is necessary combined with the ability to think critically and independently.

It is evident that both the study of history and the exercise of imagination are closely related. In fact, Ernest May spoke of history and imagination nearly interchangeably. For the sake of accuracy, we should adopt Einstein's distinction between knowledge and imagination. While the possession of historical knowledge is an asset in its own right, it is the gift of imagination that "adds value" and enables one to use the lessons of past experience in order to anticipate the challenges of public affairs. It is not a coincidence that several of the thinkers who saw this relationship were trained professional historians or individuals who received a disciplined, classical education. Bloch, Rowse, May, Neustadt, and Zelikow all fit that category. As a student, Duff Cooper had "read history" and later produced a highly respected biography of Talleyrand. Harold Nicolson wrote about historical subjects of interest to his time, namely the development of standing diplomacy, the idea of good manners and of the Versailles Conference in which he participated as a junior member of the Foreign Service. Beyond having acquired a solid elite education, each of these men possessed some experience in public affairs and developed a sense of gravitas and moral clarity. Not one of these gifted and responsible citizens expressed the thought that history was boring and irrelevant, or extolled the virtues of ignorance and blind faith in the future.

As the undesirable characteristics of persons and organizations that failed to use imagination creatively have been discussed above, it would behoove us to describe the positive relationship between imagination and creativity. For example, Professor Frank Barron, of the Institute of Personality Assessment and Research, of the University of California, Berkeley, published an important article, "The Psychology of Imagination," in *Scientific American* (1958). In this report, based on experimental research, Barron described some of the characteristics of the truly creative individual:

...The truly creative individual stands ready to abandon old classifications and to acknowledge that life ... is rich with new possibilities. To him, disorder offers the potentiality of order.

...Creative people are especially observant, and they value accurate observation (telling themselves the truth) more than other people do.

...They see things as others do, but also as others do not. They are thus independent in their cognition, and they also value clearer cognition.

...They are born with greater brain capacity; they have more ability to hold many ideas at once, and to compare more ideas with one another—hence to make a richer synthesis.³⁷

While one usually seeks to identify the qualities of character that lead to success, some of the defects associated with failed leadership are painfully familiar. As stated above, the authors of the *9/11 Commission Report* attributed to lack of imagination America's failure to recognize al-Qa'ida as a "first order threat" and to sense the possibility that aircraft could be used as weapons.³⁸ The authors of this report also pointed out the "government's broader inability to adapt how it manages problems to the new challenges of the twenty-first century."³⁹ The 9/11 Commission noted that the American defense establishment was geared more to the problems of the late stages of the Cold War in anticipation of an attack coming from abroad, but not from within.⁴⁰ More than half a century before, Rowse described an analogous state of affairs in the England of his time. Thus, both the 9/11 Commission and Rowse identified a grave cultural problem that had developed in each country independently. The leadership of both countries could not adapt to the changing times.

....The practical way of looking at things, not looking too far in advance,... not rocking the boat, and other clichés that do duty for thinking ahead, may serve well in ordinary, normal times. But our times are not "normal" in the good old Victorian sense, and never will be again. And this habit of mind in politics will certainly not serve in times of revolution, perpetual stress and conflict, war, the reshaping of the world. This conventional British way of looking at things was simply not equal to the times, and it caught these men out badly.⁴¹

Rowse thus summed up in simple language the essence of the British leadership failure: the inability to perceive the gravity of the threat that faced them. "They really did not know what they were dealing with, or the nature and degree of the evil thing they were up against. To be so uninstructed—a condition that arose from a certain superciliousness, a lofty smugness, as well as superficiality of mind—was in itself a dereliction of duty. They would not listen to warnings, because they did not wish to hear."⁴²

It is wrong to think of imagination only as a child's pastime. If a government's ability to recognize a "first-order threat" and to choose an appropriate defensive response depends even partially on imagination, then being able to exploit the lessons of historical experience and to make creative use of this gift is really a matter of strategic, if not existential importance. This observation applies all the more if it should be necessary to confront an adversary that seeks to inflict (and is prepared to accept) great losses in order to achieve its ends.


Notes

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- ¹ "What Life Means to Einstein : An Interview by George Sylvester Viereck, " *The Saturday Evening Post*, Vol. 202 (October 26, 1929), p. 117, as quoted in " Albert Einstein," www.en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Albert_Einstein.
- ² Advertising copy for Filippo Berio Olive Oil, *New York Times Magazine*, September 16, 2007, p. 27.
- ³ National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States* (New York, July 22, 2004), p. 339. See also *9/11 Commission Report, fully updated with Controversial Third Monograph and Never-before-published Progress Reports from the 9/11 Commissioners* (New York, 2006).
- ⁴ Gordon Brown, "The lesson I learnt at Auschwitz," May 21, 2009, *y-net*, www.ynet.co.il/english/articles/0,7340,L-3719516,00.html.
- ⁵ Duff Cooper, *Old Men Forget: The Autobiography of Duff Cooper* (New York, 1954), p.200.
- ⁶ L. S. Amery, *My Political Life, Vol. III, The Unforgiving Years, 1929-1940* (London,1955), p. 229.
- ⁷ *Ibid*, p. 353.
- ⁸ George Orwell, "England Your England," February 19, 1941, in George Orwell, *Selected Essays* (Harmondsworth, 1957), p. 80.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 83.
- ¹⁰ A. L. Rowse, *Appeasement: A Study in Political Decline 1935-1955* (New York, 1961), pp. 114-115.
- ¹¹ Duff Cooper, *The Second World War; First Phase* (London, 1939), pp. 126-127.
- ¹² Sir Robert Hamilton Bruce Lockhart "in 1941 became a deputy under secretary of state and took over the direction of the Political Warfare Executive which coordinated propaganda in enemy and enemy-occupied countries." *Dictionary of National Biography 1961-1970*, p. 668.

- ¹³ “Impressive Diplomatist,” in Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, *Friends, Foes and Foreigners* (London, 1957), p. 197.
- ¹⁴ Harold Nicolson, *Diplomacy*, third ed. (Oxford, 1969), pp. 64–65.
- ¹⁵ Marc Bloch, *Strange Defeat*, trans. by Gerald Hopkins (London, 1949), p. 36.
- ¹⁶ “Ernest May, Senior Advisor to 9/11 Commission,” *Washington Post*, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/10/AR2009061001709.html.
- ¹⁷ Ernest R. May, *Strange Victory; Hitler’s Conquest of France* (New York, 2000), p. 480.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 348–349.
- ¹⁹ Ernest R. May and Philip D. Zelikow, (eds., with Kirsten Lundberg and Robert D. Johnson) *Dealing with Dictators: Dilemmas of U. S. Diplomacy and Intelligence Analysis, 1945–1990* (Cambridge, 2006), preface, p. ix.
- ²⁰ Ernest R. May and Philip D. Zelikow (eds.) *The Kennedy Tapes Inside the White House during the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Cambridge, MA, 1997).
- ²¹ Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision Makers* (New York, 1986).
- ²² *Ibid.*, p. 195.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p. xiv, as quoted from one of Jimmy Carter’s former speechwriters, James Fallows, “The Passionless Presidency,” *Atlantic Monthly* (May 1979), 44. It would be helpful to include just a bit more of the original passage which Ernest May cited: “Through most of my last year at the White House, I kept asking myself, Why should a man as well-meaning and intelligent as Carter blithely forgo the lessons of experience and insist on rediscovering fire, the lever, the wheel? Why not temper the fresh view he brought with the practiced knowledge of those who had passed this way before? Why ... was there so little passion to learn how to do the job? The first clue to the solution of these questions was Carter’s cast of mind: his view of problems as technical, not historical, his lack of curiosity about how the story turned out before. He wanted to analyze the ‘correct’ answer, not to understand the intangible irrational forces that had skewed all previous answers.”
- ²⁴ George Will, “The McNamara Mentality,” *Washington Post*, July 8, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/07/07/AR2009070702339.html>. See particularly Cecil B. Currey, *Edward Lansdale; The Unquiet American* (Boston, 1988), pp. 1–3. In this encounter, Edward Lansdale, the legendary American expert in guerilla warfare, tried in vain to explain to McNamara that the war in Vietnam was about ideas, while McNamara mistakenly thought that body counts were the real measure of success.
- ²⁵ Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, *op. cit.*, p. xxi.
- ²⁶ This in some respects resembled the effort to think realistically about thermonuclear war, a subject on which Herman Kahn (1922–1983), one of the founders of the Hudson Institute and author of the classic study, *Thinking about the Unthinkable* (New York, 1962), had dedicated sustained attention.
- ²⁷ www.hks.harvard.edu/visions/publication/terrorism.htm.

- 28 Ernest R. May, "When Government Writes History: A Memoir of the 9/11 Commission," *New Republic*, (May 23, 2005) 31. www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB277/May%20memoir%20of%209-11%20Commission.pdf.
- 29 *The 9/11 Commission Report*, op. cit., p. 340.
- 30 *Ibid.*, p. xvi.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 345.
- 32 Back cover, *9/11 Commission Report*, op. cit.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p. 344.
- 34 *Ibid.*, p. 71.
- 35 Orwell, "England Your England", op. cit, p. 80
- 36 See J. S. Fishman, "Perception Failure and Self-Deception; Israel's Quest for Peace in the Context of Related Historical Cases," Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs: *Jerusalem Viewpoints* No. 450, 15 March 2001. www.jcpa.org/jl/vp450.htm.
- 37 Frank Barron, "The Psychology of Imagination," *Scientific American* Vol. 199 (1958), p. 164.
- 38 *9/11 Commission Report*, pp. 343-344.
- 39 *Ibid.*, p. 353.
- 40 *Ibid.*, p. 399.
- 41 Rowse, op.cit., p. 116.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 117.



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Essay

Iran and the Global Rise in Anti-Semitism

2006 saw the highest number of anti-Semitic incidents worldwide since 2000, with a twofold increase in physical attacks against Jews from the year before. The two prime events largely responsible for this rise were "the efforts invented by Iran to delegitimize Israel by denying the Holocaust, and the Second Lebanon War," according to a new global study by the Stephen Roth Institute. According to these findings, Iran stands at the forefront of contemporary global anti-Semitism, both as a direct perpetrator and a Hezbollah's primary patron. This is just another indication that the threat emanating from Tehran is unceasing, ideological, and global in its reach.

Iran's use of anti-Semitic expression took an expansive turn throughout the course of the past year. Most egregiously, the Iranian government provided sanction and a platform to the worst kinds of anti-Semitic "scholars" from all over the world and turned denial of the Holocaust into a state-sponsored endeavor. The December 2006 Holocaust denial conference convened by the Iranian Foreign Ministry was the most blatant of these acts. The Roth Institute report notes, "Iran's destructive intentions have been reinforced and sustained by Western Holocaust deniers, some of whom fled to Tehran in order to avoid trials or verdicts in their respective countries and shared their experiences with President Ahmadinejad." Moreover, Iranian government officials regularly use anti-Semitic references and language in their public addresses.

The primary goal of Tehran's manipulation of anti-Semitic prejudices is to undermine legitimacy for the existence of Israel. Iran took another step towards this goal when its Hezbollah proxy unilaterally launched what would later come to be known as the Second Lebanon War. The ensuing and maddening international condemnation of Israel quickly degenerated into anti-Semitic expressions and the furtherance of Iran's political ideology, namely the elimination of the Jewish State.

According to the report, with the "intensification of anti-Israel attitudes in public discourse, it became more common to demand the disappearance of a state depicted as a prototype for crime and destruction and danger to world peace." In a reinforcing feedback loop, media outlets, Muslim groups, and both right- and left-wing organizations the world over, under the guise of anti-Zionism and anti-imperialism, began to emphasize "the cruel child-killer, allegedly the essence of Jews and Israelis, as well as Nazi-like behavior, which is nothing if not modern expression of classical anti-Semitism and a further trivialization of the Holocaust.

More worrying in many respects was the physical violence directed at individual Jews and Jewish symbols during the war and in its immediate aftermath. The most tragic of these incidents was the deadly shooting attack at the Seattle Jewish Federation Center perpetrated by an American Muslim man who claimed that he was "angry at Israel." More violent incidents worldwide were only prevented due to the vigilance of local authorities and heightened anti-terrorism measures. Individual beatings of Jewish individuals on the street, anti-Semitic graffiti, and the desecration of synagogues, however, increased in frequency.

The cumulative effect of Iran's actions and propaganda

Highlights	
Essay	1
Latest Developments	2
Inside Iran	3
Must Reads	4
A Look Ahead	4
Community Update	5

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