

The Bush – Hitler Paradox

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By George Mullen and Bob Witty

Linking together the names of George W. Bush and Adolf Hitler at first glance appears grossly unfair, but this is not a comparison in terms of evil. In fact, Bush sees himself as the modern day equivalent of Winston Churchill fighting to save the world from an evil menace. The paradox is that in truth, Bush is far closer in mindset to Churchill's arch nemesis, Adolf Hitler. As with Hitler seventy years before, Bush has come to embrace a misguided bunker mentality of his *rightness* above and beyond all the lesser opinions of his detractors.

1. Success – source of the bunker mentality:

From 1935 - 1941 Adolf Hitler pursued a daring, if not death defying, approach to international affairs - rearming the Rhineland; the forced annexation of Austria and the Sudetenland; the invasions of Poland, France and the low lying countries; and the invasion of the Soviet Union.

At every turn, the German generals thought Hitler's reckless gambles would be the ruin of their nation. But each time, Hitler's gambles proved prescient. With such spectacular successes on the world stage, Hitler became convinced of his divine *rightness* over all others. For the rest of the war Hitler alone made all major strategic and tactical decisions, even though his only prior military experience was as a corporal during World War I. When his generals dared to disagree, they were either replaced or shot. To the very end, Hitler commanded his nation from his cement bunker convinced he alone could lead his nation to victory.

Likewise, George W. Bush pursued a daring approach to international affairs after the terrorist attacks of September 11 - the invasion of Afghanistan and scattering of the Taliban; the naming condemnation of Iraq, Iran and North Korea as the *Axis of Evil*; the invasion of Iraq with resistance crumbling in weeks (*Mission Accomplished*); Libya's Qaddafi surrendering his nuclear program; and Lebanon's Cedar Revolution, embrace of democracy and forced withdrawal of the Syrian military.

With these successes, Bush too became convinced of his *rightness* over his misguided critics – even though his only military experience was limited to a brief period as a pilot in the National Guard. But as with Hitler, Bush's string of successes soon soured. And as Hitler barricaded himself in his cement bunker, Bush barricaded himself in a *mental bunker* convinced his Churchillian determination would lead to victory.

In response to terse congressional opposition to his newly announced troop surge for Iraq, Bush responded on January 19, 2007 with, "I'm the decision-maker", "I've picked the plan that I think is most likely to succeed." The repeated use of "I" in his speeches reveals the bunker mentality, eerily reminiscent of Hitler.

2. *Fighting yesterday's war:*

The greatest problem for the United States is that Bush is fighting this war in the context of yesterday's war, in this case World War II. His approach is synonymous to France continuing to defend the Maginot Line in the style of World War I while the German panzers had already broken through and were racing toward Paris.

The Allies in World War II faced a vast Nazi enemy that wanted to fight it out on the battlefield. Today we face a very different enemy, one that is unrecognizable and operates via stealth and subterfuge. Yet Bush speaks and acts as though this is 1940 and we face an existential battlefield threat on par with Nazi Germany. Note the similarity in his words to 1940 Churchill:

President Bush, March 20, 2006 – *“Against this enemy, there can be no compromise. So we will fight them in Iraq, we'll fight them across the world, and we will stay in the fight until the fight is won.”*

Winston Churchill, June 4, 1940 – *“We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender.”*

3. *Wanting battlefield victory and making it happen via “Preventive War”:*

Bush, seeing himself as the Churchillian savior of the world, longed for large scale battlefield victories. Afghanistan was successful, but without capturing bin Laden the victory was hollow and more on par with Reagan's Grenada invasion.

Bush continued to desire dramatic military victory in the context of World War II, but the new terrorist enemy did not operate on this level. When the British stymied Hitler in the Battle of Britain in 1940, Hitler turned his attention to another target and invaded the Soviet Union (with disastrous results). Likewise, when bin Laden stymied Bush in Afghanistan, Bush shifted his attention to finding another target (also with disastrous results).

Bush embraced *“Preventive War”* (a.k.a. *Aggressive War* with a nice excuse like WMD) in order to provide the rationale for the battlefield glory on the scale of Ike and MacArthur that he desired. In essence, Bush used Marketing 101 to recast our new stateless terrorist enemy as something it clearly was not – that being an identifiable nation and face that could be used to sell a case for large scale war. And who better to target than our favorite evil whipping boy, Saddam Hussein. Saddam deserves no tears, but Iraq clearly did not pose an imminent threat to the national security of the United States. Bush and the CIA certainly knew this - do not buy their feeble claims of *“faulty, pre-war intelligence”*. Since the 1991 Gulf War we have known exactly what goes on in Iraq via our constant fly-overs, satellite imagery and anti-Saddam spy network of Kurds and Shiites.

Though the American losses of over 3,600 troops in Iraq pales in comparison to Vietnam (58,199) or World War II (405,399), this is only the surface of the damage. First and foremost, every single life is of paramount importance. Second, American casualties (dead and wounded) in Iraq and Afghanistan now number over 50,000. Third, estimates of the total number of violent deaths in Iraq since 2003 range from 100,000 to over 600,000. Fourth, an enormous power vacuum has been created in Iraq that would permit Iran and an array of terrorist organizations to step in and fill. Fifth, fearful it is next on Bush's evil target list, Iran is speeding toward nuclear arms that will radically tip the balance of power in the Middle East.

The Middle East is a far more dangerous place because of Bush, not in spite of him.

4. America is a democratic republic, not a dictatorship:

Fortunately, we live not in a dictatorship, but in a democratic republic. We do not have to acquiesce to dictatorial "*I'm the decider*" words of President Bush for fear of being shot. We can and must speak out. The 2006 midterm elections were not an embrace of the Democratic Party, but rather a direct repudiation of Bush and his failed policies in the Middle East. Yet Bush, convinced of his *rightness*, has brushed off this message and continues to pursue *stay the course* in all but word.

This is not a time for Churchillian stubbornness. We are in a new age battle that calls for a leader who is crafty and cunning, but who is also thoughtful and patient and can evaluate the risks *before* taking them. Bottom line, Bush is the wrong leader for the times. He may or may not have been perfect for Britain in 1940, but this is not 1940.

In President George Washington's 1796 Farewell Address he sternly warned America to steer clear of "*entangling alliances*" with foreign nations. Can anyone imagine a more entangling alliance than invading a nation on the other side of the world that has not directly threatened our national security, occupying that nation in the hopes of building a democracy there, and then babysitting the resulting Lebanese-style civil war (of complexity we don't even grasp) with our troops as the favored targets in the middle?

The bunker mentality of leaders with powerful armies at their command can only lead to disaster. And it has.

Round One goes to the terrorists. Will we have the right leader for *Round Two*?

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