

# Heroes and Villains

# Hitler's 90% Approval Rating

# George W. Bush's Post-9/11 Rating

# Hitler's Villain

How did Adolf Hitler's use of charged rhetoric shift the German citizens' public opinion toward the Jewish people?

# God and Devil Terms: Adolf Hitler's Rhetorical Impact Upon the Shifting Mindset of the German People

Jennifer Berkebile

Research Week 2023

Oral Presentation: Textual or Investigative

# Roadmap

- Overview the Theory
- Apply the Tenets
- Answer the Question
- Investigate Modern Implications

# Overview the Theory

- Richard Weaver (1953)
- Rita Rahoi-Gilchrest's Four Tenets (2021)
  - God and devil terms are framed together to shape public opinion.
  - Successful god and devil terms stem from preexisting public opinion of the individual using the terms.
  - God terms are used to create political heroes.
  - Devil terms are used to create political villains.

# Apply the First Two Tenets

## Hitler's Establishment of Acceptance

- God and devil terms are framed together to shape public opinion.
  - Sovereignty, honor, homeland (Hitler, 1921)
  - Creditors, poison, traitor (Hitler, 1945)
- Successful god and devil terms stem from preexisting public opinion of the individual using the terms.
  - Wide acceptance
  - Widespread trust

# Apply the Last Two Tenets

## Hitler's Weaponization of Rhetoric

- God terms are used to create political heroes.
  - German Aryans
  - Victimization
- Devil terms are used to create political villains.
  - German Jews
  - Cultivated misfortunes

How did Adolf Hitler's use of charged rhetoric shift the German citizens' public opinion toward the Jewish people?

# Answer the Question

- Hitler's prior acceptance
- Public acceptance of terms
- German Aryans as heroes
- German Jews as villains
- Shift in mindset

# Investigate Modern Implications

- Anti-others rhetoric to violence (D'Amico, 2022)
- Charismatic leadership's easy use of radicalized language (Breen & Frezza, 2020)
- Christians' language of godly wisdom and truth (1 Cor. 2:1; Matt. 22:38-39; Matt. 28:19-20)

Just as Hitler shifted German opinion,  
our politicians could leverage those  
same tactics to shift our own opinion.

# References

- Bahador, B., Moses, J., & Youmans, W. L. (2018). *Journal of Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 48(1), 4-26. <https://doi.org/10.1111/psq.12412>
- Birchall, F. T. (1934, August 20). *Hitler endorsed by 9 to 1 in poll on his dictatorship, but opposition is doubled*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/1934/08/20/archives/hitler-endorsed-by-9-to-1-in-poll-on-his-dictatorship-but.html?searchResultPosition=1>
- Breen, C. D., & Frezza, S. (2020). Charismatic leadership and the formation of hate groups. *International Annals of Criminology*, 58(1), 55-90. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cri.2020.17>
- D'Amico, R. (2022, October 13). *Anti-immigrant rhetoric fueled Sierra Blanca migrant shooting, advocates say*. Texas Observer. <https://www.texasobserver.org/anti-immigrant-rhetoric-fueled-sierra-blanca-migrant-shooting-advocates-say/>
- Donovan, K., Kellstedt, P. M., Key, E. M., & Lebo, M. J. (2020). Motivated reasoning, public opinion, and presidential approval. *Political Behavior*, 42, 1201-21. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-019-09539-8>
- Hitler, A. (1921). *Adolf Hitler: Speech of April 12, 1921* [Speech transcript]. Hanover College. <https://history.hanover.edu/courses/excerpts/111hit1.html>
- Hitler, A. (1945). *Adolf Hitler: Order for a last stand in the east* [Speech transcript]. Jewish Virtual Library. <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/adolf-hitler-order-for-a-last-stand-in-the-east-april-1945>
- Neiman, S., & Younes, A. E. (2021). Antisemitism, anti-racism, and the Holocaust in Germany: A discussion between Susan Neiman and Anna-Esther Younes. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 23(3), 420-35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2021.1911346>
- *New International Bible*. (2011). Zondervan. (Original work published 1978)
- Rahoji-Gilchrest, R. (2021). Epilogue: God and devil, hero and villain, and the long journey ahead. In P. J. Svenkerud, J. O. Sørnes, & L. Browning (Eds.), *Whistleblowing, communication and consequences* (pp. 231-9). Routledge.
- Weaver, R. M. (1953). *The ethics of rhetoric*. Henry Regnery.