

The Hitler Rubric: An Historical Effort to Establish a Political Morality



Figure 1: President Trump conflated with Hitler

Adolf Hitler, the German dictator of the 1930s and 1940s, is still viewed as the great villain of modern American history. Conservatives find Hitler's hatred of free enterprise and the Judeo-Christian heritage deplorable. Liberals find Hitler's murderous racism, and contempt for democracy abhorrent. Therefore, if one wants to really pull an American leader into the mud, one can compare him to Adolf Hitler. With the case of Donald Trump, we see that in Figure 1 above even today this is the case, Trump has been Hitlerized on several occasions. But remarkably he has also tried to Hitlerize others. Trump attacked conservative commentator Pat Buchanan who was running against him in 1999 as a "Hitler lover." It is almost inconceivable that any other brutal dictator from world history could work like this. People would not go overboard comparing Barack Obama to Joseph Stalin, or Bill Clinton to Mao Zedong. This paper will prove that three American leaders, Franklin Roosevelt, Richard Nixon, and Donald Trump have more similarities with Hitler than we might want to admit, by placing them in the Hitler

rubric that I have constructed. I have chosen these three, because each has had a minor tradition already of having been compared to the German dictator.

There are good reasons why people would not make those comparisons. Firstly, The United States is a nation of nations which means that a large amount of different ethnicities and races must find ways to live together. This was definitely the opposite of Hitler's view of seeing his nation. He was a racist, who murdered 6 million Jews, Gypsies, and other races he hated. His goal was to leave the ones alive he liked, and in this way he was diametrically opposed to the tolerance that makes the United States possible. Secondly, The United States is the world's longest living democracy. Hitler once said, "Democracy is the canal through which the poisons of Bolshevism (Marxism) flow."¹ And lastly, The United States has been a leader of capitalism and free enterprise in the world since the late nineteenth century. But Hitler noted that "capitalism" was a system of "exploitation." Hitler even based his hatred for the Jews on their alleged materialism, and love of money.²

Hitler's continued relevance as the great American villain stems from the fact that he opposed the unique and outstanding qualities of what America has been. Even as Americans are polarized today, subjected to dueling networks, and a lack of civic discourse, they can still agree that Hitler's mixture of dictatorship, racism, hatred for Christian Church, and enterprise is just not right. This commonality thus becomes a key to a new kind of consensus. Just as with acids

¹ <https://www.mattbrundage.com/publications/hitler-and-democracy/>

² <https://www.mattbrundage.com/publications/hitler-and-democracy/>. As quoted in *A History of National Socialism*, Konrad Heiden, Methuen & Company, LTD, London: UK, 1934, p. 58. Speech in April, 1922

measured by pH where an inverse scale is used, a Hitler Rubric could use distance away from Hitler as a positive sign of Americanism.

The Hitler Rubric is an effort to build on what consensus Americans do have. The Rubric is based on a President's actions and words about racism, and any other perceived alienation from democracy and free enterprise (Figure 2). In the graph below, the colors represent the categories. Blue for racism, red for anti-democratic orientations, and yellow for anti-free-enterprise orientations. The vertical axis represents the numbers from one to ten, how similar each President is to Hitler in the following categories. The horizontal axis represents the three American Presidents, Roosevelt, Nixon, and Trump. (From left to right) And all the way at the right, we are able to recognize Hitler with the perfect score of 30. He receives 10/10 in each category for being an anti-free enterprise, anti-democratic racist.

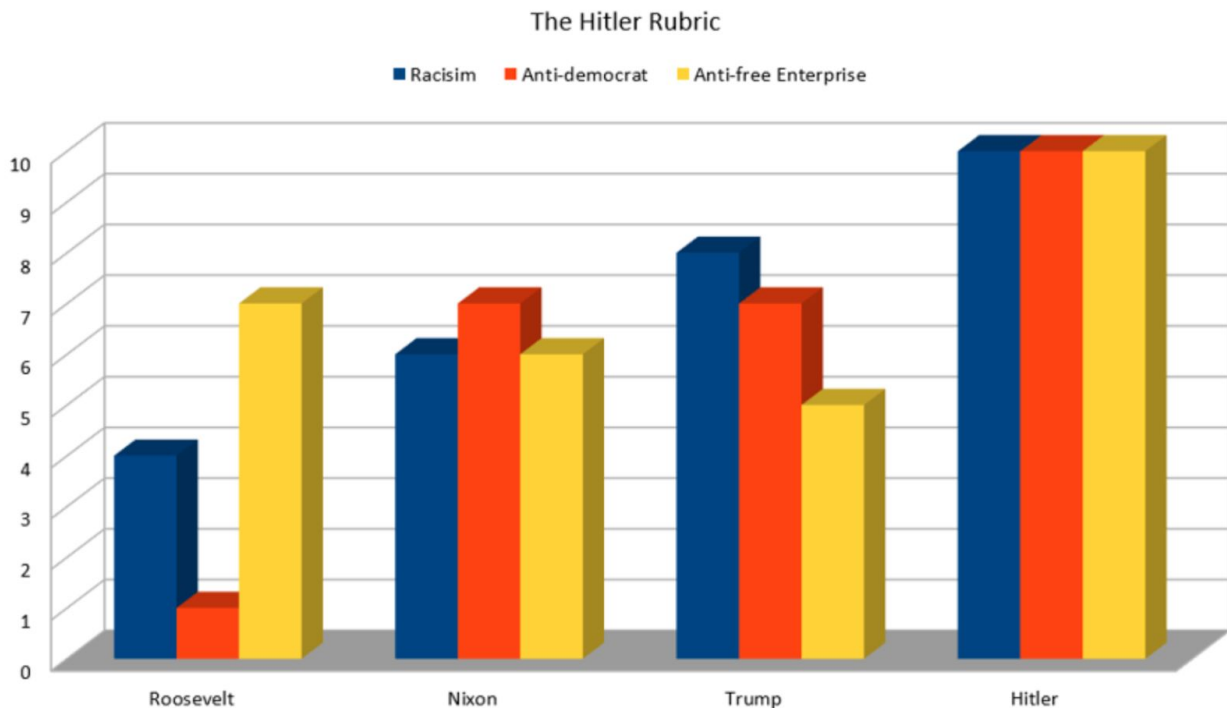


Figure 2: Hitler Rubric

Franklin Roosevelt is the first President that I placed on the Hitler Rubric. In some studies he appears as the Great Anti-Hitler, and this would make him very pro-American and give him a low score on the Rubric. After all, Hitler was actually Roosevelt's archenemy in real time, and Roosevelt had enough occasions to run down, contradict, and oppose Hitler while President. It is always a little more multiplex than that. Roosevelt, being a pampered son of rich Protestant parents, did not have a close relation to groups like Jews and Blacks in his early life. He was never a capitalist, but a leader of the Democratic Party.

Roosevelt said some anti-Jewish things. He talked about the need to spread "Jews thin" so they would not antagonize other peoples. He thought they were to blame for anti-Semitism in Poland. He also failed to help the Jews trying to escape the holocaust. When confronted about his lack of help, he revealed he had more important people to help. He could not be dictated to by "Jewish wailing" and "Jewish sob stories." He also sent the Japanese into concentration camps. These are the reasons why he receives a number 4 in the rubric. About capitalism, he once noted that though the "early bird gets the worm," "too many people think about the fortunate bird, and not the unfortunate worm." He showed that he thought capitalism was not working right. His New Deal was a mild critique of capitalism—thus he helped create the Tennessee Valley Authority, an experiment in state socialism. Roosevelt did very well in elections, and was more concerned to appeal to a group like the Appalachians than be consistent. This shows he was pro-democratic and will receive a 1 in that category. The last category is anti-free enterprise and

he scored higher (7) in that since he seemed to want to experiment with wage-and-price systems, and regulations that might have crippled it.³

The second President I placed in the Rubric was Richard Nixon. Nixon once said to his aide Bob Haldeman, about the Jews that “you can’t trust the bastards, they turn on you, am I wrong or right?” Nixon seemed to treasure his two German-American advisors Haldeman, and Richard Ehrlichman--often compared to Nazis, because he could express himself like this. Nixon showed that he was highly prejudiced and scores a 6 in the racist category. Nixon also slapped on wage-and-price controls, denying scope for the Free Market. At other times, Nixon offered defenses of capitalism and even opposed wage-and-price controls which is also a reason why he scores another 6. As far as his respect for democracy, Nixon’s people spied on the opposing party, and tried to circumvent the democratic process with “Dirty Tricks.” These are the reasons why he was very anti-democratic and scored a 7.

And lastly we have the current President of the United States, Donald Trump. Though a billionaire who appeared to flourish in the capitalist system, questions arise about him. How could someone like him go bankrupt so many times, and not be working this system? Maybe this shows a form of elitism as well as capitalism. Has Trump encouraged supporters to get tough with political opponents who resort to disorderly displays? This would show anti-democratic tendencies. Trump not only has uttered anti-Muslim, but anti-Mexican remarks as well as he has tried to construct a wall separating America from Mexico. Adding to that, he has denied Muslims asylum. This is why he receives 8 in racism, a 7 for his anti-democratic orientation, and a 5 in being anti-free enterprise.

³ “What FDR said about the Jews in Private” Los Angeles Times, 13 April 2012.
<https://www.latimes.com/opinion/la-xpm-2013-apr-07-la-oe-medoff-roosevelt-holocaust-20130407-story.html>

Quotes are a way of seeing the true intentions, opinions, and values of people, which is why the essay will look more deeply into quotes by Hitler, Roosevelt, Nixon, and Trump. They are primary sources that show how the leaders actually thought about racism, democracy, and free enterprise. Quotes show that the gulf between American Presidents and the anti-American Adolf Hitler is not that great. The first category was racism, and Hitler did not just kill six million Jews, he could say some incredibly insulting things about them. For example, when he was talking about depraved theater production, sleazy art, and communist politics, he said “And whenever you cut, even cautiously into such an abscess, you find like a maggot in a rotting body, as if dazzled by a sudden light—a Kike!”⁴ Kike is a derogatory term for a Jew and by using this term as a synonym for ‘maggot’, he showed a complete contempt for Jews. It gets way worse than this. His first written comment on Jewish question was on September 16th, 1919 when he stated that Jewish presence was the same as “race-tuberculosis of the peoples,”⁵ He also stated that the “ultimate goal must definitely be the removal of the Jews altogether.” This clearly shows why Hitler deserves a 10 in the rubric. He was a full-fledged racist.

Hitler also received a 10 for being anti-Democratic for clear reasons. As people might already know, Hitler wanted to rule everything by himself. He was a dictator who did not plan to share his power with his people. He even explained democracy in this way: "Democracy is the canal through which bolshevism lets its poisons flow into the separate countries and lets work there long enough for these infections to lead to a crippling of intelligence and of the force of

⁴ William Shirer, *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 26.

⁵ *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, www.ushmm.org/learn/timeline-of-events/before-1933/adolf-hitler-issues-comment-on-the-jewish-question.

resistance."⁶ Here he once again refers to Jews. He believed that democracy was too slow for him, and he wanted things done, fast. This is why he found great appeal in the Socialist State of his, because the pace was faster. He said "The essence of leadership as conceived by the National Socialist State is the capacity to form rapid decisions." Once he summed up his philosophy: "One works best when alone." His words give us the necessary evidence. He was the antithesis of a good democrat and deserves a 10 in that category.

Hitler was not only a racist with anti-democratic orientations. A deeper study of his quotes shows his contempt for free enterprise. He also received a 10 in this category. He despised advertising, and thought that free enterprise sponsored lies and deception. He noted that "Through clever and constant application of propaganda, people can be made to see paradise as hell, and also the other way round, to consider the most wretched sort of life as paradise."⁷

Comparing American Presidents to Hitler is pretty straight forward through quotes and other primary sources of the time such as cartoons. For example it is easy to justify the numbers from the Hitler Rubric that Roosevelt received. They were 4 in racism, 1 in anti-democracy, and 7 in anti-free enterprise. Firstly, Roosevelt strongly promoted putting "dangerous and undesirable aliens or citizens in concentration camps."⁸ In this quote, he was referring to all the Japanese people that were in the United States. Because of Roosevelt's executive order, hundreds of thousands of Japanese people were sent to these concentration camps, including

⁶ "Adolf Hitler's Views and Opinions of Democracy." *Matt Brundage*, www.mattbrundage.com/publications/hitler-and-democracy/.

⁷ "Adolf Hitler Quotes (52 Quotes)." *Goodreads*, Goodreads, www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/adolf-hitler.

⁸ Haltiwanger, John. "Trump Isn't Alone: Here Are Five Racist Quotes from Modern U.S. Presidents." *Newsweek*, 13 Jan. 2018, www.newsweek.com/trump-racist-quotes-modern-us-presidents-780168.

many citizens. In the 1940s, the United States was in a war against Japan, Italy, and Germany but it only rarely put Italian- or German-Americans in concentration camps. The Japanese, however, were sent as a group. This political cartoon below also expresses the same situation about racism and works as a piece of evidence against Roosevelt's score in the rubric.



Figure 3 : Roosevelt implying that the Japanese deserve to be punished.

Secondly, we are able to justify his very low score on Hitler's totalitarian index. Roosevelt was not like Hitler when it comes to the will of being the only dominant strong dictator. Roosevelt really wanted the best for the lives for Americans. His big achievement was the Social Security Act. He also tried hard to end the misery that the Great Depression had brought. He did this through income taxes. He raised them high for the rich, which made them support the poor. According to politico.com, "He knew the ideological threats of communism and fascism were real, and were overtaking democracy in European countries."⁹ He also mentioned that "The liberty of a democracy is not safe if the people tolerate the growth of private

⁹ Canellos, Peter, et al. "What FDR Understood About Socialism That Today's Democrats Don't." *POLITICO Magazine*, 16 Aug. 2019, www.politico.com/magazine/story/2019/08/16/democrats-socialism-fdr-roosevelt-227622.

power to a point where it becomes stronger than the democratic state itself. That in its essence is fascism: ownership of government by an individual, by a group, or any controlling private power.”¹⁰ Roosevelt decided that by assisting people, he was establishing confidence in the American system.

Lastly, Roosevelt received a very high score (7) in being anti-free enterprise, which is pretty similar to Hitler’s score (10). This meant that Roosevelt, just like Hitler, did not believe in the right to pursue business without any government control. One authority notes that, “Roosevelt believed that the government had the right and the responsibility to regulate big business so that its actions did not negatively affect the general public.”¹¹ The big part of him receiving the number 7, comes from the previous quote. Roosevelt believed in government control over businesses but his differences with Hitler explain the reasons behind his belief. Roosevelt was thinking about the general public whereas Hitler only wanted to control everything he could. Roosevelt has even been quoted as saying “Men may differ as to the particular form of governmental activity with respect to industry and business, but nearly all men are agreed that private enterprise in times such as these cannot be left without assistance and without reasonable safeguards lest it destroy not only itself but also our processes of civilization.”¹²

¹⁰ “Franklin D. Roosevelt Quotes (Author of Fireside Chats).” *Goodreads*, Goodreads, www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/219075.Franklin_D_Roosevelt.

¹¹ Milkis, Sidney, et al. “Theodore Roosevelt: Impact and Legacy.” *Miller Center*, 27 Nov. 2017, millercenter.org/president/roosevelt/impact-and-legacy.

¹² *Franklin D. Roosevelt Quotes*, www.notable-quotes.com/r/roosevelt_franklin_d.html.

The next American President in the rubric was Nixon. He received 6 in racism, 7 in anti-democracy, and 6 in anti-free enterprise. These results as well as the previous results from Roosevelt are easily justified by quotes. Nixon had racist comments against Jews, but it does not reach Hitler's level of racism against Jews, which is why he received a 7. Jews were not his only bigoted topic though. His time in the oval office has many recorded conversations where he reveals that he was extremely bigoted against black people and Mexicans as well. Nixon has said that "We're going to [put] more of these little Negro bastards on the welfare rolls at \$2,400 a family—let people like [New York Senator] Pat Moynihan ... believe in all that crap. But I don't believe in it. Work, work—throw 'em off the rolls. That's the key." He also noted: "I have the greatest affection for [blacks], but I know they're not going to make it for 500 years. They aren't. You know it, too. The Mexicans are a different cup of tea. They have a heritage. At the present time they steal, they're dishonest, but they do have some concept of family life. They don't live like a bunch of dogs, which the Negroes do live like."¹³ The same article mentions that he referred to Jews as having a "very aggressive and abrasive and obnoxious personality." All these clearly refer to him being a racist. He deserves a 7. He did not reach the murderous level of Hitler (10) but his thoughts and intentions were still racist.

The next category that President Nixon was graded in was the anti-democratic tendency, and he received a 7. Nixon did many things to manipulate the democratic process even as he technically extolled the democratic system. He would even inflame people to get others to feel that the country needed a strongman leader. Thus rather than winning votes, he tried to win

¹³ Haltiwanger, John. "Trump Isn't Alone: Here Are Five Racist Quotes from Modern U.S. Presidents." *Newsweek*, 13 Jan. 2018, www.newsweek.com/trump-racist-quotes-modern-us-presidents-780168.

through fear. One time, Nixon jumped out of his limo, and told his camera-man to start filming. He gave the protestors a victory sign. As they responded with jeers, and a thrown piece of trash, he got the camera-man to record the way people were attacking him.¹⁴ Nixon never reached Hitler's level (10). For example, he did not burn down the *Reichstag* building or the Capitol, as with Hitler, but he tried to subvert the process in other ways which brought his score up. His CREEP committee, Committee to Reelect the President, that was chronicled in the Watergate hearings, showed other manipulative approaches. CREEP paid men posing as half-nude homosexuals to scream support for his opponent. CREEP got jocks to beat up campus protesters. CREEP found a way to open first-class mail, and plant bugs in psychiatrist offices.



Figure 4: A paper in *Public Choice* shows that President Richard Nixon understood the costs of wage and price controls, but implemented them to secure his re-election in 1972.

¹⁴ History.com Editors. "Watergate Scandal." *History.com*, A&E Television Networks, 29 Oct. 2009, www.history.com/topics/1970s/watergate.

The last category that needs explanation is Nixon's take on free enterprise, where he received a 6. Nixon showed some contempt for free enterprise and capitalism when he imposed wage and price controls in the Economic Stabilization Act of 1971.¹⁵ He had previously described wage and price controls as a Socialist idea. Experts think that he imposed these guidelines in order to get elected in 1972 (Figure 4). Because of trade imbalances due to American reliance on oil, The United States was going off the gold standard, and Nixon was worried.

The last American President in the Hitler Rubric is the current President of the United States, Donald Trump. In the first category, racism, he received an 8, which approaches a similarity with the German dictator himself (10). Trump has a long history with racism even though he will not admit it. And no, his comments have not "slipped out" only a couple of times but in fact, they go way back all the way to the 1970s. Vox, a fast-rising digital media company based in Washington D.C. and New York City, notes: "bigotry is not just political opportunism on Trump's part but a real element of Trump's personality, character, and career."¹⁶ Like the German dictator who showed his contempt for Jews, Gypsies, Poles, and many groups counted as inferior, Trump's racism seems unlimited. He has shown Anti-Muslim, Anti-Hispanic, Anti-African-American, Anti-Chinese, and even Anti-European tendencies. For example, Trump has made very racist and bigoted remarks, calling Mexican immigrants "criminals and rapists." He proposed a ban on all Muslims entering the United States. He has suggested that a judge was

¹⁵ Skarbek, Emily, et al. "Nixon's Wage and Price Controls." *Econlib*, 5 Apr. 2018, www.econlib.org/archives/2016/12/nixons_wage_and.html.

¹⁶ Lopez. "Donald Trump's Long History of Racism, from the 1970s to 2019." *Vox*, Vox, 25 July 2016, www.vox.com/2016/7/25/12270880/donald-trump-racist-racism-history.

biased solely because of his Mexican heritage. A lot of people are also already familiar with the recent twitter “scandal” about congresswomen. He tweeted that these black and brown women are “from countries whose governments are a complete and total catastrophe,” and that they should “go back” to those countries. He even added “you can’t leave fast enough. I’m sure that Nancy Pelosi would be very happy to quickly work out free travel arrangements!”¹⁷ Nixon was at least discreet. Trump cannot seem to refrain from even public racist remarks.

President Trump, ever since elected, has created a kind of media circus. People around the world have multiple questions about him. Is the leader of the oldest democratic nation truly democratic? Here he receives a 7. According to Robert Reich, “Trump is the natural consequence of our anti-democracy decade.”¹⁸ Trump is the kind of leader who suppresses the real issues, and makes himself the issue. He gets personal, and vituperates, instead of helping the democracy to make an informed decision. He is clearly a player, rather than a concerted citizen. He once even said “I give money to everybody, even the Clintons, because that’s how the system works.”¹⁹ By his own words and actions, he shows his contempt for democracy.

Trump also shows anti-free-enterprise tendencies. In this category, he received a 5. Even though Trump does not reach Hitler’s level in attacking free enterprise, there are still some similarities. For example, *The Week* wrote that, “Trump’s threats this week against America’s largest automaker are nothing less than a dangerous political punch at a fundamental aspect of

¹⁷ “Trump to Congresswomen of Colour: Leave the US.” *BBC News*, BBC, 15 July 2019, www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-48982172.

¹⁸ Reich, Robert. “Trump Is the Natural Consequence of Our Anti-Democracy Decade | Robert Reich.” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 8 Dec. 2019, www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/dec/08/donald-trump-citizens-united-anti-democracy-decade.

¹⁹ Prokop, Andrew. “Donald Trump Made One Shockingly Insightful Comment during the First GOP Debate.” *Vox*, Vox, 7 Aug. 2015, www.vox.com/2015/8/6/9114565/donald-trump-debate-money.

America's free enterprise system.”²⁰ Trump does not abide with the market, he tries to control it. The GM boss, Marry Barra let the President know that they were going to cut jobs as well as production, and all he said was "I heard you're closing your plant. It's not going to be closed for long, I hope, Mary, because if it is you have a problem." This incident was followed by another “threat” against free enterprise with the President tweeting that "We are now looking at cutting all @GM subsidies, including for electric cars." We cannot be certain what he meant by this but what we do know is that few of those “subsidies” would have the government's 7,500 thousand income-tax credit for vehicles. This shows clear evidence that Donald Trump’s allegiance is not to capitalism but to himself.

Hitler is the great American villain. He helps therefore to establish what Americans value. One might think that modern American Presidents who have thrived in this same culture of Anti-Hitlerism would be very Anti-Hitler. The Hitler Rubric, which involves a comparison of actions and quotes, however, show that American Presidents have found reasons over the years to embrace many of Hitler’s attitudes, and even emulate some of his actions. How could this be? It seems that whenever there is fear, or difficulty, such as with the possible threat of Japanese sabotage in World War II, the rise of the counterculture in the 1960s, or difficulties with terrorism and immigration in recent years, Presidents are tempted to be like Hitler. Despite the fact that America might be great because of its democratic values, free enterprise, and tolerance, there remains a temptation under certain circumstances to abandon these principles. This is a

²⁰ Pethokoukis, James. “Trump Punches Free Enterprise.” *The Week - All You Need to Know about Everything That Matters*, The Week, 29 Nov. 2018, theweek.com/articles/809784/trump-punches-free-enterprise.

cause to wonder whether America might yet become what it has set out not to be.

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