



**The Adversarial Curse is thoroughly imbedded in our national culture!**

Go to **Strategic Alert #7 America BEFUDDLED** to see full White Paper

Americans are constantly asking the questions:

“What has happened to America?”

“Why are we destroying the very democracy that has given us social freedom and economic prosperity?”

“What can we do to turn around this relentless march into chaos?”

## Matrix for Mass Manipulation

America’s brain is being BEFUDDLED with a constant barrage of attacks, ill-intentioned messaging, and a deluge of disinformation, sowing of doubt and distrust.

“BEFUDDLED” is an acronym (see below next page) for tactics used to exploit our collective angst. This is essentially Hitler/Goebbels NAZI formulation from WWII, which has been updated and made more corrosive.

Intertwined with the BEFUDDLED *strategy* is the PROPAGANDA *methodology* (see below next page). Each of the 9 BEFUDDLED *strategic elements* can then be applied by one or more of the 10 PROPAGANDA *methods*. Using multiple combinations and permutations of the strategic elements and methodologies in ill-intended creative proportions, examples, and amalgamations, the brain of a single person can become riddled with an extraordinarily confusing concoction of brain-confounding information.

Facing this seemingly impossible Rubik’s cube of perplexity, the brain’s pattern recognition system seeks the simplest solution, which is also provided by the Master Manipulator, who labels the opposition’s contradictory answers “fake news.” Beware when anyone gives this overly simplistic answer!

## BEFUDDLED Strategic Elements

**Blame:** Continuously finding fault with others and reveling in scorn, while never accepting responsibility.

**Enemies:** Polarization, casting those who act or think differently as evil-intentioned, conspiring adversaries.

**Fear:** Triggering extreme anxiety that others pose a dangerous threat to my existence and my beliefs.

**Uncertainty:** Causing the perception that nothing is stable, nothing is real, what I dislike must be “fake news.”

**Doubt:** Undermining reality by asking questions designed to shake beliefs about the motives of others.

**Distrust:** Spreading misgivings and casting aspersions for the purpose of creating cynicism and suspicion.

**Lies:** Purposefully spreading disinformation, usually connecting a half-truth with a falsehood.

**Extremism:** Radicalization, multiplication, and amplification to provoke action based on inflaming emotions.

**Discord:** Using these tactics in a manipulative way to benefit one person or group who alone can fix it.

After being hit with a BEFUDDLED barrage like this, your brain is scrambled, which is the exact intent. With this malicious concoction, each of the ingredients reinforces the potency of the others.

## Hitler's Secret 10-Point Propaganda Matrix

To influence thoughts and actions of the German people, Hitler had to raise emotional turmoil to a fever pitch where emotional reaction would override rational thought or ethical reasonableness. This was done by intertwining a matrix of BEFUDDLED tactics with an assortment of labels, slogans, and ready-made judgments:

1. **Half-Truths** – Making a true statement, which is then linked to a lie, which the brain agrees to the first premise, then assume the second premise must also be true.
2. **Name Calling** – giving an idea or person a bad name makes the public reject and condemn without examining the evidence.
3. **Glittering Generality** – association of something with a “virtue word” or a “condemning word” used for the public to accept/approve or reject/doom something without real evidence.
4. **Testimonial** – having someone respected (or hated) say that a given idea, program, or person is good or bad.
5. **Transfer** – carries the authority, sanction, and prestige of something respected or revered over to something else in order to make the latter acceptable; or it carries authority, sanction, and disapproval to cause us to reject and disapprove of something.
6. **Plain Folks** – the method used by a speaker to convince his audience that he and his ideas are good because they are “good for the people” – the common man, just “plain folks.”
7. **Card Stacking** -- selectively presenting facts or falsehoods, illustrations or distortions, and logical and/or illogical statements in order to give the best or worst possible case for an idea, program, person, or product.
8. **Smearing & Slander** – making false accusations designed to evoke a passionate reaction with the intent of polarizing opinion.
9. **Band Wagon** – using the theme “everybody – at least all of us – is doing it;” thereby the propagandist attempts to convince the public that all members of a group, to which we belong, are accepting his program and we must therefore follow *our* crowd.
10. **DARVO** – Deny, Attack, Reverse Victim & Offender, respond to all criticism vociferously, never yielding to the opposition, never admitting immoral thought or action.

## STRATEGIC ALERT

What's most disconcerting is that the BEFUDDLED tactics are now firmly engrained in our culture – they've become normal habits.

The reason why the BEFUDDLED tactics work now, but were thwarted in other times, is because the culture is cracking, becoming far more fragile: *adversarial* and *transactional*, while scorning those who attempt to be *collaborative bridge builders*. That's why Congress is so deadlocked, and bipartisanship so scarce.

*Hitler Codified the Modern Manipulation Game*: It's important to understand Hitler's game book, because it is being used in the 21<sup>st</sup> century – on steroids.

To be effective Hitler calculated he had to take advantage of specific weaknesses, vulnerabilities, and points of contention in German society. He knew an effective propaganda machine must be highly scientific in nature, using established formulae and methodology (today these are called algorithms, fueled by advanced computer technology), analyze interpersonal and psychological conditions, control its use, measure its results, and define its impact.

### *America's Political Game Schemers*

Certainly, reading the list on the sidebar: *Hitler's Secret Propaganda Sauce*, one can see politicians using his play-card today. This political manipulation began with Newt Gingrich in the 1980's. Astute and cunning, he polarized and vilified people playing Americans off against each other, for his party's political benefit, believing human nature is that of the beast -- Darwinian<sup>1</sup> "dog-eat-dog" – attack first and relentlessly:

*"It's not viciousness. It's natural." "The No. 1 fact about the news media is they love fights ... When you give them confrontations, you get attention; when you get attention, you can educate."*<sup>2</sup>

Taking cues from Hitler, Gingrich engineered a combative strategy of polarizing partisanship, with the deliberate intent to infect the staid but civilized status quo Republicans with his firebrand style of adversarial, divide-and-conquer skullduggery. Instead of condemning Newt's dark crusade, Republican strategists reveled in the glory of new-found power in the form of "principled obstructionism." Mitch McConnell joyously proclaimed obstructionism of any Democrat's initiative "gives gridlock a good name."

Polarizing Partisanship aims at obstructionism to diminish the other side embracing *no vision, nor values, nor valor, thus no future*. It has become a means of overturning the delicate system of Madisonian checks and balances leading egregious abuse of power. Now everyone with access to Twitter and Facebook (now Meta) can be part of the blood sport.

**All Americans should be deeply alarmed that Hitler's Evil Propaganda Strategy is now thoroughly imbedded in our national culture!**

The biggest vulnerability has been the *continuous erosion of trust in our institutions for the last fifty years*. (see <https://iclinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Trust-in-Institutions-Youth-2019-Short-Version.pdf>)

Distrust is like Termite Invasions, silently but steadfastly undermining the structure of the Institutions that support civilization itself. Distrust is the spawning ground for authoritarian leaders.

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<sup>1</sup>The thesis for Darwin's first book – *Origin of the Species* (1849), a theory of evolution, was intended principally for plants and animals, not humans. When he realized his book was being interpreted as a "survival of the fittest" handbook for destroying humanity, he wrote a sequel – *The Decent of Man* (1871) – in which he concluded the creation of *collaborative cultures* propelled rapid human development. (see :[The Great Darwin Hoax](#))

<sup>2</sup> Quotes from [Atlantic Monthly](#) & [Mother Jones](#)

## STRATEGIC ALERT

### *Culture by Chance or Design?*

Culture is the prime determinant of human behavior because it uses peer influence to transmit the values, learnings, spirit, adversity responses, norms, rewards and punishments to the next generation.

Most leaders focus their attention on daily pressures and reacting to urgent problems that need solving, with no time left to think much about architecting their culture – leaving it to sway unguided in the wind..

### *Choosing Between the Three Archetypes*

Consider the 3000 year “perpetual maelstrom” that has plagued modern civilization, whipsawed primarily between the *adversarial* and *transactional* modes, leaving countries, communities, families, and people dead and impoverished. We haven’t come to grips with the Three Archetypes of human and cultural behavior that are hard-wired into our psyche, we know that excellent leadership can bring out the best (collaborative behavior) in humans and poor leadership can trigger the worst.

### *Trust as Central Organizing Principle*

In organizations, including simple teams, and ranging to complex global enterprises and alliances and eco-systems, where collaboration is the fundamental driver of success, *trust must be the central organizing principle*.

Without trust, organizational structure is inherently devalued and diminished, while transaction costs escalate and non-value-added work spirals out of control.

Trust is the foundational cornerstone of all collaborative enterprise because it supports Fasttime, Teamwork (internal & external), Innovation, Value Creation, and Management of Complexity.

Trust is long to create and short to destroy. Great leaders are constantly monitoring the levels of trust in their organizations, and careful to choose new managers and employees who commit to the centrality of trust. Likewise, they are fast to discipline those who will transgress trusts sacred boundaries.

### **Strategies to Combat Being BEFUDDLED**

- ✓ **Exposure:** A ruthless gambit exposed is no longer effective.
- ✓ **Outrage:** What’s more, no one likes to be duped and manipulated.
- ✓ **Centrist Neutralization:** A large proportion of the electorate are “Independents” -- centrists who deplore “obstructionists” and want bipartisan governance.
- ✓ **Monetary Starvation:** Don’t donate to politicians entrenched in BEFUDDLED games
- ✓ **Character Counts!** In the end, *our democracy is fundamentally dependent upon good character. Vote for the man or woman with the best character.*
- ✓ **Say NO!** When someone wants you do so something polarizing, resist.
- ✓ **Take the High Road:** Don’t wallow in the dirt and dung of name calling.
- ✓ **Listen:** Give people a chance to air their grievances to understand the angst.
- ✓ **Ask Questions:** *Convincing a person against their will leaves them a doubter still.*
- ✓ **Create a Covenant of Collaboration:** (see [\*Covenant of Cooperation\*](#) for an example.
- ✓ **Check Your Facts:** Don’t pass along emails or tweets without checking their veracity.
- ✓ **Be Articulate:** Don’t be afraid to voice your opinion: focus on Principles, not Personalities.

## ***Institutional Cultural “Arrows”***

There are six highly influential institutions that could make a massive difference if they could be persuaded to *shift paradigms*: business, education, government, media, law, and religion. These constitute the major cultural “arrows” that must guide us to greater heights, out of the abyss and away from the paths to perdition.

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*We must never let our emotional triggers be our sentinels for rationality and ethics, lest we surrender the dignity of our human spirit.*

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## **Trust as a Central Organizing Principle**

Many of the older generation still remember a childhood where *Trust was a Central Organizing Principle of social order*. We didn’t think about locking our doors at night, or making our schools armed fortresses. We were optimistic about our future. Today’s children have far more fearful expectations.

## ***Required Sea-Change Shift in Leadership & Culture***

Truly great revolutions in world history have not been fought on the battlefield. Foremost, they have been *revelations in the mind and heart*; first conceived by a handful of people, who, together, see, believe, and are committed to a higher order for civilization and humankind.

### *Leadership is the Primary Lever for Change*

Given the current state of affairs, it is unlikely these inspired leaders will come from Academia. Their professional schools are simply not embracing a Collaborative Shift. Nor will the shift likely start with Law, Politics, Religion, or the Media.

Creating a vibrant “centre” around Collaborative Excellence is the inspiring future of leadership.

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*Great Civilizations embark on a continuous journey to bring out the best in humanity – our ability to collaborate, create beauty, find truth, innovate, and inspire wisdom –*

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Together we must begin establishing a “Centre of Gravity” for our age – a centre that elevates the standard of excellence of humanity rebalancing and realigning civilization’s floundering ship, preventing it from capsizing in storms of disillusionment and adversity, BEFUDDLED as it sinks.

The rise of the Authoritarians is not to be taken lightly. Their reemergence is a danger to every democracy on the planet. Authoritarians exploit the fault line of distrust in institutions, sowing fear, uncertainty, discord, and divisiveness. (see: [Beware the Authoritarian Dark Triad](#))

Unless our democracies shore up the leadership of our cherished institutions, Authoritarianism will continue to grow, and its prosperity will become civilization’s poverty.

## ***Call for Action***

Time is dangerously short. Many of our cherished institutions are suffering and on the verge of disintegration. People are losing their faith in democracy itself; this means people have lost faith in its leaders.

Take a stand for Collaborative Excellence.