

ENGLISH: *PARADISE ROAD*

The way in which we respond to conflict determines if it can be resolved

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The Battle of Reaction

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American journalist AG explores the two reactions which shape the outcome of antagonism. The constructive vs. the destructive.

Whether it is our own global dominance, our \$687 billion military expenditure or even a sheer sense of arrogance, not always will factual supremacy equate to physical. It is not only our almighty homeland that suffers this egotistical view, in fact many western countries take part in wars, invasions and even arguments in a destructive manner that is mirrored in its outcome. Past and present, numerous events exemplify the underlying links between response and resolution, or lack of, in particular, mistakes we as a country have made.

Against the backdrop of a pervasive communist threat in the 1960's, the US' 'superpower' status shaped its decision to attempt to wipe out the communist influence that permeated through South-East Asia and most particularly threatened Vietnam. The clash that stemmed from the roots of the Cold War between our capitalist nation and the Soviet Union's communism had filled with such tension that we only saw it fit to attempt to destroy such an ideology, especially given China's rise under Mao Zedong. From the very beginning, the arrogant and therefore imprudent plan to utterly obliterate the threatened North Vietnam through heavy bombardment became a catalyst in the subsequent massacre and stalemate that unfolded. With Ronald Reagan announcing "We should declare war on North Vietnam. We could pave the whole country and put parking strips on it, and still be home by Christmas", the only option was to not only win, but seemingly annihilate any Communist opposition. This misplaced mindset was highlighted in the most bitter light as the Viet Cong's strategic guerrilla warfare countered our far superior weaponry using a series of ambushes, intricate booby traps, and a complex network of underground tunnels. Overconfident and destructive in our reaction to the threat of Communism, the loss of 58,000 US lives and millions of innocent Vietnamese highlights the detrimental effects of brutal antagonism and arrogance as the eventual resolution in 1975 barely halted the ongoing clash between Communist and Capitalist states.

More recently, the conflict that has arisen between densely populated Islamic nations and the US has also seen glimpses of the naïve and omnipresent western egotism that seems to inevitably dictate the negative outcome of such clashes. Destroying not only lives and the economy but our confidence and security too, the September 11 attacks on the twin towers became the source of an ongoing battle between namely Al Qaeda and the Taliban against US forces. Belligerently acting on instinct, we entered Afghanistan and quickly took power from the Taliban and captured major cities including Baghdad in false hope that it would end there. How we were wrong! \$655 billion and 100,000 soldiers in Afghanistan in 2011 highlighted the miss-calculated response to the war on terror. George W Bush's comment in his speech on the war on terror in September 2001 encapsulates the inappropriateness of our instinct reaction stating; "Our grief has turned to anger and anger to resolution. Whether we bring our enemies to justice or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done." We acted out of fury, with the only way we know how... overwhelming military force. However, not only has this conflict not ended, evident by the 63,000 US troops still in Afghanistan, it has been exacerbated with caliphates of Al Qaeda more angry at the attempt to inject western influence where it isn't wanted. Terrorist activity aimed at killing westerners has become prominent since 2001 with the Bali bombings, London transport bombings and recent Boston bombings acting as evidence to support the influence our initial response has on reaching a seemingly impossible outcome.

It is not only us who regrettably act on instinct but other countries too, responding to conflict in a damaging manner that seems to govern the outcome, if there is one. Amidst the devastation of World War II, it was the ruthless treatment by Japanese forces in reaction to a perceived inferiority complex that saw increased hostility and tension with its European opposition. A circulating stereotype of the feeble and timid Asian country was the catalyst for an assertion of authority that exacerbated the previously existing antagonism. In an attempt to establish themselves as a threatening and vicious opposition, the Japanese became renowned for their brutal treatment of enemies as seen in the Banka Island Massacre of 1942. After being bombed by Japanese planes, the small coastal steamer Vynner Brooke, which carried non-combatants with protected status from involvement in war, sunk, in turn forcing passengers to paddle life boats to the shore of Banka Island. With a legal right to be unharmed and cared for, Japanese forces took the opportunity to declare their power, ordering the 23 nurses to turn around and walk into the ocean. Mercilessly, the Japanese opened fire, massacring the innocuous women and subsequently intensifying the already strained relationship between Japanese and British forces. Such callous actions became a feature of the Japanese army as the experiences of English missionary Margaret Drummond and Australian nurse Betty Jeffery revealed the extent of laborious torture and physical demise that enemies of the Japanese became victimised to. Sleeping on a concrete slab side by side and having water available from a single, slow-dripping tap were some of the HARSH conditions particularly Betty wrote about. While the Japanese did destroy their weak stereotype, the treatment of prisoners of war proved to have a detrimental effect on outcome post war. Not only losing the war, but their dignity too, the pitiless reaction of the Japanese proved to dictate the outcome of the War, as US forces became motivated by shock and horror and subsequently invaded Japan and took control by August 1945.

Countless instinctual reactions both and present have allowed us, and the global community to realise the repercussions of initial actions. The undeniable link between the start and beginning of a conflict exemplifies the importance of long-term planning, as it will undoubtedly shape the outcome of any form of antagonism.