

HITLER & PUTIN: A CAUTIONARY TALE

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ABSTRACT

Adolph Hitler and Vladimir Putin are just two political leaders who have utilized the power of propaganda in order to benefit their career ambitions. Others such as Kim Jong-un and Donald Trump have also built an almost cult following behind them of supporters who can, in some cases, wind up committing brutal acts of terror under their leadership, like the SS officers who worked in Hitler's concentration camps. This paper analyzes the methods in which Putin and Hitler came to power and provides insight on other leaders whose actions allow me to draw parallels between them and Hitler. The aim of this paper is not to say that Putin is the next Hitler, but rather to synthesize and draw parallels between political leaders through the commonalities in their employed propagandas and to show that danger can sometimes lurk in the shadows. What I have found in committing to this thesis is that there are almost endless similarities between powerful men and women and Hitler, which has led me to decide that this will be the first draft of what will end up being a more comprehensive work including more political figures and groups such as ISIS. My intention is that this cautionary tale can be appreciated by the public as a written work that will force readers to think more critically about the information they get from their media sources. I also offer this thesis as a prime example for why we should always remember our history because if we don't, we will inevitably repeat it.

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Part One - Introduction

There is much to say about the state of a society and the level of functionality at which it operates. The last hundred or so years have seen the transformation of many societies on account of dysfunctionality and this clearly persists in the modern day. If we look at the Soviet Union, its Communist ideals set the country back in terms of functionality when those in power were unable to run the country in ways that benefited the society as a whole. The lost sense of prominence on the world stage after its demise proved energizing for Vladimir Putin, as those who remember the days when their country was a global superpower now backed his anti-Western mantra and supported his recent acquisition of Crimea.

The Nazi party, similarly, was unable to provide its citizens with a secure foundation on which functionality would flourish. The Third Reich thrived under systems founded in dysfunctionality and with its use of a secret police force and labor/death camps, we can see how just like the Soviet Union, it was destined to fail. Adolph Hitler was one of the most commanding leaders in history, but he was only able to do this as a result of having the German people on his side. Every great leader must have the backing of the people. Without it, they would not be as effective as they would like and history would not remember them so vividly. Vladimir Putin and Adolph Hitler were both able to amass a large following and this enabled them to take part in highly controversial foreign policy decisions.

It is clear that to be a successful and respected political leader, one must be able to muster up the courage to confront the naysayers and to be a confident and strong figure in

order for ordinary citizens to feel safe under their guidance. Leaders throughout the span of time have known this and have devised ways to best capture the minds and hearts of their people. By comparing Vladimir Putin to Adolph Hitler with regards to propaganda and nationalism, it must be noted that in understanding Hitler's past and drawing its parallels to Putin, we can see how they both used propaganda to spin their messages in order to build nationalism. What the Nazis were able to accomplish was, in many ways, unprecedented and changed the political game. The ways in which Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's Minister of Propaganda, was able to tailor the Nazi ideology and maximize its scope to the masses included using tactics that many world leaders, even American leaders, have used and are currently utilizing.

As I go about dissecting the roles of both Hitler and Putin and pointing out the similarities between the two, I must emphasize that this is not meant to be a pure foreshadowing of where Putin's ambitions may lead. Hitler despised a distinct group of people, the Jews, and vowed for their removal from German society from the start. His anti-Semitic rhetoric went so far as to result in the deaths of millions of innocent lives and it would be a mistake to compare or predict this kind of cruelty as the motivation of the current Russian president. Although he may have passed laws that amount to human rights abuses, like those outlawing homosexuality, we cannot assume that Putin intends to perpetrate similarly egregious acts as those of Hitler did during his years as leader of Nazi Germany.

But how does one attain the backing of the people? How have these leaders, specifically, been able to generate such a fan following that has transformed the political landscape? Hitler's rise to power and domination over Nazi Germany and Putin's climb

to state control and his unmistakable grip on present-day Russia came about as a result of carefully maneuvered tactics that were employed by both men and those who worked alongside them, through the control of propaganda. When we begin to understand the means by which they attained and held such power, we can begin to draw parallels between the two.

These parallels, however striking they may be, do not just link Putin to the late Fuhrer, but also many other leaders. I believe as readers contemplate the similarities between their employed propagandas to raise nationalism within their borders and even beyond them, they will see just how similar many of our respected and well-known leaders today can be scrutinized in the same light. I chose to write about these two leaders, specifically, because the United States' media has a way of portraying Russia as this awful state run by a madman. So why not compare him to a real madman and not only that, but also draw parallels that would make many think about leaders they know well, like our own presidents, current and past, and leaders of other first world nations. This should serve as a reminder to remember that propaganda is a tool used by virtually all governments, including our own. Let us not fall victim to the messages spinning through our media outlets, even from our own government and more importantly, let us all remember the events of our past so we may not repeat them in the future.

Part Two - Adolph Hitler

“In the light of such consensus, it would appear that one of the most important factors contributing to the Nazis’ rise to power was the cumulative effect of their propaganda...”(Welch, D. 1993:10).

As we look back at humanity’s past, one of the most detestable figures that we recall is Adolph Hitler. He and his legion of German worshippers threatened the world with their anti-Semitic beliefs and heartless treatment of those they deemed inferior. Hitler would not have been able to become who he was if it wasn’t for both the state of the German society when he attained power and for the men and women who contributed to his rise. Even as all this hatred permeated throughout Nazi Germany, we must remember that the only reason this man had so much authority was because his people *adored* him, and he used force to make this certain.

Overwhelming and almost unwavering support on the part of the German people wasn’t an easy feat to secure. It took skill, dedication, and a certain kind of genius in order to bring the Nazi party from the streets of Berlin to the halls of the Reichstag, the former home of the German parliament. It also took the mind of Joseph Goebbels, Hitler’s Minister of Propaganda. From there, the Nazis rallied support from the masses and became a powerful force to be reckoned with.

The German economy post WWI was in tatters, leaving many in the country dissatisfied and in search of a leader that could provide them with the assurances of economic and social improvement. President Hindenburg had been popular with the German people, as he brought a sense of old wisdom to the position of state leader. “Hindenburg, as a figurehead, represented stability” (Manvell & Fraenkel 1973:88). This

was a time where the German people were struggling to make ends meet and with soaring unemployment reaching around nine million, everyone felt the effect. “People all over Germany were desperate for money with which to feed, clothe and house their families. Consequently, it is estimated that German unemployment affected over 20 million people” (“Effects of the Crash,” 2011).

The year 1930 signaled a great turning point in Hitler’s quest for becoming Chancellor of Germany. This isn’t to say that events prior to 1930 weren’t as important, however before 1929 Hitler and Goebbels’ “...instruments of mass communication which are commonly associated with authoritarian police states – mass-circulation press, radio, film and television – were largely absent from the Nazis’ initial rise to prominence”(Welch, D. 1993:12). During the next few years, Hitler would watch his reach stretch from just under a million electors, to around 13 million electors between 1928 and 1930 (Welch, D. 1993:9).

One of Hitler’s closest men, Hermann Goering, was president of the Reichstag and worked to assist Hitler in his rise to power, beginning with supporting his wish of securing the position of Chancellor. As Hitler competed with others for the appointment of the Chancellorship, the position of Vice-Chancellor was offered to him, much to his dismay. “Hitler could become any number of things, but never a Vice”, said Goering (Manvell & Fraenkel 1973: 90). The position of Vice-Chancellor was like a slap in the face for Hitler and he refused to take on any position that was less than what he believed he deserved. A hard fought campaign by him and his men, especially Goebbels, began. “The formidable armoury of Nazi propaganda came into play during the two presidential election campaigns in 1932, when Hitler competed for the highest stakes yet of his

political career...Nazis ran some 34,000 public meetings during the first campaign...distributed 8,000,000 pamphlets and printed large editions of the party newspapers...striking colored posters hammered election slogans home” (Zeman 1973: 30). Meetings, pamphlets, newspapers, radio broadcasts, posters – they thought of everything.

During this campaign, the Nazis vehemently attempted to win Hitler the seat of Chancellor. They pushed hard to get as much press out to the masses about the ailments of Germany and its connection to the Jews. The application of propaganda doesn't just revolve around changing people's minds and fooling them into absorbing what you want them to take in. It is most effective when propaganda appeals to the needs and wants of the people and plays on the emotions of fear and anger. This, along with twisting words and mixing it with preferred material is what powerful propaganda is all about.

“There is now considerable evidence to suggest that Nazi policies and propaganda reflected (many of) the aspirations of large sections of the population...the success of propaganda should not be measured purely in terms of its ability radically to change opinions and attitudes. Propaganda is as much about confirming as about converting public opinion”
(Welch, D. 1993:9).

The puppet masters of the Nazi movement were savvy enough to understand that if they were going to make Hitler Chancellor, they had to capture the people and naturally, the best way to do that is to appeal to their desires. What did the people of Germany in the late 1920's and early 1930's want? The awful state of the German economy saw many people facing hunger, homelessness, and poverty. The people needed jobs that paid decent wages. They needed food, warm homes, good schools, and programs for their kids. Most of all, they needed a strong leader to not only bring them

out of this economic and social Depression, but to offer them a real sense of national and personal pride.

All of the hard work the Nazis invested throughout Hitler's campaign proved fruitful when Hindenburg provided him with the position of Chancellor. In his diary, Goebbels mentions, "Hitler emerged from the President's office after his appointment...He says nothing, and we all remain silent...His eyes are full of tears. It has come. The leader is appointed Chancellor...Germany is at a turning point in her history" (Manvell & Fraenkel 1973: 96). At this turning point, both German and world history would never again be the same.

Part Three - Vladimir Putin

“...President Vladimir Putin’s approval ratings...hit an all-time high of 89 percent” (Birnbaum, M. from The Washington Post, June 24, 2015).

At this moment, President Vladimir Putin of Russia earns approval ratings figures that would make any politician envious. With an almost 90% approval rating in an opinion poll taken by the Levada Center in Moscow, Putin is riding high with most Russians appearing to be in support of his policies. He is the leader of one of the world’s most powerful nations and it is no surprise he is at least attempting to reclaim some of the lost sense of prominence his country has had to deal with since the fall of the Berlin Wall. To some, Putin’s Russia has seen a decline on the world stage, however this has not halted their aggressive participation in the fight against ISIS in Syria and their military tactics in Ukraine.

The decisions made and that are currently being made by the Russian government have been directed and orchestrated by the president of the country. The buck stops with him, as the saying goes, and this is an important point to note because it calls into question the legitimacy of the Russian “democracy”. Some have characterized the Russian government as being more fascist than democratic and certainly an argument can be made for that.

The slightly strange form of capitalism that dominates Russia’s post-Communist society is one that provides the government massive amounts of power over key industries. From energy to defense to manufacturing, the states’ influence is omnipresent and those who control these industries constitute a small yet incredibly wealthy group of

men. The inner circle of Russia's elite has remained relatively small since the 1990's. It was out of great networking and sheer luck that Putin found himself amongst this group just a few years after the end of the Soviet Union.

Putin worked in the KGB, essentially the Russian version of the CIA, during the late 1980's but after the fall of the Berlin Wall, he was sent to work at Leningrad State University under the direction of Anatoly Sobchak, a law professor. Sobchak became mayor of the city and Putin continued to work with him as his deputy. But after Sobchak lost his reelection campaign, Putin was no longer employed. One of the men who also worked with Sobchak was Alexei Kudrin who became the deputy chief of staff to the Russian President, Boris Yeltsin. With this connection, Putin was able to land positions within Yeltsin's administration and even received the position of head of the FSB (Federal Security Service) in 1998, the succeeding organization of the KGB. "The following year [Yeltsin] appointed him first acting prime minister of the Russian Federation and then acting president. So the simplest answer to the question of how Putin came to power is that he was selected" (Kotkin, 2015).

Selected, appointed, chosen by divine right – whatever way it may be expressed, there's no doubt Putin was provided with the chance of a lifetime. He was to become the Russian president at a critical juncture during an age of increased jihadi terrorism. The early 2000's in Russia were characterized by a heightened sense of urgency to address the Chechen terrorist threat. These rebels were made responsible for the bombing of a Moscow apartment in September of 1999, which has been viewed by many as an inside job with Russian authorities having been complicit in these attacks (Knight, A. 2012).

Controversy around those involved in the orchestration of this attack should not detract from the fact that this bombing was to be the perfect media story to provide Putin the legitimacy he needed to assert his presidential ambitions.

In the election of 2000, Putin received the majority of votes needed for him to become elected president and avoid a runoff. “Putin secured victory in the March 2000 presidential election through control of the country’s main television station, Channel One, ruthless manipulation of the Chechen terrorist threat, and access to all the perks of incumbency” (Kotkin, 2015). Big television networks in Russia such as NTV and Russia Today have, in some fashion, a connection to the president. For example, Russia Today was actually funded by Putin and he took it from having a \$30 million to a \$300 million budget. The BBC, in comparison, during the 2014-2015 year had a budget of about \$376 million (Shuster, S. 2015: 46).

The people of the Russian Federation, after having voted for their new president, enjoyed a time of economic prosperity that brought with it a new middle class. The economy during the late ‘90’s was bleak in Russia, but Putin would claim credit for turning this around while his presidency began to thrive. “From 1999 through 2008, Russia’s economy grew at a brisk seven percent annually, doubling its GDP in ruble terms. A new middle class was born, some 30 million strong...unemployment dropped from 12.9 percent to 6.3 percent, and the poverty rate fell from 20 percent to 13 percent” (Kotkin, 2015).

Russia’s economic rise was impressive but Putin is not solely responsible for it. The price of oil rose dramatically during Putin’s first terms in office, and as oil is one of the federation’s largest industries, this inherently led to a surge of the Russian economy.

“Russia is the world’s number two oil producer and number one natural gas producer, and global prices for oil quintupled between 2002 and 2008. Oil and gas accounted for 61% of Russia’s export earnings in 2005 (World Bank 2006), with the value of exports tripling from \$76 billion in 1999 to \$241 billion in 2005” (Rutland, P. 1051: 2008).

Recently, the economic situation in Russia has worsened, as the nation has been stifled with sanctions by U.S. led coalition powers as a result of Putin’s actions in Ukraine, largely viewed as violations of international law. The Russian currency has become devalued following a dramatic drop in oil prices thereby instilling panic in the nation’s energy sector. This economic shift has yielded minimal impact, however, with regards to how Russians feel about their leader and about their country. Even in a dismal economy, Russians still feel they can trust their president.

The former Soviet Union’s prominence in the sphere of professional sports has also been damaged. During the Sochi Olympics, we witnessed the many fans and supporters of Russian athletes exuding pride for their nation’s top performers in the field of winter sports. Recently, revelations of and allegations about a state-run athletic-doping program have overshadowed nationalistic sentiment and have potentially threatened Russian participation in the 2016 Rio Olympic games. The New York Times ran a piece exposing the findings of an investigation ran by the World Anti-Doping Agency.

“Members of Russia’s secret service intimidated workers at a drug-testing lab to cover up top athletes’ positive results. They impersonated lab engineers during the Winter Olympics in Sochi last year. A lab once destroyed more than 1,400 samples. Athletes adopted false identities to avoid unexpected testing. Some paid to make doping violations disappear. Others bribed the anti-doping authorities to ensure favorable results, and top sports officials routinely submitted bogus urine samples for athletes who were doping”(Ruiz, R. 2015).

Just as the decision about whether to allow Russian athletes' participation in the next Olympic games is questionable, so too is the future of Russia. What is not debatable is the importance propaganda serves for Putin as he continues as president of the federation. Whether it is his compelling speech this year at the U.N. in New York or his forceful demeanor when questioned about his response to the Turkish downing of a Russian fighter jet, what is clear is Putin will do all he can to show the world his resolve not to appear weak and his commitment to upholding Russian strength.

Part Four - Drawing Parallels

It is striking that these men who have led and lead countries with such strong influential histories are both, simply put, men. As towering as their personas may be, they are made of the same organic compounds that we are all made of. Yet, out of persistence, strength, courage, connections, and luck, they found themselves the subjects of countless articles and books detailing everything from their personal lives to their roles as political leaders. They were and are loved by their citizens; Hitler famously held massive rallies where Germans flocked to see their Fuhrer. Putin enjoys approval ratings above 80% and by having the overwhelming support of his people, as did Hitler, he is able to make controversial foreign policy decisions such as the annexation of Crimea and becoming involved in the Middle East without having his citizenry turn against him.

As Goebbels and Hitler used films and blasted speeches from vans across Germany in order to raise nationalism and German pride, Russia uses the powerful network RT, formerly Russia Today, as their propaganda weapon. Putin himself characterized the use of RT as "...a formidable weapon enabling the manipulation of public opinion" (Shuster, 2015). As a powerful propaganda tool, the network alters world events in order to unify the Russian people.

The role media plays cannot be underestimated as it has the ability to curb public perception, as it did in the 1930's and 1940's in Nazi Germany and as it does today in Russia. Nazi Germany saw a dramatic rise in nationalism and also saw a rise in anti-Semitism, which was brought about by the intricate propaganda Hitler and Goebbels developed in order to support their ambitions. Putin has also been able to use propaganda

to twist public opinion flooding financial resources into RT and broadcasting the station “...in a variety of languages – including English, Spanish and Arabic – to the potential audience of 700 million people that RT claims to reach in more than 100 countries” (Shuster, 2015). This strategy is indeed a communications game changer. The advancement of technology allows Putin to not only shape the opinions of those within his country’s borders, but also of those living around the globe that decide to tune in. Russians who move to other countries can find the RT station and continue to be tuned in to the words being broadcast only through the approval of the Kremlin, Russia’s governing body.

Hitler was, akin to a well-advertised product, marketed to be a strong and charismatic leader who best fit the ideal of a good and powerful German. The way he dressed and how he carried himself were part of the scheme devised to promote Nazi beliefs and ideals to the masses and people were seduced by his image. He seemed like the epitome of what a man should be and had a charm about him that women adored. Similarly, Putin has a media portrayed image of himself meant to evoke manliness, toughness and a macho attitude. “Putin favors stylish black clothing that connotes toughness and seriousness...Putin likes being photographed in the presence of weapons and other instruments of war...Putin likes to show off his presumed physical prowess” (Motyl, 2007).

Returning Russia to prominence as a global superpower is at the heart of what Putin is trying to build. It is clear his intentions are to free his country from the grip of Western powers and to restore Russian pride and worldly influence. Instead of the United States driving world events, Putin wants Russia to take control of the steering wheel. This

is another parallel from Putin to Hitler, who also felt Western powers infringed on his ability to be an effective leader. “He put prior blame for the annihilation of Germany on Churchill, who, because Britain was dominated by Jews, refused to free Germany to make war on the prime enemy of all, the Soviet Union” (Manvell & Fraenkel, 1973).

The parallels between these two charismatic leaders can become pretty extensive when you include the entirety of their political careers. Time Magazine named both Putin and Hitler “Person of the Year” in their respective lifetimes. The Olympics played large roles in boosting both the images of Nazi Germany in 1936 in Berlin and that of Russia in 2014 in Sochi. Both leaders have engaged in the occupation of bordering nations, or portions of nations, such as Hitler’s seizure of the Sudetenland and Putin’s accumulation of the Ukrainian Crimea region. The way that Hitler and Putin each occupied their respective territories were similar in that they both employed the use of a referendum to get those on the ground to vote on if they wanted to join their nation. Both leaders made speeches after successfully gaining the lands they sought, and it is no surprise that there are similarities to be found in those too.

“THE uncompromising autocrat got to his feet and made a bombastic speech as he seized a part of a neighboring state dominated by his own countrymen. It came in the midst of a referendum condemned by other powers as a sham, with voters intimidated by the autocrat's looming tanks. The move was greeted with delirious pleasure by his own citizens but seen as a portent of international strife by other Western countries. The despot in question is not Vladimir Putin but Adolf Hitler. The occasion was not the annexation of Crimea but the Nazi seizure of the Sudetenland, the German-speaking part of Czechoslovakia. Putin, who spoke to the Russian parliament yesterday, appears to have stolen many of the themes of his speech from the Fuhrer's address to the Reichstag as he seized the Sudetenland in October 1938. Putin said Crimea had always been Russian: In people's hearts and minds, Crimea has always been an integral part of Russia.' Hitler said of the Sudetenland: The Sudeten German population was and is a German.' Putin insisted he would fight for Russians everywhere. Hitler's imagery was also emotive. More than 1,000,000 people of German blood had in the years 1919-1920 to leave their homeland.' Putin criticized Western nations, and Hitler complained that his

efforts to reach out to the West were rebuffed. Putin said Russia would retaliate against Western sanctions. Hitler said: As a National Socialist, I am accustomed to strike back at an attacker.' Putin claimed he would not invade other parts of Eastern Ukraine if Russia was allowed to exercise influence: Don't believe those who try to frighten you with Russia and who scream that other (Ukrainian) regions will follow after Crimea. We do not want a partition of Ukraine.' Hitler also claimed that his ambitions would stop at the Sudetenland. I have declared that the frontier between France and Germany is a final one. Germany has no interests in the West.' Five months later, he invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia; 14 months after that, he invaded France.”
 (“Echoes of Hitler’s 1938 Speech,” 2014).

I do not believe it would be fair to make these connections if I didn’t also offer a bit of contrast by introducing some famous figures that also have similarities to Hitler. President Roosevelt in 1942 “signed an executive order in February 1942 ordering the relocation of all Americans of Japanese ancestry concentration camps in the interior of the United States” (ushistory.org, 2015). The relocation of the Japanese in America is all too reminiscent of Hitler’s removal of the Jews in Nazi Germany. Fast-forward to 2015 and we can see glimpses of a desire to revert back to this way of thinking with the policy proposals made by Republican presidential candidate, Donald J. Trump.

As a way to think critically over the power of propaganda and how it can sway public perception and raise nationalism, today this is being played out perfectly by Trump in his pursuit to “Make America Great Again”. With that being his campaign slogan and the presidential campaign coverage by media outlets working to his benefit, he has been able to maintain a significant lead in the race. A recent poll by Washington Post/ABC News showed Trump leading the pack with 38% support and Senator Ted Cruz in second at 15% (Balz, D. & Clement, S. 2015). He is able to have so much support in large part because, like Hitler and Putin, his face and message is spread around the country through the assistance of media companies like NBC, CBS, and ABC.

“According to the Tyndall, Report, which tracks the airtime that the various flagship programs on NBC, CBS, and ABC dedicate to a variety of stories, the 2016 election has received 857 minutes of combined coverage, through Nov. 30. Republican frontrunner Donald Trump, unsurprisingly, is the most-covered candidate in the race. In fact, he alone has gotten more airtime (234 minutes) than the entire Democratic field (226 minutes)”
(Borchers, C. 2015).

His methodology involves getting his supporters see him as the candidate who will ‘take the country back’ and the way he does this is through playing on the fears of Americans. With wars in the Middle East and terrorist attacks by Islamic extremists in western countries, Trump is able to generate anti-Muslim fanfare by turning the fears of the American voter into anger toward the Muslim community. Ever since our country’s inception there has always been an element of racial discourse in our society that has had two very strong opposing sides. The era of segregation in the American south is but one historical example of how racial differences led to the devaluation of people of color.

George Wallace, governor of Alabama, became a fixture in American history books when he rallied against the civil rights movement of African-Americans. He was a fierce proponent of segregation and used the media to get out the message that Blacks would continue to be treated as second-class citizens in his state.

“Let us rise to the call of freedom-loving blood that is in us, and send our answer to the tyranny that clanks its chains upon the South. In the name of the greatest people that have ever trod this earth, I draw a line in the dust and toss the gauntlet before the feet of tyranny, and I say, segregation now, segregation tomorrow and segregation forever”
(Wallace, G. 1963).

Similarly, the Jews were considered second-class citizens in Nazi Germany and their unwelcomed presence was duly noted in Nazi newspapers, posters, and declarations. Their rights were limited and laws were passed to cement their low status in German

society. Modern day Russia seems to be following suit with the passing of anti-gay laws that put pressure on the gay community there to practice their love life in the shadows.

“On July 3, Mr. Putin signed a law banning the adoption of Russian-born children not only to gay couples but also to any couple or single parent living in any country where marriage equality exists in any form. A few days earlier, just six months before Russia hosts the 2014 Winter Games, Mr. Putin signed a law allowing police officers to arrest tourists and foreign nationals they suspect of being homosexual, lesbian or “pro-gay” and detain them for up to 14 days. Contrary to what the International Olympic Committee says, the law could mean that any Olympic athlete, trainer, reporter, family member or fan who is gay — or suspected of being gay, or just accused of being gay — can go to jail”

(Fierstein, H. 2013).

In an attempt to find information on the persecution of gays in Nazi Germany, I was surprised to find that one of the key men in Hitler’s rise to power, Ernest Roehm who was a leader in the Nazi paramilitary group known as the SA, was openly gay. Other leaders, too, who were a part of the organization were also gay, which at first was not much of a hindrance to Hitler but soon after he started to gain more of a following, became a point of humiliation.

“Under the Nuremberg Laws in which genocide was defined after the war, the killing of homosexuals was not considered a crime against humanity or a war crime. In addition, gay men and women who wished to emigrate from Europe after World War II had to keep their sexual identity secret because many nations, including the United States, enforced laws that forbade homosexuals from immigrating or even visiting those countries. The Nazis' murder of some homosexuals started earlier than that of the Jews with the murders of Ernest Roehm and other brown shirts in his paramilitary group known as the SA, although the major reason for these murders was to eliminate a potentially rival force to the SS. Roehm was a major Nazi leader, second only to Hitler as they rose to power in the 20's and early 30's. He and his cadre of "brownshirts" were homosexuals, which was not a problem at the beginning for Hitler, but later did prove an embarrassment and a threat. Roehm and other SA leaders were murdered without warning in a famous blood purge, which was led by Himmler and other SS officers at the instigation of Hitler and began on June 30, 1934, which has been called "The Night of Long Knives”

(Porter, J. 1998).

Part Five - Current Events & Future Speculations

“Far from learning from others’ mistakes, everyone just keeps repeating them, and so the export of revolutions, this time of so-called democratic ones, continues. It would suffice to look at the situation in the Middle East and North Africa, as has been mentioned by previous speakers. Certainly political and social problems in this region have been piling up for a long time, and people there wish for changes naturally. But how did it actually turn out? Rather than bringing about reforms, an aggressive foreign interference has resulted in a brazen destruction of national institutions and the lifestyle itself. Instead of the triumph of democracy and progress, we got violence, poverty and social disaster. Nobody cares a bit about human rights, including the right to life. I cannot help asking those who have caused the situation, do you realize what you’ve done? But I am afraid no one is going to answer that”

(From Putin’s Speech at the U.N. in New York, September 2015).

In this excerpt from President Putin’s speech at the U.N. General Assembly meeting in September 2015, the Russian leader outlined points that were certainly geared towards pointing out flaws in the West’s approach to foreign policy. His speech at the U.N. was meant to not only showcase Russia’s increasing role on the world stage but to also provide background as to why there is a need for his country and others in the U.N. Security Council to tackle and deal with the incredible increase of radical terrorist organizations like ISIS or ISIL, al-Qaeda, and al-Nusra Front. Putin was right to point the finger at the United States, whose invasion of Iraq is what ultimately led to the proliferation of radical jihadist ideology and the rise of major terrorist groups. The speech itself presented valid points and gave Putin a boost in approval by his supporters. His

time in the U.S. during this meeting was also highlighted by an interview the president did with PBS' Charlie Rose.

Charlie Rose: "So you would like to join the United States in the fight against ISIS? That's part of why you're there. Others think that while that may be part of your goal, you're trying to save the Assad administration because they've been losing ground and the war has not been going well for them. And you're there to rescue them"

President Putin: "Well, you're right. We support the legitimate government of Syria. And it's my deep belief that any actions to the contrary in order to destroy the legitimate government will create a situation which you can witness now in the other countries of the region or in other regions, for instance in Libya where all the state institutions are disintegrated. We see a similar situation in Iraq. And there is no other solution to the Syrian crisis than strengthening the effective government structures and rendering them help in fighting terrorism. But, at the same time, urging them to engage in positive dialogue with the rational opposition and conduct reform"
(Putin on Charlie Rose, 2015).

After five years of civil war and bombings on innocent civilians by the country's president, Bashar Assad, the nation of Syria is severely crippled and at risk of falling entirely into the hands of terrorist groups like ISIS. Putin's approach is to work with the government in order to prevent ISIS from occupying more territory, which according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights controls over 50% of the country. It's a different way to deal with a seemingly never-ending problem. When will the Middle East ever see peace?

In order to draw a parallel between the events of the current day and that of the Third Reich, I would like to reflect on the effect both ISIS and the Nazis had on foreign relations. The evils of Hitler and his men were put to an end when the great powers of the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain came together to defeat them. They sent their men, their weapons, and even put their country's through tough economic periods. However, they fought together in order to defeat a great evil, the same way they are fighting together right now in Syria.

Hitler brought us together in the 1940's and ISIS brings us together now. There's an old saying that naturally comes to mind when I reflect on this. *Those who don't know their history are doomed to repeat it.* I believe a cycle of atrocities that are piling up in all facets of life across the globe has hit a point where nations with the most powerful militaries are fighting once more against a dark evil. It is sad to say, but even as we focus our attention to fighting terrorism at home and abroad, we must not forget to keep our eyes open to other forms of evil.

There's a dynasty of powerful leaders in the small but troublesome country of North Korea that has some of the gravest parallels to Hitler. The current leader of North Korea is Kim Jong-un, his father was the late Kim Jong-il. The laundry list of human rights abuses that these men are currently making their citizens endure includes labor/death camps, where some of the most abhorrent acts take place. This was the account of Jee Heon who had escaped a camp and recalled the day a woman in the camp had given birth.

"The baby was crying as it was born; we were so curious, this was the first time we saw a baby being born. So we were watching this baby and we were so happy. But suddenly we heard the footsteps," she said. The footsteps belonged to a guard, who ordered the mother to drown her baby. Jee continued: "The mother was begging, 'I was told that I would not be able to have the baby, but I actually got lucky and got pregnant, so let me keep the baby, please forgive me', but this agent kept beating this woman, the mother who just gave birth. And the baby, since it was just born, it was just crying. And the mother, with her shaking hands she picked up the baby and she put the baby face down in the water. The baby stopped crying and we saw this water bubble coming out of the mouth of the baby. And there was an old lady who helped with the labour, she picked up the baby from the bowl of water and left the room quietly"

(Walker, P, 2014).

These acts, that are absolute gross violations of international laws and human rights, are allowed to happen. The government of North Korea has the freedom to brainwash their people, control their media, and build powerful weapons.... sounds an

awful lot like Hitler before the U.S. began to take him seriously. When dangerous figures like Hitler or Kim Jong Il land positions of power, there seems to be a waiting period before outside powerful forces get involved to stop them. Kim Jong-un is actively deteriorating the quality of life for his citizens, but he has not yet attacked a foreign nation. For this reason, outside forces have decided not to go in just yet and commit regime change. If he were to attack a foreign nation such as South Korea or the United States, he and his military generals would certainly face the wrath of the Western worlds military might.

In order for nations of the world to prevent and put an end to horrendous acts of violence, political leaders must be willing and able to establish enduring relationships with one another. United States presidential elections will dictate the U.S. response to Russia for at least the next four years, which may determine Putin's collaborative policies and actions with or against western interests. Hitler's relationship with the Soviet Union went from having an agreed upon non-aggression pact in 1939 to the invasion of Soviet territory in 1941. Reflecting upon this piece of history illustrates the volatile nature of ever changing national agendas relative to a leader's personal and political interests. Putin may at some point decide to discontinue relations with the West, but the United States can do just the same with nations it considers allies of the moment.

What if, by chance, the United States stopped providing economic and military support to the nation of Israel? Or if we stopped caring so much about the Ukrainian conflict and pulled back our NATO forces? These, along with thoughts of Putin's possible future ambitions are all up for deliberation and speculation, but in the end, we won't know for sure what the future holds until it arrives. We can only hope that the state

of current world affairs will turn out for the better and more poignantly, that we will enter into a period where global powers will come together and put aside political differences for the betterment of humanity.

Part Six - Conclusion

Adolph Hitler and Vladimir Putin are both extremely different yet acutely similar. The rise of the Nazi party was due to the effective use of propaganda throughout their reign in Germany and Hitler's persona was manufactured and broadcasted to the masses in order to secure his legitimacy. Putin, in the present day, uses Russian media, most notably RT, in order to twist the minds of its viewers to place Russia and Putin in its favor and to secure an aversion to the West. Over and over again we see the parallels that can be drawn between leaders of today and those of yesterday. Moreover, in the instances I've discussed, the media has played a pivotal role in each event whether it is repeatedly airing Donald Trump's hateful comments or controlling the minds of the North Korean people.

I find it both interesting and important to discuss world leaders, especially leaders who just by the mention of their names connote controversy. The political landscape is ever-changing and it is important to remember the past just as much as we look towards the future. As I stated earlier, I do not intend this to be a pure foreshadowing of Putin's future ambitions. I offer this as a comparative piece looking at both Putin and Hitler through their use of propaganda and how it has and is being used to cultivate nationalism within their borders. Although slightly controversial, in comparing one of the most hated men in history to a current world leader, I have found glaring similarities between the two and have come to appreciate the use of critical character analysis in order to expand my knowledge of many political leaders. My aim is to keep expanding this to include more

leaders or groups, such as the Scientology leader David Miscavige, and to delve deeper into those that have been mentioned in this paper.

Vladimir Putin is but one player in this game of politics, and there are plenty of others who are just as involved. Leaders of powerful nations have implied and at times overtly expressed their duty to maintain major influence in global matters. This then leads to “my horse is bigger than your horse” type escalations, such as the nuclear arms race that characterized the latter portion of the 20th century. Comparing Putin and Hitler allows for me and for readers to see the parallels between these two very well known political figures and to connect their decisions and actions with that of other world leaders.

It is my hope that the world will never again have to bear witness to the atrocities Hitler and his Nazi followers committed during the 1930’s and 1940’s, and I have no doubt that President Putin shares my belief. It is, however, folly to assume that the world no longer has to be vigilant of bad seeds that may seep into political arenas. We must all, always, be vigilant with regards to our support of such people and one way to help with this challenge is to start by understanding just how someone as dangerously formidable as Hitler became such a memorable figure, and how constituencies become herded sheep.

More than anything, I believe this to be a cautionary tale and one that includes all of us as its characters. Although very different, the ways in which both of these men garnered the votes of millions and remained popular during their political careers gives way to certain similarities that have certainly been worth mentioning. These similarities do not conclude that the future of Putin’s presidency can be seen through the actions of Hitler. They can, however, give us clues as to how governments and the media alike can

be supremely powerful in how they shape public perception. If you don't believe me, just turn on the news.

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