HOW HITLER’S AND STALIN’S VIEWS OF CONFLICT AND WAR IMPACT TODAY’S WORLD

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ABSTRACT

Hitler and Stalin viewed conflict and war as simply an extension of politics. This thesis compares and contrasts the political philosophies and belief systems of Hitler and Stalin relating to the nature and purpose of conflict and war. In developing the thesis, I drew upon literature regarding political philosophy, philosophy and psychology of conflict and war, and the relationship between leaders’ belief systems and conflict behavior. It further discusses how their actions, based on those philosophies and beliefs, impact today’s world.

The thesis begins with a description of the political, economic, and social background of Germany and Russia, and how Hitler’s and Stalin’s experiences and personalities contributed to the formation of their basic views on society, conflict and war, and the future. Subsequent chapters provide a detailed comparison of their respective ideologies. Pertinent aspects of the history of Germany and Russia through World War II are explored, revealing how Hitler’s and Stalin’s perspectives evolved because of changing events as the war progressed. It then examines how their legacies have continued to affect the course of history during and after the Cold War. Finally, it concludes with some personal reflections on how this history helps us to understand the
potential danger posed by some dictators and to inform the world’s ongoing defense against tyranny.
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INTRODUCTION

“In the Allied headquarters at Reims, Field Marshall Jodl signed the instrument of German surrender on May 7, 1945. At midnight of the next day there ended, in Europe, a conflict that had been raging since September 1, 1939” (Eisenhower 1948, 1).

That “conflict” (World War II) accounted for the destruction of approximately forty million lives divided almost equally between military and civilian populations. The toll included between five and six million Jews, millions of Poles, Germans, Russians, and Ukrainians, among others. Even though British and French military losses were no more than one tenth those of the immense German casualties, the Soviet Union’s loss—over and above ten million civilians—consisted of three million POWs, and an additional 6.5 million on the Eastern Front (Mazower 2000, 212-213). That a clash between modern dictators could comprise the major part of this human tragedy on such a staggering scale is almost beyond belief. Yet, it happened. Some of the principal reasons why such a thing came to pass will be addressed in this paper.

Much has been written about Hitler, Stalin, and World War II. This thesis will research and compare historical, philosophical, and psychological views of these two dictators and their philosophies of conflict and war. First, conflict and war will be defined. Then a review of the political and economic situations leading up to World War II, and the entrance of Hitler and Stalin onto the world scene will continue the study. The distinctive political philosophies and belief systems of these two dictators relating to the nature, meaning, and purpose of conflict and war will be compared and contrasted. This research will examine how they viewed war at the outbreak of World
War II and how those opinions evolved during the course of that conflict. The relationship between their initial war philosophies and the adjustments they felt compelled to make to such reasoning due to the occurrence of unforeseen events will illustrate the development of their viewpoints as the conflict progressed. The study will further illuminate how each dictator, while harboring diametrically opposed political systems, concluded that his particular war philosophy, if followed, would prevail.

After the end of World War II the legacies of Hitler and Stalin continued to exert a substantial influence on the course of history. Throughout the Cold War, the subsequent fall of communism, and into the present era, the consequences of the clash between fascism and communism and the many pernicious decisions of two fateful dictators have determined, to a marked degree, the state of the world today.

No dictator has ever been hero-worshipped to the extent that Stalin has--not only in Russia, but around the world. The doctrine of Stalinism still exerts significant influence over some people today. Hitler also continues to have followers, but his influence, unlike Stalin’s, is based on racism more than on ideology (Klein 2004, 7). Considering the horrors perpetrated by these regimes, it is not easy to understand how both ideologies could have remained influential to any extent.

Today, many people throughout much of the world are oppressed by the ulterior motives and actions of tyrannical dictators. Because of this deplorable circumstance, the ramifications of Hitler’s and Stalin’s views on conflict and war will be explored in order to discover possible ways in which today’s responsible governments can continue to enact effective measures to counter such threats to world peace.
CHAPTER 1

PRE-WORLD WAR II BACKGROUND

Hitler, Stalin, and the Problem of Conflict and War

It is important not only to define conflict and war, but to present various ways in which they are often conceptualized before progressing to the study of the two dictators’ philosophies and belief systems. Conflict is described by the *Oxford English Reference Dictionary* as “… A state of opposition or hostilities … a fight or struggle … the clashing of opposed principles, etc….” This definition will be presumed when the word is used throughout the thesis. War has been described as an intentional, pervasive armed conflict. In *War and Existence*, Michael Gelven defines war as a deliberate and widespread armed conflict between political nations or states that are in marked disagreement over government or rule. War reveals the desire for domination over others (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, War).

Although there exist other relevant concepts, it is helpful in this study to consider the “we-they principle” to define the basis for war. This principle gives meaning and worth to what we value as our own, and is based on “what is mine” rather than on what is necessarily “moral” or “better.” This belief gives credibility to the precept that it matters only whether or not it is my country that I am defending. As an illustration of this concept, it has been noted that throughout the modern history of war, troop rebellion and the refusal to fight are rare. War is not fought primarily for justice or right, but for meaning. The Germans in World War II fought because of their strong...
sense of German identity and nationalism. To fight for their homeland was seen as a sacred and holy obligation (Gelven 1994, 14, 29, 62, 73).

Another relevant principle is Schopenhauer’s theory which suggests that in order to achieve independence from the savage world-will, one should work to overcome the individual’s will to live. Schopenhauer’s philosophy supports the concept that human life in itself is not of supreme value. This concept is demonstrated by the willingness of the soldier to overcome the will to live by sacrificing his life as a service to others. According to Schopenhauer, passion is an essential component for the success of war, and violence, the ultimate expression of passion, is an intrinsic part of our nature. To ensure that this necessary level of devotion be met, a high and sustained morale and spirit must be achieved. Richard Wagner, the composer, embraced the idea of overcoming the will to live, and, as a result, wrote one of the world’s most acclaimed operas, *Tristan und Isolde*, exemplifying this concept (Gelven 1994, 84-86). Hitler was an avid fan of Wagner and his music. Schopenhauer’s philosophy as illustrated in Wagner’s music made an indelible impression on Hitler who ardently and effectively passed the philosophy on to the German people and their defenders through his rousing speeches. That this belief was fully ingrained in the German psyche during World War II is demonstrated by the fanaticism with which German soldiers defended their country until the bitter end. To better understand how such obsessive compulsions motivated the warriors of the Third Reich we must look back to the previous generation and the circumstances surrounding the conclusion of World War I “the war to end all wars.”
The radical ideologies of communism and fascism made their historical debut during the First World War, and by the end of the war Germany’s and Russia’s subordinate positions caused much resentment. Both the Weimar regime in Germany and the tsarist Russian regime had been destroyed during the course of the war. Representatives from the two countries’ new governments were excluded from the victors’ councils. The Bolsheviks, who had gained power in the 1917 Russian Revolution, were not invited to the Peace Conference. The German republican government was invited to the Treaty of Versailles only to accept and sign the treaty’s conditions (Davies 2006, 133). The terms of the peace treaty were considered intolerable by Germany. These terms included returning the territories of Alsace-Lorraine to France, a parcel of territory to Belgium, a similar parcel in Schleswig to Denmark, and some former Polish lands to Poland. Germany was also required to return to Russia land taken in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. The German army was reduced to 100,000 men and forbidden to have airplanes or tanks. In addition, Germany had to admit full responsibility for starting World War I and would have to pay reparations (Shirer 1988, 58). Many Germans believed that these stipulations were calculated to humiliate them and to bring disgrace upon their country. Germany began to seek a way in which to deal with the victors’ condemnation without feeling shame and guilt. The German people gradually became convinced that this could be successfully accomplished through supporting Adolph Hitler, a nationally recognized politician who resisted all efforts to shame Germany. Hitler reinforced love of country, pride in the German culture, and in what the German identifies as his own and gives him identity.
Patriotism was exaggerated to become the militant affection for the homeland, which supported war. This is an example of the universal we-they principle—Germans love for their country. German nationalism is a part of what is “one’s own” – a co-nationalist with other countrymen. It is the common feeling of sacredness for one’s homeland. More than love of country, it is the pride felt for one’s country that supports war (Gelven 1994, 162-163, 197-198, 209).

Hitler was instrumental in establishing German fascism which began as an authoritarian partisan movement as a result of the political and social changes initiated by World War I. These changes included the post-war economic crisis, a lack of confidence in the current traditional political system, and a growing fear of socialism and communism. In Gary Grobman’s The Holocaust—A Guide for Teachers, in the section entitled “Nazi Fascism and the Modern Totalitarian State,” Nazi Fascism is defined by intense nationalism, anti-socialism, focus on productivity, and the necessity of a strong leader. The right-wing Fascist Nazi totalitarian regime began in Germany and relied on support from the traditional economic upper class.

Conversely, the communist left-wing totalitarian regime arose in undeveloped countries through revolution, using violence and terror to accomplish its goal of creating a classless society, combining common ownership of production methods, and governmental control over its wealth and resources as described in Grobman’s The Holocaust—A Guide for Teachers, in the section entitled “Nazi Fascism and the Modern Totalitarian State.” Classic Soviet communism focuses on the materialist philosophy of complete state ownership of industry and the domination of agriculture.
Religion is suppressed. Mass purges of the population take place. Communism uses peace propaganda with military action against proxies or minor powers and never initiates war with a major power (Payne 2000, 12). Stalin is universally recognized as the tyrannical dictator responsible for the solidification and continuation of communism throughout the Soviet Union.

In Richard Overy’s *Why the Allies Won*, Stalin is described as having a strong influence on the people and possessed the ability to secure tremendous sacrifices from them (Roberts 2006, 10). In general, the Russian people saw World War II as a patriotic war in which they fought bravely for the land they loved but not necessarily for the Soviet system (Gelven 1994, 236). It is amazing to realize that at the time of Stalin’s death in 1953 there were people who mourned openly for him, as though he had been a kind and benevolent leader. There were, however, many others who rejoiced in witnessing his demise (Klein 2004, 54).

Communism and fascism, which promoted violence to accomplish their objectives, were the antithesis of liberal democracy. Communism is defined as an economic, social, and political system established through revolution to create a classless society. It is further described as having a common ownership of production and subsistence. A centralized government exerts complete control over the economy. Stalin and the Communist ideology, originating with Lenin, practiced the left-wing philosophy. In comparison, fascism is a right-wing dictatorship exemplified by a governmental system merger of state and business leaders that promotes an ideology consisting of aggressive nationalism (Grobman 1990, Nazi Fascism, 4). Hitler and the
National Socialist Party conformed to the Fascist philosophy. In Germany, the Nazi party gained popularity in opposition to the German Communist movement, which had seemed more dangerous to the German people in the years between World War I and World War II. The communist movement in Germany threatened to join with the Soviet Communists to initiate a European revolution. Yet, despite their glaring differences, the German Fascists and the Russian Communists initially joined together in order to overthrow the much hated “Versailles Settlement” (Davies 2006, 133-134).

The essential descriptions of war—vast, communal, historical, violent, organized behavior, horror, and heroism rooted in pride and love of country, hatred of the enemy, and a country’s existential freedom, describe the Russian and German understanding of the we-they principle and their actions during World War II (Gelven 1994, 217).

**Pre-war Political, Economic, and Social Background of Germany and Russia**

Germany

As the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia took place after the demise of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, all of Central and Eastern Europe became a prime target for German political expansion. The German Weimar Republic had ended as a result of economic recession (Crozier 1997, 10). Prior to the outbreak of World War II, German economic instability and inflation existed with an increase in unemployment, corruption, looting, illness, and strikes. Shops were pillaged. Anti-Semitism flourished. The Jews were accused of exploiting the current miserable conditions. According to one historian, Germany’s inflation was the catalyst for World War II even more so than the
catastrophic results of World War I itself (Brendon 2000, 33-34). A new era began in 1933 with the arrival of the German National Socialists effectively promoting nationalism through Hitler’s rousing speeches (Crozier 1997, 10). Hitler and the National Socialist party promised to restore a strong and unified German Reich. Hitler wanted to annihilate the state that he believed brought about Germany’s defeat and ruin, replacing it with one that exemplified national pride and racial purity. This would be accomplished through zealous patriotism, will-power, defiance, and most importantly, hate (Brendon 2000, 34). Hitler’s foreign policy program was calculated to overthrow the terms of the Treaty of Versailles and to dominate Europe (Crozier 1997, 10). His speeches conveyed these ideas to an impressionable public. Hitler found it relatively easy to convince the German people to put their trust in someone who proposed to develop the country once again into a position of prominence and strength. Hitler promised to overcome the country’s psychological and economic depression caused by the loss of World War I (Weinberg 1995, 52-53).

Hitler fervently believed that fate had selected him to save Germany from its state of crisis. The National Socialist Party also believed that he alone possessed the knowledge and ability to lead them (Kohler 2000, 7). Because Hitler was convinced of his infallibility, he was willing to take chances with re-arming Germany, the result of which he believed would enable him to strike and defeat his rivals before they fully recovered from World War I. In the process of this pursuit he took full advantage of the Western Powers’ consistent indecisiveness regarding his nefarious activities (Davies 2006, 57).
Russia

Early in the twentieth-century Russia was one of the major European powers, despite being politically, culturally, and economically backward when compared with Britain, Germany and France (Fitzpatrick 2001, 15). This unequal and undemocratic Russian society was presided over by a tsar and his family. At this time the country was on the verge of revolution. World War I brought Russia’s discontent to the surface (Public Broadcasting Service, Stalin, 2). The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 established Stalin’s place in politics. He believed that it was his personal mission to save the revolution and to establish a communist form of government to rule Russia. This became the central purpose of his life (Overy 2004, 7, 13). By using blackmail and other despicable tactics, Stalin efficiently disposed of party officials who stood in his way. Thus, he began to rise in this political structure. He was appointed by Lenin as General Secretary, and, after Lenin’s death, achieved his goal in 1929 of assuming ultimate power in the party (Klein 2004, 46). He then proceeded with a campaign of class warfare against the more prosperous farmers (kulaks), who were selling surplus produce on the open market and had managed to acquire farm animals and farm implements. Their possessions were confiscated and they were banished to remote areas. Often the heads of households were shot, and the remaining family members shipped out to the icy North in what were called “death trains.” Many of these people died of hunger, disease, and the cold. Stalin also began to initiate a policy of starvation on a segment of the Russian people in order to achieve his goals. In the Ukraine he initiated a purge which resulted in a famine that wiped out one quarter of the rural
population. In order to protect his personal reputation he arrested anyone he could blame for the grain shortage (Brendon 2000, 236, 249). Professionals such as doctors, scientists, and teachers were sent to concentration camps for opposing his regime. Stalin, like Hitler, was anti-Semitic and succeeded in eliminating all Jews from the regime’s senior posts. He believed that to maintain and strengthen his position of power, the more death and destruction he caused the better. “For him the end justified the means and what he had in mind was the subjugation of an entire people to his will alone” (Klein 2004, 48). These purges, and more to come, resulted in many millions of deaths.

Stalin wanted to establish an economic policy of rapid industrialization to rival that of the capitalist countries. This was to be achieved through forced collectivization of agriculture, the establishment of Five-Year Plans which coordinated all investment and production, and the initiation of programs to build heavy industry. These goals were to be achieved at the expense of the lives of millions of innocent citizens (Public Broadcasting Service, Stalin, 3). This was Stalin’s answer to achieving and maintaining his dictatorship over the proletariat (Brendon 2000, 249).

**Dictatorship**

Both Hitler and Stalin exhibited exceptional power and were immensely popular with their people. This adulation of the two dictators demonstrates the “cult of personality,” (according to Steven Kreis’s History Guide website, Stalin and the Cult of Personality, a fanatical fixation of individual dedication and loyalty to the leader), a
common feature of both dictatorships. The projection of their super-personalities was the “cause and effect” of their power (Overy 2004, 99-100).

Hitler wanted to become Germany’s dictator, but only with the approval and support of its people. He was able to project strong leadership and a state of normality that was reminiscent of pre-World War I days. He helped to restore Germany’s confidence and dominance. A recent study by Alf Ludtke based on letters German soldiers sent to their families, showed that a majority of the people accepted Hitler and his goals for re-establishing Germany’s place of prominence in Europe. As a result, the German people became devoted to Hitler and supported him throughout World War II (Gellately 2001, 1, 3). The Holocaust, Hitler’s execution of the Jews and other “undesirables,” was, at the time, overlooked or condoned by the German people and most of the rest of the world (Grobman 1990, Preface, 1). Today, many Germans fondly recall only Hitler’s accomplishments in restoring order, social values, and establishing social harmony (Gellately 2001, 3). This attitude is cause for concern.

In Russia, as the revolutionary movement ended, Josef Stalin emerged committed to ending the Tsar’s rule and creating a dictatorship that was to represent ordinary people. He relied on the party to lead and prepare peasants and workers to the transition into a democratic and collectivist future (Overy 2004, 101).

At the death of Stalin millions of Russians openly grieved. These people believed he had led Russia to victory against Hitler and the Nazis, and that he had transformed the country from an agricultural state to an industrialized nation. In reality, however, behind these magnanimous scenes, lurked a picture of murder, death and
starvation in prisons and labor camps. Stalin was a brutal dictator, a ruthless tyrant who used terror, murder, betrayal, and destruction to achieve and maintain power and control over the Soviet Union (Klein 2004, 43).

These two dictators personified the very meaning of the word dictator—a ruler, particularly recognized as a tyrant, who exercises total authority and jurisdiction over a country and its people as defined in Grobman’s *The Holocaust—A Guide for Teachers*, in the section entitled “Nazi Fascism and the Modern Totalitarian State.” Hitler and Stalin were driven by an extraordinary commitment to singular, though different, causes and each saw himself as the only person capable of fulfilling his country’s destiny. Each was underestimated by friends and enemies who could not see that their relative outward modest (though admittedly eccentric) personalities concealed unrestrained ambition, ruthlessness, and an utter disregard for others when it came to politics. Both, through their own efforts, built the road to dictatorship through mastery of their parties (Overy 2004, 22-23).

Twentieth-century dictators Stalin and Hitler were noted for the use of violence against their opponents. Edmund Burke believed that regimes formed out of revolution would use violence as a means to make up for their lack of legitimacy. These two regimes were identified by their use of mass killings and the selection of victims based on particular subjective categories. “Justice” was administered by the use of special tribunals that had little similarity to regular courts. Verdicts in these trials were decided in advance. This type of “justice” relied on anonymous accusations. Often, relatives of the accused persons were also punished (Szejnmann 2009, 97).
In *History, Dictatorship, and War: A Conversation with Richard J. Overy*, Overy states that the period of dictatorship in Europe after 1914 is different from that of previous such time periods. The Russian and German people chose dictatorship over monarchy because the latter had let them down. Economic and political modernity developed rapidly in Germany and Russia, bringing about the collapse of the old political systems. The upheaval of traditional life resulted in an increase in tensions and the escalation of violence. These changes were the catalysts for the emergence of the German and Russian dictatorships (Szejnmann 2009, 13-14).

The dictatorships of Hitler and Stalin were characterized by ideological sectarianism, where one political group discriminates against another group by attaching importance to the group differences which in this case, are fascism versus communism. Stalin believed in the communist philosophy which advocated class struggle and harbored intolerance for those who deviated from his circumscribed interpretation of Marxist-Leninism. Hitler sought the physical elimination of perceived opponents who were primarily designated as a separate category within, but not restricted to, the concentration camps. Thus, the narrowly defined twentieth-century ideologies espoused by Hitler and Stalin were marked by unconstrained violence which went generally unchallenged by their respective judiciaries and, initially, at least, by the rest of the world (Szejnmann 2009, 96-97).
CHAPTER 2
HITLER

Background and Personality

Adolf Hitler was born on April 20, 1889 in the village of Brasnau on the Austro/Bavarian border. He did not experience a stable childhood (Klein 2004, 55). His father, Alois, was a strict, humorless civil servant, an authoritative, domineering husband, and a stern, distant, irritable father (Cross 2009, 11-12). In contrast, Hitler’s mother, Klara, Alois’s third wife, was kind, submissive, quiet, and absorbed with caring for her two children and two stepchildren. Klara’s and Alois’s first three children died in infancy. Hitler was the fourth born and the first to live to adulthood. The fifth child, Edmund, died under the age of six. The last sibling, Paula, born in 1896, survived until her death in 1960. The tragic circumstances of the early death of many of her children were, no doubt, instrumental in Klara’s development of an overly protective disposition of love and affection for her remaining children. This devotion was reciprocated by her children, especially Adolf. All his life, he was known to express love for his mother, carrying her picture with him down to the last days in the bunker (Kershaw 2008, 3-6).

According to Paula, as a child Adolf often challenged Alois and just as often received a sound thrashing, but, when this happened, Adolf was inevitably consoled by his mother. During Hitler’s 1940’s fireside speeches he spoke of how Alois’s flare-ups would often cause his father to strike out suddenly. These temper outbursts compounded Adolf’s paternal fear (Kershaw 2008, 6).
Hitler’s unstable childhood undoubtedly had a detrimental psychological effect on his personality. He later exhibited contempt for submissive women and expressed a desire to dominate. With few exceptions he demonstrated an inability to form deep personal relationships along with a hatred and brutality toward the majority of humanity. Much of this hatred was directed toward the Jews and the things he associated with them. These loathsome (in his view) involvements concerning the Jews included, but were not limited to, bolshevism, capitalism, democracy, traitors who caused the loss of World War I, an international financial conspiracy, and “infectors” of the Aryan race with Jewish blood (Victor 2007, 123).

He was also known to be consumed with extreme hatred toward intellectuals, the religious of all faiths, the physically and mentally handicapped, and all ethnic groups except the Aryan (master race). His love/hate beliefs were striking in their contrasts and in their expressed intensity. Consider the following illustration of Hitler’s distorted sense of decency: though his Nazi state had no laws restricting experiments on humans, Hitler instituted such laws to protect fauna, a tribute to his expressed love for animals and, simultaneously, an unintentional acknowledgement of his apparent indifference to the welfare of mankind. Hitler expressed a particular fondness for children (of the Aryan race), and also for Norwegians (considered pure Nordic). He demonstrated devotion to the great German composer Richard Wagner and his music. Over the years he maintained a cordial rapport with Wagner’s descendents, especially the famed musician’s daughter-in-law Winifred Wagner. He came to be so vital a component of the Wagner family and such an avid promoter of his favorite composer’s
music that by 1933 the Wagner Festival in Bayreuth had become known as the Hitler Festival (Kohler 2000, 263, 265). The targeted hatred and the explicitly focused love manifested by Hitler were apparently formed, to a great extent, by many of his childhood experiences (Kershaw 2008, 6).

Upon finishing school, Hitler moved to Vienna. He applied to both the Vienna Academy of Art and the Vienna Academy of Architecture, but was rejected by both. This exclusion and resulting depression led him into a Spartan existence in the city where he was barely able to make ends meet. Within a relatively short time he came to despise the bourgeois society that had rejected him (Klein 2004, p. 55). An interesting observation was made by a friend of Hitler’s during this time. Hitler, the friend recalled, went to see the movie Tunnel by Bernhard Kellermann. During the movie an agitator was shown giving speeches which excited the working masses. Hitler was so impressed with this scene that he spoke of nothing but the power of the spoken word for many days afterward (Klein 2004, 55-56).

At this time Vienna was experiencing a rapid growth in population. The existing poor social and economic circumstances there were exacerbated by the influx of many persons of other nationalities. This increase in inhabitants made living conditions in the already overcrowded and overburdened city much worse. Many of the newcomers crowded into the working class quarters where Hitler was residing (Bullock 1993, 20-21). The Jews in Vienna during this period constituted less than ten percent of the population. A higher percentage of them, proportionate to their numbers, were employed in secondary and higher education as well as in prominent professions such
as law, medicine, finance, and the performing arts. At the other end of the social scale were poor Jews, many from Eastern Europe. Hitler could not help but notice that the appearance of these destitute people attracted unfavorable attention (Bullock 1993, 20-21).

Hitler’s experiences in Vienna had the effect of reinforcing his German nationalism. He became aware of three groups that he perceived to be threats to the German (master race) in Central Europe. He identified these groups as the racially inferior Slavs, Marxists, and Jews. He felt that some action should be taken to fight these “threats,” but he had no idea how it could be accomplished (Bullock 1993, 24). In 1913 he left Vienna to escape compulsory enlistment into the Austrian army and moved to Munich. It was here that he began to cultivate a zealous hatred of the Jews (Klein 2004, 56).

When Hitler first heard of the outbreak of the First World War in August of 1914 he immediately volunteered to fight with the German Army (Overy 2004, 14). He was assigned the role of a runner, carrying messages from the trenches. He worked tirelessly and courageously in accomplishing this assignment, receiving two Iron Crosses for bravery (Klein 2004, 57).

After the war Hitler developed hatred toward those who had surrendered Germany to the Allies. He perceived national defeat as a personal humiliation. This attitude instilled in him a tremendous desire for vengeance against the Allies (Overy 2004, 15). He returned to Munich intent on pursuing a political career. His immediate ambition was to break the hold exerted by Social Democracy, the currently established
political ideology in Germany, which he believed was manifested by the Jews. He associated this political movement and the lower class with economic privation, low ethics and morals, and an inferior level of intelligence (Kershaw 2008, 36-38).

Hitler joined The German Workers’ Party in 1919 and was put in charge of propaganda. He began touring beer halls and auditoriums to spread the party’s credo (Klein 2004, 57). While on this circuit, Hitler continued with speeches that incited as much hatred as possible toward the Jews whom he believed to be at the root of Germany’s problems. He also began to demonstrate remarkable oratorical skills as he spoke about his party. Because of this he quickly became well known by the German people. Soon, the party changed its name to The Nationalist Socialist German Workers’ Party (Nazi) and used the swastika as its symbol. Hitler continued to mesmerize his audiences with speeches filled with emotion and hate, seemingly casting a spell over the German people. He organized riots and mass demonstrations against the German state, and was arrested for his participation in a demonstration on November 8, 1923 in Munich. He was subsequently sentenced to prison for five years, but served less than nine months (Klein 2004, 57-58).

Upon his release in 1924 he found that the economy had rebounded during his incarceration and that the people had become more optimistic and less hostile toward the Republic. He then re-entered politics but, because of the public’s relative satisfaction with the government, was unable to gain a foothold for seven years. Then, at the onset of World Depression in 1930, by taking advantage of a weakened Republic, Hitler agreed to the formation of a coalition with the Right (Klein 2004, 58). He was
offered this opportunity because of his growing popularity with the German people even though, as a result of the November 1932 elections the Nazis were unable to win a majority of seats in the Reichstag. The Chancellor, Franz von Papen, a prominent member of the right, could not garner enough support to be effective in the Reichstag and as a consequence was able to rule in only a limited capacity through an emergency decree in Article 48 of the Constitution. In an attempt to maintain control, Von Papen offered Hitler the vice-Chancellorship if he would support the Chancellor, thereby guaranteeing the additional support of the Nazi party’s Reichstag representatives. Hitler refused this offer. He did not want this secondary position—he wanted to be Chancellor. Von Papen and President Hindenburg finally conceded to Hitler’s wishes, appointing him Chancellor with the idea that Hindenburg would be able to control Hitler (Welch 2008, 98).

At last Hitler had realized one of his political dreams by becoming Chancellor of the German Reich. This momentous occasion was only the beginning of a series of lucky breaks (for Hitler) that would propel him incessantly forward to eventual total power and domination. His good fortune continued when on August 2, 1934, President von Hindenburg died. Within one hour of his death, a decree was issued merging the now vacant office of president with that of Chancellor. This act elevated Hitler to German Head of State and Supreme Commander-in-Chief of its Armed Forces (Klein 2004, 58). Finally, in a maneuver calculated to seal his accomplishment, on August 19, 1934, the German people were asked to vote on their approval of Hitler’s assumption as Head of State. Forty-five-and-a-half million votes were cast with more than thirty-
eight million voting “Yes” (84%) (Klein 2004, 59). The overwhelming results assured Hitler of his popularity and the allegiance of the German people.

After assuming the dictatorship, Hitler was able to pass laws at his personal whim. He successfully eliminated all opposition by banning the Communists and Social Democrat Parties. In 1934 he purged the German army of every suspected opposing element. Executions were conducted on June 29. It is estimated that 300-500 men were killed (Klein 2004, 58). This savage tactic was a horrific example of the extent to which Hitler would go in order to remain in power. It was also a demonstration of his indifference to law and order, his contempt for human life, and a premonition of the fate awaiting all who would oppose his regime.

In his new capacity Hitler became preoccupied with two major goals. The first was foreign policy. He wanted to rebuild Germany’s standing both at home and throughout the world by rearming the nation so that it would be competitive and on an equal footing with other countries. The second goal was to devise a way in which to handle the Jewish “situation.” In pursuit of this second objective, laws were passed depriving German citizenship to anyone of Jewish blood, banning marriages between Jews and Germans, and denying Jews the right to hold office or to vote. A major event occurred in November 1938 when the German police were directed to burn down synagogues, wreck and loot Jewish businesses, and attack anyone thought to be of Jewish origin. After this incident (Kristallnacht), 20,000 Jews were rounded up and sent to concentration camps under the pretense of offering them protection (Klein 2004, 59-60). This operation has been documented as being a direct order emanating from Adolf
Hitler directed to all police commanders in the country through the central Gestapo organization (Evans 2006, 582).

As undisputed dictator, Hitler was positive that he was witnessing one of the significant periodic changes to world history. These changes, he believed, were initiated by the French Revolution which had led to individualism and economic self-interest as the foundation of morality. European society, he thought, was dividing into classes, suiting the bourgeoisie, and creating class envy and money worship. He concluded that these trends alienated the working classes encouraging a revolutionary internationalism that threatened to change or weaken European civilization. In order to survive these events, Hitler believed, it must be recognized that historical changes are not brought about by class struggle but by racial changes. In his mind, race, culture, and social institutions generated by the racial community must be preserved (Overy 2004, 18-19).

According to Hitler, maintaining this viewpoint was the main task of politics. He espoused a radical nationalism that went far beyond the importance of national interests. He wanted the nation to become a type of community that embraces “race comrades” instead of classes. This community, he believed, would be described as “national socialist,” and would be controlled in the peoples’ name. Further, common blood would be the defining form of allegiance. His belief was that the primary enemy of this concept and community was the Jews. Hitler blamed the Jews for Germany’s defeat in World War I, of espousing Marxist ideology which caused social deterioration, as capitalists controlling the world market, and as a challenge to his concept of German purity of blood. In his book Mein Kampf (My Struggle), Hitler stated that all people
who are not of “good race” are worthless. This view demonstrated his contempt and hatred for other races and ethnic groups, and incorporated anyone he regarded as the enemy. Hitler’s political plan directed toward anyone other than those of the Aryan race was that they should be mastered, seduced, excluded, or eliminated. He carried these beliefs with him as he progressed from a radical agitator to eventual dictator and head of state. Hitler was certain that he was chosen by Providence to rescue Germany from humiliation and shame, and was driven by this cause and commitment from the beginning of his career to its end (Overy 2004, 21-22).

Personality and leadership were focal points in Hitler’s speeches and writings. He focused on his mission as the savior destined to bring together the people for Germany’s rebirth. This undertaking, he sincerely believed, would assure Germany’s climb to world domination. He saw himself destined for greatness in its accomplishment. Whenever the opportunity presented itself, Hitler would reinforce his ideas on Germany’s fate and his incomparable part in its eventual outcome. His growing popularity through rousing speeches fed his egomania and reinforced his bond with the German people (Kershaw 2008, 181, 379-381).

Perhaps the crowning event responsible for enhancing Hitler’s already exaggerated self-importance came as a result of the outcome of his attack upon Western Europe. The assault, which commenced on the morning of May 10, 1940, was a stunning success, greater than even Hitler himself had expected. After five days the Dutch surrendered. The Belgians capitulated before the end of the month. The French defense, which was regarded as impregnable throughout Europe, proved to be
negligible and on June 14th German troops triumphantly entered Paris. Three days later the French sued for peace. The magnitude of this triumph inflated Hitler’s megalomania to a new height. His self-glorification and perceived infallibility were amplified by the acclaim of his generals who could only marvel at this unbelievably successful strategic campaign. A vast adoring public greeted Hitler on his return to Berlin (Kershaw 2007, 65). The exhilaration instilled in Hitler by this public adulation provided powerful fuel for his already unduly inflated ego (Kershaw 2008, 380-381).

**Hitler’s Views on Conflict and War**

Hitler’s views on war were shaped by his belief that it was necessary to achieve racial domination and heightened national identity (Overy 2004, 449). The Nazi philosophy he promoted did not believe in the equality of races but promoted the victory of the “stronger” and “better” Aryan race. His philosophy maintained that it is essential to dominate and control the inferior and weaker non-Aryan races in accordance with the universe’s eternal will (Gavin n.d., 1-2).

The root of this idea was not only a military concept but also included social and economic elements. Hitler viewed history as a struggle for existence by the people. He believed that history was about the availability of economic resources and the taking of land necessary for the population. To him, war was “the ultimate weapon with which a people fights for its daily bread.” Hitler’s solution to Germany’s racial crisis was to reinstate German “inner strength” and to wage war to obtain the necessary resources. This solution, he professed, would require “the whole strength of the people.” He believed that preparation for war could not be less than a total commitment. Further, it
must be “large-scale” and the German Armed Forces must become the world’s premier army. To him war could not be too large nor could it proceed at too swift a pace. Social and economic needs, he believed, were defined by the necessities for the preparation of war. He asserted that any other ambitions were totally inconsequential (Overy 2004, 449-450).

Hitler believed that his mission to restore Germany’s position of national strength and power could only be achieved through “the sword.” Therefore, war would have to be undertaken to achieve supremacy and Germany would have to achieve super power status or face extinction (Kershaw 2008, 514). Germany’s population, Hitler believed, needed more space and this could only be accomplished through strength followed by force (Kershaw 2008, 180).

In *Mein Kampf* Hitler explains his plan for military conquests. Because the Aryans are the highest form of the human race, he asserts, they need to acquire more land (Gavin n.d., 1-2). He called this plan for expansion, Lebensraum (living space). Hitler believed that Germany’s lack of living space could not be solved by industry or by emigration (Hitler 2006, xxi). He looked to Russia as the necessary land needed for German expansion. But first, he attested, Germany must avenge its defeat in World War One and secure its western border. This would include conquering Germany’s old enemy France (Gavin n.d., 1-2).

As a result of his hatred of the World War I victors, Hitler evolved a plan to solve each problem he believed was caused by the outcome of this war by the use of force and intimidation. His quest for obtaining ultimate power and control was through
aggressive war strategies. The Second World War combined some smaller regional conflicts that had no direct relation initially to the German drive for world conquest, yet it was Hitler’s determination to attack all countries surrounding Germany. This initiative resulted in these smaller conflicts evolving into one huge catastrophe (Domarus 2007, xiv).

Hitler’s concept of war evolved over time, and was partially formed by a new method of warfare he put into practice with the invasions of Poland, Western Europe, and then Russia. He initiated the Blitzkrieg—a lightning war (Bullock 1993, 542-543). This new strategy, enthusiastically embraced by Hitler, was introduced to him in the book entitled Achtung! Panzer, by Heinz Guderian, after the First World War. Guderian promoted the use of the tank as the most effective weapon of modern warfare. It, along with radio communication, would allow rapid advancement into enemy territory instead of utilizing the traditional infantry led attack. The salient features of Blitzkrieg warfare consisted of the application of coordinated operations rather than covert maneuvers. In addition, the utilization of methods of subterfuge employing a mixture of tanks, mobilized troops, modern artillery, coordinated aircraft support, and integrated radio communication would be essential components. This particular strategy, partially made possible by the result of advancing technology, had never been possible in previous conflicts and therefore proved to be catastrophic to the unprepared enemy (Welch 2008, 183). It was to be directed against his opponents, one at a time with an initial blow using a concentration of forces that would surprise the enemy and lead to a quick victory (Bullock 1993, 542-543).
In addition to the Blitzkrieg, Hitler invented another new system of warfare. It was a campaign devoted to the destruction of people who did not conform to his ideas of social reconstruction. This hatred of such people stemmed from his fear of differences. Racial minorities, such as Gypsies, were included on his list, as well as communists, traditionalists, and conservatives. Others he believed unworthy of existence and therefore an encumbrance to achieving his goals included the mentally or physically deficient—the sick, the handicapped, and the insane. But, the Jews were at the top of his list simply because of who they were—not because of what they did (Domarus 2007, xv). Nazi aggression was the principal reason for World War II. That aggressive behavior was embodied in the person of Adolf Hitler. The “removal” of the Jews was inherent in his mission. “In this way the Nazi war on the Jews was a central component of … the Second World War … the greatest slaughter the world has ever known” (Kershaw 2007, 470).

Hitler’s original concept of the direction the war would follow was interrupted during its course as unexpected events frustrated his preconceived schemes. Britain’s decision not to seek peace after the fall of France was one of the principal unanticipated obstacles that prevented Hitler’s winning Western Europe in its entirety (Kershaw 2007, 52, 54). Hitler felt certain that America would eventually enter the war on the side of Britain. This concern was worrisome, but he believed that the event was far in the future. He knew at the onset of his aggression in Western Europe that the United States would only stand by and watch. The Neutrality Laws in effect in the United States would have to be revised before it could even sell arms to the Allies, much less supply
troops. Another problem facing the United States was the appropriation of funds for ground forces in a nation where the concept of isolation and an ingrained neutrality policy were prominent. It is most probable that Hitler’s excellent intelligence network had made him aware of the fact that at the beginning of summer in 1940 the United States had practically no munitions manufacturers and the army ranked eighteenth in the world, behind Holland, (504,000 as compared to Germany’s 6.8 million). “The offensive Germany had launched … on May 10 along the western front consisted of 136 divisions; the United States …” at that time “… could, if necessary, muster … five … divisions” (Goodwin 1994, 23). Hitler reasoned, therefore, that Britain’s expected rescue by the United States was, at best, a far off possibility that could be dealt with later.

However, the United States signed the Lend-Lease Act into law in March 1941 allowing it to ship to Britain vitally needed supplies (Kershaw 2007, 187). Hitler then realized that his conclusion that American involvement in the conflict would not occur until some indeterminate future date was now insufficient. He decided that it was now possible for circumstances to cause the United States to enter the war without delay. To avoid this prospect, Hitler felt compelled to restrain his deadly U-boat (submarine) fleet from targeting American supply ships even though his naval officers continued to recommend such tactics. This modification of his theory of aggressive warfare deemed necessary by unforeseen events was another example of a departure from preconceived views of war. Ironically, this strategy was reversed in December 1941 when the United States formally joined the war against the Axis Powers following the Japanese attack on
Pearl Harbor. Hitler then altered his tactics, recognizing the British and American fleets as equal prey for his U-boats. His new campaign was calculated to destroy their respective merchant ships at a faster rate than they could be replaced (Blair 1998, x).

The elation Hitler experienced at the fall of France was almost immediately diminished by the failure to secure the surrender of Britain. Hitler had been confident that a weakened Britain, after witnessing the devastating defeat of France, would seek a treaty favoring Germany. The decision to fight on, announced by Prime Minister Winston Churchill at the end of May 1940, left Hitler incapable of completing his war in the West as he had planned. The alternative to a negotiated settlement, a military conquest, was deemed impossible at the time (Kershaw 2007, 52). Though some preliminary plans and basic studies concerning an amphibious assault remained in progress, operation “Sealion,” as it was called could not possibly be ready for execution until the middle of September 1940. This timeframe was later postponed until “sometime” in 1941. German generals and admirals were exceedingly reluctant to embark on such a risky mission, having little confidence in their navy and air force to keep the pathway through the English Channel clear. The admirals particularly warned against the appearance of the British fleet on the scene. Ultimately, “Sealion” was doomed to never become a reality (Hart 1970, 89-90).

Hitler was approached and assured by Hermann Goring, Command-in-Chief of the Luftwaffe (the German Air Force), that his air force could nullify the British navy and air power, thus opening the way for a successful invasion (Hart 1970, 89-90). Hitler acquiesced and what became known as the Battle of Britain, or, the Blitzkrieg, or,
colloquially, “The Blitz,” began in July 1940 and the bulk of the fighting ended in October 1940 (RAF 2004, Phases 1 and 4). During one campaign, London was bombed for fifty-seven consecutive days, and in the course of one week in October more than 1,300 Londoners were killed. Thus did the Germans succeed in terrifying the British people (Jewish Virtual Library 2010, Battle of Britain, 2).

The Royal Air Force (RAF) responded gallantly to these raids, however, decisively winning the “Battle of Britain,” with total losses during the aerial warfare to the Luftwaffe of 1,733 aircraft while the RAF experienced a loss of 915 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Poland 2005, 1). This triumph ruined Hitler’s invasion plans and, for the first time, Germany experienced defeat. The Luftwaffe was then withdrawn from the mission and sent eastward in preparation for operation “Barbarossa,” the invasion of Russia which began on June 22, 1941. Much to Hitler’s chagrin the Battle of Britain did not achieve its objective of destroying the British navy, the RAF, or the morale of the British people (Hart 1970, 108). The courageous action of the RAF in repulsing the relentless air assaults of the Luftwaffe inspired Churchill to famously proclaim “Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few” (Spencer-Churchill 1940, 7).

Hitler eventually decided that a more immediate threat to Germany’s commanding military status loomed in the East. He believed that the stubborn British refusal to make peace was predicated on the hope that Russia would join them in an alliance to defeat Germany. This led to the Hitler decision that has been described as “his most fateful choice of the Second World War.” On July 31, 1940 he pronounced
what proved to be these inauspicious words to his generals: “With Russia smashed, Britain’s last hope would be shattered. Germany then will be master of Europe and the Balkans. Decision: Russia’s destruction must therefore be made a part of this struggle. Spring 1941 … If we start in May 1941, we would have five months to finish the job” (Kershaw 2007, 52, 54).
CHAPTER 3

STALIN

Background and Personality

Stalin was born Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugasvili on December 21, 1879 in the Caucasian town of Gori, Georgia located in southern Russia. His father, Vissarion Dzhugasvili, unable to earn a living as a cobbler, turned to alcohol. Vissarion would frequently come home drunk at night and beat his wife, Yekaterina. She had to do laundry and sewing for customers in order to eke out a living for the family (Klein 2004, 43).

During childhood, Stalin suffered from a severe case of smallpox that resulted in scarring on the left side of his face. Also, as a result of smallpox, he later developed septicemia which caused his left arm to become weaker than his right. His mother nursed him through this difficult time relying on her strong religious beliefs to sustain her. As an extremely devout Christian she desired her son to enter the priesthood. At the age of nine Stalin was enrolled in the local Orthodox school. In 1894 he earned a scholarship to attend the Orthodox theological seminary in Tiflis. During his attendance he became interested in politics and joined the Messame Dassy, a radical group demanding Georgia’s independence from Russia. They believed in the precepts of socialism: production directed by workers through worker-elected councils or communes; production taken from a few capitalists and put into the hands of the workers; workers governing themselves with the proletariat (working class) planning
production and resources—that each worker being rewarded according to the amount of labor contributed to society (New World Encyclopedia, Marxism). Stalin got into trouble because of his radical political beliefs and was expelled from the seminary in 1899. In 1901 he joined the Social Democrat Party of Georgia in Tiflis after trying unsuccessfully to secure a position as a private tutor, and later as a clerk (Klein 2004, 44).

His break with the seminary left Stalin with a hatred of the school administration, the bourgeoisie (capitalist class), and anything in Russia that represented the Tsar. Marxism gave Stalin a fixed framework and ideology with a dogmatic system to take the place of the theological structure provided by the seminary. It provided him with the same requirements as Russian orthodoxy—exclusion of doubt, intolerance of dissention, and persecution of heretics—views held by both orthodoxy and Marxism. By age twenty he had decided what his occupation and beliefs were. From this time forward he would be a professional agitator dedicated to overthrowing the existing order by revolution (Bullock 1993, 16). He began to organize demonstrations and strikes. During this time he wanted to be called by the nickname “Koba” meaning indomitable after a Georgian folk hero. Later, in 1913, he changed this to “Stalin” meaning “Man of Steel” (Klein 2004, 44).

During 1902, Stalin was arrested for the first time and was sent to a Siberian labor camp. He was able to escape and return two years later to Tiflis. He then became interested in a new political movement started by Lenin (Vladimir Ilich Ulianov) called Bolshevism. Stalin was excited by this new political organization and was eager to join
(Klein 2004, 44-45). The main components that attracted him to Lenin’s doctrine were:
the need for a disciplined revolutionary elite guard, belief that action (the subjective factor) could alter the course of history (in particular, that seizure of the state government could bring about a social revolution), his defense of radical methods of dictatorship, contempt for liberals and democrats (and for socialists who compromised with them)—all ideas that stemmed more from Russian revolutionary tradition than from Marxism. Marxism is broadly defined as a socio-economic theory regarding the functioning of capitalistic societies, the historical components of which may lead to their probable futures (Worsley 2002, vii-viii). The concept includes a political ideology by installing socialism via a working class revolution with the object of obtaining an exclusively state-owned property component which would eventually result in a classless society. Lenin favored immediate action to bring down the tsarist regime instead of waiting for it to be decayed by the development of capitalism (Figes 1997, 145, 154). During this early period of the party, he never deviated from backing Lenin’s policies (Klein 2004, 44-45).

In 1903 the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party was organized and then immediately split into two factions, one called Menshevik and the other Bolshevik headed by Lenin. Lenin wanted to separate his followers from the Menshevik majority. The breach occurred because Lenin insisted that to be a party member one must not only support the program but must be committed to full-time revolutionary activities. The party organization was based on the military model with a stringent chain of command. Its function was to direct labor—not be directed by it. At the 1903 Social
Democratic Congress, Lenin designated his followers “Bolshevik” meaning majority. His opponents were labeled “Menshevik” meaning minority (Pipes 2001, 28, 31). This strict, disciplined organizational approach appealed to Stalin. He immediately identified this group as his road to power. Stalin began to disseminate Lenin’s views through the local distribution of secret pamphlets and newspapers (Klein 2004, 44).

Even though Stalin was heavily involved in politics with little time for social activity, he managed to meet and then marry Yekaterina Svanidze in June 1904. The marriage ended with her death three years later leaving their son Yakov for Stalin to raise. The next several years were spent in the pursuit of political activism resulting in imprisonment. Stalin’s hard work for the Bolsheviks finally paid off when Lenin personally appointed him in 1912 as one of several leaders assigned the important job of underground propaganda. During this time Stalin moved to St. Petersburg and started the new Bolshevik newspaper, *Pravda*. The first edition was printed on May 5, 1912. In 1913 Stalin was asked to accompany Lenin and other colleagues to Vienna where he wrote his first study on Marxism. Lenin was impressed with Stalin’s fanaticism for detail and his organizational skills (Klein 2004, 44).

On March 15, 1917, Tsar Nicholas II abdicated from the Russian throne after realizing he was losing the battle to the political change from a monarchy to a constitutional form of government. He had already established a national elected parliament and legalized political parties and trade unions in an effort to bring about this change (Fitzpatrick 2001, 15-16). However, this was insufficient to deter the success of the Bolshevik Revolution. The abdication resulted in the freeing of some prisoners,
including Stalin, who had been serving yet another prison sentence in Siberia since
1913. Stalin returned to St. Petersburg where he was elected as one of nine members of
the party’s Central Committee. At that time the temporary Russian government was
overthrown in what was known as the “October Revolution.” Though untrue, Stalin
later re-wrote history books which portrayed himself as the major person behind this
event. The “revision” of history books was to become Stalin’s trademark, as he re-wrote
many official documents to inflate his prestige and worth (Klein 2004, 44-45).

On November 7, 1917 the Bolsheviks finally came to power but had to fight a
civil war in 1918 with the Tsarist-sympathetic White Army. During this time, Stalin
was assigned several minor positions such as Cabinet Minister for Nationalities and
Acting Inspector General of the Red Army. He continued to work behind the scenes
waiting for the opportune time to make his move. He was successful during this period
because he followed Lenin’s policies to the letter. Stalin backed Lenin on all his actions.
His plan worked as he was able to join Lenin, Leon Kamenev, the chairman of the
Central Executive Committee, Trotsky, and Kretinsky on the party’s inner directorate,
newly named Politburo. Stalin continued to remain in the background, satisfied to be in
charge of the Organizational Bureau that was responsible for the appointment of party
officials. He promoted as many friends and political allies as he wished, being careful to
choose men who came from modest backgrounds with little or no education. He found
that men of this sort could easily be manipulated by using existing rivalries to remove
one another from party membership (Klein 2004, 45).
During 1919 Stalin married for the second time. His new bride was Nadezhda Allilueva. At the end of 1919, Nadezhda gave birth to a son, Vasili. During this time Stalin was strongly encouraged by his wife to assume more important goals. He acquiesced, initiating secret investigations as well as blackmailing party officials he disliked. He slowly began to ascend the political party structure, and, in 1922, Lenin appointed him to the position of General Secretary. Shortly after this Lenin had several strokes, enabling Stalin to take control of the party. On January 21, 1924 Lenin suffered a fatal stroke (Klein 2004, 46).

After Lenin’s death, a battle ensued over party leadership that was to last five years. Stalin began by taking his place to the right of the party but later moved to the left. He had rival party members Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Kamenev killed. By 1929 he had gained complete power and remained in control for the next twenty-four years (Klein 2004, 46-47).

Stalin wanted Russia to become more industrialized and to achieve equality with the more advanced West. To reach this goal he initiated a “Five-Year Economic Plan” which forced all peasants to join state-owned co-operatives, pooling their machinery, grain, and livestock, and forcing them to depend on the government for their wages. Their compensation consisted of whatever remained after the dictatorship took its portion. The peasants revolted by killing their livestock and burning their land, which led to nation-wide starvation. Reprisals were initiated by the government, and many who opposed collectivization were deported and then murdered. Those remaining alive were forced into state-controlled factories or labor camps where they were worked to
death. Scientists, teachers, doctors, artists, and their relatives were sent to the labor camps for “opposing” the regime. Stalin, in acts that confirmed his anti-Semitism, removed Jews from senior government positions and had Jewish citizens watched by the Secret Police. He acted by any means he deemed necessary to keep the people completely under his control (Klein 2004, 47-48).

In 1934, more than 300 delegates became so dissatisfied with Stalin that they voted against him as Party Leader in favor of Sergei Kirov who was the Leningrad Communist party leader. Stalin was enraged. Shortly after this occurrence, Kirov was murdered, most likely at Stalin’s command, although no conclusive evidence exists to confirm this theory. Conveniently, the murder investigation was taken over by Stalin himself. This resulted in his accusation that a major conspiracy against the country was in progress, giving him an excuse to get rid of more opponents. Stalin began a “campaign of terror” with show trials during 1936-1938, resulting in the murder of over a thousand delegates of the 1934 Congress and ninety-eight Central Committee members. Between 1934 and 1938 an estimated seven million people “disappeared,” including a majority of the Red Army senior officers. Through these horrific actions taken by Stalin against his people it became obvious that he enjoyed discovering how his opponents met their demise. Often some of his loyal lieutenants would demonstrate to Stalin how victims would beg for their lives before they were murdered. During this time Stalin began to grow more cruel and distrustful. Because of his paranoia, some people with whom he maintained close political friendships were killed. He became
suspicious of his own family members, (the Svanidzes and Alliluevas) executing many of them for “betraying” him or the country (Klein 2004, 48, 50-51).

As most of Stalin’s political purges came to an end, he signed a non-aggression pact with Hitler (Klein 2004, 51). Stalin welcomed the pact for two basic reasons. First, it kept the Soviet Union out of a war with Germany—a war for which Russia was ill prepared; and, second, the confidential sections of the agreement guaranteed that he would receive some of Poland in addition to being given unrestricted freedom from German interference in the Baltic States, Finland, and Bessarabia (Drabkin 2002, 12). Hitler later betrayed Stalin by initiating a surprise attack (Operation Barbarossa) against Russia. Stalin was completely taken off guard by this action. Even though he had been warned time and again by military intelligence that the massing of Nazi troops and equipment on the Russian border indicated invasion was imminent, Stalin was totally and unpleasantly surprised when the attack commenced (Klein 2004, 51). On June 22, 1941, the German Army began the invasion which consisted of three major attacks between the Baltic Sea and the Carpathian Mountains, surging deep into the Russian homeland (Hart 1970, 159). As a result of his purges, the Russian armed forces lacked the leadership needed to adequately repel this invasion and were almost completely annihilated by the initial Nazi assault (Klein 2004, 51).

During the course of Operation Barbarossa, Hitler encouraged his troops to commit cruel and violent acts as they moved across the country. This atrocious behavior caused the Russians to fight back with such heightened determination and resolve that,
though facing superior military forces, they would not allow the Germans to take Leningrad. The battle soon turned in favor of the Russians (Klein 2004, 51).

By the end of September, the Germany Army could observe a clear path to Moscow, but by the end of October the weather deteriorated, making a quagmire of the country. In addition, the German troops were exhausted. They were further demoralized when fresh Russian forces materialized in front of Moscow. The Germans pushed on, however, and by the beginning of December some detachments had entered into the suburbs of Moscow. The reserves which Stalin was able to bring up in defense of Moscow, however, were a big factor in stalling the German thrust. From the winter of 1941 the Russians continued to outnumber the Germans on the Russian front. From this point onward, until the end of the war, Russia succeeded in pushing the German Army relentlessly back to their homeland. Even though the Russians fought with exceptional valor and were greatly aided by American supplies and equipment, it took three years to completely drive German forces out of Russia (Hart 1970, 141, 167-169).

Finally, in May of 1945 the Red Army marched into Berlin. This momentous occasion, however, was marred by Stalin, who ordered troops returning from Germany sent to labor camps for “re-education.” In addition, Russian citizens who had been held in foreign prisons and work detention centers were executed or sent to Russian labor camps upon their return. These actions were taken by Stalin to further isolate Russia and to “de-contaminate” Russian citizens who had been “exposed” to Western influences (Klein 2004, 51).
Stalin’s Views on Conflict and War

Stalin’s primary concern with conflict and war up until the outbreak of World War II and the invasion of Russia by Germany was with revolutionary operations for the purpose of establishing a new government within Russia. He was attracted to Marxism while still a seminary student. This ideology teaches the inevitability of class war to overthrow a corrupt and unjust social order. Marxism appealed to Stalin’s emotions of hatred and resentment. His resentment against authority was made legitimate by class war. Marxism offered a scientific basis for a future revolution (using Western Europe as a model) with the evolution of capitalism through a capitalist democratic phase evolving into class conflict and then social revolution (Bullock 1993, 14-15). Stalin believed in the theories and practices of the Marxist Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin. Lenin’s ideology (Marxism-Leninism) maintained that a professional revolutionary party should lead the working class in initiating a violent revolution to overthrow capitalism. The next stage in the process would be the establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat (working-class) before advancement to the final stage, communism (New World Encyclopedia, Marxism, 20).

Stalin wrote in his *Foundations of Leninism* that “the law of violent proletarian revolution, the law of the smashing of the bourgeois state machine is an inevitable law of the revolutionary movement.” To him, violence was a necessary consequence of his
political mission and was considered redemptive, rescuing society from imagined
enemies whose use of violence was regarded as characteristic (Overy 2004, 644).

In Stalin’s interview with Roy W. Howard on March 1, 1936, he stated that the
Soviet Union wanted to start a revolution in order to build a new classless society and
had, in fact, accomplished this. Stalin affirmed, however, that they did not want to start
revolutions in other countries. He further stated that Marxists believed revolution would
take place in other countries, but only when they were prepared and ready. He explained
that Marxists do not advocate exporting revolution and that it is untrue that they want to
initiate revolution in other countries. This, he stated, has never been advocated (Stalin
1940, 268).

Stalin believed that a nation has a right to self-determination which includes the
working class’s right to consolidation of power—the right of self-determination being
subordinate to the consolidation of power. He thought that when there is a clash
between these two factors, the right of self-determination must not become an obstacle
to the working class’s right to dictatorship (Stalin 1940, 278).

According to Stalin, conflicts and military hostilities as well as the proletariat’s
struggle against the capitalist class are based on the fundamental conflict between
production and the framework of national-imperialist development. He believed that
this framework, together with capitalism, suppresses production. The solution, he
maintained, is a world economy organized on the “principle of fraternal economic co-
operation” between the industrial and the less advanced countries, and not on the
progressive country taking from the backward country. He further stated that the
solution to such a situation between two unbalanced countries would be an international proletarian revolution without which there can be no normal world economic development. Further, to correct the world economic situation, it is necessary to achieve proletariat victories in a few advanced countries. He thought that until this is achieved, the Marxists must seek economic co-operation with capitalist countries (Stalin 1940, 279).

However, according to Stalin, doubt remained in the international proletarian revolution, and in its victory. He thought there was skepticism towards national liberation movements in occupied or dependent countries. He also thought Russians failed to understand that without the existence of Marxist ideology in other countries, Russia itself could not survive against world imperialism. He believed that the inability to realize that a socialist victory in one country is not final, that there is no guarantee against imperialism until revolution has succeeded in several other countries, and, finally, that there must be a realization that the victory of socialism in one country is not the end, but the means, for advancing and supporting revolution in other countries. Stalin stated that it is important for the victorious revolution in one country to help generate, encourage, and sustain revolution in other countries (Stalin 1940, 280, 282).

The Leninist theory, according to Stalin, affirms that the chain of imperialism will be broken at its weakest link. Russia in 1917 was where the chain was weakest and thus the revolution of the proletariat occurred (Stalin 1940, 283). What became known as the Bolshevik Revolution was set in motion by Vladimir Lenin on October 25, 1917 (Montefiore 2005, 32). Stalin maintained that Lenin had stated that a new epoch had
begun with the proletarian victory in Russia. Stalin believed that this era would usher in a new period of conflicts, wars, attacks, retreats, victories, and defeats—a world revolution. These events, he affirmed, would lead to proletariat victories in major capitalist countries. This period of world revolution, as stated by Stalin, represented a new stage in the revolutionary process. The time period for such a radical change could last years or decades. He further believed that revolution does not necessarily develop in a straight, ascending line but with advances and retreats, and the ebb and flow of events. As Stalin observed, these circumstances serve to solidify the forces of revolution for its ultimate victory (Stalin 1940, 285-286).

As a result of World War I, Stalin believed, a redistribution of countries and their spheres of influence had taken place. America and Japan had come to the forefront. Old states such as England had receded into the background. Stalin believed that Germany was experiencing a resurrection, and that a struggle was taking place for capital investment markets and the land and sea routes to these markets. He also thought there was growing antagonism among and within capitalist countries and between capitalist countries and dependent countries. These situations, he maintained, represented a crisis in world capitalism which would ultimately lead to war. He thought the existence and growth of the communist Soviet Union exacerbated this crisis. He also believed that war would have occurred long ago had it not been for the communist parties’ fight against imperialist wars. The Soviet Union’s policy of peace, he believed, had inhibited the move toward war. He voiced the opinion that it was the Soviet Union’s task to continue an unwavering policy of peace, and to continue friendly
relations with surrounding states despite enemy provocations. Stalin expressed the view that the Soviet Union must go its own way to defend its cause of peace, and to expose the war-mongers. This, he stated, would be the best policy for uniting the Soviet Union into one camp should capitalist countries declare war on the Soviet Union. He declared that American democracy and Soviet Union communism could peacefully co-exist and compete with one another. However, he proclaimed, these two countries’ political systems could not evolve into each other (Stalin 1940, 296-299, 304-310, 315, 327).

In 1923, Stalin had posed the question “… should …” (German) “… communists strive … to seize power without the Social Democrats?” If that situation should occur, he thought, German communists would be defeated. He believed that it would be more advantageous for fascism to rise first. This would cause an attraction of the working class toward communism. Stalin had heard that, in Germany, fascism was weak. He advised restraint against inciting the Germans. Russia, he asserted, was most sympathetic toward Germany, and believed that friendly relations would continue. However, he also believed that the Germans’ respect for law had changed recently because the National Socialists had violated laws, broken up workers clubs, and murdered workers without receiving any punishment for these acts (Stalin 1940, 305-309). Stalin’s strategy of letting fascism rise in Germany without concentrated opposition from the communists when such resistance could conceivably have defeated the movement was perhaps a major mistake.

During the 1930’s period of economic crisis, Stalin reiterated that the Soviet Union would maintain its foreign policy and pursue upholding the peace. He continued
to assert that the Union of Soviet Socialists Republics (USSR) wanted to strengthen business relations with all other countries. He expanded on this position, by maintaining that extending these policies would not change if no attempts were made to trespass on the Soviet Union’s frontiers. He further asserted that the USSR specifically desired to maintain peaceful relations with countries bordering the Soviet Union, and would support those that were the victims of aggression. The USSR was not afraid of aggressors’ threats, he proclaimed, and was prepared to retaliate against any who would attempt to violate Soviet borders (Stalin 1940, 337-338).

In 1934 the USSR joined the League of Nations, which served as a place where Stalin believed aggressors could be exposed thereby preventing war. He soon revised this opinion, observing that the League of Nations seemed to be deteriorating. He thought that meetings being held for diminishing naval armaments were, conversely, becoming conferences for naval re-armament and expansion. He thought that this situation would result in a rapid increase in the danger of war (Stalin 1940, 298, 336-337).

In 1940, Stalin recognized that Germany, long suffering from the conditions of the Versailles Peace Treaty, had joined forces with Japan and Italy, (Axis Powers), demanding an extension of its territory in Europe, and the return of its colonies which were taken as part of the World War I treaty. Stalin believed that the three countries’ alliance was formed as a result of the provisions of the Versailles Treaty. The Axis Powers, Stalin stated, had launched a new imperialist war upsetting the entire system of post-World War I peace. He further confirmed that the fascist leaders had misled and
deceived their people. He also stated that Japan had seized a large portion of territory in China, Italy had seized Abyssinia, and Germany had seized Austria and the Sudeten region, and that Germany and Italy together had seized Spain. These acts of aggression, he asserted, were in defiance of the interests of the non-aggressive states (Stalin 1940, 329-331).

Stalin surmised that this new imperialist war, instigated by the Axis Powers, had not yet become a world war. These aggressor countries, he thought, had infringed upon the interests of England, France and the United States. There had been no attempt by the non-aggressive states at resistance. Stalin confessed that he could not comprehend how these neutral countries, which had so much potential, could abandon their positions and obligations without any resistance. The aggressors, he thought, would continue the war against their non-aggressive opponents thereby weakening and exhausting each other. Stalin had faith that this scenario would be a “Cheap and easy!” way for the USSR to step in and establish its ideology within these mutually enfeebled countries (Stalin 1940, 333).

The failure of Stalin to understand the reluctance of Britain, France, and the United States to respond to Hitler’s offensive military adventures early on in Germany’s aggression proved to be another misconception. He apparently had no idea of the extent to which England, France, and the United States abhorred the thought of war at this time. The memories of the enormous losses sustained in the Great War (World War I) were too fresh and painful for them to contemplate another such conflict. In addition to being totally unprepared from a military and economic standpoint to wage war, the
United States was officially an isolationist country—a condition that would literally take an act of Congress to repeal, which, to the astute observer at the time, seemed unlikely at best. The eventual victory of the Allies over Germany (which the USSR was destined to share) was then a concept beyond Stalin’s wildest imaginings.

As we have seen, Stalin believed that the USSR and Germany were no longer enemies after establishing the non-aggression pact of 1939. In foreign relations, Stalin asserted, it is better to reduce the number of enemies, making them into good neighbors while maintaining peaceful relations with one another (Stalin 1940, 337, 341). Providence proved this reasoning flawed.

The first “Big Three Meeting,” consisting of Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin, took place in Tehran from November 28 to December 3, 1943. Here, “Operation Overlord,” the invasion of Europe by Allied forces crossing the English Channel from Britain, was discussed. Also debated was the important aspect of how to deal with the post-war era. Along with crippling Germany, Stalin wanted to punish France for his perception of France’s collaboration with Nazi Germany. At this conference Stalin never lost touch with his ultimate goal of winning the war, getting the allies to do their share, and expanding the Soviet Union’s control over the postwar world (Gellately 2008, 545-546).

Stalin was particularly pleased with Churchill’s plan for post-war Poland. Churchill suggested that after the war Poland give up its eastern border region to the USSR. Poland would be given a portion of eastern Germany in compensation. Churchill wanted Poland to remain independent and strong, and shifting the country’s borders
westward would be acceptable. Churchill noted that Stalin was pleased with this suggestion (Gellately 2008, 546-547).

Stalin hosted a dinner on November 29, 1943 during which he brought up the issue of how to deal with the Germans. He was concerned that Germany could initiate another war “in fifteen or twenty years.” He suggested as a preventive measure that “at least 50,000 and perhaps 100,000” of the German commanding staff be “physically liquidated.” Stalin continued by stating that in addition, “the victorious Allies must retain possession of the important strategic points in the world so that if Germany moved a muscle she could be rapidly stopped.” He also stated that the same treatment should be administered to Japan. After Stalin presented his suggestion, Churchill took strong exception to the “cold-blooded executions of soldiers who had fought for their country.” Churchill continued his strong objection to performing executions for political purposes. Roosevelt suggested (with tongue in cheek) that the Allies should execute only 49,000 instead of 50,000. This conversation upset Churchill to the point that he walked out but Stalin rushed to stop him stating that “he was only joking” (Gellately 2008, 547-549).

Key points mentioned by Stalin during the Tehran meeting were that the Allies needed to control strategic areas around the world. He stated that he wanted to keep watch on Germany, but he was also thinking about all other parts of the postwar world where he believed the Soviet Union could be influential. Roosevelt and Churchill showed little initiative to oppose Stalin’s ambitions. As a result, Stalin achieved a great
political victory in Tehran. He received almost everything he wanted (Gellately 2008, 549-550).

The Allies, led by the United States, initially agreed to divide Germany into five self-governing units and to place them under international control. Stalin wanted the divisions to be permanent. He wanted and received the northern part of East Prussia. This land, Stalin said, would give the Soviet Union an ice-free port—a small part of German territory that he felt the USSR deserved. They agreed on a plan for the invasion of Western Europe. Stalin stated that the Soviet Union would join the war against Japan upon Germany’s defeat. The Big Three also agreed to form an international organization that would later become the United Nations (Gellately 2008, 549-550).

Stalin’s 1927 speech to the 17th Party Congress and later Khrushchev’s speech in 1956 to the 20th Party Congress summed up their collective salient views on a major aspect of war by stating that an ever-expanding military advantage is required in order to observe the enemy’s internal deterioration. Only military strength can insure that the enemy, in its “death throes,” will not recover from its losses with one rapid military maneuver (Seabury and Codevilla 1989, 275).

Josef Stalin was a supremely successful post-World War I dictator. He rose to power in the second most powerful country in the world, killed more people than Hitler, and lived until the age of seventy-four. He was responsible for millions of deaths in labor camps, prisons, and the majority of the Russian people that perished by starvation (Klein 2004, 43). Dr. Robert C. Tucker, renowned scholar of Soviet-era politics and history, said that even though Stalin was responsible for mass murder in addition to
creating a “cult of personality,” the Russian people admired him because he stood for a strong, centralized government (Bernstein 2010).

The views of Stalin on conflict and war were originally predicated upon his communistic strategy of defense. When Hitler initiated “Operation Barbarossa” Stalin’s only consideration was to preserve the homeland. His troops were initially overwhelmed by Germany’s superior forces and prospects for a successful defense were bleak. As the tide slowly turned with the assistance of the bitter Russian winter coupled with an unanticipated alliance with the Western powers, Stalin’s outlook for a successful repulsion of the German forces began to look more hopeful. The Russian military continued to gain momentum, pushing the enemy beyond USSR borders. Stalin’s basic attitude regarding war began to waver. By the time Hitler had been subdued, Stalin’s philosophy of war would never again be the same. The staggering benefits derived from his aggressive armed forces rout and unconditional defeat of the once all-powerful German military machine and the vast territory he had overrun, subdued, and seized could not help but change him into a believer in aggressive warfare. The world now had a new adversary to fear.
CHAPTER 4

COMPARISON OF HITLER’S AND STALIN’S PERSONALITIES AND VIEWS ON CONFLICT AND WAR

Personality Comparisons

Hitler and Stalin were two of the major figures of the twentieth-century. They were notorious participants in the most devastating war the world has ever known. Each employed terror as a political device and were the perpetrators in the deaths of millions of men, women, and children. The unspeakable horror inflicted on innocent victims, to them, was simply the normal course of doing business. Though these things, hideous as they were, were common traits exhibited by both men, other characteristics they possessed were unique to their individual personalities. What manner of men—of monsters—were these? How did they measure up to each other? What made them tick?

What we know of Hitler’s personality is comprised of a composite of observations revealed primarily by those who knew him during his lifetime, along with conclusions we can draw from his known history. Since Hitler never subjected himself to a psychiatric evaluation, there is no definitive, first-hand, psychological profile by a qualified professional in existence. Hitler strived to hide his innermost thoughts, motives, and mental processes, working to keep his subordinates baffled and off-guard. In 1938 he stated “You should know first of all that you will never be able to discover my thoughts and intentions until I give them out as orders …You will never learn what
is going on in my head. As for those who boast of being privy to my thoughts—to them I lie all the more” (Victor 2007, 61).

As a young man his mannerisms, his tastes in the arts, history, literature, and especially architecture, his social skills, and his precarious relationships with others combined in forming personality traits which in many ways were quite normal, if perhaps a bit stiff and overly formal under ordinary social circumstances. This façade of normalcy, however, concealed what has been described as a conflict-ridden and raging mentality.

The self-acknowledged appeal Hitler engendered among the masses through his public speeches, along with his hatred—so conspicuously exhibited—of “differences” in people i.e., racial, sexual, physical, intellectual, ideological, religious, social, national—an almost never ending list—accounted, no doubt, for many of the peculiarities that formed a major portion of his complex personality.

He was the perfect example of a charismatic leader. Much of this publicly exhibited compelling charm could be attributed to extraordinary oratorical and communication skills. Unlike Stalin, Hitler believed that political authority must be based on popularity and backed by the people. His faith in this principle was a great motivator in his quest to reach the epitome of German leadership. He praised the German people’s spirit and they reciprocated (Gellately 2008, 15-16). These histrionic interactions with the public had the effect of further inflating Hitler’s already immense ego.
Hitler reserved an exclusive component of his wrath for the Jews, Gypsies, and other racial “outsiders.” Political opponents such as Communists and Capitalists, and those he considered deviant, depraved, or homosexual were also included on this list of “abominations.” He particularly hated the Communist claim of universality. His ideology was based on the “blood and soil” of the present as well as a future utopia he envisioned as being reserved exclusively for “racially fit Germans” and a small number of Nordic Europeans. This “New Order” would be sealed off from the rest of the world (Gellately 2008, 16). These examples of the breadth and depth of hatred a human is capable of achieving, accompanied by the delusions of a future isolated racial paradise comprised some of the most appalling aspects of Hitler’s character.

Hitler possessed a number of quirks that factored into the makeup of his personality. For example, he avoided participating in sports, perhaps because he was a notorious sore loser and, also, because he was repelled by physical contact. He was a teetotaler and a dedicated vegetarian with a marked preference for pastries. He was known to occasionally pitch tantrums, which led some of his acquaintances to refer to him behind his back as “that rug chewer,” a phrase that eventually became known and used among his detractors throughout the world. He often carried a whip, arrogantly slapping it on his leg or snapping it in the air. He professed a love for animals, yet was known to occasionally beat his dog. His attitude toward women was old fashioned—believing their place to be in the home, rearing children, and not competing with men. He was unconventional, abstemious, and, in his later years, quite controlling in social
situations, where he often exaggerated his ruthlessness and obstinacy (Victor 2007, 62-64).

Despite, or perhaps because of, his often bizarre behavior and his many compelling idiosyncrasies, combined with his well-expressed, unique ideology, Hitler evoked a kind of personal magnetism that inspired fanatical devotion and unswayable loyalty among his followers. Since the conclusion of World War II, this enigma has been, and remains, a subject of apparently endless speculative psychological analysis.

Stalin was a self-proclaimed leader of the new ideology, Bolshevism. Unlike Hitler, he felt his authority was not derived from the people, but from Marxism and history, of which he believed he possessed “superior” knowledge. Party purges and public self-criticism were an essential component of communist life under Stalin (Gellately 2008, 15-16).

Stalin was mysterious, energetic, vain, and overly emotional. Beneath the surface there also lurked anger, ambition, and unhappiness. He possessed a fiery temper, and was called “a man of many faces” by his successor, Nikita Khrushchev. He was an avid reader of history and literature. He suffered from hypochondria, chronic tonsillitis, psoriasis, and rheumatic aches and pains from his deformed arm. He was excessively talkative, sociable, and a talented singer. If not a classic alcoholic, he had a reputation for drinking to excess. Throughout his life, he ruined every love relationship and friendship for reasons he considered to be politically expedient and because he suffered from paranoia (Montefiore 2005, 5-6).
Both Hitler and Stalin had authoritarian fathers who did not spare the rod. They formed close attachments to their mothers. Each rebelled against an expected religious education. They were outsiders nationally and socially. Stalin was a Georgian, outside the mainstream of Russian society, and Hitler was an Austrian, alienated from mainstream German society. Both men started their political careers as terrorists—Hitler, after 1918, as a radical nationalist in Germany—Stalin, before 1914, in the Russian Social Democratic party. Both were sent to prison for their political activities and beliefs. These life events undoubtedly had similar marked effects on their respective personalities (Overy 2004, 5).

Neither Hitler nor Stalin was normal in the conventional sense, yet they were not considered to be mentally unbalanced. Both possessed extraordinary personalities and intense drive and focus in striving for their respective causes (Overy 2004, 22). Though it is true that both Hitler and Stalin commanded outstanding legitimate skills as politicians, they also did not hesitate to use underhanded methods of secrecy and calculated manipulation in achieving their goals. Both were experts at playing people against each other. They utilized unpredictability as an important part of their power to such an extent that no one ever knew with certainty how far either man would go in a given situation (Bullock 1993, 359). This was exactly the effect they intended. Each displayed a single-minded purpose in attaining unrestricted authority and control over the people. Fundamentally, this power would be achieved through ruthlessness combined with complete disregard for the welfare of others in accomplishing political
objectives. Many of their remaining personality traits differed significantly (Overy 2004, 22, 5).

Stalin was a workaholic who focused on administrative matters (Gellately 2008, 15). Unlike Hitler, he was not a dilettante. He spent long hours working, paying meticulous attention to details in order to arrive at his own conclusions (Overy 1997, 34). Hitler preferred that others make most of the decisions as his representatives. He reserved only major decisions for himself and could not be concerned with technicalities (Gellately 2008, 15).

Stalin was once asked if he could attribute any part of his career to luck. He reacted with irritation, stating that he believed only in the power of the human will. Conversely, Hitler believed that he was to arrive at what had been predestined for him by Providence without having to exert any particular effort (Overy 2004, 4).

**Views on Conflict and War Comparisons**

Stalin’s involvement in politics began at age 15 while he attended the seminary. He joined a Georgian Social-Democratic group and began to promote the doctrine of Marxism (New World Encyclopedia, Stalin, 4). To Stalin, Marxism meant that “… the revolutionary proletariat alone is destined by History to liberate mankind and bring the world happiness ….” however, mankind would have to endure severe hardships and undergo great alterations in order to achieve true socialism. The essence of this metamorphosis would be “… the class struggle: Marxism is the masses whose liberation is the catalyst for the freedom of the individual” (Montefiore 2007, 66). He left the seminary before the end of the yearly examinations and began working with the
political underground in the Caucasus. There, between 1902 and 1917, he was repeatedly arrested on various charges of subversion, and sent to Siberia (New World Encyclopedia, Stalin, 4). By the time he turned twenty his beliefs and occupation had been settled. From that time forward he dedicated his life to being a professional agitator. His final objective was accomplished with the revolutionary takeover of the existing order. Stalin’s decision in 1899, at the age of twenty, determined the further maturation of his personality and the experiences that would follow him for the rest of his life (Bullock 1993, 16-17).

Stalin’s personal war experience occurred after World War I when he participated in the four-year civil war following the October 1917 Bolshevik revolution. His personal civil war experience resulted in the lasting impression that the triumph of revolution is inevitably associated with uncompromising violence. Pursuing action on this belief is what propelled him to change Soviet society (Overy 2004, 442-443).

Stalin’s view of war was greatly influenced by the Bolshevik party leader Vladimir Lenin. Lenin believed that in the modern age war and revolutionary politics could not be separated. In 1920 he wrote that as a result of World War I, a revolutionary crisis had begun which would end in a proletarian (working class) revolution and subsequent victory. Later, in 1930, Stalin expressed his idea that war cannot be divorced from politics. Bolshevik ideology supported anti-imperialist revolutionary wars for the purpose of liberating the proletariat regardless of the amount of blood that might be expended in the process (Overy 2004, 442-443).
Stalin was convinced that war was initially instigated by others in their determination to destroy the newly formed socialist state. He believed that the appropriate response to this was to defend the state. Most of today’s evidence demonstrates that Stalin’s approach to World War II was defensive and reactive, and not planned for revolution and conquest. The Soviets favored war between imperial states. This approach was also personally preferred by Stalin rather than having to fight Germany by allying with the West, an option he reluctantly felt compelled to choose in order to preserve the homeland (Overy 2004, 443).

Stalin’s view of war also had an economic base. He believed that the Soviet Union needed to make a critical choice—either to remain in the past with primitive technology and small-scale production, or to increase production through “modern heavy industry.” He believed that a large-scale militarization program and accompanying economic reorganization plan were necessary in defense of the revolution (Overy 2004, 450).

Hitler, at twenty, having been rejected a second time by the art academy, ended his quest to further his education and had not as yet formed a cohesive idea of the purpose or consequences of war. The following six years in Vienna and a short time in Munich left him no closer to discovering a meaningful purpose for war, or, for that matter, his life (Bullock 1993, 17). His ideas concerning German nationalism and, through extension, war, were not conceived until sometime between his experience on the front line in France in 1914 and the defeat of Germany in 1918 (Overy 2004, 442).
Hitler’s views on war were inseparable from his campaign for Germany’s national survival. He believed that the will of self-preservation was natural and desirable for the German people. After watching his troops finish summer maneuvers he stated that Carol von Clausewitz’s, the famous war theorist (New 1996, 78), view on war was right: “War is the father of all things; every generation has to go into war once” (Overy 2004, 442).

Hitler longed for war. Not only did he seek revenge for the World War I defeat and humiliating peace settlement, but he believed it to be his self-appointed mission to establish a new German nation in order to extend the empire and to destroy the “Jewish-Bolshevik dragon.” War was necessary to revive and regenerate the German people (Overy 2004, 443).

Hitler’s perception of the type of war Germany must fight was influenced by his argument that war was a necessary element in the struggle for racial superiority and national affirmation. Originally this concept was social and economic as well as military. He envisioned his army to be the world’s most powerful. To develop it he asserted that unlimited resources must be provided as quickly as possible (Overy 2004, 449-450).

For Hitler and Stalin war was the major factor of their world views. Each had personally experienced four years of warfare. There were, however, significant differences between Hitler’s and Stalin’s views of war (Overy 2004, 442-443). For example, Hitler’s war against the Jews was based on pure anti-Semitism and extremist German Nationalism. Combined with the “necessity” of Lebensraum, war against
communism, a form of government he believed to have been originated and controlled by the Jews, was simply an extension of the program designed to annihilate all Jews. Stalin believed that the Nazi quest for dominance over communism was perpetrated by Hitler in order to establish a “paradise” exclusively reserved for Germans and some selected North Europeans. Communism, to the contrary, had as its goal a Soviet utopia calculated to include all of mankind. On one point, however, both dictators were in total agreement—all necessary atrocities needed to realize their objectives were considered acceptable (Beck 2010, 332).

The contrasting positions of Hitler and Stalin, the first being aggressive and oppressive and the latter being defensive, produced similar responses in the 1930s as both Germany and the Soviet Union became engaged in military preparations. Both dictators assumed supreme command in order to dominate military and strategic processes and major decision-making. Their views on war at this time were shaped primarily by political and not military priorities (Overy 2004, 443-444).

During the 1930’s, the arms race between Germany and the Soviet Union was the principal driving force for an increase in militarization. A memorandum from Hitler released in 1936 reflected a significant increase in the development of the Red Army. Stalin’s report in 1934 to the Seventeenth Party Congress featured the threat of German fascism and its calculated policy of war. Stalin did not believe an immediate threat from western imperialism existed in the mid 1930’s, but did observe that the menace of German and Japanese imperialism was intrusive and expanding. Hitler’s foreign policy was conducted with the conviction that the western countries could be militarily
defeated and forced to accept Germany’s treaty revisions and Eastern European domination. He thought such a military subjugation was necessary to keep Soviet communism from gaining a foothold in Europe (Overy 2004, 451-452).

In less than ten years Hitler and Stalin became the focal points for changing their countries into military superpowers. They believed that any future conflict would include the colossal consumption of military, economic, and social resources of their countries. Both were willing to accept the terrible consequences of total war and to risk the stakes at hand, i.e., German national survival, and the results of the Soviet revolution (Overy 2004, 449).

The German-Soviet nonaggression pact of 1939 was not drafted by Hitler and his representative Ribbentrop, but by Stalin and his representative, Molotov. More importantly, the Soviet Union suggested that in addition to the treaty, there should be a secret agreement between both powers establishing “spheres of interest,” i.e., the division of Eastern Europe between Hitler and Stalin. Hitler readily agreed. This pact did not signal a change in either dictator’s ideologies. Stalin’s plan was to keep the Soviet Union out of what he concluded to be the fast approaching world war. He also thought that the isolation provided by the arrangement would eventually reinforce the cause of international communism. Stalin believed that after an unspecified period of time, the Soviet Union could reap major benefits by moving triumphantly into a ravished, war-torn Europe (Lukacs 2006, 54-56).

Stalin was pleased with the partnership and the territorial possibilities it now established with Hitler. One of the advantages to the Soviet Union was winning back
Eastern European lands which had been possessed by the former Russian Empire. Hitler was pleased as well with the acquisition of additional territory in the east. Molotov stated that this partnership was a “turning point” (Lukacs 2006, 57). Both dictators believed that their own secret interests were bolstered by the pact.

When the non-aggression treaty was made public, it did not reveal the secret understanding that Germany would seize Lithuania, that the Soviet Union would take Latvia and Estonia, and that Poland would be divided evenly between Germany and the Soviet Union (Leckie 1989, 92). Because of this, the rest of the world merely observed the arrangement without appreciable apprehension.

For Stalin there now occurred a momentous metamorphosis of his political views as he began to recognize that the highest importance should now be given to the state as well as to nations and nationalism. These ideas were a fundamental departure from Marxist doctrine. In his changing political outlook Stalin came to realize that international socialism should not maintain the high level of importance mandated by Marxism. His contemporary conversation with Georgi Dimitrov, head of the Communist International (an organization formed during Marx’s time for the purpose of dealing with looming international revolution) revealed that he now believed in the priority of national tasks. Stalin no longer saw the validity of clinging to yesterday’s rule, but, instead, began to place more importance on current conditions. This new recognition was brought about by his unabashed admiration of Hitler, who had accomplished tremendous feats in achieving German national unity through the utilization of modern tactics (Lukacs 2006, 58-59).
Stalin was surprised and impressed with the speed of Germany’s campaign in Poland. He therefore made the decision to proceed more quickly with the Russian occupation of eastern Poland. Changes were also made to the original pact which now assigned Lithuania to the Soviets as well as the exchange of other territories. Both Hitler and Stalin, at this point, began to think of territorial expansion. Hitler marched into Denmark and Norway, in the process pushing the British out of Norway. In an unbelievably short time thereafter Holland, Belgium, and France fell. Stalin, inspired by the boldness of Hitler’s audacious actions, decided to “cash in” on these events by following Hitler’s example and immediately incorporated the Baltic States (Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia) into the Soviet Union. He later issued an ultimatum to Rumania for the surrender of Bessarabia, which had once been under Russian rule. Simultaneously he added a portion of northwestern Rumania (northern Bukovina), something not mentioned in the secret pact with Hitler (Lukacs 2006, 59-62).

Upon observing this Soviet aggression, Hitler began to have doubts about Stalin’s interpretation regarding “spheres of interest.” This concern led him to consider the possible results of an imminent conquest of Russia, something he had long contemplated but had postponed while awaiting what he determined to be the most advantageous time to act (Lukacs 2006, 62). “The Hitler/Stalin co-conspirators” now began to transmogrify into “The Hitler/Stalin competitors” in territorial conquest and expansion.

Following his precepts of war, Hitler preceded to demolish the non-aggression pact with Russia in one dramatic action. On June 22, 1941, Germany launched
Operation Barbarossa, the massive invasion of Russia. In the early hours before dawn, German artillery began a tremendous barrage on a front stretching approximately one thousand miles from the Baltic southward. A combined force consisting of over three million German troops along with an additional 500,000 of their allies rushed across the Soviet border extending from Finland to the Black Sea. This was the largest assault ever conducted in the history of mankind (Evans 2009, 178-179). By this offensive action Hitler confirmed to an astounded world that no arrangement, treaty, compact, or mutual understanding, written or otherwise, with another country was sacred to him. By this bold act his personal philosophy of total war waged in order to achieve worldwide dominance of the master race was suddenly and clearly revealed in a spectacular display of force. It now also became obvious that Hitler believed the German army to be invincible.

It is ironic that Stalin, known for his suspicious and paranoid nature, and despite continuous warnings from military intelligence that Hitler’s forces were gathering in great numbers all along the western Soviet border, refused to believe that a German attack on mother Russia was imminent. As recently as mid-May 1941 he had commented to the leaders of his armed forces “You must understand that Germany will never on its own move to attack Russia…” Stalin always insisted that he knew best. This personality characteristic, believing that his was consistently the only correct judgment in any given situation no matter what anyone else advised, was one of his biggest faults (Kershaw 2007, 243). No one was more surprised by the ensuing German onslaught than was the Soviet dictator.
The amazing success of the initial assault by Germany into Russia led General Franz Halder, Commander of OKH (Army High Command), to record in his diary that “… the objective to shatter the bulk of the Russian Army this (western) side of the Dvina and Dnepr (Rivers) has been accomplished … east of (these rivers) we would encounter nothing more than partial forces … it is thus probably no overstatement to say that the Russian Campaign has been won in the space of two weeks” (Glantz & House 1995, 58).

Though the viewpoint of General Halder proved to be overly optimistic, the German series of military victories, from the onset of Operation Barbarossa in June until the huge counter-offensive launched by Soviet forces in December 1941, were unsurpassed in the history of armed conflict (Weinberg 1995, 278).

The Soviet dictator who had been, up to this time, fighting a purely defense battle, as his original convictions on warfare demanded, began to go on the offensive. The German army, ill equipped for the bleak Russian winter ahead and at the point of exhaustion for lack of reinforcements, was in a most vulnerable position when the counter-offensive began. Unknown by anyone at this time, the German military’s fate was doomed from this point until their final capitulation on May 7, 1945. From the first attack by Soviet forces in December, Germany was slowly but continually forced to retreat from Russian soil. The Soviets, bolstered by military supplies from America and a huge, seemingly endless complement of troops gleaned from its vast territory, were relentless in their offensive action against the Germans. The D-Day invasion closed the
final trap, squeezing the Third Reich from all directions until Hitler’s dream of a
paradise on earth for the “master race” became a nightmare of total destruction.

It is fair to state that the views of war professed by the dictators Hitler and Stalin
grew and changed significantly during the human tragedy known as World War II. At
the end, in the cramped hole (bunker) beneath the New Reich Chancellery garden in
Berlin, as stated in James P. O’Donnell’s *The Bunker*, Hitler was finally heard to wail
“All is lost!” The concept of war he had embraced must now have proven to be, even to
him, an abject failure (O’Donnell 1978, 23).

In marked contrast, the elation experienced by Stalin in this moment of victory
could only have made him pause to examine his original view that war should be
perceived as a defensive mechanism. His success in expanding the Communist doctrine
to other countries thanks to offensive military action during the war was obvious.

Through the examination of these two strong personalities, the dictators Hitler
and Stalin, it is possible to conclude that views of war are not stable, unalterable
concepts, but are precepts that mutate and evolve through the course of human events.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The Dictators at War’s End

The issues at stake for Germany and the Soviet Union concerning the outcome of World War II were addressed early on by two of the principal players in this theatre.

Their comments proved to be remarkably prophetic.

Joseph Goebbels, who had been appointed Reich Propaganda Leader of the Nazi party in 1930 and was a meticulous diary keeper throughout the course of “genius” Adolph Hitler’s professional political career (Evans 2005, 204-206, 244), made the following entry in his diary on June 16, 1941: “The Fuhrer says right or wrong, we must win. It is the only way. And victory is right, moral and necessary. And once we have won, who is going to question our methods? In any case we have so much to answer for already that we must win, because otherwise our entire nation—with us at its head—and all we hold dear will be eradicated” (Overy 2004, 483).

In Stalin’s July 3, 1941 radio address he stated “The enemy is cruel and implacable. He is out to seize our lands, watered with our sweat, to seize our grain and oil secured by our labour. The issue is one of life or death for the Soviet State, for the peoples of the USSR; the issue is whether the peoples of the Soviet Union shall remain free or fall into slavery” (Overy 2004, 483).

Hitler’s worst case scenario was fully realized less than four years after Goebbels fated diary entry. Just before 3:30 p.m. on April 30, 1945, to validate the
eradication of Nazism from the face of the earth, Adolf Hitler killed himself (Rees 2005, 270). Stalin’s ultimate goal, “… life … for the Soviet State …” was to be fulfilled far beyond his expectations in almost exactly the same length of time. These premonitions laid the preliminary groundwork, to a significant extent, for decisive post-World War II global events.

The violence perpetrated by the Nazis was originally perceived to have been directed outward toward other countries. This external warfare eventually destroyed the Third Reich (Payne 2000, 13). At the end of World War II, however, in addition to known atrocities committed in occupied territories, new discoveries confirmed that millions of innocent people—men, women, and children—people residing within Germany’s borders and many transported there from other countries—had been slaughtered for no other reason than that they were considered to be “different” from Hitler’s conception of those belonging to the “master race.” These disclosures revealed Hitler to have been a man filled with hate who harbored strong, misguided, and irrational beliefs and ideas (Barnett 2006, 465). The horrors committed by Hitler ultimately earned him a world-wide reputation as the most despised dictator of all time.

The Soviet dictator, Stalin, was an ignorant and corrupt individual. He was particularly unaware of conventional economic theory. He was also ignorant of the long-term consequences of terrorism, a state which usually leads to the final overthrow of regimes that practice such tactics (Barnett 2006, 465). Stalin was so steeped in the strategy of employing terrorism to solve political problems that it endured longer than the Nazi reign of terror and overtook the number of people killed by the Third Reich.
(Laar 2008, A.13). The violence initiated by the Soviet Union through internal acts of terrorism might well have caused the destruction of the country from within had not the Red Army managed to defeat Hitler. In any event, the results of this victory caused an increase in Stalin’s prestige and power and a simultaneous appearance of legitimizing the Communist system (Payne 2000, 13).

**Approach to Cold War**

By February 1945, for all practical purposes, Germany was defeated, though the final official instrument of surrender would not be signed until May 7. In order to hammer out a plan for post war disposition of the chaotic situation existing not only in Germany, but throughout war-torn Europe in the aftermath of the most catastrophic conflict in world history, the Big Three, Winston Churchill, Joseph Stalin, and Franklin D. Roosevelt met in Yalta. The conference resulted in an agreement among the three leaders that, upon the defeat of Germany, the country would be separated into four zones administered by the United States, England, France, and the Soviet Union, respectively. The eventual outcome of this agreement was that the Western Allies, with the United States in the lead, established in the western zone, (approximately two-thirds of the country), an electoral democracy, free market, and new public, municipal, and political organizations. Over time these installations developed into a fully independent, democratic post-Nazi government (Hitchcock 2004, 22, 30-35).

In Stalin’s mind the colossal human and tangible assets lost in attaining victory over Germany now justified the Soviet Union’s claims to vast territories and political power in creating a post-war European configuration (Weber 2009, 293). The authority
established in East Germany and other post-war Communist-controlled countries was a reaction to the troop violence, mass arrests, and deportations by the Soviets throughout late 1945-1946 (Slaveski 2008, 395). In occupied East Germany, as well as in the remainder of Eastern Europe, an immensely unpopular Communist-controlled economy and political system was imposed which could only be maintained over the following decades through force. This system resulted in an ingrained resentment among many of the inhabitants of these countries (Hitchcock 2004, 19, 22, 39). Yet, because so many were afraid to offer resistance, independent violent reaction to the Soviet repression became unimaginable (Slaveski 2008, 402). In 1946 Winston Churchill summed up the situation in an address delivered at Westminster College in Missouri announcing that “From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent” (Hitchcock 2004, 37-38). Used frequently in a disparaging manner, “behind the iron curtain” became a common phrase employed worldwide when referring to the Soviet Union and its puppet states during the subsequent decades, continuing until the final disintegration of the USSR in 1991.

Another idea presented at the Yalta Conference by Roosevelt was the founding of an international organization that would have the power to settle differences between and among nations in the hope of averting armed conflict. Both Churchill and Stalin supported the idea and thus the embryonic foundation for the United Nations (UN) was established (Hitchcock 2004, 19-22).

The UN, the embodiment of an idea spawned by the horrors of World War II, has managed to survive as an international institution until today. The United States is
the source of its major funding and furnishes the New York site for its headquarters. Although it has contributed to actions implemented to deter international tensions deemed threatening to world peace, the effectiveness of the UN has fallen far short of the expectations envisioned by Roosevelt. Much of the ineffectiveness of the UN lies in its lack of commanding authority and force in backing up its resolutions. Though this weakness is obvious, the United States and other major members are opposed to granting the organization sufficient independence and capacity to overcome this inherent fault. Thus, this deficiency and resulting inadequacy have become major reasons for a continuing controversy concerning the practicality of maintaining the organization.

Stalin profited greatly from the victory over Germany by expanding Soviet territory. No time was lost in establishing Communist rule in the countries overrun by Soviet troops during the conflict. This vast area included most of the eastern and central parts of Europe (Pipes 2001, 77). An integral part of the Bolshevik ideology was to spread communism to the West. At the conclusion of World War II a circle of states situated around the Soviet western border had been “cleansed.” For almost half a century these states remained under communism as acts of terror and the secret police became part of everyday life. Since the dissolution of the USSR these countries continue to recover from the repressive Communist system that prohibited their development into modern, free nations (Gellately 2008, 591).

At the close of the war the Nazis had been defeated but the Soviet Union had been reinvigorated. An added and unanticipated benefit gained by Stalin through the
successful defense of his country and the ensuing conquest of Germany was the positive effect toward the Communist regime this produced in the Soviet people. For the first time since the Russian Revolution the people came to believe that they had a legitimate government (Pipes 2001, 77). A new patriotism pervaded the nation. Stalin must have felt rejuvenated.

In April 1945, Stalin announced to Marshal Tito, head of the Communist resistance in Yugoslavia, that the Soviet Union would completely recover from the war within fifteen to twenty years. After that, he added, they would “have another go at it.” This statement was interpreted to mean a desire by the USSR to conquer the rest of Europe (Gellately 2008, 588). When Stalin first became dictator of the Soviet Union he did not have a prepared plan to establish communism in Eastern Europe. Works by Norman Naimark on the Soviet occupation of Germany and the Cold War indicate that Stalin followed a realistic foreign policy within the framework of a Marxist perspective. However, he did not lose sight of the eventual goal of world revolution (Kuromiya 2007, 720). The objective to vanquish all of Europe as expressed to Tito and, as understood by the West, foreshadowed the Cold War and remained an incessant threat for almost fifty years (Gellately 2008, 588).

The Cold War

The Cold War was a direct result of the defeat of Adolf Hitler’s Nazism and the resurgence of communism under Josef Stalin at the close of World War II. The war theories of these dictators leading into and continuing through to the end of the war created a situation ripe with all the aspects necessary for a prolonged confrontation
between East and West. The Cold War only became a reality because of Stalin’s pursuit and eventual victory over Germany. This action enabled the USSR to seize control of virtually all of Eastern Europe. Thus, Hitler’s legacy of aggression against Russia led directly to the situation that eventually developed into the Cold War. In broad terms, the Cold War can be defined as an international contest waged between capitalism as espoused by the United States, and communism as exemplified by the Soviet Union. Both sides believed that the threat of another world war was implicit in the character of the military philosophy and political composition of the other. Though the intensity of the Cold War fluctuated over its lifetime, distrust, misconceptions, and suspicion helped keep the dissension alive throughout its nearly fifty year existence. One of the major consequences of the Cold War was the arms race that developed between the US and the USSR. Enormous amounts of resources were consumed by both countries in an attempt to achieve and sustain equivalence, if not superiority, in military power. This was especially true in the area of nuclear weapons, reasoned to be vital by both sides because of the idea of avoiding conflict through “mutually assured destruction” (Eleanor Roosevelt Papers 2003, 1-3).

Though it seriously stressed the country’s resources, the Cold War helped to perpetuate the Communist system in the Soviet Union. The external foe was used as an excuse for continued totalitarian rule (Brown 2009, 477-478). After Stalin’s death in 1953, the policies initiated by his regime to ensure that the Cold War continued were carried on by his successors, some of whom were Nikita Khrushchev, Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov, and Konstantin Chernenko (McAuley 1992, 124-125).
We have not yet seen the end of communism in the world. China, North Korea, Laos, Vietnam and Cuba still retain this system of government. The Cold War, however, is definitely dead, and with it went the super power known as the USSR. The eminent Russian reformer Mikhail Gorbachev was the last head of state of the Soviet Union. Elected General Secretary of the Communist Party in March 1985, Gorbachev’s reform efforts and collaborations with President Ronald Reagan effectively brought a peaceful end to Communist Party rule in the Soviet Union. This led directly to the final breakup of the USSR (Brown 2009, 477-478).

The Post-Communist Era

More than any outside factor, the demise of communism in the USSR was fundamentally due to the internal faults of the economic policies originally installed by Stalin and then continued until the reign of Mikhail Gorbachev. Post-Cold War Russia initially suffered from a third world economy, and yet, from all appearances, believed itself to be a first world power. Concern about USSR nuclear missiles located in what became three independent countries was a high priority throughout the free world following the breakup of the Soviet Union. However, the United States was successful in supplying political, security, and monetary incentives to the former Soviet Republics of Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan, persuading them to transfer all nuclear weapons back to Russia. Thus, immediately following the fall of communism, Russia became a nation struggling to come to grips with an aging nuclear arsenal which had no apparent objective, a faltering governmental system, and an economy attempting to join the
twentieth-century from historically authoritarian roots (Leebaert 2002, 599-600). At that time, Stalin’s dream for his country had fallen short.

Russia today has made a marked recovery from the early post-Communist period. A federation since August 1991, the Russian State is the largest and most powerful of those to arise from the defunct USSR. Its economic strength is largely based on its vast energy resources of oil, natural gas, and coal (New York Times Almanac 2004, 1). Moscow often cites to the rest of the world the power it brandishes as a prime energy provider (BBC News Russia 2010, 2).

In Germany, in 1990 at the end of the Cold War, what had been two separate states, East and West Germany, quickly reunited with terms instituted by the West. More than any other event, this reunification designated the absolute end of the Cold War and its chief legacy, the division of Europe into two rival sections. Helmut Kohl, United Germany’s Chancellor from 1990-1998, was principally responsible for the successful reunification. With help from U.S. President George Bush, the eager cooperation of the divided country’s people, and the surprising assistance of Mikhail Gorbachev, the monumentally complex task was completed on October 3, 1990 (Hitchcock 2004, 368-369, 375).

Following reunification, Germany began the formidable task of bringing the standard of living in the former East German state up to that of the West. This daunting work continues, but much progress has been made. Germany today boasts “… one of the world’s highest levels of education, technological development, and economic productivity.” It has an immense “… middle class society … provides for universal
medical care, unemployment compensation and other social needs.” Germany’s prospering millions are financially able to travel abroad each year, and do! Governed by a federal republic, Germany is held in high esteem throughout the world, (U.S. Dept. of State Germany 2010, 2) a universal opinion Hitler had once hoped to someday elicit.

After Stalin’s death in 1953, new Communist or Socialist regimes were established in Asia and in Central and South America. Many or perhaps most of these countries were inspired by the amazing success demonstrated by Stalin in the defeat of Germany at the conclusion of World War II. These regimes not only looked to Stalin and his views on conflict and war as a model, but were also aided, either covertly, as in the case of initially establishing the Cuban dictatorship of Fidel Castro, or openly, as was the case in North Korea at the defeat of Japan at the end of World War II. These, and similar actions involving other countries such as China, Vietnam, and Laos, resulted in much conflict and violence, causing immeasurable suffering. The devastating results these regimes inflicted on the land and people can still be seen today (Gellately 2008, 594). America’s involvement in these newly established political systems, ostensibly to “keep the world free from Communist aggression” and to preserve “democracy,” are well known, especially the conflicts that occurred in Korea and Vietnam. Halting the “domino theory” was the underlying reason given for the sacrifice of so many American youth throughout these campaigns. Ironically, the greatly feared and anticipated Russian style Communist threat ultimately imploded, rendering the decades-old concern moot.
The Impact of Hitler’s and Stalin’s Views on Conflict and War Today

Sixty-five years after the fall of the Third Reich, a fascination with Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party exists in the world today (Engelhart 2010, 30). People continue to be enthusiastic regarding books, movies, plays, journals, and articles relating to World War II (Lukacs 2010, 51). *Mein Kampf* has become a bestseller in such unlikely counties as India, Turkey, and the Palestinian territories. Among diversified peoples, a fascination with anything concerning Hitler and the Nazis is prevalent. A thriving trade has sprung up in items that Hitler touched or might have touched. In Pakistan bumper stickers saying “I like Nazi” or “I like Hitler” are abundant. In Asia “Nazi chic” T-shirts with Hitler portraits and swastikas are popular (Engelhart 2010, 30-34).

Interest in Hitler’s ideology has not been diminished by some who embrace the currently expanding extreme right. This growing influence is exemplified by the recent increase in the national vote in Hungary for far-right candidate Jobbik Magyarorszagert Mozgalom and his “Movement for a Better Hungary.” The party espouses anti-Semitic and anti-Roma rhetoric (Engelhart 2010, 30-34).

Hitler’s legacy is also perpetuated with the increasing popularity of Hungarian history teacher, Gabor Vona, who has launched the far-right Jobbik party into mainstream politics. His percent of the national vote increased from 2.2 in 2006 to almost 17 in 2010, enough to win a place in parliament. His party vows to ban immigrants from weakening Hungarian purity—drawing comparisons to the Nazis that are hard to ignore. Vona has stressed Hungary’s past glory and concerns about globalization which resonates with today’s Hungarians. Hungarians are vulnerable to
such compelling ideas to some extent because one out of ten people is unemployed as a result of the global recession (Engelhart 2010, 30-34).

In 2008, the Nazi-inspired Freedom Party (FPO) became the third largest national party in Austria. Its leader, Heinz-Christian Strache, supports the installation of a ministry for immigrant deportation. His verbal attacks on Jewish bankers and references to Muslim women as female ninjas, and his recent campaign to overturn the 1947 law banning Hitler’s ideology confirms his extreme right philosophy. Two of the founders of his FPO party were wartime SS officers (Englehart 2010, 30-34).

The United States also has radical right-wing groups such as the Militiamen, white supremacists, and others who may be combining forces to increase strength and influence (Englehart 2010, 30-34).

In Russia today the quest for a national identity since the collapse of the USSR has relied almost completely on a reexamination of the past. This reconsideration tells the story of how progress and triumph were shaped by the direct intervention of the government during and after World War II. To advance this outlook some liberal commentators, both inside and outside Russia, have begun to focus on Lenin, Stalin, and the Communist past (Merridale 2009, 32-38).

As Russians struggle to find a new identity, a reemergence of nostalgia among many people for a return to Stalinist times has occurred. In 2000, the Stalinist national anthem (with revised words) was reintroduced by the Russian government. Most Russian citizens supported this revival (Merridale 2009, 32-38).
Rekindled knowledge of Russia’s victory in World War II has given the Russian people proof of their country’s heritage of strength and courage. Ostensibly, there is a renewed focus in Russia to recognize and celebrate this monumental feat in world history. The current government appears to be encouraging the creation of a new patriotism and authoritarianism based in part on past glories of the USSR. In 2008, students studying the post-World War II period were issued textbooks that “glossed over” Stalin’s crimes, explaining that this stage was necessary for the Soviet Union’s economic growth. According to the Kremlin, Russia needs a story that will encourage patriotism and justify a centralized form of government that Vladimir Putin, Russia’s Prime Minister, believes is necessary (Merridale 2009, 32-38).

**How Can We Create a More Enlightened Caring World Today?**

A universal lesson can be learned from World War II and other conflicts. It has been said that those who do not learn from history are destined to repeat it. This is occurring now with nostalgia for left-wing Communist ideology and the increase in right-wing ideology springing up in Austria, Hungary, India, Pakistan, and among the Palestinians, a people without a country. These countries and peoples are suffering from severe economic troubles. They are searching for a group or cause to identify with that will help give them hope, confidence, and nationalistic pride. However, the world cannot allow the legacy of dictators such as Hitler and Stalin to gain control. Preventing despots from attaining power is easier than removing them by force once they have become established. If budding dictators do manage to gain power, it is the moral obligation of America and its allies to remove them. If the UN was an effective
instrument for solving these problems as envisioned by Roosevelt, they would be nipped in the bud. Unfortunately, that UN does not exist in the real world. Thus, it becomes the responsibility of the United States and its international colleagues, in the interest of maintaining their way of life, to act. How do we, the singular superpower remaining on earth, and our allies, identify these pretenders/dictators? As scripture says, “By their actions you shall know them.”

The removal of Saddam Hussein as the dictator of Iraq in 2003 by the United States and its allies is illustrative of a moral obligation and necessary action. The civilized peoples of the world agree that the world is better off without Saddam Hussein. The question remains, however, was the price too high? When dictators are deposed as in the case of Iraq, the country cannot be left in chaos. The liberating powers are obligated to help establish a new government. Most of the civilized world agrees that a newly organized government should be established based on democratic leadership and principles in order to prevent another despot from taking control. The expense of such a task, in material and human resources, has proven to be exorbitantly high.

Some dictators in the world today appear to pose no threat to their neighbors. Among these are: Raul Castro of Cuba, Alexander Lukashenko of Belarus (BBC News Belarus 2010, 1), and Kurbanguly Berdymukhamedov of Turkmenistan (BBC News Profile 2007, 1). Currently, two of the most notorious dictators bearing strictest scrutiny because of the potential threat to their own people, neighbors, and by extension, the
world are: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran and Kim Jong-il of North Korea. These dictators should be either confronted, removed, or both.

The danger of a country posing a threat to its neighbors and/or other nations is more complex today than it was in the time of Hitler and Stalin, with the threat of terrorism and religious fanaticism acting as added catalysts. The potential conflicts that might arise in Iran make the Middle East a particular area of concern. The rise of this hostile regime and others such as North Korea, have become major threats to world peace. North Korea has already succeeded in developing nuclear weapons. This, along with the desire of other threatening regimes to develop nuclear weapons is especially worrisome. The use of such weapons today would cause far more devastation than the world has ever known.

In recent years the rise of religious fanaticism and terrorism has radically changed our world. The rise of fascism once did the same. At the time, there was no doubt that Germany, under the dictatorship of Adolf Hitler, was intent upon subjugating the entire world. This intimidation was of such magnitude that it caused governments with diametrically opposed ideologies to join forces in order to save themselves by eradicating the threat. Communism and capitalism were brought together just long enough to destroy the common enemy, then, after the victory, quickly reverted to their previous adversarial relationship. Even so, much was learned regarding the beliefs and methods of those who participated on both sides of this unprecedented conflict. The formidable challenge confronting us now requires that we proceed, armed not only with the most sophisticated technical applications and advanced intelligence gathering
procedures available but also with the vast knowledge of past experience. Because we have learned that the visions of war and conflict fostered by some dictators can materialize into real, unimaginable horror for the entire world, our vigilance must be unending.
REFERENCE LIST


