The Conspicuous Similarities Between Adolf Hitler and Vladimir Putin

Benard Ochieng' - *Bachelor of Arts, International Relations and Diplomacy*, Maseno University.

Follow my blog here: benmyarts.wordpress.com

18th February 2024

In as much as some may disagree, I notice stark similarities between Nazi Germany's Adolf Hitler and Russia's Vladimir Putin. The similarities are many but I can only mention the few that I can.

1) **Dictatorship/Authoritarianism and Fascism**

The first similarity is that both practiced dictatorship and fascism in the leadership of their states. They were both legitimately elected into power and eventually became dictators and destroyed democracy in their states.

They both consolidated power by intimidating, arresting, and killing opposition members. They both used state police to inflict physical abuse on demonstrators or protestors through arrests, harassment, and detentions.

2) **Totalitarianism**

The second similarity is that they both practiced totalitarianism and therefore, used state machinery, power, and influence to spread propaganda to gain country-wide support from their subjects.

They both used state apparatus to control the media, prohibiting media reports criticizing the government or having views from the opposition members.

3) **Racial/Ethnic Superiority**

The third similarity is that they believed that their races or ethnicities, and that is, the German and Russian races or ethnicities respectively, were superior to others, exceptional, special, and with a great history and prowess traditionally.

4) **National grievances of injustice from the Western Powers**

The fourth similarity is that they both had national grievances of injustice from the Western powers**,** and the need to unify their people, the Germans and Russians respectively, to avenge perceived historical injustices from the Western powers.

In the case of Adolf Hitler, the Western powers defeated and humiliated Germany in World War 1 and forced Germany to surrender on terms of the West dictated in the Versailles Treaty, which Germany was forced to sign leading to not only a humiliating end of the war for Germany, but also

the de-militarization of Germany. Hitler therefore, mobilized the German people through his Nazi Party to wage war against the Western powers, leading to the outbreak of World War 2.

In the case of Putin, he believed that the Western powers, through their political, economic, and socio-cultural values and ideologies, contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union, which was everything he adored and lived and worked for in his life. These Western values and ideologies became more favorable to the people in the Soviet states and they demanded independence and one by one, declared independence from the Soviet Union following the demolishing of the Berlin Wall in 1989. In 1991, the Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev caved in to this pressure and formally dissolved the Soviet Union and this was seen as an ideological victory by the Western powers and the rest of the West-affiliated capitalist countries and a humiliating defeat of Russia and the Soviet Union.

The newly formed independent ex-Soviet states began shifting their allegiance from Moscow to the Western powers as many of them joined the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which is a military alliance. They joined this alliance to receive protection from any possible future Russian aggression and attempts at subjugation.

According to Putin, the West contributed to the collapse of his beloved Soviet Union and deprived Russia of its spheres of influence and glory. He used this to stir resentment amongst Russian people against the Western powers and mobilize the Russian people to wage war against the Western powers, to restore Russia to its long-lost glory and power in the world, and the only way he could accomplish this, was through military invasions, annexations and ultra-nationalist control of ex-Soviet states, for example the 1990s military invasion of semi-autonomous Russian Republic of Chechnya, the 2008 military invasion of Georgia and annexation of Abkhazian and South Ossetian provinces of Georgia, the 2014 military invasion of Ukraine and annexation of the Crimean province of Ukraine, the 2022 military invasion of Ukraine and annexation of more provinces in the Donbass, Kherson and Zaporhyzhia regions.

There are speculations amongst analysts that Putin desires to restore the Soviet Union or expand Russian borders into other sovereign states so that he can create a modern larger Russian Empire, just like the historical political figures he admires in Russian history like the Tsars who used expansionist policies to expand Russian borders to create a very huge empire.

5) Expansionism and Irredentism

The fifth similarity is that both believed and asserted that their states were surrounded or encircled by hostile states that victimized citizens of their ethnic origins.

For example, Hitler claimed that European states were victimizing and mistreating German-speaking people in their countries.

Putin also claimed that some European states were victimizing or oppressing Russian-speaking people in their countries.

Both Hitler and Putin used these false excuses as pretexts for military invasions and annexations of sovereign territories of or whole of their neighboring states, in the name of protecting people of their ethnicities and languages in the neighboring states. This is called irredentism, which is an ideology and practice in international relations that involves expansionism, which is the use of military force, coercion, or intimidation to extend a country's power and influence and sometimes illegally extending borders into another state, and this is specifically referred to as territorial expansionism.

6) Ultranationalism

The sixth similarity is that both believed in and practiced ultranationalism which is an extreme form of nationalism and is centered on the belief that one's state should dominate the internal affairs of another state even by use of coercion or force, specifically, military force, in the pursuit of national interests.

In the case of Putin, he believed that Russia should dominate the internal affairs of Russia's neighboring ex-Soviet states like Georgia, Ukraine, and the Baltic states of Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia. After the collapse and formal dissolution of the Soviet Union, the former states of the Soviet Union leaned towards the West, joining Western international organizations and institutions like the European Union and NATO to protect themselves from any possible future Russian coercive influence and aggressive expansionism, including territorial aggression and expansionism. Russia under the leadership of Boris Yeltsin following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, to some extent, accepted the geopolitical reality of the post-Soviet era and signed treaties or agreements of non-interference in the internal affairs of the ex-Soviet states and also non-interference in the security arrangements, preferences and architecture of the ex-Soviet states.

These treaties include the **Budapest Memorandum** with Ukraine and treaties and agreements signed at the **1999 Istanbul Summit**. This means that ex-Soviet states who wanted to join the European Union and NATO or whatever Western institutions, were free to do so, as per these treaties and agreements.

However, when Yeltsin, stepped down and handed over power to Putin, Putin reversed these policies by Yeltsin and branded the West the enemy of Russia and NATO especially, as a threat to Russia's interests and security in Eastern Europe. He asserted that ex-Soviet states should refrain from joining Western institutions like the EU and NATO, and he later lamented the collapse and dissolution of the Soviet Union as the "***greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century***" and the West and its ideologies were to blame. He therefore concluded that to restore Russia to its former Soviet glory, Russia must secure its so-called "sphere of influence" in Eastern Europe from Western influence by literally interfering in and controlling the internal affairs of the ex-Soviet states in Eastern Europe and also, if possible, expand Russia's borders into these states to solidify or affirm full ultranationalist control of these states. This foreign policy under Putin that is geared towards interference in internal matters of other states and expanding Russia's borders into other sovereign states without international authority and consent of affected states, has no legal basis under international law and is a direct violation of international laws as enshrined in the United Nations Chatter.

Putin's Russia has achieved minimal influence on and interference in ex-Soviet states that had Westernized and joined EU and NATO, but those who had not yet joined by 2008, were so unlucky and became military and ultranationalist targets for Russia, for example, Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014 and 2022.

In the case of Adolf Hitler and his Nazi regime, they exerted considerable efforts to control and affect the internal affairs of European states, particularly during the 1930s and throughout World War II. These efforts included diplomatic and political pressure, military invasions, and puppet governments. Hitler attempted to control European states' internal affairs in multiple ways.

1. **Diplomatic Pressure and Alliances**: Before the outbreak of World War II, Hitler relied on diplomacy to exert influence on other countries, formed alliances and pacts to isolate his enemies and secure his eastern and western flanks. The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact Nazi Germany signed with the Soviet Union in 1939 is a good example, as it not only secured Germany's eastern border but also divided Eastern Europe into German and Soviet spheres of influence.
2. **Hitler's Germany directly annexed or demanded the surrender of territories from neighbouring countries.** The remilitarization of the Rhineland in 1936 was the first step,

followed by the Anschluss of Austria in 1938, and the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia later that same year following the Munich Agreement. In 1939, the remaining part of Czechoslovakia was taken over, which led to the country disintegrating and being under German control.

3. **Puppet Governments and Occupation**: the Nazis installed puppet governments that were subservient to German interests or directly administered the territories through military occupation, in countries that were invaded and occupied, like Poland, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, and France. The puppet regimes were forced to follow Nazi policies, which included the persecution of Jews and other groups deemed undesirable, economic exploitation, and the conscription of labor for the German war effort.

4. **The economies of occupied countries were controlled and exploited by Hitler's Germany, which directed resources, labor, and production towards the needs of the German war machine.** This encompassed plundering resources, forced labor, and obtaining agricultural and industrial output.

5. **The Nazis used propaganda and reorganization of occupied societies to reflect Nazi racial and political hierarchies to spread their ideology, both cultural and political influences.** In some areas, it was common to suppress local cultures, languages, and traditions in favour of Germanization policies.

6. **The threat of German military might, even without direct military action, was used to persuade governments to comply with Hitler's demands.** This was evident before the annexations and territorial changes during the war.

Hitler's aggressive foreign policy and the actions of the Nazi regime together resulted directly in the outbreak of World War II and had a significant impact on the internal affairs of European states, alteration of national borders, governments, and societies in ways that would have lasting effects for decades.

7) Human Rights Violations and Deliberate Military Targeting and Killing of Civilians

The seventh similarity is that both Hitler's and Putin's regimes were active in human rights violations in their respective states and the states that they subjugated, victimizing both civilians and military personnel.

For example, during World War 2, Hitler's Nazi military forces wasted their resources bombing British civilians and civilian infrastructure to crush British morale for the war, when these resources could be used in targeting and destruction of British military forces and their assets. This wastage of resources by Nazi Germany on civilian targets worked in the favour of the British and allied ultimate victory over Hitler's Nazi Germany in the war.

Putin's military forces also wasted much of their resources bombing Ukrainian civilians and civilian infrastructure since the beginning of the 2022 Russian military invasion of Ukraine, a move that failed to crush Ukrainian morale and change the tides of war against Ukraine.

Russian military forces were also involved in the torture of Ukrainian civilians and Ukrainian soldiers captured and held captive as prisoners of war, a violation of the Geneva Conventions on the Rules of War.

8) Militarism and Alliances with Authoritarian States

The eighth similarity between Hitler and Putin is that they both believed in and practiced militarism and formed political and military alliances with other authoritarian states.

On the part of Adolf Hitler, he protested the de-militarization of Germany after World War 1, which was dictated by the terms of surrender for Germany in the Versailles Treaty, signed to end the war with the Western powers.

Germany's military was reduced in size and capabilities and when Adolf Hitler got in power, he embarked on the re-armament of the German military and militarization of Germany. This militarization involved increasing the size and capabilities of the German military forces and engaging deeply in the research and development of new weapons systems, chemical and biological weapons, aircraft engines, and many more military resources.

Hitler formed political and military alliances with authoritarian states that also engaged in fascism, expansionism (military conquest), and ultranationalism. Such states included Imperial Japan and Benito Mussolini's Fascist Italy.

On the part of Putin, since he got into power, he has enabled the militarization of the Russian state and society around ultranationalist ideals aimed at Russia's neighboring states, especially the Eastern European ex-soviet states, all in the name of restoring Russia to its long-lost glory of a powerful empire in the international system. He has accelerated the research and development of new modern weapons systems, ranging from the AK-12 infantry rifle, the Sukhoi-35 fighter jet, and the Kinzhal and Zircon hypersonic missiles. Putin has rallied the Russian society to support his militaristic, ultranationalist, and expansionist ideals which have led to the Russian military invasions and annexation of sovereign territories of Russia's neighboring states such as Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014 and 2022. Putin does not want these countries to join NATO and EU, claiming this threatens Russia's interests and security, and therefore seeks to dominate and control the internal affairs of these states for the benefit of Russia but to the detriment of these states.

Putin has built alliances, both formal and loose economic, political, and military alliances with authoritarian, totalitarian, militaristic, and ultranationalist states such as North Korea, the People's Republic of China, Iran, and Syria.

References:

Read more on the links below:

Is Putin the New Hitler? (2022), Steve Herman, Voice of America:

https://www.voanews.com/a/is-putin-the-new-hitler-/6476408.html

Putin's Russia Rose Like Hiter's Germany-and could end the same (2022), Alexander J. Motyl, The Hill:

https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/3470515-putins-russia-rose-like-hitlers-germany-and-could-end-the-same/