Longwood University

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Eliot Dix

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Professor David Coles

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Throughout the last 2 centuries in European and American history we have experienced numerous incredibly prolific leaders. Though for everyone of them, is a man intoxicated by power, who used bloodshed and intimidation to rule with an iron fist. They typically have in common their humble beginnings, showing genuine promise as a leader in battle, or in their respective political roles. It appeared to be the eventual promotion to total control that sourced their unquenchable thirst for power. Notable men in this role were Napoleon Bonaparte, Adolf Hitler, and Joseph Stalin. Napoleon while perhaps not being a citable influence to his successors, was an early example an egotistical bloodthirsty dictator who would eventually bring upon his own downfall through one major mistake. The emerging middle class of France longed for stability in the post revolution era. The only sense of this came from military might inciting a nationalistic resopnse from the people. Napoleon would later use this phenomena to his advantage in creating a powerful nation under his rule.

The French directory feared the ambitious Napoleon. His success as General in charge of the coup to win back legislative seats, granted him major respect from the Directory. Though his success was threatening, and the government thought he could be most useful, in mind, but out of site. Napoleon triumphed in the invasion of Italy and lead the effort against Austria. He was easily victorious against Austria and concluded the Treaty of Campo, removing them from the war. Before long Napoleon’s efforts granted French control over the Italian Peninsula and Switzerland. This success would not last indefinitely however. His attempted invasion of the Ottomon Empire ended in defeat, causing the French to reflect on their strength, realizing reforms would be necessary to once again tangle with other European powers. Napoleon’s offensive was far from over.

One of the directors, Abbe Sieyes, would propose a new constitution that would provide “an executive body independent of the whims of electoral politics,”(pg 586). The idea would ideally create confidence from “below,” (the people) with power still being in the hands of the “above.” Sieyes sought to use Napoleon in this effort, as he was an acclaimed figurehead for his recent military success, however he underestimated Napoleon’s own desire for power. Three consuls would control the “above,” one of which Napoleon overstepped Sieyes to control through the Constitution of the Year VIII. This new constitution would establish the rule of one man, Napoleon Bonaparte. He would continue to use flattery, bribes, and just his overall cunning and charm to establish peace France. Bonaparte suppressed opposition mightily, instating prefects to control different avenues of centralized administration. Secret police would handle defectors and rebellions, bringing a highly sought after sense of national pride to France. Napoleon began to take advantage of knowingly false claims of assination plots and coups to do as he wished as a national leader. He was able to attack the Jacobins because of a plot to attack his life which was incorrectly associated with them, and actually was the doing of the Royalists. The same instance occured in his assassination of the Duke of Bourbon, who was accused of plots Napoleon knew him to be innocent of, but Napoleon flagrantly violated international law anyway. Bonaparte also concluded a Concordat with Pope Pius VII, which declared Catholicism as the national religion in France. This agreement required clergyman who had accepted the revolution to resign. The new clergy was under sworn order of the state. Napoleon continued to further unify the church and state to restore the sense of nationalism he desired.

In 1802, Napoleon was elected to a long term position as consul, and drafted what would later be known as the Napoleonic code. This removed the formation of workers unions and created disproportionate rights of employers over their employees. It also restricted female independence in many regions, enacting universal discriminatory laws. This code was beneficial for property owners however, strengthening the working class. His use of nationalism and propaganda strengthened his army to one that could actually compete with, and dominate other national powers. Napoleon continued in his might to win battles against Austria, Prussia, and Russia, eventually crowning himself Emperor of Italy. Napoleon had turned France into a unified dominant European force to be reckoned with. Napoleon was in control of his dynasty, encompassing all of Germany.

Bonaparte divided his Empire into satellite states run individually by members of his family. This stretched his power a little thin, and around this time noticed, Britain’s extreme naval superiority. This became a concern to him as he realized as his imperialist conquest grew, opposition towards him would as well. It became apparent that British naval strength could provide the necessary support to rebellions that would overthrow him. In the major blunder of his career, Napoleon began an economic warfare against Britain. This would immediately backfire given British naval control. They quickly responded with their own economic decrees, that strongly urged their allies not to trade with France. Napoleon’s restriction of Europeon free trade would come to be known as the continental system, which only furthered frustrated foreign and internal merchants. This merely strengthened the desire for uprising, and would weaken his forces. Yet still, his bold egotistical power driven mindset, sent him on an imperial conquest of Russia that would eventually render him defeated. Napoleon would lose 600,000 men in a chess match of a battle against Russia, who allowed Moscow to be burnt down, destroying Napoleon’s battle strategy. The Russians retreated and left his army to freeze, defeated finally by the forces of the Russian winter.

2). The rise of Nazism, and the reign of Adolf Hitler was one of, if not the darkest time in all of humanity. Certain economic vulnerability in Germany created a climate in which something of this magnitude became possible. Germany’s outright loss of World War 1 crippled the nation to a point of national catastrophe, opening a pathway for radical leadership that would change history forever. Hitler was an extreme example of power hungry imperialism gone horribly wrong, where an almost addictive desire for power overtakes the initial goals of centralized national strength. It is common for the careers of dictators to start this way, as it resembles the practices of Stalin and Napoleon. Through intimidation, dystopian nationalism and violent entitlement of a selected “type” of person, the Nazi party grew incredibly powerful.   
 The economic disaster Germany inherited after World War 1 would be the first step in understanding the rise of the Nazi party and the existence of Facism in Germany. Inflation was so incredibly high at this time that the German mark was worth next to nothing as it “traded at a ratio of 64 to 1...”(pg 880), with the American photographs. Historic photographs show citizens shopping with wheelbarrows of money, as well as simply burning marks as fuel for the stove. The French intended to secure their reparations, and did so by invading the Ruhr. This was a German territory that houses numerous German factories with which the French could utitlize the resources of to get their moneys worth. Germany had truly hit rock bottom, and lacked the representation or direction to adequately solve these issues. Non labour workers in Germany were especially victimized by the inflation, causing major unrest in the lower and middle classes.

The Weimar Republic was the German government post World War1, and pre rise of the Nazi party, spanning the years of 1919 to 1933. This government included a Constitution including the basic rights of speech, press, and assembly, as well as basic government structure including a president, chancellor, and parliament (known as the reichstag). This constitution had contained an article that became a major reason for Hitler’s eventual rise to power. Article 48, “Allowed the president, in an emergency, to rule by decree,”(pg 879). The Weimar Government lived through humiliations, and generally minimal popularity amongst the people. In 1920 the right wing Kapp-Putsch attempted a coup that was narrowly avoided by Government officials fleeing the city. Around the same time workers conducted a general strike which had to be combated by government troops. The principal reason the reparations were accepted by Germany was due to threats of further invasion. The Weimar Republic represented a time of instability and prevalent violence throughout its tenure.

Through his own political interest after his brief term in World War 1 Hitler identified with a group known as the Christian Socialist Party. This group helped bring Hitler’s anti-simetic beliefs to fruition. Before long he would be fully anti Marxism due to simply to its association with Jews. His next step toward political power was the discovery of the Nationalist Social German Workers party, or Nazis. It became apparent to him that he could redefine the idea of a socialist, and actively compete with Marxists to win over the support of the working class. Remnant to the practices of Napoleon, Hitler did a strong job of cultivating extreme nationalism, and utilizing the advantages of the necessary unity in Germany. Different propoganda was rolled out by the Nazi’s in ways that specifically addressed the economic pressures in different areas. This tailored propaganda worked well to advertise for the party, and increase its national support. Hitler’s strong sense of initiative, and powerful driven attitude naturally allowed him to rise to the top of the Nazi party. His ideology would closely resemble that of Benito Musilini, another popular fascist figurehead. The Nazi’s openly bashed liberals, believing they were incapeable of resurrecting Germany and undoing the ‘wrongdoings’ of the Treaty of Versailles. Their first violent demonstration would be the Beer Hall Putsch. This was a coup attempted on the Weimar Republic, fueled by the devastating economic scenario, seeking to spread a national opinion of dissatisfaction with the government. Hitler would be tried for high treason, however the trial would simply bring him publicity, and further spread his reputation.

The Weimar Constitution would have another flaw that would ultimately aid Hitler’s rise to power. This was that the government called for equal representation of any political parties, regardless of size. With 107 seats in the Reichstag, (the majority over the communists 77), the Nazi party began gaining major ground in their national conquest of power. Due to incredibly high rates of unemployment, citizens flooded the ranks of the SA, the first paramilitary force Hitler would deploy. Parades were held in all sections of Germany from the city to the countryside with up to 100,000 men, using tactics of intimidation and dominance to establish new rule in the nation. For Nazis, “...politics meant the capture of power through terror, intimidation, as well as through elections,”(pg 885).

Chancellor Papen wanted to utilize the power the Nazis produced, without giving Hitler any absolute power. He attempted to bargain with them using the incentive that Nazis couldn’t come to power on their own, and should essentially take what he gives them. In December of 1932, Papen resigned, and leftist General Kurt von Schleicher became chancellor. This erupted a civil war between the far left and the far right. Paul von Hindenburg, the aging President of the Weimar answered calls of concern from his inner circle that leftists coalitions would be far more dangerous than Hitler could ever be. As a result, Hindenburg used his ability to rule by decree, and appointed Hitler chancellor. This was a foolish political move that if done differently could have kept Hitler out of power indefinitely. Upon Hidenburg’s death, the offices of the chancellor and president were combined, making hitler the Fuhrer, and absolute leader of Germany. His anti-simetic beliefs soon became laws in the formation of the Nuremberg Laws. These devastated Jewish life economically and otherwise, legalizing the “exclusion and humiliation,”(pg888) of Jews in Germany. Jews lost their pensions, could not start businesses, and were in many ways constantly harassed before the start of the war, when the greatest atrocity in human history took place throughout his Final Solution.

The Nazi’s essentially thrived on the fact that war is good for the economy, forgoing all political and civil liberty, “destroying a free trade union movement, limiting the private excersize of capital, ignoring consumer satisfaction,”(pg 889), and therefore ridding the nation of unemployment to prepare for war and the aggression that follows. Hitler’s major goal was rearmament in preparation for war, and did so by rerouting capital enterprise to mainly benefit the state on a larger scale. War was eminent in Hitler’s mind, and he would soon engage in one.

3). The German invasion of Poland is considered somewhat of a hallmark for the start of the second World War. After the Nazi-Soviet Nonagression pact, tensions rose in Europe, as the Soviet Union acted as a passive body guard that merely permitted Hitler’s “bullying” of Europe, allowing Germany to advance at full force. The Russians felt as though the western powers expected them to accept the entire burden of Germany’s growing military intention. This suspicion as well as frustration of being left out of the Munich Pact lead to the formation of the the Nazi Soviet Pact.

German fighting style known as “blitzkrieg,” was about swift, powerful, unexpected combinations of aerial attacks and major ground forces. They invaded poland with ease, directly violating the treaty of Versailles and showing outward disregard for the League of Nations. As was discussed within their pact, the Nazi’s and Soviet Union split Poland between themselves. Two days after Germany’s initial invasion, Britain and France declared war on Germany. By 1940, the Russians had control over Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia, all of which became puppet republics of the Soviet Union. German’s solidified their northern front by invading Denmark and Norway, and received surrenders from both within two weeks. France was present attempting to assist in Belgium, who soon recognized France’s incompetence, and chose to retain their neutrality leaving the French armies exposed. France collapsed, and Mussolini reaped the spoils of victory, by invading southern France. In two pivotal months, Hitler had successfully accomplished more than Germany had in 4 years of the First World War.

With the fall of France, Hitler expected Britain to concede to his demands, offering that they maintain their empire in exchange for a “free hand,” to essentially complete his continental control, however newly appointed Winston Churchill refused to negotiate. Churchill had long since been displeased with the Nazi party and general tryanny throughout history. His pride for the power and freedom of Great Britain would never allow him to accommodate the demands of Hitler. Though the fight seemed hopeless for Britain, The United States would help to strengthen their odds. While at this point in the war they held fast to isolationist ideology, they continuously provided supplies and resources overseas to aid the British. Hitler began to consider an invasion of Britain via aerial attacks, leading him to bomb London every night for two months. Damage however, was manageable, and moral was anything but destroyed. The attack strengthened British nationalism and lead to a dramatic victory in the Battle of Britain in which the Royal Air Force destroyed twice as many planes as they had lost. The British would live to fight another day. During this attempt at Britain, Hitler attempted an invasion of Russia which was devastating at first. Killing millions, destroying the majority of their planes and takes, victory seemed imminent for the Germans. However Hitler’s hesitance around taking Moscow, caused a delay in that blitzkrieg. The Russian winter began taking its toll on the unequipped German army, and flashbacks to Napoleon's downfall at the hands of the harsh Russian elements became prevalent.

The United States entering the War would serve as a major turning point for the Allied forces. US support of Britain was nearly enough for Hitler to declare war on the US, however he held off. Japenese desire to expand brought them into an alliance with Germany and Italy, which prompted the United States to cut off oil exports to Japan. Without a declaration of war, the Japenese bombed pearl harbor, prompting the US to declare war with Japan. Given the newly formed Axis alliance, the US found itself under way in war declared by all three powers. America’s power potential was endless, however at this time their army was “...tiny, inexperienced, and poorly supplied,”(pg 912). The future was seemingly grim for the allies, as Germany would advance deeper into Russia, and threatened Brittish naval fronts with their submarines. However the US defeated Japan triumphantly in a naval battle that would secure Australia’s independence. One month later, US victory at the Battle of Midway would secure control of Hawaii, and majorly shift the momentum of the war in the pacific. This would allow the US to focus its efforts on Europe.

Mussolini being overthrown in Italy by a powerful coup would be a devastating blow to the Axis powers. Germany’s imperial campaign waged on however, seeking to adopt control of oil fields near the Caspian Sea. Stalingrad would become a vital hole allowing Germany to be attacked through the south. Hitler’s desire to acquire, clashing with Stalin’s insatiable desire to defend, lead to the bloodiest battle throughout the entire war. The Russians would lose more men than the US did in the entire war in this battle, but persisted in defeating Hitler, who waged far more than he could handle in this battle. This crushing blow would begin the downfall of Nazi control. American and Brittish precision bombing of Germany would shorten the length of the war, along with another defeat at the Battle of the Bulge in Germany’s final feeble attempt to gain ground in the West. On June 6th 1944, also known as D-Day, allied troops landed on the coast of Normandy engaging in a bloody battle that solidified Germany’s defeat. The global, imperial, fascist dictatorships desired by Germany and Japan would be stifled. It was intended that democracy be returned to Europe, however the Soviet Union coming off of the Bolshevik revolution had different ideas that would eventually lead to the Cold War.

4). The Cold War began after World War 2 between the United States and Soviet Union simply on account of vastly differing ideologies and opinions. The Soviets attempt to continue its expansion Westward would continue to spread of Tsarist Russian communist foreign policy. Britain had originally owned the rights to the task of controlling the nature of Russian expansion in the middle east and elsewhere, however the US would inherit this task as British global strength decreased. The US feared Stalin having a global plot to undermine western democracy. The two nations went back and forth, attempted to gain the support of surrounding countries to either enclose the USSR and keep stop the spread of Communism, or from the USSR’s perspective, undergo their own attempts overthrow regimes friendly to the United States. The United States attempt at “containment” would make them a long term player in European foreign policy. Vast military support and expenditures to anti communist territories was used to strengthen the fight against the spread of communism in Europe.

The Truman Doctrine, and the Marshall plan were two US attempts to provide support by strengthening countries under pressure from communist interest. The Truman Doctrine advocated support for “free people who are resisting subjugation by armed minorities, or by outside pressures,”(pg939). The Marshall plan, named after George C. Marshall, the secretary of state at the time who proposed the plan, would invite European states to take part in provided economic support on the condition that they work together for their mutual benefit, essentially buying European allies. Soviet satellite or “puppet” states were strongly encouraged to join, many of whom display interest, however the USSR forbade them from doing so.

In 1948, Stalin brutally displayed his dominance over Eastern Europe, attempting to bring them under Soviet Control. He murdered the foreign minister of Czechoslovakia, and the son of the founder of Czechoslovakia, which would force it into Soviet Rule. The allies had some difficulty in deciding how Germany would be dismembered. The United States control over the Western Zone of Germany was conducted very differently than the Soviets in the East. The US would have to help Germany’s economy become self sustainable, attempting to restore Germany’s industrial capacity. The Soviets became concerned with the economic success in the US influenced western Germany, in which the German mark was trading better than their own currency in East Germany. This frustrated the Soviets, prompting them to keep the west out of Berlin by blockading all railroads and highways that traveled from Berlin to West Germany. Eventually Germany was split into two states, the German Federal Republic, and the German Democratic Republic. This tightened tensions between the divided country, and would remain a central staple of the Cold War. The formation of NATO, the National Atlantic Treaty Organization would unite Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, France, Britain, and later Greece, Turkey, and West Germany. This was an alliance of defense between these countries that agreed to support one another if ever attacked. For the first time the United States was committed to defend allies outside of the western hemisphere. To get even, the Warsaw Pact was formed, including Soviet controlled states and East Germany that recognized the presence of communist control in these areas. The unfriendly tension of the Cold War remained steady.

The Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East was important early stage of the cold war. The Zionest movement supported the ideas that Jews deserved a national home in Palestine, which encouraged the migration of thousands of Jews to the Yishuv, or Jewish community within Palestine. Palestinians saw them as intruders, insighting bloody conflict to ensue. The western powers felt as though the Jews should be granted refuge due to their extreme and horrific persecution from Nazi Germany. Thus the United Nations created a Jewish state, and an Arabic state in Palestine, which caused increasing tension amongst Arabs who didn’t appreciate new settlers. Immediately after the establishment of Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, and Iraq invaded. By the end of the fighting, Israel managed to expand its borders, farther out than those previously determined by the United Nations. The new Jewish state was divided between Jordan and Israel. World superpowers would be drawn into this conflict, due to economic interests regarding oil and other resources. The existing conflict between the US and USSR followed suit in the form of US supported Israel or Russian supported Arabs. The Korean War appears to just be further demonstration of US and Russian Conflict simply in a new location. The control of Korea was split between the two powers, and predictably, split into a “contained” South Korea, and a Russian influenced Communist North Korea. Chinese aided combat threatened the United States in South Korea forcing them to retreat. In 1953, “...the Eisenhower administration concluded an armistice ending the Korean War and restoring the border near the 38th parallel,”(pg 949). This restored the US confidence in the practicality of their strategy of containment, as they held fast to this method of controlling the perceived global threat of communism. After the successful armistice, hopes that global peace could resume existed, however an unsuccessful Geneva conference between the countries who formally made up the allied powers, accomplished little, and allowed the Cold War to wage on.

1956 was an eventful year for the Cold War. With the death of Stalin, the era of Krushchev began. Without fully breaking away from authoritarian communist ideology, Krushchev distanced himself from the oppressive freedom revoking rule of Stalin.   
In The Secret Speech of 1956 he even openly criticized “Stalin and his crimes against socialist justice during purged of the 1930s,” (pg 947). This changed the way other Soviet Union leaders from Soviet controlled states would conduct their governments. Slightly more freedom emerged within communist states. The Three Crises of 1956 were also key moments within the Krushchev era. The Suez intervention was an unsuccessful war between Israel and Egypt that lead to British and French intervention before the US convinced them to withdraw. The Soviet Union was opposed their involvement. It became clear that without the United States, the Western Powers were incapable of “imposing their will on the rest of the world,”(pg 947). The Polish Crisis proved a similar inadequacy of the Eastern powers of imposing their own will. The Poles refused to accept the Moscow appointed leader after the death of their prime minister, but ended up still having a prime minister that satisfied the Soviet Union by solidifying their involvement in the Warsaw Pact. The Hungarian uprising saw a desire for an independent Hungary. Inre Nagy desired for Hungarian unification at the cost of seeking assistance from non-communist states and even threatening to withdraw from the Warsaw Pact. Predictably this was strongly denied by the Soviet Union, and lead to an invasion of Hungary and the execution of Nagy. These events displayed to the world that the US and USSR are indeed “superpowers,” that while different in nature, would have their wills expressed through the vessels of the Eastern and Western blocs.

After the launch of the spacecraft, Sputnik, the Russians sought a “peaceful coexistence,”(pg 948) with the United States. This was in a sense a way of suggesting that with their new found technological superiority, they were truly a force to be reckoned with, and presented peace as a way to avoid further conflict given Russians self proclaimed superiority. Conversations were held about nuclear weapons and a summit in Paris was scheduled for 1960. However, just before the summit could occur, Russians shot down an American spy plane conducting surveillance, which caused the Russians to call off the summit.

The erection of the Berlin Wall came about due to a threatened Eastern Germany, who was insulted by the migration of East Germany to West Germany. To end this travel a concrete wall was constructed to restrict travel between the two. The wall brought to US commitment to the prosperity of West Germany into question, as perhaps it seems as though they abandoned the eventual hope for a unified democratic Germany.

The Cuban Missile crisis represented the first initial ease of tension between the US and USSR, not without an incredibly intense process however. When Fidel Castro took control of Cuba, his communist regime sought the allyship of the Soviet Union. Within a few years the Soviet Union was housing Nuclear missiles in Cuba just 100 miles off the coast of Florida. This raised major concerns that a nuclear war could be an actuality. As a result President Kennedy “...blockaded Cuba, and halted the shipment of new missiles, and demanded the shipment of existing installations,”(pg 949). The Soviets would agree to Kennedy’s terms which caused some issues amongst Krushchev’s supporters. Some believed he wasn’t showing enough initiative in preparation for as strong or stronger than the US in the case of a war. It seemed to some that his commitment to communism being a dominant world force was encroached upon by the United States. Nevertheless, the two superpowers signed a nuclear test ban treaty, which for the first time would ease tensions, and remove sense of approaching war from between them.

To say which power was more at fault during this decade long dance could almost be considered an impossibility. One could however say from their own personal opinion as to which of their governing ideologies was the least hostile in nature. It could be said the oppression of basic liberties guaranteed in the United States is reason enough to support to Western Powers “defense” over the Eastern powers “offense.” However it remains true that the incredible fear the United States has of communism has cost the US countless lives and billions of dollars in resources. That being said, the Soviet expectations to continue down a path that bares eerie resemblance to the oppressive regime of Nazi’s whom they just defeated, was likely a literal red flag for the United States. After decades of reform under Gorbachev and the dismantlement of the Soviet Union, Russia still remains in the oppressive bloody hands of Vladamir Putin and his communist rule. The tides have in many ways turned with the current endorsement of communist president Putin, by the acting US president.