

Adolf hitler and napoleon bonaparte comparison

[People](#), [Adolf Hitler](#)



Hitler and Napoleon had numerous differences; however, I believe there were more similarities. Both leaders immigrated in the country they ended up ruling; both conquered most of European countries; both had radical views about wars, and both were surprisingly fast in their fighting.

Nevertheless, the most significant similarities between Adolf Hitler and Napoleon Bonaparte is how they were accepted as monarchs in a society that was democratic before; and what they did for the countries after becoming monarchs.

A hundred years before Hitler became Chancellor, Hegel, in a famous course of lectures at the University of Berlin, had pointed to the role of 'World-historical individuals' as the agents by which 'the Will of the World Spirit', the plan of Providence, is carried out.

They may all be called Heroes, in as much as they have derived their purposes and their vocation, not from the calm regular course of things, sanctioned by the existing order; but from a concealed fount, from that inner Spirit, still hidden beneath the surface, which impinges on the outer world as on a shell and bursts it into pieces. (Such were Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon.)

They were practical, political men. But at the same time they were thinking men, who had an insight into the requirements of the time--what was ripe for development. This was the very Truth for their age, for their world. . . .

It was theirs to know this nascent principle, the necessary, directly sequent step in progress, which their world was to take; to make this their aim, and to expend their energy in promoting it. World-historical men -- the Heroes of

an epoch -- must therefore be recognized as its clear-sighted ones: their deeds, their words are the best of their time. (Hegel, 1902, pp. 31-32)

Hitler probably held some such belief about himself from an early period. It was clear enough in the speech he made at his trial in 1924, (Hegel , 1902, p. 117) and after he came out of prison those near him noticed that he began to hold aloof, to set a barrier between himself and his followers. After he came to power it became more noticeable.

It was in March 1936, that he made the famous assertion already quoted: 'I go the way that Providence dictates with the assurance of a sleep-walker.' (Domarus, 2004)

As soon as Hitler began to think and talk about the organization of the State it is clear that the metaphor which dominated his mind was that of an army. He saw the State as an instrument of power in which the qualities to be valued were discipline, unity and sacrifice.

It was from the Army that he took the Führerprinzip, the leadership principle, upon which first the Nazi Party, and later the National Socialist State, were built. 'Our Constitution,' wrote Nazi Germany's leading lawyer, Dr Hans Frank, 'is the will of the Führer.' (Volkischer Beobachter, 1936). This was in fact literally true.

The Weimar Constitution was never replaced, it was simply suspended by the Enabling Law, which was renewed periodically and placed all power in Hitler's hands. Hitler thus enjoyed a more complete measure of power than Napoleon, since he had been careful not to allow the growth of any institution which might in an emergency be used as a check on him.

Hitler's originality lay not in his ideas, but in the terrifying literal way in which he set to work to translate these ideas into reality, and his unequalled grasp of the means by which to do this. To read Hitler's speeches and table talk is to be struck again and again by the lack of magnanimity or of any trace of moral greatness.

His comments on everything except politics display a cocksure ignorance and an ineradicable vulgarity. Yet this vulgarity of mind, like the insignificance of his appearance, the badly fitting raincoat and the lock of hair plastered over his forehead of the early Hitler, was perfectly compatible with brilliant political gifts.

Accustomed to associate such gifts with the qualities of intellect which Napoleon possessed, we are astonished and offended by this combination. Yet to underestimate Hitler as a politician, to dismiss him as an ignorant demagogue, is to make precisely the mistake that so many Germans made in the early 1930s.

The conception of the Nazi Party, the propaganda with which it must appeal to the German people, and the tactics by which it would come to power--these were unquestionably Hitler's.

After 1934 there were no rivals left and by 1938 he had removed the last checks on his freedom of action. Thereafter, he exercised an arbitrary rule in Germany to a degree rarely, if ever, equalled in a modern industrialized state.

At the same time, from the re-militarization of the Rhineland to the invasion of Russia, he won a series of successes in diplomacy and war which

established an hegemony over the continent of Europe comparable with that of Napoleon at the height of his fame.

While these could not have been won without a people and an Army willing to serve him, it was Hitler who provided the indispensable leadership, the flair for grasping opportunities, the boldness in using them.

In retrospect his mistakes appear obvious, and it is easy to be complacent about the inevitability of his defeat; but it took the combined efforts of the three most powerful nations in the world to break his hold on Europe.

Luck and the disunity of his opponents will account for much of Hitler's success--as it will of Napoleon's--but not for all. He began with few advantages, a man without a name and without support other than that which he acquired for himself, not even a citizen of the country he aspired to rule.

To achieve what he did Hitler needed--and possessed--talents out of the ordinary which in sum amounted to political genius, however evil its fruits (Taylor, 1950).

The obvious weakness of Hitler's policy, the fault which destroyed him as surely as it had destroyed Napoleon, was his inability to stop. By the end of 1938 Hitler had transformed Germany's position in international affairs.

He had everything to gain by waiting for a year or two before taking another step, sitting back to profit from the divisions and hesitations of the other European Powers, instead of driving them, by the fears he aroused, into reluctant combination. Moreover, a temporary relaxation of the rearmament drive would have had considerable economic benefits for Germany.

According to General Jodl, at the height of the fighting in the West Hitler expressed his determination to deal with Russia as soon as the military situation made it at all possible. Hitherto he had always made it a condition of any attack on Russia that Germany must first be secure against intervention from the west.

In his speech to the generals on 23 November 1939 he had repeated this condition, first laid down in *Mein Kampf*: 'We can oppose Russia only when we are free in the west.' (Domarus , 2004). But, with Britain expelled from the Continent and left without an ally, was this not already as good as settled?

Hitler was prepared to wait until the autumn to see if the British could be brought to admit defeat openly, but not longer. In the meantime, before July was out, even before the Luftwaffe had begun its all-out offensive against the British, he gave orders to start preliminary planning for an attack on Russia.

There is an obvious parallel with Napoleon in 1805 the French Emperor started planning the march eastwards which was to lead to Austerlitz while still maintaining his preparations for the invasion of Britain from the camp at Boulogne.

In comparison, in the east, after throwing back the Russians in March 1943, in July the Germans launched a new offensive against their lines round Kursk. Half a million men, the finest troops left in the German Army, including seventeen panzer divisions equipped with the new heavy Tiger tanks, were used to carry it out.

After heavy and costly fighting the Russians not only succeeded in bringing the German attack to a halt, but on 12 July themselves opened an offensive (for the first time in the summer) farther north. Gradually their attacks spread along the whole front.

On 4 August they retook Orel, and on 23 August Kharkov. On 23 September they recaptured Poltava, and on the 25th Smolensk, from which both Napoleon and Hitler had directed their invasions of Russia.

From the re-militarization of the Rhineland to the invasion of Russia, he won a series of successes in diplomacy and war which established an hegemony over the continent of Europe comparable with that of Napoleon at the height of his fame. Luck and the disunity of his opponents will account for much of Hitler's success--as it will of Napoleon's--but not for all.

After the war, Adolf Hitler distanced himself from his family. Christa Schroeder summed it up: "He has no feelings for the family." (Schroeder, 1949, p. 115) It was more than that--Hitler had little in common with his cousins in the country or with his siblings. He had outgrown them. He was rightly wary of Alois Jr. and his son Patrick, although they actually never harmed him.

Perhaps they knew too much, but what they revealed in French and American papers was innocuous. Hitler was opposed to nepotism and criticized Napoleon for it. His feelings about his relatives were truly mixed. Though he remembered them in his will, he also gave orders to make the countryside around Döllersheim, one of the villages in his ancestral region (Ahnengau), into an artillery range (Wake, 1977).

Undoubtedly, Hitler and Napoleon had numerous differences; however I believe there were more similarities. Both leaders immigrated in the country they ended up ruling; both conquered most of European countries; both had radical views about wars, and both were surprisingly fast in their fighting.

Nevertheless, the most significant similarities between Adolf Hitler and Napoleon Bonaparte is how they were accepted as monarchs in a society that was democratic before; and what they did for the countries after becoming monarchs (Taylor, 1950).

Evidently, France and Germany needed someone because they were both in economic chaos. Both men were intent in building a new type of state with a new social order. Both leaders took the advantage of more or less unlimited power, assuming, however, this power very carefully and legally.