

Hillary Clinton: Playing a Dog-Eared “Hitler” Card

Actions by Russia’s President Vladimir Putin in the Crimea

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The frontrunner to become the next president of the United States is playing an old and dangerous political game — comparing a foreign leader to Adolf Hitler.

At a private charity event on Tuesday, in comments preserved on [audio](#), Hillary Clinton talked about actions by Russia’s President Vladimir Putin in the Crimea. “Now if this sounds familiar, it’s what Hitler did back in the ‘30s,” she said.

The next day, Clinton gave the inflammatory story more oxygen when speaking at UCLA. She “largely stood by the remarks,” the Washington Post [reported](#). Clinton “said she was merely noting parallels between Putin’s claim that he was protecting Russian-speaking minorities in Crimea and Hitler’s moves into Poland, Czechoslovakia and other parts of Europe to protect German minorities.”

Clinton denied that she was comparing Putin with Hitler even while she persisted in comparing Putin with Hitler. “I just want people to have a little historic perspective,” she said. “I’m not making a comparison certainly, but I am recommending that we perhaps can learn from this tactic that has been used before.”

Yes indeed. Let’s learn from this tactic that has been used before — the tactic of comparing overseas adversaries to Hitler. Such comparisons by U.S. political leaders have a long history of fueling momentum for war.

“Surrender in Vietnam” would not bring peace, President Lyndon Johnson said at a news conference on July 28, 1965 as he tried to justify escalating the war, “because we learned from Hitler at Munich that success only feeds the appetite of aggression.”

After Ho Chi Minh was gone, the Hitler analogy went to other leaders of countries in U.S. crosshairs. The tag was also useful when attached to governments facing U.S.-backed armies.

Three decades ago, while Washington funded the contra forces in Nicaragua, absurd efforts to smear the elected left-wing Sandinistas knew no rhetorical bounds. Secretary of State George Shultz said on February 15, 1984, at a speech in Boston: “I’ve had good friends who experienced Germany in the 1930s go there and come back and say, ‘I’ve visited many communist countries, but Nicaragua doesn’t feel like that. It feels like Nazi Germany.’”

Washington embraced Panama’s Gen. Manuel Noriega as an ally, and for a while he was a CIA collaborator. But there was a falling out, and tension spiked in the summer of 1989. Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger said that drug trafficking by Noriega “is

aggression as surely as Adolf Hitler's invasion of Poland 50 years ago was aggression." A U.S. invasion overthrew Noriega in December 1989.

In early August 1990, the sudden Iraqi invasion of Kuwait abruptly ended cordial relations between Washington and Baghdad. The two governments had a history of close cooperation during the 1980s. But President George H. W. Bush proclaimed that Saddam Hussein was "a little Hitler." In January 1991, the U.S. government launched the Gulf War.

Near the end of the decade, Hillary Clinton got a close look at how useful it can be to conflate a foreign leader with Hitler, as President Bill Clinton and top aides repeatedly drew the parallel against Serbia's president, Slobodan Milosevic. In late March 1999, the day before the bombing of Kosovo and Serbia began, President Clinton said in a speech: "And so I want to talk to you about Kosovo today but just remember this — it's about our values. What if someone had listened to Winston Churchill and stood up to Adolf Hitler earlier?"

As the U.S.-led NATO bombing intensified, so did efforts to justify it with references to Hitler. "Clinton and his senior advisers harked repeatedly back to images of World War II and Nazism to give moral weight to the bombing," the Washington Post reported. Vice President Al Gore chimed in for the war chorus, calling Milosevic "one of these junior-league Hitler types."

Just a few years later, the George W. Bush administration cranked up a revival of Saddam-Hitler comparisons. They became commonplace.

Five months before the invasion of Iraq, it was nothing extraordinary when a leading congressional Democrat pulled out all the stops. "Had Hitler's regime been taken out in a timely fashion," said Rep. Tom Lantos, "the 51 million innocent people who lost their lives during the Second World War would have been able to finish their normal life cycles. Mr. Chairman, if we appease Saddam Hussein, we will stand humiliated before both humanity and history."

From the Vietnam War to the Iraq War, facile and wildly inaccurate comparisons between foreign adversaries and Adolf Hitler have served the interests of politicians hell-bent on propelling the United States into war. Often, those politicians succeeded. The carnage and the endless suffering have been vast.

Now, Hillary Clinton is ratcheting up her own Hitler analogies. She knows as well as anyone the power they can generate for demonizing a targeted leader.

With the largest nuclear arsenals on the planet, the United States and Russia have the entire world on a horrific knife's edge. Nuclear saber-rattling is implicit in what the prospective President Hillary Clinton has done in recent days, going out of her way to tar Russia's president with a Hitler brush. Her eagerness to heighten tensions with Russia indicates that she is willing to risk war — and even nuclear holocaust — for the benefit of her political ambitions.

Norman Solomon is co-founder of RootsAction.org and founding director of the Institute for Public Accuracy. His books include "War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death." Information about the documentary based on the book is at www.WarMadeEasyTheMovie.org.

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