

Hitler's Rise to Power

Basis of comparison	Argument	Limitations
Personality	<p>Topic Sentence Hitler's personal appeal enabled him to gain overwhelming support from the German people, while his ability to be ruthless in outmaneuvering his opponents eliminated challenges to his rise to power.</p> <p>Personal Appeal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hitler was a charismatic orator whose powerful speeches had a spell-binding effect on his audience, winning him supporters at large rallies • Armed with a simple message of strong, authoritarian leadership, Hitler adeptly manipulated the emotions of the Germans and played on widespread German nationalism • For example, he manipulated his trial after the failed 1923 Beerhall Putsch to attack the Weimar Republic and gain national fame • Proclaimed himself an ordinary patriot who had been forced to act out of love for his fatherland • Hitler also recognized the importance of propaganda, which he directed through Goebbels, his propaganda chief <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shrewd and ruthless, Hitler often stirred up fear of communism, which he claimed would plunge Germany into social anarchy • Used scapegoats like the Jews to present the Nazis as having the solution to Germany's problems • These popular fears and anxieties were eventually distilled by Hitler into the Nazis' ideology including German ultra-nationalism, strong government, anti-communism, and volksgemeinschaft • His ability to pull together so many different ideas enabled the Nazis to be the only party able to transcend class boundaries and win over diverse groups • Essential to his rise to power as he was heavily reliant on electoral success • Led Intentionalist historians like Andreas Hillgruber to argue that Hitler's ideology and personality was indispensable to the development of Nazism <p>Personal Ability <u>Surrounding himself with talented subordinates</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was able to recruit and ensure the loyalty of many talented individuals such as Strasser, Goebbels and Rohm who had a key role in his rise to 	<p>Circumstances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structuralists like Lisa Pines argued that Hitler's skills as an orator and his techniques for winning the masses could not have brought him power without the right circumstances and conditions • Hitler's personality alone could not have led to his rise to power as the Nazis' electoral performance remained at a mere 2.6% until 1928 • Stephen J. Lee: It took the Great Depression to convert a trickle of middle-class support into a flood • His popularity surged as a result of the 1929 economic crisis and the Weimar Republic's failure to resolve it • Conversely, the votes for the Nazis dropped by 4.3% in November 1932 when the situation was improving • People did not see the need for extremist policies • Hence circumstances played a vital role

	<p>power</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strasser re-organized the party and developed a national party structure; built associated organizations for youths, women and students • Gobbels was the key figure responsible for creating the cult of Hitler, which was central to the Nazis' support from the people • Created the Nazi Film Service and party newspaper • Rohm led the SA to intimidate people to vote for the Nazis; "propaganda by deed" <p>Manipulation of violence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hitler's ruthlessness was also key in eliminating his opponents obstructing his rise to power • In June 1934, Hitler had Rohm and many other SA leaders arrested and executed during the Night of Long Knives • Also eliminated other political leaders who opposed him including ex-Chancellor Schleicher • Won the support of the SS with the removal of the SA • Used the Reichstag Fire in February 1933 to stir up fear of communism and as a pretext for passing the Enabling Act in March through an alliance with the Centre Party • Suspended civil liberties and gave him extensive legislative powers • With the death of Hindenburg in 1934, instead of calling for elections, Hitler took over as Fuhrer, merging the two offices of President and Chancellor <p>Historiography:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bracher: It was not Himmler, Bormann, Heydrich and the Nazi Party, but with Hitler himself that the German people had identified with enthusiastically 	
<p>Role of the Party</p>	<p>Topic Sentence The Nazi Party was well-organized under Hitler, which both legitimized the party and allowed for its growth, paving the way for Hitler's electoral success.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appealed to a wide spectrum of society • Set up regional branches in different parts of the country, developed a national party structure • Enjoyed much freedom to develop the party according to local circumstances • Built up a series of associated organizations for young people, women, students etc. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain support from all classes, showed it was practical in its approach • Backed up by extensive use of propaganda and SA violence (<i>refer to use of force</i>) • Distinguished the Nazis from other parties 	
Propaganda	<p>Topic Sentence Propaganda was an important tool in promoting Hitler and his ideology to the masses, as he relied on electoral success to gain power in the Weimar Republic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensured the Nazis' ideology permeated the German population through a simple and effective propaganda campaign masterminded by Goebbels and Ernest Rohm • Made extensive use of grassroots organizations • Organized door-to-door campaigning and leafleting • Disseminated posters with simple messages that clearly stated their goals • Used local insiders and notables to gain support by focusing on bread and butter issues, targeting the entire German population • Aided by elaborate mass rallies and Nazi rituals, which played up the cult of Hitler <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1923 Beerhall Putsch: used the trial to attack the Weimar Republic • Proclaimed himself an ordinary patriot who had been forced to act out of love for his fatherland • Allowed him to gain national fame • Enhanced his image within the right-wing conservatives • Viewed him as a man of action who was able to take the necessary risks to achieve his goals 	<p>Economic instability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite Hitler's use of propaganda to gain support for the Nazis' ideology, the party did not receive much electoral success from 1925 to 1928 • Remained at a mere 2.6% in 1928 • The tremendous political and economic instability following the Great Depression was what made Hitler's ideology deeply appealing • The Nazis emerged as the largest Reichstag party in July 1932 <p>Personality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • However, it was Hitler's personal appeal that won over the undying devotion of people like Goebbels and Ernest Rohm who would mastermind his propaganda campaign • According to Bracher, it was not Himmler, Bormann, Heydrich and the Nazi Party, but with Hitler himself that the German people had identified with enthusiastically
Use of force/terror (can also use as propaganda)	<p>Topic Sentence Hitler's rise saw the extensive use of force by the SA for widespread public indoctrination and for intimidating political opponents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SA was the Nazis' paramilitary organization, and its uniform and marches seemed to symbolize order to the Germans • The SA's "propaganda by deed" through street violence with the communists depicted the Nazis as the defenders of the German people against the "red menace" • Focused attention on the communist threat and the Nazi's commitment to quash it • Gave the impression that the Nazis would offer firm government and that Hitler was the best insurance against a communist revolution 	<p>Weakness of Conservative Elites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In November 1932, Nazis had a drop of 4.2% in the elections • The middle class was alienated by the violence; began to desert the Nazis • Chancellor Bruning had banned the SA due to their street violence • Showed that the Nazis were on the beginning of decline in 1932 • Hitler could not have risen to power without the intervention of the political elites to be made Chancellor

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Won him support among many upper class businessmen • Fear of an SA seizure of power persuaded some elites to favour Hitler playing a more prominent role in the government since they thought he was the only one who could control the SA • The SA was critical in passing the Enabling Act in March 1933 by threatening Reichstag members who wanted to vote against the act • Gave Hitler formidable power by suspending civil liberties; led to the Nazification of many key state organs • Ruthlessly used the SS to eliminate the SA and any opposition to his rule during the Night of Long Knives in June 1934, which led to the further entrenchment of Hitler's power within the party • Richard Bessel: Although some people were alarmed by the violence, many were pleased that the Nazis were taking a strong stand on communism 	
Ideology	<p>Topic Sentence Nazism was formulated to appeal to the broadest sections of society possible, extending Hitler's sphere of influence to a wide spectrum of people and gaining their support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • German ultra-nationalism: Sought to restore Germany back to greatness after its defeat in WWI and the humiliating Treaty of Versailles • Take its rightful place in the world as the Aryan master-race • Appealed strongly to a population left resentful and vindictive from Germany's treatment by the Allies • Was an ideological glue to hold together diverse groups of people • Strong government: Promise of strong and clear government based on authoritarian principles • Many Germans from the middle class found the idea of a firm leader determined to restore order very appealing • Volksgemeinschaft (Folk Community): • Frank McDonough: One key reason diverse groups supported Nazis was not primarily because of its opposition to the Versailles Treaty or anti-Semitism • But was due to Hitler's powerful utopian promise to end class-based politics and replace them with a popular ethnically united folk community • Anti-Communism: Crush Communism and build a disciplined workforce 	<p>Economic instability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hitler's ideology had been around since 1924 with the publication of <i>Mein Kampf</i> but his rise to power only accelerated in the early 1930s in the wake of an economic crisis • Despite the Nazis' ideological appeal, the party did not receive much electoral success from 1925 to 1928 • The tremendous political and economic instability following the Great Depression was what made Hitler's ideology deeply appealing • The Nazis emerged as the largest Reichstag party in July 1932

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gained support from the <i>mittelstand</i> and upper class conservatives eg. businessmen, who feared the influence of communism on their workers and profits • Lebensraum: Extension of living space into the Slavic lands and recovery of German territory seceded in the Treaty of Versailles • Anti-Semitism: Used the vastly unpopular Jews as a scapegoat for economic woes during the Great Depression • The Nazis' ability to pull together so many different ideas enabled them to transcend class boundaries and win over diverse groups • Became the only party in the Weimar Republic able to project an appeal to all sectors of the population • With the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, the Nazis' lucrative promises gained widespread support amidst the atmosphere of fear and uncertainty • Allowed Hitler to gain mass support, which was integral to his electoral success <p>Historiography:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intentionalist historians eg. Klaus Hildebrand: The Nazis' appeal was the result of Hitler's ideology 	
Existing Regime	<p>Topic Sentence</p> <p>In the aftermath of WW1, the new Weimar state had been unable to properly establish itself in Germany. This allowed Hitler and the Nazis to exploit its weaknesses in order to gain popularity among the Germans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to Stephen J. Lee, during the Weimar period, the onus was always on democracy to prove it was better than the authoritarian models of the past • However, this was something the Weimar Republic categorically failed to do • The Weimar constitution was based on proportional representation and afforded huge emergency powers to the President as a result of Article 48 • Coalition governments had to be formed to pass laws, however they were weak and were extremely disunited • Hence, the Reichstag was fractious and crippled with instability, while President Hindenburg's excessive use of Article 48 severely undermined democracy • As a result, in the early 1920s, liberal coalitions oversaw periods of political 	<p>Economic crisis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite such turbulence, a period of relative stability from 1924-29 meant that in 1928, the Nazis only won 2.6% of the national vote • The Communists also benefitted from popular discontent with the Weimar Republic; had 30% of the national vote in 1928 • Hence, it was the Great Depression that dealt a devastating blow to democracy and propelled Hitler into the political mainstream

	<p>and economic instability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eg. 1919 Spartacist Uprising, 1920 Kapp Putsch and 1923 Beerhall Putsch • Disillusioned with the ineffectiveness of democracy, people turned to the Nazis and their attractive promises of strong authoritarian government • Enabled them to gain widespread popularity <p>Impact of WW1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact of Germany's defeat in WW1 was key in losing much support for the Weimar Republic's foreign policy • The Treaty of Versailles was a source of deep humiliation to Germany • Resulted in the war guilt clause, loss of territory, imposition of reparations and demilitarization • The Germans were convinced that they had not lost the war; had not been invaded or defeated at the time the armistice was requested as did not expect to be punished • Blamed the Weimar politicians who signed the treaty for "stabbing Germany in the back" and capitulating to the West • Deep dissatisfaction for the new regime; turned to Hitler's attractive promises of lebensraum and restoring Germany back to greatness 	
Economic conditions	<p>Topic Sentence The collapse of the German economy as a result of the Great Depression had dealt a devastating blow to democracy and created the conditions essential to propel Hitler into the political mainstream.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Germany's recovery in the mid-1920s had been greatly aided by US loans under the Dawes plan, which were withdrawn in the aftermath of the 1929 Wall Street Crash, leaving the German economy decimated • Chancellor Bruning failed to deal with the crisis, and unemployment rose to 6 million by 1932 • According to Stephen J. Lee, the crisis dealt a devastating blow to democracy and the Weimar Republic came under intense criticism • The Germans began to look for attractive alternatives like the Nazis • Offered national unity, prosperity, authoritarian leadership and economic recovery • The Nazis' popularity soared as shown in the electoral results • In 1930, it became the second largest party in the Reichstag with 18.4% of the national vote and in 1932, the largest single party with 37.4% • Enabled Hitler and the Nazis to gain legitimacy and support, which was crucial to his rise to power 	<p>Miscalculation of political elites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Nazis still lacked an overall majority in the Reichstag and thus President Hindenburg initially refused to have him made Chancellor • Moreover, the Nazi party lost 4.3% of the national vote when the economy was showing its first signs of recovery • Hence, economic instability was essential to Hitler's rise to prominence but does not fully explain his rise to power • Caroline Sharples and J.W. Hiden: The rise of Hitler was not inevitable but depended on the complicated maneuvering of politicians such as Papen, Schleicher and Hindenburg to invite Hitler to become Chancellor <p>Personality/Ideology/Propaganda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Such conditions would have benefited any party with a radical ideology, not just the Nazis • Support for other parties eg. SPD and KPD remained strong • Frank McDonough: Although the Nazis did profit from the overheated political atmosphere created by the Great Depression, the unemployed also voted for the SPD and KPD • A great deal of credit must therefore be given to Hitler and the efficient Nazi propaganda machine in persuading voters to see the Nazis as the

	<p><u>Economic instability</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A default of reparation payments in January 1923 led to the French occupying the Ruhr, catalyzing a period of hyperinflation • By November 1923, a dollar was worth 4 billion marks • Left many Germans bankrupt, with millions losing savings and pensions • While the period 1924-29 witnessed partial economy recovery, any optimism was shattered by the collapse of the economy after 1929 • <i>(Link to above)</i> • Due to hyperinflation, temporary recovery and the Great Depression in succession, the Weimar Republic could not reassure the masses of economic stability • People began to look for attractive alternatives like the Nazis • Offered national unity, prosperity, authoritarian leadership and economic recovery 	<p>major outlet for their frustration</p>
<p>Opposition</p>	<p>Topic Sentence</p> <p>Hitler benefitted from the disunity of his opponents, which failed to mount an effective challenge to his bid for power.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The opposition to the Nazis was heavily divided and could not prove to be a challenge • The SPD and KPD constantly fought against each other; rivaled each other for votes • SPD formed majority of the Weimar Republic, was the biggest supporter of parliamentary democracy • Fell into decline after the Great Depression • Rejected cuts in social benefits and wages required for continued coexistence in coalition in 1929 • Forced Chancellor Brüning to call elections in 1930, which the Nazis won 18% at the expense of the SPD • KPD opposed democracy, wanted to seize power and initiate class war, establish communism • KPD gains in 1930 triggered fears of revolution and left-right civil war by the middle class and conservatives, who remembered the 1919 Spartacist uprising • Shifted their votes to the Nazis • Were unable to present a united struggle against the Nazis • The Nazis capitalized on this by focusing on uniting the people of Germany • Was the only party that claimed to represent all diverse groups in Germany and promised to unite all Germans under the Third Reich 	<p>Personality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hitler's opportunistic personality and the Nazi party's strengths in contrast to their rivals enabled him to capitalize on the weakness of the opposition to gain support <p>Personality/Ideology/Role of the Party</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stephen J. Lee: Though fortuitous circumstances caused Hitler to become Chancellor, it does not mean that Hitler and the Nazis did little themselves to achieve this • It is unlikely that the conservative elites would have been as willing to collaborate with a weak fringe group or an unpopular leader • It was evident to them that Hitler and the Nazis had managed more effectively than any other party to mobilize popular support • Moreover, the position of Chancellor would not have meant anything without Hitler's political ruthlessness during the period 1933 to 1934 • Hitler manipulated the events of the Reichstag Fire to pass the Enabling Act, and become Führer following the Night of Long Knives and death of Hindenburg <p>Use of force</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of force through the SA was crucial to the passing of the Enabling Act (refer to use of force)

- Allowed them to gain widespread support from those disillusioned with other parties, which was key for the Nazis' electoral success and Hitler's rise to power

Misjudgment of the conservative politicians

The personal rivalry between Chancellors Papen and Schleicher, which led to Hindenburg's appointment of Hitler as Chancellor, was indispensable to Hitler's rise to power.

- In the wake of the Great Depression, successive coalition governments in the Reichstag had collapsed and were caught in an impasse
- President Hindenburg was in urgent need of a popular figurehead for a new coalition and turned to Hitler under Papen's advice
- Papen wanted to use Hitler to bring down his personal rival, former Chancellor Schleicher
- Convinced Hindenburg to appoint Hitler as Chancellor in January 1933, believing that Hitler could be easily manipulated
- However, even as Chancellor, Hitler's power was by no means absolute
- The cabinet was dominated by non-Nazis and his position was dependent on Hindenburg who openly despised him
- Used the Reichstag Fire in February 1933 to stir up fear of communism and as a pretext for passing the Enabling Act in March through an alliance with the Centre Party
- Suspended civil liberties and gave him extensive legislative powers
- Was followed by a decree banning opposition parties and the establishment of elections in which only Nazi party candidates stood in November 1933
- Subsequently, Hitler ruthlessly used the SS to eliminate the SA and any opposition to his rule during the Night of Long Knives in July 1934
- Rose to Fuhrer in 1934 when he combined the positions of President and Chancellor with Hindenburg's death

Historiography:

- **Roderick Gordon:** Hitler's ascension was a matter of a single decision on the part of a clique of conservative elites

Time frame: 1918 to 1934 (Führer)

Terms:

1. "Personal appeal" – Qualities that allowed Hitler to attract support and be a popular choice for a leader
2. "Personal ability" – Skills or actions that Hitler possessed that he used to gain more power, eg. opportunism and ruthlessness
3. "Ideology" – Set of ideas and beliefs based on which a country is governed in, which Hitler used to gain support from the masses
4. "Conditions of the state" – Structural problems inherent within the existing government that enabled Hitler to capitalize on to attract support and seize power
5. "Economic crisis" – State of turmoil and suffering brought about by economic collapse
6. "Force" – Use of violence through military and paramilitary organizations to combat and suppress opponents
7. "Rise to power" – Hitler's rise to power would refer to his efforts and the circumstances that led to him outmaneuvering his opposition to emerge as Führer in 1934

Personality intro

Much of the great man historical theory as suggested by Thomas Carlyle would have suggested that the rise of dictators like Hitler was more due to their personal appeal and ability.

Circumstances intro

The rise to power of many leaders of single-party states in the 20th century would have been impossible without the unique circumstances and conditions within their respective nations. Hitler was no exception.