

content: periodisation

Formation: 1918–1919

PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE → TOV

TERMS OF THE TREATY

War guilt: Putting blame on Germany for starting the war

Reparations: Agreed without German consultation, 6600 MILLION POUNDS

German Territories and Colonies: former German colonies controlled as *mandates* by LoN, forbidden to join with Austria. Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia became independent
Alsace-Lorraine to France, Rhineland became DMZ, Saarland and Danzig run by LoN.

Germany's armed forces: Restricted to prevent war- 100k men, conscription banned, not allowed armoured vehicles save 6 battleships

League of Nations: Int'l peacekeeping force, Germany not invited until it showed it was *peace-loving*

REACTION TO TREATY

OVERALL: HORROR and OUTRAGE, ANGRY that government NOT REPRESENTED

War guilt: Extremely harsh, did not feel they started or lost the war, felt that blame should be shared

Reparations: Particularly hated as this would cripple already tattered German economy

Territories: Major blow to German pride and economy

Disarmament: Upset Germans as army was symbol of German pride

WEIMAR REPUBLIC

Reaction to democracy: German people could not accept democracy straightaway after traditional, autocratic, Kaiser-style system of government

CONSTITUTION

Weaknesses of Proportional Representation: No clear majority, no clear leadership, too many diverse views in parliament, unable to reach consensus and compromise, ineffective and inefficient in making swift decisions to urgent problems. Political fragmentation →

too many parties and they had **diverse views** → political decision-making **fraught with internal conflicts** → **cannot produce consensus**

Weaknesses of Article 48: "Abuse of power", showed that the Weimar govt had so little authority that they had to resort to such emergency powers to make decisions → democracy did not serve the govt well

Ebert used Article 48 136 TIMES, Brüning had to use it to pass budget in July 1930

Early years: 1919–1923

POLITICAL PROBLEMS

ToV

Germans blamed Ebert, Weimar Republic for signing Treaty and causing problems
Signing of ToV seen as betrayal of and disgrace to German pride and German army
Germans felt "Stabbed in the back" by Weimar govt → propaganda by right-wing opponents to discredit Weimar govt during their "Backstabbing Legend" campaign → legitimacy of Weimar government **questioned** by the people → doubt in the Weimar govt → loss of support from the start

Source of bitterness in Germany that Nazis and right-wingers exploited

Economic disaster led to people harbouring resentment for the government, lost the support of people esp. middle class

LEFT-WING

Communist Spartacists against democratic Germany

Attempted communist revolution crushed by anti-communist Freikorps (whose help Ebert engaged)

Ebert's ruthless measures against Communists gained approval from many Germans

RIGHT-WING OPPOSITION

Nationalistic Germans favouring Kaiser's dictatorial style of government

ToV led to German desire for revenge and return to the power Germany had under the Kaiser, with strong country and army

Foreign minister Rathenau murdered by extremists

Kapp Putsch

Dr Wolfgang Kapp led Freikorps in a rebellion

But saved by German industrial workers who declared general strike

Munich Putsch

Led by Adolf Hitler

Hitler got arrested but judge was impressed, giving him light punishment

*Both Putschs showed that Weimar government had very little control and authority over their opponents and even their own army → diminished impression of Weimar's authority in people's eyes

ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

Economic chaos caused by ToV reparations, etc.

RUHR OCCUPATION

Reparations not paid in 1922, French and Belgian troops occupied Ruhr in response

Took what was owed in form of raw materials and goods

So government ordered workers to go on strike, halting industrial production in most important region → collapse of German currency

HYPERINFLATION

With no goods to trade, government simply printed money

Prices and wages rocketed, money became worthless

Middle class with savings in bank suffered most

Bread rose from 0.63marks in 1918 to 201 billion marks in Nov 1923

Golden years: Aug 1923–1929

WEIMAR UNDER STRESEMANN

POLICIES

Called off passive resistance in the Ruhr

Called in worthless marks, replaced with new currency, Rentenmark

Dawes plan - negotiated to receive American loans

Renegotiated reparations payments

ACHIEVEMENTS

Economy: Economic crisis solved very quickly thanks to Stresemann's policies

Built up Germany's prosperity, by 1927 industry recovered and achieved pre-war levels of production in 1928, exports increasing

BIG BUSINESSES and WORKERS were winners; Weimar governments sympathetic towards unions, led to improved pay and conditions

Culture: Cultural revival, flourishing of literature, cinema (producing greatest int'l star Marlene Dietrich), new exciting Bauhaus-style architecture, censorship removed

Politics: Stabilised, parties supporting Weimar democracy did well, Nazis gained less than 3% of votes in 1928 election

Success in Stresemann years made Germans uninterested in extreme politics

Foreign policy: Germany accepted into LoN, remove British, French, Belgian troops from Rhineland

PROBLEMS

Economy: Economic boom precarious- US loans could be called in at short notice which would ruin German economy

Peasant farmers overproducing in peacetime

Small business owners disillusioned, business threatened by largely Jew-owned large department stores → these people felt Weimar government offered them little

Culture: Conservative Germans felt culture represented moral decline

Wandervogel movement reacted to Weimar culture wanting return to simple country values and less decadence in towns → powerful feeling harnessed by Nazis later

Politics: Nazis and Communists building up parties, 30% of votes regularly went to opposition parties, Hindenburg as president in 1926 → rising of opposition

Pre-existing underlying political problems only suppressed, not removed

Foreign policy: Signing of Locarno Pact attacked by nationalists

NAZIS

Hitler joined in 1919, set-up SA in 1921, 25-Point Programme announced in 1920

Munich Putsch in 1923 gave Nazis high profile despite being minority party

NAZIS IN THE WILDERNESS 1924-29

Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf*, presenting ideas on Germany's future

Hitler rebuilt party to achieve power through democratic system, won 32 Reichstag seats in May 1924 after their first elections

Hitler Youth, Nazi students' League (local Nazi parties) set-up

Enlarged SA in 1925, set-up SS → fanatically loyal to Hitler personally (100k by 1928)

Fall of Weimar: 1929-1933

GREAT DEPRESSION

American stock market crashed in 1929

ECONOMIC IMPACT

German banks had to repay money they borrowed → economic collapse, businesses went bankrupt, unemployment rocketed

Unemployment rose from 1mil in 1928 to >6mil in 1932

Bruning pursued tough economic policy and made things worse → cut govt spending and welfare benefits

POLITICAL IMPACT

Weimar constitutions made firm and decisive action to solve GD problems DIFFICULT, democratic parties simply could not get Germany back to work

Weimar govt lost a lot of support to Nazis who were **largest single party (230 seats)** in July 1932

Disillusionment with democracy: Misuse of Article 48 by Hindenburg as they had no support from Reichstag; even dissolved parliament calling for new elections in 1930
Disastrous decision → gave Nazis opportunity to exploit fear and discontent in Germany → Nazis gained even more seats in Reichstag

Reichstag became more divided, even harder for policies to pass, Article 48 emergency powers used more frequently to bypass democratic process

People found that democracy was ineffective and useless

RISE OF NAZIS

RELEVANCE OF HITLER'S IDEAS

25 Points very attractive to those most vulnerable to Depression: unemployed, elderly, middle classes

Gave culprits to blame for problems → Jews, Allies, 'November Criminals' (Weimar govt)

Most important points of 25 Points Programme:

Abolition of Treaty of Versailles

Union of Germany and Austria

Only Germans in Germany (no Jews)

Nationalisation of large industries and businesses

Generous provision for old age pensioners → Contrast to Brüning's budget cut in 1930
Strong central government in Germany → Kaiser dictatorship style

NAZI CAMPAIGNING

Modern and effective campaigning methods relying on generalised slogans

Uniting Germany behind one leader → appealing to Kaiser-style govt

Expressed contempt for Weimar's democratic system, said it was unable to solve Germany's economic problems

Posters, pamphlets everywhere, rallies impressed with energy, enthusiasm, sheer size

SA, SS gave impression of discipline & order, better organised and had police and army support vs rowdy Communist party that engaged in frequent street battles → many people felt that the country needed that kind of order

Organised soup kitchens and provided shelter in hostels for unemployed → impression of party that cared for needy people in society

BEST CAMPAIGNING: HITLER

Powerful speaker, stirred nationalistic passions in audiences by appealing to pathos

Ran for president in 1923: despite defeat, hugely raised his and party's profile

Quote by historian E Zuckmayer: "Hitler knew how to whip up those crowds jammed closely in a dense cloud of cigarette smoke- not by argument, but by his manner: the roaring and especially the power of his repetitions delivered in a certain infectious rhythm..."

HITLER BECOMING CHANCELLOR- Scheming of Hindenburg and von

Papen

Start of 1933 Weimar system of government was clearly not working

Hindenburg had already overthrown principles of democracy by running Germany with **emergency powers (Article 48)**

Needed Chancellor with support in the Reichstag to **rescue democratic system** → Hitler was the best candidate

Nazi was largest single party in Reichstag, so Hitler could get **greatest support** in Reichstag for Hindenburg's policies

Other important evidence

Reichstag elections, 1919- 1933

Number of Deputies Elected									
Date	Jan 1919	Jun 1920	May 1924	Dec 1924	May 1928	Sept 1930	July 1932	Nov 1932	Mar 1933
Total Deputies	423	459	472	493	491	577	608	584	647
SPD Social Democrats	165	102	100	131	153	143	133	121	120
KPD Communists		4	62	45	54	77	89	100	81
Centre Party (Catholics)	91	64	65	69	62	68	75	70	74
DDP Democrats	75	39	28	32	25	20	4	2	5
DVP Peoples Party	19	65	45	51	45	30	7	11	2
DNVP Nationalists	44	71	95	103	73	41	37	52	52
NSDAP Nazis			32	14	12	107	230	196	288

Proportional representation system

Proportional representation led to an instability in the Weimar government, weakening its support amongst the German public. **[CLAIM]** The system allotted seats in the Reichstag to all of the many parties that contested Germany's elections, resulting in a fragmented parliament whereby no single party had a majority, forcing them to form coalition governments. **[IMPACT OF FACTOR]** These coalitions were formed of parties of widely differing views, from the leftist SPD to the conservative DDP, which were unable to agree on clear, common policies and thus frequently had to renegotiate coalitions and change chancellors, with the longest coalition lasting only 2 years. **[IMPACT ON POLITICAL DECISIONS]** Such instability gave the public the impression that democratic politicians lacked the vision and statesmanship necessary to unite the country and enable Germany to face its challenges, as was evident when the grand coalition of 1928 broke up in response to Brüning's budget. None of the parties in the coalition had sufficient votes to push through their preferred solution, and the resultant argument over the budget prevented the government from taking firm action in the midst of the crisis. The public's resultant sense that democratic government was unable to respond effectively to its challenges **[IMPACT ON PUBLIC]** was reinforced by the fact that it was only when Hindenburg stepped in and used Article 48 to implement the budget by decree that the coalition's argument was resolved. This contrast between the splintering democratic coalitions and Hindenburg's decisiveness in action- even if to implement an unpopular budget- led Germans to support parties that offered a clearer sense of leadership and vision for Germany, **[NAZIS VS WEIMAR]** as evidenced in the Nazis' jump in Reichstag seats from 12 to 107 in the elections immediately following the budget debate; **[EVIDENCE FOR NAZIS RISE AGAINST WEIMAR'S FALL]** whereas the fragmented democratic parties could not cooperate on a response to the Great Depression, the Nazis promised decisive action in their slogan 'Arbeit und Brot'.

Failure of Weimar govt to deal with GD

The failure of the Weimar Government to deal with the Great Depression was the most important factor in Hitler becoming chancellor. **[CLAIM]** This factor had eventually led to the rise of the Nazis and its gaining of mass public support, hence placing Hitler in a position to be chosen by Hindenburg and von Papen to become Chancellor.

The failure of the Government to deal with the Great Depression ended its political stability in the Golden Years (1924-1929). The Great Depression had hit Germany badly in the 1930s, causing unemployment rates to skyrocket from 1 million in 1928 to more than 6 million in 1932. **[SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GD]** Even when faced with such a dire situation, the government had failed to act appropriately with effective solutions. In fact, the Weimar government had made the economic situation worse for those most vulnerable to the Great Depression such as the unemployed and the elderly. Brüning pursued a tough policy that severely affected the Germans' own economic ability to cope with basic living expenses while being unemployed, **[EXAMPLE]** as he had cut government spending and welfare benefits. This left the German masses extremely discontented with the Government's ineffectiveness and incompetence, as they expected the government to be able to alleviate the impact of the Great Depression. **[IMPACT OF FACTOR ON PUBLIC]** The people's dissent was exploited by the Nazis, who had pitched themselves to the masses as a much more effective alternative to the government. **[NAZIS VS WEIMAR]** Their 25 Points party policy wanted to economically empower the Germans through nationalisation of large industries and businesses and generous provisions for old age pensioners, a direct contrast to the government's policies. **[EVIDENCE OF NAZIS' POLICIES DIRECTLY VIS-A-VIS WEIMAR'S]** Hitler had hence gained enormous public support, where he led the Nazis to become the largest single party in the Reichstag in July 1932 with 230 seats. **[NAZIS' RISE]** This great support in the Reichstag propelled Hitler to be considered by Brüning and von Papen as a candidate for Chancellor. Brüning and von Papen needed a chancellor like Hitler to gain support for the Weimar's policies in the Reichstag as they were facing a great lack of support for their policies then. **[LINK TO HITLER BEING EVENTUALLY ELECTED CHANCELLOR]**

Hence the failure of the Weimar government to deal with the Great Depression was the most important factor as compared to other factors such as the Nazis' propaganda. In fact, the Nazis had failed to gain support before 1929, being a minority party with less than 10% of the votes; their popularity only picked up after the Great Depression in 1929. Hence Nazi propaganda had appealed to the public only because the public had wanted an alternative to the Weimar government that had failed to solve the severe problems arising from the Great Depression. **[WEIGHING OF FACTORS ACCORDING TO VOTES/AUTHORITY IN REICHSTAG AND ACCORDING TO TIME]**