Section 1 – The Unification of Germany 1815-1871

The French Revolution’s Effects on Germany

- The French Revolution was spawned when the French peasant class rose up against the aristocracy to create a liberal and fair government, which would look after them. Spurred on by the mantra: “liberty, equality and fraternity” they guillotined all the aristocracy and the working people took over France but they were unable to create a stable government until Napoleon arrived on the scene.
- Napoleon set himself up as the sole leader of France and became a Dictator, who began a war throughout Europe which would last until 1815 and establish France as a great power.
- The Napoleonic Wars saw France take over all of the region we now call Germany, which at the time was a collection of 300 individual, small states who were fiercely independent. They were ruled over by autocrats (a single person who held all the power and made all decisions) and the French invasion angered them because their powers were taken away.
- French reform of the German region also angered the autocrats because Napoleon consolidated the 300 states into just 40 to make it easier to keep control. He also established the Confederation of the Rhine, which was a collection of 16 German states who were loyal and together were to ensure the co-operation of the remaining 24 states with their French occupiers.
- Napoleon established the “Code Napoleon”, which completely destroyed the former Feudal class structure, as the Revolution had aimed to make an equal, classless society. It was praised for being fair and while not being democratic it showed that autocratic power could be replaced by liberal assemblies to make all the decisions.
- When the Napoleonic Wars turned against France the German people rose up in the “War of Liberation” in 1813 to overthrow their French occupiers. They were success and with successive defeats in Russia, Spain and with Britain Napoleon was brought down in 1815, where he was exiled from France to St Helena.

Factors encouraging and discouraging German unity after 1815

Encouraging Factors

- A common language bound the German states together as they had a single identity.
- Despite their independence the German people had a shared history, culture and race which saw them as one single people - even if at the time they didn’t see themselves that way. This was important as if they didn’t have any of these common features then there is no way that they could have become a nation as there’d be nothing connecting them together.
- The “War of Liberation” saw the German people recognise these common features to come together to liberate themselves from the invading French forces. They saw themselves as Germans throwing off the occupation of the French and this creation of a national consciousness was important in drawing the people together.

Discouraging Factors

- The autocratic leaders of the German states were against a unified Germany simply because they would lose all their power to a central governing body and to them this was unacceptable.
- The Reformation throughout Europe had caused a split in the German states with the North accepting Lutheran Protestantism while the South continued to follow Roman Catholicism. This religious division hampered unity between the states in the North and the South.
- Each state had its own small economy and each were in control of their own tariffs on imports and exports to the other states. This hampered economic unity because trading was so difficult between the states that they didn’t export their manufactured goods.
- France and Austria had always been against seeing the states join together in a united Germany as it would threaten their borders and their own monopolies over the states. To prevent this they had for years been trying to hamper the development of any national consciousness, which could lead to unification. That is
Repression of German Nationalism and Liberalism 1815-1848

- **Nationalism** is the idea that all people who share the same common language and culture should be allowed to govern themselves.
- **Liberalism** is the political belief that people should be governed over by a liberal elected parliament, which grants the people basic freedoms and human rights. Liberals wanted to remove the autocratic monarchy and replace it with an elected government and they believed this could be achieved through a unified Germany.
- These ideas quickly spread during and after the French Revolution and by 1815 they had become a threat to the established order in Europe. To combat this the Congress of Vienna, which was set up at the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars, tried to revert Europe back to how it was before the French Revolution. It tried to suppress the ideas of nationalism and liberalism to prevent any future attack on the establishment like in 1790.
- The Austrian Chancellor Metternich set out to suppress these two ideas spurred on by the Congress of Vienna. He realised that these two beliefs threatened to destroy the decaying Austro-Hungarian Empire and he saw that destroying these ideas could give it a new lease on life.
- Nationalism grew through the Industrial & Intellectual Middle Classes, who had been created out of the Industrial Revolution in 1818, and in the Universities. Young thinkers were being educated about liberalism and the idea of there being a single German national state and this worried the autocrats and Metternich. He enacted the Carlsbad Decrees to shut down the Student Political Unions and expel all University lecturers who taught nationalism.
- Metternich continued to suppress nationalism up until his deposition in 1848 but it was with increasing difficulty that he did this with the nationalist movements becoming stronger and particularly German nationalism, which had found a leader: Prussia.

The Growth of Nationalism in Prussia

- Quickly Prussia became the leader for German Nationalism and an opponent against Austrian interference in Germany’s affairs. She did so because of a variety of reasons and while doing so she helped to advance the nationalist cause:

**Political Factors**
- The Prussian King was open to accepting the ideas of nationalism and so he openly allowed the expelled nationalist lecturers to come and teach in Prussian Universities, in a total slight against the Carlsbad Decrees laid down by Metternich.
- Prussia wanted to see itself leading a united Germany and liked the fact that it had been strengthened at the expense of Austria at the Congress of Vienna. It wanted to capitalise on this by circumventing Austria completely and setting itself up as the leading force in creating a unified Germany.

**Social Factors**
- The Romantic movement was influential in the growth of nationalist feeling throughout Germany and in Prussia particularly. After Metternich passed further legislation called The Six Acts to further suppress Nationalism and increase censorship people had to find new ways to express their beliefs in a united Germany. They did this through the arts, in poetry, in drama and this was called Romanticism. It drew upon the common culture of the German people to argue that there should be a single German nation.

**Economic Factors**
- The Industrial Revolution spawned off the development of industry and transport in Prussia. Quickly it asserted itself as a strong mining and manufacturing power. This led to the creation of a large and strong Industrial Middle Class, who were supporters of liberalism and nationalism as it’d give them a share of political power.
- Transport, especially the creation of the railways, contributed to closer economic ties between Prussia and the other German states as it was now physically easier to transport goods, people and raw materials, which the states were dependent upon, between themselves. It also acted as a way of binding the states together.
The Year of Revolution 1848

- 1848 was the year when nationalism became a force to be reckoned with through exploiting the revolutions in Austria. They threatened the very survival of the Austro-Hungarian empire and to appease the Nationalists Metternich fell from power. This removed the greatest single force of opposition to their cause and encouraged the nationalists in Prussia to push for a share of political power.

- Economic hardship was one reason for the revolution in Prussia but they also rose up against King Frederick William IV to make their demands for a liberal elected parliament with a constitution very clear. Unfortunately, the revolution was met with resistance from the armed forces who killed several demonstrators. With anxiety rising over reprisals to these attacks, William conceded to the demands of the demonstrators.

- Out of the revolutions came the Frankfurt Parliament which ultimately failed to bring about unification but which achieved a great deal towards making unification possible later.

- In a spectacular turn of events King William IV changed his mind after feeling uncomfortable about accepting control of Germany from an elected Parliament of commoners. His pro-liberalism attitude in the past changed into anti-liberalism very quickly. However, he seemingly conceded a little in creating his own Constitution which appeased most of the middle class – who had orchestrated the revolution – as it gave them the vote and a say in how the country was governed. It was far from being fair and democratic but it was enough to ensure that the revolution died down as the working class were not strong enough to continue it now that the middle classes had been appeased.

The Frankfurt Parliament

- The Parliament was the first democratic National Assembly that had delegates from all of the German states. The Austrians vehemently opposed it as they knew it was an opportunity for the unification of the states to happen. It was made up of the intellectuals and thinkers who were tasked to unify Germany.

- It failed because the politicians in the Parliament were too intelligent that they never were able to agree on a course of action but instead bickered among themselves. This caused any decisions to be too late for it still to be an important issue.

- The decisions that they reached never actually were enacted upon because the Parliament lacked any army of its own to enforce the changes and reforms. Without this the individual autocrats of the German states could leisurely ignore all that the Parliament did, which was to their advantage as they didn’t want to lose any of their power to a central democratic Parliament.

- Despite its ultimate failings it achieved a great deal and solved many of the questions, which were needed for Germany to unify.

- The question of what would constitute the unified Germany was resolved with the divisive Grossdeutschland (39 German states and Austria) vs. Kleindeutschland (39 German states without Austria) issue being answered. The Parliament decided to exclude Austria and choose the Kleindeutschland option and this was significant as it meant that in any unified Germany Austria would not have any control over decisions.

- Also it decided upon a liberal Constitution and Bill of Rights for the unified state, which was important for satisfying the demands of the liberals who were supporting nationalism as a platform for gaining these reforms and establishing a constitutional monarchy.
Even though many historians claim that 1848 was a failure for nationalism in Germany it laid the foundations for a united Germany. It was now a certainty that it would happen and only a question of time.

**Bismarck’s Contribution 1862 – 1871**

- Bismarck came to power during the Prussian Constitutional Crisis of 1861 and gained much notoriety with the Prussian King for his staunch monarchist support.
- The King was at odds with the Prussian Parliament over passing a budget to fund important military reforms, as the Prussian military was lagging behind with new developments in warfare. The Parliament had the right to veto a spending budget under the Constitution and so the King was caught in an impasse until Bismarck came on the scene.
- He was able to exploit a loophole in the constitution to declare and emergency and force through the reforms. This angered many in the Prussian Parliament but they were unable to do anything about it and they realised that Bismarck had the same agenda as they did in unifying Germany so they went along with his plans.
- Bismarck knew that the only way to unify Germany was to get rid of the influence of the great powers either side of her. The greatest threat was from Austria and Bismarck knew that he’d have to get rid of her influence in German affairs first but he didn’t want Prussia to appear to be the aggressor so he embarked on a complicated plot to construct a war between Prussia and Austria, where the latter was the aggressor.
- This is part of the historical argument over whether Bismarck was a planner or an opportunist as he clearly did have defined aims but how he got there was based on manipulating opportunities which arose. This is the embodiment of his political belief of *Realpolitik*, which is doing whatever is possible even if it’s not desirable.

**Prussian-Danish War 1863**

- The Schleswig-Holstein affair was a complicated one stretching down through history. In 1863 they were both part of the German Confederation (Bund) but due to a long dispute over who had the right to the throne Denmark had acted to forcibly annex them.
- Bismarck saw this as an opportunity to lay the foundations of a war with Austria because as members of the Bund he could call upon Austria to help repel the Danish invasion of the Duchies. He knew he could count on Austrian involvement as they would not want Prussia to be seen to be acting alone as it would undermine their status as the protectors of the Bund – this was exactly what Bismarck wanted.
- The military reforms which he had forced through a few years before meant that Prussia was able to beat the Danish in a very short war, which humiliated Denmark through more of Bismarck’s cunning diplomacy in making them out to be the ones refusing to settle for peace.
- After the war it was decided at the Convention of Gastein that Prussia would take over Schleswig and Austria Holstein. This tied up Austria in the Duchies and due to the collapse of a power sharing government in Holstein Austria was forced to completely take over, which had the desired effect of discrediting her because it made her out to have entered into the war only to annex more territory. This separated her from the Southern German states who traditionally supported Austria because of their Roman Catholic connections.

**Austro-Prussian War 1866**

- Bismarck now had Austria tied up in the Duchies and decided to use this as a trigger to start a war but first he isolated Austria from France through falsely promising the French king Napoleon III that he would give them some of the South German states to compensate them for any territory they gained in a war with Austria. This agreement wasn’t written down so Bismarck knew he wouldn’t have to fulfil his end of the bargain.
- He gained Italian support for the war by signing an agreement to give them Venetia, which was still held by Austria, to complete the newly unified Italian state. The only catch was that Austria had to declare war first and within 3 months of the signing of the agreement.
- Bismarck raised tensions in Holstein so that Austria had to mobilise her army long before the conflict broke out, owing to their army being less developed that Prussia’s. This made Austria the clear aggressor and ultimately she declared war on Prussia, thus satisfying the terms of the Prussian-Italian pact. She could not...
rely on Russia for any support – her natural ally – because they had fallen out over Austria’s refusal to assist them in the Crimean war of 1850
• The war lasted only 7 weeks and demonstrated just how effective the Prussian military was against the dilapidated Austrian forces. The railways meant that they could move forces into battle quickly, the newly developed weapons meant the Prussians were more advanced in their fighting ability. This reminded the Prussian Parliament of the importance of the earlier military reforms
• Bismarck having defeated Austria sued for a lenient peace as he only wanted Austria out of German affairs and didn’t want to make a future enemy of her through forcing through a harsh peace settlement. He knew that he had to stop Austria from joining France in any forthcoming war in the West
• After the war the German Confederation was disbanded completely and all the northern German states joined together in the North German Confederation. The Southern states also joined together but in a much less successful grouping and so Bismarck knew that unification was only a short way off

Franco-Prussian War 1869
• France was less than pleased after it was refused the territorial concessions promised by Bismarck. It tried to gain territory in the South of Germany and in Luxembourg unsuccessfully, which when revealed to the public drove the Southern German states closer to the North German Confederation as their only source of protection for being annexed by France.
• Bismarck was determined to have a final war with France to unite Germany and again exploited diplomatic means to bring this about. By using the Spanish Throne Succession to support a Hohenzollern candidate he was able to make France react forcefully to try and prevent a Prussian royal relative ascend to the Spanish throne.
• The Prussian King to Bismarck’s dismay backed down at this but after the French ambassador approached the King at Ems and demanded reassurances that Prussia would not support a Hohenzollern candidate again Bismarck saw he had another opportunity to trigger war
• After the King informed him by telegram of the French approach Bismarck made a few edits, which made the telegram’s tone seem insulting towards the French. He then leaked it to the press and soon after war was declared. This demonstrated Bismarck’s innate ability to turn opportunities to his advantage and achieve his aims
• The war with France was a long, protracted affair with many casualties on both sides. It was not until Prussia successfully laid siege to Paris that a peace settlement was sued for by the French
• Bismarck again tried to stop any future animosity in a harsh settlement but the war had been too costly that the army and political leadership continued their demands. They took from France the rich in minerals area of Alsace and Lorraine, as well as demanding several billion marks in damage payments. The German army also held a triumphant march through Paris, which further angered the French and made them a potential enemy in the future

The Unification of Germany 1871
• In 1871 the remaining South German states merged with the North German Confederation to form the New German Empire comprising 38 of the German states (only excluding Luxembourg who was declared neutral after French attempts to annex it)
• King William I was presented with the crown after a last minute bit of manipulation on Bismarck’s part to have it given by a fellow monarch, as there was objections to him accepting the crown from an elected Parliament. To do this he had to call in his debts to King Ludwig of Bavaria, who presented the crown to William I
• The new Germany was governed over by a federal government led by Bismarck and it gave an impression of democracy but in fact it was run by the Monarchy – Bismarck. The German people appreciated his strong leadership
• Bismarck’s work was complete and he ran Germany as Chancellor until 1890 when King William I died.
• His role in the unification is important as he was the strong leading figure who used all the work of the nationalism up until 1848 to unify the 38 German states under the one German Reich banner. Without him it’s likely unification would have occurred only at a much later date
Section 2 – The Weimar Republic 1918-1933

The Conclusion of the First World War

- Germany was a strong nation in 1914 when the war began but by 1918 it was tired and starving. 4 years of war coupled with a military blockade meant that all the resources that Germany was dependent upon to continue her war effort were not reaching her

- On the battlefront they still had not been pushed back over the Rhine but the war was not going in Germany’s favour with the introduction of America into the war in 1917. Her navy were still in port, refusing to go out and engage the British Royal Navy

- The German Generals in Berlin saw that the war was going to be lost and knew that they would take the blame if they were still directing the war when the defeat came. After several failed attempts to broker a peace with the allies the military ruling class handed over all power to Prince Max Baden, who was to lead a new Civilian Government. The hope was the allies would be willing to negotiate with a civilian rather than autocratic government

- The German Navy were ordered out to take on the British but seeing that this would be certain death the naval officers in Kiel and other port cities revolted against the Naval Command by refusing to take to sea. Instead they set up workers councils like in Soviet Russia during the Russian Revolution

- The German state of Bavaria declared itself a Socialist Republic and so became neutral in the final days of the war

- With revolution growing throughout Germany and defeat seeming inevitable the Kaiser Wilhelm II was forced to abdicate by the civilian government who then took over total control of Germany. They sued for a peace settlement and on November 11th 1918 the guns stopped firing as an armistice was signed at 11 o’clock

The Birth of the Weimar Republic

- This was the first attempt Germany had ever made at having a democratic government and it was modelled similar to America by having a central federal government, which had representatives from each of German states who made decisions on national matters. Each state had control over most of its own internal affairs.

- The government was unable to sit in Berlin to work because it was a hotbed of revolutionary activity just after the war ended and so they sat in the relatively peaceful town of Weimar, which is why it became known as the Weimar Republic.

- The Republic was created with an almost perfect system of theoretical democracy but in practice it had at two serious flaws within its Constitution, which were to destroy it:
  - The Constitution gave universal suffrage and also set down that elections to the Reichstag would be made under Proportional Representation. This system makes a direct relation between the percentage of votes cast and the percentage of seats a party receives in government. It makes the elections very fair but also means that the government’s created are weak as it’s very difficult to get a single party with more than 50% of the vote. This means that coalition governments have to be formed and they often are unstable and weak. It also is too representative and can allow extremist parties to get into government, which legitimises their agendas and this was so in the case of the Nazis
  - Also Article 48 was a well intentioned clause which gave the President of the Reichstag the ability to rule by decree and bypass the democratic government in an emergency situation. The problem was that only the President could determine when there was an emergency and it gave him complete legislative power, thus making the country into a dictatorship despite its democratic constitution set up to avoid this. During the 1930’s this power was used to destroy democracy within Germany

- A more serious problem was one that the Republic inherited from the conclusion of the war. They assumed the blame for Germany’s defeat in signing the Armistice in November 1918 and because her military had not been defeated on the battlefield an idea of a “Stab in the Back” grew up. This blamed the Weimar government and the socialists for Germany’s defeat as they betrayed the troops back home, this conveniently absolved the former ruling establishment of any responsibility for Germany’s defeat
The Treaty of Versailles Effects on Germany

- Germany was forced to sign the Treaty of Versailles in June 1919 and it was a dictated peace settlement, which she had no say in. She had no choice but to sign as the alternative would have been for a military invasion by the allies. It crippled Germany through a series of unfair and debilitating clauses:
  - **Article 231** – also called the “War Guilt Clause” forced Germany to accept blame for the outbreak of the war, when clearly it had been a collective failing throughout Europe that had led to hostilities. This was necessary to establish guilt to make a compensation claim against Germany.
  - **Article 232** – this started Reparation payments to the allies to compensate them for their losses during the war. In total Germany had to pay back the impossible amount of £6,600 million and as she couldn’t – being bankrupted by the war – the allies stripped her of anything economically of value. This meant that Germany’s economy couldn’t recover and was crippled for years after. This was to become significant in the rise of the Nazis as the economic woes translated into a surge in Nazi support.
  - **Territorial Concessions** – Germany lost the rich in raw materials area of Alsace and Lorraine to France, which was fair as she had originally taken in from France in the Franco-Prussian war. However, she lost all her overseas colonies to Britain and France, as well as significant territory to Poland in West Prussia to give Poland access to the sea port of Danzig. This separated East Prussia from the rest of Germany. Also the Rhineland on the border with France was demilitarised, which left Germany’s western frontier unprotected and occupied by the allies.
  - **Disarmament** – Germany was forced to disarm all the weapons of war it had used successfully and was banned from having any: tanks, military aircraft, submarines and was restricted to a non-conscripted army of 100,000 men. All the allies were used to disarm but only Germany was actually forced to. This left them feeling vulnerable to the French, who might try to invade the Ruhr to punish Germany further.
  - **Isolation** – Germany was made the pariah of the international community because of the war. She was banned from membership in the League of Nations.

All this left a strong bitter and angry feeling in the hearts of the German people because the treaty was totally unfair and the Weimar Government was blamed for signing the treaty – despite having no choice in the matter – this was something that would wound and haunt it until its death in the 1930s.

Early Problems in Weimar Germany

- The German people weren’t used to democracy and after the war weren’t sure exactly of how they wanted to be governed. Some wanted the days of the strong Kaiser back while some wanted the people to have total control. This resulted in a difficult few years for the Republic with revolution abounding.
  - **Spartacist Revolt 1919** – This was the left wing Communist attempt to overthrow the Weimar Republic and set up a Soviet Republic, similar to what had happened in Russia. The leaders were divided over whether the revolt should be violent or peaceful but the former was chosen.
  - The revolt was ultimately put down through an unholy alliance between the Weimar government and paramilitary right wing forces called the Freikorps. They hated Weimar and wanted to see the return of the Kaiser but they hated Communism more and so they joined with the government to overthrow the Communist revolt. The Government armed them and they were ruthlessly efficient is bloodily murdering the leaders of the revolt and its members.
  - These forces hated Weimar and because they were now armed they were able to plot their own coup. Weimar had made a terrible mistake in joining up with the Freikorps but it shows just how desperate they were to survive that they would join up with people who were out to destroy them.
  - **Kapp Putsch 1921** – This was the right wing attempt to get rid of democracy and bring back an autocratic leadership for Germany. The Freikorps used their weapons given to them to put down the Communists to take over Berlin and declare the end of the Weimar Republic.
  - However, the trade unions in Berlin shut down the city by refusing to work and bringing about a blackout. Faced with this the Kapp Putsch collapsed and its leaders were put on trial but were let off by the judiciary. This was because the judiciary was dominated by the old establishment who were as against the Weimar Republic as the revolutionaries. They were lenient to them, which contrasted with the harsh brutal murders of the Spartacist Revolt.
• This demonstrated that the civil service and old establishment were working to undermine the new Weimar Government
• These revolutions highlighted the weaknesses of the Weimar Government that she couldn’t keep control and had to resort to getting help from right wing paramilitaries. Also the actions of the old establishment only served to fuel future revolutions on the right against Weimar like Hitler in 1924. This only served to undermine Weimar further

Hyperinflation Crisis 1923
• By 1923 it was clear that Germany couldn’t meet the Reparations payments as dictated in the Treaty of Versailles. She was missing her payments to France and this only served to anger the French further and to make matters worse Germany had signed the Treaty of Rapallo with Communist Russia and this worried the French more
• They decided to use Germany’s missed Reparations payments to invade the Ruhr with an underlying motive to ensuring that Germany wasn’t trying to gain military support from Russia. In January 1923 she invaded the Ruhr, passing through the undefended Rhineland and began to force all mined materials to be sent to France
• The German workers attempted to resist the French occupation but were silenced when French workers were brought in to do the mining. All of this was too much for the German economy, which was already weak and this caused a rise in inflation. The currency rapidly began to devaluate while Weimar continued to have money printed. The result was that hyperinflation began and entered into a vicious cycle that was impossible to stop. At its peak a loaf of bread cost several billion Marks
• The hyperinflation destroyed the middle classes and the elderly, who were the ones that saved up for their futures. All those savings were wiped away and caused them to hate the Weimar Republic for allowing the situation to go out of control
• The crisis only came to an end when a new Chancellor Gustav Stressemann was appointed. He swiftly got rid of the old German currency and replaced it with the Rentenmark, which successfully put an end to the hyperinflation.

The Nazis Early Beginnings
• The German National Socialist Workers Party was a small political party that met in Beer Halls of Munich in 1919. It had a very small group of supporters and stood no chance of getting an real political power
• Hitler, a failed artist and demobilised soldier from the war, attended one of the NSDAP meetings to assess if they were any threat to the Weimar Republic as part of his new post-war job. He found them to be harmless but was attracted by their politics. After the meeting he impressed the small gathering in a debate and he was invited to become a party member
• Over the coming months Hitler became the star attraction of the Nazi meetings due to his tremendous public speaking ability. He was a rabble-rouser in that he used simple language to convey a message that inspired a listening crowd and gained their support. He often spoke passionately about:
• Destroying the Treaty of Versailles, which had crippled Germany and humiliated her in the world. Also he promoted destroyed the Weimar Republic because they were traitors who had signed the Treaty in the first place. To Hitler no true German patriot could have signed such a destructive agreement
• He also was a believer in the “Stab in the Back” and blamed Germany’s defeat largely on the Jews. He was an ardent anti-Semite and wanted to see the Jews stripped of German citizenship and any public office they held. No one’s entirely sure but it’s believed his hatred of the Jews stems back to some of his experiences in Vienna when he was destitute after being rejected from Art College
• These issues were ones that mattered to the German people and through careful manipulation of them Hitler was able to gain increasing support. His case against Weimar grew in 1923 during the Hyperinflation Crisis and this caused many of the Middle class to turn towards the Nazis who were blaming it all on the Republic for signing Versailles.
• Munich Beer Hall Putsch 1923 – Hitler led his own attempted revolution against the Weimar Republic in 1923 but unlike the rest his was a complete disaster that fell apart before it had even started. He had plotted
with other right wing generals to march on Munich, take over the Bavarian government before making a move on Berlin. This fell apart through his co-conspirators getting cold feet at the last moment and withdrawing. Hitler led the march as planned on the Munich government but was stopped by the army and was arrested after a brief fire fight

- What was significant about his trial and punishment was how lenient it was. He was charged with high treason but yet was only sentenced to nine months imprisonment and was allowed to turn the courtroom into a political theatre. This served to show that the judiciary were still partial towards the aims of the right in German politics to get rid of the democratic Weimar Government
- Hitler only served 6 months of his term in Landsberg prison but he came out with his political ideology written down as a book: “Mein Kampf”, and he had realised that the Nazis would have to come to power legally using the democratic system so that once they were in power they could bring it down from the inside

**Weimar’s Years of Stability 1925-1929 and the Nazis Lean Years**

**Reforming Influence of Stressemann**

- Germany experienced a time of relative stability from 1925 – 1929 under the supervision of Stressemann. He was skilled with foreign policy and he was able to secure Germany several key treaties to bring her back onto the international stage
- Stressemann believed in the policy of “fulfilment”, which was that he believed Germany should try to continue to pay the Reparations payments to the allies but he was also conscious that she couldn’t under the existing payment plan. He negotiated the Dawes and Young plans which eased the burden of Reparations by extending the time period for payment and lowering the amount paid in each instalment. This took a great burden off the German economy. The Dawes Plan saw that the French withdrew from the Ruhr, which helped strengthen the value of the Rentenmark. They also secured important American loans, which were used to bolster the German economy and help make the Rentenmark stable after the hyperinflation crisis. It was this American money that allowed Germany to reach a level of relative prosperity
- He was able to overcome the Treaty of Versailles in gaining Germany entry into the League of Nations, from which she had been banned. This was important in getting Germany respected in the International community again
- He also signed the Treaty of Locarno with France, which was important in securing better relations with France. In it Germany promised to respect France’s eastern border and not threaten any of her frontiers so long as France agreed to do the same. This lessen the tensions between the two nations and in it Germany also formerly agreed to disarmament, which asserted her intentions to never use war as a means of resolving future differences
- Stressemann was the closest that the Republic ever got to having a strong leader but he was only Chancellor for a short time and his real successes were only ones in foreign policy and didn’t solve any of the internal problems afflicting Germany

**Reforming Influence of Hitler**

- After his release from prison, Hitler quickly returned to the Nazis to reassert his influence over them. He took control of the party again without any real difficulty for in his absence there had been crippling divisive conflict. Once back in control he began to apply his new belief in legally coming to power by reorganising the party into an effective political fighting machine
- Hitler was able to gain some support in elections through the Nazis effective propaganda machine headed by Goebbels. He was able to exploit film, newspapers and radio broadcasts to tell the people what they wanted to hear so that they would support the Nazis. The Nazis had a message for everyone and sometimes it was contradictory but it was what the people wanted to hear and some listened to it
- He made use of Hitler’s public speaking talent at mass rallies, where Hitler was able to rouse up the crowd into a euphoria. This particular electioneering tactic was particularly effective later on in the Nazis rise to power
- One particular area where Hitler was able to get support was from the Industrial Middle and Upper Classes. He exploited the strength of the Communists and the fear against them re-enacting a Communist Revolution
like what had happened in Russia in 1917 to gain the votes from these groups. The business men were happy to fund the Nazis are support them because they were promising to protect them from the Communists who threatened to take away everything that they had built up for themselves
• By 1929 the Nazis were still a fringe party but they were organised and ready for when their moment to take power to arrive and it did in the Wall Street Crash of that same year

**The Economic Collapse of 1929 and the Death of Weimar**

- The 5 years of economic stability had been hiding the real political weakness of Weimar, which reasserted themselves after the 1929 Wall Street Crash. When the American stock market collapsed the American’s withdrew all their loans, which Weimar had been reliant on for prosperity. With them removed the old cracks in the political establishment returned and spelled disaster
- The hyperinflation crisis had been bad for those who had saved money but the economic collapse crippled Germany completely with rising unemployment and demands from America for immediate repayment of loans the Germany economy went bankrupt and a period of Depression ensued
- Out of the Depression came a general feeling throughout Germany of anger towards Weimar. The people were outraged that they had been completely ruined and blamed it all on the Weimar Republic. They visibly turned in vast numbers to the polar-extremes of the political spectrum: the Nazis and the Communists for a way out of the Depression
- The Nazis and Communists both gained significant numbers of seats in the Reichstag in the 1930 and 1932 elections, which showed that the German people had given up on democracy solving their problems and had turned to the Nazis and Communists.
- The centre parties who had been trying to make democracy work for the last decade were forced to surrender to the extremist parties and when President Hindenburg invoked Article 48 of the Constitution to rule by decree and force through necessary measures, the death of the Weimar Republic had been sealed

**Summary of Weimar’s Weakness and Failings**

- Constitutional weaknesses which made strong governments impossible and instead introduced weak coalition governments through Proportional Representation. Article 48 allowed democracy to be destroyed and replaced by the dictatorial rule by decree of the Reich President
- Associated with defeat and betrayal through the “Stab in the Back” myth and blamed for signing the destructive Treaty of Versailles, which crippled her economy
- Lack of support for democracy among the German people who had only been used to the rule of the Kaiser
- Lack of a strong leader and a strong government to deal with the problems afflicting post-war Germany
- Disruptive influence of the left and right wing forces trying to overthrow the Republic throughout the 1920’s
- The lack of faith of the middle classes who were destroyed by the hyperinflation crisis of 1923 and the economic collapse of 1929
- The working of the establishment to bring down the Weimar Republic and reinstate the old rule of the Kaiser

**Rise of Hitler and death of democracy**

- The Nazis used the economic collapse to their advantage as they realised the economic hardship would push the German people to the extremes – right into their arms. They organised their propaganda machine to send out messages blaming the Weimar Republic for the Depression. Using the new methods of transport Hitler was able to attend election rallies all around Germany to raise support for himself and the party in elections
- They were able to use their electioneering techniques honed during the Lean Years to win 107 seats in the Reichstag, making them the second largest party while at the same time they used their own private army the SA to attack the Communists and disrupt their meetings, as they were the only other credible threat to the Nazis popularity
After the 1932 election, the Nazis had become the largest single party in the Reichstag but were lacking an overall majority to take control. However, their position meant that the other parties would have to deal with them and Hitler tried to become Chancellor at this point but was stopped by Hindenburg.

Since 1930 Hindenburg had invoked the Article 48 of the Constitution to rule by decree through the Chancellor Bruning, this had ended Germany as being a democratic country. After Bruning had resigned from office the new Chancellor Von Papen had taken over and had proposed setting up a coalition with the Nazis.

It was Von Papen’s belief that Hitler could be made Chancellor but kept in check by only allowing three other Nazis in the Cabinet. They intended to just use Hitler to make a stable government for them to pass through all the legislation they wanted. Also, many large German corporations lobbied Hindenburg to instate Hitler as they knew it was in their interests to have him elected. This is why in 1933, despite Nazi electoral support declining during the second 1932 election because of lower unemployment, Hindenburg decided to allow Hitler to become Chancellor. This was called "political intrigue".

Hitler knew what the establishment had been planning and accepted knowing full well that he would in fact be the one who would be running Germany because they had totally underestimated him. He had achieved power legally and knew that he’d have to work fast in order to keep the Nazis stranglehold on power as their vote had peaked in early 1932 and begun to decline after that. This is why when the Reichstag was burnt down he used it as an excuse to destroy the last vestiges of democracy with the Enabling Laws.