

# Introduction

- Definition
  - The elimination of opposition from the state
- Timeframe studied
  - 30 Jan 1930 (Hitler is appointed Chancellor) - 8 May 1945 (Capitulation of Germany)
- Important Dates
  - 27 and 28 Feb 1933: Reichstag Fire and Reichstag Fire Decree
  - March 1933: The Enabling Act
  - Coordination of Gleichschaltung (achieving totalitarian control) and the establishment of Führerstate
    - 31 March 1933: All sitting Landtagee (regional parliaments) were dissolved, and reconstituted with a Nazi majority
    - 7 April 1933: Creation of Reich Governors
    - May 1933: Abolition of Trade unions, taken over by DAF (German Labour Front)
    - July 1933: Dissolution of all political parties except the NSDAP
    - 30 January 1934: All sitting Landtage were dissolved and their sovereign powers were surrendered to the national government.
  - 30 June 1934: Night of the Long Knives

# Use of Force

## Purges

- Night of the Long Knives (June 30 1934)
  - Hitler's position in legal office meant the SA had become a liability
    - Power struggle between SA and Army
      - The Army's traditional role and status felt threatened by the SA
    - Public was increasingly critical of the SA's thuggish tactics
  - Rohm determined to overthrow Weimar democracy by force, despite Hitler having already achieved legal power through his chancellorship and the Enabling Act
    - SA remained somewhat autonomous within the party – never under direct control of Hitler
    - Radical stance of economic and political revolution
    - Many of its members came from the radical socialist Strasserist faction of the party
  - 30th June 1934 – eliminated the SA – approx. 200 murdered
    - Hitler denounced the leadership of the SA and accused them of treason
    - Röhm and the main leaders of SA were shot
    - Hitler took it as an opportunity to dispose of his other political opponents
      - Schleicher (former chancellor) and Strasser (leader of radical socialist wing of the Nazi Party) were both killed

## **Impact of Night of the Long Knives**

- The Night of the Long Knives
  - Consolidated Hitler's leadership of the party by removing other figures with significant influence (Rohm) and leading figures with more radical ideals (Strasser)
  - Strengthened Hitler's control over the military
    - Minister of War Blomberg's public vote of thanks to Hitler on 1 July
    - German soldiers agreed to take a personal oath of loyalty to Hitler
  - Hitler gained stronger control of the Nazi paramilitary
    - SA was downsized by 40%, and its role was largely replaced by the SS
  - Strengthened the legal grounding for the Nazis, as they did not face pushback from the court or cabinet for the extrajudicial killings.

## Secret Police

- The SS, Schutzstaffel

- Formed in 1929, headed by Heinrich Himmler
- An elite paramilitary organisation that served as the personal Nazi Army, independent of the State
  - Controlled the intelligence, security and police forces, and extermination of those they considered undesirable.
- Unquestioningly loyal to Hitler
  - Their official motto was "Meine Ehre heißt Treue" (My Honour is Loyalty)
- The Gestapo
  - Initially headed by Goering, later under the control of Himmler
  - Official secret police of Nazi Germany and in German-occupied Europe focused on hunting down enemies of the Reich

### **Impact of Secret Police**

- Removed potential enemies of the state
  - Between 1933-45 over 800,000 were arrested and detained by the Gestapo for political crimes
- Image of power and force
  - The SS provided personal protection for Hitler and functions and events
    - Projected an image of personal power and force for Hitler and the Nazis
  - Participated
- Created a climate of fear and oppression
  - Use of *Schutzhaft* — the ability to extrajudicially imprison potential enemies of the state
    - Created a climate of fear as they were able to extrajudicially arrest anybody who was suspected of being an enemy of the state
  - Night and Fog decree allowed them to abduct enemies of the state, who were sent to concentration camps where they were treated especially brutally.
    - Over 7000 individuals in German-occupied Western Europe were arrested under this decree

### **Evaluation of Secret Police**

- The Gestapo
  - Manpower of the Gestapo was limited; 32000 policing 66 million Germans
    - Large cities like Frankfurt and Hamburg had only up to 50 agents
  - Many Germans did not face much repression; tended to be random
    - Eric Johnson argued that the Gestapo focused its efforts on specific enemies like the political left, Jews, religious groups or asocials
    - The majority was complicit in turning a blind eye to the Gestapo's persecution; thus it was the support of the majority that allowed for these actions to help consolidate and maintain Hitler's power

- Supported by how only 1% of Germans who were neither Jews nor communists had any contact with the Gestapo
- Secret Police was thus limited due to manpower and logistical limitations, and relied on the complicity of the general population was more useful in consolidating Hitler's power

## Concentration Camps

- Before the war
  - Used concentration camps to put away those considered habitual criminals or asocials
  - Later expanded to include political prisoners, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Jews
  - Prisoners were exploited to extract building materials for Nazi Architecture
- During the war
  - Greater demand for forced labour, with camps set up next to quarries or brickworks
  - 'Death Camps' set up
    - Enemies of the Aryan Race - Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, Jehovah witnesses, sent there
    - Russian and Polish prisoners of war were executed in these camps

### Impact of Concentration Camps

- Increased compliance within the population
  - By eliminating those with behaviours they considered undesirable, Nazis were able to use fear to control the population
    - The arrest of "work-shy" prisoners kept levels of productivity up
- Removal of political opposition
  - Czech and Austrian anti-Nazis were arrested after the annexation of their countries in 1938 and 1939
  - Polish and Soviet prisoners of war were also sent to concentration camps

## Conclusion

Thus, use of force, while effective, was limited in maintaining Hitler's power due to limitations in manpower and logistics

# Charismatic Leadership

## Hitler's cult of personality

- Early Years
  - Presented as a moderate
    - Curbed the more radical SA
    - Legal methods made him seem constitutional
- Hitler's visual image was developed to facilitate the growth of his personalit cult
- Portraits of Hitler were hung in every public building,; in 1934 the state announced that it would bear the cost of installing approved photographic images of the Fuhrer in every office
- Portrayed as Germany's redeemer, a Christ-like warrior who would save the German Race
- Goebbels attempted to create a new type of social ritual with the Heil Hitler salute

## **Impact of cult of personality**

- Charismatic leadership attracted strong allies and elites to unite under his banner
  - Joseph Goebbels – Master propagandist who admired and was deathly loyal to Hitler – followed him to his grave
- Gave his actions quasi-religious justification
  - He was driven forward by a sense of personal destiny he called 'providence'

## **Evaluation of Hitler's cult of personality**

- Much of Hitler's personality cult was dependent on his success, with support waning as Operation Barbadossa proved a failure, and Allied bombing campaigns worsened this effect
  - Lisa **Pine** claims that by the end of the war, the Fuhrer myth had all but collapsed
    - Can be seen by how civilians barely mourned Hitler's suicide, instead being preoccupied with fleeing from the fighting in Germany
- The centralisation of power, combined with Hitlers disinterest in governing, led to inefficacies in the government
  - Hitler did not play a prominent part in day-to-day government. Peterson has described him as a 'remote umpire handing down decisions from on high'
  - His orders were often vague, and officers had to interpret them, leading to discrepancies and conflict
  - Competition for Hitler's favour led to internal conflict within the party
  - HOWEVER, these same factors reduced the likelihood of a staged coup

## Conclusion

Thus, Hitler's charismatic leadership, while it did not afford him control over the day-to-day of the state, still resulted in his control over key facets through influence of the individuals who controlled these. The admiration of him as a God-like figure unified the people, elites and commoners alike. However, his charismatic leadership had limits, and he often resorted to the use of force to consolidate his power

amongst the top levels of leadership, as seen in the Night of the Long Knives. Additionally, it was only later on that his deification took hold. Beforehand, his support from the army and voters was due to his portrayal as a moderate with a wide appeal. However, it could be argued that the various classes supported the Nazi regime due to its effective economic policy, rather than any ideological benefit

# Dissemination of Propaganda

## Topic Sentence

Propaganda, though it had its limits, was of instrumental importance to the maintenance of Hitler's power. It was largely successful in cultivating Hitler's personality cult as well as reinforcing established family values and German nationalism. Although not all pervasive and completely successful, it was largely successful in creating an acquiescent public.

## Rallies

- Mass rallies were held at Nuremberg from 1927-1938, with half a million in attendance
  - Albert Speer used light to create stunning effects - e.g. Cathedral of Light in Nuremberg
- Combination of uniforms, disciplined mass movements, flags and symbols created a powerful sense of wishing to belong
- Films of these rallies even made non-participants feel like they wanted to be included

## **Impact of rallies**

- Rallies made people feel like they belonged to an impressive movement
  - Goebbels describing how rallies transformed a person 'from a little worm into part of a large dragon.'
- Large size provided visual proof of German support

## Entertainment and celebrations

- Emotive nationalism and loyalty towards Hitler were promoted through films such as "Olympia", Leni Riefenstahl's docu-drama of the Berlin Olympics and "Triumph of the Will", about the 1934 Nuremberg Rally.
- Celebration of significant Nazi dates
  - Hitler's Birthday on 20 April, day of failed 1923 Putsch and Nuremberg party congress were celebrated
  - Banners decked the streets and houses and processions were organised
  - Failure to demonstrate was dangerous – Gestapo would punish

## **Impact of entertainment and celebrations**

- Normalised the centrality of Hitler and the Nazi party had in the German state
  - Allowed Nazi presence to permeate into German culture
- Culturally influenced German people

## Control of mass media

- Newspapers
  - Nazis owned 69% of newspapers by 1939 and 82% by 1944
  - Propaganda Ministry provided guidance on editorial policy and issued a daily press conference led by Goebbels
- Radio
  - Creation of the Reich Radio Company
  - Production of a cheap radio known as the People's Receiver
  - Radio was manufactured with a limited range of reception to block foreign broadcasts
  - Ban on listening to foreign broadcasts during wartime
  - By 1939, 70% of German homes had a radio and it became a medium of mass communication monopolised by the regime, from 20% in 1932

## **Impact of Mass Media**

- Managed to obtain a monopoly over press and radio, monopolising a platform for Nazis to spread their message
- Radio propaganda was useful in cultivating Hitler's image as a cult figure
- However, film propaganda had a limited impact on the population. The Triumph of The Will was criticised for being overly long and boring, while movies like The Eternal Jew were criticised as overly crude. Attempts to bolster nationalism through film during the war with the film on Frederick the Great was largely unsuccessful in raising morale in the face of defeat.
- Newspaper
  - Nazis were largely successful in muzzling the press, with internationally renowned Frankfurter Zeitung closing down in 1943
  - The German News Agency succeeded in consolidating news agencies
  - However, result was bland journalism
  - They were unable to use the press to generate any mass support



# Legal Methods

## Topic Sentence

Hitler's consolidation of power has often been described as a "legal revolution". In his role as Chancellor, he was subject to the authority of Hindenburg, and had to be careful to avoid dismissal by the President or overthrow by the army. Thus, Hitler employed methods that were entirely legal to the letter of the Weimar Constitution to gradually weaken political opposition and assume the role of Fuhrer

## Methods

- Enabling Act
  - Converted emergency powers from a precautionary to a regular process
  - Destroyed the original aim of Article 48
  - Was fundamentally anti-democratic
- 31 March Law
  - Abolished the power of the Lander legislatures
  - Subordinated the state Ministers President to Ministry of Interior
  - Destroyed the federal system and decentralised power
- Law against New Formation of Parties
  - Made it illegal to have new parties
  - Essentially destroyed the purpose of voting and proportional representation
  - Marked the end of the Weimar Republic

## Limitations of Legal Methods

- Lee suggests that the Nazis included an element of mass movement which was incompatible with legality
- Hitler's legal changes were accompanied by a considerable degree of mobilised pressure
  - The enabling act was passed due to the use of the Reichstag decree to imprison KPD officials
  - Additionally the SA was used to intimidate KPD officials present
- Structuralist historians argued that Hitler's appointment of Special Deputies overrode the functions of Ministers, causing bureaucratic inefficiencies
  - These inefficiencies would work against Hitler's process of Gleichschaltung, or centralisation of power, as key appointments such as education had conflicts (e.g. Youth Leader of the Reich vs Minister of Education)
  - Intentionalists argue that Hitler took advantage of this chaos to prevent uprisings and cement his own power as the only one who could navigate the chaos

- It is likely that while Hitler did not intend for such layers of inefficiencies, the lack of action to remedy these inefficiencies implies that the added bureaucratic confusion further benefitted him

# Foreign Policy

## Topic Sentence

Nazi foreign policy can largely be separated into three phases, the build-up to war, the Blitzkrieg period, and the total war. It can be said that the build-up to war was incredibly useful as a propaganda tool for Lebensraum, garnering support for the Nazi party, and rearmament revitalizing industry. Furthermore, the Blitzkrieg was crucial in supporting the Nazi economy through the “plunder economy”, as suggested by Saeur. However, the total war phase was a disastrous foreign policy decision on the part of Germany, and resulted in the ultimate collapse of the Reich.

## Build-up to war (1933-1939)

- Rearmament
  - Hitler began to undermine the armaments limitation clauses of the Treaty of Versailles as early as 1933
  - 1934 - broken the limits imposed on arms forces
  - 1935 - openly announced the creation of the Luftwaffe and introduction of conscription, both were prohibited under ToV
  - Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935 -
  - Remilitarisation of the Rhineland
- Use of military
  - Helped the french in the Spanish Civil War
  - Hossbach Memorandum - meeting between Hitler and chiefs of staff to prepare for ar
  - 1938 - Annexed Austria in the *Anschluss*
    - Annexed Czechoslovakia
    - Occupied Bohemia
- Evaluation
  - The build-up to war was incredibly useful in providing tangible results of Lebensraum, which helped Hitler maintain the ideological basis for continued expansion

## Blitzkrieg

- Invasion of Poland under the Non-Aggression pact with USSR
- Hitler managed to conquer Denmark, Norway, Netherlands, Belgium and France
- However, there was limited success in the Battle of Britain, and the abandonment of Operation Sealion marked the beginning of Operation Barbarossa
- Evaluation
  - The blitzkrieg was useful in helping Germany expand in as sustainable manner while supporting their consumer and rearmament economic needs
  - HOWEVER, Overy suggests that the Blitzkrieg was a stopgap measure put into place to support the German economy. He argues that Hitler did not expect the invasion of Poland to result in France and Britain declaring war, and it was thus the Blitzkrieg that

depleted Germany's unprepared resources, and rendered it incomplete. This can be seen by the logistical issues the Germans faced in the 1940s at Stalingrad and Tobruk.

- However, regardless of the situation, blitzkrieg was important in supporting the German economy and maintaining the conflict. Only, the degree to which it helped (absolutely, or as a stopgap), is debatable

### Total War

- Despite initial German success in Operation Barbarossa, the Soviet Union recovered in 1942
- Situation worsened with the Battle of Alamein in 1942
- Total war was also assumed in December 1941, when Hitler declared war on the United States
- Evaluation
  - This aggression in Hitler's foreign policy meant that he would ultimately be trapped against a conflict between Anglo-American forces and Soviet forces, causing the ultimate collapse of Germany. However, historians like Taylor have suggested that these escalations of conflict were not the result of German foreign policy, but rather preemptive strikes to defend against potential foreign threats.

# Control of Opposition

Nature	Extent
<p><b><u>Political Opponents</u></b></p> <p>Internal party opponents who had more socialist leanings and did not support Hitler's alliance with the elites</p> <p>Opponents from other parties - mainly the KPD and SPD</p>	<p><b><u>Internal opposition was not extensive</u></b> - completely removed after Night of Long Knives</p> <p><b><u>External opposition was initially extensive</u></b>, with Nazi only winning 33% of the vote in 1932 and 44% in March 1933. Was only eliminated with Reichstag Fire Decree, allowing Nazis to arrest members of KPD and SPD</p>
<p><b><u>Military Opponents</u></b></p> <p>Commander in Chief von Fritsch, Minister for War Blomberg</p> <p>Assassination plot by Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg in 1944</p>	<p><b><u>Military opposition to Hitler was initially very strong</u></b></p> <p>Military elites like von Fritsch and Blomberg were high-ranking elites with military background, they disliked Hitler's common origins and low rank</p> <p>Military had relative independence from the state, as they had a separate power structure which made the high command autonomous</p> <p>Opposition was initially stiff, but won over by Hitler's successes</p>
<p><b><u>Ideological Opponents</u></b></p> <p>White Rose Movement</p> <p>Pacifist student movement that protested the war and the social policies of the Reich from 1942-1943</p> <p><b><u>Religious Opponents</u></b></p> <p>Catholic and Confessing Church opposed Hitler's social and religious policies</p> <p>German Bishop Clemens Von Galen opposed social policies like euthanasia</p> <p>Confessing Church protested the conflation of</p>	<p><b><u>Short lived yet extensive</u></b></p> <p>In response to the genocide in Polish and Soviet territories, and the sentiment that the Germans were losing the war</p> <p>Published leaflets and sprayed graffiti that condemned the Nazi government's actions</p> <p><b><u>Relatively extensive</u></b></p> <p>German people were deeply religious and thus did not take well to Nazi attempts at supplanting religion</p> <p>Adolf Wagner's attempts at removing crucifixes from classrooms in 1941 incited public protest, was ultimately successful in preventing</p>

<p>church and state caused by Ludwig Mueller's German Evangelical Church</p>	<p>nazification of Catholic schools</p> <p>Clemens von Galen's sermons on euthanasia inspired widespread opposition to the Nazi eugenics policy</p> <p>Limited to specific social policies</p> <p>Resistance waned as Nazi repression of Church declined in later years</p>
<p><b><u>Perceived Ideological Opponents</u></b></p> <p>Degenerate classes like Jews, homosexuals and physically and mentally disabled were seen as threats to German society due to conflicting with Aryan race</p>	<p><b><u>Not really a threat</u></b></p> <p>Elimination and repression of these demographics served to strengthen the Aryan ideology, and create a climate of fear and oppression</p>
<p><b><u>Social Opposition</u></b></p> <p>Movements among the masses, particularly the youth, who opposed the repressive social policies of the Nazis</p> <p>Swing Kids from upper middle class engaged in counterculture pacifistic rebellion</p> <p>Edelweiss Pirates engaged in sabotage of Nazi and Hitler Youth operations, helping Jews flee</p>	<p><b><u>Widespread</u></b></p> <p>One Nazi official commented in 1941 that everybody knows the Pirates, they are bigger than the Hitler youth</p> <p>Opposition to Nazi Rule was limited as these groups were loosely organised and largely apolitical</p>