

Emergence of Authoritarian States - Hitler's Germany (Methods)

General Information

Timeframe studied: November 9 1923 (Hitler's failed coup) – August 2 1934 (Hitler merges the posts of chancellor and president – becomes Fuhrer)

Methods: Controllable actions that the Nazis specifically carried with specific intent or aims

Rise to power: Hitler's installation in both a legal position of power, as well as the less quantifiable influence he had over the populace of Germany.

Propaganda

Topic Sentence

Propaganda, while useful in garnering support for the Nazis, had its limitations, and was not the main factor for why he rose to power

Elaboration (Facts)

- Effective Propaganda
 - o Nazi propaganda was centrally controlled and organised by Joseph Goebbels – appointed head of Party Propaganda in November 1928
 - o Repetition of a few key slogans and images of effective propaganda
- Oratorical Propaganda
 - o Heart of Nazi propaganda was the spoken word; delivered in its most powerful form by Adolf Hitler
 - o Strategies were used to build up tension; Hitler's entrance was always delayed, and accompanied by shows of power; flag-bearing and drum beating supporters; with music playing
 - Nuremberg rally; held annually from 1927 onwards, was a quasi-religious event: organised with great theatrical flair, helped to give a powerful display of Nazi passion
 - o Nazi message was relayed by a large number of party-appointed public speakers at meetings held through the country
 - Local speakers were carefully selected and trained, with speeches carefully vetted by the national party headquarters
 - Local speakers were supplied with up-to-date information on key electoral issues and instructions on how to present issues to potential voters
- Constant Propaganda
 - o Pamphlets appeared in abundance
 - o Goebbels had as many as possible of Berlin's buildings covered in swastikas and posters
 - o Loudspeakers, radio, film and record were all used to spread the Nazi message
 - o Use of press; Nazis set up some 'in house' newspapers, including a national daily newspaper; (The Volkischer Beobachter), and many other local newspapers

- After 1930, Nazis received favourable coverage in many of the leading regional papers controlled by Alfred Hugenberg
- Messages within the propaganda
 - 'Negative Campaigning' – Attacks on opponents and blaming of economic depression and high unemployment on the failings of the Weimar democratic system
 - The 'Marxists' and 'Jews' depicted in Nazi propaganda as the key enemies of the German people
 - Emphasized the positive aspects of their own movement
 - Projected Hitler as the charismatic saviour of the German people
 - Dominance of Hitler in the projection of the Nazi Party – commonplace for party to be described as 'the Hitler movement'
 - All-encompassing message
 - Specific messages for different social groups and Nazi speakers paid particular attention to the worries and concerns of the individual clubs and societies they addressed
 - Farmers and peasants – offered special benefits to offset the collapse of agricultural prices
 - Industrialists – plating down the fear of nationalization and state control of the economy

Elaboration (Analysis)

- Oratorical Propaganda
 - "Mass suggestion" – the atmosphere and use of devices to heighten the effect; uniforms, torches, music salutes, flags, songs and anthems, and speeches from leading personalities
 - In a time where the German people were lacking a strong figure, this form of propaganda filled a gap – showed the prominence of one figure (Hitler)
 - Show of power and charisma in a time with a perceived severe lack of it drew in many Germans
 - Active form of campaigning – keeping up to date with issues – permanently attempting to reinforce solidarity among existing supporters and to attract new converts
- Constant Propaganda
 - Normalisation and integration of the Nazi message into normal life
 - Nazi influence seeped into every aspect of ordinary German life
- All-encompassing message
 - Appeal to every social group – far-cry from the other highly specialised parties which appealed to a single social group
 - Nazi party was a genuine 'people's party' whose membership was drawn from all social groups in German society
 - Garnered more support

Evaluation

- Limited in enforcing ideals

- Propaganda was more successful in reinforcing existing sympathies and feelings than in creating them
- Lack of effectiveness
 - Noakes points out that Nazis had major electoral successes in some areas where there was little propaganda, and vice versa
 - Germany was one of the most literate countries – Propaganda had less effectiveness on educated people
- Increase in support from citizenry, but lacking in other forms of support
 - Propaganda increased Hitler and the Nazi party's general popularity and this was evident through increased electoral support
 - However, popular support from the citizenry was only one aspect which elevated Hitler to a position of power. Propaganda had little effect on elites with pre-existing motives – and it was ultimately them that pushed Hitler to a legal position of power
- Other parties also used propaganda, and to a greater extent than the Nazis
 - German Democratic Party (DDP) and German National people's party (DNVP) made much greater use of film than the Nazi Party prior to 1933
 - Nazi propaganda did not have a monopoly on the technological advantage

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Thus, while propaganda definitely played a role in the dissemination of Nazi ideology, the persuasive elements of propaganda had little correlation with electoral support. Furthermore, electoral support was simply the leverage that propelled Hitler to Chancellorship, and does not account for Papen and other elites' support for him.

Use of Force

Topic Sentence

The Nazis regularly employed force in the form of the Sturm Abteilung (SA), and though useful, it was not the main factor for Hitler's rise to power.

Elaboration (Facts)

- The Sturm Abteilung was formed in 1921, led by Ernst Rohm
 - o Protected Nazi meetings
 - o Provided a strong army of committed- and very violent – activists to place out on the streets in direct competition against the communists
- The Sturm Abteilung's membership
 - o Offered an outlet for many delinquent young men to channel their anti-social and violent proclivities against political opponents
 - o Between 1929 and 1932, the membership of the SA grew from 30,000 to 425,000
 - o Most members were males between 18 and 35, half were working class, many were gangsters
- The Sturm Abteilung's Usage
 - o During his speeches, Hitler was surrounded by the SA who beat up or threw out hecklers
 - o Hitler wanted the SA to "conquer the streets"
 - Out-shouting and making life difficult for their political opponents
 - Used to provoke clashes with other parties' militias like the KPD's Red Front and the SPD's Reichbanner
 - Were seen as a street-fighting force

Elaboration (Analysis)

- Street Violence as a form of coercion
 - o The use of street violence could have intimidated people to vote for the Nazis
 - o Created an atmosphere where people wanted a strong government to restore law and order
 - o Use of SA to protect Nazi party – projected an image of power that people were intimidated by
- Boosted party membership
 - o SA recruited particularly among the many unemployed in the economic crisis
 - Fulfilled the yearning of many unemployed workers for class solidarity and nationalist fervour
 - o Provided an avenue for delinquent young men and sucked them into the Nazi Party
 - Membership of 425,000 in 1932

Evaluation

- The involvement of the Wehrmacht
 - o In the words of General Groener: "Not a brick can be moved any more in the political process in Germany without the word of the army being thrown decisively in the scales"
 - o The army was concerned that the SA posed a threat to its role within the state

- Forbidden recruitment of Nazi members into its rank
- Night of the Long Knives (June 30 1934)
 - The leader of the SA remained wedded to the idea of overthrowing Weimar democracy by force
 - SA remained somewhat autonomous within the party – never under direct control of Hitler
 - Differing viewpoints – “Continuation of the German revolution”, more radical and wanted an economic as well as a political revolution, many of its members came from the more ‘socialist’ wing of the party
 - In response to threats to his power and external pressure to silence the SA
 - Hitler denounced the leadership of the SA and accused them of treason
 - Executed key SA figures such as Ernst Rohm
 - Army unanimously applauded the Night of the Long knives
 - Hitler still sought support from the army
 - Use of force through the SA was not enough – needed the backing of pre-established organisations, such as the arm
 - Had to convince the army through Night of the Long Knives that its role would be enhanced by a Nazi regime
 - Felt that it was vital in his ‘legal path’ to power
- Beer Hall Putsch
 - Use of force alone is not enough to establish power
 - The Nazis’ march to Berlin failed miserably – the Nazis had not taken control of a single army barracks or important government building
 - Unable to overthrow Weimar democracy
 - Lacked support from the Bavarian right – government, local army, and state police moved to shut down the Nazi march to power using force, and succeeded immensely
 - Force used in isolation without support failed

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Thus, the Use of force, though useful, was not the main factor for the Nazi rise to power

Ideology

Topic Sentence

Nazism as an ideology preached ideals that appealed to German society, but in isolation, was not enough for Hitler to rise to power, and is thus not the main factor for Hitler's rise to power

Elaboration (Facts)

- Nazism was a vague ('eclectic ragbag ideology' – Frank McDonough) which drew on a wide variety of sources; had many different, sometimes conflicting viewpoints
 - o Nazism thus built its support by tapping into the negative feelings of certain sections of German society – all-encompassing ideology that promised different things to different classes
- Volksgemeinschaft
 - o Hitler promised to create a classless, national community,
 - o Individual was expected to serve the common good – “common good before individual good” was a key Nazi slogan
 - o A tempting promise of order in the chaos of Germany
- Fuhrerprinzip
 - o Promise of strong authoritarian leadership
 - o Promise of order in chaotic Nazi Germany
- Herrenrasse
 - o Idea of a pure Germanic community,
 - o Idea of racial deterioration being responsive for Germany's failings, blamed racial enemies like the Jews
 - o Antisemitism played a central aspect of Nazism
 - o Hitler ascribed every ill in the world to 'Jewish influence'
 - Claimed that the Jews dominated global capitalism and communism
- Anti-Communism
 - o Virulent hatred of Marxism ran through Hitler's writing and speeches
 - Desired to eliminate Marxism within Germany, and then to exterminate Bolshevism during a war against the Soviet Union
 - May have been a useful tool to appeal to the elite class, who were concerned about the effects of Communism on their labour force
- Extreme Nationalism: Lebensraum
 - o Central foreign policy aim of Nazism was to make Germany the most dominant power in Europe, and to gain revenge for the German defeat in the First world war
 - o Territorial gains on the European continent
 - Incorporate all German speakers in Austria, the Sudetenland and Poland into a greater German Reich
 - Gain Lebensraum (living space) for Germany in eastern Europe through a war of conquest against the Soviet Union
 - Used racism to justify the subjugation of lesser races
 - o McDonough suggests that these ideas of rearmament and military conquest were useful in appealing to the military leaders. However, some were still cautious of his

thuggish tactics, as seen by the need to use the NoLK and squash the SA to consolidate military support

Evaluation

- Stephen Lee suggests that the greatest strength of ideology was its ability to appeal to a large base
 - o Promises of “Bread and Work” swayed the working and middle class Post-Depression
 - Explains the jump in votes from 1928 to 1939 (12-107)
 - o Anti-communist and anti-union sentiments appealed to the landowners, businessmen and industrialists supported Nazi party
 - Was useful in generating funding and publicity for the party
- The support of the electorate was ultimately what spurred key player like Papen and Hindenburg to consider Hitler for Chancellorship
 - o HOWEVER, Hitler’s charisma played a large role in swaying Papen to his side, which was integral in Hindenburg’s decision to appoint him chancellor
 - o Furthermore, Hitler’s charisma was useful in commanding the respect of the conservative right candidate, who were swayed more by his promises of restoring Germany than any specific elements of Nazi ideology

Links

Thus, while ideology was useful in garnering support from the electorate, as well as key industrialists that helped the Nazi publicity machine, the Nazis did not come into power solely by virtue of their political support. Rather, it was Hitler’s charisma that presented himself as a strong candidate for Chancellorship, eventually allowing him to gain control of the Cabinet, despite it being comprised of his political rivals

Role of Leaders

Topic Sentence

The role of leaders, particularly Hitler, was the main factor which contributed to Hitler's rise to power.

Elaboration (Facts)

- Hitler's personal appeal
 - o Charismatic orator
 - Great orator who had a magnetic and hypnotic effect on the audience
 - Appealed to the audience – communicated what they wanted to hear not just in content but in style
 - o A rallying figure
 - Attracted loyal and capable subordinates like Hermann Goering, Joseph Goebbels, Heinrich Himmler, and Martin Bormann
 - Goebbels' rhetorical and propaganda skills were valuable, Himmler and Bormann were capable organizational men
 - Able to surround himself with capable elites with unique skillsets
- Hitler's political ability
 - o Turned the Nazi Party into a modern party with brilliant electioneering tactics
 - o Able to occupy the political vacuum of the right of German politics
 - o Only civilian politician who stood any chance of establishing a popular authoritarian regime
 - o Useful in establishing Nazi ideology through Mein Kampf
- Hitler's charisma was incredibly useful in persuading the conservative elite of Hindenburg's cabinet that he was the only one who could win over Germany
 - o Won over the support of key players like Papen, Oskar Hindenburg, and Meißner Hindenburg
 - o Papen rejected the post of chancellor, and vehemently supported Hitler
 - o Was also important in winning over the support of many of the ministers in his newly appointed Reich cabinet
- Hitler's strength as a singular figure who possessed charisma
 - o Offered the simple promise of strong and clear leadership based on authoritarian principles
 - o Many Germans who turned to the Nazis found the idea of a strong leader determined to restore order very appealing

Elaboration

- Hitler's charisma helped him gain popularity with the electorate
 - o "He was never only their leader, he was always their voice... the people, as if electrified, recognised themselves in him" - Joachim Fest
 - o Hitler embodied the ideals of the German nation
 - o His portrayal of a simple front soldier and the representative of the generation of the trenches helped galvanise the support of the people

- Hitler's force of personality affirmed the ideology of Fuhrerprinzip
 - Fuhrerprinzip
 - Nazi ideology placed heavy emphasis on an all-powerful figure who was served unquestionably – that figure was Hitler
 - Personal traits – seen as a charismatic and all-powerful figure, supported this perception by the public
 - Was a promise of order to a Germany fraught with economic crisis.

Limitation

- While Hitler's charisma was a powerful tool for garnering political support, his temperament and paranoia meant that he often did not trust his supporters, resulting in use of force to control them (NoLK)
 - Even during the night of the long knives – many SA figures died saying "Heil Hitler" because they believed that an anti-Hitler SS plot had led to their execution
 - Demonstrated the limits of his charisma, as he often treated people loyal to him as foes, lapsing on force to control them

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Thus, the role of leaders, particularly, Hitler, is the main factor in his rise to power, as he was integral in gaining the support of the elite and the electorate, and developing Nazi ideology. However, Hitler often had to use force to control others due to his own paranoia, showing that while he had strong charisma, he sometimes lacked the political acumen to properly leverage this charisma.