

# Knowledge Map: Germany 1919-1933 (Weimar)

**Summary:** This period of German history is a very turbulent and chaotic one as Germany struggles to come to terms with the impact of defeat in the First World War. It sees a series of political and financial instability both at the beginning of the period, and at the end. By 1933, the situation would be so dire in Germany you would see the rise of the extreme right-wing party: the Nazis. In January 1933, Hitler would become Chancellor of Germany, ending the Weimar Republic.

1918-23: Years of Crisis				1924-28: Years of Recovery				1928-33: Economic Depression							
Treaty of Versailles (1919); Spartacist Revolution (1919); Kapp Putsch (1920); Invasion of the Ruhr (1923); Hyperinflation (1923); Munich				Stresemann as Chancellor (1924); Rentenmark (1923/24); Dawes Plan (1924); Locarno Treaty (1925); League of Nations (1926)				1929 Wall Street Crash; Economic Depression (1929-33);							
1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933
End of the First World War		1919-1933: Rise of the Nazi Party: Creation of Nazi Party; Munich Putsch (1923); Hitler in prison (1923-24); Mein Kampf (1924); Reorganisation of the Party (1924-28); Nazi Propaganda (1928-33); Election Gains (1928-32); Von Papen and Hindenburg deal (1933); Hitler becomes Chancellor (1933)													

## 1918-23: Years of Crisis

### Summary

Following defeat in the First World War, Germany experiences years of political and economic turbulence, culminating in the French invading the Ruhr due to Germany not paying the reparations agreed at the Treaty of Versailles. The impact of the First World War cannot be underestimated. Perhaps the biggest impact is financial but the decision to make Germany a Republic caused huge political upheaval.

### Key Knowledge

1	1914-1918: The Impact of the First World War	The First World War had a disastrous effect on Germany both politically and financially. Politically it saw Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicate his throne and Germany without a recognisable way of running the country. It would see the establishment of a democracy in Germany. Financially, the war destroyed the German economy and Germany would struggle financially in the upcoming years.
2	Treaty of Versailles (1919)	The Treaty of Versailles was the peace agreement between the Allies and Germany. It only increased Germany's problems after the war, especially financially. They agreed to pay £6600 million in reparations (compensation), agreed to the war guilt clause, lost various territories, and had its military devastated. It was simply an attempt to keep Germany weak politically, financially and militarily.
3	Weimar Republic created	Following the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II, Germany chose to remove its monarchy and replace it with a democracy. It established a parliament, a Chancellor and President and universal suffrage. The democracy was built on Proportional Representation which saw the number of seats assigned to a party according to their share of the vote nationally. This would often cause problems as no party ever had a majority.
4	Political Revolutions: Spartacists, Kapp and Munich	Due to establishment of a new democracy, many extreme parties took the opportunity to try and seize power by revolution [putsch]. The Spartacists were left-wing communists. The Kapp Putsch was a right-wing military attempt to seize power. The Munich Putsch was a right-wing revolution by the Nazis. All failed for different reasons.
5	Invasion of the Ruhr (1923)	In 1922, Germany failed to pay its reparations payments and France invaded the Ruhr to seize the equivalent value of the reparations but in raw materials such as coal and steel. Germany responded by going on strike meaning France could not take the materials as they were not being produced. 100 000 workers would be exiled by the Germans, and over 100 workers would be killed. It had huge economic consequences for Germany.
6	Economic Crisis and Hyperinflation	In order to end the crisis and get the economy going again, Germany took the decision to print money. The scale of the printing would get out of control and the country would enter a period of hyperinflation where the currency becomes devalued. At one point in November 1923, £1 would be worth 220 000 000 000 marks in Germany. It would be in this economic environment that the Nazis would attempt to seize power.

## 1923-28: Years of Recovery (Golden Years)

### Summary

This period sees Germany recover from the turbulent years of 1918-23. Under the leadership of Gustav Stresemann, Germany recovered from the economic crisis of 1923 with the introduction of the Rentenmark. Most significantly though, the Dawes Plan enabled Germany's economy to start recovering. The reliance on American loans though would prove costly in 1929 when the US economy collapses following the Wall Street Crash. It is also a period where Germany's international reputation begins to recover.

### Key Knowledge

7	Gustav Stresemann	Gustav Stresemann (GS) is credited with directing the recovery of the German economy. His willingness to accept Germany's circumstances, particularly the Treaty of Versailles, and his willingness to work collaboratively with other parties saw political stability return to Germany. Pre-1924 there had been 4 elections but between 1925 and 1928 there were none. This enabled him to change Germany's financial fortunes and restore their international reputation.
8	Rentenmark Introduced (1923-24)	GS would solve the problem of hyperinflation by restoring balance to the German economy. The introduction of a new currency, the Rentenmark, saw inflation reduce to normal levels.
9	Dawes Plan (1924)	Perhaps GS's most significant contribution to the recovery. The Dawes Plan borrowed large sums of money from the US which was then put into creating German businesses and kick-start the German economy by providing jobs and money. It worked as the German economy recovered well. By 1927 it was producing more steel than it had been pre-1914.
10	Locarno Treaty and League of Nations (1925-26)	The Locarno Treaty was signed by GS and was an international agreement that Germany would accept the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, particularly the loss of land. By doing this Germany would prove itself to be a peaceful nation and would be allowed to join the League of Nations suggesting equality once again with fellow countries such as Britain and France.

## 1928-33: Economic Depression

### Summary

The collapse of the US economy following the Wall Street Crash in 1929 would have disastrous consequences for Germany. Due to the economic recovery being reliant on American loans, when they were recalled by the US the German economy collapsed. This saw huge unemployment (6 million by 1933) and would see the population begin to lose faith in democracy and the Weimar Republic. The political 'experiment' appeared to be a failure in Germany and many of the population turned to the more extreme left and right-wing parties to solve the economic crisis.

### Key Knowledge

11	Wall Street Crash (1929)	The Wall Street Crash of 1929 is a major moment in world history because of the effect it had globally. The collapse of the US stock market would speak a global economic depression. The collapse of the US economy affected Germany more than any other country because of its reliance on US loans.
12	Economic Collapse (1929-33)	Due to its reliance on US loans and the US recalling those loans, saw the German economy collapse. Stresemann's warning that Germany was "dancing on a volcano" came true. The collapse in the economy saw unemployment rise in Germany from half a million in 1928 to 6 million in 1933. This was 25% of the German workforce.
13	Consequences of Collapse	The major consequence of the economic depression in Germany was that many people sought solutions to the problems they faced in extreme political parties. Parties such as the Nazis and Communists saw rises in the number of people who would vote for them because of their disillusionment with the Weimar Republic which had experienced a difficult 15 years. Eventually, it would be destroyed by the Nazi Party who found themselves the biggest party in the Reichstag in 1932.

## 1919-33: Rise of the Nazi Party

### Summary

The Nazi Party was formed in 1918 after the First World War. It campaigned on far-right issues such as race, militarism and reversing the Treaty of Versailles. Hitler would come to dominate this party but it would be a stormy beginning it would become the largest political party in Germany in 1932. The early phases of the party are characterised by revolutionary tendencies but this would all change after 1924 and they would seek power legally.

### Key Knowledge

14	Origins of the Party	The origins of the Nazi Party are in the German Workers Party (DAP). A right-wing party established by Anton Drexler after the war it advocated the reversal of the Treaty of Versailles, policies based around racism and military expansion. In 1920, Hitler would become its leader. In 1921, it was influential in the establishment of the SA.
15	Beliefs of the Party	In 1921, Hitler wrote the party's 25-point programme which outlined its political beliefs and would form the basis of its election campaigns right up until they achieved power in 1933. Examples of points: Point 1 - The uniting together of all Germans in a greater Germany.; Point 2 - Abolish of the Treaty of Versailles; Point 4 - Only fellow Germans to have right to be citizens [i.e. not Jews].
16	1924-28: Change of Direction	Originally, the Nazi Party wanted to achieve power by revolution but when that failed in 1923, Hitler, whilst in prison, considered a new direction. In his book, Mein Kampf, Hitler felt the Nazis would have a better opportunity to achieve power by being elected. It meant reorganising the party into a national party that used propaganda as a means to target specific areas of the country with their policies.
17	Nazi Propaganda and Election Gains	Nazi Propaganda was unlike other parties propaganda in that it targeted emotional messages to people rather than logical ones. Under the guidance of Joseph Goebbels, they targeted the unemployed and promised them "Bread and Work". This combined with Hitler's charismatic leadership saw millions of Germans vote for them over any of the other parties. By 1932 they had 230 seats in the Reichstag, more than any other party.
18	Von Papen and Hindenburg Deal	As a consequence of the election gains and the Nazis being the biggest party in the Reichstag, Hitler should have been offered the Chancellorship but due to his commitment to ending democracy, President Hindenburg was understandably reluctant. However, democracy could not work without the cooperation of the Nazis so they had to make him Chancellor but tried to limit his powers in doing so.

### Keywords

Republic	A state in which supreme power is held by the people and their elected representatives; no monarchy.
Reparations	Payments to be made by Germany for their part in the First World War. Set at £6600 million.
Putsch	A violent attempt to overthrow a government.
Proportional Representation	An electoral system in which parties gain seats in proportion to the number of votes cast for them.
Reichstag	House in German Parliament.
Chancellor	Elected leader of German Reichstag. Usually leader of largest political party.
President	Elected Head of German Republic. Can dismiss Chancellor.
Communism	A political system of government in which all property is owned by the community and each person contributes and receives according to their ability and needs.