Hitler's rise to power cannot be attributed to one event, but a mixture of factors including events happening outside Germany, the strengths of the Nazi party, and the weaknesses of other parties within Germany. Hitler used these factors to his advantage and in 1933 he legitimately gained power to become chancellor.

Summary

In 1929, the American Stock Exchange collapsed, and caused an economic depression. America called in all its foreign loans, which destroyed Weimar Germany. Unemployment in Germany rose to 6 million.

The government did not know what to do. In July 1930 Chancellor Brüning cut government expenditure, wages and unemployment pay - the worst thing to do during a depression. He could not get the Reichstag to agree to his actions, so President Hindenburg used Article 48 to pass the measures by decree.

Anger and bitterness helped the Nazis to gain more support.

Many workers turned to communism, but this frightened wealthy businessmen, so they financed Hitler's campaigns. Many middle-class people, alarmed by the obvious failure of democracy, decided that the country needed a strong government. Nationalists and racists blamed the Treaty of Versailles and reparations.

In 1928, the Nazis had only 12 seats in the Reichstag; by July 1932 they had 230 seats and were the largest party.

The government was in chaos. President Hindenburg dismissed Brüning in 1932. His replacement - Papen - lasted six months, and the next chancellor - Schleicher - only lasted two months. Hindenburg had to use Article 48 to pass almost every law.

In January 1933, Hindenburg and Papen came up with a plan to get the Nazis on their side by offering to make Hitler vice chancellor. He refused and demanded to be made chancellor. They agreed, thinking they could control him.

In January 1933, Hitler became chancellor, and immediately set about making himself absolute ruler of Germany using Article 48.
Why did Hitler come to power?

[LIWP PAPER]
The story of why Hitler came to power is about the reasons why the German people lost their senses and allowed a vicious madman to come to power. What could have brought this about?

All the following were present from the 1920s:

1. **Long-term bitterness**
   Deep anger about the First World War and the Treaty of Versailles created an underlying bitterness to which Hitler’s viciousness and expansionism appealed, so they gave him support.

2. **Ineffective Constitution**
   Weaknesses in the Constitution crippled the government. In fact, there were many people in Germany who wanted a return to dictatorship. When the crisis came in 1929–1933 — there was no one who was prepared or able to fight to stop Hitler.

4. **Propaganda**
   Nazi propaganda persuaded the German masses to believe that the Jews were to blame and that Hitler was their last hope.

6. **Programme**
   Hitler promised everybody something, so they supported him.

6. **Attacks on other parties**
   The Stormtroopers attacked Jews and people who opposed Hitler. Many opponents kept quiet simply because they were scared of being murdered — and, if they were, the judges simply let the Stormtroopers go free (see point 2).

7. **Personal Qualities**
   Hitler was a brilliant speaker, and his eyes had a peculiar power over people. He was a good organiser and politician. He was a driven, unstable man, who believed that he had been called by God to become dictator of Germany and rule the world. This kept him going when other people might have given up. His self-belief persuaded people to believe in him.

After 1929, however, two short-term factors brought Hitler to power:

8. **Economic Depression**
   After the Wall Street Crash of 1929, the US called in its loans to Germany, and the German economy collapsed. The number of unemployed grew; people starved on the streets. In the crisis, people wanted someone to blame, and looked to extreme solutions — Hitler offered them both, and Nazi success in the elections grew.
   Germans turned to Nazism because they were desperate. The number of Nazi seats in the Reichstag rose from 12 in 1928 to 230 in July 1932.

9. **Recruited by Hindenburg**
   In November 1932 elections the Nazis again failed to get a majority of seats in the Reichstag. Their share of the vote fell — from 230 seats to only 196. Hitler contemplated suicide. But then he was rescued by Hindenburg.
   Franz von Papen (a friend of Hindenburg) was Chancellor, but he could not get enough support in the Reichstag. Hindenburg and von Papen were having to govern by emergency decree under Article 48 of the Constitution. They offered Hitler the post of vice-Chancellor if he promised to support them.
   Hitler refused — he demanded to be made Chancellor. So Von Papen and Hindenburg took a risk. On 30 January 1933 Hindenburg made Hitler Chancellor. He thought he could control Hitler — how wrong he was.
   In the end, Hitler did not TAKE power at all — he was given it.
Was Weimar doomed?

Was Hitler's success because of Weimar's failure? Was the Weimar constitution to blame or was Weimar doomed from the start?

Arguments

Throughout this section (Germany - Weimar), we have been assessing how successful the Weimar Republic was. It was beset by problems in the early years, but the stability and prosperity enjoyed by Germany during the period 1924-1929, suggests that it was successful to a degree.

However, throughout this time, Hitler and the Nazi party came to prominence and eventually gained control in 1933.

It is arguable that the problems which beset the Weimar Republic from the start finally 'got it in the end':

- The vilification of the government as the November Criminals continued even into the 1930s, when Hitler referred to the government as the November Criminals in his election speeches.
- The weakness of the Reichstag governments because of proportional representation continued right to the very end, and lay behind the Hindenburg/Papen deal with Hitler in January 1933.
- Hitler used Article 48 to destroy the Republic after January 1933.

Yet:

- The Republic lasted 13 years - the world in 1933 was very different to 1919, so there was no simplistic cause-and-effect.
- The Republic was very successful during the period 1923-1929. When the pro-democracy parties organised themselves properly, the Republic could be very strong.
- The Republic would have survived if Hindenburg and Papen hadn't made Hitler chancellor; the Nazis had not done as well in the November 1932 elections as they had in July 1932, and some historians believe that their appeal was beginning to wane.

The historian AJP Taylor said that there was nothing wrong with the Weimar Republic per se: he blamed the stupid men who lacked the will to maintain democracy the politicians of the Centre and Social Democratic parties, and particularly Hindenburg and Papen for Hitler's rise to power.
How and why did Hitler get appointed Chancellor in January 1933?

**Political scheming 1929–32**

The end of parliamentary democracy

Although the Nazis were popular, they didn’t have enough seats to control parliament. They didn’t have a majority in terms of the number of seats because not everyone in Germany supported them – but they were determined to strengthen their power.
The Brüning, Von Papen and Von Schleicher Coalitions

Left to right: Brüning, Von Papen and Von Schleicher

The Brüning Government, 1930–32

Chancellor Brüning ruled alongside President Hindenburg, using the emergency powers of Article 48.

This government did not succeed in solving the problems, and Brüning wasn’t popular. Von Schleicher, a general in the army, managed to persuade President Hindenburg to get rid of Brüning. He resigned in May 1932.

The Von Papen Government

Von Papen, at the time a member of the Centre Party, became Chancellor. He only had 68 supporters in the Reichstag. He hoped to win more support in the 1932 election, but he was disappointed. The largest party in the Reichstag was the Nazi party. Hitler wanted to be appointed Chancellor.

Hindenburg supported Von Papen. The Reichstag decided to hold a vote to decide whether or not they would also support Von Papen as Chancellor. He won 32 votes but 513 had voted against him.

In March 1932 Hitler stood against Hindenburg as President of Germany. He gained 13.4 million votes but Hindenburg won with 19.3 million.

Von Papen organised another election in November. The support for Von Papen in this election was even less.

The Von Schleicher Government

He was Chancellor for two months. Hindenburg had no choice, and on 30 January 1933, he appointed Hitler as Chancellor.

The reasons for the Nazis’ election success

The effect of the Recession

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of unemployed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>1,862,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>2,850,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>3,217,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>4,886,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>6,042,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hitler’s appeal and his promises

The Nazi party was the people’s party. It tried to win everyone’s support. Hitler would deliver speeches to German audiences in halls or sport stadiums.
## To whom did the Nazis appeal?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group of people</th>
<th>Promise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The middle class</td>
<td>Protection from Communism, and restoration of law and order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Mittesland)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The upper class</td>
<td>Reprisal for the Treaty of Versailles, and the creation of a strong government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large industrialists</td>
<td>Suspension of trade unions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The working class</td>
<td>Jobs and the protection of workers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary people from the countryside</td>
<td>An increase in the price of agricultural products.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Emphasis on the family and morals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fear of Communism**

The Communist Revolution happened in Russia in 1917. Many feared that it would spread to Germany.

**The role of the SA**

**The SA - the Nazis' private army, the party's military wing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ernst Rohm</td>
<td>2,500,000 by 1934. Many were undisciplined hooligans.</td>
<td>Fought for the Nazis in the Munich Putsch of 1923. Controlled the streets in order to promote the Nazis' activities and prevent their opponents' activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Uniform: Brown shirts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The use of propaganda**

- Propaganda poster 1
- German women think of your children! Vote Hitler
- The wirepuller – anti-Semitic propaganda
- Work means bread
How Hitler consolidated power 1933-1934

In January 1933 Hitler became chancellor of Germany and by August 1934, he had declared himself Führer - the leader of Germany. What happened during this time that allowed Hitler to take the ultimate position of authority?

27 Feb 1933

Reichstag Fire - the Reichstag building is set on fire. A Dutch Communist, van der Lubbe, is caught red-handed in the burning building.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reichstag fire</th>
<th>Hitler used the fire to his advantage in two ways:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. It gave him an opportunity to imprison many communist leaders, which stopped them campaigning during the election.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. It allowed the Nazis to say that the country was in danger from the communists during its election campaign.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both these actions helped the Nazis to win more seats in the election.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When the courts convicted Dutch Communist van der Lubbe, but did not convict other Communist leaders, Hitler was furious and replaced the courts with the Nazi People’s Courts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Just 24 hours after taking office, Hitler had called for new elections to be held on 5 March 1933. He felt that new elections would not only increase the Nazi share of the vote, but also increase his own status within the country.

Rather than the usual events of a democratic election, the SA and SS embarked on a violent campaign. In addition, Hermann Goering, a leading Nazi who had become head of the police in Bavaria, recruited 50,000 SA and SS members into the police. The ensuing campaign of violence and terror was waged against Communists and other Nazi opponents.

On 27 February 1933, just as the campaign moved into its final days, the Reichstag (Parliament building) was set on fire and burnt down. A young Dutch communist (Van der Lubbe), was arrested and imprisoned along with 4,000 other Communists.

Emergency powers

Hitler exploited the Reichstag fire. On 28 February, the ‘Decree for the Protection of People and State’ was drawn up by the Nazis and signed by Hindenburg. The ‘emergency’ powers contained within the decree marked the beginning of the breakdown in the democratic process.

In the aftermath of the fire, during the final week of the election the SS and SA arrested thousands more Communists and other enemies of the Nazis. The new powers meant that they could be imprisoned indefinitely without trial.

Again, using these new powers, the Nazis banned newspapers, leaflets and meetings of opponents. The ensuing violence led to the deaths of more than 50 people and injuries to many more.
5 Mar 1933  General Election - only 44 per cent of the population vote for the Nazis, who win 288 seats in the Reichstag.

23 Mar 1933  Enabling Act - the SA intimidates all the remaining non-Nazi deputies. The Reichstag votes to give Hitler the right to make his own laws.

Just 24 hours after taking office, Hitler had called for new elections to be held on 5 March 1933. He felt that new elections would not only increase the Nazi share of the vote, but also increase his own status within the country. Rather than the usual events of a democratic election, the SA and SS embarked on a violent campaign. In addition, Hermann Goering, a leading Nazi who had become head of the police in Bavaria, recruited 50,000 SA and SS members into the police. The ensuing campaign of violence and terror was waged against Communists and other Nazi opponents.

3  Enabling Act - 23 March 1933
The Reichstag voted to give Hitler the power to make his own laws. Nazi stormtroopers stopped opposition deputies going in, and beat up anyone who dared to speak against it.

The Enabling Act made Hitler the dictator of Germany, with power to do anything he liked - legally.

The Enabling Act allowed the Cabinet to introduce legislation without it first going through the Reichstag. Basically the Reichstag Deputies voted to allow themselves to be bypassed. Any legislation passed by the Cabinet did not need presidential approval either. The act had a lifespan of four years before it had to be renewed via the Reichstag – something that happened on two separate occasions with an even more Nazified Reichstag and with what was effectively open voting.

Just how significant was the Enabling Act? Shortly after the bill became law, Joseph Goebbels wrote that Hitler now had full power to push Germany forward. He made no mention of the Cabinet. In fact, there was no Cabinet input in the sense that a modern Cabinet would expect to function. For example, Hitler had given the Centre Party his full guarantee that their power would be protected if they supported the Enabling Act. On July 14th 1933, all political parties other than the Nazi Party were banned on the orders of Hitler. It was generally thought that it took just 24 hours to put into legislation something that Hitler had ordered. The Enabling Act also protected the position of President. Such was Hitler’s power that when Hindenburg died in August 1934, he simply merged the positions of Chancellor and President and created the position of Führer even though interfering with the position of the President was not allowed even by the terms of the Enabling Act.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26 April 1933</td>
<td><strong>Local government</strong> is reorganised - the country is carved up into 42 Gaus, which are run by a Gauleiter. These Gaus are separated into areas, localities and blocks of flats run by a Blockleiter. Hitler sets up the Gestapo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 May 1933</td>
<td><strong>Trade Unions banned - 2 May 1933</strong> The Trade Unions offices were closed, their money confiscated, and their leaders put in prison. In their place, Hitler put the German Labour Front which reduced workers' pay and took away the right to strike.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 June 1933</td>
<td><strong>Concordat</strong> - Hitler makes an agreement with the Pope who sees him as someone who can destroy communism. This agreement allows Hitler to take over political power in Germany as long as he leaves the Catholic Church alone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 July 1933</td>
<td><strong>Political parties</strong> are banned - only the Nazi party is allowed to exist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 April 1934</td>
<td><strong>People's Courts</strong> - Hitler sets up the Nazi people's courts where judges have to swear an oath of loyalty to the Nazis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7 Night of the Long Knives - 30 June 1934

The SA were the thugs who Hitler had used to help him come to power. They had defended his meetings, and attacked opponents. By 1934 there were more than a million of them.

Historians have often wondered why Hitler turned on the SA. But Hitler was in power in 1934, and there was no opposition left - the SA were an embarrassment, not an advantage. Also, Rohm, the leader of the SA, was talking about a Socialist revolution and about taking over the army. On the night of 30 June 1934 - codeword 'Hummingbird' - Hitler ordered the SS to kill more than 400 SA men.

Why did Hitler turn on the SA?

1. It was growing too powerful
Rohm wanted to be leader of the army and quarrelled with Hitler.

2. Hitler was now Chancellor/ the government
and had no more use for violent action (a force which had been designed to destabilise/overthrow the government).

3. Choice – SA or army
(nb Rohm wanted to be commander of a joint army-SA). Hitler chose the army (nb connections with 1 and 2).

4. SA was too Socialist
(nb broad appeal of National (right wing) Socialists (left wing). But now Rohm and the SA wanted a 'second' (socialist) revolution - they were recruiting Communists and wanted an alliance with Russia.

Hitler and his industrialist sponsors were against this (i.e. choice: SA or industrialists?) Hitler chose the industrialists.

Minor factors

5. Were the SA plotting a coup?
Hitler claimed that the SA were plotting a coup (some evidence).

6. Scandalous behaviour/ homosexuality
In contrast to the Nazi concept of manliness, 'clean-living' culture and the family.

Hitler and the army

It is important to note that in 1934, the army was not subject to Hitler's authority. At this point, he still needed the army's support, which is why he destroyed the SA in the Night of the Long Knives.

In 1938, army leaders hoped Hitler's plan to conquer the Sudetenland would fail and give them an opportunity to depose him. When he succeeded, their attempt to get rid of him fell apart, and Hitler dismissed the chief of staff and 60 other generals. Thereafter, the army was also subservient to Hitler.