

Plan:

Failure of democracy

Government

Revolutions  
Nationalism  
Power concentrated  
in hands of  
president.  
Right-wing.

Civil service

was not reformed.  
Autocratic, did  
not support gov  
Nationalistic

Hitler & Nazi  
Promoted  
feelings of  
nat. and  
united Germans.  
Ideology  
mein Kampf

In 1918, Germany experienced democracy for the first time. However, although it had been politically reformed, a social revolution had not occurred. For this reason, nationalistic elements of German society remained and gradually undermined the republic. For this reason, nationalism can be seen as an extremely important factor in the break-down of the Weimar republic, and a major cause of the failure of democracy between 1918 and 1924.

After the abdication of the Kaiser, and the appointment of Friedrich Ebert as the leader of Germany, a new constitution was prepared. This document was extremely democratic, and all German citizens were granted individual freedoms and personal liberties. However, German society had not been reformed in any way, and had never experienced democracy before. Previously, Germany had been an

autocratic and imperialistic nation, and this form of government and foreign policy had provided great military and economic success. Militarism and nationalism had reigned supreme, and thus, these attitudes and ideologies within society had remained, despite a vast change in political structure. By failing to reform such sectors of society, such as the civil service; the military, the judiciary, the education system, the bureaucracy, as well as convincing the upper-class German society of the benefits of democracy, these nationalistic elements and sections within <sup>remained</sup> ~~society~~ <sup>and</sup> did not support the new democratic government or the Weimar republic, <sup>doing</sup> ~~and did~~ all they could to undermine the success of the republic. Thus, the importance of nationalism as a cause of the failure of democracy can be seen, and by failing to impose a social, as well as political revolution within Germany, the Weimar Republic was faced with a nationalistic civil service and



social elite that did not support the new government or republic.

Furthermore, nationalistic attitudes and ideals remained within the government, and political problems that stemmed from intense feelings of nationalism further undermined democracy.

Democratic politicians had once been seen as enemies of German tradition and imperialism.

However, in 1918 it was these men that were forced to take control of, and run the nation.

Nationalistic figures within society (including members of the military - in particular, Ludendorff and later, Hitler) connected such democratic politicians with the hated 'Treaty of Versailles' which was named a 'diktat' or 'imposed peace'.

Democratic politicians were labelled 'November criminals' that had 'stabbed the nation in

the back', and became symbols of the suppression of

German nationalism, and imposers of the treaty.

Hatred towards the harsh treaty that was seen as denying Germany her true position of greatness was thus connected with the Weimar politicians, and therefore, intense German nationalism further undermined the position of ~~the~~ Weimar politicians, and ultimately, ~~the~~ contributed greatly to the failure of democracy.

Right-wing and other nationalistic factions within the government, also contributed to the break-down of democracy, and the republic. Attempted overthrows of democracy (the most notable being the Kapp and Munich Beerhall Putsches) were conducted by ~~national~~ extreme nationalists such as Wolf-gard Kapp and Hitler's Nazi party, and although they did not have support of the military, they disrupted democracy and further undermined the republic, stirring up German nationalism, and eventually contributing to the failure of democracy.

Right-wing factions within the Reichstag



also contributed to the breakdown of democracy. The system of proportional representation by which a political party needed only 6 000 votes to hold a seat within the Reichstag, meant that no party could maintain a majority, and coalition parties (often involving right-wing nationalists) were elected, and decisions made were inconsistent. Parties changed often, and overall, the presence of right-wing, nationalistic political parties disrupted democracy in the Reichstag and contributed to its failure.

Hitler's Nazi party was one nationalistic group that contributed to the downfall of democracy more than any other. Outlined in 'Mein Kampf', Hitler had developed an ideology that saw Germany as the destined world leader. According to Hitler, social darwinism and the superiority of the German race was clear, and he believed that Germany deserved

to be leader of the world. As his political party gained power and influence (particularly after as a result of the depression - AJP Taylor, "the depression put the wind in Hitler's sails"), German nationalism and a hatred of democracy was encouraged. This contributed greatly to the downfall of democracy and Hitler's appointment as Chancellor of Germany on 30<sup>th</sup> Jan, 1933 signalled an end to democracy in Germany.