

How far is it accurate
to describe hitler as a
'weak dictator'?
essay



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The Third Reich, for Hitler, was supposed to have lasted 1000 years minimum, but it only lasted 12 years and four months. Many historians blame this on an individual that's Hitler himself. Whether it is accurate or not to describe Hitler as a 'weak dictator' has been questioned for decades, leading to the heart of the complex Intentionalist-Structuralist debate. The argument is based on Hitler being a weak dictator that was unable to unite Germany, as a new Fuhrer should had.

On the one hand, there are the Intentionalist historians who argue forcefully that 'Hitler was master in the Third Reich', while the Structuralists stress the many constraints on Hitler's power which range from his own personal inadequacies to the limits imposed upon him by the structure of the Nazi party and state. There are many themes both supporting and going against this debate, themes such as; the consolidation of power; decision-making and image and reality, all of which could be used to come to a conclusion on Hitler's dictatorship. It is certainly hard to make out a case for Hitler being a weak leader in the period 1925-33. He was able to consolidate his position at the Bamberg meeting in February 1926, and during the crucial years of 1930-32 he resisted being manipulated prematurely into a. Similarly he was able to restrain the SA from putting his pseudo-constitutional tactics in jeopardy by hazarding everything by risking an armed uprising in 1932. It may be, as Gregor Strasser argued, that these tactics showed a dangerous indecision and that Hitler was only saved from failure by the notorious 'backstairs intrigues' of von Papen and the banker Schroder; but at least they were held to consistently, and the Party was forced to follow them.

It is clear that Hitler had succeeded in moving the Nazis from a position as a minority power to a dominant political force in Germany and by 1934 had created a one party state, enabling Germany to increasingly look like the desired dictatorship which was planned. However, Hitler could on the other hand be seen as an opportunist reacting to external events as he was practically handed the opportunity he fell into after the collapse of the international order. He cannot of had total power as the plots against his own life were a signal that there was an opposition and therefore he had to steer clear of certain groups and people such as, the army, the churches, the communists and eventually all major world powers, to ensure the survival of power. Essentially meaning that Nazi Germany might have aspired towards being a totalitarian society but it was not quite able to do so. Structuralists express that Nazi Germany was a product of a range of factors from Germany's recent past and certainly not Hitler's powerful dictatorship! In conclusion to Hitler's overall consolidation of power, he can be seen as a powerful dictator who saw a chance in reviving Germany and took it, however possibly shone weakness through being unaware of the opposition which would essentially destroy his dictatorship. When it came down to decision-making, Hitler's will was law! The Nazi structure put Hitler as a kind of absolute monarch, firstly, who was surrounded by officials, constantly competing with each other.

As firstly he had the power to dominate and rouse an audience and masterminded the Nazi campaign for power by creating the Nazi ideology. Through doing so he established a dictatorship that had considerable popular support! Due to this firstly system it seemed to Nazi government that

there was no need for a formal decision making structure and it could be apparent that from Hitler's political decision-making process that in effect laid the foundation for World War 2. It is clear that Hitler was central to the regime, as developments such as the SS developing, extermination of the Jews and involvement in the war, would not have happened without him. Intentionalists argue that Hitler was a strong dictator who controlled and planned everything. Whereas, it could also be seen that Hitler's power to make informed decisions was limited by the very system he had created and that he was a prisoner of his own structure. Although maybe providing an overall vision he was a man remote from public affairs who was uninvolved in actual decision-making.

Hitler was unwilling to take on decisions and was influenced in a strong fashion due to his frequent uncertainty, supporting the structuralist view that Hitler was not in total control. His own improvising and failure to give planning and consistency resulted in a chaotic machinery of government and the collapse and disintegration of an ordered state, revealing a regime of chaos and uncertainty created by Hitler that eventually caused his own demise and Nazi Germany suffering from a leadership crisis. Although it may have seemed that Hitler was a strong dictator who controlled and planned everything, in reality Nazi Germany presented a chaotic flow of information between Hitler and his advisers showing weakness in the Nazi state and his dictatorship and may have certainly triggered and accelerated the march towards war. Hitler gave off the image of an all-knowing leader with very ordered and structured aims and ideas, including that of 'volksgemeinschaft'. He held an image of an extremely powerful dictator that

took total power immediately and there is the idea that the Nazis achieved such power through the leadership of this one man.

The Nazis image seemed to have been predominantly controlled through propaganda. Hitler used stunts such as cheap people receivers, which were massed, produced and had one station only. This shows some intelligence and power from Hitler and the Nazis as they had thought up the idea to prevent other stations being aired and therefore preventing a use of propaganda for opposition. In reality, like structuralists put forward, Hitler was not such strong and powerful dictator as his image suggested.

There was no apparent collective government and the dictatorship in reality, if one at all, was highly disorganised. It had taken time for Hitler to achieve some power and was certainly not immediate like his image had given off, we can also question whether it was ever actually total power achieved? In reality also, Hitler was helped into power, through gaining an advantage from the collapse of international order and from being given the job in the first place, whereas his image had suggested otherwise. Hitler's tactics through propaganda in reality could also be seen as the weakness of a dictator as maybe he doubted his ability to gain support and power from the German people and therefore felt he had to fight off and beat opponents through methods such as the on station radios. In total conclusion, from the evidence I've provided Hitler seems to have been a weak dictator. He had definite powers and initiation, through his quick reaction to the international crisis and problem German fell into during the late 1920's and through his ability to gain such support and following from the majority of the German population despite lack of controlled organisation structure and decision

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making in his own party. He certainly achieved highly through the use of propaganda, yet in reality and behind closed doors he was failing fast, which is why the Third Reich ended when it did and why Hitler's dictatorship can be concluded as weak.