

19.6 Why did Germany move from fragile democracy to Nazi dictatorship?

Source: <https://www.historyonthenet.com/nazi-germany-timeline>

Instructions: As historians look back in time to explore cause and effect, certain events, certain decisions, set a nation down a particular path and eliminate other possible outcomes. Examine this German timeline from 1918 through 1939. Select three “decision points” that set Germany on the path from democracy to Nazi domination and World War II.

Date	Event
November 9, 1918	Kaiser Wilhelm abdicated. Democratic Weimar Republic established.
June 29, 1919	Treaty of Versailles signed. Germany is held responsible for World War I, stripped of territory, and must pay reparations to the victors.
February 24, 1920 – November 4, 1921	The National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDP) or the Nazi Party is formed with a 25-point program. Adolf Hitler became the leader with the title <i>der Führer</i> . The Nazi Party established a militia, the SA or <i>Sturm Abteilung</i> .
November 8, 1923 – December 20, 1924	In the Munich (Beer Hall) Putsch, Hitler and the Nazi Party unsuccessfully attempt to overthrow the Bavarian government. Party leaders were arrested and charged with treason. Hitler was sentenced to five years in prison but was released in December 1924 after only serving nine months. While in prison, Hitler wrote <i>Mein Kampf</i> .
April 1925 – August 1927	The Nazi Party forms the SS or <i>Schutzstaffel</i> to serve as Hitler’s bodyguards and the party’s formal militia, starts the Hitler Youth group to recruit young people, and holds its first annual party conference in Nuremberg.
1929-1930	As many Germans face unemployment and poverty during the Great Depression, support for the Nazi Party dramatically increases.
September 1930	The Nazi Party achieved over 18% of the vote in Reichstag or parliamentary elections becoming Germany’s second largest political party.
July 1932	The Nazi party achieved over 37% of the vote in Reichstag elections becoming Germany’s largest political party.
January 30, 1933 – March 23, 1933	German President von Hindenburg appoints Adolf Hitler Chancellor of Germany or head of the government. A fire in the Reichstag building is blamed on the Communist Party, Germany’s second largest and Hitler’s chief opposition, leading to it being banned. Hitler ordered a new election and the Nazi Party secured 44% of the vote. As an emergency measure the Reichstag granted Hitler the authority to make laws for a period of four years.
April 26, 1933 – August 2, 1934	Hitler and the Nazi Party consolidate control over Germany. The Gestapo, a Nazi secret police, was formed; the Nazis took control over local governments; trade unions were banned; “un-German” books were burned; all other political parties were outlawed; Germany withdrew from the League of Nation; and the SA was eliminated as unreliable and 150 of its leaders were executed (Night of the Long Knives). With the death of von Hindenburg, Hitler combined the posts of President and Chancellor and declared himself Führer or leader.
September 1934 – March 25, 1936	Germany violates the Treaty of Versailles by establishing an air force (the Luftwaffe), expanding the German army, instituting a military draft (conscription), reoccupying the Rhineland on the border with France, and establishing alliances with Italy and Japan.
September 15, 1935 – November 10, 1938	Nuremberg Laws redefined German citizenship; relationships between Jews and Aryans are banned; membership in Hitler Youth is made compulsory for boys; and Jewish shops and synagogues are destroyed on Kristallnacht.
March 14, 1938 – September 1, 1939	Germany annexes Austria and the with the Munich Agreement with the United Kingdom and France the Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia; Germany invades and occupies Czechoslovakia, signs a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union, and invades Poland, precipitating World War II.