



**Extended Essay:**

**Research Question: To what degree was the downfall of the Weimar Republic brought about by economic factors?**

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## Abstract

This essay will mainly focus upon the years of 1929 to 1933, a short time-span of great upheaval in the Weimar Republic. The focus upon this period is to avoid a too broad topic, which would have been the case if emphasis was put on the entire Weimar period. However, the essay will also investigate, and provide relevant information for, the earlier years of Weimar.

I conducted the investigation by first consulting books on the subject, and five specific books in particular, by Richard Overy, E. J Feuchtwanger, A. J Nicholls, Terry Morris and Derrick Murphy, and Theo Balderston. These books allowed me to formulate a case for the causes of the downfall of the Weimar Republic. This case was shown by the results that were extracted from the books during this investigation, which were, not only, that economic factors were significantly responsible for the demise of the Weimar system, but also that there were other factors which cannot by any measure be disregarded. A major factor was the organisation of the Nazi machinery, which allowed it to rapidly benefit from changing public opinion after 1929. Another would be the tolerance of authoritarianism amongst German leaders, including Hindenburg who allowed Article 48 to be abused.

From these results the conclusion taken is that it would seem that the economic factors acted as a catalyst for outpourings of grief towards the Weimar system. Without the radical elements such as the Nazis to benefit from such as a shift in public opinion, and without the tolerance of the corruption of the Weimar system, the Weimar Republic would likely have survived the onslaught of the Wall Street Crash. Likewise, without the economic turmoil, the radical elements would likely not have been strong enough of their own to bring down the Republic.

Word count: 297

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## Introduction

The fall of the Weimar Republic in 1933, when NSDAP under Hitler usurped power is a significant watershed in European and World history, as it, in time, brought about the Second World War and the subsequent Cold War. Both these served to shape and dominate events for the remainder of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and arguably beyond. It is as such essential to examine and investigate the causes of the downfall of the Weimar Republic, due to the ripples it brought with it, both for its own sake and to evaluate whether or not something similar could happen again in our time. One of the major factors influencing the Republic's downfall was that of economics, and this essay will focus on determining to what extent these economic factors played in bringing down the Weimar Republic. The importance of economic problems in bringing about the downfall could be especially significant for us in our time, as economic problems are as prominent now as then. If the Weimar Republic was brought down by economics, what would stop a modern state from suffering the same fate? And so I will touch upon the economic background of the early years of the Weimar Republic 1919-1928, as well as the briefly giving some information on the NSDAP activities during the second half of these years. Furthermore I'll assess the German economy from 1928 until the fall of Weimar in 1933, and also NSDAP doings during the same years. Lastly, I'll provide an overall assessment of the Weimar Republic.

## The Birth years of the Weimar Republic

During these early years of the Weimar Republic three related long-term issues sprouted which would come to have significant impacts later on during the period after the Wall Street Crash.

The first of these issues was directly related to hyperinflation of late 1923, when the mark collapsed under the weight of several factors, such as easy credit, breaking confidence and, decisively, the occupation of the Ruhr by French and Belgian forces<sup>1</sup>. The hyperinflation annihilated the savings of the German people, which had amounted to 19 billion marks in 1913 had fallen to 608 million marks in 1925.<sup>2</sup> After the imposition of the Rentenmark in November 1923 the hyperinflation was stopped in its tracks, but severe damage had been dealt to the German economy and the German people.<sup>3</sup>

The second issue was the indirect result of the hyperinflation. As the hyperinflation has wiped out the life-savings of millions of ordinary Germans, it dealt a damaging blow to the confidence which many ordinary Germans held in the establishment.<sup>4</sup> The long-term political damage could arguably have provided a basis for fundamental distrust in the Weimar mainstream, which would have helped millions of Germans reconcile themselves with the beliefs of the radical NSDAP come the second economic collapse with the Depression.

The third issue would be the damage dealt to the long-term performance of the Germany economy by lack of capital. Whilst the government debt was wholly done away with during

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholls, A. J – 'Weimar and the Rise of Hitler' pg. 102 | Overy, Richard – 'Weimar and Nazi Germany' pg. 37

<sup>2</sup> Overy, Richard and Feuchtwanger, E.J (authors of used sections) – 'Weimar and Nazi Germany' pg. 38 | Feuchtwanger, E.J – 'From Weimar to Hitler' pg. 139

<sup>3</sup> Feuchtwanger, E.J – 'From Weimar to Hitler' pg. 138

<sup>4</sup> Morris, Terry and Murphy, Derrick – 'Europe: 1870-1991' pg. 299

the hyperinflation<sup>5</sup>, so was, as stated, a great portion of the German wealth and thus domestic spending power and savings to finance investments.<sup>6</sup> This made Germany heavily dependent on foreign investments, particularly from America, to compensate for the loss of wealth to inflation and capital flight<sup>7</sup>. This is perhaps the very main economical aspect of the early period which would affect the outcome of the post-Crash period.

### **Effect of the Golden Years 1924-1928**

Firstly, during this period the issue of deficient German capital due to the hyperinflation, together with the Dawes Plan and the emergence of American capital was to co-operate in putting the German economy in a state heavily dependent on America. The loss of savings in the hyperinflation hampered domestic consumption and slowed economic growth, and limited the pool of domestic capital available for investments<sup>8</sup>. This was solved by the Dawes Plan of middle-late 1925. By forcing the Reichbank to keep an interest rate above 5%, it was profitable for American capitalists to shift their capital to Germany. The short-term benefits of this were immense, as the American capital provided a significant portion of the means used for investment in Germany, with as much as 38 percent of German bank deposits in 1928 being foreign-owned<sup>9</sup>. However, much of this capital inflow was of the nature that it

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<sup>5</sup> Feuchtwanger, E.J – 'From Weimar to Hitler' pg. 121 | Overy, Richard – 'Weimar and Nazi Germany' pg. 37

<sup>6</sup> Feuchtwanger, E.J – 'From Weimar to Hitler' pg. 139

<sup>7</sup> Overy, Richard and Feuchtwanger, E.J (authors of used sections) – 'Weimar and Nazi Germany' pg. 39 | Nicholls, A. J – 'Weimar and the Rise of Hitler' pg. 101

<sup>8</sup> Nicholls, A. J – 'Weimar and the Rise of Hitler' pg. 127 | Feuchtwanger, E.J – 'From Weimar to Hitler' pg. 151

<sup>9</sup> Overy, Richard and Feuchtwanger, E.J (authors of used sections) – 'Weimar and Nazi Germany' pg. 39

could quickly be recalled to the States if need be.<sup>10</sup> Hence, by dependence on America, the groundwork for a severe economic collapse was laid, come the Wall Street Crash.

Secondly, another main issue was the chronic current account balance deficit during the period, and even if reparations were not taken into consideration Germany had current account issues<sup>11</sup>. To pay for this deficit, Germany had to take more and more foreign loans, loans which served to increase interest payment outflows.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, between 1924 and 1928, Germany accumulated a foreign debt equal to 25 percent of national income, a staggering sum in only four short years.<sup>13</sup> This reinforced an unsustainable situation, which only served to exacerbate the crisis come 1929.

### **Political changes and activity during the Golden Years 1924-1928**

Politically, the period was marked with a remarkable shift to more moderate parties. In the elections of May 1928, the anti-Weimar parties overall took a severe beating, having their share of the votes declined to less than 30%.<sup>14</sup> The NSDAP polled at its worst result to date with a mere 2.6% of the votes. Indeed, seen over the three elections over the four years, the NSDAP declined with each one. The correlation between, superficial, economic recovery and the popularity of political radicalism can be seen clearly from such statistics.

However, despite the NSDAP's apparent plunge towards obscurity, the party was during the period reorganised by Hitler into a more disciplined and streamlined party, different from

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<sup>10</sup> Nicholls, A. J – 'Weimar and the Rise of Hitler' pg. 128

<sup>11</sup> Balderston, Theo – 'Economics and Politics in the Weimar Republic' pg. 78 | Nicholls, A. J – 'Weimar and the Rise of Hitler' pg. 27

<sup>12</sup> Nicholls, A. J – 'Weimar and the Rise of Hitler' pg. 127

<sup>13</sup> Balderston, Theo – 'Economics and Politics in the Weimar Republic' pg. 62

<sup>14</sup> Nicholls, A. J – 'Weimar and the Rise of Hitler' pg. 134 | Feuchtwanger, E.J – 'From Weimar to Hitler' pg. 200-201 | Morris, Terry and Murphy, Derrick – 'Europe: 1870-1991' pg. 301



the heterogeneous collection of radicals it had previously been.<sup>15</sup> Its membership also grew, despite its electoral decline, allowing it a broader campaigning base and a wider spread throughout Germany. This essay would argue that the party was setting organising itself for an eventual rise, a rise which only needed a catalyst in the form of a cataclysm to precipitate it.

The party also had several advantages compared to other parties which it would have use of later. It was, visibly, classless, had not been compromised by having been in government, and was not associated with either monarchy or republicanism. It was also able to make grand promises to many different groups simultaneously.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps more significantly, it did not threaten big business and the upper class, the main source of critical funding for the Nazi campaigning.<sup>17</sup> The NSDAP, which from history we knew rose to power, also had several aspects which could appeal to angry voters.

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<sup>15</sup> Feuchtwanger, E.J – 'From Weimar to Hitler' pg. 195-7

<sup>16</sup> Feuchtwanger, E.J – 'From Weimar to Hitler' pg. 231-233

<sup>17</sup> Nicholls, A. J – 'Weimar and the Rise of Hitler' pg. 158

## Assessment of the German economy from 1928-1933

The Crash on Wall Street was to affect Germany the most of all industrialized nations, the communist state of Russia being the exception. Indeed, Germany was even more affected than the epicenter of the Crash, the USA.<sup>18</sup> By the first months of 1932, national unemployment had reached a shocking peak of 6 million, or some 30-35% of the entire labour force, with as many as 2 million more invisible unemployed, bringing the actual unemployment even further up, exceeding 40%<sup>19</sup>.

Firstly, as stated in earlier paragraphs, the decline of the German economy began earlier than the Wall Street Crash. The situation with increasing levels of debt and interest payments showed itself to be unsustainable in the longer run, as touched upon in earlier paragraphs, and this situation combined with a slow and uncertain German revival made the vital American investors and speculators unwilling to continue investing capital into Germany.<sup>20</sup> Already before the Crash in America, the German economy was in crisis<sup>21</sup>, and by spring 1929 2.9 million Germans were unemployed<sup>22</sup>. One could say that the so-called Golden Years of the Weimar Republic showed themselves to be “gold-plated”<sup>23</sup> at most, in economic terms. Excessive loans from America had previously covered the fact that the economic recovery was incredibly fragile, however its removal brought about what Knut Borchardt called: “The Crisis before the Crisis”<sup>24</sup>. Germany was slipping into recession, Wall Street Crash or not, and a big part due to the structural issues that were laid since 1919. As such, this essay could not help but argue that the Crisis on Wall Street did not create most of

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<sup>18</sup> Balderston, Theo – ‘Economics and Politics in the Weimar Republic’ pg. 77

<sup>19</sup> Balderston, Theo – ‘Economics and Politics in the Weimar Republic’ pg. 79

<sup>20</sup> Overy, Richard and Feuchtwanger, E.J (authors of used sections) – ‘Weimar and Nazi Germany’ pg. 39

<sup>21</sup> Overy, Richard and Feuchtwanger, E.J (authors of used sections) – ‘Weimar and Nazi Germany’ pg. 39

<sup>22</sup> Overy, Richard and Feuchtwanger, E.J (authors of used sections) – ‘Weimar and Nazi Germany’ pg. 39

<sup>23</sup> Balderston, Theo – ‘Economics and Politics in the Weimar Republic’ pg. 61

<sup>24</sup> Overy, Richard and Feuchtwanger, E.J (authors of used sections) – ‘Weimar and Nazi Germany’ pg. 39

the economic troubles in Germany, but rather intensified those that were already present before it and to which the foundations had already been laid during the 1920s<sup>25</sup>.

Secondly, Germany's overreliance on foreign capital was certainly caused by the lack of its own. That would be why one of the major economic hits that were inflicted on Germany was the sudden and much accelerated withdrawal of foreign capital and credit. In turn this would in the coming year, after the Crash, cause the German banking sector to collapse.<sup>26</sup> The freeze in loans and investment brought havoc upon the German economy, and was a major factor in its poor performance in the next 4-5 years<sup>27</sup>, until the advent of the economic recovery under Hitler, as companies were hard-pressed to find credit to finance their activities during these harsh times, often forcing them to sack employees or declare bankruptcy.

### **Evaluation of politics - 1929-1933**

The German government's, under Brüning, response was, rather than employment-creating and deficit spending, to initiate a deflationary policy which was to push down prices, wages and welfare payments in order to balance the budget, save German exports, restore confidence amongst foreign lenders in Germany's ability to keep its financial obligations, and lure back German flight capital which had been hidden away in banks in other countries.<sup>28</sup>

Whilst his policy managed to slow further export declines and reduce the deficit in the German budget, the cost was further job losses adding to the ever-growing pile of redundant

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<sup>25</sup> Overy, Richard and Feuchtwanger, E.J (authors of used sections) – 'Weimar and Nazi Germany' pg. 40

<sup>26</sup> Overy, Richard and Feuchtwanger, E.J (authors of used sections) – 'Weimar and Nazi Germany' pg. 41

<sup>27</sup> Feuchtwanger, E.J – 'From Weimar to Hitler' pg. 249

<sup>28</sup> Overy, Richard and Feuchtwanger, E.J (authors of used sections) – 'Weimar and Nazi Germany' pg. 40

workers<sup>29</sup>. The need to cut the deficit as opposed to deficit spending to stimulate the economy is also blatantly connected with the loss of German capital in prior years. Foreign, dollar loan was needed to fuel spending, and this was a politically sensitive question for political parties to face.<sup>30</sup> Naturally these moves were deeply unpopular amongst the German populace which was hit harder than perhaps was necessary if there would have been continued, bigger, deficit spending. One could argue that this helped in the rise of radical and anti-Weimar forces such as the NSDAP, by further increasing the amount of disgruntled Germans. The disgruntled force of deprived Germans provided ample voters for the Nazis. Indeed, between 30-40% of NSDAP votes did come from the working-class<sup>31</sup>, a group heavily struck by unemployment and despair, which although below their share of the population was a substantial amount of votes. Equally, the middle class was again hit hard by the economic downturn like it had been in 1923. As a substantial number of small entrepreneurs and shop-keepers and other small business-men were heavily dependent on credit in hard times, a large amount of these businesses succumbed during the crisis, which one could presume would be a significant cause for discontent, amongst others. In this way, the severity of the crisis and the distrust towards the Weimar system accrued over the years turned great numbers of them towards radical parties such as the NSDAP.

This, accompanied by the refusal of the Reichstag to acquiesce to his proposal paved the way for a new turn in German politics. This new turn was the reliance on Article 48 to force through legislation, rather than to have it approved by the Reichstag, establishing precedence for the chancellors after Brüning. This precedence served to weaken the parliamentary system at a critical time in the Weimar Republic's existence, by putting

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<sup>29</sup> Overy, Richard and Feuchtwanger, E.J (authors of used sections) – 'Weimar and Nazi Germany' pg. 40

<sup>30</sup> Feuchtwanger, E.J – 'From Weimar to Hitler' pg. 234

<sup>31</sup> Feuchtwanger, E.J – 'From Weimar to Hitler' pg. 230

Germany in the middle of democracy and authoritarianism<sup>32</sup>, and by encouraging successive chancellors such as Von Papen to do the same. It also eased in the eventual transition to dictatorship under the Nazis in 1933, as this was done under the guise of decrees overriding parliament as well. Critically, Brüning's authoritarian ways scared away foreign investors, whose capital was sorely needed in Germany, which indirectly worsened the crisis.<sup>33</sup>

The correlation between economic crisis and political radicalism in this period is obvious. As the crisis worsened, so did the support for parties like the NSDAP. In May 1928, arguably at the height of the Weimar economic recovery the party could amass a mere 2.6% of the vote, despite some backing by big business and despite a restructured NSDAP organisation, unlike the prior heterogeneous party. That the NSDAP could increase its share to 18.3% in September 1930<sup>34</sup> to 37.3% in July 1932 at the height of the Depression in Germany can hardly be attributed to anything else than discontent and anger felt by the German people, with such economic suffering and despair. Furthermore, the party's decline by 4.3%, or 2 million votes, in the election of November 1932 could arguably also be connected with an improvement of economic conditions. By then, non-seasonal unemployment had begun to fall, albeit slightly.<sup>35</sup> This indicates the fragile fundament of discontent that the NSDAP was built on, and which could fall apart as fast as it was put in place, if economic conditions could improve. It could also be connected with the lack of funds available to the NSDAP during this time, as a significant part of grants from big business had been spent in the previous election, whilst some donors had cut ties.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Feuchtwanger, E.J – 'From Weimar to Hitler' pg. 237

<sup>33</sup> Balderston, Theo – 'Economics and Politics in the Weimar Republic' pg. 85

<sup>34</sup> Feuchtwanger, E.J – 'From Weimar to Hitler' pg. 229

<sup>35</sup> Balderston, Theo – 'Economics and Politics in the Weimar Republic' pg. 99

<sup>36</sup> Nicholls, A. J – 'Weimar and the Rise of Hitler' pg. 165

## Overall Assessment of the Weimar Republic

The overall assessment of the 14 year period of the Weimar Republic would be one heavily based upon its economic success, or rather failures, that permeated it since its foundation in 1919. This essay would argue that economic factors were a significant cause of the ability of the NSDAP to rise to power in the Weimar Republic, leading to the Republic's decline and demise between the years of 1929 and 1933. As shown earlier in this essay, the portion of the vote received by the NSDAP was overwhelmingly based upon the economic circumstances at the time of election. By the height of the Golden Years, the NSDAP was given only a meager 2.6% of the votes, emphasising the appeal of radicals to have a negative correlation with economic prosperity. The 18.3% the party was given in September 1930 and the 37.3% in July 1932 both apply to the general rule of negative correlation, which is when one factor increases when the other decreases. Discontent and thus votes for the NSDAP rose exponentially when times were bad. Had it not been for the Depression and the downturn in Germany to provide fuel and such exponential growth in votes for the NSDAP party, the NSDAP would likely have faded away into obscurity along with all the other radical parties which sprung up during the early 1920s. All of these disappeared without leaving much of a trace on Germany, as voter support slipped away, and the NSDAP would not have escaped this process, and certainly did not between the elections of 1924 and 1928.

That assessment, however, should not lead us to assume that the NSDAP's rise to power was not significantly due to its own making. The party and its machinery was reformed by Hitler during the mid-to-late 1920s in order to be able to contest elections legally and effectively, on a legal platform, an obviously necessary prerequisite to deliver to the party any kind of power in the future. Perhaps as critically, the party also managed to attract vital party

funding from big business, which allowed it to campaign properly and on a large scale throughout Germany in the first place. Simply put, it's not as simple as to say that the NSDAP only rode the wave of depression to power. Rather, the NSDAP worked hard to put itself into the kind of position where it became the alternative for the disgruntled German populace to vote for. Had the NSDAP not managed to achieve this important objective, then the votes of disgruntled German voters would simply just have passed to another political party, perhaps radical or perhaps not, which inevitably would have had different goals, aims and methods from the NSDAP, as well as a leadership with a different level of competence. Especially leadership competence would have been important, as a less sly leader than Hitler would have likely been a lot less likely to succeed in overthrowing the Weimar system as the NSDAP succeeded in doing. In a scenario where the NSDAP was not reformed, the downfall of the Weimar Republic would by no means have been assured, nor would a downfall have necessarily been to the condition the NSDAP state was to become after its take-over in 1933. From this perspective, the downfall of the Weimar Republic as we know, that is to say brought down by the Nazis, was as much dependent on NSDAP preparation and work as the economic crisis after 1929. While it was the economic crisis that gave the NSDAP the votes, it was the NSDAP which gave the voters the NSDAP alternative, by making itself appear available and desirable to the voters it was appealing to, that is the general public. As this essay would argue, both of these factors were significant prerequisites in the downfall of the Weimar Republic as we know it, by the NSDAP ushering in Nazi Germany, and even to a significant likelihood the downfall of the Weimar Republic, period.

Thirdly, another factor of importance is the acceptance of authoritarianism in the top corridors of power. The dismantling of the Weimar Republic was not achieved by bloody revolution or armed uprising, as the dismantling of the Russian Republic, and the Russian

Provisional Government, had been after the October Revolution. Instead it was dismantled in a superficially legal manner, by the consent of the president and Article 48.<sup>37</sup> Usage of the latter had been provided with ample precedence by previous governments indulging in such political behaviour.<sup>38</sup> Hitler's actions to subvert the Weimar Republic during 1933 were by no means unapproved by Hindenburg, either actively or passively. Rather, Hindenburg allowed Hitler and the NSDAP to seize power as they did, and then not only passively but also actively due to him allowing Hitler to use Article 48 time and time again, with the destruction of the Weimar Republic as the end result.

The essay would infer from this that the NSDAP's rise to power could perhaps have been prevented by a strong and hostile president, and a more conservative allowance of Article 48 to override the constitution and the Reichstag. Indeed, the NSDAP was kept away from power during the whole of 1932, despite enormous electoral success, with the NSDAP becoming the biggest party in the Reichstag, precisely because Hindenburg refused to give Hitler the chancellorship. Even with the chancellorship, Hitler and the NSDAP needed the allowance of Hindenburg to override the constitution and parliament. Had Hindenburg refused then, there might have been a chance that German democracy wouldn't have collapsed altogether, even at this late point. However, he did not oppose the NSDAP ambitions or the NSDAP usage of article 48, just as he had not opposed the usage of article 48 by previous governments. Hindenburg was a weak president, an aged president, tired of his post and his responsibilities. He had only reluctantly agreed to run for the post a second time in 1932, as the time aged 84, ironically as he was considered the only choice able to

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<sup>37</sup> Overy, Richard and Feuchtwanger, E.J (authors of used sections) – 'Weimar and Nazi Germany' pg. 114

<sup>38</sup> Overy, Richard and Feuchtwanger, E.J (authors of used sections) – 'Weimar and Nazi Germany' pg. 113



defeat Hitler and keep him out of the presidency<sup>39</sup>, and thus power in Germany. Furthermore, precedence of use with Article 48 had been set with previous administrations under Von Papen and Brüning, as these chancellors had had to rely on this measure in order to ensure that legislation was successfully passed. This factor could well be seen as a third prerequisite for Nazi power; a weak president accepting of authoritarianism.

Furthermore, the presence of a conservative Reichwehr certainly eased the transition to NSDAP-rule. The military could have opposed the abolition of democracy by military action, something which was not rumoured in the last days before the final take-over by the NSDAP.<sup>40</sup> However, due to the politically conservative nature of its officers, many of whom were either remnants of the old Imperial Army from 1919, or approved into its ranks by that clique,<sup>41</sup> this was a very unlikely measure. And, as we can see from history, the Reichwehr did indeed not intervene to save German democracy. However, due to its limited size, and especially in comparison to the large numbers of active NSDAP supporters, one could ask oneself how major its role could have been even if it had chosen to oppose the NSDAP government. As such, the importance of its neutrality is less than that of the three factors already discussed.

In his discussion on the Weimar downfall, A.J Nicholls agrees on the combination of unloyal institutions such as the Army, bureaucracy and president, and the emergence of a major economical storm, as major factors allowing the Republic to be dismantled. He argues that the NSDAP movement was a fad, which was waning in early 1933. E.J Feuchtwanger agrees with Nicholls points, but also points to the issue of the segregated military as important in the downfall. Overy focuses on describing the economic factors in his section, as does

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<sup>39</sup> Feuchtwanger, E.J – 'From Weimar to Hitler' pg. 263-4

<sup>40</sup> Feuchtwanger, E.J – 'From Weimar to Hitler' pg. 310

<sup>41</sup> Nicholls, A. J – 'Weimar and the Rise of Hitler' pg. 129

Balderston in his book, although Balderston acknowledges that economic factors may not have necessarily been the causation of political changes, only that they were correlated.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, this essay has outlined and assessed that, in regards to the fall of the Weimar Republic, economic factors were one of the main causes of the rise of the NSDAP and the abolition of German democracy and the destruction of the Weimar Republic. Economic factors were the factors which disgruntled Germans and turned them away from the more mainstream parties in favour of more extreme options such as the NSDAP, or alternatively the Communists. It was the poor state of the economy, not so much of the political system, which created such hardships for the German people. However, as this essay has further discussed, such factors were by no means the only factors involved in the downfall of the Weimar Republic. As discussed in the last paragraph, the presence of a well-oiled NSDAP party machine was critical in ensuring support for the NSDAP by German voters in the 1930 and 1932 elections. Furthermore, about as significant was the presence of a president willing to make Hitler chancellor and sign his decrees weakening the Weimar system systematically and irrevocably. Without the well-oiled party machine and the effective campaigning the party would never have been able to launch itself into legal politics and into the awareness of such a large portion of the electorate. Neither should it be forgotten that without the weak Hindenburg who appointed Hitler as chancellor, and signed his decrees allowing him to bring down the fabric of the Weimar Republic, the NSDAP would not have been legally able to tear the Weimar system apart. Finally, the indifferent attitude of the Reichwehr certainly helped the NSDAP in bringing down the Republic in that the supposed armed defenders of

the Republic weren't prepared to fight for it, nor defend its values. The vital last line of defense of the Republic was as such removed completely from the equation.

To sum up the research question of this essay, *"To what degree was the downfall of the Weimar Republic brought about by economic factors?"*, the economic factor played a significant part of the downfall of the Weimar Republic, yet it was by no means the only critical factor. However, without it there wouldn't likely have been such an uproar against the Weimar as there was. The NSDAP, for all its well-oiled machinery, would have stayed a small peripheral party. It was such a factor that without it the Weimar Republic would have survived its fall of 1933.

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