
A View of the Political Power of the Weimar Republic during the Golden Age

“The Weimar Republic enjoyed a golden age of political stability in the years 1924-28”

When the armistice was signed by Germany in 1918, Germany was in a complete state of disarray. A naval mutiny broke out in Kiel, and Germany was plunged into a revolution. Several groups scrambled for control of Germany. Eventually, the Weimar Republic was formed, it promised a democratic republic with equal rights to all its citizens. However, to say the republic calmed tensions and provided political stability post-1918 would be far from accurate. Hyper-inflation and the harsh terms of the treaty of Versailles led to increasing resentment towards the newly-found republic from the German public up to the crisis year of 1923. However, historians have argued that between 1924 and 1928, Germany experienced a period of political stability, this is mainly attributed to Stresemann's addressing of the hyper-inflation crisis by introducing the Rentenmark, as well as American loans and investment from the Dawes plan assisting the German economy in recovering. However critics have argued that there is no such thing as the “golden age” and that the Weimar Republic was still in a state of crisis.

Some historians argue that it would be impossible to describe the period in Germany from 1924-1928 as a “golden age of political stability” because there was no stable Government during this period. Over this period there were 9 successive governments in the space of 4 years, all of them being coalition governments. The frequent change in leadership meant there was no time for any meaningful impact to take place as the next Government would scrap what the previous Government had been planning. In addition, some of the Governments during the period were minority Governments, leading to cases where Governments were unable to pass legislation due to other parties grouping together to prevent it from passing. The lack of strong government during the period highlighted the weakness of German democracy and led to the German public becoming disenfranchised with the establishment.

However, looking at the period pre-1924, and compare it to the years 1924-28, it is clear that following 1924, there was a period of growing stability. Up to 1923, inflation was increasing at an exponential rate with the Government printing more and more money in order to pay of the overwhelming debts they held following the treaty of Versailles. The continual printing of money led to the Deutschmark becoming so worthless many German's opted for a primitive barter economy instead. Hyper-inflation was only made worse by the French-Belgium invasion of the Ruhr. German workers in the Ruhr went on strike meaning reparations weren't being paid; this

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led to a joint force of France and Belgium occupying the Ruhr. The German government at the time opted for a policy of passive resistance; they paid the German workers to stay on strike, but did not actively confront the occupying forces. The effect of passive resistance was that it led to even more money being paid out than the annual reparation payments cost them, which in turn exacerbated the hyper-inflation crisis. When Stresemann became chancellor in 1923 he set up a new currency, the Rentenmark which helped stabilise the economy and effectively ended the hyper-inflation crisis. Therefore, the crisis period up to 1923 is in great contrast with the relatively calmer more prosperous years from 1924-28. During this “golden age” real wages for industrial workers increased and there was a sense of newfound prosperity, quite the opposite of the years leading up to the golden age.

On the other hand, some historians would argue that the so-called economic prosperity of the “Golden age” wasn’t as prosperous as it is made out to be. Stresemann says in a speech shortly before his death “the economic position is only flourishing on the surface,” whilst the economy grew from 1924-1927 it shrunk in 1928; unemployment was a continuous issue, by March 1926 unemployment was at 3 million, this and the wall street crash which happened just after the golden age indicate that whilst the economy seemed to have recovered, in reality the foundations it was built on were unsafe to begin with.

In conclusion, I would argue that whilst the Weimar Republic appeared to be more politically stable, the reality was that the short-lived prosperity was only due to American investment, and when the wall-street crash occurred, Germany was unable to rely on the USA, leading to an economic disaster. Thus the Weimar Republic enjoyed a false sense of political stability, but no real stability was present.

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