**Adolf Hitler (right-wing ruler)**

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| **Ideology and the nature of the state** |
| Ideology – this term refers to a set of beliefs and ideas that characterize a political movement and provide the principles from which its policies derive.  **The superiority of the German race**  Hitler’s desire was to unite all people of the superior German race and create a sense of national community, or Volksgemeinschaft.  **Anti-Semitism**  The persecution of Jews not unique to Hitler’s Germany. The growth of industrialization, which provided Jews with new opportunities for money making, led to a revival of anti-Semitic feeling.  **The cult of the leader – the Fuhrerprinzip**  German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche put forward the principle that just as there were superior races, there were superior individuals. A superior individual or Ubermensch (superhuman) should lead the people.  **Struggle and survival of the fittest**  The Nazis were Social Darwinists that believed struggle and warfare were healthy activities that allowed the best to rise to the top while leaving the weak to perish. |
| ***What did Hitler himself contribute to Nazi ideology?***  The four basic elements of Nazi ideology described above – the superiority of the German race, Anti-Semitism, the cult of the leader, and survival of the fittest – were already well established before Hitler emerged as a politician. Nazi ideology was also shaped by Hitler’s own experience.   * Hitler’s nationalist beliefs were roused by his history teacher, Leopold Poetsch. Herr Poetsch entertained his class with stories of Germany’s past greatness. * Hitler was probably an Anti-Semite before he moved to Vienna but his stay in Vienna fostered Anti-Semitism. It was in Vienna he attended the operas of Wagner and read the anti-Semitic Viennese newspaper the *Volksbat* and the pro-Aryan monthly journal *Ostaria*, which carried the swastika logo. * Hitler’s time in Vienna taught him to despise democracy. He hated the ‘mediocrity and compromise’ he witnessed from the public gallery of the Reichsrat (Austrian parliament). He did however learn how powerful speeches could sway the crowd. * Hitler learned from Austria’s Pan-German Nationalist Party which called for Anschluss, used the title Fuhrer, and adopted the ‘Heil’ greeting. |
| ***The development of Nazi ideology in the aftermath of war***  After serving as a soldier for four years, Hitler believed the armistice to be ‘the greatest villainy of the century’ – a view typical of many who accepted the belief the German army had been ‘stabbed in the back’ by politicians.  The Nazi Party was created after the war.  In *Mein Kampf* Hitler stated Germany had to fight international Marxism which was the invention of Jews. He stated National Socialism was the only doctrine capable of fighting communism. He stated there had to be racial unity, elimination of Jews, authoritarian control, and no tolerance of diversity or dissent in order to successfully obtain Lebensraum (living space) in the east.  Nazism became increasingly anti-democratic, anti-modern, and anti-feminist. The Nazis regarded all that was new and forward-looking in the Weimar Republic as degenerate and weakening. |
| ***How important was the role of ideology in Nazi Germany?***  Gleichschaltung refers to a co-ordination process whereby all German institutions were to conform to Nazi ideals. Hitler coordinated all aspects of the state to serve his ends. The idea of Volksgemeinschaft (people should feel bound together by blood as a single community) was spread through youth, community and workers’ organizations.  While policies were shaped in light of ideology, it was often the case that practical politics prevented ideological principles being carried out immediately, or in their entirety. (Persecution of Jews was low-key until 1935, the war for lebensraum didn’t occur until 1939, the women who had been forced out of the workplace were encouraged to work during the war, the Holocaust didn’t happen until the war.) Hitler controlled how ideology was used to further his own political ends. Hitler was not driven simply by the desire to put ideological principles into practice, but had his own agenda and molded Nazi ideology to it.   |  |  | | --- | --- | | *Intentionalists*  Argue Hitler’s policies were shaped by ideology and that he knew from a very early stage what he wanted to accomplish. Intentionalists see Hitler’s actions as part of a carefully conceived plan to translate ideology into action. | *Structuralists*  Argue Hitler’s actions were molded by circumstance and that, while he had broad ideological principles, the actual detail of his policies evolved almost haphazardly. | |