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## Weimar Germany 1924-1929; was it a 'golden-era'?

The Weimar Republic was born out of the German defeat in WW1 in 1918; the allies insisted that the Kaiser needed to be replaced by a democratic government as a necessary prerequisite of peace talks. The Treaty of Versailles in 1919 burdened Germany with 'War Guilt' and a huge reparations bill of GBP 6.6 billion; this was not a great start for democracy in Germany. The period 1919-1923 was a turbulent, revolutionary, violent and troublesome period for the Weimar Republic. Furthermore, the Wall Street Crash in October 1929 precipitated the Great Depression, which culminated in Hitler being elected as Chancellor in January 1933. However, the period 1924-1929 is often called the 'Golden Years', 'High-Water Mark' or 'Stresemann-era'. There were no major rebellions, a 'culture-boom' occurred, led by artists such as Otto Dix and the Bauhaus Project, and the Dawes Plan of 1924 boosted the German economy with much-needed American loans. However, to what extent can it really be considered a 'Golden-era'?

Patrick's arguments that the period 1924-1929 should be viewed critically	Elliott's arguments that the period 1924-1929 should be viewed positively
<b>Domestic Politics:</b> The period 1924-1929 did precious little to establish the tenets of democracy and to secure the respect of its citizens. The stark reality is that the political parties in favour of democracy were <i>always</i> in the minority in the Reichstag. Plus, the election of Hindenburg as President in 1925 was a mortal blow – he was never committed to the project of establishing democracy.	<b>Domestic Politics:</b> After the political turmoil of the previous period, 1924-29 represented a sustained level of relative stability: there were no assassinations and no attempts to overthrow the government (after the Munich Putsch) – a clear indication of a maturing of the Weimar democracy. These years are known as the 'wilderness years' for extremist parties, and with good reason.
<b>Foreign Policy:</b> At first inspection, Stresemann appears to have secured some significant foreign policy agreements, such as Locarno in 1925. However, the grim reality is that each agreement made by Stresemann was a tacit and embarrassing acceptance of the shameful 'Diktat' of the Treaty of Versailles. Therefore, most Germans viewed his achievements with a sense of national humiliation.	<b>Foreign Policy:</b> The length of Stresemann's tenure as Foreign Minister (6 years) meant he could achieve real long term success in this area. The Dawes Plan (1924) and the Young Plan (1929) reduced reparations payments to £2 billion; the Locarno Pact (1925) convinced the French & Belgians to leave the Ruhr and paved the way for Germany to join the League of Nations.
<b>Economics:</b> Following hyperinflation in 1923, the Dawes Plan of 1924 managed to secure American loans as a remedy. However, this meant that the German economy was built on the flimsy foundations of American goodwill – Stresemann himself said 'We are dancing on a volcano.' Subsequently, Germany was the worst hit country in the world by the Great Depression.	<b>Economics:</b> The amount of reparations was reduced to £2 billion, which helped relieve the tax burden from the German people who then became avid consumers. Hyperinflation was ended with the introduction of a new currency: the Rentenmark. Loans and investment from America, totaling 25 billion triggered industrial expansion. Wages rose every year and unemployment fell.
<b>Culture:</b> Enthusiasm for the cultural renaissance of Weimar Germany extended only as far as the suburbs. For most politicians, the judiciary and those who lived in rural areas, the artistic and cultural movements of Weimar were an alien and disorientating import, to be resisted at all costs.	<b>Culture:</b> There was an explosion of new, modernist, cultural dynamism that sought to forge a new future out of the destruction of the past. The Bauhaus movement, along with other artistic developments, helped Germany "...create its own cultural identity through the work of the Reichskunstwart (Reich Guardian of Culture)." <b>McElligot.</b> Berlin became the cultural capital of Europe.

Don't forget to check out Dr Elliott L. Watson's free website: [www.thecourseworkclub.com](http://www.thecourseworkclub.com) and follow him at @thelibrarian6 on Twitter.

Don't forget to check out Patrick O'Shaughnessy's free website: [www.historyhappy.com](http://www.historyhappy.com) and follow him at @historyhappy on Twitter.