

# Star Wars: The Fascism Awakens Representation and its Failure from the Weimar Republic to the Galactic Senate

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Whether in science fiction or the establishment of an earthly democracy, constitutional design matters especially in the realm of representation. Democracies, no matter how strong or fragile, can fail under the influence of a poorly constructed representation plan. Two strong examples of representational failure emerge from the post-WWI Weimar Republic and the Galactic Republic's Senate from the Star Wars saga.

Both legislatures featured a combination of overbroad representation without minimum thresholds for minor parties to be elected to the legislature and multiple non-citizen constituencies represented in the body. As a result both the Weimar Reichstag and the Galactic Senate fell prey to a power-hungry manipulating zealot who used the divisions within their legislature to accumulate power. As a result, both democracies failed and became tyrannical governments under despotic leaders who eventually would be removed but only after wars of massive casualties.

Representation matters, and both the Weimar legislature and Galactic Senate show the problems in designing democratic governments to fairly represent diverse populations while simultaneously limiting the ability of fringe groups to emerge.

*"The only thing necessary for the triumph of  
evil is for good men to do nothing."  
- Edmund Burke (1848)*

*"So this is how liberty dies ... with  
thunderous applause." - Padme Amidala (Star  
Wars: Episode III Revenge of the Sith, 2005)*

## Introduction

Designing democracies is one of the most difficult processes any society may decide to undertake. The process is so fraught that Benjamin Franklin, after being asked what kind of government he and his colleagues had created during their four months in Philadelphia as he departed Independence Hall, replied "A republic ... if you can keep it." Keeping republics is difficult, but made much more so by improper or flawed constitutional design.

Flawed constitutional design can lead to any number of ills, from correctible issues of election maintenance to fatal flaws dooming

representative democracies. A poor constitutional design can even lead to tyranny. Among the flaws most potentially damaging to a republic is a faulty representational structure. Republics can actually build too much representation into their structures, the result of which is tyranny as a byproduct of democratic failure.

In two notable instances, fascism was borne of democracy because of the failings built into the representational structures of each of the systems. From the post-World War I Weimar Republic of Germany and the Galactic Republic of the Star Wars saga, clear examples of representational design failure midwifing the birth of totalitarianism. By allowing fringe groups access to the policymaking arm of a republic, both systems created their own doom and provided lessons in constitutional design for fictional and real worlds.

## Cold Warrior: George Lucas' Influences

Some of the parallels between Weimar Germany and the rise of Empire in Star Wars may be tacitly by design. Star Wars' creator, George Lucas, took inspiration from a panoply of sources but the most influential may have been his youth in the aftermath of World War II and the height of the Cold War. Born in 1944 as World War II was in its late phases, Lucas and fellow baby boom generation members were profoundly influenced by the geopolitics of their youth. Lucas could not have learned recent history without understanding the circumstances that led to the rise of NAZI power in Germany, and scholars have suggested that the influence of that era impacted the Star Wars universe in significant ways. (Bastiansen, Klimke, and Werenskold 2018)

While Bastiansen and colleagues focus on using Star Wars as the inspiration for public policy, the inverse is also a valuable insight into global politics. President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) was nicknamed Star Wars in a potent example of life imitating art. Lucas had used other historical and current-day cues in his work, further suggesting an analog between the design of the Old Republic and the real-life Weimar government. For instance, others saw cues from the rise of Napoleon, in the Vietnam War, and of-the-time political leaders such as former U.S House Speaker Newt Gingrich in Lucas' stories from the films and canonical literature surrounding the Star Wars universe. (Reagin and Liedl 2012)

### **Constitutional Design: Weimar**

*"The old and rotten, the monarchy has collapsed. The new may live. Long live the German Republic!" Philip Scheidemann, 1918*

At the end of World War I, Germany was attempting to rebuild itself as a peaceful democracy after a destructive campaign throughout Europe. The post-war constitution of the German Empire (Reich) was adopted by

an assembly in Weimar in 1919, giving the government its common name until its failure in 1933. (Eyck 1962)

World War I exacted a significant toll on the German Empire, led with iron fist by Kaiser Wilhelm II. Wilhelm's desire for control and expansion of the Empire led to his excessive reliance on military advisors for vision, but those military advisors helped stretch Germany's resources too thinly between multiple fronts, and by 1918 Wilhelm had abdicated this throne and fled into exile, leaving a nation in crisis. (Peukert 1993)

The vacuum of executive leadership led to Germany participating minimally if at all in the war-ended Treaty of Versailles. The treaty not only ended the war but imposed two significant restrictions on the new republic that would hinder its development and exacerbate the representational design issues present in the new constitution. First, Germany was ordered to pay massive reparations which would damage the post-war economy, and second the Empire was ordered to disband its standing army. (Kaes et al. 1994)

Post-WWI Germany was a chaotic place. Under dictatorial rule during the age of the Kaiser, the wartime defeat Germany suffered brought a wide variety of interests to the fore. Two primary groups, the Independent Social Democratic Party and the Social Democratic Party, emerged as arms of popular movements. The old aristocracy asserted itself, with self-styled regent successors to Kaiser Wilhelm, such as Baden's Prince Max becoming public leaders of movements. Private niche organizations also emerged, such as the Spartacist League and Workers' Council. The military, disbanded, broke into a number of paramilitary bands working often at cross purposes to each other. After decades of authoritarian rule, democracy opened the floodgates of interested parties into the politics of a country still struggling to find its own identity. (Berman 1997)

Building democracy from the ashes of a totalitarian empire was no easy task. Small

groups identified themselves as representing large swaths of the population but with little popular support to justify their claims. Workers, attracted by the successes of similar entities in Russia, expressed desire for more control over the conditions of their employment and reaction against the privilege they saw in the minor nobles left as the last fragments of the Kaiser's rule. Understanding that the multiplicity of interests would be difficult to manage and unrest could follow if certain groups were excluded from participation, further pressed by a desire to show the rest of the world that Germany could be a peaceful and pluralistic society, the Weimar-adopted constitution created a legislature with a bicameral system and proportional representation. (Scheele 1946)

The two chambers of the Weimar legislature were loosely modeled on the American legislature, with a popularly elected chamber (Reichstag) and second chamber selected by the individual states (Reichsrat). Reichsrat members were often elected officials or staffers in their state governments. Thus bureaucrats were regularly members of the Reichsrat, often to the consternation of members of the voting public. (Bookbinder 1996)

To allow for the multitude of different groups, interests, and participants that Weimar Germany wished to show the rest of the world cooperating peacefully in its new government, the constitution not only allowed for proportional representation, it included no minimum threshold of votes to gain election to the Reichstag. The primary intent was to increase the granularity of representation in the legislature. As functional democracies were still quite young, no historical precedent to warn the Weimar's designers of the dangers of overrepresentation existed. Therefore, the Weimar's construction did not provide buffers for the many parties that would emerge in the new legislature. (Diehl 1977) One of those parties, which entered as a very small

proportion of the legislature, was the National Socialist Party which sent three Bavarian members to the Reichstag beginning in 1924. (Feuchtwanger 1993)

Executive leadership was a sensitive topic because a strong executive could have balanced out a very freewheeling legislature, but popular pressure against Germany's Kaiser Government instead led to a split-power arrangement between the legislature and a Chancellor. The two branches would share power in another similarity to American-style checks and balances, but the chancellor also had a grant of emergency powers to subvert the legislature when the leader deemed it appropriate.

With a disbanded military, small militias were charged with keeping the peace, but the size of the militias along with their inconsistency and geographic isolation led to an inability to keep the peace. Insurrections regularly emerged, especially as the Republic fell into economic distress at the close of the 1920s. (Diehl 1977)

### **Constitutional Design: The Galactic Republic**

*"Mom, you said that the biggest problem in the universe is no one helps each other." Anakin Skywalker, Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace (1999)*

Roughly one millennium before the onset of the Clone Wars, the Dark Age of the galaxy ended. The Sith, an ancient order of malevolent Force-practitioners, were defeated after the Hundred-Year Darkness and driven into hiding, but the standing galactic government, known as the Old Republic also fell. Following the collapse of that government and a full-scale war, a number of solar systems united, founding a successor state: the Galactic Republic. As its governing body, the newly reorganized government established the Galactic Senate, the members of which were

elected to represent their systems. The Republic's capital was installed on the planet of Coruscant.

The Republic's head of state, the Supreme Chancellor, was elected by and from the senators, in which the first in a long line of Chancellors was a scion of the House Valorum. Protecting the new democracy was an elite Senate Guard, who would regularly patrol the Senate District and came to be a proxy for the Republic's lack of a standing army over the Republic's first centuries. (Wars 1999)

In time, a small militia known as the Jedi Order, an organization of protectors who could tap into the power of the Force, came to serve the Republic as guardians of peace and justice. With the lack of a standing army, the Republic came to rely on its peacekeeping Judicial Forces, led by the Judicial Department as the de-facto law enforcement branch of the government. The Judicial Forces, members of which who were simply known as Judicals, trained at the Judicial Academy and came to serve in both ground and space forces, often led by Jedi Commanders to maintain peace throughout the galaxy.

For centuries, the Republic expanded to neighboring systems by strength of numbers. The promise of trade with Core World markets held many systems in sway, attracting nonmember worlds into tighter cooperation with the state body. The Republic was reticent to invite too many new systems into the fold, as the addition of new territories would lessen the political power of existing worlds and systems. New senators invariably aligned themselves with local galactic power blocs, while most senators who gave the invitations represented systems in the Core. As a result, the Galactic Center represented the core of the Republic that would draw wealth and power from outside the core, with most senators vetoing services provision and protection to outlying worlds. Consequently, many useful star systems were left waiting—some for centuries—for the body politic to admit their world as a member of the Senate, even though

it came at the cost of the body's overall power. (Masket 2014)

As time went by the Republic stood firm, becoming increasingly powerful. As a result, the galaxy remained free from full-scale war for centuries. However, many of the bureaucrats and Senators that ran the government continued to work for private profit at the expense of public common good. Greed, corruption and internal strife slowly began eroding the government from within. Outlying worlds, lacking protection from a centralized military and harassed by pirates, came to resent the privileged position of the Core Worlds, believing themselves the victims of social and economic injustices. As a result of the perceived inability of the Judicial Forces in protecting outlying territories, who were often withheld in intervening after many far-flung worlds refused to provide the Core Worlds with profitable deals, the Outer Rim world of Eriadu and the Greater Seswenna formed the Outland Regions Security Force for the protection of the Seswenna sector in the years before the Clone Wars. Being comprised of an amalgam of ships, it was funded primarily by off-world loans and supplied with laser and ion cannons acquired from arms merchants who had for centuries been ignoring a Republic ban on the sale of weaponry to member worlds. While the OSRF was at first lacking success, it soon came to be renowned for its efficiency at dealing with raiders, especially after Wilhuff Tarkin was accepted into Outland's anti-piracy task force, in which he was known for outsmarting and outmaneuvering his opponents.

The political balance of the Galactic Republic altered greatly when the Outer Rim began asserting itself and demanding change to the representational structure of the Senate. Every world, no matter how remote or small, would have equal representation in the Senate, greatly expanding the body and bringing more fringe groups to the fore.

Despite Outland's best efforts, the Outer Rim Territories continued to fall victim to

increasing corporate interests from the Core, with the monolithic Trade Federation expanding its reach a year before the Invasion of Naboo in both the Outer Rim and the Galactic Senate by utilizing loopholes in existing free-trade legislation. Shortly before the Invasion of Naboo, a trade summit was held on the Outer Rim planet of Eriadu in which then Supreme Chancellor Finis Valorum was turned away by Wilhuff Tarkin, who was hoping to reduce the influence of the Chancellor who was already rumored to lose the next election in order to support then Senator Palpatine, who had earlier helped Tarkin gain entrance into the Judicial Academy and supported his ascension as leader of his homeworld. (Anonymous 2014)

### **The Path to Failure: Weimar**

*“Our representatives are little men who are no match for British diplomacy and its kind condescension. Like the chancellor and ambitious busy-bodies who must have their fingers in every pie. Like Stresemann, the man of general distrust, but it seems impossible to get rid of him... My opposition to our foreign policy is generally known.” General Hans von Seeckt, April 1926*

To understand the circumstances that touched off the end of both the Weimar and Galactic Republics, one must address the issue of trade. For Weimar Germany, their booming economy was a point of pride and its collapse was a problem it was ill-equipped to deal with.

Weimar’s economic troubles centered on reparations for the war. The actual amount of reparations that Germany was obliged to pay out was not the 132 billion marks decided in the London Schedule of 1921 but rather the 50 billion marks stipulated in the A and B Bonds. Historian Sally Marks says the 112 billion marks in “C bonds” were a smokescreen—a device to fool the public into thinking Germany would pay much more. The actual total payout

from 1920 to 1931 (when payments were suspended indefinitely) was 20 billion German gold marks, worth about \$5 billion US dollars. Cash amounted to 12.5 billion that came mostly from loans from private banks. The rest was goods like coal and chemicals, or from assets like railway equipment. The reparations bill was fixed in 1921 on the basis of a German capacity to pay. The highly publicized rhetoric of 1919 about paying for all the damages and all the veterans’ benefits was irrelevant for the total, but it did determine how the recipients spent their share. Germany owed reparations chiefly to France, Britain, Italy and Belgium. (Kershaw 2000)

In the early post-war years, inflation was growing at an alarming rate, but the government simply printed more and more banknotes to pay the bills. By 1923, the Republic claimed it could no longer afford the reparations payments required by the Versailles Treaty, and the government defaulted on some payments. In response, French and Belgian troops occupied the Ruhr region, Germany’s most productive industrial region at the time, taking control of most mining and manufacturing companies in January 1923. Strikes were called, and passive resistance was encouraged. These strikes lasted eight months, further damaging the economy and the social life.

The strike prevented some goods from being produced, but one industrialist, Hugo Stinnes, was able to create a vast empire out of bankrupt companies. Because the production costs in Germany were falling almost hourly, the prices for German products were unbeatable. Stinnes made sure that he was paid in dollars, which meant that by mid-1923, his industrial empire was worth more than the entire German economy. By the end of the year, over two hundred factories were working full-time to produce paper for the spiraling bank note production. Stinnes’ empire collapsed when the government-sponsored inflation was stopped in November

1923. In 1919, one loaf of bread cost 1 mark; by 1923, the same loaf of bread cost 100 billion marks. (Webb 1988)

Since striking workers were paid benefits by the state, much additional currency was printed, fueling a period of hyperinflation. The 1920s German inflation started when Germany had no goods to trade. The government printed money to deal with the crisis; this meant payments within Germany were made with worthless paper money, and helped formerly great industrialists to pay back their own loans. This also led to pay raises for workers and for businessmen who wanted to profit from it. Circulation of money rocketed, and soon banknotes were being overprinted to a thousand times their nominal value and every town produced its own promissory notes; many banks & industrial firms did the same. (Laidler & Standler 1988)

The value of the Papiermark had declined from 4.2 Marks per U.S. dollar in 1914 to one million per dollar by August 1923. This led to further criticism of the Republic. On 15 November 1923, a new currency, the Rentenmark, was introduced at the rate of one trillion (1,000,000,000,000) Papiermark for one Rentenmark, an action known as redenomination. At that time, one U.S. dollar was equal to 4.2 Rentenmark. Reparation payments were resumed, and the Ruhr was returned to Germany under the Locarno Treaties, which defined the borders between Germany, France, and Belgium. (Eyck 1962)

The Republic was soon under attack from both left- and right-wing sources. The radical left accused the ruling Social Democrats of having betrayed the ideals of the workers' movement by preventing a communist revolution and sought to overthrow the Republic and do so themselves. Various right-wing sources opposed any democratic system, preferring an authoritarian, autocratic state like the 1871 Empire. To further undermine the Republic's credibility, some right-wingers (especially certain members of the former officer corps) also blamed an alleged

conspiracy of Socialists and Jews for Germany's defeat in World War I.

In the next five years, the central government, assured of the support of the Reichswehr, dealt severely with the occasional outbreaks of violence in Germany's large cities. The left claimed that the Social Democrats had betrayed the ideals of the revolution, while the army and the government-financed Freikorps committed hundreds of acts of gratuitous violence against striking workers. (Fritsche 1990)

The onset of the Great Depression further hindered Germany's ability to crawl out of its post-war problems, but its inability to respond was cemented by its wide-open legislature. On 29 March 1930, after months of lobbying by General Kurt von Schleicher on behalf of the military, the finance expert Heinrich Brüning was appointed as Müller's successor by Reichspräsident Paul von Hindenburg. The new government was expected to lead a political shift towards conservatism.

As Brüning had no majority support in the Reichstag, he became, through the use of the emergency powers granted to the Reichspräsident (Article 48) by the constitution, the first Weimar chancellor to operate independently of parliament. This made him dependent on the Reichspräsident, Hindenburg. After a bill to reform the Reich's finances was opposed by the Reichstag, it was made an emergency decree by Hindenburg. On 18 July, as a result of opposition from the SPD, KPD, DNVP and the small contingent of NSDAP members, the Reichstag again rejected the bill by a slim margin. Immediately afterward, Brüning submitted the president's decree that the Reichstag be dissolved. The consequent general election on 14 September resulted in an enormous political shift within the Reichstag: 18.3% of the vote went to the NSDAP, five times the percentage won in 1928. As a result, it was no longer possible to form a pro-republican majority, not even with a grand coalition that excluded the KPD, DNVP and NSDAP. This encouraged an escalation in the

number of public demonstrations and instances of paramilitary violence organized by the NSDAP. (Hertzman 1963)

Between 1930 and 1932, Brüning tried to reform the Weimar Republic without a parliamentary majority, governing, when necessary, through the President's emergency decrees. In line with the contemporary economic theory (subsequently termed "leave-it-alone liquidationism"), he enacted a draconian policy of deflation and drastically cutting state expenditure. Among other measures, he completely halted all public grants to the obligatory unemployment insurance introduced in 1927, resulting in workers making higher contributions and fewer benefits for the unemployed. Benefits for the sick, invalid and pensioners were also reduced sharply. Additional difficulties were caused by the different deflationary policies pursued by Brüning and the Reichsbank, Germany's central bank. In mid-1931, the United Kingdom and several other countries abandoned the gold standard and devalued their currencies, making their goods around 20% cheaper than those produced by Germany. As the Young Plan did not allow a devaluation of the Reichsmark, Brüning triggered a deflationary internal devaluation by forcing the economy to reduce prices, rents, salaries and wages by 20%. Debate continues as to whether this policy was without alternative: some argue that the Allies would not in any circumstances have allowed a devaluation of the Reichsmark, while others point to the Hoover Moratorium as a sign that the Allies understood that the situation had changed fundamentally and further German reparation payments were impossible. Brüning expected that the policy of deflation would temporarily worsen the economic situation before it began to improve, quickly increasing the German economy's competitiveness and then restoring its creditworthiness. His long-term view was that deflation would, in any case, be the best way to

help the economy. His primary goal was to remove Germany's reparation payments by convincing the Allies that they could no longer be paid. (Frye 1965)

### **The Path to Failure: The Galactic Republic**

*"Hundreds of senators are now under the influence of a Sith lord called Darth Sidious" Count Dooku, Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones (2002)*

The Galactic Republic's path to fascism was decidedly different from that of post- WWI Germany because the Republic was presiding over a prolonged time of peace and relative prosperity. The main problem the Republic had to deal with was a re-emergence of the imbalance of trade concern that had marked the Outland movement and the reactionary Outer Rim insurgency.

The Republic had imposed new taxes on trade routes, ports, and freight carriage throughout the galaxy, leading to a group of merchants to form a Trade Federation. Despite representation on the Galactic Senate as a non-governmental entity, the Trade Federation could not muster the level of support it needed and Chancellor Valorum used his emergency powers to impose the taxes on Free Trade Zones established by the Trade Federation.

An ambitious Senator from Naboo, Sheev Palpatine, manipulated the young queen of his planet, Padme Amidala, to lead calls for change from within the Galactic Senate. Palpatine knew that he could not successfully consolidate power for himself without a crisis, and so in his true identity as the Sith Lord Darth Sidious Palpatine engineered the Trade Federation to blockade and invade Naboo. (Wars 1999)

The invasion was deeply disturbing to Amidala, particularly showing her the inability of the Republic to respond to military threats with the small bands of Jedi Knights it

employed as peacekeepers over the previous centuries.

*I will not defer...I have come before you to resolve this attack on our sovereignty now. I was not elected to watch my people suffer and die while you discuss this invasion in a committee. If this body is not capable of action, I suggest new leadership is needed. I move for a vote of no confidence in Chancellor Valorum's leadership." — Queen Padmé Amidala*

With this speech, Queen Amidala unintentionally set in motion the final stage of Palpatine's long-term plan to create his Empire. The fact that this shrewd young senator was able to control his queen so completely speaks to his mastery of politics. Palpatine knew that he had the opportunity to set a plan in motion that would lead to his installation into power using the fractured and disorganized Galactic Senate as the method. With a legislative body prone to indecision, the manufactured crisis was a perfect mechanism to spur over-reaction and begin his power grab.

Amidala was willing to keep her planet safe even at the risk of violating the deliberative nature of government. Government is a slow operator, occasionally at the expense of justice. Amidala's burden of the safety of her people pushed her to drastic methods of resolving the invasion. When Amidala's early efforts hit the roadblock of a disinterested bureaucracy, the tendency toward impatience is often too great. (Wars 2002)

In masterminding the invasion of Naboo, Darth Sidious knew that it would weigh heavily on the planet's naïve young queen. He knew that she, like all of Naboo, would be unprepared for the kind of brutality that the Trade Federation would bring with them. He knew that the horrors her people experienced would serve to enervate her to severe action. Palpatine calculated that her impatience would prompt the no-confidence vote in Chancellor

Valorum that would sweep Palpatine into the Chancellor's office, placing him on the final stepping stone to ultimate power.

Palpatine moved quickly to consolidate power, giving more representation to bureaucrats and other NGO's. The bureaucratic expanse merely served to slow the government down further, providing Palpatine the key issue to sow the seeds of doubt about the ability to the Galactic Senate to manage conflict. Amidala would then be the subject of Zam Wessel's assassination attempt, less than one year later. Immediately after the attempt, Amidala went to the Senate to argue against the Military Creation Act, her opposition to which had nearly cost her her life.

Amidala is vital as a pawn in Palpatine's ascension to power. Amidala was a swing vote on the Military Creation Act, and so her assassination would have not only provided Palpatine the example he needed to consolidate power but would have eliminated one of the powerful anti-war voices within the Senate. The chaos and unexpected violence is so sudden that no other Senators consider neither what other vested interests are acting, nor how much damage will the Republic suffer if their interests are pushed forward.

The Galactic Senate is as responsible for the ensuing war as Palpatine, but as a passive manipulated actor instead of an intentional controller. When it came to evaluating and acting on the many warning signs that appeared before them, the esteemed body which had protected the galaxy for centuries failed. The Senate failed not only their constituents but the entire government that they served. That failure would eventually doom democracy.

The vote on the Military Creation Act was postponed due to the assassination attempt on Amidala, but did not end it. Palpatine, like any determined politician, kept trying to win the war even when losing particular battles. Palpatine manipulated more Outer Rim votes to grant him the emergency powers necessary to marshal the clone troops for war. So devious

was Palpatine that he engineered Senator Amidala's retreat into seclusion, allowing him the ability to replace her with an even more malleable pawn, Jar Jar Binks.

History regards Representative Binks as starting the war, but even Binks was constrained by the limitations of the Senate. The Separatists had no reason to spool down their war machine for a large-scale attack regardless of what actions the Republic took. The droid foundries discovered on Geonosis provided ample evidence of the Separatists' resolve. Therefore, war was not a question of if, but when. Palpatine had forced the Senate's hand so that the only response possible was one of degree. (Wars 2005)

Binks' rise to public office was also partly the responsibility of the Senate itself. Jar Jar Binks' presence in the Senate was exclusively due to the loyalty and faith placed in him by Amidala. The fractured and ineffective Senate was unattractive to traditional politically engaged leaders, making it easy for Amidala to install him. Binks' inexperience and lack of political acumen made him particularly vulnerable to the atmosphere in the Senate Chamber, and this atmosphere was toxic to deliberation and reason. In the midst of this crisis, with more worlds seceding regularly, the Senate's first line of defense was an appeal to jingoism. In the same way that the newly-christened Darth Vader told his former Jedi Master, "If you're not with me, you're my enemy," during their duel on Mustafar, the Senate suffered from a dangerous us-versus-them mentality. Binks, a novice political actor, had to contend with this strong pro-war, pro-Chancellor sentiment when deciding how to act. His decision would help usher in the first widespread, sustained conflict in over a thousand years.

### **The Fall: Weimar**

*"Instead of working to achieve power by an armed coup, we will have to hold our noses and*

*enter the Reichstag against Catholic and Marxist members. It outvoting them takes longer than outshooting them, at least the result will be guaranteed by their own constitution. Sooner or later we shall have a majority..." Adolf Hitler, 1923*

By late 1931, the conservative movement was dead and Hindenburg and the Reichswehr had begun to contemplate dropping Brüning in favor of accommodating Hugenberg and Hitler. Although Hindenburg disliked Hugenberg and despised Hitler, he was no less a supporter of the sort of anti-democratic counter-revolution that the DNVP and NSDAP represented. In April 1932, Brüning had actively supported Hindenburg's successful campaign against Hitler for re-election as Reichspräsident; five weeks later, on 20 May 1932, he had lost Hindenburg's support and duly resigned as Reichskanzler. (Feuchtwanger 1993)

Hindenburg then appointed Franz von Papen as new Reichskanzler. Papen lifted the ban on the NSDAP's SA paramilitary, imposed after the street riots, in an unsuccessful attempt to secure the backing of Hitler. Papen was closely associated with the industrialist and land-owning classes and pursued an extreme Conservative policy along Hindenburg's lines. He appointed as Reichswehr Minister Kurt von Schleicher, and all the members of the new cabinet were of the same political opinion as Hindenburg. This government was expected to assure itself of the co-operation of Hitler. Since the Republicans were not yet ready to take action, the Communists did not want to support the republic, and the Conservatives had shot their political bolt, Hitler and Hugenberg were certain to achieve power. (Dorpalen 2015)

Because most parties opposed the new government, Papen had the Reichstag dissolved and called for new elections. The general elections on 31 July 1932 yielded major gains for the Communists, and for the Nazis, who won 37.3% of the vote – their high-

water mark in a free election. The Nazi party then supplanted the Social Democrats as the largest party in the Reichstag, although it did not gain a majority. The immediate question was what part the now large Nazi Party would play in the Government of the country. The party owed its huge increase to growing support from middle-class people, whose traditional parties were swallowed up by the Nazi Party. The millions of radical adherents at first forced the Party towards the Left. They wanted a renewed Germany and a new organization of German society. The left of the Nazi party strove desperately against any drift into the train of such capitalist and feudal reactionaries. Therefore, Hitler refused ministry under Papen, and demanded the chancellorship for himself, but was rejected by Hindenburg on 13 August 1932. There was still no majority in the Reichstag for any government; as a result, the Reichstag was dissolved and elections took place once more in the hope that a stable majority would result. (Berman 1997)

The 6 November 1932 elections yielded 33.1% for the Nazis, two million voters fewer than in the previous election. Franz von Papen stepped down and was succeeded as Chancellor (Reichskanzler) by General Kurt von Schleicher on 3 December. Schleicher, a retired army officer, had developed in an atmosphere of semi-obscurity and intrigue that encompassed the Republican military policy. He had for years been in the camp of those supporting the Conservative counter-revolution. Schleicher's bold and unsuccessful plan was to build a majority in the Reichstag by uniting the trade unionist left wings of the various parties, including that of the Nazis led by Gregor Strasser. This policy did not prove successful either. (Nicholls 1991)

In this brief Presidential Dictatorship intermission, Schleicher assumed the role of "Socialist General" and entered into relations with the Christian Trade Unions, the left-wing members of the Nazi party, and even with the Social Democrats. Schleicher planned for a sort

of labour government under his Generalship. But the Reichswehr officers were not prepared for this, the working class had a natural distrust of their future allies, and the great capitalists and landowners also did not like the plans. The SPD and the Communists could have achieved success building on a Berlin transport strike. (Broszat 1987)

Hitler learned from Papen that the general had not received from Hindenburg the authority to abolish the Reichstag parliament, whereas any majority of seats did. The cabinet (under a previous interpretation of Article 48) ruled without a sitting Reichstag, which could vote only for its own dissolution. Hitler also learned that all past crippling Nazi debts were to be relieved by German big business.

On 22 January, Hitler's efforts to persuade Oskar von Hindenburg, the President's son and confidant, included threats to bring criminal charges over estate taxation irregularities at the President's Neudeck estate; although 5,000 acres (20 km<sup>2</sup>) extra were soon allotted to Hindenburg's property. Outmaneuvered by Papen and Hitler on plans for the new cabinet, and having lost Hindenburg's confidence, Schleicher asked for new elections. On 28 January, Papen described Hitler to Paul von Hindenburg as only a minority part of an alternative, Papen-arranged government. The four great political movements, the SPD, Communists, Centre, and the Nazis were in opposition. (Wheaton 1968)

On 29 January, Hitler and Papen thwarted a last-minute threat of an officially sanctioned Reichswehr takeover, and on 30 January 1933 Hindenburg accepted the new Papen-Nationalist-Hitler coalition, with the Nazis holding only three of eleven Cabinet seats: Hitler as Chancellor, Wilhelm Frick as Minister of the Interior and Herman Göring as Minister Without Portfolio. Later that day, the first cabinet meeting was attended by only two political parties, representing a minority in the Reichstag: The Nazis and the German National People's Party (DNVP), led by Alfred Hugenberg, with 196 and 52 seats

respectively. Eyeing the Catholic Centre Party's 70 (plus 20 BVP) seats, Hitler refused their leader's demands for constitutional "concessions" (amounting to protection) and planned for dissolution of the Reichstag. (Snyder 1966)

Hitler was sworn in as Chancellor on the morning of 30 January 1933 in what some observers later described as a brief and indifferent ceremony. By early February, a mere week after Hitler's assumption of the chancellorship, the government had begun to clamp down on the opposition. Meetings of the left-wing parties were banned and even some of the moderate parties found their members threatened and assaulted. Measures with an appearance of legality suppressed the Communist Party in mid-February and included the plainly illegal arrests of Reichstag deputies.

The Reichstag fire on 27 February was blamed by Hitler's government on the Communists. Hitler used the ensuing state of emergency to obtain the presidential assent of Hindenburg to issue the Reichstag Fire Decree the following day. The decree invoked Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution and "indefinitely suspended" a number of constitutional protections of civil liberties, allowing the Nazi government to take swift action against political meetings, arresting and killing the Communists. (Tobias 1964, Momsen 1985)

Hitler and the Nazis exploited the German state's broadcasting and aviation facilities in a massive attempt to sway the electorate, but this election yielded a scant majority of 16 seats for the coalition. At the Reichstag elections, which took place on 5 March 1933, the NSDAP obtained 17 million votes. The Communist, Social Democrat and Catholic Centre votes stood firm. This was the last multi-party election of the Weimar Republic and the last multi-party all-German election for 57 years. (Heiden 1969)

Hitler addressed disparate interest groups, stressing the necessity for a definitive solution to the perpetual instability of the Weimar Republic. He now blamed Germany's problems on the Communists, even threatening their lives on 3 March. Former Chancellor Heinrich Brüning proclaimed that his Centre Party would resist any constitutional change and appealed to the President for an investigation of the Reichstag fire. Hitler's successful plan was to induce what remained of the now Communist-depleted Reichstag to grant him, and the Government, the authority to issue decrees with the force of law. The hitherto Presidential Dictatorship hereby was to give itself a new legal form. (Manvell and Frankel 1974)

On 15 March, the first cabinet meeting was attended by the two coalition parties, representing a minority in the Reichstag: The Nazis and the DNVP led by Alfred Hugenberg (288 + 52 seats). According to the Nuremberg Trials, this cabinet meeting's first order of business was how at last to achieve the complete counter-revolution by means of the constitutionally allowed Enabling Act, requiring a 66% parliamentary majority. This Act would, and did, lead Hitler and the NSDAP toward his goal of unfettered dictatorial powers.

Under Hitler's dictatorship, Germany revived its war machine and returned to its World War I role as a military power. Hitler's goal was expansion of his power and the growth of the German empire. Hitler continued to consolidate power in his own hands, and by the death of President Hindenburg he had complete control of the Reichstag. Hitler would subsequently lead Germany into the Second World War, ending in his defeat and death in 1945. (see Robertson 1963, Carroll 1968, Overy 1982, e.g.)

## The Fall: The Galactic Republic

*“In order to ensure our security and continuing stability, the Republic will be reorganized into the first Galactic Empire.” — Emperor Sheev Palpatine*

Once Mace Windu and Yoda determine that Darth Sidious is actually Palpatine, Windu leads a team of Jedi to Palpatine’s office to arrest him. During the arrest attempt, however, the Knights find in Palpatine/Sidious a much more formidable opponent. Palpatine kills three of the Knights before being subdued by Windu. A young Jedi who Palpatine has secretly been mentoring to the Dark Side, Anakin Skywalker, intervenes allowing Palpatine to kill Windu. With all evidence of Palpatine’s manipulation destroyed, he distorts the story to an insurgent power grab by the Jedi. Palpatine thus completes his takeover, using the Jedi ‘assassination’ attempt to consolidate power and create his empire. Like so many politicians, Palpatine seizes on the opportunity to reassure the people that drastic changes are necessary to preserve the common good. (Wars 2005)

Palpatine here espouses the philosophy that stability and order are more important than messy things like deliberative legislative bodies or freedom of speech. The darkest implications of this philosophy have yet to be realized — we are still years away from brutally crushed protests and the first Death Star — but it’s clear from Palpatine’s words that the government on Coruscant is about to change dramatically. Palpatine suggests in his speech to the Senate that the Empire will learn from the Republic’s mistakes. Chief among those mistakes, in his twisted mind, is democracy.

Under Palpatine’s dictatorial rule, the Galactic Senate validated his edicts just as the Reichstag did for Hitler. Having manipulated his way to power through the body, the Galactic Senate was a method for the Emperor to maintain control of the member systems,

especially those in the Outer Rim. The Galactic Empire crushed the Separatists and the Emperor began a twenty-year rule. As with Hitler’s end, it would take war to bring Palpatine’s rule to its conclusion.

Roughly eighteen years after Palpatine’s ascension to Emperor and using the Galactic Senate as a control mechanism, he dissolved the Senate in favor of a system of regional governors. An alliance of anti-Empire rebels coalesced around the leadership of Skywalker’s children, destroying the under-construction super-weapon Death Star and with it Palpatine himself.

## Common Causes of Democracy’s Failure

The examples of Weimar and the Galactic Republic are actually quite similar. Both republics were designed to accommodate diverse populations. Both struggled with highly militarized and despotic pasts, Germany with the aftermath of the Kaiser’s rule while the Galactic Republic still bore the scars of Sith rule a thousand years of peace later.

The core issues involved in the precedent failures of democracy in both republics was the result in a twofold failure of representation. First, the diverse represented populations led to choices opening the legislatures up to too much representation. In the Weimar, the deep socio-cultural divisions among different groups led to a large representative body with proportional representation and no minimum threshold for election to the legislature. Small, fringe groups such as the National Socialists were able to establish a foothold in the legislature without a 5% rule or similar lower boundary.

For the Galactic Republic, expansion into the Outer Rim territories from the Core Region introduced a diversity of needs and viewpoints that, despite early efforts to limit their power, led to them being embraced and accepted with each member planet being granted equal representation. The expansion of the republic led to bloat within the Senate as every new

member world added to the body pushing it to over two thousand members.

Second, the desire to acknowledge pluralism led to non-governmental and non-constituent bodies being provided representation. The Weimar-era Reichsrat provided bureaucrats and paramilitary groups representation, and the Galactic Senate also added seats for Trade Federation membership and bureaucrats.

Cultural divisions, largely the product of diverse and stressed populations, also underpinned the descent into tyranny experienced by both the Galactic Republic and Weimar. Weimar Germany suffered from a fourfold division: communist versus capitalist; labor versus industry; nobility versus popular; and paramilitary versus pacifist divisions all divided the post-WWI German nation. Three

basic divisions hastened the divisions within the Galactic Senate: core worlds versus outer Rim; trade interests versus subsistence farmers; and bureaucrats versus represented constituents.

Both the Weimar and Galactic Republic descended into tyranny through an ambitious despot's manipulation of issues and the representative bodies from which they emerged. Sheev Palpatine was a Senator from minor Outer Rim world Naboo but leveraged the chaos of Separatist violence and its threat to his homeworld to navigate a path to power. Adolf Hitler's National Socialists exploited the Reichstag fire to consolidate power behind their leader. In an eerie coincidence, both Hitler and Palpatine created the crises they used to rise to power.

	<b>Weimar</b>	<b>Galactic</b>
<b>Timeframe</b>	1919-1933	A long time ago
<b>Location</b>	Germany, Central Europe	A galaxy far far away
<b>Government</b>	Chancellor/Parliament divided government	Chancellor/Senate divided government
<b>Popular representation</b>	661 (Reichstag) 66 (Reichsrat)	2,000+ (Galactic Senate)
<b>Social conflict</b>	Communist vs. Capitalist Labor vs. Industry Nobility vs. Popular Paramilitary vs. Pacifist	Core worlds vs. Outer Rim Trade interests vs. Subsistence farmers Bureaucrats vs. Constituents
<b>Limitations on representation</b>	None	Planetary member status of Galactic Republic
<b>Peacekeeping forces</b>	Small local paramilitary forces	Jedi Knights
<b>Method of tyrant's ascension</b>	Reichstag fire	Assassination attempts
<b>Pivotal culture shift</b>	Remilitarization	Remilitarization
<b>Pivotal event</b>	Enabling Act to revive war machine	Palpatine vs. Windu battle

**Table 1: Comparison of Weimar and Galactic Republic Characteristics**

### Representation on Earth and In Space

Representative democracies must uniquely face the problem. Direct democracy eliminates the need to have representatives, and tyrants are mostly disinterested in them. In a republic, though, constitutional designers must balance between the need to give citizens a voice and inserting too many voices to discordance. (Rae 1967)

In the United States, research suggests a linkage between the electoral structure of legislative districts and characteristics of those elected. More specifically, studies find that African-Americans and other geographically concentrated minorities are more successful in single-member districts (SMDs) while women are elected more frequently from multimember districts (MMDs). Using data from 10 states, which use some combination of single-member and nonseat designated multimember districts, Moncrief and Thompson compare characteristics of legislators elected from the different district types, finding that nonnative legislators are more likely to represent urban SMDs; educational attainment is a function of the urban/rural nature of the district and is not related to electoral type; and that legislators from SMDs have longer legislative service than those from MMDs. More importantly though, with respect to race and gender, they find compelling evidence that African-Americans are advantaged by SMDs, especially urban SMDs, and that women are elected more frequently from MMDs, especially urban MMDs. (Moncrief and Thompson 1992)

More to the point, Rae (1968) notes that European systems without 5% rules were much more likely to fracture than those with minimum thresholds. Ordeshook and Shvetsova (1994) show that district magnitude, either in size or constituent-representative ratio, has a significant impact on representativeness. The smaller a district, the more likely parties are to emerge and

One of the core failures of both Weimar and the Galactic Senate was representation. multiply. However, a larger district mitigates both the appearance and expansion of parties.

Party multiplicity is an important concern for our purposes here because in both the Weimar and Galactic Senate examples fringe parties emerged using the absence of minima to participate in the policymaking body. Party multiplicity can be culturally driven as well as constitutionally driven. (Sartori 1999) Parties can serve as balancing agents for each other. As Masket (2015) points out, had the Galactic Senate had a party system with a stable minority, Palpatine's efforts would have had the potential of being thwarted.

### Conclusion

In politics as well as science fiction, the rules matter. Weimar failed, at least partially because of a problem with constitutional design. In the Star Wars saga, a shrewd megalomaniac uses the inherent representational weakness of a legislature to advance to total power. Democracies are subject to the stresses of representational pressure, and when representation expands to unreasonable lengths the result can be tyranny.

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