

## Interpretations of Nazi Germany - are you an intentionalist or a functionalist?

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Decide which statement from each of the following pairs you agree with more:

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- a) Hitler's personal political beliefs were hugely influential – he imposed them on Germany very successfully.
  - b) Individuals other than Hitler were often responsible for developing Nazi policies. Hans Globke, for example, drafted the details of the Nuremberg Laws which cemented much anti-Semitism in Germany.
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- a) Mein Kampf was the 'bible of Nazism' – from it came all of the Third Reich's core ideas.
  - b) Mein Kampf was an unorganised rant which could not have been used alone as a source of Nazi policy.
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- a) Hitler was the most powerful man in Nazi Germany - he was the 'master of the Third Reich'.
  - b) Hitler was a lazy leader who hated paperwork and had no interest in overseeing policies.
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- a) Hitler deliberately created multiple departments with overlapping interests to allow him to 'divide and rule'.
  - b) Hitler had no clear control over the competing political departments which emerged in Germany. He was a 'weak dictator' who allowed policies to emerge from below rather than imposing them from above.
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- a) The Holocaust was a direct consequence of Hitler's personal hatred of Jewish people. Other Nazis followed his lead to please him.
  - b) The Holocaust was the consequence of 'cumulative radicalisation'. The competition between individuals and departments in Nazi Germany led to a race toward more and more radical policies.
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- a) Hitler seized control of many right wing groups and rose to power rapidly because of his personal command and unwavering ideas.
  - b) Hitler was a 'man for the times' onto which people projected their own hopes and fears. He was all things to all people, adapting his views and speeches to suit his audience.
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- a) Hitler expressed his desire for Jewish people to be 'removed altogether' as early as 1919. Genocide was always his intention.
  - b) The 'Final Solution' only emerged as a policy of annihilation when Nazi invasions to the east resulted in millions more Jewish people living within Nazi territory.
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- a) Responsibility for the Holocaust lies with Hitler.
  - b) Responsibility for the Holocaust lies with the whole state.
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### If you answered mostly As:

Your answers suggest that you agree more with the intentionalist school of thought developed by historians such as Andreas Hillgruber.

This was the dominant way of thinking about Nazi Germany after 1945 until the 1960s. It placed a great deal of personal responsibility for Nazi policies with Hitler as an individual. This included arguing that he had the intention to commit genocide from as early as 1919.

You can find out more about the intentionalist vs. functionalist debate using the following websites:

<http://tinyurl.com/cn2xyhx>

<http://tinyurl.com/ceby2kr>

<http://tinyurl.com/aujuk>

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### If you answered mostly Bs:

Your answers suggest that you agree more with the functionalist school of thought developed by historians such as Ian Kershaw.

This way of thinking about Nazi Germany emerged from the 1960s onwards. Functionalist historians have argued that Hitler did not have control over many policies in Nazi Germany. The state became increasingly extreme because other individuals sought to impress Hitler and extend their own power by proposing increasingly radical ideas.

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