Hitler clearly demonstrated that in respect of this argument the army was more important to his aims, he informed SA that only military were allowed to legally carry weapons.

In terms of both political goals and foreign policy, Hitler understood that having support from the military was absolutely essential.

Rohm’s calls for a “second revolution”

- Rohm’s calls for a ‘second revolution’ and impact of elites
- Hitler also concerned about the growing opposition of the conservative right in Germany against the Nazis and calls for a ‘second revolution’
- Powerful conservatives including Papen had raised the possibility of the monarchy being restored on Hindenburg’s death- while Hitler has some sympathy for Rohm’s politics he understood the power that the elites of Germany had- compromise was required at the early stage of his power.

Rohm in 1934 – a private interview with a party boss

“Adolf is a swine. He will give us all away. He only associates with reactionaries now… getting matedy with the East Prussian generals. They’re his cronies now… Adolf knows exactly what I want. I’ve told him often enough. Not a second edition of the old imperial army”

Night of the long knives

Trigger (short term causes)

- On 17th June 1934, Papen spoke at Marburg university, criticising calls for a ‘second revolution’, as well as Nazi intimidation of German churches and its refusal to listen to other political viewpoints
- Hitler was now seriously concerned that the acts of the SA would fuel opposition from the military and the conservative right.
- The tension was accentuated further when the head of the military, Werner von Blomberg, threatened to impose military control over Germany if the Nazis could not stop the disorder still taking place in German towns
- Other Nazis, like SS leader Himmler and Goering, who despised Rohm, had been spreading false rumours that Rohm was about to launch a takeover of government against Hitler

Events (what happened?)

- With this building pressure, Hitler finally decided to act on 30th June 1934
- The SS moved against any powerful opponents to the regime, arresting Rohm and other SA leaders and having them executed
- Other conservative opponents were executed, including the previous chancellor Schleicher and the author of Papen’s Marburg university speech, Edgar Jung
- Papen himself was arrested and kept prisoner for 4 days, where he was continually threatened with execution
- Two of his closest advisors were executed
- When he was finally released, he was a severely weakened figure who posed no further threat to Hitler’s dictatorship
- In total, around 200 of the key SA leaders were executed + another 100 other political opponents

Impact

- Overwhelmingly positive for Hitler’s dictatorship
- Completely destroyed any potential threat from the conservative right
- It was popular with the military, who appreciated Hitler’s destruction of the SA