*Germany after the Congress of Vienna*

**The German Confederation**

The German Confederation (German: Deutscher Bund) was the loose association of 39 states created by the Congress of Vienna in 1815 to coordinate the economies of separate German-speaking countries. As industrialization in the German Confederation increased, the need for a unified German state with a uniform currency, legal system, and government became more and more obvious.

**Otto von Bismarck**

Otto von Bismarck was named chancellor of the German Confederation in 1862. One of his goals was the unification of Germany into a single kingdom, not a confederation. One of the main obstacles to German unification was Austria, and Bismarck solved the problem with a series of wars that united the German states north of Austria. The most significant was The Seven Weeks War between Austria and Prussia. This war broke out in June 1866. In July, the two armies clashed in an enormous battle involving half a million men. The Prussian breech-loading needle guns carried the day over the slow muzzle-loading rifles of the Austrians, who lost a quarter of their army in the battle. Bismarck was deliberately lenient with Austria in order to establish a long-standing alliance that would force the Austrians to remain in a subordinate role to Germany.

**North German Federation 1867-1871**

In 1867, after the Prussian victory in the Seven Weeks’ War, the German Confederation was dissolved. In its place the North German Federation (German: Norddeutscher Bund) was established, under the leadership of Prussia. The North German Federation was a transitional organization that existed from 1867 to 1871, between the dissolution of the German Confederation and the founding of the German Empire.

**The Franco-Prussian War**

In 1868, the Spanish queen Isabella II was expelled by a revolution, leaving the Spanish throne vacant. When Prussia tried to put a Prussian, Prince Leopold, on the Spanish throne, the French angrily protested. In July 1870, France declared war on Prussia, thus initiating the Franco-Prussian War. The debacle was swift. A succession of victories by the North German military in northeastern France followed. After a few weeks, the main French army was finally forced to surrender. French Emperor Napoleon III was taken prisoner, and France was forced to pay indemnities of 5 billion francs and give the French territories of Alsace-Lorraine to the North German Federation. It was a bitter peace that would leave the French thirsting for revenge. One month after the end of the Franco-Prussian War, The North German Federation renamed itself as The German Empire.

**German Empire**

The German Empire was the historical German nation state that existed from the unification of Germany in 1871 to the defeat in World War 1 in 1918. Bismarck was named chancellor of the new German Empire. Bismarck's post-1871 foreign policy was conservative and basically aimed at security and preventing the dreaded scenario of an alliance between France and Russia, which would trap Germany between the two in a war. To this end, in 1872 Germany formed The League of Three Emperors with Russia and Austria. It stated that the three powers would discuss any matters concerning foreign policy. Bismarck needed to form and maintain good relations with Russia in order to keep France isolated. In 1879, Bismarck formed a Dual Alliance between Germany and Austria-Hungary, with the aim of mutual military assistance in the case of an attack from Russia. Then, in 1882, Bismarck persuaded Italy to join the Dual Alliance, forging a Triple Alliance between Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy. In return for German and Austrian support, Italy committed itself to assisting Germany in the case of a French military attack. Finally, in 1887, Germany signed the so-called Reinsurance Treaty with Russia: in it, the two powers agreed on mutual military support in the case that France attacked Germany, or in case of an Austrian attack on Russia. In order to safeguard Germany’s future, Bismarck essentially was agreeing to involve them in virtually any war on the European continent.