

Germany - A New Empire: 1871–1918

Statistics for 1914	
Population of Germany	65 million
Population of the colonies	15 million
Number of German colonies	10
Size of the German colonies	2,5 million sq. km
German's army	4 200 000 soldiers
German's navy	281 ships

Warm-up questions:

- Which state was the biggest in German Empire?
.....
- German Empire dates from 1871 to 1918. These years relate to the events of?
.....

Setting the scene:

The **Kingdom of Prussia**: was a German kingdom **from 1701 to 1918**. Until the defeat of Germany in World War I, it comprised almost two-thirds of the area of the German Empire. It took its name from the territory of Prussia, although its power base was Brandenburg.

- How powerful was Prussia as a German state? Cross out wrong answers: *weak, nothing special, powerful, the most powerful German state.*

Important dates:

1861-1888: reign of Kaiser Wilhelm I, dynasty of Hohenzollern

1862-1890: **Otto von Bismarck**, Prime Minister. He designed the German Empire in 1871, becoming its first Chancellor and dominating its affairs until his dismissal in 1890. His policy known as "Blood and Iron policy": policy of dynastic wars, violence, military power. His powerful rule gained him the nickname "The Iron Chancellor".

1864: common attack of Austria and Prussia against Denmark. Denmark was defeated and surrendered both Schleswig and Holstein, to Prussia and Austria respectively.

1866: Austro-Prussian War: final battle in **Sadowá by Hradec Kralove**. Austria defeated. Prussia annexed several lands, including Holstein. Austria gives up on setting up the unification of Germany. The German Confederation was dissolved as part of the war. The North German Confederation in 1867 was formed in its place: 21 states north of the Main: customs union, common currency.

1870: the Franco-Prussian War: the aim of Prussia was to finish the unification of Germany by taking control of the French border territories. **1871**: Prussia won the Franco-Prussian War and declared the establishment of the German Empire in Versailles ⇨ Annexation of Alsace and Lorraine.

Germany: 1871–1918

General info: Germany was unified as a modern nation-state in 1871, when the German Empire was established, with the Kingdom of Prussia as its largest constituent. After the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, the German Empire was proclaimed in Versailles on 18 January 1871. The **Hohenzollern** dynasty of Prussia ruled the new empire, whose capital was **Berlin**. The empire was a unification of all the scattered parts of Germany **except Austria** (concept of "Lesser Germany").

Political system: Germany as a **federation** of 25 states with its own representatives, each nominating its deputies to the Senate (Bundesrat) and Assembly (Bundestag, electoral right for men above 25 years of age).

Parliament: Bundesrat + Bundestag

: Head of the state: Prussian king

Foreign affairs: Germany as a very important power of the world policy. Germany continued in its militaristic policy; state was built on the military traditions of Prussia. Germany's foreign policy: arrogance, chauvinism = extreme nationalism. Orientation on the European conservative powers: Russia, Austria-Hungary. Austria-Hungary under political and economical influence of the Germany.

1. Colonies in Africa: Cameroon, German Eastern Africa, German South-Western Africa, Togo.

2. Colonies elsewhere: Kaiser Wilhelm Land (today part of Papua New Guinea), Kiaochow (in Slovak: Tiaočou) in south-eastern China.

2. Drang nach Osten ("Desire for East", "yearning for the East", "drive toward the East"): term coined in the 19th century to designate German expansion into Slavic lands - desire for the countries of central, eastern and southeastern Europe including Ukraine, southern Caucasia.

3. In 1899 Siemens (company) finished construction of the railway "Berlin – Constantinople – Baghdad" (planned up to Basra in Persian Gulf, but Great Britain intervened. GB promulgated Kuwait to be their protectorate (1901) and controlled the access to Basra)

Three Emperors' League (1873): Otto von Bismarck negotiated an agreement between the monarchs of Austria-Hungary, Russia and Germany. The alliance between Tsar Alexander II, Emperor Franz Joseph I and Kaiser Wilhelm I of Germany sought to resurrect the Holy Alliance of 1815 and act as a wall against radical sentiments the conservative rulers found disturbing.

Britain and Germany competed to build the best navy in the world. Between 1900 and 1914 Germany built over 40 battleships and cruisers.

Labour conditions: *Give basic characteristics:*

Many workers were unhappy because their wages were low, food was expensive and working conditions were bad. More and more workers were **joining trade unions and organising strikes**, hoping that this would force the government to improve their conditions. Many were also joining the **Socialist Party** which wanted Kaiser Wilhelm II to share his power with Germany's Parliament. Some Socialists (The Social Democratic Workers' Party of Germany, in German *Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands*, SDAP, was a German left-wing political party founded in 1869 in Eisenach. The party fought for social demands, mostly from 1873 to 1879. In **1878 Act on socialists** which outlawed the socialists. From 1875 as SPD - The Social Democratic Party of Germany (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* — SPD)) wanted to overthrow him in revolution. By 1914 one German in every three supported the Socialist Party and many were actively working to start revolution.

1880-1890: acts related to the social policy: pension, social security (disease, injury,...) scheme, improvement of social conditions.

Sovereigns: Kaiser Wilhelm I (1861 – 1888, from 1871 first German Kaiser), **Kaiser Wilhelm II** (1888 – 1918): he was jealous of the mighty British Empire. He decided that Germany too must have colonies overseas. He once said that Germany must have "a place in the sun" and that his aim was "world-wide power".

