

# **Great Power Politics since the Congress of Vienna till 1914**

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# Great Power Politics since 1814 till 1918

**Dominance of European major powers – France, Britain, Russia, Austria (since 1867 Austria-Hungary) and Prussia (since 1871 the German Empire)**

Eric Hobsbawm – long nineteenth century

Caused by their **rapid modernization**: industrialization, urbanization and introducing lay principles in education.

Practice of modern science – economic, technological and military advantage

Colonialism and Imperialism. Possible due to **Industrial Revolution**.

**Multipolar system with British hegemony – Victorian era**

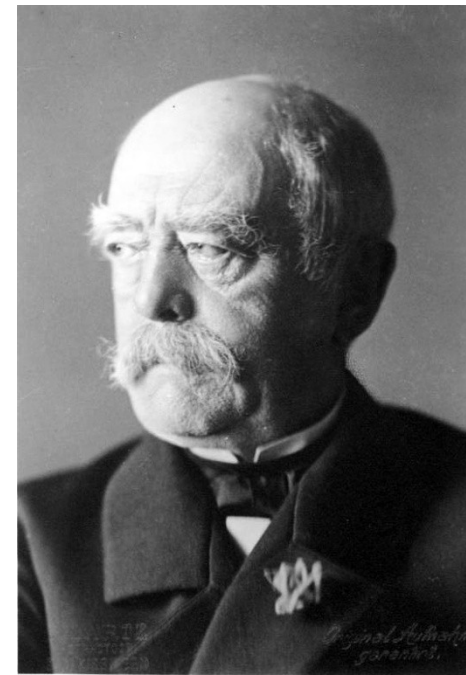
Rise of Germany – **Bismarck**.

**Late 19th century** – rising power of the **USA, Japan and Italy**.

**Ottoman Empire and China** – declining powers.

**Late 19th century - major power - industrialized and modernized state.**

**No major war but no peaceful period!**



# Congress of Vienna

**The Congress of Vienna (1814–1815)** - restore the monarchies and the Old World order.

**The Congress of Vienna – Tsar Alexander I, Metternich and Lord Castlereagh.**

The Congress of Vienna dissolved the Napoleonic world and attempted to restore the monarchies Napoleon had overthrown.

**Major Powers: Britain, Russia, Prussia, Austria+ France - regularly meetings in order to resolve differences.**

1. Poland and Finland to Russia.
2. 3/5 Saxony, part of Poland and Danzig to Prussia.
3. German Confederation of 39 states.

**Framework for European international politics until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.**



# European concert

**Concert of Europe – 1814-1914.**

**Concert of Europe** was not an international organization based on the idea of equality between nations!

System of major European power dominance based on the balance of power!

**Two stages:**

1. From 1814 to the early 1860s.
2. From the 1880s to 1914.

**European Concert - damaged by the Crimean war taking place between 1853-1856 but did not cease to exist.**

Italian War of Independence (1859), the Austro-Prussian War (1866), and the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71) – weakening of the system.

Triple Alliance - Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy – 1882.

Triple Entente - France, Russia, and Great Britain – 1907.

# Holly Alliance

## Holy Alliance (Tsar Alexander I)

Promote conservative restoration in Europe.

**Great Britain and Ottoman Empire did not participate.**

The Greek War of Independence - a major military conflict in the 1820s.

**HA - collapsed by 1830s.**

**Ceased to exist after Crimean War.**



# Crimean War and Eastern Question in 1850s

19th century - the Ottoman Empire decline

Eastern Question.

**Crimean war - 1853 to 1856** - the Russian Empire lost to an alliance of the Ottoman Empire, France, Britain and Sardinia.

**Pretext** - rights of Christian minorities in the Holy Land.

**Cause** - Russia – expanding south.

**Treaty of Paris - March 1856.**

The Crimean War undermined the Russian position among Great Powers and showed the Russian underdevelopment in terms of technology and social organization.

**The European Concert was preserved.**



# Italian Unification

After the Congress of Vienna (1814–15) – Italy controlled largely by the Austrian Empire.

Italian nationalism was based among intellectuals and political activists.

**Carbonari - Giuseppe Mazzini and Giuseppe Garibaldi.**

**First Italian Independence War – 1848-1849** - defeated by Austria.

**Second Italian Independence War – 1859 – 1861**

**1861 – Kingdom of Italy**

Rome – Capital of Italy, but not controlled by the new kingdom.

1866 – deepening unification - **Third War of Independence (1866)**

**1871 – unification was completed – control over Rome.**

1880s – 1890s – colonial expansion.

**Italy – relatively weak, but still a great power.**



# German Unification

The Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation - more than 300 independent states - dissolved in 1806.

After the Vienna Congress, Germany was split into hundreds of independent units – the strongest was Prussia.

**German Confederation** a conglomeration of 39 states, including Austria and Prussia.

**Unified Germany was a dream of many Germans both conservatives and liberals.**

1834 establishment of the Zollverein customs union.

Two ideas - “greater” Germany versus a “smaller” Germany.

Austria – the main competitor – defeated in 1866.

**1871 – unified Germany – emperor Wilhelm I. - enormous impact on distribution of power in Europe.**

Bismarck time - the German posture was defensive.

**Late 1890s - Wilhelm II. – Weltpolitik - colonialism and huge military built, challenging the UK.**





# The UK global hegemony in 19th century

The UK was a leading power in International Politics in 19th century.

The UK - maintaining the balance of power in Europe.

**Splendid isolation** - reluctance to enter permanent European alliances.

Colonial expansion - Scramble of Africa, India.

Abolition of the international slave trade and slavery as institution.

**19th century - a modern international system was established, a result of the UK hegemony.**

Revolution in communications – telegraph, steam navy, the Suez Canal.

**The UK was followed by Russia, France, Prussia and Austria and later by the USA, Japan and Italy.**



# **Decolonization of Latin America in 19th century**

**Decolonization started in 1776 in the USA.**

**19th century - the main theatre was Latin America.**

**1823 – Monroe Doctrine - James Monroe and John Quincy Adams.**

**Spanish American wars of independence.**

In 1824, the armies of generals José de San Martín of Argentina and Simón Bolívar of Venezuela defeated the last Spanish forces.

Spain kept Cuba.

**1898 – Spanish–American War – Maine incident.**

The USA took Cuba, Philippines and Guam.

**Spain's role in international affairs as a major power was essentially over.**

# International Politics after 1871: years of transition

**Otto von Bismarck - the decisive figure in world history between 1871-1890.**

Russia took advantage of the Franco-German war (1870-71) to renounce the 1856 treaty, a result of Crimean war.

**The UK – splendid isolation.**

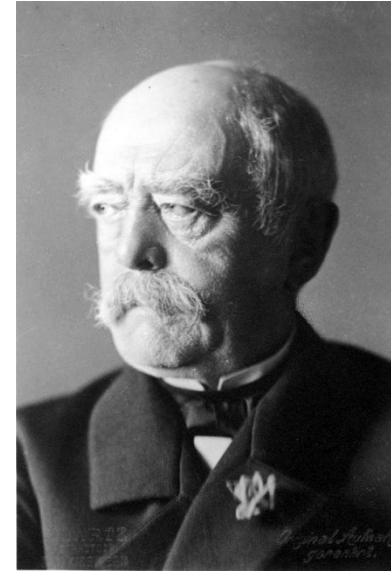
Italy was finally unified.

**Period of European imperialism.**

Non European countries entered the Concert of Power, especially the USA and Japan.

China and the Ottoman Empire went on their decline.

**The golden age of feudalism in Asia was definitively over.**



# International Politics in late 19th century

**Chancellor Bismarck** - German foreign policy from 1870 to in 1890. Goal – peaceful Europe with strong Germany.

In 1873, he formed the **League of the Three Emperors (Germany, Russia, Austria-Hungary)** - collapse in 1887.

1879 – **Dual Alliance**, Germany, Austria-Hungary,

1882 – **Triple Alliance** - Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy

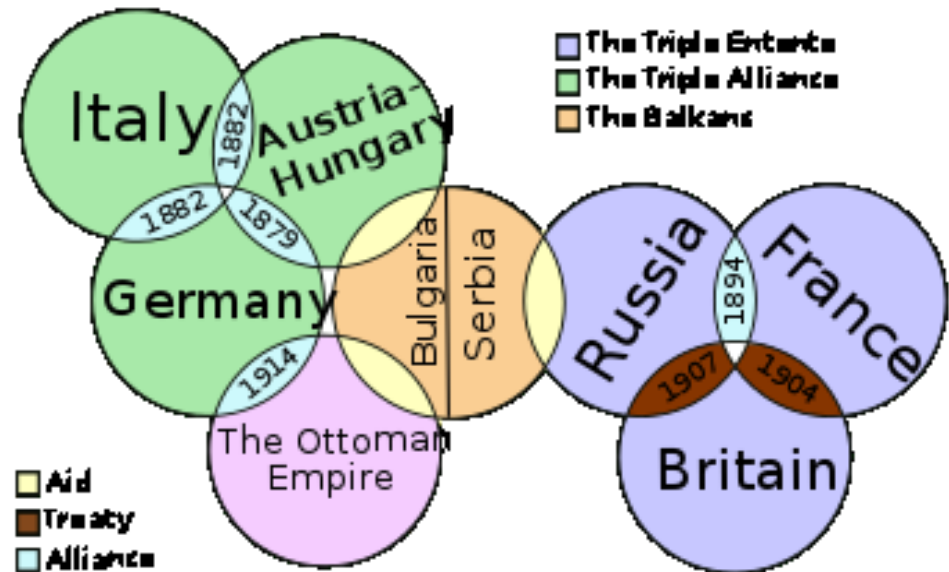
The new German Kaiser Wilhelm II dismissed Bismarck in 1890 and developed his own aggressive foreign policy called „Weltpolitik“.

1894 - the alliance between Russia and France.

Since the 1880s all the major European powers were preparing for a large-scale war.

None of them expected one and did not want to provoke one.

Late 19th century - the Triple Alliance and Triple Entente (1907) – the beginning of the End of European Concert.



# Scramble for Africa

19th century –colonization of Africa. Imperialism – inevitable consequence of capitalism or a policy choice?

Scramble for Africa – the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, and Portugal.

Tension between the UK and France - Fashoda Incident of 1898.

Entente cordiale – 1904 - British control over Egypt, while France became the dominant power in Morocco.

The Ottoman Empire lost its nominal control over Algeria, Tunisia and Libya.

1875 Britain purchased the Suez canal.

1884-85 - Berlin Conference – solution of disputes among European great powers.

1914 – only Liberia and Ethiopia were self-governing.



# The Eastern Question II (1870s)

"Eastern Question" = "Sick man of Europe" = Ottoman Empire.

Russia - take over the Straits X the UK and France – balance of power.

1877 - Russia declared war on Turkey.

March 1878 - the Treaty of San Stefano - highly advantageous to Russia, Serbia, and Montenegro, Romania and Bulgaria.

Britain, France, and Austria opposed the Treaty of San Stefano.

The 1878 Treaty of Berlin - diplomatic masterpiece of Bismarck – compromise.

Russians were dissatisfied,.

German-Russian relations deteriorated



# Balkans Wars

In 1912, Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro and Serbia formed the Balkan League.

Ottoman Empire was unable to reform itself from feudal to modern capitalist society and deal with the rising ethnic nationalism of its ethnically and religiously diverse peoples.

**The First Balkan War - the League attacked the Ottoman Empire in October 1912.**

Ottoman Empire lost all of its territories in the Balkans.

**The Second Balkan War – 1913 – Bulgaria X Serbia, Romania, Greece, Montenegro and the Ottoman Empire.**

**Treaty of Bucharest - 1913**, Bulgaria lost most of the territories it had gained in the First Balkan War.

**The Ottoman Empire almost lost its status as a Major Power.**



# World War I. – alliances and origins

**First World War ended the years of European dominance in the international system.**

Was this war inevitable?

All great powers were preparing for a war and political elites of European Great Powers provoked a lot of extreme nationalist sentiment.

**Book *The Great Illusion* – Norman Angel - the economic interdependence between industrial countries would be the real guarantor of peace.**

The long-term French reaction to defeat in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71 was desire for revenge.

**1904 - Entente Cordiale , 1907 - the Triple Entente.**

Deteriorated relations between Germany and Britain.

**Even the colonial disputes among European Great Powers did not provoke the Great War.**

**Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand.**





# World War I (The Great War)

**WWI – 1914-1918.**

**Central Powers** - Germany and Austria-Hungary, Ottoman Empire

**Entente Allies** - Britain, Russia and France.

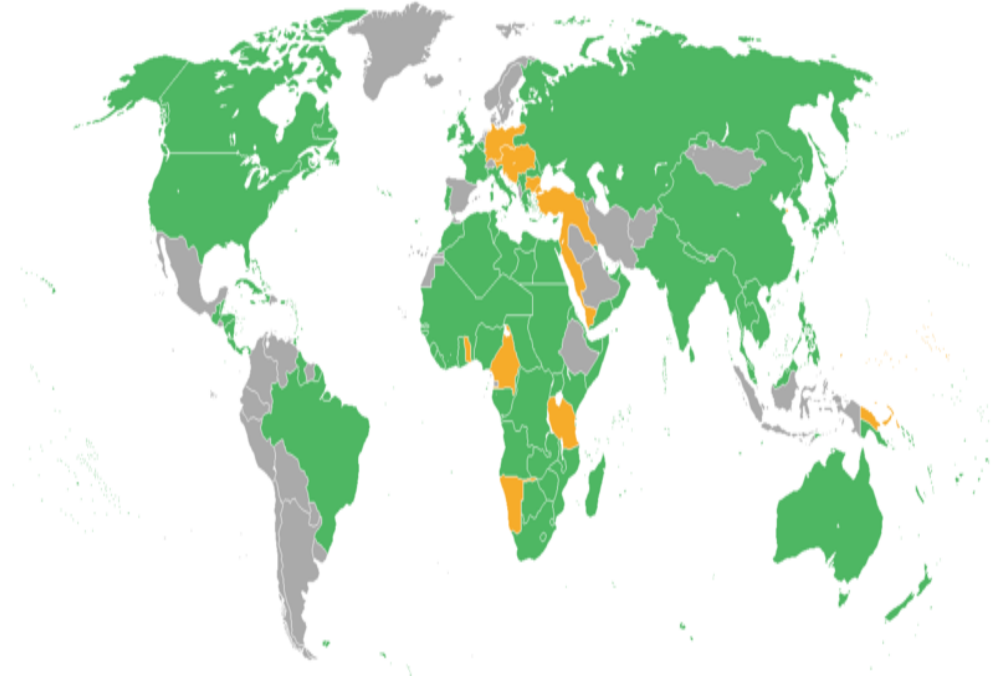
Italy – since 1915 – Allies.

**USA – 1917 – Allies.**

**January 1918 – 14 points** was a statement of principles for peace.

1917 – Bolshevik coup – Russia out of war.

**1918 – truce, in practice a total surrender of Germany.**



**Allies are in green, the Central Powers in orange, neutral countries in grey.**

# WWI Impact

## End of European dominance in IR!

Enormous impact on the number of Great Powers in the international system.

Three of them disintegrated (**Habsburg Monarchy, Russia and the Ottoman Empire**) while **Germany was seriously weakened**.

**Nine new nation-states** in Europe were set up (Poland, Finland, Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania).

**Deaths** - 11 million military personnel and about 7 million civilians.

**Enormous costs** - \$80 billion in 1913 US dollars, about \$2 trillion in 2017 dollars.

**The League of Nations** was founded during the Paris Peace Conference.



# Concert of Powers

(Hocking and Smith, p .55, changes by ZK)

## Concert system 1815-1914

### Actors

Small but rising numbers of states.  
Growing but limited number of non state actors.  
Europe-centric system.

### Stratification and structure

Multipolar structure of five great powers (UK, Russia, France, Austria and Prussia in 1815) and eight great powers (UK, Germany, USA, Russia, France, Austria, Japan and Italy on the eve of Great War).

### Patterns of interaction

Great power wars diminish in frequency but intensity, extend and severity increases.  
Expansion of trade and commerce.  
Professionalization of diplomacy.  
Flexible alliance systems.  
Limited impact of ideological division between state actors.  
Nationalism as a potent force.

### Rules and practices

A managed great power system.  
Balance of power.  
Use of great power conferences to resolve disputes.

# Literature

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