

D. Rise of the German Empire

1. We have already learned how France and Germany split separately after 843 AD. Now we need to look more closely at how Germany became what it is today.
2. Like the French kings, who had such a hard time reigning in the powerful dukes of Normandy, German kings also struggled to deal with powerful and disloyal lords. In Germany there were *hundreds* them! (See map right.)
3. The German kings aspired to a greater role than merely the kings of their own nation. They were allies of the pope in Rome, and had the title of “*Holy Roman Emperor.*”
4. However, kings who fell out of favor with the pope would find their lords unwilling to accept the king’s authority.
5. This situation persisted for the whole medieval period (until 1789). Thus, when Napoleon rose to power in France, he found that this still un-integrated Germany was easy to invade. He made short work of it, and upon his conquest of 1806, Napoleon proceeded to formally abolish the “Holy Roman Empire.”
6. Severely humiliated by the Napoleonic conquest, German leaders—especially the leaders of the major northern Germanic state called *Prussia*—began to work towards the formal unification of Germany.
7. One man stands above all others in the project as the architect of Germany unification: *Otto von Bismarck.*
8. Realizing that France was fearful of German unification and would try to prevent it, Bismarck orchestrated a series of wars within Germany and between France and Germany that made France appear to be the “bad guy,” which allowed Prussia to pose as the standard-bearer of Germany.
9. Prussia defeated France in the *Franco-Prussian War* of **1870-1** and the balance of power in Europe tilted towards Germany.



Germany, after the Frankish split, was in fact a mere miscellany of hundreds of territories with the grandiose title of “Holy Roman Empire” belying the fact that kings had little direct control over it.

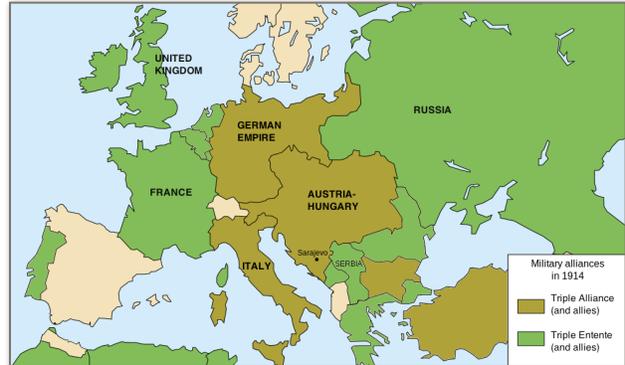


The Proclamation of the German Empire by Anton von Werner, captures the triumph of Prussian-led Germany over France in 1871. Otto von Bismarck features in the white jacket at the head of the stairs as his fellow commanders salute the new German emperor.

VII. Modern European History Revisited

A. The World Wars

1. **World War I (1914-19)** follows directly from the formation of the German empire, which was the leading partner of an alliance of ambitious imperial powers that started the war.
2. With its ambitions frustrated by the United States in **World War I** the German people accepted the message of national hatred for others from Adolph Hitler's *Nazi* (national socialist) party and embarked a new imperial effort in **World War II (1939-45)**.



The German Empire established in 1871 was the driving force behind the “Triple Alliance” in the center of Europe, which is responsible for initiating **World War I (1914-19)**.

B. Russia and the European Union

1. In modern times, Russia has continued to strengthen its connection to Europe.
2. Participating in the *Europe of Nations*, however, has been extremely painful for Russia. Napoleon’s invasion was just the first terrible European war for Russia.
3. When Russia came under attack again in **World War I (1914-19)**, this time by the alliance of central powers led by the German Empire, its monarchs were blamed for the failure to catch up to Europe and overthrown in a revolution. Russia turned to communism as a supposed way to accelerate its development.
4. When Russia was again invaded in **World War II (1939-45)**, Russia’s leaders decided that instead of being dominated by Europe, Russia should dominate Europe. They invaded and occupied Eastern Europe, imposing communism on it.
5. Had the United States not stood in the way, it is likely that all of continental Europe would have come under communist rule. The formation of **NATO in 1949** (see page 6, above) prevented the communist takeover of Europe.
6. To this day, the looming military presence of Russia is part of what holds the **European Union** together. Europe would like to be able to be in charge of its own affairs, instead of doing what the United States tells it to do!