



Volume 4. Forging an Empire: Bismarckian Germany, 1866-1890  
Triple Alliance with Austria and Italy (May 20, 1882)

The Dual Alliance of 1879 between Germany and Austria-Hungary was expanded in 1882 with the entry of Italy. The Alliance was initially set to last five years but was renewed every five years until 1914. Bismarck always entertained mixed feelings about this three-way alliance, in part because of Italy's vulnerability to attack from the sea but also because of Italy's liberal parliamentary system. Another ally against France was welcome, however. As it happened, Italy did not join the First World War on the side of Germany and Austria-Hungary in 1914. After months of delay and negotiations with the Entente Powers, Italy declared war against its former alliance partners in 1915.

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### **Triple Alliance between Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy from May 20, 1882**

Their Majesties the Emperor of Austria, King of Bohemia, etc., and Apostolic King of Hungary, the Emperor of Germany,\* King of Prussia, and the King of Italy, animated by the desire to increase the guaranties of the general peace, to fortify the monarchical principle and thereby to assure the unimpaired maintenance of the social and political order in Their respective states, have agreed to conclude a treaty which, by its essentially conservative and defensive nature, pursues only the aim of forestalling the dangers which might threaten the security of Their states and the peace of Europe.

To this end Their Majesties have appointed [ . . . ]\*\*, who, furnished with full powers, which have been found in good and due form, have agreed upon the following Articles:

*Article I.* The high contracting parties mutually promise peace and friendship, and will enter into no alliance or engagement directed against any one of their states.

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\* Incorrect formulation of the imperial title. [All footnotes adapted from Ernst Rudolf Huber, ed., *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte (Documents on German Constitutional History)*, 3rd rev. ed., vol. 2, 1851-1900. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1986, p. 497.]

\*\* Appointed as plenipotentiaries for the conclusion of the treaty were the following: Heinrich VII, Prince Reuß (1825–1906), Prussian diplomat; Gustav Count Kalnoky (1832–98), Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister 1881–95; and Carlo Felice Nicolas Count de Robilant (1826–88), Italian Ambassador in Vienna 1876–85, Italian Foreign Minister 1885–87.

They engage to proceed to an exchange of ideas on political and economic questions of a general nature which may arise, and they further promise one another mutual support within the limits of their own interests.

*Article II.* In case Italy, without direct provocation on her part, should be attacked by France for any reason whatsoever, the two other contracting parties shall be bound to lend help and assistance with all their forces to the party attacked.

This same obligation shall devolve upon Italy in case of any aggression without direct provocation by France against Germany.

*Article III.* If one, or two, of the high contracting parties, without direct provocation on their part, should chance to be attacked and to be engaged in a war with two or more Great Powers nonsignatory to the present treaty, the *casus foederis* will arise simultaneously for all the high contracting parties.

*Article IV.* In case a Great Power nonsignatory to the present treaty should threatened the security of the states of one of the high contracting parties, and the threatened party should find itself forced on that account to make war against it, the two others bind themselves to observe towards their ally a benevolent neutrality. Each of them reserves to itself, in this case, the right to take part in the war, if it should see fit, to make common cause with its ally.

*Article V.* If the peace of any of the high contracting parties should chance to be threatened under the circumstances foreseen by the preceding articles, the high contracting parties shall take counsel together in ample time as to the military measures to be taken with a view to eventual cooperation.

They engage henceforward, in all cases of common participation in a war, to conclude neither armistice, nor peace, nor treaty, except by common agreement among themselves.

*Article VI.* The high contracting parties mutually promise secrecy as to the contents and existence of the present treaty.

*Article VII.* The present treaty shall remain in force during the space of five years, dating from the day of the exchange of ratifications.

*Article VIII.* The ratifications of the present treaty shall be exchanged at Vienna within three weeks [ . . . ].

Kálnoky  
H. VII of Reuss  
C. Robilant

Source of English translation: *The Secret Treaties of Austria-Hungary, 1879-1914*, vol. I, Alfred Franzis Pribam, ed. Eng. Ed. by Archibald Cary Coolidge, Tr. by Denys P. Myers and J. G. D'Arcy Paul. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920, pp. 65, 67, 69, reprinted in Theodore S. Hamerow, ed., *The Age of Bismarck: Documents and Interpretations*. New York: Harper & Row, 1973, pp. 285-87.

Original German text reprinted in B. Schwertfeger, *Die Diplomatische Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes 1871-1914* [*The Diplomatic Files of the Foreign Office 1871-1914*], vol. 1, pp. 266ff, and in Ernst Rudolf Huber, ed., *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte* [*Documents on German Constitutional History*], 3rd rev. ed., vol. 2, 1851-1900. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1986, pp. 497-98.