

France and Great Britain were sparring over Egypt, Indo-China, or Morocco. Great Britain and Russia more than once nearly came to blows over Afghanistan and the road to India. By enlisting in the Triple Alliance Italy secured the friendship of Great Britain, and it seems agreed that in 1887 a convention was made between the two countries whereby Great Britain undertook to safeguard Italian interests in the Mediterranean as against France. The Triple Alliance was renewed in 1887 for a further term of six years, and this time the terms were more generous to Italy; her allies guaranteed her interests in the Balkans and in the Mediterranean, a concession no doubt mainly due to Austrian fears of Russian action and doubts as to the future of the Balkans since the blow for freedom struck by Bulgaria in 1885.

Whatever one's opinion of the moral aspects of Bismarck's policy, it must be confessed that it was superlatively clever. Anxious to consolidate the position of Germany in Europe and to complete the humiliation of France, he encouraged all the possible rivals of Germany to carry their ambitions into the scramble for places in the sun in Africa and Asia. The English in Egypt off-set the French in Tunis; the Russians in Merv and Penja balanced the English in the Persian Gulf and Afghanistan. Pursuing the same policy of pin-pricks to France, he urged Crispi to realize the old ambitions of Italy to become a colonial Power, and since it was impossible in those days of Anglo-Turkish friendship to take Tripoli, Crispi devoted his attention to the Red Sea. In 1870 a private company had bought, with the help of public money, the port of Assab on the Abyssinian coast, and this was in 1882 transferred to the State. In 1885 Massowah was occupied and gradually developed into the Colony of Eritrea; in 1889 the Italian strip of Somaliland was added.