

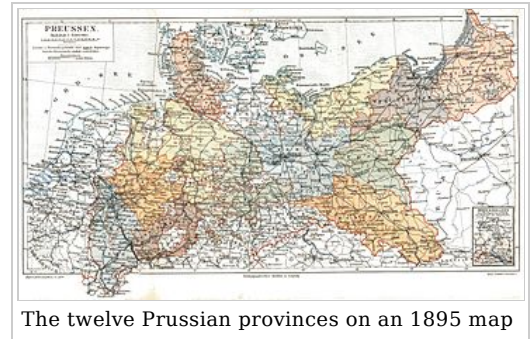
Provinces of Prussia

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The **Provinces of Prussia** constituted the main administrative divisions of Prussia upon the Stein-Hardenberg Reforms.

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The twelve Prussian provinces on an 1895 map

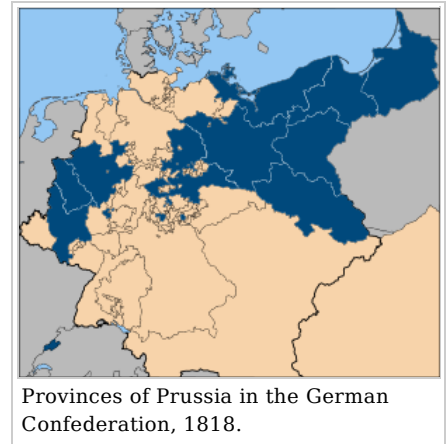
History

Following the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806 and the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the various German states gained nominal sovereignty. However, the reunification process that culminated in the creation of the German Empire in 1871, produced a country that was constituted of several principalities and dominated by one of them, the Kingdom of Prussia after it had ultimately defeated its Austrian rival. Its territory covered some 60 percent of the territory that was to become the German Reich.

German Confederation

The German Confederation was established at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and the Kingdom of Prussia was a member until the dissolution in 1866 following the Austro-Prussian War.

The Prussian state was initially subdivided into ten provinces. The Prussian government appointed the heads of each province known as *Oberpräsident* (i.e. upper president). The Oberpräsident represented the Prussian government in the province, and was busy with implementing and supervising central prerogatives of the Prussian government. The provinces of Prussia were further subdivided into government districts (*Regierungsbezirke*), subject to the upper presidents. As to self-rule each province also had a provincial diet (*Provinziallandtag* in German), the members of which were elected in indirect election by county councillors and city councillors of the constituent rural counties and independent cities.



Provinces of Prussia in the German Confederation, 1818.

Western Provinces:

- Jülich-Cleves-Berg (Cologne), until 1822; regions: Cleves [till 1821], Cologne and Düsseldorf
- Lower Rhine (Koblenz), Grand Duchy, until 1822; regions: Aachen, Coblenz and Trier
- Saxony (Magdeburg); regions: Erfurt, Magdeburg and Merseburg
- Westphalia (Münster); regions: Arnsberg, Minden and Münster

In 1822 the Rhine Province was created from the Lower Rhine and Jülich-Cleves-Berg provinces.

Eastern Provinces (East Elbia):

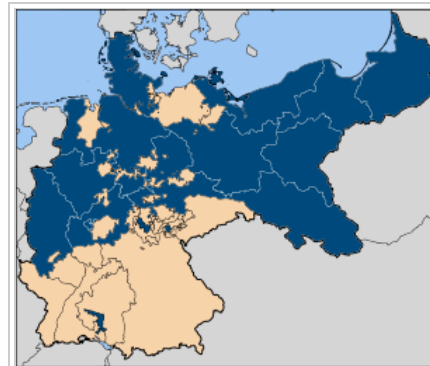
- Brandenburg (Potsdam, Berlin [1827-1843]); regions: Berlin [till 1821], Frankfurt and Potsdam
- East Prussia (Königsberg in Prussia); regions: Gumbinnen and Königsberg
- Pomerania (Stettin); regions: Köslin, Stettin and Stralsund
- Posen (Posen), Grand Duchy of Posen until 1848; regions: Bromberg and Posen
- Silesia (Breslau); regions: Breslau, Liegnitz, Oppeln and Reichenbach [till 1820]
- West Prussia (Danzig); regions: Danzig and Marienwerder

In 1829 the Province of Prussia was created by the merger of the West Prussian and East Prussian provinces, lasting until 1878. Congruent with the Kingdom of Prussia proper (i.e. former Ducal and Royal Prussia), its territory, like the Greater Polish territory of Posen, was not part of the German Confederation.

In 1850 the Province of Hohenzollern in Southern Germany, created from the annexed principalities of Hohenzollern-Hechingen and Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen.

German Empire

The outcome of the Austro-Prussian War put an end to the aspirations of a grand unified state consisting of the countries in both Germany and Austria. Instead the North German Confederation was created under Prussian leadership, and following the Franco-Prussian War the German Empire was proclaimed in 1871. The German Empire was dissolved in 1918 following World War I. From 1875 on the provinces were bodies combining regional home rule through representatives delegated from each rural and urban county (German: *Landkreis and Stadtkreis*), forming the provincial diet (German: *Provinziallandtag* with a 6-year term), which elected from its midst a head of this self-administration, the Landesdirektor (with a 6 to 12-year term), and a provincial government (German: *Provinzialausschuss*, provincial committee) as well as part of the superordinated overall Prussian royal administration, supervising - on a provincial range - the self-governing municipalities and counties as well as each governorate (German: *Regierungsbezirk*, mere supervising bodies of the Prussian government). For this purpose the respective Prussian minister of interior affairs appointed an upper president (German: *Oberpräsident*) to each province, who fulfilled his task with the help of a Prussian government-appointed provincial council (German: *Provinzialrat*).



Provinces of Prussia in the German Empire, 1914.

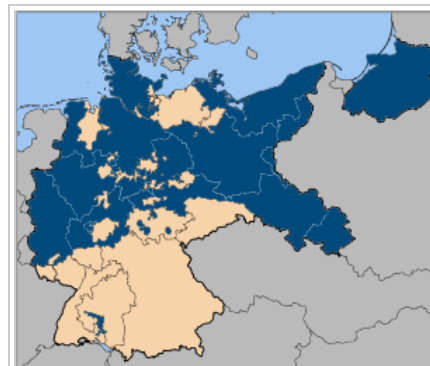
- Berlin (On 1 April 1881 the city was separated from Brandenburg to become a city-province. Its lord mayor (German: *Oberbürgermeister*) carried out the duties of a Landesdirektor in the other provinces, while the city council doubled as the provincial committee. The Prussian government-appointed chief of police (German: *Polizeipräsident in Berlin*) served as the upper president of Berlin.^[1])
- Brandenburg (Potsdam; from 1881 on without Berlin, but provincial offices remained in Berlin); regions: Frankfurt and Potsdam
- East Prussia (Königsberg in Prussia; recreated by dividing the Province of Prussia in 1878); regions: Allenstein (as of 1905), Gumbinnen and Königsberg
- Hanover (Hanover; constituted from the Kingdom of Hanover, annexed in 1866); regions: Aurich, Hanover, Hildesheim, Lüneburg, Osnabrück and Stade
- Hesse-Nassau (Kassel; constituted from the Free City of Frankfurt upon Main, Electorate of Hesse, and the Duchy of Nassau, annexed in 1866); regions: Kassel and Wiesbaden
- Hohenzollern (Sigmaringen); region: Sigmaringen
- Pomerania (Stettin); regions: Köslin, Stettin and Stralsund
- Posen (Posen); regions: Bromberg and Posen
- Rhineland (Düsseldorf as to provincial self-rule, Koblenz as to upper presidential offices); regions: Aachen, Cologne, Düsseldorf, Koblenz and Trier
- Saxony (Magdeburg); regions: Erfurt, Magdeburg and Merseburg
- Schleswig-Holstein (Kiel; annexed in 1866, in 1876 Saxe-Lauenburg, prior a German state of its own, merged in); regions: Holstein (till 1868) and Schleswig
- Silesia (Breslau); regions: Breslau, Liegnitz and Oppeln
- Westphalia (Münster); regions: Arnsberg, Minden and Münster
- West Prussia (Danzig; recreated by dividing the Province of Prussia in 1878); regions: Danzig and Marienwerder

Weimar Republic

After the fall of the German Empire the Kingdom of Prussia was reconstituted with a republican government as the Free State of Prussia. The Free State promoted the democratisation of the provinces, the provincial parliaments (Provinziallandtage) were elected in direct elections by the voters, unlike before when elected county councillors chose from their midst members for the provincial parliaments.















Prussia had to cede virtually all territory belonging to the provinces of Posen and West Prussia to the newly created state of Poland and the League of Nations mandate of the Free City of Danzig. Smaller areas had been ceded to Belgium (East Cantons, formerly Rhineland), Czechoslovakia (Hlučín Region, formerly Silesia), Denmark (Northern Schleswig, formerly Schleswig-Holstein), the League of Nations mandate of the Memel Territory (formerly East Prussia), Poland (eastern Upper Silesia, formerly Prov. of Silesia), and the Mandatory Saar (League of Nations) (formerly Rhineland).

Prussia and its provinces formally continued to exist even though political control was eventually taken over by the National Socialist German Workers Party following their rise to power in 1933. However, Prussia did not survive the defeat and the division of Germany following the end of World War II in 1945. Several of the provinces attained statehood or became a part of other



Provinces of Prussia in the Weimar Republic, 1928.

post-war federal states.

-  Berlin (in 1920 the city was considerably extended (Prussian Greater Berlin Act) on the expense of Brandenburg)
-  Brandenburg (Berlin); regions: Frankfurt and Potsdam
-  East Prussia (Königsberg in Prussia); regions: Allenstein, Gumbinnen, Königsberg and West Prussia (1922-1939)
-  Hanover (Hanover; in 1921 Pyrmont, prior a district of the Free State of Waldeck-Pyrmont, merged in); regions: Aurich, Hanover, Hildesheim, Lüneburg, Osnabrück and Stade
-  Hesse-Nassau (Kassel; in 1929 the Free State of Waldeck, prior a German state of its own, merged in); regions: Kassel and Wiesbaden
-  Hohenzollern (Sigmaringen); region: Sigmaringen
-  Lower Silesia (Breslau; part of Silesia between 1938 and 1941); regions: Breslau and Liegnitz
-  Pomerania (Stettin); regions: Köslin, Stettin, Posen-West Prussia (as of 1938) and Stralsund (till 1932)
-  Posen-West Prussia (Schneidemühl; created in 1922 from parts of the provinces Posen and West Prussia that had not been ceded to Poland, the province was dissolved in 1938 with its territory being mainly incorporated into Pomerania, and two exclaves into Brandenburg and Silesia.); region: Schneidemühl
-  Rhineland (Düsseldorf as to provincial self-rule, Koblenz as to upper presidential offices); regions: Aachen, Cologne, Düsseldorf, Koblenz and Trier
-  Saxony (Magdeburg); regions: Erfurt, Magdeburg and Merseburg
-  Schleswig-Holstein (Kiel; in 1920 Northern Schleswig was ceded to Denmark); region: Schleswig
-  Upper Silesia (Oppeln in Upper Silesia; part of Silesia between 1938 and 1941); region: Oppeln
-  Westphalia (Münster); regions: Arnsberg, Minden and Münster

Notes

1. Cf. *Meyers großes Konversations-Lexikon*: 20 vols. – completely new ed. and ext. ed., Leipzig and Vienna: Bibliographisches Institut, 1903-08, here vol. 2, article 'Berlin', p 700. No ISBN

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