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GRAND STRATEGY OF THE KINGDOM OF ITALY (1861-1943)

DISSERTATION

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To my beloved mother, Stamatina

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a comprehensive analysis of the Italian grand strategy during the years 1861-1943. Colonial empire, national unification, Great Power status and successful nationalization of the masses were all dependent upon the successful implementation of the national grand strategy. My dissertation attempts to trace the reasons that rendered the implementation of the Italian grand strategy unsuccessful through a qualitative analysis of the political institutions and domestic challenges, national foreign policy and economy as well as armed forces. The problem of how to achieve a sense of national consciousness was directly linked to obtaining Great Power status, and greatly shaped the Italian history, leading the country to the enormous calamities of the Adowa disaster, the Great War and the myth of the “mutilated victory” that paved the way for the fascist accession to power and fueled the revisionist rhetoric against the post-war settlements. The pursuit of the Italian national identity and Great Power status through conquest, imperialism and aggression eventually led to the overwhelming disaster of the Second World War, and the primary task of my dissertation is to thoroughly examine the turbulent years of the rise and fall of the Italian Empire.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the Italian grand strategy and examine its connection to the Italian nation-building process. Italy was officially proclaimed a Kingdom on March 17, 1861. The process leading up to establishment of the Kingdom is known as the “Risorgimento”, and included the unification of the various regions and the incorporation of their independent states into a single one. However, contrary to the contemporary Italian historiography, which regarded the Risorgimento process a mass, glorious, patriotic and heroic war of Italian independence against the despotic, reactionary regimes of the various states of the Italian peninsula, the reality was very far apart.

The cultivation and protection of the nation’s founding myth contributed significantly to the formation of the Italian grand strategy, both domestic and foreign. Italy found herself in a peculiar position among the rest of the Great Powers, and her grand strategy had to meet the requirements imposed by the Great Power status simultaneously with successfully instilling the Italian national identity among the masses, rendering Italy both a project and a reality. Domestic politics, foreign policy as well as the condition of the national economy and the armed forces are being thoroughly examined in each chapter. The first chapter examines the

years right after unification until the accession of Francesco Crispi to power. The second chapter is devoted to Francesco Crispi, the patron saint of Italian colonialism and imperialism and his enormous contribution to the emergence of the force politics in Italy. The third chapter aims to provide a summary of the new politics course which was initiated by the new King Vittorio Emanuele III and Giovanni Giolitti. The fourth and fifth chapters are of crucial importance, as they provide the reader with information on the turbulent circumstances under which Italy entered the Great War. Great Power status, notions of a colonial empire and national unification were greatly challenged by the post-war settlements of 1919, creating the illusion of the “mutilated victory”, setting the ground for the fascist rise to power. The seventh chapter of this assignment attempts to track the deep reasons why the fascist regime proved incapable of forging the new Italian identity and instead, led Italy to the overwhelming and total disaster of the Second World War.

CHAPTER 1

ITALY AT THE POST UNIFICATION ERA (1860-1887)

1.1 Domestic Politics

From the very beginning, the political framework within which the new Kingdom functioned was incomplete and therefore, inadequate to accommodate the constitutional needs of the new state. The constitution of the country was based on the highly authoritarian *Statuto* of 1848, conceded by Charles Albert of Savoy to his small Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardegna. By law, Vittorio Emanuele II was a King “by grace of God” and retained the right to appoint and

dismiss ministers and deputies at will. The executive power belonged to him alone and the legislative powers were shared by him and the two houses of parliament, these being a senate chosen by himself and a chamber of deputies elected on a very restricted suffrage. He was also the commander-in-chief of the armed forces and retained the authority to declare war and make peace at will, without being forced to give the necessary explanation to the parliament, and could issue royal decrees where he thought it necessary for effective implementation of any law. (Denis Mack Smith:1989,4).The political co-existence with the autocratic monarch quickly turned into a massive challenge for any politician willing to go ahead and press for reforms the country desperately needed. A way of “court politics” soon emerged, politicians who resented the temporary loss of power due to the civilian efforts to control the royal authority, and who were supported by the King in order to reassert the powers of the crown, by depreciating parliament and securing their own accession to power. Between 1861 and 1876, the country was governed by a coalition of liberal conservatives from the north. Known as La Destra (the Right), they strove to turn Italian unification into unity and through their able finance ministers, strove to balance the budget and eliminate the deficiencies. The leaders of La Destra were the nearest thing to a responsible ruling class that Italy ever produced. (Gilmour:2011,255) .The representatives of the Right stood for fiscal rectitude and a state that intervened as little as possible in the lives of the civilians. This also included the avoidance as much as possible of foreign wars and colonial adventures and the adherence to the principle of maintaining the European equilibrium as the only means within which Italy can survive. Their efforts were severely hindered by the capricious behavior of the monarch, who never hid his contempt for the political institutions of the country. Time and again, through his actions he undermined the authority of the government officials and his tactics of governing instead of reigning rendered the already innately fragile institutions discredited in the eyes of the people. The Left, who came to power in 1876, supported a powerful state which could engender works through public works and were more keen on foreign wars and colonial adventures. As soon as the Left came into power in 1876, politics in Italy became way less principled and more corrupt, more a matter of manipulation than of policies. Agostino Depretis inaugurated the tactics of *trasformismo*, his method of retaining a parliamentary majority by constantly conjuring alliances between shifting and incompatible factions. Depretis created a firm coalition with the southern deputies by gaining their votes but in exchange he lost the power to carry out reforms that the south so badly needed. As Gilmour put it: “He gave them control of their regions, they gave him control of the nation”. (ibid,256). Depretis was thus governing in the name not of the nation, but whoever gave him a majority in the Chamber. Patronage, bribing,

instability and fixing of the elections became a common pattern in the political life of Italy. Numerous bank scandals, poor attendance records and even duellings between deputies and ministers led to the complete discreditation of the national parliament in the eyes of the Italian people. As Sidnei Sonnino put it: “Ninety per cent of the people feel entirely cut off from the political institutions and see themselves subjected to the State but do not feel that they are an organic part of it and take no interest at all in its existence or its affairs” (ibid,257). The Chamber of Deputies never managed to acquire significant pre-eminence and become a focus of national pride, as it was constantly checked and balanced by the Senate, whose members were appointed by the King. Therefore, the national parliament was not a place where one ideologically defined party replaced another after elections fought over clear and rival political programs. After the unification, the members of the political elite all defined themselves as liberals of one kind or another. They were defenders of the Risorgimento settlement and usually they were men who had emerged from and were integrated into a local power base and patronage system. (Bosworth:2005,45).

Under the successive coalitions of the Left under Agostino Depretis (1876-1887), a series of liberal reforms were introduced. However, the social reforms were inadequate to facilitate the solution of the most pressing problems of the country, as no serious attempts were made for administrative reform, neither in national nor in regional level.(Miller:1997,363),

The political life of the new Kingdom was from the beginning highly turbulent and the adaptation to the new reality was quite challenging, both for the government officials in Turin and for its new subjects, especially on the southern part of the country. Upon arriving on the south, the Piedmontese were quickly disgusted and appalled to witness the horrendous level of poverty and corruption and it is fair to say that very few northerners actually had any level of knowledge of the southern problems, let alone of the enormous challenges they would be facing trying to govern their new acquisitions. One typical example of this attitude was typified by Luigi Carlo Farini, Cavour’s first viceroy of Naples, who described the locals as “swine, living in a hell pit”. (Gilmour:ibid,241). According to the southern perspective, these alien newcomers were entirely foreign to their traditions and culture, and the new King Vittorio Emanuele a distant reactionary King who never actually bothered to hide his contempt for them. According to Giacinto De Sivo, a local historian, the destruction of his country should not be called a “risorgimento” and the northern oppression should not be called “liberty” (ibid). The new administration failed to realize the peculiarities and certain administrative features of their new subjects. As soon as the deposed King Francesco of Naples abandoned his capital, an enormous revolt started in Basilicata against the Piedmontese yoke, and spread throughout the most of

the mainland. The rebels were labeled as “brigands” from the government officials and were treated as such. Contemporary historians referred to this five-year revolt not as a civil war but as “the war on “brigandry”. The atrocities and brutal punishment of whoever was considered a sympathizer towards the guerilla forces was so notorious, that even the new administration started to have second thoughts about whether the unification was a prudent choice. It took the army five years to suppress the revolt but then, another revolt started in Sicily. Other sources of contempt that rendered the circumstances under which the political life of the new Kingdom had started horrendous, were the inconsiderate, increased taxation imposed on the new subjects, and the confiscation of Naples’s large gold reserves to help pay the Piedmontese debt.(ibid,243).

By far the most challenging and long-lasting problem the new Kingdom faced was the bitter hostility and animosity of the Papacy who saw its acquisitions usurped in 1870 during the conquest of the Papal States. The Pope refused to formally recognize the new state and did not hesitate to excommunicate both the King Vittorio Emanuele II and his government. He reacted to the anti-clerical and secular policies of the new state by adopting highly reactionary policies and in 1874 forbade all the pious Catholics of the country to participate in the national elections, excluding a tremendously important social group from the political life of the country.

1.2 Foreign Policy (1860-1885)

The handling of the foreign affairs of the new Kingdom was by far the most bleak affair and also the most challenging for a number of reasons, the most notorious being the constant intervention of the King Vittorio Emanuele II which hindered both the quality and the consistency of the Italian grand strategy and severely damaged the reputation and the prestige of both the crown and the country. For the most responsible and sensible men of the Right, such as Visconti Venosta, Constantino Nigra and Carlo di Robilant, Italy had never become a Great Power. These men were bred in the Piedmontese tradition of sitting on the fence, waiting for France, Austria or Prussia to make up their minds and then choosing the right side. For them, Italy was just a bigger version of Piedmont and therefore, they regarded peace as an absolute necessity, until Italy had gathered the required resources and power to emerge as a Great European Power in Europe. In general terms, Italy was regarded as of “no account” to international affairs and by confession of the Russian ambassador to Pasquale Mancini, the

Italian foreign minister, was only invited to the international congresses as a matter of courtesy (Lowe,Marzari:1975,4). Therefore, as long as the Right was in power (1860-1976) the foreign policy towards the rest of the Great Powers was conducted in a careful and calculating way, by avoiding formal alliances and retaining a significant autonomy. The doctrine of this policy can be perfectly summarized in Visconti Venosta's words:" Independent always, isolated never". The biggest challenge for the new Kingdom was its relations with Austria-Hungary. Following the ceding of Venice to Italy in 1866 as a result of the Prusso-Austrian war, the two countries had managed to stabilize their relations within a framework of mutual understanding and recognition of their new borders and cordiality seemed to be the driving force behind their relations. In 1874, the Austrian Foreign Minister Andrassy wrote a private letter to his ambassador in Rome, Wimpfenn, which of course was intended to be seen by the King and his ministers in Rome by which he explicitly ruled out any further ceding of territory to the Italians and delicately threatened to retake Venice in case of any further Italian pressure for the annexation of the "unredeemed lands" of Trieste and Trento. In his meeting with the Austrian monarch Francis Joseph in Venice in 1875, Vittorio Emanuele accepted this reasoning and promised to restrict any public sign of irredentist demonstrations.

However, this happy state of affairs was quickly changed when the Bosnian crisis of 1875-1876 coincided with the rise to power of the Left. The Italian government was absolutely certain Austria would seize the opportunity to annex the provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the hopes of all those in Italy who eagerly waited for the national unification were now revived. Their expectation was that, if Austria managed to expand eastwards, Italy could seek compensation in Trento and Trieste. Apart from the leaders of the irredentist movement, Benedetto Cairoli, Renato Imbriani and Giuseppe Garibaldi, even the "responsible" ministers of the Right were momentarily carried away and acknowledged Italy was in front of a good opportunity to expand. In September, Visconti Venosta prompted a visit by crown prince Umberto in St Petersburg with the hope that the Three Emperors League would break up under Balkan stresses, creating an opportunity for Italy to insert herself (ibid,15).The rise to power of the Left under the cabinet of Agostino Depretis included within its ranks the followers of Francesco Crispi and Benedetto Cairoli, the latter being a founding member of the National Association. On 29 May 1876 he officially attended the Legnano ceremonies, ceremonies at which the banners of Trento and Trieste received the post of honor. The reaction from Vienna was immediate and as Andrassy told Robilant on 16 October, "we will not cede a village, and if we see ourselves menaced by aggression we will take action", a direct reference to the Wimpfenn letter, which became the basis of the two countries' relations. (ibid,16).Francesco

Crispi was then sent to Germany in order to inquire about the intentions of the Kaiser and trying to secure German support in obtaining the “unredeemed land” from the Austrians. In a meeting that took place in Gastein on 17 September 1877, Bismarck explicitly said he would not raise a finger against Austria and exposed Italy to the danger of diplomatic isolation. Thus the “clean hands” policy of Italy during the Berlin Congress. Count Luigi Corti had clear instructions not to oppose any annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina by the Austrians and he was prudent enough not to insist on any compensation for Italy that could lead to a severe humiliation.

Relations with France during the first years of the Kingdom were characterized by cordiality as well as a complex balance of power directly related to the Roman question. In Visconti’s view the French threat was not big enough in order to justify a German alliance, however the government in Rome was always suspicious of the pious Catholics in France and their will to launch a crusade to liberate the Pope from his bondage. In case of a Bourbon restoration this threat would create an existential danger for Italy. According to Visconti Venosta, the key to checking France on the Papal issue lay in Vienna. A potential deterioration of the Austro-Italian relations would inevitably lead to a rapprochement of Paris and Vienna, and the Papal issue would provide the best incentive (ibid, 4). Thus, it was essential to maintain cordial relations with Austria on the grounds that in return for Austrian benevolence on the Roman Question, Italy would accept the policy of Vienna on the east. That was the reason why Rome welcomed the new understanding between Germany and Austria. Certain of German support, the Austrians would not seek the French (ibid). The relations between Italy and France got poisoned over the Tunis question. Even though the Italians had no serious claim in Tunis except from maintaining the commercial and cultural interests of the large Italian population residing there, a potential conquest of Tunis would be tremendously expensive, both in resources and manpower. The Italians had faith in Gambetta’s Left government in Paris that they would refrain from colonial adventures and would not take any steps that would alienate Italy. However, a silent rivalry had emerged in Tunis, with the appointment of Licurgo Maccio as General-Consul with the clear instructions to battle French influence wherever it could be found. He took important concessions for Italian firms throughout the bey’s domains, the most important of which was the Tunis-La Goulette railway obtained for the Rubattino shipping company (ibid, 23). Encouraged by the Anglo-French dispute over the Enfida case, Maccio was instructed to continue as before, believing naively that if the Italian influence on Tunis would increase, the French would be prevented from annexing it. That axiom was quickly proved a delusion, and the French formally imposed a French protectorate over Tunis on 12

May 1881, causing a political earthquake in Italy. (ibid,27).Italy was then quick to respond in a reactionary way, immediately opening negotiations for a German alliance, which was signed on 20 May 1882.The effect of this alliance was mostly psychological for the Italians, because they now had a sense of belonging to the European order and of not being isolated anymore. However, its provisions was more harmful to Italy than were beneficial. Italy formally had to renounce all her ambitions in Trento and Trieste, as well as all her colonial ambitions that could endanger the European balance of power.

Italy's grave mistake of joining the Triple Alliance was evident in the Egyptian crisis of the summer of 1882.Italy's claim to join the Anglo-French Dual Control of Egypt as a Mediterranean power was asserted time and again through Italy's Foreign ministers and its ambassadors to Paris and London but to no avail. After joining the Triple Alliance, Pasquale Mancini attempted to utilize the new alliance by trying to act as a representative of the Austrian and German interests and successfully erode the Franco-British front. To his bitter disappointment however, both Berlin and Vienna explicitly denied all Italian requests, condemning all Italian efforts to futility, and forcing Italy to bear the burden of the opposition to the British and French, with dire diplomatic consequences. The reason behind this stance was that Bismarck foresaw a policy of non-intervention would be in the best interests of the Triple Alliance, as it could potentially lead to a breach in the Anglo-French relations, something that could be endangered and jeopardized further by an Italian intervention. Bismarck's tactics bore fruit and on 27 July Gladstone, facing diplomatic isolation, invited Mancini to join the Dual Control of Egypt and thus presented him with a clear dilemma: to join Britain in the occupation of Egypt could potentially lead to an Anglo-Italian understanding in the Mediterranean and perhaps to a military alliance. The cost, however would be to cause the wrath of Bismarck and the alienation of France and perhaps the permanent loss of both Tunis and Tripoli. The pressure of its formal allies led Mancini to deny the offer, demonstrating in the most accurate way the shortcoming of the alliance.

A factor of the utmost importance which negatively affected both the preparation and the implementation of the Italian foreign policy was the constant and arbitrary interventions of the King Vittorio Emanuele II. His dream was to provoke a general war for the liberation of Venice and Rome, and for this purpose he had created and financed a vast network of his own, secret diplomacy, bypassing the Foreign Office and acting without any consultation to his ministers. This tactic of course was common knowledge in the European capitals and it was in fact deplored, rendering the effective implementation of the Italian foreign policy dysfunctional. Some of his most trustworthy agents were Count Ottaviano Vimcerati who was strategically

planted in the Paris embassy, General Stefano Türr and Cavaliere Enrico Bensa. Among Vittorio Emanuele's secret plans was to provoke a general war with Austria for the recapture of Venice in 1866, the plan to depose King Otto of Greece and replace him with his younger son, Amedeo and to provoke a general Balkan uprising by financing various revolutionary groups in the Balkans. Of course none of those grandiose plans came into effect, as the various revolutionary groups in the Balkans were unable or unwilling to cause an uprising and seemed to be content in milking the royal purse. The damage inflicted upon the prestige of the country was enormous. (Mack Smith:ibid,12).

1.3 Economy

The Italian economy was clearly based on the agrarian sector and therefore, its potential was limited and never quite matched neither the capabilities nor the potential of the economies of the rest Great Powers. Italy undoubtedly was the "sixth wheel of the chariot", the least of the Great Powers in terms of both economy and demography. Her industrial power measured by the yardsticks of the nineteenth century- coal, iron and steel-was slight. The rate of industrial growth was not spectacular and this posed a severe limitation on the national wealth. In consequence annual income per capita was very low and in 1861 amounted to one third compared to Germany and France. In other words, Italy had neither the resources nor the wealth to pay for her industrial development, and especially during the period of the great railway boom, 1866-1867, most materials had to be imported from abroad due to a lack of a native industrial complex. The construction of the railway was financed by foreign loans and as a result, Italy suffered from severe and chronic budget deficiencies. After 1881, when the Finance Minister Agostino Maliani introduced the convertibility of the lira, large scale public works and railway expansion, deficits grew like weeds. (Lowe:ibid:5).As in most aspects of political life, the choices made by the Piedmontese government officials also had grave consequences for the economy. For instance, right after the unification the government attempted to "piedmontize" the south by imposing liberalism, thinking that the backward south could benefit from it. The insistence on free trade damaged and destroyed the heavy and textile industry of the south and the southern industrialists lacked both the capital and the knowledge to adapt

their industries to the new reality. On top of those new implemented dogmas, Sicilians and other southerners were also facing the ancient curses of drought and unproductive land, which rendered them completely incapable to compete with the foreign and domestic competition and were slowly driven into misery (Gilmour:ibid,248).The internal market was limited and the lack of an extended railway network rendered the transportation of goods almost impossible. The bulk of a proper transport infrastructure was only limited to the north of the country. The agricultural production was also significantly poor and more than 8 million farmers were living in conditions of extreme poverty, illiterate and hostile to any innovative method of improvement. The reputation of Italy as “the country of the deficit” also hindered the foreign and domestic investments in the country. Most of the affluent Italians either preferred to invest abroad, in the Bourse of Paris, or preferred to invest their money in Italian state bonds, instead of funding the domestic industry and encouraging the development of agriculture.

1.4 Armed Forces

The task of creating a new Italian army was from the beginning proven highly strenuous. The army was highly valued and considered a “school” of forging the new Italian identity. During the revolts in the south, the guerrilla forces were targeting soldiers and officers of the new regime and royal decrees were issued to employ harsh repressive measure against the “brigands”. General Della Rocca boasted of the number of summary executions carried out by his soldiers, and by the end of 1865 the number of those executed by the Piedmontese army was disheartening. The revolt which broke out in Sicily also gave an excuse to the Piedmontese forces to go on the rampage by indiscriminately executing and arresting islanders. The officer corps was dominated by Piedmontese veterans eager to implement their own ethos into the new force. Their generals and officers were unimaginative men who relied too much on conventional tactics and the use of bayonet. The incompetence of those generals, most notorious of them being Generals Alfonso Lamarmora and Enrico Cialdini, was evident in their hostility towards innovation and their miserable failure to win a single battle against the Austrians despite the fact that their forces were by far superior in numbers. Intrigues, incompetence and the constant intervention of the King Vittorio Emanuele II himself, who insisted on personally commanding his troops during the battle of Custoza in 1866, led to a humiliating national defeat (ibid,230).The slight industrial resources and little wealth of the

country also meant that the money available for armaments was limited and this also had a grave consequence upon the armed forces. The money available for the army permitted a peace strength of 234.000 in the 1870s and those numbers could only be maintained by practicing the most rigorous economy (Lowe:ibid,6).

Piedmont had also no nautical traditions as it was given Liguria by the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and had no coastline except Nice. However, it was evident right after the unification that as a Great Power, Italy had to construct a huge navy in order to assert itself on the Mediterranean. By 1866 this fleet included twelve ironclads and was commanded by an admiral, four vice-admirals and eight rear-admirals. (ibid,231).However the seamanship skills of the Admiral Carlo Pellion, Count of Persano, was embarrassing. In 1866 his numerically superior fleet forces were annihilated by the Austrian Admiral Wilhelm von Tegethoff in the battle of Lissa, failing to secure at least a tiny victory which would save the prestige of the country and the monarchy.

CHAPTER 2

THE CRISPI ERA (1885-1896)

Francesco Crispi was one of the most controversial and influential figures in Italian politics. His heritage rendered him a patron saint of Italian colonialism and imperialism and left a clear and distinct mark on his successors.

A fierce supporter of the Risorgimento and of the mazzinian ideal of republicanism and national self-determination, Crispi showed great zeal for the cause of unification and staunchly supported the annexation by Piedmont. The discovery that the vast majority of southern Italians would rather fight against their landlords than for “Italy” made him unsympathetic to the problems of the “peasants” and similarly he developed a deep contempt for socialists “whose sense of internationalism makes them lose their sense of patriotism, if they ever possessed one”. Thus, the old hero of the Risorgimento turned into a lonely, authoritarian figure with a peculiar responsibility as custodian of his “Italy” and his whole life was a constant battle against the

enemies of the new state-Sicilian peasants, Emilian anarchists, Roman cardinals, Lombard irredentists and French chauvinists.(*ibid*,47).

2.1 Domestic politics

Francesco Crispi rose to power on 29 July 1887 when he became President of the Council, Minister of the Interior and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Vittorio Emanuele II had passed away at 1878, being replaced as a monarch by his son Umberto I. The new King was, like his father, raised in a strictly military fashion but despite his upbringing, he was less reactionary compared to his forebear. However, he retained the doctrine of maintaining a heavy taxation for the purpose of constructing and maintaining an enormous army, an opinion which was fully endorsed by Crispi. Crispi firmly believed a strong monarch could safeguard and guarantee a strong government at home and an expansionist policy abroad, an idea manifested in his saying “the monarchy unites and the republic will divide us”. Given that Vittorio Emanuele was a poor national symbol, unwilling to rid himself of his Piedmontese background and devote himself to “Italy”, it was a task of utmost significance that the monarchy must acquire and retain its status as the principal means of the Italian national unity. The constitutional basis of his “parliamentary dictatorship” was laid by the royal decree of 1876, which gave the office of the prime minister greater pre-eminence over the other ministers. This new style of prime-ministerial government threatened to reduce the authority of both the King and the parliament.(Mack Smith:*ibid*,88).During his first term as a prime minister, Francesco Crispi devoted himself completely to the cause of constructing a coherent national identity and was completely eager to finalize the project of nationalizing the masses, of making the Italians. Both his domestic and foreign policy were targeting to enhance the prestige and status of the country and to instill to the masses a sense of national grandeur. For instance, during his term in office he actively took initiatives to promote the monarchy as a unifying symbol of the nation and was the principal architect of the monarch’s elaborate funeral, and he hoped that mass participation in the event and the carefully orchestrated public grief at the time would serve as springboards for a subsequent ‘national’ cult. (Duggan:2010,341).In Crispi’s mind, already in the 1880s,the idea of a German-style constitutional system with himself as a Bismarckian chancellor figure capable of governing the country with an iron fist gained ground.

Consequently, he governed the country with little regard to the opposition, imposing his policy and treating the Chamber with condescension by publicly asserting his readiness to overrule its decision and rule by royal decree. (Mack Smith:ibid,88). His primary technique of holding onto power was by threatening to resign or actually resigning whenever he foresaw a hostile vote in parliament, which permitted the King to re-appoint him with a new coalition to include some opponents as a way of disarming his critics. (ibid:89).His first government fell in January 1891.This was a result of his alienation of both the Left and the Right, protesting against the implementation of his conservative domestic policies and suppression of the irredentist movement. The two successive interim governments of Di Rudini and Giolitti quickly came into clash with the royal court over the issue of increasing the armed forces' expenditure and amid great accusations of the notorious Banca Romana scandal that cast great shadows of discreditation among the political class of Italy and the House of Savoy. Throughout the country, public awareness of grave banking irregularities in the banking system was growing and even the House of Savoy became a target of attacks for the extravagance of its civil list of belongings and vast fortune. Rumors about too many politicians being involved in bribes and receiving interest-free "loans" spread through Italy and the successive prime ministers Di Rudini, Giolitti and Crispi took great pains to conceal it, until in December 1892 Napoleone Colajani, a deputy of the radical Left published a secret official report claiming that the director of Banca Romana, Tanlongo, had offered Crispi a sum twenty times his salary. (ibid:104).These accusations extended to a large number of deputies, receiving money for their votes, as well as to the King Umberto himself, which led the monarch to desperately ask the government to conceal as much as possible and refuse a parliamentary enquiry. Thus, when Crispi was called into office for the second time in 1893, he had a clear order to impose his force politics which would protect both the monarchy and himself from the widespread accusations. His ministers were non-entities who would do as they were told and he let it be known that the King had agreed to grant him dictatorial powers and if necessary, he would use them to suppress the parliament as national security should take precedence over constitutional liberties. (ibid:107). His new reign was immediately characterized by mass repressive measures against the Press, against public meetings and even the arrest of deputies on the grounds that the state of emergency created on southern and central Italy rendered these measures necessary. As the country was in a state of civil war, he could claim justification in setting up military tribunals and proclaiming martial law. Crispi managed to secure the parliamentary support of Giolitti and Di Rudini by claiming the "secessionist" movements in Sicily and Lombardy were supported by France and he won a parliamentary vote of confidence of 342

against 5. In reality the cause of these riots were the appalling living conditions of the laborers who fell victim to Crispi's irrational tariff war against France and the constant deterioration of their living standards and purchasing power. In southern Italy there were constant riots against both the actions and inaction of the government: against the scarcity of land, high prices, high rents and high food prices. In the 1890s, social unrest led to the birth of a movement in Sicily called the "fasci", left-wing peasant groups who encouraged strikes, the seizure of land and burning of tax offices. Crispi saw them as promoters of a revolution and took decisive steps to annihilate them. That was the final blow to the southern question, a devastating mistake that alienated the southerners completely from the State and urged them to massively emigrate to the continents of America to ensure a better future for themselves. (Gilmour:ibid,251).

In the face of Umberto, Crispi found himself an important ally who would facilitate his stay in power. Both men shared some critical convictions: both were ready to suppress socialist manifestations by force, both feared subversion and regional separatism and both resented the fact that in the industrial north existed minorities so scared of budget deficits and expensive imperialist ventures that there was talk of breaking loose to form a separate Lombard republic. (Mack Smith:ibid,111). However, their most important common conviction laid on the increased concern over the Banca Romana scandal, and both supported each other in order to conceal the scandalous details. Crispi went so far as to even ban the Chamber of Deputies to assemble from 11 July 1894 until December and again until June 1895. Taxes were imposed unconstitutionally, so did the banning of socialism, the dissolution of elected town councils and even the detain of leading deputies of the opposition. (ibid:112). However, his insistence on draining the national treasury to fund his colonial ambitions in Africa had dire political consequences and after the devastating annihilation of the Italian army in the battle of Adowa in 1896, the "Italian Tsar" was forced to resign.

2.2 Foreign Policy (1887-1896)

Foreign policy was the predominant field of interest of Francesco Crispi and the basic means of enhancing the prestige of his country abroad. In his view, Italy was a Great Power "by natural right", derived from the heroic sacrifices and struggles of its people in the Risorgimento wars. Contrary to the politicians of the Right, he never endorsed the view that the new Italy had been

made by diplomacy or the accidents of European history. Rather, it had been made by the awakening of the Italian people to their destiny as the heirs of ancient Rome (Lowe:ibid,48). During his first term in office the relations with France degenerated to the verge of war. Crispi viewed France as the natural enemy in the struggle for hegemony in the Mediterranean, a view which was further enhanced by his long-standing anti-clericalism.

Thus, Crispi's will to assert Italian independence over France by ignoring the traditional policy of deference towards Paris led to a series of misunderstandings which culminated in the highly disastrous tariff war. The catastrophe from the loss of Italian exports to France in 1888-1889 raised a storm of criticism particularly from the southern deputies, his most faithful supporters. The relations with Austria during Francesco Crispi's first term in office were particularly easy, as his opinions on the mazzinian ideal of national self-determination had been significantly altered over the years. The disasters that befell the Cairoli administration when he gave irredentism a free hand left a deep impression on Crispi, who completely lost his previous interest in the partitioning of the Habsburg Empire between Italy and Germany and in March 1880 he broke with the traditional Left by announcing to the Chamber that "Austria is a necessity for us". Thus, he accepted Austria as a "necessary evil", renounced the irredentist claims to Trieste and Trento and during an election speech at Florence he even went as far as to tell his audience that "...the principle of nationality to which we owe our existence may, if pushed too far, lead us to our ruin". (ibid:52). The deep reason behind this proclamation was his constant fear of clerical conspiracies which could potentially lead Paris and Vienna together in defence of the Pope if the insistence on the irredentist claims went too far. According to Crispi's view, Austria was the best bulwark against the Russian expansion in the Balkans and thus, by keeping the Slavs away from the Italian interests, the Habsburg Empire's disintegration would pose a lethal threat to Italy. By far the most incoherent was Crispi's handling of the Ottoman relations. Influenced by his mazzinian liberal background, he deeply resented the Ottoman regime and considered it an "oppressor of the peoples". As he told Blanc in August 1887 the long term strategy of Italy should be to liberate the oppressed nationalities of the Empire, however for the time being it was essential to maintain good relations with the Porte and guarantee her territorial status-quo. Hence Crispi signed the Mediterranean Agreements of 1887 with Britain and Austria, whose chief purpose was to halt the Russian expansion to the Dardanelles and the French expansion in the ottoman North Africa, and tried to draw the Porte close to this *entete a trois*. The Italian grand strategy was really incoherent and lacked credibility because simultaneously Crispi guaranteed the territorial status-quo of the Empire, and on the other hand he supported the Cretan and Bulgarian independence movements. If Italy

dealt with the Eastern Question through pursuing a straightforward policy of “annexations” for her Balkan spheres of interest, there was a clear danger that Austria and Russia would get the lion’s share. He tried to assert the Italian influence in the Balkans by launching a vast scheme of wide reform of the ottoman dominions under the aegis of the Great Powers. However, over the course of time Crispi engaged in a series of conflicts with the Sultan which culminated in him directly staking a claim in Tripoli and threatening to undertake military action.

Relations with Britain were strongly interconnected with Crispi’s crusade in Africa. Italy’s first serious attempt to construct an African Empire took place under his first term in office and culminated in the defeat at Adowa in 1896. Crispi’s administration inherited a ffolicle of land in Massowa from his predecessor Pasquale Mancini, a fact that caused the suspicion and rage of the Abyssinian King John, who instructed the neighboring chieftain Ras Alula to engage in skirmish battles with the Italian forces and prevent a further advance into the interior. It was evident at this point that the only viable solution for Rome was to try to appease the King and strengthen the Italo-Abyssinian relations in order for the port of Massowa to be effectively utilized and become profitable. However, the King was soon proven not willing to compromise and he threatened to occupy the port of Arafali, an action which, according to the Italian commander General Gene, could severely damage the economic potential of the port of Massowa. The living conditions in Massowa were so horrendous that the Italian forces were forced to advance into the interior of Abyssinia and find shelter in the neighboring hills, an action which alarmed John and made him believe that his country was under attack from the colonial forces of Italy and soon a series of misunderstandings culminated in an ambush and annihilation of an small Italian force of 500 soldiers under the commander Tomasso De Cristoforis in Dogali on January 1887. The Dogali incident caused outrage in Italy and the political pressure befell the Crispi administration, still reluctant to engage in an Abyssinian campaign. Instead, Rome managed to convince Berlin to put pressure upon the British Foreign Minister, Salisbury, in order to mediate and reach a compromise with John that would save the prestige of Italy. The Negus gave in and on 30 March 1888 the Italian demands were accepted: Italy received the provinces of Saati, Uua and the Senahit valley as well as a treaty of commerce which made Massowa the entrepot of the Negus’s dominions, in compensation for the massacre of Dogali. So far Crispi’s policy seemed successful but in the course of 1888-1889 he became increasingly convinced that East Africa could absorb the waves of the annual emigration that went to France or the USA and as he told the Chamber in May 1888, “Italy needs colonies for her future and for her trade and this bourgeois habit of calculating the cost is unpatriotic: there is something greater than material interests, the dignity of our country and the interests of our

civilization”. (ibid:57). Count Antonelli, the head of the African affairs of the Consulta also convinced Crispi that after the death of King John, Italy should implement a strategy of “divide and conquer” in Abyssinia, by backing his client, Menelik, for the succession, in exchange for Italian protection.(ibid). The Treaty of Ucciali (Wuchale) which was signed on 2 May 1889 gave Italy the Mareb frontier as well as the right to conduct the foreign relations of Menelik with the other powers, in exchange for a loan of 3 million lire. This falsely gave Italians the impression they had created an African empire, and that Abyssinia was now legally their protectorate. Britain had also agreed to give Italy a free hand in the Red Sea as a means of supporting the Mediterranean alliance and this extended also to the Somali and Benadir coasts all the way to the Kismayu, which could put Menelik completely under Italian control. Crispi’s strategy of exploiting the German alliance to kick the British completely out of East Africa caused considerable damage in the Anglo-Italian relations. His appetite was never satisfied and after signing an additional agreement with the King Menelik, entitling Italy to become the protector of all the tribes under his authority, he soon talked of expanding beyond the line of the 8th parallel, which was the clear frontier between the British and Italian spheres of influence. He even threatened that if Italy’s “just demands” were not satisfied, he would cede the protectorate to either the French or the Russians. This threat created an immediate need for consultation between London and Rome and a Colonial Congress took place in Naples in 1890. However, the British, certain that the Italians lacked both the financial and human resources to actually implement their threats, showed no sign of willingness to negotiate and led the Congress to a failure. This determined Crispi to press ahead and occupy the strategically vital port of Kassala. There were three important motives for this: Firstly, Kassala was the richest trade centre of Sudan and its capture would divert commerce from the Egyptian port of Suakin to the Italian port of Massowa. Secondly, the Italian possession of this vital point of Sudanese territory could facilitate an Anglo-Italo partnership in the Nile Valley, with important advantages for the general Italian position in Africa and Mediterranean. Lastly, a potential colonial agreement with England could help him secure victory in the domestic elections.(ibid:60). Crispi’s reckless behavior completely alienated the British by provoking them in their most sensitive spot, the Nile Valley, and given that the King Menelik categorically refused to accept the Italian suzerainty, this rendered Italy’s position in the Mediterranean and in Africa unbearable. Thus, Crispi was forced to resign on January 1891.

During his second term in office Crispi faced pressing, existential threats in the domestic front which forced him to pursue an aggressive policy of expansion and to desperately seek for a military victory abroad which could save the prestige of the country, of the monarchy and

guarantee his own political survival. Constantly suspicious of the “French conspiracies”, Crispi and his Foreign Minister, Alberto Blanc sought to revive the British alliance in the spirit of the Mediterranean Agreements of 1887. Italy’s grand strategy can be perfectly summarized in the doctrine of “with Germany at land, with Britain at sea”. In this way, the *triplice maritima* would combine with the *triplice territoriale* in order to effectively safeguard the Italian interests in Europe, in the Mediterranean and in Africa. However, the Germans were highly critical of any potential cooperation of Vienna with London in the Near East in the basis of common action. This led Crispi and Blanc in despair, as they now feared the goal of the German grand strategy would be to resurrect the old Dreikaserbund and cut all the links between the Central Powers and England. Nevertheless on 12 December the Italian ambassador in London, Ferrero, did present Salisbury with an official request of renewal of the 1887 Agreements, but it was rejected on the grounds that it would alienate the Russians. Neither Berlin nor Vienna gave any support and this caused bitter resentment in Rome because the doctrine of “Germany at land, Britain at sea” had collapsed. The Kruger Telegram and Berlin’s open espousal of a continental league against England alarmed Crispi and Blanc, who now thought it essential, in view of the French hostility, to renew the Triple Alliance at all costs, and if the Mediterranean Agreements were to collapse, the German powers should assume greater responsibilities. What Rome wanted was a clear guarantee that she would receive Tripoli in case of an Ottoman collapse. When the Foreign Minister of Austria-Hungary, Goluchowski, fell under the pressure of Berlin and led the negotiations over the renewal of the Mediterranean Agreements to an end, Crispi turned to Berlin as the only way of obtaining the support he needed to fulfill his goals, but was quickly disheartened by the response of the German Foreign Minister, Hohenlohe, who informed the Italian prime minister that the African matters fell out of the scope of the alliance. Italy was completely isolated and in need of a rapid military victory anywhere. As King Umberto said to Farini, “Crispi would like to occupy everywhere, including China and Japan” (ibid:65). The urgency to obtain a rapid victory led the Italian grand strategy to a lethal distortion and the gravest mistake made was trying to enforce the Treaty of Uccialy to King Menelik. Lacking the resources to further fund a prolonged campaign in Africa and disheartened at the further diplomatic isolation by both the Germans and the British, who did not want to endanger their negotiations with France over Siam, Crispi now thought it a need of the utmost importance to bring home a victory in Africa before the parliament reassembled, otherwise it was clear he would have been brought down. Under those critical circumstances he sent the fatal telegram of 25 February to General Baratierri, instructing him to seek a decision at all costs, in order to “save the honor of the army and of the monarchy”. Baratierri ordered

an attack on Menelik in Adowa on 28 February. By the end of 1 March it was all over, Italian army had been completely annihilated. No other country had ever suffered such a colonial calamity and the consequences of this disaster were enormous.

Crispi's grand strategy was highly erroneous: It deprived Italy of its flexibility in the diplomatic arena, leading to over-dependence from Berlin. His tariff war with France had devastating results for the Italian exports and dire consequences on the national GDP, and his insistence on heavy taxation in order to fund the creation of a strong army and navy left the country impoverished and unable to develop.

2.3 Economy

The Crispi administration further aggravated the already vulnerable position of the Italian economy through his constant desire of allocating enormous funds to the armed forces and the colonial campaigns. Crispi's irrational tariff war with France had grave consequences on the Italian exports to France which got reduced by 40%. Among the most affected were the olive producers and the the silk and wine traders from the south, who got deprived of the most profitable market for their products. The tariff war had a domino effect on the whole internal market, leading to a serious loss of capital and work positions and undoubtedly rendered the vast majority of the south further alienated towards the state and severely impoverished. (Miller: *ibid*, 364). The colonial campaign in Africa further strained the national treasury. The colonies were a huge burden to the state, as they were infertile and commercially non exploitable and Italy paid a heavy price for it: annual borrowing from the state doubled. (Lowe: *ibid*, 5).

2.4 Armed Forces

.Instead of proportioning foreign policy to available revenue and resources, King Umberto mistakenly assumed taxes could without difficulty be raised to meet the requirements imposed by "Great Power status". At court there was this general conviction that the army would be

needed for offensive and not just defensive purposes and would also be essential for the maintenance of social order at home. Francesco Crispi sought to enlarge the army and even stated that “the army is the only cement holding Italy together” (ibid:7). During his administration the expenditure for the armed forces doubled. In the African front, Crispi’s irrational insistence on the occupation of Kasala, further extended the existent front of 600 kilometres into the Sudan. This was a completely suicidal decision, as the available military manpower was just amounting to 8.000 men. The replacement of General Baldisera with General Baratierri completely reflected both the Umberto’s and Crispi’s desire to push on with the African campaign at all cost in order to bring home an impressive victory and conceal the accusations of corruption. Baratierri was generally regarded as incompetent, the perfect instrument for Crispi’s ambitions. His position in Africa was highly unattainable, owing to the growing hostility of Menelik and the other local chieftains on his flank, the poor supply network and the diplomatic isolation and unwillingness of the other Great Powers to provide assistance of any kind.

The navy was in a far better condition and contrary to the land forces, impressive progress was made between the years 1862 to 1914. As battleships could not suppress demonstrations, the Navy was far more popular with the Left and the ministers of Marine were not subjected to the usual rules of musical chairs. Thus, from 1876 there were only two Ministers of Marine, Admirals Benedetto Brin (1876-1899) and Carlo Mirabelo (1903-1909). Brin succeeded in building a technically advanced naval fleet which in the 1880s doubled the Italian tonnage. Even though smaller in size than the British and French - only ten battleships in 1889- he still managed to establish Italy in the third place. However, Italy could not keep up with the Austrian determination to become a naval power and dominate the Adriatic and fell seriously behind despite a large increase in expenditure. (ibid:6).

CHAPTER 3

THE NEW POLITICS 1900-1918

3.1 Domestic politics

The Crispi administration left a clear mark on the political life of Italy. It created a popular aversion to colonial adventures. The parliamentary crisis that followed the news of the defeat were of such magnitude that Farini noted on 3 March: “The Crimean expedition of 1856 was the vital seed of the new Italy: may the African expedition not prove its death blow”. (ibid:69). Towards the end of the 1890s Italy was in a state of despair: the political system seemed inadequate to provide solutions to the pressing problems and was under severe pressure from the new social groups formed: namely the socialists and the nationalists. Large scale riots quickly broke out in the rural areas and the urban centres of the country, which culminated in the assassination of King Umberto in Monza on 29 July 1900. Umberto was given much of the blame for the Adowa disaster, financial collapse and the inability to produce an effective parliamentary government. (Mack Smith:ibid,143). His successor, Vittorio Emanuele III was immediately faced with the task of restoring the prestige of the monarchy by having to justify its existence through practical utility. He believed in governing through parliament and took great steps to unify the country politically on the basis of a large political consensus. The politician who dominated the Italian politics for the next twelve years was Giovanni Giolitti. A great reconciler, he strongly believed that prosperity and social peace was essential and would do more to enhance national unity than military expeditions in Eritrea. Giolitti knew that national unity could no longer be achieved by repeating old formulas combining ideas of

patriotism, conquest and self-sacrifice. It required the inclusion of social groups which had been excluded from national politics such as the political Catholics and the socialists whom he helped incorporate into the body politic. Giolitti's years were a time of civic and financial progress which led to relative prosperity and, with the enlargement of the franchise, of greater political participation.(Gilmour:ibid,279).Hence, Giolitti's administration was vital for the introduction of drastic liberal reforms, the most crucial and socially beneficial reform being the extension of the suffrage, enlarging the electorate from 3 to 8 million voters.(Miller:ibid,369). The new social forces of the country were the political Catholics, the socialists and the nationalists. In 1904 the Pope published an encyclical allowing the Catholics to vote in order to help preserve the social stability by preventing the socialists from assuming office. During the first decade of the 20th century, the most direct and pervasive challenge to the existing social order was the socialist movement, flaunting its commitment to international revolution. A number of revolutionary groups united in 1892 to form the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) and by 1900 they had elected 33 deputies to the Chamber. Giolitti found a reliable ally on the Catholics to help him contain the socialists. The new nationalist movement called the *litterati*, led by Enrico Corradini, was a small marginalized group of intellectuals which rose to prominence after the Austrian annexation of Bosnia in 1908.They were virulent francophobes, fierce supporters of the military might of Germany and fervent colonialists. Luigi Federzoni, a prominent member of the movement, attacked the "timidity, weakness and passivity" of the Italian foreign policy and demanded Italy to expand through military force. Those were Giolitti's most virulent opponents. They despised him and accused him of abandoning the project of making Italy great in favor of making it prosperous. Together with the Futurists of Tommaso Marinetti, they were the social group which most pressured the government to take military action against the Ottoman Empire in Libya.

One of the most pressing problems of the country was the mass emigration of laborers and farmers from the impoverished south mostly to the USA. The Italian State perceived the emigrant communities as a type of informal empire, both a proxy and a vector for global influence. The creation of formal empire was a response to mass emigration-the establishment of settler colonies would allow the migratory flux to be redirected to channels more beneficial to Italy. In fact, many Italian liberals such as Luigi Einaudi, embraced a vision of a peaceful, modern colonialism of people and goods rather than conquest and control, a "softer" form of imperialism of emigrant settler colonies not incompatible with the core principles of the Risorgimento. (Wilcox:2021,26-27).The Italian state actively encouraged, diverted and controlled the emigration phenomenon and thus, managed to create an "ethnographic" empire

which was built on the Italian global diaspora, re-conceptualizing an internal weakness (emigration) into a strength (global status). (ibid). Since “the Italian emigrant constituted an instrument for the projection of strength across the world”, the State continued to provide services to these dispersed citizens, through language schools, cultural institutions and banking services.

Political difficulties were immense for Giolitti during his fourth term as a prime minister. (1911-1914). He attempted to enlarge his political base by attracting support from moderate socialists and thus, wide the gap between them and the “radical” Left. The elections of November 1912 was a blow to Giolitti, because the radicals, socialists and Catholics increased their representation in the Chamber and even though he won a majority, it was conditional on the Catholic support. Italy was not yet ripe for government by two clearly defined parties, and Giolitti’s manouvre had only enhanced the possibility of the new mass parties sweeping away the coalition of the Centre, the old ruling class. The calamities of the Italo-Ottoman war in Tripoli and the constant shouts from the nationalists for a more aggressive policy in the Mediterranean, combined with the immense pressure bestowed upon Italy by her nominal allies in the eve of the Great War had a deep impact on Giolitti who chose to resign.

3.2 Foreign Policy (1900-1914)

The devastating defeat at Adowa left a clear mark on the Italian grand strategy. It was essential for Italy to “clear up the African mess”. According to Giacomo Malvano, the Secretary General of the Consulta, the doctrine of the post-Crispi grand strategy should be one of: ”scrupulous faithfulness to the Triple Alliance, cordial friendship with England and the avoidance of any dispute with France”. (Lowe:ibid,71). The only viable policy was to revert to the pre-Crispi state of affairs: maintaining the Triple Alliance as a safeguard against Austria and continuing the dialogue with France in order to gain greater flexibility and avoid the total dependence upon Berlin. The new Premier, Rudini with his Foreign Minister Caetani settled with peace with Menelik on the basis of renouncing the Treaty of Ucciali, leaving Italy with Eritrea to the Mareb frontier and the Somali coast protectorates, retaining Kassala.

The means of effecting a reconciliation with France laid in the settlement of the Tunis dispute and the end of the tariff war. Negotiations over the Tunis question were opened in 30 September and were concluded shortly, with Italy finally accepting the Treaty of Bardo, but retaining her school autonomy and fishing rights. The only real concession was that Italians in Tunis were

now subject to French tribunals as the capitulations were abolished. However, a commercial settlement was slow in materializing, because the French Foreign Minister Hanotaux had a strong protectionist viewpoint and the longer the negotiations lasted the greater the hope of obtaining concessions from Rome, either by making her abandon the Triple Alliance, or winning over her colonies in the Red Sea. It was Luzzati, the Italian Finance Minister who urgently pressed the government to conclude the negotiations and an agreement was finally reached on 21 November 1898, the basis of which was the application of the minimum French and Italian tariffs generally, the major exceptions being the import of Italian silk and French woolen goods. (ibid:76).

Even though both the Tunis question and the tariff war got resolved, the relations of Rome with Paris never improved dramatically. The partition of Sudan between France and Great Britain and the convention signed in March 1899 ending the Fashoda crisis caused outrage in Italy and enhanced the suspicions in Rome that the French were nibbling at Italy's heritage in Tripolitania. Visconti Venosta, the Foreign Minister concluded an agreement with Delcasse which seemed like a good bargain: France would not encroach in Tripoli in return for Italian support of the French position in Morocco. The agreement was successful as Venosta finally obtained the French recognition of the Italian right to take Tripoli-but conditional upon a prior French occupation of Morocco- without causing a breach in Rome's relations with her nominal allies of the Triple Alliance. (Pribram:1921,226).

However, Venosta's success was quickly canceled by his successor, Giulio Prinetti, responsible for the Prinetti-Barrere Agreement of 30 June 1902. By this agreement, Prinetti obtained a loan from France and a free hand in Tripoli: Italian action was no longer dependent upon prior French occupation of Morocco. The prize, however, was disheartening: Italy bound herself to remain neutral in the event of any attack upon France or if France herself should go to war as a result of "direct provocation". This agreement severely limited Italy's freedom of action as it imposed strict neutrality in the event of a Franco-Prussian war, virtually whatever the cause. (Lowe:ibid,88). This settlement inevitably caused outrage in Berlin, and the Germans were adamant in their demand that the Triple Alliance would be renewed unaltered. The Italians fell back and eventually, the Triple Alliance was renewed without any alterations, including the provisions calling for military cooperation with Germany against France (Taylor:1954,464).

Salisbury's tactics of seeking to solve its differences with its competitors, namely Germany and France, through direct negotiations had rendered relations with Italy of secondary importance. Bilateral relations deteriorated over the San Mun incident, indicative of the British

indifference towards Rome. Italy's willingness to act as a Great Power and assert her position in equal terms in the European competition for the partition of China led to another diplomatic humiliation. In March 1899 the Italians put forward a request to the Chinese government for the lease of the San Mun Bay and the recognition of the largest part of its hinterland as a commercial sphere of influence. The Chinese government refused this ultimatum and as a result, on 8 March 1899, the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vice Admiral Canevaro, as a show of power, ordered the Italian Military battleships 'Marco Polo' and 'Elba' to occupy the San Mun Bay in an attempt to force the Chinese to cede this area. Despite this show of aggression, China refused to change their position. The Italian's eventually backed-down later that year when they realised that the United Kingdom would not support the Italian position. (Langer:1950,683).

The formation of the *Entente Cordiale* between France and Britain in 1904 had an enormous impact on Italy. If it really portended a British alliance with France, then it would inevitably lead to a drastic reshaping of Italian grand strategy and to a potential abandonment of the Triple Alliance. Therefore, since right up to July 1914 Anglo-German relations were variable, so was Italian foreign policy. (Lowe:ibid,90). This strategy of delicately balancing between alliances and friendships could only be successful so long as peace was maintained. The Moroccan Crisis of 1905 and the prospect of a war between the Entente coalition and Germany posed an enormous challenge for the Italian policymakers. What is more, Berlin's insistence on a European conference kept rendering Italy's position difficult. On the one hand, Italy was determined not to oppose France, on the other Germany insisted on Italian support as a test of her good faith to the Triple Alliance. The Moroccan crisis revealed a convergence of views between Rome and Vienna. Both wanted to avoid the polarization of Europe into two hostile camps in which their interests were bound to suffer. For Vienna, Italy was a useful check upon the adventures of Berlin. For Rome, it was essential to strengthen the alliance as the only guarantee of peace, to which there was no alternative, especially after the recent exposure to the abyss of a European war. (ibid:96). Tittoni's encounter with Aehrenthal at Desio in July 1907 marked the highest point of ten years in the Austro-Italian relations. Italy's prime strategic goal was to try to erode the Austro-Russian front in the Balkans, extended by the Murzteg Agreement of October 1903, and assert herself in a potential partition of Ottoman territory in Macedonia, her primary goal being Albania. If Austria took Albania she would possess the entire eastern seaboard of the Adriatic and pose a constant menace to the entire Italian coastline. As Rudini told Passeti in May 1897: "Albania or Tripoli themselves would be a source of weakness, not strength. We should regret it however if these territories should pass into the

hands of other powers.” (ibid:99). A local struggle for power emerged in Albania between Rome and Vienna, based upon controlling of schools, the church, obtaining contracts for public works and bribing the local chieftains. The Austrians’ advantage of being the official protector of the Catholics, one third of the population, was counterbalanced by the enormous influence exerted by the ethnic Albanian community of southern Italy. Prominent community leaders and members developed Italian shipping and commerce with Albania and by 1911 Italy possessed the lion’s share of the trade. (ibid:100).

The terms of the Desio Agreement obligated the two powers to share power in the Adriatic, to abstain from intervention if Macedonian politics produced a Balkan war and to support an independent Albania if Turkish power in Europe collapsed.

The annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908 by the Austrians severely damaged the bilateral relations of the two countries. Tittoni was convinced that the annexation of Bosnia was a prelude to a determined plan of Austrian expansion to Salonica. His strategy concentrated on blocking any further Austrian expansion in the Balkans, and through initiating negotiations with both the Austrians and the Russians, tried to make sure Murzteg would not be revived without Italian participation.

The Bosnian annexation contributed greatly to the emergence of the nationalist movement of Enrico Corradini, previously insignificant and marginalized. Throughout 1910-1911 the constant chant of action by the nationalists became the major theme of the more influential newspapers. The Agadir Crisis of 1911 added fuel to the nationalist flame, with the *clean hands* approach of 1878 being renounced as disastrous for Italy and if it were repeated, Italy would cease to be a Great Power and become a “maritime Switzerland”. (ibid:114). It was this general insistence upon the need for action, plus Italy’s inability to risk a confrontation with Austria in the Balkans that determined the conquest of Tripoli. Libya became the major focus of the imperialists’ attention. Peaceful penetration by the operations of the Banco di Roma was accompanied by the widespread belief that the two provinces of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania could rapidly be transformed into fertile and prosperous lands that could absorb the mass of Italian emigration. (Wilcox: ibid, 32). War against the Ottoman Empire was declared on 29 September 1911, symbolically falling on the fiftieth anniversary of unification. The Italian dreams and expectations were quickly shattered by the wartime realities. The task of finding a peace acceptable to both parties without too much loss of face prevailed in the minds of the Italian policymakers. In an effort to force the ending of the war, the Italian navy occupied the Dodecanese islands in the Aegean Sea, hoping to use them as a hostages to a Turkish abandonment of Libya. (Bosworth: 1970, 686).

The outbreak of the Balkan wars forced the Turks to sign the Treaty of Ouchy with Italy on 18 October 1912. By Article II of the Treaty, Italy remained in “temporary” occupation of the islands until all Turkish troops left Libya. Since it was impossible to distinguish between a Turkish soldier and an Arab insurgent, Italy had won a dateless cheque. The islands would be valuable bargaining points and would only be abandoned under the right offers. (ibid, 690). Di San Giuliano adroitly used the Dodecanese Islands to extract an Italian sphere of influence in Asia Minor. The Adalia region was chosen in order to provide “naval bases, so that Italy does not find herself in a position of too great inferiority when confronting France, who controls Morocco, Algeria, Tunis and in time Syria.” (Lowe:ibid,126).

3.3 Economy (1900-1914)

Between the years 1894 and 1908, Italy experienced an enormous industrial expansion and development. However, contrary to other European countries, this growth proceeded in a less uniform fashion. The ineptness of governmental industrial policies and the concentration on the least deserving branches of industrial policy accompanied by irrationally conceived and executed tariff weakened the process of Italian industrialization. Italian tariff was chiefly devoted to protect old industries with moderate rates of technological progress, such as grain, cotton textiles and ferrous metal-making. (Gershenkron:1970,370). Other factors which undermined, rather than promoted the development of the Italian industrialization were the political instability of the early 20th century and the absence of any strong ideological basis to industrialization. According to Gershenkron (ibid), the great industrial push of Italy should be greatly attributed to the importation of the great economic innovation of German banking in its most developed form. The most important of them, the *Banca Commerciale Italiana* was found in 1894 with German, Austrian and Swiss capital. Conspicuous among the bank's foreign sponsors were the Bleichroeder bank of Berlin, notoriously tied to Bismarck, and the Kreditanstalt (Rothchild) of Vienna. The bank inherited the assets and liabilities of the two big ambitious north Italian institutions of industrial credit that fell the year before, the Credito Mobiliare and the Banca Generale. (Webster:1974,321).

3.4 Armed Forces

During the turbulent years following the defeat at Adowa and Crispi's resignation the bulk of the armed forces was primarily used for the maintenance of domestic order and stability. The constant socialist agitation was directly linked with the Italian rapid industrial growth and the army was used to repress or discourage disorder at home. (Mack-Smith:ibid,76).

Military preparation for the Libyan war was poor, and the mobilization process was slow, enabling the first troops to disembark in Tripolitania in early October, giving the Turks vital time to organize their defences. The Libyan expeditionary force was led by General Carlo Caneva and was only given two divisions initially, and was anticipated to conquer Tripolitania and Cyrenaica with ease. Important coastal ports and cities were quickly occupied. However, a grave Italian miscalculation was quickly revealed: the native Berber and Arab populations were hostile to the Italian presence there, and were organized by Turkish regulars into guerilla units as soon as the war began. (Wilcox:ibid,34).

The Italians suffered a devastating defeat at Sciara Sciatt on 23 October 1911 and their response was brutal, involving severe reprisals and the internment of thousands of Tripolitians in concentration camps in Ustica and Caserta, with terrible long-term consequences.

Caneva found himself facing a highly committed opponent, supported by the local population, able to rely on deep knowledge of the terrain and to use flexible guerilla tactics against the poorly trained Italian conscripts. Giolitti's government announced the annexation of both Tripolitania and Cyrenaica under the name Libya in November, despite the fact that Italian occupation was only limited to a tiny coastal area, ensuring no easy solution to the crisis would be achieved. The Chief of General Staff Alberto Pollio proposed a drastic solution to the problem, namely to dismantle the Ottoman Empire by rapidly occupying Smyrna, provoking a general Christian insurrection, but his proposals were ignored by the civil leadership, further highlighting the pattern of military-civil conflict that would last until the downfall of the fascist regime. (Bosworth:1984,60).

The war was celebrated as a key sign of Italian modernity: the army used artillery and machine guns, modern naval power, and a wide range of machinery, including the radio, as well as

modern hygiene methods. The most important, and indeed global first innovation was the use of aircraft in combat. (Wilcox:ibid,38).

Lastly, an increasing embrace of direct colonial settlement was evident, rather than the emigration model previously advocated by the Italian state.

The war proved disastrous for Italy both in political and financial terms. Libya was not pacified until the fascist era and severely drained human and material resources. The capture of the Dodecanese and the brutal treatment of the locals caused a breach in the relations of Rome with London and Paris. What is more, the war was critical for the Balkan history, as it led to the formation of the Balkan League and the disturbance of the fragile status-quo in the peninsula, with enormous complications for the European peace.

CHAPTER 4

THE FIRST WORLD WAR (1914-1918)

4.1 Domestic Politics

The outbreak of the Great War in August 1914 posed Italy with a significant dilemma: Should she abstain and reap the advantages of neutrality, facing the wrath of her nominal allies in the Triple Alliance or should she honor her commitments and assert her rights as a Great Power, especially since, in the first month of the conflict, it looked almost certain the Triple Alliance would win.

The ongoing military operations in Libya were devouring human and material resources, the “Red Week” of June, a series of revolts in Marche, Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna, severely

damaged national stability and the universal male suffrage of May 1912 had enhanced the prowess of the new mass parties and increased the political influence of the socialists and the Catholics. The informal “Gentiloni Pact” of 1913 between the Giolittian liberals and the Catholics had collapsed and Giolitti stepped down in March 1914. A new government was formed under the conservative Antonio Salandra who was busily engaged in consolidating his own power, shoring up social order and moving the Liberal party considerably to the right, when the July Crisis emerged. (ibid,42).

In the domestic front, a large range of conservatives from Nationalists to Catholics remained virulent francophobes and were not hostile to the idea of a war against France. In July and early August of 1914 the nationalists were calling for war against France, with Nice and the colonies deemed as necessary in order to enhance the prestige of the country as a Mediterranean power, and also an anti-Slavic crusade against Serbia seemed an attractive prospect which could provide an excellent bridgehead for Balkan expansion. However, war against Britain was unthinkable as Italy was heavily dependent on Britain for raw materials, chiefly coal, and relied on British financial networks for credit. (ibid,43). The Royal Navy could easily threaten both the Italian coastline and the communications with its colonies.

Italy declared her neutrality on August 1, 1914, and essentially auctioned herself to whichever side was willing to satisfy her demands, namely the liberation of the Trento and Trieste, control over the Adriatic and the acquisition of new colonial possessions. (Ρούκουνας:1983,112). The neutralist block was led by Giovanni Giolitti and the solid parliamentary majority under his control. He staunchly supported that participation in the war was against Italian interests, as the army was unprepared and the economy underperforming and thus, the country could not sustain a long war. What he called for was a *parrechio*, a “good deal”, namely to sell the Italian neutrality to the highest bidder and obtain the national goals without even going to war.

The majority of Catholics opposed the war, especially the peasantry adopted widespread neutralist positions based on a pacifist reading of the Gospel. However, the Vatican found itself in a highly awkward position. The Catholic Austria-Hungary was undoubtedly its biggest support, contrary to the Italian Kingdom who had deprived the Pope of his power. Fighting alongside Orthodox Russia, secular France and protestant Britain was an unthinkable prospect. The Italian social elite and the business and banking sectors were also highly pro-Triple Alliance because of their close bonds with German banking and commercial houses and institutions. After the Italian neutrality was declared, former Chancellor von Bulow was sent to Rome to negotiate the prospect of the maintenance of the Italian benevolent neutrality. Matthias Erzberger, the leader of the Catholic Centre Party was also sent to Rome in spring

1915 to persuade the Italians to abandon their neutrality and participate in the war, but to no avail. (ibid).The Germans promised to accommodate Italy's demands over the "unredeemed lands" but the Austrian government was categorically refusing. Further promises of support for Italian interests in Antalya and the eastern Mediterranean were not enough to outweigh the loss of Trieste and the negotiations soon collapsed.

The cause of the Italian intervention was the outcome of an intensive domestic struggle. Irredentist austrophobia was linked to Italy's wider aspirations in the Mediterranean but also to the conduct of war for its own sake, as a demonstration of power. (Wilcox:ibid,50).The leading public faces of interventionism were Gabriele D'Annunzio, Cesare Battisti, Enrico Corradini and the newly converted to the cause of war, Benito Mussolini. On the Left, a small but committed group of social democrats and syndicalists embraced "democratic intervention", led by the anti-colonialist Salvemini and reformer socialist Leonida Bissolati .A peculiar coalition of pro-war forces, monarchists eager to bring glory to the House of Savoy, young radical intellectuals embracing Marinetti's vision of purifying war, earnest democratic republicans who sought to complete Mazzini's Italy and committed imperialists and nationalists like Corradini had emerged.(ibid:51).

In reality, the vast majority of the Italian people were hostile towards the prospect of a war, being totally ignorant of its causes and knew little of the state, except being a malign conscripting and tax imposing force. (Bosworth:2005,57).

However, the task of undertaking a total war in the face of mass popular indifference to the war effort was a task which required the mobilization of a powerful coercive apparatus. During the war the Italian state created and extended a range of repressive techniques designed to control the civil and military population. (Wilcox:ibid,85).The legislative processes of parliament were suspended and the country was placed under military law. Hence, the national parliament was rarely in session during the war and this led to a growing dissociation between the country and its representatives. (Bosworth:1970,329).Civilians were placed under the jurisdiction of military tribunals. The army was handed control of industrial mobilization and zero tolerance was shown towards the sympathizers of peace, who were labelled as "internal enemies" and punished severely.

Salandra's government collapsed in June 1916 and was succeeded by a national coalition led by Paolo Bosseli. The new coalition included among its ranks the highly influential socialist reformer Leonida Bissolati and the republican Ubaldo Comandini. (Σφήκα-Θεοδοσίου:2004,73).

This coalition retained office until 1917. On 24 October took place the most devastating battle on the Italian front: the battle of Caporetto. A major political crisis was created and the whole cabinet was forced to resign, with Vittorio Emanuele Orlando assuming office. Orlando managed to turn an offensive war into a defensive one and his coalition government appealed to the patriotism of the Italians and prevented the disintegration of the country and its plunging into revolution.

4.2 Foreign policy (1914-1918)

Despite Italy's formal commitments deriving from the Triple Alliance, most recently renewed in 1912, the declaration of neutrality came as a protest to the Austrian defiance of Rome. More specifically, under the article VII of the Alliance, the allies were obliged to consult with each other about their plans in the Balkans, the Adriatic and the Ottoman islands and any alteration of the status-quo would only take place after mutual understanding and territorial compensation. Italy was not consulted by Austria regarding her Balkan plans and the declaration of war was a clear breach of the letter and spirit of the alliance and did not constitute *casus foederis*. (Pribram:ibid,148).

After neutrality was declared, Sonnino was very active in exploiting the war situation. The aims of Sonnino in the negotiations with both sides were two: the acquisition of *Italia irredenta* and the establishment of an enhanced position in the Adriatic and the Balkans. This was a truly national policy, since both the interventionists and neutralists advocated these aims, their disagreement being located only in the means through which these would be fulfilled. (Albrecht-Carrie:1948,330). The negotiations with the Entente were destined to succeed simply because the two sides were discussing the cession of territory that belonged to a third party, Austria-Hungary. It was the Russian objections against Italy's incorporation of Dalmatia, a primarily Slavic area, that hindered the negotiating process. An agreement was finally reached on 26 April 1915, when the two sides signed the Treaty of London. According to its provisions Italy would enter the war within a month and in exchange would acquire the *terra irredenta*, Trento and Trieste, a dominant position in the Adriatic through the annexation of Dalmatia and

the right to establish a protectorate in Valona and its hinterland, including the island of Sazan, which was already occupied in December 1914. Moreover, Italy would be given a clear title to the Dodecanese and the promise of colonial compensation in Asia Minor and Africa, though undefined, in the case of corresponding acquisitions by the Allies.

It was evident that Italy only utilized the Entente alliance in order to promote and enhance her own interests and prestige, primarily in the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkans. Even though her obligations from the Treaty of London forced Italy to declare war without any delay against all three Central Powers, Italy only declared war against Austria-Hungary in May 1915 and against Ottoman Empire later in August. Against Germany Italy only declared war as late as 1916. Both the industrial and the banking, as well as the commercial sector were strongly pro-German, and Berlin's infiltration of Italian society was immense. The Italian economy was dependent on German credit and capital, and Berlin managed to mobilize a vast network of agents to exert pressure on Rome.

Italy's failure to declare war on Germany led to her exclusion from the Syces-Picot Agreement, by which the partition of the Ottoman Empire by the Entente forces was planned. This caused the bitter resentment of Sonnino, who was highly suspicious against the French expansion in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans.

The French-Italo relations were strained throughout the conflict and a tacit competition emerged between the two countries, especially in Albania, a clear sign of Italy's determination to utilize the war in order to secure her own expansion and interests, frequently at the expense of the Entente cause.

Sonnino's high strategy in the Balkans was one of suspicion towards any Balkan allies in whom it saw potential rivals, and Italy frequently used the tactic of "permanent occupation" in order to establish and consolidate her foothold. According to the Treaty of London, Italy had consented to the partition of Albania between Montenegro, Serbia and Greece, and Rome would only retain the island of Sazan and Valona with its hinterland, in order to safeguard the entrance to the Adriatic. Valona was occupied on December 1914 and during the years 1916-1917 the Italians did not hesitate to expand their occupation zone even more south, occupying the Northern Epirus, region, ostensibly to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Bulgarians. In 1917 they even extended their occupation arbitrarily in the Epirus region of Greece, occupying the cities Konitsa and Ioannina on the grounds that the emergency state of the Greek domestic policy rendered the country incapable of safeguarding its own borders and thus, security issues were raised for the Salonica front.

The opening of the Macedonian front in Salonica on September 1915, following the Serbian collapse and the Bulgarian intervention further aggravated the Italian relations with the Entente. Pressing demands were made towards Rome from her allies for the immediate sending of troops and munitions, but Sonnino chose to further consolidate the Italian position in Albania. The reason behind this move were indicative of the Italian ambitions: A larger Italian force in Albania would prevent the reconstruction of the Serbian forces within Albanian territory and a potential capture of Valona, which was considered as “national territory”. Moreover, a stronger Italian army corps there would further balance and consolidate the Italian position in the Adriatic against the Austrians and at the same time would allow Italy to postpone sending troops to Salonica. The long term objectives of the expansion of the occupation would be to prevent both the Greeks and Serbians from claiming Albanian territory and just like in the Dodecanese, Italy would benefit from the occupation when the time of the final settlement would come. (Σφήκα-Θεοδοσίου,ibid,135).In June 1917,General Giacinto Ferrero unilaterally declared the independence of Albania under the protection of the Italian monarch, Vittorio Emanuele III. This move signaled a significant change of the Italian policy, which by the 1915 Treaty of London had agreed to partition Albania alongside Serbia and Greece, However, by 1917 the priorities of the Consulta had changed: the collapse of Austria-Hungary was imminent, and the Italians wanted to prevent the creation of an extended Slavic state, which could potentially replace Austria-Hungary as Italy’s main opponent in the Adriatic. Therefore, it was essential to create an extensive Albanian state, which would incorporate within its borders the areas disputed by both the Serbians and the Greeks and stretch throughout a large part of the Adriatic shores, serving us a bulwark between the Slavs and the sea. (Κόντης;1994,109).

Lastly, relations with Greece was a destabilizing factor in the inter-Entente relations and yet another clear indicator of the Italian priorities and deference of the spirit and cause of the Entente. Through the Italian ambassador in Athens, Alessandro Di Bosdari, Italian diplomacy was instrumental in undermining the Allied pressure towards the Greek government. The pro-German King Konstantinos was frequently backed by Rome, as he was the most solid symbol of Greek neutrality. A potential Greek intervention would inevitably pose a lethal threat to the Italian interests in Albania, and therefore, it had to be prevented at all costs. Domenico Nuvolari, the Italian consul at Ioannina, worked feverishly to destabilize the social coherence of the area and hinder all Greek efforts for concerted, organized action in Northern Epirus. When the Greek issue was discussed in the St Jean de Maurienne Conference of April 1917, Sonnino was quick to raise objections against the dethronement of King Konstantinos, and only

when he obtained an enormous swathe in Anatolia, including Aydin, Konya, Mersin and Smyrna as well as the Adana-Mersina railway did he accept allied support for the Greek involvement to the war and the return of Eleftherios Venizelos to power. However, the agreement was conditional on Russian acceptance and ratification, and the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 rendered it inapplicable. The US intervention in the war and President Wilson's declaration of the 14 Points, which became the charter of Allied war aims was not compatible with the Treaty of London, and set the the ground for a post-war fight of principle between the Old and the New diplomacy.

4.3 Economy

According to Gino Olivetti, under-secretary of the Italian Confindustria, war could only be waged effectively by cementing the closest ties between government and business. The factory ought to become the dynamo of national life, resembling the war economy organized in a similar fashion in Germany by Hindenburg and Lunderdorff. To some extent, the Salandra administration took initiatives towards this direction. For example, in June 1915 a decree was issued which permitted the military to intervene in industry in order to ensure the most efficient equipping of the armed forces. General Alfredo Dallolio was instrumental in trying to make this system function and during his term in office as Minister of Munitions, production expanded significantly. War expenditure in relation to GDP rose to 33.1 per cent in 1917-1918 and Italian industry proved able to meet the national demands for armaments. (Bosworth:2005,69).

The big industrial enterprises, Ansaldo and Fiat and Alfa Romeo saw their capital and workforce increasing dramatically. By 1918 Fiat had become the largest manufacturer of vehicles in Europe, manufacturing 70,862 between 1915 and 1918. Fiat also built aeroplane engines, machine guns and ammunition and its annual profits touched 70 per cent of the investment. (ibid).

War had indeed converted the state into being “the driving force of the national economy” according to the distinguished economist Riccardo Bacchi. (ibid). Waging the Great War cost Italy 12,892 million US dollars and it was true that the sum of government outlays of 1915-1918 was double the total spent by all Italian administrations from 1860 to the onset of the war. (ibid).

The Austrian offensive of May-June 1916 on the Trentino convinced the Italian government to undertake the path of total mobilization. During the course of 1917, two national loans were organized, in order to accumulate further resources for the war effort and send a political message to the Entente that Italy was determined to continue the war effort and suffer the sacrifices until final victory had been won, on condition that those sacrifices met her requests in terms of continuity of supplies and the opening of new lines of credit. (Esposti:2015).

4.5 Armed Forces

The outbreak of the Great War caught Italy completely unprepared militarily. The Chief of General Staff since 1908, General Alberto Polio, a committed triplicist, had suddenly passed away on 1 June 1914. In this enormously important time of crisis, Italy was left without a Chief of General Staff and not only until 27 July was General Luigi Cadorna appointed as his successor. From the very beginning, Cadorna's task of effectively mobilizing the army was met with tremendous challenges. As Italy had been an ally of Austria-Hungary since 1882, the military planning for war against the Dual Monarchy was primarily defensive, and Cadorna had to develop an entirely new approach to fighting the Austrians. The operational plan drafted in late August 1914 required Italy to undertake rapid military action and set out a thrust in the Austrian positions at Friuli, heading towards Trieste and Gorizia. However, it was nearly impossible to conduct offensive operations in the Alpine mountainous terrain, let alone achieving a strategic victory there, and, understandably, the bulk of the armed forces was concentrated along the line of the Isonzo river, where concentrated manpower and firepower would be anticipated to smash their way through the Austrian positions. Franz Conrad von

Hotzendorf, Cadorna's Austrian counterpart, easily anticipated this strategy and organized his forces accordingly.

Cadorna's task of mobilizing was also hindered by political necessities, namely the government's simultaneous conduct of negotiations with both sides, which did not permit the order of full mobilization, out of fear of revealing Rome's true intentions. However, Cadorna's herculean task of gradual and secret mobilization was remarkable: From fewer than 300.000 men in August 1914, by the following May Italy had 900.000 men in arms, and by the time full mobilization was finally ordered, 1.1 million men were already at the front, supported by another 500.000 in the interior. (Wilcox:ibid,58).

The army was recruited and organized in national rather than regional line and the sole purpose of this system was political: the army was the crucible of the nation, serving to forge Italians from the raw materials of the provinces, a socio-political programme which left little room for acquiring military skills. Rather than a nation-in-arms, it was the army that consisted the nation. This recruitment system was slow, inefficient, costly, and the prevalence of local identities and dialects severely hindered the formation of solid primary group identity. (ibid:60).

Another critical problem was the severe shortage of officers. Even though in August 1914 the army had 45.000 in service, only one third of them were permanent regular officers, the rest being under-trained reservists or members of the territorial militia. (ibid). Urgent measures were taken for the rapid recruitment of around 7.500 new officers, the result being the over-hasty commissioning of inexperienced, untrained men in critical positions. The Italian army also faced an acute shortage of non-commissioned officers, shortage of boots, uniforms, and inadequate medicine services. The artillery and weapon stocks were also inadequate, both in quality and quantity.

Italy's first attacks were only launched one month after the declaration of war, on 23 June 1915, a fatal mistake since the Austrians benefited from this vital breathing space to build up their defences along the Isonzo. The front quickly settled down into an attritional and static match of patience. Until the autumn of 1917, 11 battles of the Isonzo were fought and only Austria's numerical inferiority on the front prevented them from inflicting a strategic defeat on the Italians. (ibid:62). In 1916, Austria-Hungary was at last able to go on the offensive on the Italian front, launching the *Strafexpedition* on 15 May. Austro-Hungarian troops advanced without difficulty within 12 miles of Italian territory. It was only the Brusilov offensive on the East and Hotzendorf's inability to consolidate his gains which saved the Italians from utter disaster. The Italian casualties amounted to 60.000 men, following another 70.000 after a

poorly organized counter-attack was launched. (ibid). Italian armies made few territorial gains, suffered severe punishment and were repulsed with colossal losses. Cadorna's tactics of mass frontal attacks, prepared by powerful artillery fire in order to encircle the enemy were blocked by quick counter-attacks, with every attempt of encirclement being transformed into a new frontal action.

Cadorna was determined to instill a sense of national pride and discipline to his soldiers and was notorious for implementing the ancient Roman tactic of summary execution. 750 soldiers were executed during the war, a number much higher in comparison with the other belligerent armies. Of serving soldiers, 210,000 were found guilty of one crime or another (Bosworth:2005,71). Hence, the morale of the Italian troops throughout the Great War was abysmal, and massive numbers of soldiers were voluntarily surrendering to the Austrians as POWs.

What is more, Cadorna never hid his contempt towards the civil authorities and throughout the conflict he openly clashed with the political elite. He categorically refused any civil intervention in the army affairs and frequently resisted the formation of a civil-military Board responsible for the more effective coordination of the war efforts on the grounds that he was only answerable to the King and no one else.

His downfall was due to the national disaster at the battle of Caporetto, where the Italians were crushed by a coordinated Austro-German assault, forcing the Italian troops to retreat 100 kilometres into the interior to the river Piave, their losses amounting to 700,000 men. Even at this critical moment, Cadorna attributed this colossal defeat to the ineptitude and lack of patriotism of his soldiers. (Strachan:2005,324).

He was duly dismissed by the King himself and General Armando Diaz succeeded him. He took great steps to win the soldiers' trust, he loosened the draconian disciplinary measures of Cadorna and most importantly, adopted more effective offensive tactics. Diaz was unwilling to repeat the same grave mistakes Cadorna had committed, namely to initiate purposeless mass assaults that would only further increase the heavy Italian losses. Instead, he chose to engage in a war of attrition, unwilling to further damage the morale of the Italian army and resisted the calls from the Allied High War Council pressing for an immediate large scale offensive. His tactic bore fruit and on 30 October the Italian army captured the town of Vittorio Veneto and some days later captured Trento and Trieste, the "unredeemed lands" of the Italian Risorgimento.

CHAPTER 5

ITALY AT THE PEACE CONFERENCE AND THE POST-WAR REALITY

5.1 Domestic politics

As Richard Bosworth (2005) put it, for Italy, least of the Great Powers, poorest of the great economies, most fragile of the new societies and most uneasily nationalized of the great cultures, the conversion from war to peace entailed a sea of troubles. Italian lands were

devastated by the conduct of war. Economy was shattered and unable to sustain its rapid wartime expansion. What is more, the Liberal regime seemed to lack a comprehensive set of political, diplomatic, economic and social aims. Social turmoil owing to the severe financial recession cultivated a culture of violence and posed an existential threat to the liberal regime. The wartime political consensus had collapsed when Leonida Bissolati, the leader of the democratic interventionist Left, resigned on December 1918. His views on the nature of the Italian demands, namely the full endorsement of the Wilsonian idealism were radically opposed to those of the Foreign Minister, Sonnino.

Over the course of the next four years, Italy was in a state of emergency. The financial recession that struck the country greatly contributed to the spectacular rise of socialism. The intellectual party leaders, Antonio Gramsci and Amedeo Bordiga alarmed the political establishment when they openly called for the overthrow of the “decadent and petty bourgeois ruling class responsible for the national catastrophe” and for the establishment of a proletarian dictatorship. (Bosworth:ibid,100). Membership of the Socialist Party expanded almost tenfold from September 1918 to 1920 to 208,974 members. Socialist branches also increased to 2,815 during the same period in the November 1919 elections the socialists won 156 seats, and 32.5 per cent of the total ballot.(ibid,101).

Political Catholicism was also prominent in the post-war era and in 1919 the new Catholic Party was found, under the leadership of the charismatic priest Don Luigi Sturzo, destined to serve as an effective bulwark against the socialist menace. Both these two parties inaugurated the new era of mass politics in Italy and struggled to win the confidence of the masses, through creating various social and civic institutions and bodies throughout the country. Another significant social force were the returned soldiers, the veterans of the Great War. Both parties made great efforts to secure their electoral support, however they openly condemned both as inadequate and incapable of representing their interests. The government’s inability to provide adequate welfare services and their perception of the settlements as a “mutilated victory” completely alienated them from the political system and they soon found their own association, the *Associazione Nazionale dei Combattenti*, with its branches spreading rapidly across the country (ibid:107).It was Gabriele D’Annunzio, the controversial and peculiar figure of the Italian nationalism, who best appealed to their instincts. His desperate cries for the liberation of Fiume and its annexation by Italy quickly rendered this issue a question of mass national hysteria and Orlando’s failure to obtain the city during the Peace Conference negotiations led to a bitter clash with President Wilson and eventually, to the entire cabinet’s resignation. The new Prime Minister, Francesco Nitti, heralded a new course in Italian politics, namely to focus

in balancing the budget, restoring social order and battling inflation. International affairs were of secondary importance and through the implementation of conciliatory policy in regards to the Fiume issue, he greatly alienated the Nationalists. Gabrielle D'Annunzio frequently accused the prime minister of his intentions to sacrifice the Italian wartime gains for "food, coals and credits".(ibid,100).In September 1919 he assembled an army of volunteers and arbitrarily occupied the city of Fiume, proclaiming himself a dictator. Nitti's position was desperate: Any potential issuing of orders towards the armed forces aiming to forcefully end the occupation and expel D'Annunzio could prove fatal for the country, given D'Annunzio's appeal to a large number of army officials and amid great circulating rumors of an impending military coup against the King by his cousin, the fervent nationalist and militarist Duke of Aosta. Nitti's coalition collapsed in June 1920, owing to his failure to effectively resolve the problem and obtain favorable terms for Italy in the San Remo Conference. He was succeeded by the veteran Giolitti. By that time, social turmoil had peaked. Railway strikes, factory occupations, forcible land redistributions and armed socialist agitation made revolution seem imminent. Giolitti's old tactic of non-intervention in strikes only aggravated the acuteness of the social disorder. But the Government matched its moderation in foreign policy with a conciliatory attitude toward the workers. It was also proposed to confiscate war profits, increase death-duties and taxes on unearned incomes, and encourage co-partnership in industries. The General Election of May, 1921, was far more peaceable than had been anticipated. The Socialists lost thirty seats, and the Clericals (Popolari) gained eight. A new party, which had been opposing Socialists and Communists in many places by violence, entered the Chamber with twenty seats; they called themselves Fascisti. The majority of the Cabinet in the new Chamber was so small that Giolitti resigned, and was succeeded by Ivanoe Bonomi. In the autumn of 1921 the Fascisti held a congress at Rome, in which they transformed their organization into a regular political party. (Gibbons:2019,351).

The fascist party, led by Benito Mussolini, may have lacked ideological coherence, it was however precise in identifying its enemies: official socialism and whoever doubted the nationalist version of the Italian war effort. It attracted people from divergent social bases and backgrounds, and quickly allied with the conservative social elements of society, with the mission to restore law and order and combat Socialist terrorism.

The political system had been too unstable and the state too weak to resolve the pressing political and social turmoil effectively and maintain internal order, and fascism's constant chants for a "new politics" of discipline and force, aiming to restore Italy as a Great Power both domestically and abroad captivated the imagination of the Italian people. Thus, in a remarkable

case of liberal suicide, King Vittorio Emanuele invited Mussolini to become prime minister in October 1922. The fascist leader achieved power without any preceding revolution or army revolt, contrary to his claims that it was the notorious March on Rome that forced the King to this action.

5.2 Foreign Policy (1918-1923)

Italy's participation in the Paris Peace Conference can be considered a failure, its impact on the political future of the country being enormous. The political viewpoints of the Italian political elite were radically different and their inability to agree on a common basis on which the Italian claims would be firmly based upon severely undermined the Italian grand strategy. Gaspare Colosimo, the Minister of the Colonies, advocated the strategy of focusing on the colonial settlements on Africa and the Red Sea contrary to Sonnino, who was increasingly interested in the Minor Asia project. Orlando, desperate to preserve his own position, supported the "Treaty of London plus Fiume" formula. (Wilcox:ibid,186). On 19 April 1919, the Italian delegation officially presented their claims to the Council of Four. Italy demanded the fulfillment of the clauses of both the Treaty of London and of the Agreement of St Jean de Maurienne of 1917. The primary objectives of the Italian diplomacy would be to gain full control over the Adriatic and through the imposition of a "protectorate" status in Albania, to use this country as a secure political and military bridgehead from which she would firmly expand her influence in the entire Balkan peninsula and the Eastern Mediterranean. (Κοραντής:1996,14).

The Italian delegation also demanded the annexation of Fiume, despite the fact that it was not included in the Treaty of London. What is more, this bargain directly contradicted President Wilson's 14 Points, which was accepted by the other Allies as the basis of the peace. Wilson gave way to the South Tyrol demand, but was adamant in his refusal to cede Fiume to the

Italians. According to his 14 Points, Fiume was to be given to the new Yugoslav state as an essential sea outlet, in accordance with the principle of national self-determination.

The basis on which the Italian claims were made shifted radically from case to case: Tyrol was claimed on the grounds of security, Fiume on the basis of nationality, Dalmatia on the basis of the Treaty of London and of historical links, while African gains were justified in terms of territorial compensation. Inevitably, this flexibility looked like sheer opportunism and only undermined the Italian position. (Wilcox:ibid,191).

Regarding the Ottoman Empire affairs, the St Jean de Maurienne agreement was also declared invalid by the Entente, as it was conditional on Russian approval and ratification. The tsarist regime had been overthrown and the allies rid themselves of the necessity to award Italy with an enormous zone of influence, stretching from Antalya to Smyrna.

Following the armistice of Mudros the French and British immediately started occupying vital parts of the Ottoman Empire to the great suspicion of Sonnino, who also started to draft his own plans. In April General Diaz and Henry Wilson, his British counterpart, agreed terms for the Italian occupation of Konya and an Italian Expeditionary Force under General Giuseppe Battistoni landed in Adalia, gradually penetrating into the interior, seizing local railway lines and strategic points around Adalia and the Aydin region of southern Anatolia. (ibid:216).Fearing a non-authorized occupation of Smyrna, the Entente duly authorized the Greeks to occupy the port temporarily, to prevent it from falling in Italian hands and the first Greek troops disembarked on May, creating a constant state of tension between the nominal allies.

The Italian position in Albania was also rendered unattainable, owing to the Italian diplomacy's strategic mistakes. More specifically, through the Proclamation of Argirokastro of 1917, Italy unilaterally declared the unity and independence of Albania under the protection of Vittorio Emanuele III. However, this action was in flagrant contradiction with Article 7 of the Treaty of London, which clearly stated that "Italy shall not oppose the division of Northern and Southern Albania between Montenegro, Serbia, and Greece".

As Carlo Sforza pointed out:"Sonnino is driving Italy directly to the rocks of the Adriatic Sea. He shows zero interests in anything of real value: the mandate orders, the colonies, the reparations and recklessly engages in conflict with the new Yugoslav state, omitting to realize this is the best safety guarantee against a potential revival of the Dual Monarchy". (Κοραντής:ibid:76).

Nitti's administration sought to follow a compromising line in foreign policy and end the diplomatic isolation of his country, attributed to the bitter struggle with President Wilson and

the withdrawal of the Italian delegation from Paris in May. He sought to reach a compromise with Greece and Yugoslavia, Italy's main competitors in Albania and Asia Minor respectively, in order to reduce Italy's opponents in the Conference. Under the Tittoni-Venizelos Agreement of 1919 Italy undertook to support the Greek claims in Northern Epirus, in return for Greek recognition of the Italian right to annexation in Valona and the establishment of an Italian protectorate in Albania through the issue of an international mandate. The straits of Corfu would demilitarize and Italy would cede the Dodecanese islands to Greece, with the exception of Rhodes. However, Article 7 of the agreement gave Italy the right to declare it invalid in case her Minor Asia interests would not be sufficiently accommodated. (Λάσκαρις:1954,157).

However, once news of the agreement reached Albania, a national movement quickly developed in order to prevent the incoming partition of the country between the Italians and the Greeks and in June 1920 a large-scale anti-Italian revolt broke out in Valona. The Italian positions were unattainable due to Nitti's rapid demobilization schemes and riots also broke out in Italy, with troops refusing to obey orders and depart to Albania. Italian policy had failed, and any dreams of a protectorate were shattered. (Wilcox:ibid,212).

Nitti's willingness to reach a compromise with the Yugoslavs and the unauthorized occupation of the city by D'Annunzio brought down the prime minister. Carlo Sforza, the Foreign Minister under the Giolitti administration, sought to cultivate cordial relations with France and Britain and denounced the Venizelos-Tittoni agreement of 1919, altering the Italian grand strategy towards the direction of creating and maintaining an independent Albania, which could be placed under the Italian influence through financial and political penetration, rather than military occupation. Italy evacuated the whole of Albania, only retaining the tiny island of Sazan, for strategic purposes. The same principle applied for the Ottoman Empire, and Sforza reached an agreement with the nationalist movement of Mustafa Kemal in 15 March 1920. Italy consented to gradually withdraw its troops from Anatolia in return for financial and political privileges in the area. (Κοραντής:ibid,176). The Fiume issue was also resolved through the Treaty of Rapallo of November 1920. According to its provisions, Fiume was to become a free city, with Dalmatia and its chief islands remaining in Yugoslav hands, with Italy retaining only Zadar and a handful of islands. A frontal military assault and naval bombardment of Fiume on December 1920 finally forced D'Annunzio to abandon the city.

5.3 Economy (1919-1923)

The Italian economy was in a state of constant decline throughout 1919-1923. The wartime total mobilization of the economy and the acceleration of the high rate of production and output could not be sustained, leading to a severe financial recession. During 1918-1919 the expenses of the state largely outnumbered the income by a ratio 3:1, while the Italian overall export value was three times lower than the country's total value of imports. Inflation was rising faster than it had during the actual war, state expenditure remained high and the lira kept losing ground on international money markets. (Miller:ibid558). The pressing need for credit was the driving force behind Nitti's conciliatory foreign policy, which subsequently led to the outbreak of a nationalist fever throughout the country. Nitti's austere slogan "produce more, consume less" outraged the public, whose wartime sacrifices had cultivated their hopes that their lives would be dramatically improved once victory had been achieved. The demobilization process would put an enormous strain on the Italian economy. Three million men were still under arms in the beginning of 1919 and schemes for soldiers' welfare and their integration into peacetime employment posed the government with a herculean task of financial administration. As a result of this decline, enormous waves of riots and social discomfort swept the country, culminating in the August 1920 occupation of the factories throughout the North, with a total of half a million industrial workers participating, promising a Sovietization of the economy. In the rural areas, a series of incidents peaked in the 1920 "largest agricultural strike in Italian history", one which was joined by more than half a million peasants forming armed bands and usurping the properties of the landowners. (Bosworth:2005,104). It was this culture of mass violence and lawlessness stipulated by the financial recession which offered the *squadristi* an excellent chance of expanding their influence among various elements of society.

5.4 Armed Forces

When the armistice was signed, some 3.9 million were under arms. Most of them would not be demobilized by December 1920. The demobilization process was not only costly but also highly slow-moving, owing to the large geographical location of the Italian troops and various

expeditionary forces. In June 1919 Orlando, Sonnino and Diaz agreed to start bringing back the most of the soldiers stationed overseas. A significant reduction of the forces serving in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica along with the withdrawal of the Murmansk expeditionary force and at least 20.000 men from the Albanian Corps were repatriated. By summer 1920, some 200.000 men were still overseas. Following the Mudros Armistice and the subsequent occupation of Istanbul by the Allies, Italy was allocated the Scutari and Kadikoy areas, effectively governed by the High Commissioner, Carlo Sforza. On February 1919 an Italian contingent from Armee D'Orient, named the Expeditionary Force of the Aegean, was disembarked at Galata in order to safeguard and administer the Italian-occupied areas.

During March-April 1919, large debates ensued between Sonnino, General Elia, governor of Rhodes, and the Minister of War, Enrico Caviglia, over the unsoundness of a potential Italian occupation of Minor Asia. Effective planning of a military mission to Minor Asia was rendered impossible due to poorly defined objectives and amid complete breakdown of local and political authorities. The army officers were protesting over the dreadful conditions of internal transport and communication networks. Adalia was not a promising basis for any kind of colony. The extreme poverty of the town and lack of everyday essentials, lack of public order and the abundance of Ottoman brigands in the hinterland were evident, and Italians were certain that large-scale investments were required in order for the area to become profitable. However, the occupation took place over April 1919, led by General Giuseppe Battistoni of the 33rd Division, the occupying forces amounting to 15.000 men. (Wilcox:ibid,216). Gradual withdrawal of the Italian units from Anatolia started late in 1920 and continued until 1922, when the last ones withdrew to the Dodecanese. Lastly, the Istanbul forces were withdrawn in October 1922, formally ending the Italian presence in Asia Minor. (ibid:229).

The small symbolic Italian force withdrew from the Holy Lands, being highly irrelevant to international questions. Italy's efforts to link its presence there to the Catholic interests had failed, and intense British competition rendered the presence of any troops there pointless.

The demobilization schemes not only cast an overwhelming burden on the Italian economy, but also severely undermined its ability to enforce her will through military prowess in her various areas of interest. The expeditionary forces in Albania and Minor Asia were neither unable to effectively undertake further expansion and consolidate their gains nor able to earn the diplomatic clout which France and Britain were able to wield in pursuit of their goals. (ibid).

CHAPTER 6

THE FASCIST REGIME

Mussolini's primary target was to forge a new Italian identity, and change the character of the Italian people. Fascism was in a certain sense a modern ideology which looked at the future, but at the same time looked back at an idealized Roman past. This created a field of tension that provided Fascism with much of its dynamic as well as its attraction. (Nelis:2007,393). In theory, fascism was a new and "revolutionary" because it had found a way to rally the masses behind an authoritarian way of government. Mussolini explained that the key to his regime lay in its harnessing of youth, trade unionism and leisure through the instrumentalities of a single and ubiquitous party. A "liturgy" was to be instilled in every Italian mind where any notions of the ancient Catholic belief system or the more modern ideas of liberalism, consumer capitalism and socialist humanism must be ruled out in favor of this new fascist "civic religion". (Bosworth:2005,3).

Fascist Italians, wiped clean of their roots and histories, should surrender their individual and collective characters to the dogmas of their leader. However, the fascist regime could not settle down into a comfortable enjoyment of power because it had to produce an impression of driving momentum, "permanent revolution", in order to fulfill its promises. Moreover, ideology was perpetually conditioned by Italians' recourse to familiar and other forms of loyalty whose cast was as frequently local as it was Italian, let alone Fascist. (ibid,570). Ordinary Italians sought to wheedle the dictatorship into serving them, perceiving fascism merely as another form of patronage and bribery, similar to the Liberal regime, one where pay-off was always more important than belief. The ideological incoherence of the regime in combination with its corruption and general incompetence also failed to erode Italians' faith to the House of Savoy or the Vatican, despite the effective measures the regime adopted in order to undermine or utilize those institutions.

Fascist foreign policy was one of revisionism. Deriving from the fascist doctrine, revisionism was officially endorsed by Mussolini in 1928, when he proclaimed that “no treaty is eternal”. Mussolinian revisionism against the post-war settlements had grave consequences for the European reconstruction and stability, as it greatly contributed to the division of Europe to two rival blocs. Since his ascension to power in 1922, Mussolini had indeed been working to alter the postwar order and gradually to expand his sphere of influence in southeastern Europe and in the Adriatic region. However, Yugoslavia, France’s protégé, stood in his way. In June 1927, he approved the shipment of arms and money to underground right-wing terrorist groups, on the condition that they fight against the South Slavic state. Until the mid-1930s, Mussolini continued to support the idea of destroying Yugoslavia through subversive terrorist activity by supporting the Hungarian and Bulgarian revisionist claims. (Calic:2019,84). The Tirana Agreements of 1926-1927 effectively rendered Albania an Italian vessel and consolidated the Italian presence in the Balkans. (Καταπόδης:1996,673). Italian grand strategy also focused on the preservation of the Austrian independence and the prevention of the *Anschluss*, the unification with Germany.

The Dodecanese islands, obtained by the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923, were destined to serve as the bridgehead from which the Italian commercial interests would expand in the Middle East. The islands of Leros and Rodos were of great military importance for the implementation of the Mussolini’s Mediterranean policy, as they were used as naval and airforce bases and strongholds. (Τούντα-Φεργάδη,171).

Hitler’s rise to power and the revival of German power posed a great threat to the European stability and Mussolini ruthlessly utilized it as a means to extract substantial concessions from the West. Mussolini subordinated his collaboration with the Western Powers to a free hand in pursuit of those aims of grandeur which had been the *leitmotif* of his political programs since 1922. (Lowe:ibid,292). Throughout the 1930s, the pattern of the Italian foreign policy was to keep France and Britain in perpetual fear of Germany on the continent so as to procure their pliability in the Mediterranean. However, Rome lacked both the diplomatic and military capacity to engage in a successful life-or-death struggle with France and Britain while maintaining a balance of power with Germany, and was eventually abandoned by the West, only to be trapped in an uneven alliance with Hitler.

The fascist regime made great efforts through propaganda to convince the Italians that the national economy was greatly revitalized, however in reality Mussolini’s policies greatly damaged both the economy and the living standards of the people. The high valuation of the lira foreshadowed the protectionist and state interventionist policies of the 1930s, known as

“autarchy”. Italian lira was overvalued against sterling and the “Battle for Grain” led to soil exhaustion, a decrease in animal farming and a decline in exports of more profitable crops. (Gilmour:ibid,316). By 1940 the Italian economy was far from self-sufficient. Key materials such as oil, coal and iron had to be imported in large quantities and Italy was unable to match its enemies’ level of production. Governmental incompetence accompanied by widespread corruption had rendered Italy one of the poorest countries of Europe. The cost of life had increased by a stunning 20%, wages were the lowest in Europe and more than one million people were unemployed. Fascist policies of encouraging the creation of large families led to overpopulation in both the urban and the rural areas and especially in the South the living conditions were so horrendous that people were even forced to live in caves. (Miller:ibid,570). Five factors had a major impact on Italian military efficiency in the years between 1918 and 1940: the uneasy relationship between the political authorities and the armed forces leadership, Italy's limited resources, the lack of a central command organization, Italian engagement in continuous military operations from the summer of 1935 onward, and Mussolini's personal alliance with Hitler. Italian deficiency in raw materials, manufacturing capacity and capital and the backwardness of the scientific- technological base all detracted from the nation's potential as a twentieth- century military power. However, the poor allocation of available resources among the services made matters worse. The logic of Italy's geographic position, its choice of national enemies, and Mussolini's Mediterranean strategy all suggested that the navy and air force should have received preference in funding, while the army should have stressed quality in the form of amphibious, mechanized, and airborne units. Instead, the army used its political power to ensure itself the lion's share of resources until 1936. These funds were spent on maintaining a large force of wretchedly trained and equipped infantry, and on the comforts of the senior officers. (Sullivan:2010,170). Of the 116 billion lire provided to the armed forces from 1935 to 1940, some 77 billion were consumed by the costs of the Ethiopian War, Italian intervention in Spain, the occupation of Albania, and the pacification campaigns in Italian East Africa. This left relatively little for modernization programs at a time when Britain and France had begun to rearm. The lack of a combined general staff or a single armed forces ministry contributed to the worsening of Italian problems. While Mussolini toyed with the idea of creating such organizations, he ultimately rejected the notion for fear of their potential as centers of political opposition. As a result, he lacked a mechanism either to impose his strategic concepts on the armed forces or to distribute resources among the services in a rational manner. Instead, each of the general staffs and ministries developed its own war plans in isolation, which led to bizarre consequences during the Second World War. (ibid).

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

After the Italian unification in 1861, the Italian grand strategy had three distinct but interconnected goals: The completion of the national territory, the acquisition of great-power status and the most important: the propagation of the new national identity. The political institutions of the country failed to provide a solid source of national pride and contribute to the successful nationalization of the masses. After eighty-five years, during which it presided over national unification and enjoyed many triumphs as well as failures, the House of Savoy ended in tragedy and anticlimax. The Vatican was openly hostile towards the new state until the Lateran Pact of 1929 and its refusal to recognize the Italian state was fatal to the cohesion and consolidation of the new nation. In the borderline position of Italy between great and small powers was the key to its diplomacy to be found. Italy was the “sixth wheel on the chariot”, with its diplomacy being one of continuity, opportunism and lack of genuine achievement. Slight industrial resources, chronic budget deficiencies and a backward agrarian economy had a devastating consequence upon the national wealth, and the strenuous colonial efforts only aggravated the problem. It was only after the end of the Second World War that Italy abandoned its pretensions to become a Great Power and concentrated, with far more success, in achieving prosperity for its citizens.

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