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History of Italian Foreign Policy

**Italian Military Policy: A
Historiographical Analysis, 1860-
1960**

February 11th, 2015

Post-Unitarian Italy

- ▶ **Special relationship of King with Army**
- ▶ **Myth of Garibaldi**
- ▶ **By 1870 middle-class element predominant in Army ranking**
- ▶ **Military unpopular**
- ▶ **First task was occupation of new territories to defend Liberal system**
- ▶ **Military performances: humiliating defeat at Lissa and Custoza**
- ▶ **Victory in social war against Bourbonists, clericals, bandits, peasants**
- ▶ **Piedmont introduced conscription in 1854 and then all over Italy**
- ▶ **Army better at preserving law and order than defending nation, or fighting aggressively for its cause: huge military expenditure had largely domestic purposes**

III Independence War

- ▶ According to Prussian war plans, Italy was supposed to challenge Austria on Southern front
- ▶ Meanwhile, in light of naval superiority, Italy could threaten Dalmatian coast

War developments

- ▶ **16.06.1866 breakout of hostilities between Prussia and Austria**
- ▶ **Italy severely defeated at Custoza**
- ▶ **Custoza marked a halt to Italian operations, with decision to get organised against counter-attack**
- ▶ **Following several important Prussian victories (i.e. Sadowa July 3), Austrians gave priority to fight against Prussia**
- ▶ **Battle of Lissa July 20**
- ▶ **First great naval battle with the use of steam battleships and last one with ramming manoeuvres**

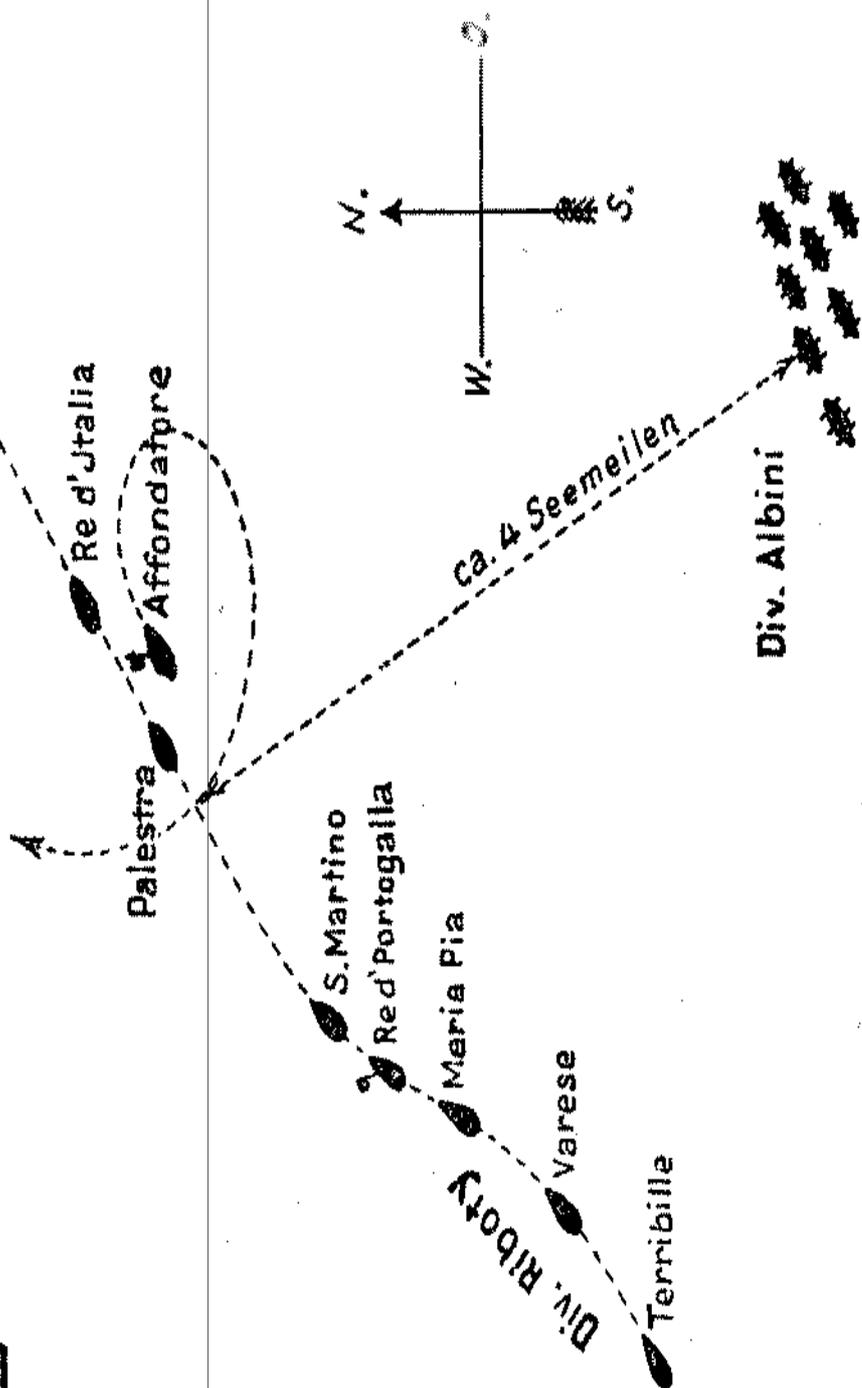
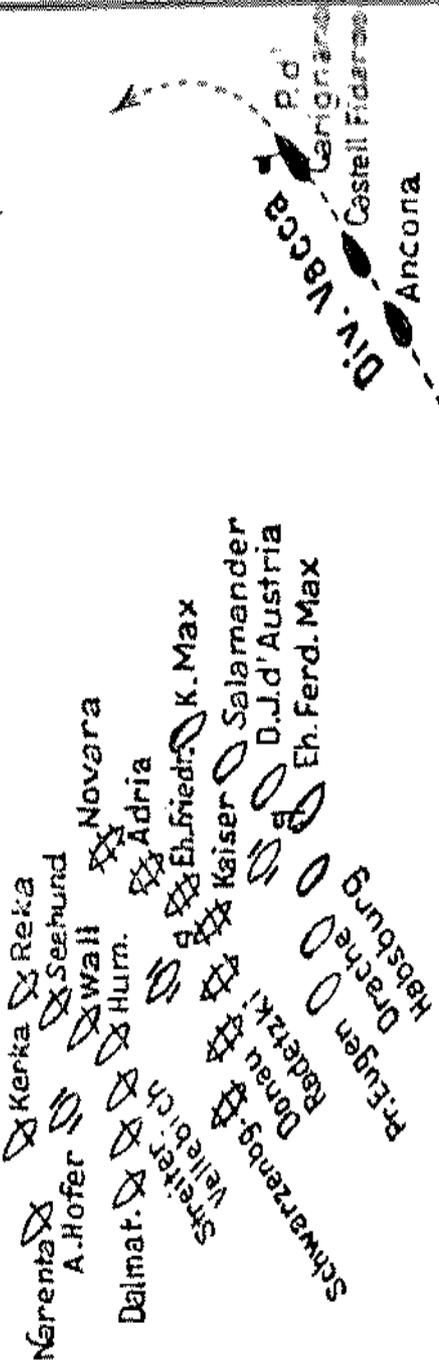


Schlacht bei LISSA. *)

1. Moment.

Zeichen - Erklärung:

- Öst. Panzerschiffe.
- ⊕ " Holzschiffe.
- ⊕ " Kanonenboote.
- ⊕ " Raddampfer.
- Ital. Panzerschiffe.
- ⊕ " Holz-Fregatten.



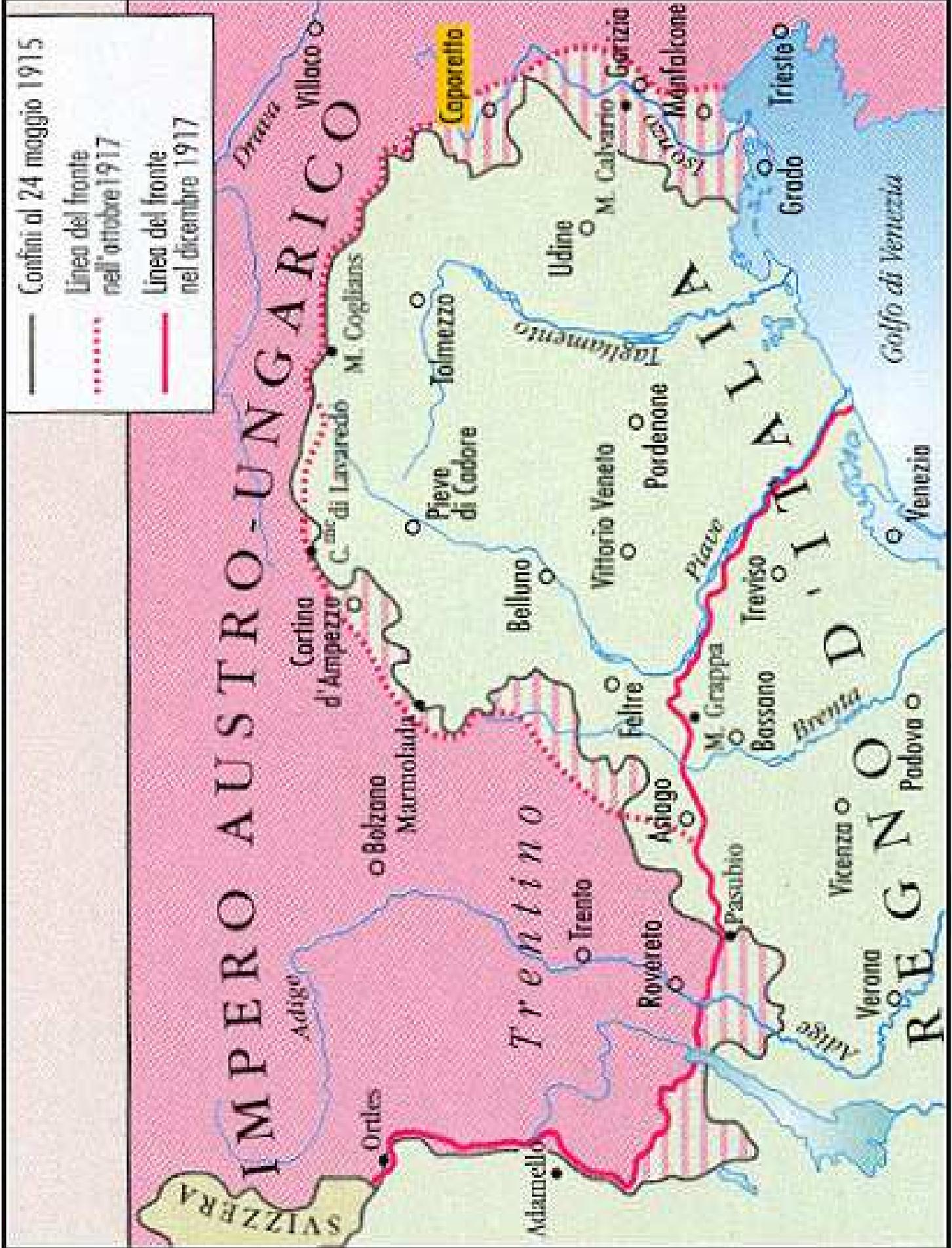
Div. Albini

Giolitti

- ▶ **Though social unrest could provoke suspension of civil rights, with Army behaving like force of occupation, Giolitti tried to hold the balance between employers and social protesters**
- ▶ **Army less openly needed to guarantee survival of State**

Catholics

- ▶ **Political Catholicism shared some values with military: conservatism**
- ▶ **Catholic chaplains in war urged forward what they hoped were Catholic soldiers of the army**
- ▶ **Some parts of clergy became fervent patriotic after Caporetto**



— Confini al 24 maggio 1915

⋯ Linea del fronte nell'ottobre 1917

— Linea del fronte nel dicembre 1917

SVIZZERA

Trentino

Friuli

Veneto

Golfo di Venezia

Adige

Tagliamento

Piave

Brenta

Drava

Villaco

Cortina

d'Ampezzo

Bolzano

Marmolada

Trento

Rovereto

Asiago

Feltrina

Pasubio

Vittorio Veneto

Pordenone

Udine

M. Calvario

Gorizia

Monfalcone

Trieste

Grado

Venezia

Vicenza

Verona

Padova

Caporetto

M. Coglians

Pieve di Cadore

Belluno

M. Grappa

Bassano

The Navy

- ▶ **Initially ignored**
- ▶ **Navy League established in 1897**
- ▶ **Except in some coastal cities (Arsenal in Taranto 1889), navalism had little popular appeal – aftermath of fiasco at Lissa**
- ▶ **No pivotal role played by the Navy in WW1**

First World War

- ▶ **Massive war effort**
- ▶ **5.7 men involved**
- ▶ **Around 600,000 dead**
- ▶ **Some 500,000 wounded or mutilated**
- ▶ **Govt spent more than double than total military expenditure 1861-1913**
- ▶ **Peasant soldiers gave highest contribute (casualty rate 39.8 %)**
- ▶ **Low pay and brutal discipline (decimation)**
- ▶ **State fighting merely for dynastic advantages (sacro egoismo)**
- ▶ **Nov 1918 – more Italians than previously found identity in nation**
- ▶ **After Caporetto, Italy began to fight something like modern war, with propaganda determined to forge mass involvement in national idealism**

Fascism

- ▶ **More militant view of the world**
- ▶ **Paramilitary youth organisations as example of totalitarian achievement**
- ▶ **Education system to serve neither middle class, not proletarian truth, but rather national truth based on culture of people inspired by eternal values of Italian race and civilization**
- ▶ **Textbooks full of military culture**

Pietro Badoglio

- ▶ **Chief of General Staff 1919-21, despite claims of his military incompetence leading to some extent to Caporetto disaster**
- ▶ **After March on Rome, his future seemed doubtful, because of his ideology, his military record, and because Fascists ideologues wanted to bring revolution to military hierarchies**
- ▶ **Outcome was continuity and tradition: Badoglio Chief of General Staff 1925, with a fervent fascist as his deputy**

Air Force

- ▶ **Example of strength and weakness of Fascist military policy**
- ▶ **A pilot's life seemed ideal to new Fascist man: modern technology, speed and daring – still a knightly crusader for the nation**
- ▶ **Air Ministry set up 1925**
- ▶ **Gap between theory and practice**
- ▶ **Air Force not ready for blitzkrieg**
- ▶ **In 1939, Italy possessed 840 war planes**
- ▶ **Low aircraft production – 1942 US produced in a week more war planes than Italy did in a year**

Fascist War and social classes

- ▶ Italian society still nourished pre-1922 beliefs
- ▶ Middle class sought to save its sons from military service in war
- ▶ Proletariat rediscovered sense of self in 1943 strikes
- ▶ Intellectuals began to doubt Mussolini's charisma
- ▶ Peasantry, still the most likely to fight and die in war, dreamt of family, village and America
- ▶ Rome's population sought hope and comfort from Pope after 1943 bombings

Early Republic

- ▶ **Italian military relationship with wider world ended in 1945, though Italy was granted membership of NATO**
- ▶ **New Army established and sent to Trieste in 1953 to negotiate fate of that city**
- ▶ **Italian soldiers only occasionally attracted attention of politicians**
- ▶ **Military had lost pretension to strut on wider stage**

