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History of Italian Foreign Policy

**Italian Foreign Policy: A
Historiographical Analysis, 1860-
1922**

January 26th, 2016

France vs Italy

- ▶ **Harold Nicolson, British Diplomat, 1939:**
- A) Rigid French Diplomacy vs Italian mobile diplomacy**
- B) Italian diplomacy system based on Renaissance traditions, based neither on business, nor on power-policy. It is based on ongoing manouvre**
- C) While Germany bases diplomacy on power, Italy bases power on diplomacy: to gain importance through negotiation rather than strength.**
- D) While France secures permanent allies against permanent enemies, Italy regards allies and enemies as interchangeable.**
- E) While UK seeks durable credit, Italy seeks immediate advantage. While UK opposes any country aiming at dominating Europe, Italy wants to be tilt of scale**
- F) Italian art of negotiation, creating bad relations with countries she wants to negotiate with, then offering good relations, asking concessions Italy does not expect to obtain, in order to abandon them and obliging the interlocutor to pay some compensation**
- ▶ **Italy combines pretentions of Great Power with methods of Small Power**



IMPERO RUSSO

Mosca

BEGNO DI NORVEGIA

BEGNO DI DANIMARCA SVEZIA

Mare del Nord

BEGNO D'INGHILTERRA Londra

Danzica

BEGNO DI PRUSSIA

CONFEDERAZIONE GERMANICA

FRANCIA

IMPERO D'AUSTRIA

VALACCHIA

CONFEDERAZIONE GERMANICA

Bucarest

Belgrado

Milano

Venezia

Firenze

Tolone

Bordeaux

Barcellona

Madrid

Barcellona

REGNO DI SPAGNA

Lisbona

Ajaccio

Roma

Napoli

Vienna

Etténheim

Erfurt

Bodlogne

Berlino

Wissit

Danubio

Mar Nero

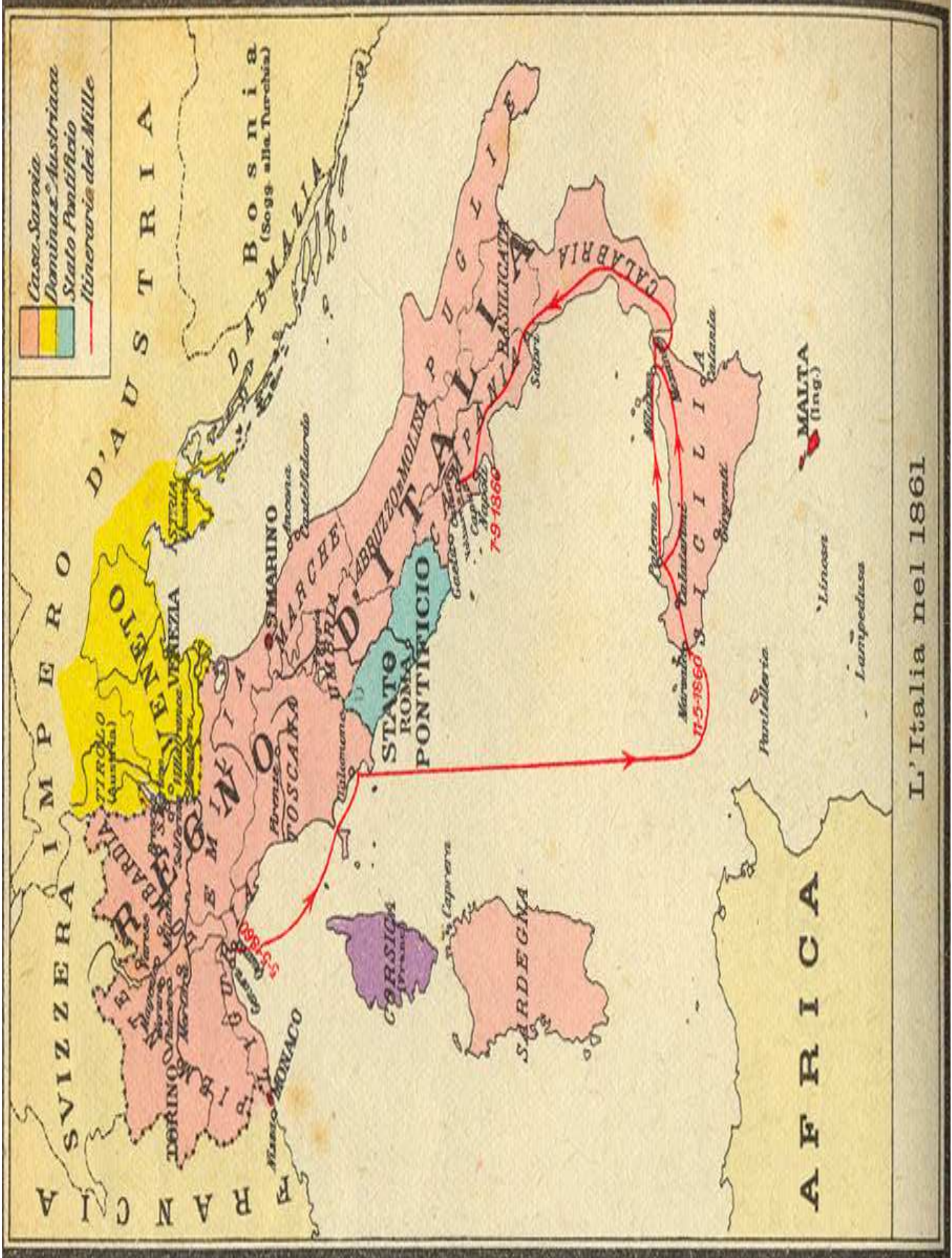
Costantinopoli

IMPERO OTTOMANO

EGITTO

Mar Mediterraneo

Mar Caspio



L'Italia nel 1861

Outcome of Risorgimento

- ▶ Unlike European State nations, in Italy a nation emerged where none had been before, with pretty new frontiers
- ▶ Two per cent of the population with right to vote, half of whom Catholic with no opinion of their own
- ▶ Liberal system with constitution
- ▶ Capitalist economy
- ▶ Could the country with smallest population, least developed economy, most vulnerable strategic position and largest gap between politics and society hold a place among Great Powers?
- ▶ Italy was a country necessarily embracing diplomacy. Italy could only exist while having a foreign policy
- ▶ First foreign policy aim: Cavour - seizing "Italian" territories still in foreign hands (Istria, Trentino, Corsica, Malta, Dalmatia, Ticino)

Parity with European Powers

- ▶ Nationality principle as a pillar of Italian foreign policy up to WW1
- ▶ Once accepting European diplomacy and concert of States, Italy claims equal relationship
- ▶ Parity in Europe as main theme of Italian policy: concert of nations, League of Nation, United Nations, NATO, EU
- ▶ Very soon attention was turned to Mediterranean and Balkan-Danube area

Politica del Carciofo

- ▶ **Artichoke policy: one leaf at a time**
- ▶ **U. Rattazzi: "Pacification" of the South as "school" for Africa**
- ▶ **Crispian African adventures**
- ▶ **Public opinion played a minimal role, while in Germany pressure groups soon shaped a popular basis to foreign policy**

Vatican

- ▶ **Italy unified against a sea of enemies**
- ▶ **For the first three of four decades, the Vatican was one of the worst foes of the Liberal regime**

Balkans

- ▶ **Some urged Serbia and Greece to assume the mantle of Piedmont in the region**
- ▶ **Some sought economic influence**
- ▶ **Some regarded Albania as foundation stone of Italian empire**

Austria

- ▶ **Public enemy number one for both irredentists and imperialists**
- ▶ **Until 1916, Austria had been the only European power to which Italy had ever declared war**
- ▶ **At the same time, since 1882 Austria had been an ally in the Triple Alliance**
- ▶ **Triple alliance necessary to preserve status quo (Central Powers as champions of conservatism) and oriented to public enemy number two**

Giving up neutrality

- ▶ Rivalry with France and risk of invasion of Sicily
- ▶ Austrian-Hungarian Empire might expand Eastwards, with relative strengthening in Adriatic
- ▶ Hope that, in case of alliance, Austria might cede Trentino
- ▶ In case of war between Russia and Turkey, Britain would have backed the former
- ▶ Neutrality could have been turned into isolation

Getting closer to Germany

- ▶ **1877 Crispi (Chairman of House of Deputies) got in touch with Bismarck to propose alliance in case of war against both France and Austria**
- ▶ **Integrity of Austrian Empire matched European balance and German interests**
- ▶ **Italian proposal rejected: Bismarck did not back Italian irredentism and wished Italo-Austrian friendship**

Berlin Congress 1878

- ▶ **Austria occupied Bosnia-Herzegovina and improved positions in Dalmatia**
- ▶ **Britain kept Cyprus**
- ▶ **France got free hand in Tunisia**
- ▶ **Russia gained Bessarabia and Batum, on Black Sea**
- ▶ **Germany had no territorial gains, but became main stay of European balance**

1878-1885: I Balcani al Congresso di Berlino

costituzione della Bulgaria



La Grande Bulgaria
al trattato di Santo Stefano

Repercussions in Italy

- ▶ **No gain for Italy**
- ▶ **Agreements reached before Congress**
- ▶ **Italy excluded since she was not part of any alliance**
- ▶ **May 12, 1881: French Protectorate on Tunisia without any compensation and guarantee to Italian interests**
- ▶ **British tacit assent to French interests**
- ▶ **Italy completely isolated and diplomatically powerless**
- ▶ **Necessity of alliance on anti-French purposes**

Triple Alliance 1882

- ▶ Italian commitment to assist Germany in case of unprovoked French aggression
- ▶ Austrian and German commitment to assist Italy in case of unprovoked French aggression
- ▶ Casus foederis: in case one or two parties involved in war, without any provocation, against two or more powers – I.e. if Austria attacked by Russia and France, Italy obliged to intervene
- ▶ In case of war against power due to threat, the other parts observed benevolent neutrality towards allies, reserving themselves to intervene on her side
- ▶ Commitment not to undertake any other alliance hostile to Triple Alliance and to consult the other parts on political and economic matters
- ▶ Accomplishment of Bismarck diplomacy: isolation of France, surrounding of Germany avoided, European system rotating around Germany



France

- ▶ **Latin sister/step sister**
- ▶ **While Piedmont expanded into Italy, Cavour had surrendered Nice and Savoy to France**
- ▶ **While Nice, Savoy or Marseilles did not possess strategic importance of Trento and Trieste, conflict with France was also ideological:**
 - A) Republican France might succour democrats in Italy**
 - B) Catholic France might befriend the Pope**
 - C) Intellectual France might claim cultural superiority**
 - D) Financial and commercial France might dominate Italian economy**
 - E) Imperial rivalry with France**

France

- ▶ **Tunisian Question:**
- ▶ **Treaty undersigned with Bey – Lord of Tunis, formally vassal of Sublime Porte, but practically widely self-governing – in Sept 1868 safeguarded Italians living there; Italy to benefit status of most favoured nation on economic level, as well as France**
- ▶ **In order to divert French attention from revanchism against Prussia, Bismarck persuaded them to concentrate on different aims**
- ▶ **Bismarck felt this would bring a double advantage to Germany**
 - A) distract France from plans of revanche in Europe**
 - B) France clashed with Britain and Italy over the African question**
- ▶ **While France remained hostile towards Britain, she could not fight in Europe, and an offended Italy would seek support in Germany and Austria-Hungary**
- ▶ **Tunisia became French protectorate (1881) with great Italian displeasure**
- ▶ **This ended up to favour Austrian and German interests**

Italian Claims

- ▶ **Taking advantage of France's defeat in the war against Prussia, Italy attempted to impose an agreement on Tunisia, which envisaged special privileges for the Italian residents**
- ▶ **The Bey decided to resist. The Italians then began to prepare a naval expedition against Tunisia and only a joint British, French and Turkish demarche forced them temporarily to relinquish their plans**
- ▶ **French capitalists became more and more persistent in demanding Tunisia's complete conversion from a semi-colony into a French colony**
- ▶ **Tunisia's annexation was raised at the Berlin Congress in 1878. France agreed to recognise the British and Austrian conquests (Cyprus and Bosnia-Herzegovina), and also Russia's expansion in the Balkans, under the condition that she be given the appropriate compensation**

Sicily [Italy]

Bizerte

Ichkeul National Park

Tabarka

Bulla Regia

Dougga

Kairouan

El-Jem

Algeria

Sbeitla

Tunisia

Tunisia

Tozeur

Chott el Jerid

Matmata

Zaafrane

Dobz

Ksar Ghilane

Hammamet

Sousse

Monastir

Mahdia

Kerkennah

Islands

Djerba

Tatouine / Ksour

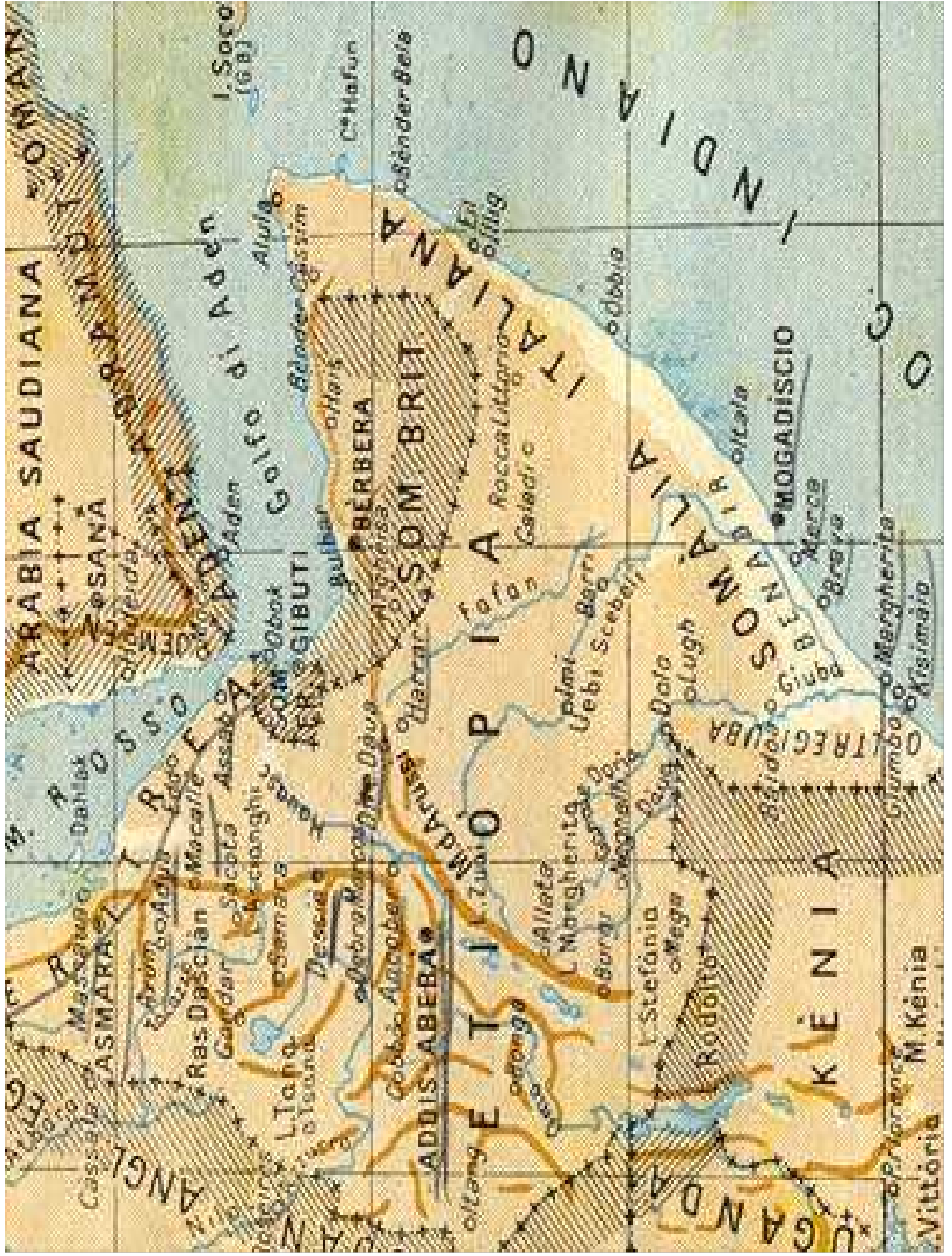
Libya

Mediterranean Sea

Tunisia map © buulbag.com

The Mediterranean Basin





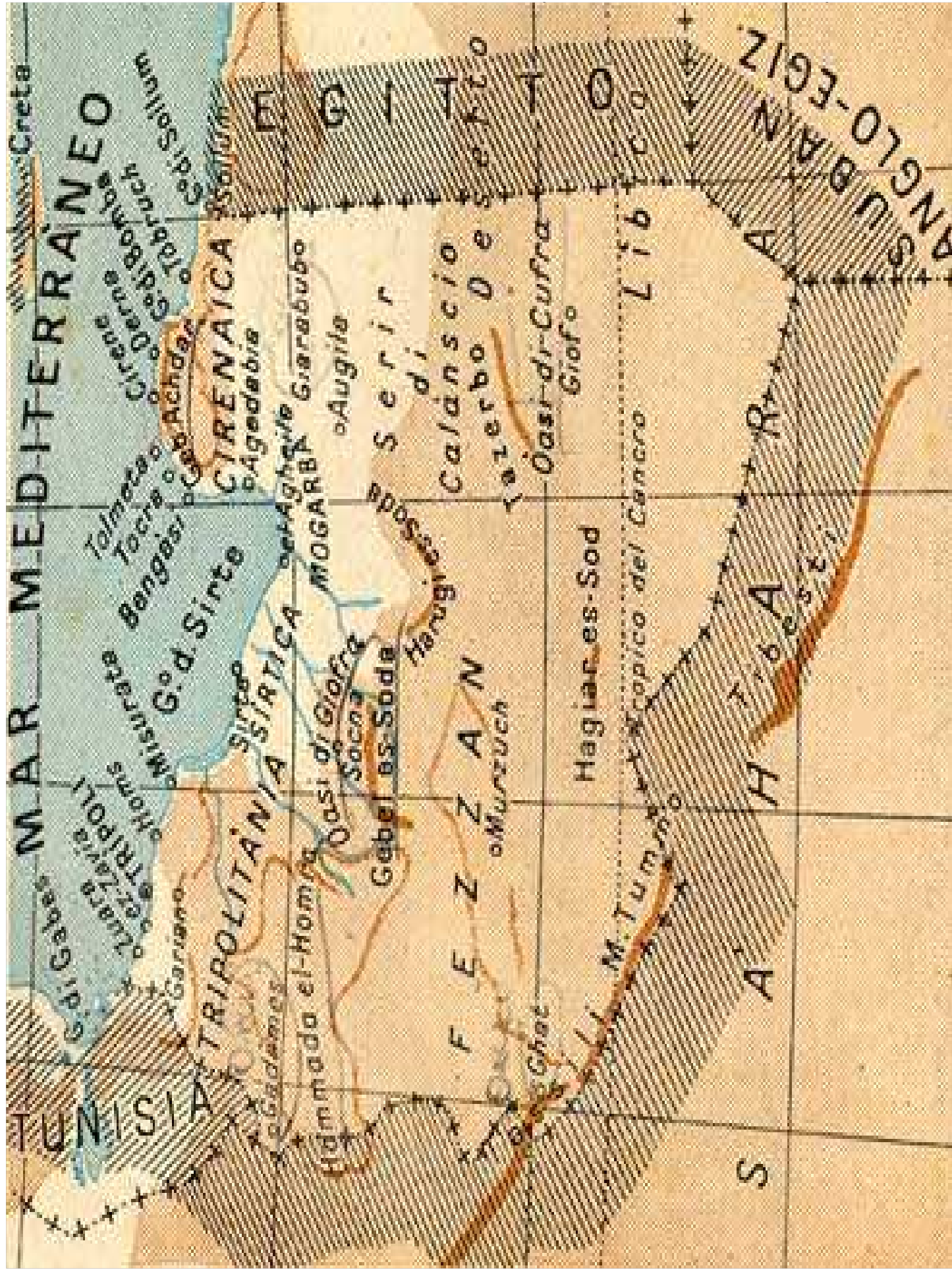


- Area drained by the Nile River and its tributaries
- 1 Aswan High Dam
 - 2 White Nile Dam
 - 3 Sennar Dam
 - 4 Khashm el Qirba Dam
 - 5 Roseires Dam
 - 6 Owen Falls Dam



0 500 Miles
0 500 Kilometers





Alliances

- ▶ **France acquired Britain as an ally in 1904**
- ▶ **Austria had acquired Germany as an ally in 1879**
- ▶ **Italian finance had become client of German expertise after the Scandal of Banca Romana**
- ▶ **Banca Romana 1893: a deficiency of cash, cooked accounts, a great quantity of bad debts due to speculation in building. Politicians had received money to finance their election expenses and to run or bribe newspapers**

Bismarck's Diplomacy

- ▶ **Anti-German coalition avoided**
- ▶ **St. Petersburg and Vienna divided on Eastern question**
- ▶ **France tried to break isolation and reconquer a position of power, thus weakening Germany**
- ▶ **Twofold Alliance Austria-Germany 1879**
- ▶ **Three Emperors Pact 1881 (Germany-Austria-Russia): Bismarck sought peace between Austria and Russia, at the same time avoiding approach between Russia and France**
- ▶ **Through Triple Alliance, though without any explicit reference to safety of borders, Italy was relieved from territorial worries and Austrian support to French clericalism**

Entente Cordiale

- ▶ **Germany disliked Italian diplomacy since Italy was trying to rapproach France**
- ▶ **Berlin aimed at keeping intact Triple Alliance as a challenge and defence against Anglo-French Entente Cordiale 1904**
- ▶ **Colonial controversies sorted out: Britain free hand in Egypt, France free hand in Morocco**

Franco-British Declaration, 1904

- ▶ **His Britannic Majesty's Government declare that they have no intention of altering the political status of Egypt**
- ▶ **The Government of the French Republic declare that they will not obstruct the action of Great Britain in that country**
- ▶ **The Government of the French Republic declare that they have no intention of altering the political status of Morocco**
- ▶ **His Britannic Majesty's Government recognise that it appertains to France to preserve order in that country, and to provide assistance for the purpose of all administrative, economic, financial, and military reforms**

Secret Articles

- ▶ **In the event of their considering it desirable to introduce in Egypt reforms tending to assimilate the Egyptian legislative system to that in force in other civilised Countries, the Government of the French Republic will not refuse to entertain any such proposals, on the understanding that His Britannic Majesty's Government will agree to entertain the suggestions that the Government of the French Republic may have to make to them with a view of introducing similar reforms in Morocco**

Britain

- ▶ **Despite claims on Malta and Eastern Mediterranean, until 1922 Italy had no real anti-British stance**
 - A) British naval superiority**
 - B) Cities like Palermo, Naples, Genoa open to seaborne bombing and attack**
 - C) After acquisition of Libya, communications with Fourth Shore could only survive on sufferance of Royal Navy**
 - D) UK exporter of coal: stranglehold over Italian energy supplies**
- ▶ **Since Italy remained rather poor, peace, and not war, was Italy's foreign policy purpose**

First World War

- ▶ **Premier and Foreign Minister (Salandra and Sonnino) not pushed by accurate analysis of national interests, but by the chance to “enter history”**
- ▶ **Risorgimento to be made real**

Domestic influence

- ▶ **Giolitti believed that Italy could avoid participating in great power policy game, though eventual defeats would make Liberal regime collapse**
- ▶ **Italy laid in heart of Europe. Unlike Sweden or Spain, she could not ignore European quarrels**

War and social classes

- ▶ Peasantry saw the worst evils of the war
- ▶ Working class in general rejected the war, though some moderate Socialist leaders (Turati) favoured a policy of "neither support, nor sabotage"
- ▶ Revolutionary leaders, like Mussolini, saw war as their historic moment and abandoned official Socialism
- ▶ Catholics preferred Italy to stay out of war
- ▶ King did not want war
- ▶ Industrialists saw opportunities of profit both from neutrality and from combat
- ▶ Freemasonry did not automatically opt for war
- ▶ 1914 Giolitti: Italy to enter war only after it was absolutely clear who was winning, and get ready to deal with embittered losers in post-war settlements
- ▶ In 1915 Salandra sensed that time was running out

War Gains

- ▶ **Italy achieved basic war aims: Alto-Adige, Trieste, Trento, Istria: border reached Alpine watershed with Germanic and Slav peoples**
- ▶ **Austro-Hungary disappeared from map**

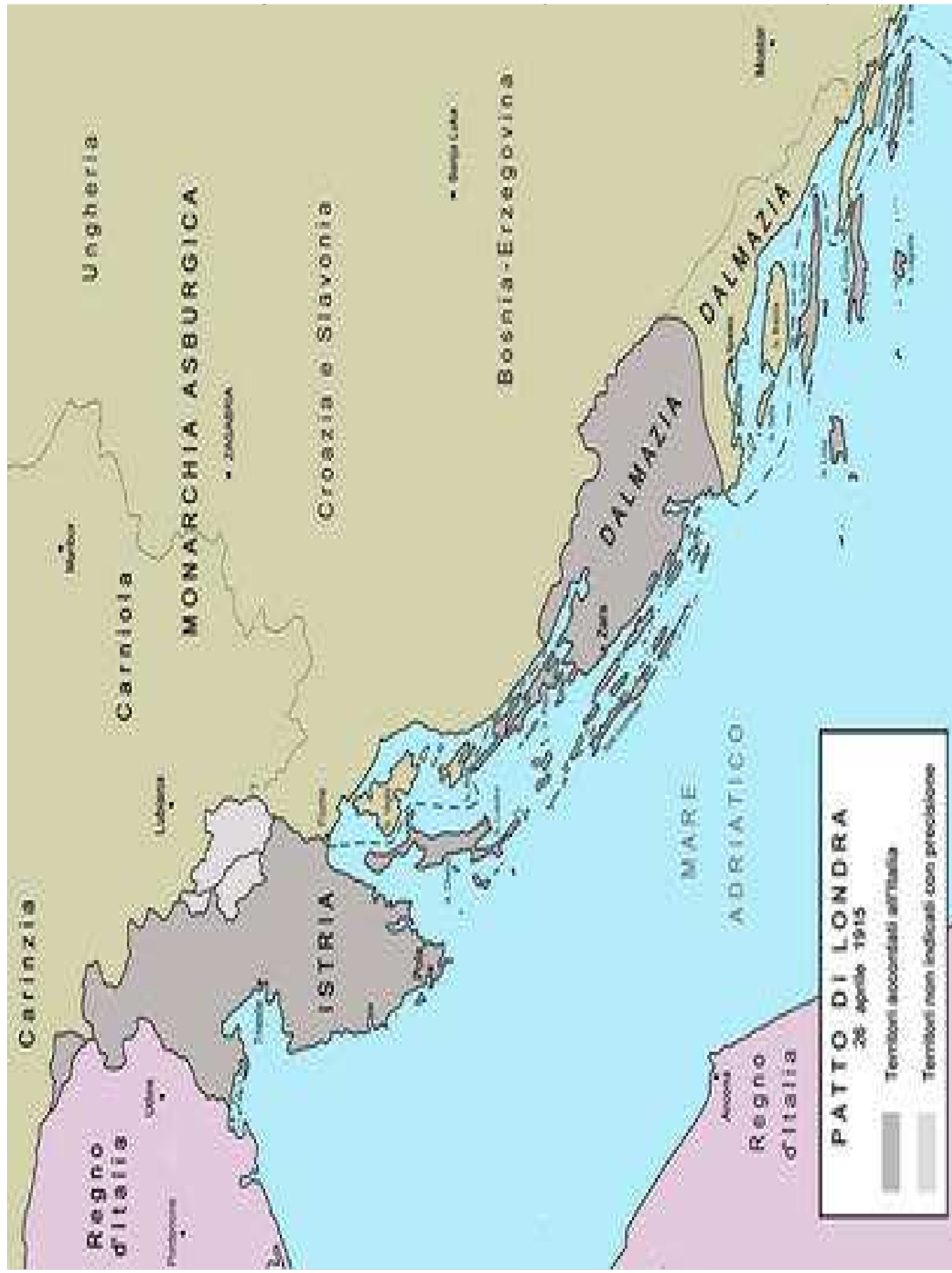


Italian Interests

- ▶ Italy wanted territorial compensations in case of Austrian enlargement also in non Ottoman lands, such as Serbia and Montenegro
- ▶ Protocol of Triple Alliance provided agreement on Balkans
- ▶ Italy aimed at Italian provinces of Austria and parts of Adriatic coast
- ▶ Austria did not respond to Italian pressures, thus making Italian entry into war impossible
- ▶ 3.8.1914: statement of Italian neutrality
- ▶ Vienna ready to accept Italian claims, but not those relating to Balkans

Treaty of London

- ▶ PM Salandra: sacred selfishness must be guide for Italy
- ▶ 2.3.1915: beginning of secret negotiations with Entente
- ▶ Anglo-French progresses against Turkey decisive for Italian decision to join war effort: in case of Turkish defeat, Asia Minor questions would have involved also Adriatic area
- ▶ Telegram to Italian Ambassador to London: «Italian Govt, for reasons of loyalty to Austria and Germany, wish to keep strict neutrality, but in light of threats which may derive from a changed territorial asset in the Balkans, Adriatic, and in general European and Mediterranean area, as well as the threat coming from German and Austrian resentment due to Italian neutrality, think it possible to join British, French and Russian war effort. However, for economic reasons this option must be necessarily followed by a series of guarantees...»
- ▶ 26.04.1915 Italy to join war within a month with Entente, in exchange of, in case of victory, Trentino, Southern Tirol, Venezia Giulia, Istria except Fiume, part of Dalmatia, several isles in Adriatic, Vlona and Saseno in Albania, coal fields in Turkey. Territorial compensations in Africa to detriment of German colonies. Italian commitment to fight with Britain, France and Russia against all of their enemies

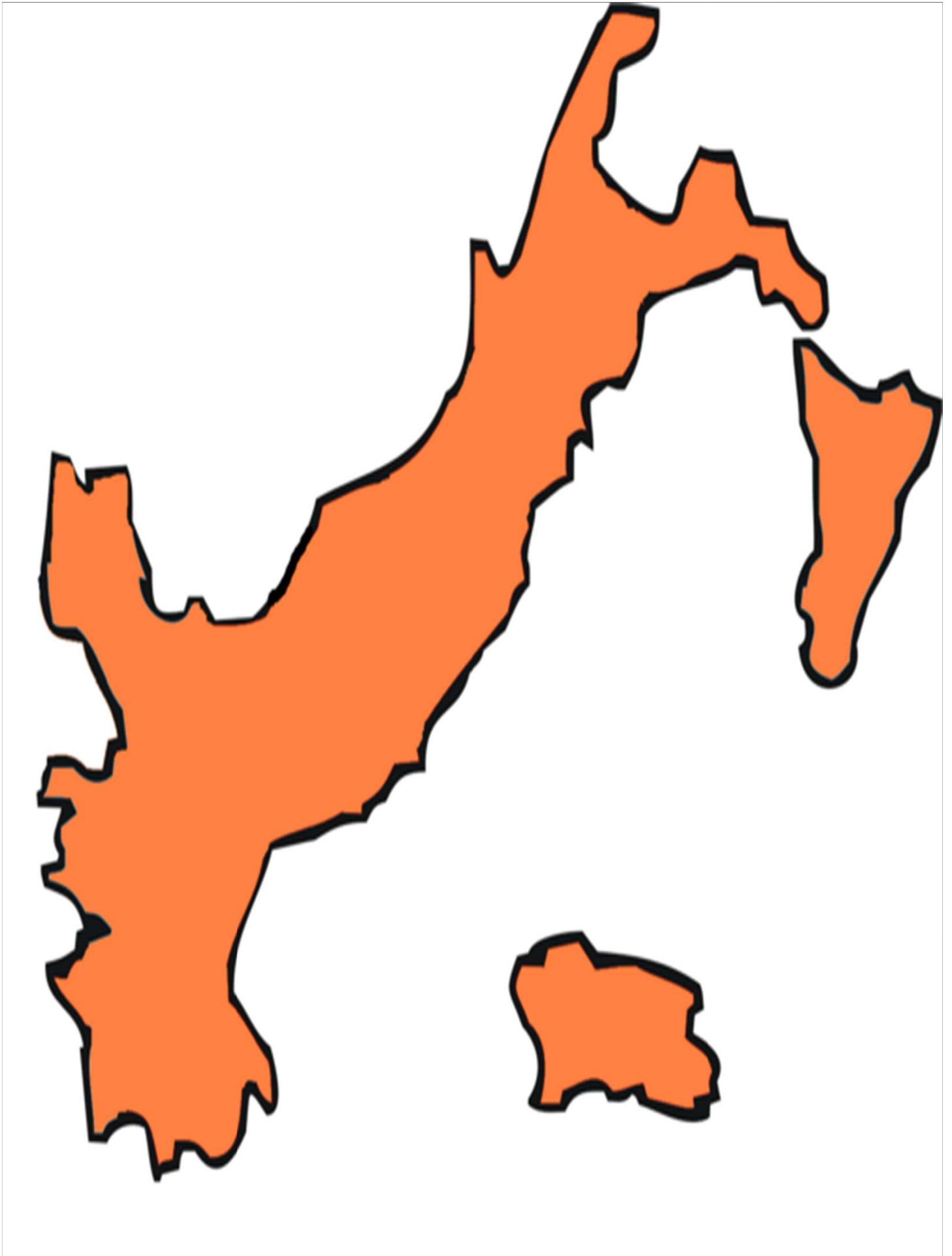


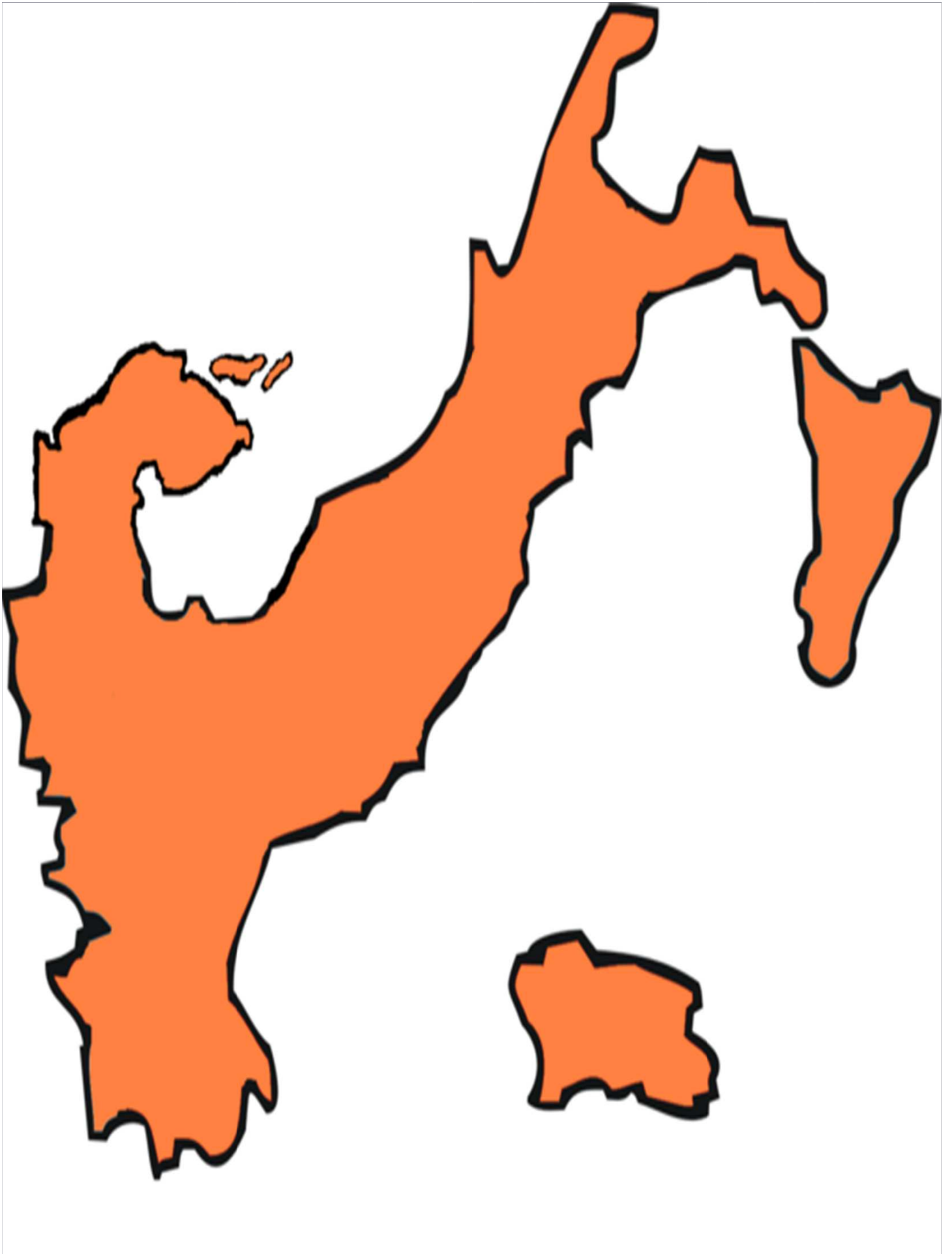
War Diplomacy

- ▶ **24.05.1915 Italy joins war**
- ▶ **Rome never regarded with equal dignity within Entente**
- ▶ **Different psychological perception of war: for allies real enemy was German militarism. Austria to collapse afterwards; for Italy historical enemy was Austria**
- ▶ **Declaration of War to Turkey without sending in any troops**
- ▶ **No declaration of war to Germany until Aug 1916**
- ▶ **No real committment in Balkans**
- ▶ **Allies did not inform Italy on cession to Russia of Costantinoples and Straits and partition of Ottoman territories in Middle East**

War Aims

- ▶ Entente thought Italy had been already widely compensated in Adriatic
- ▶ Rome wanted compensations in Asia Minor and Middle East
- ▶ February Revolution in Russia weakened Russian commitment: allies obliged to satisfy Italy:
 - 1) Smirne and hinterland in Asia Minor included into Italian sphere of influence, after Russian assent
 - 2) End of projects of any separate peace with Austria





Mutilated Victory

- ▶ **Caporetto meant that foreigners would always dismiss Italy's skills in the most insulting way**
- ▶ **Formal powers in war had rested in hands of Salandra and Sonnino, and then V. Emanuele Orlando**
- ▶ **Sacro egoismo vs Wilsonian liberal capitalist diplomacy**

United States at War

- ▶ **1917 Wilson: democratic peace and self-determination of peoples**
- ▶ **Kingdom of Serbia-Croatia-Slovenia (Greater Serbia no longer possible due to Russian defeat)**
- ▶ **Italian programmes overcome by these two events**
- ▶ **Bolscevicks published text of Treaty of London**
- ▶ **Interventionist left wing in Italy claimed agreements with Slavs, thus respecting Wilsonian design**

The fourteen points

- ▶ **Wilson 8 Jan 1918**
- ▶ **Peace without winners, since peace imposed through force would include elements of another war**
- ▶ **Peace based on equality of nations, self-determination of peoples, freedom of seas, general reduction of armaments**
- ▶ **Secret Diplomacy had to be abandoned**
- ▶ **Nationality Principle - "self-determination of peoples" -: implemented above all in Eastern Europe and Middle East, in order to fill the vacuum left by simultaneous collapse of multi-ethnic empires**
- ▶ **Point 9. Change of Italian frontiers according to clearly recognizable demarcation lines among nationalities**
- ▶ **Italian diplomats completely alien from this kind of foreign policy**

Peace Conference

- ▶ **V.E. Orlando – Three obstacles for Italy: allies, Wilson and Jugoslavs**
- ▶ **Allies recognised Brennero border**
- ▶ **No concession on Fiume and more than half Istria**
- ▶ **Wilson thought Italian safety could be assured by League of Nations**
- ▶ **Italians appealed to sanctity of pacts to legitimise claims on Slav lands and to nationality principle to claim Fiume**
- ▶ **Wilson appealed to people on Apr 23:**
 - 1) Treaty of London only a private agreement**
 - 2) Austro-Hungarian Empire no longer existed**
 - 3) Extension to Dalmatia not necessary**
 - 4) Hope for Italy not to ask for any compensations contrary to liberal principles**



MUSEO di FLUMEA - ROMA

Treaty of Rapallo

- ▶ **1920: Republicans in US back to power and isolationism**
- ▶ **Italo-Jugoslav Treaty:**
 - 1) Trieste, Gorizia, Istria and some districts of Carniola annexed to Italy**
 - 2) Zara assigned to Italy**
 - 3) Free State of Fiume with territory called "Corpus separatum", within the borders of city and district of Fiume", and a further strip of territory guaranteeing territorial continuity with Italy**
 - 4) With Treaty of Rome Jan 1924, Fiume was annexed to Italy**
 - 5) With Treaty of peace of Lausanne with Turkey (1923), Italy kept Dodecanese, but colonial questions still opened, while renouncing to Asia Minor**

Early Fascism

- ▶ Mussolini financially backed through squash raids on peasant and socialist institutions.
- ▶ Fascists talked a lot about foreign policy, but were led by inner interests: **Primat der Innenpolitik**