

ITALY 1870-1914

Agricultural Economy:

- The Italian unification led to several economic problems: it had left a large debt that could only be removed by heavy taxation. This debt also hindered the efforts of the local governments to raise sufficient capital to invest in education and public services.
- The Italian economy was predominantly agricultural 1870-1919
% of population in agriculture:
1871 = 68%
1913 = 57% (Britain = 15%)
Of these 68% / 57% only 10% owned or shared their own land – the rest (90%) were hired labourers. Their wages were very low...
- Huge differences between North and South! In the South it was common with big Estates run by the Aristocracy as landowners (latifundias). The peasants were very poor and worked on seasonal basis. The agriculture was backward and the productivity was low! In the North the land was more fertile but the productivity was still fairly low compared with agriculture in Western Europe.
- In the 1880's the South went through some major crisis with the spread of "phylloxera" (= vinus) from France that ruined the vineyards.
- In the end of the 1800's Italy got protective tariffs in agriculture which increased the production a bit, but only in the North. The South slipped even further behind...

Industrial Development:

- Italy did not have a lot of "natural resources" – most things had to be imported and the country did not have the finances to import a lot...
- The Iron and Steel production was low!
- The main energy resource coal had to be imported. In 1914 coal stood for 12% of the import. This is a low number which reveals Italy's limited industrial development
- In the North water power could be used as an energy resource (electricity) and it was mainly used to develop the small chemical, textile and later the motor industry
- The North benefited from more direct contacts with Western Europe
- Railroad construction was prioritized but it did not have a direct impact on the industrialization
- Major tariffs in the industry was introduced in 1878 and 1887 – Italy became a protectionist state (like most of Europe after the depression in the 1870 and 1880's)
- The "Industrial Revolution" came relatively late to Italy; 1896-1914.
- In 1893 the Bank of Italy (**Banca d'Italia**) was founded (Then three banks merged; Banca Nazionale nel Regno, Banca Nazionale Toscana & Banca Toscana di Credito per le Industrie e il Commercio d'Italia)
- The Government had gradually taken over the railroads in the country and now they tried to support the economy and industrialization of Italy by pouring money into more railroad constructions
- The motor industry started relatively early with the founding of Fiat Company (**FIAT = Fabbrica Italiana Automobili Torino**)
- It was in the North – especially around Milan, Genoa and Turin that the industry developed
- The unification had at first brought "free trade" which had killed the industry in the South (it had lowered the prices on different products, especially the agricultural ones, so that the South could not compete. The few industries were closed. The Government tried to develop the industry in the South during the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century but it did not work due to:
 - The social system of the South (latifundias with big landowners and hired farm labourers)
 - The unskilled labour forces
 - The lack of resources
 - The poor Communication System

Poverty:

Italy showed several signs of being poor and a bit undeveloped:

- 38% of all army conscripts were rejected due to poor health, deformity, insufficient growth
- Cholera – between 1884-1886 50000 people died
- Typhoid – In 1887 27000 people died
- Malaria – During the 1880's about 15000 people died every year
- Death rate per 1000 inhabitants 1881-1885:
North Italy = 26.1% South Italy = 29.4% Britain = 19.4%
- The poverty and the slow progress gave a **huge Emigration** – by 1914 about 6 million Italians (out of 41 millions) lived and worked abroad (mostly in the US)

Politics and the political system, 1870–1914

After the conquest of Rome in 1870, Italian politicians settled down to manage the economy, to build up the country's military power, and—in the telling phrase of the Piedmontese author and statesman Massimo d'Azeglio—to “*make Italians.*” Popular disaffection remained high, especially because of the grist tax that had been introduced in 1869. Governments of the right remained in office, first under Giovanni Lanza (to 1873) and then under Marco Minghetti (1873–76). The right was not an organized party but a group of patriotic, mostly northern landowners committed to a strong currency and free trade. Under both prime ministers the main domestic task was to balance the budget. Minghetti eventually managed this, but raising taxes and squeezing expenditure made the right unpopular, and its candidates did badly in the 1874 elections. In March 1876 the Minghetti government fell when its Tuscan supporters refused to support a state takeover of the railways.

Italy was then ruled for many years by governments of the left, which were usually led by Agostino Depretis (until his death in 1887). The deputies of the left, heirs of the Risorgimento's democratic tradition, were more anticlerical, more frequently members of the middle class (many of them were lawyers), more often from the south, and less concerned about the value of money than the rentier right had been. They were, however, splintered into various groups, and factional disputes became endemic. Left governments abolished the grist tax (1883) and made two years' primary education compulsory (1877).

A main achievement of the left was the widening of suffrage in 1882. The voting age was reduced to 21 (from 25); the requirement to pay 40 lire in direct taxes per annum was halved and was abolished altogether for those with two years' schooling. The electorate thus increased from approximately 500,000 to 2,000,000 men, including now many urban artisans, especially in the north, where schools were more common. Within a few years modern political parties were founded and won seats in northern Italy, but southern constituencies remained dominated by elite groups of lawyers and local notables, often linked to prominent landowners.

Local government was also very significant, and there were often bitter disputes among local factions. The 8,300-odd municipalities (*comuni*) were in charge of primary schools and most welfare services, raised much of their own revenue, and appointed their own staff. The central government tried to control them by appointing the mayors and also by giving veto powers over municipal decisions to provincial bodies that were strongly influenced by the provincial prefect, a government appointee. The prefect frequently dissolved councils for alleged financial or legal abuses and replaced them with a government “*commissioner*” until new elections were held, but these dissolutions often occurred when council leaders opposed government candidates at parliamentary elections. However, government attempts to control local government were never really successful. The prefects had to ensure that government candidates would win the next parliamentary elections, and so they had to conciliate, not bully, local elites, including the mayors and municipal councillors. Corruption was therefore often left unchecked. National governments became remarkably dependent on local power holders. Depretis himself won over (“*transformed*”) deputies and kept his governments in office by distributing patronage and favours to local notables.

Trasformismo (“*transformism*”) became the normal way of conducting parliamentary business, for there were few serious disputes among the leading politicians. Virtually all of them accepted the constitutional settlement of 1861, and few disputed foreign and colonial policy, which, in any case, was conducted by foreign ministers and prime ministers without much reference to parliament. In 1881 the French occupation of Tunisia alarmed the government, and the following year, to avoid diplomatic isolation, Italy joined the Triple Alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary. This was essentially a defensive alliance guaranteeing German and Austrian support against any attack by France, Italy’s main rival in the Mediterranean. Meanwhile, Italy embarked on its first real colonial ventures, the takeover of the Red Sea ports of Asseb and Massawa (both now in Eritrea) in 1885. Southern politicians favoured colonial expansion as an outlet for surplus population and agricultural produce; northern ones wanted Italy to be a great power, saw the army as an essential guarantor of public order, and supported high military spending—the army and navy ministries spent more than all other ministries combined between 1862 and 1913.

Source: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Italy/Italy-from-1870-to-1945#ref318953>

Transformismo (Wikipedia)

Transformismo refers to the method of making a flexible centrist coalition of government which isolated the extremes of the left and the right in Italian politics after the unification before the rise of Benito Mussolini and Fascism.

The process was initiated by Agostino Depretis, the Italian Prime Minister in 1883 who was a member of the Left. He moved to the right and reshuffled his government to include Marco Minghetti's Liberal-Conservatives. This was a move Depretis had been considering for a while before 1883. The aim was to ensure a stable government that would avoid weakening the institutions by extreme shifts to the left or right. Depretis felt that a secure government could ensure calm in Italy.

At this time, middle class politicians were more concerned with making deals with each other and less about political philosophies and principles. Large coalitions were formed, with members being bribed to join them. The Liberals, the main political group, was tied together by informal gentleman's agreements, but these were always in matters of enriching themselves. Indeed, actual governing did not seem to be happening at all, but since only two million men had franchises most of these wealthy landowners did not have to concern themselves with such things as improving the lives of the people they were supposedly representing democratically.

One of the most successful politicians was Giovanni Giolitti, who succeeded in becoming Prime Minister on five different occasions over twenty years. Under his influence, the Liberals did not develop as a structured party. They were instead a series of informal personal groupings with no formal links to political constituencies. However, *trasformismo* fed into the debates that the Italian parliamentary system was weak and actually failing and it ultimately became associated with corruption. It was perceived as the sacrifice of principles and policies for short term gain. The system of *trasformismo* was little loved and seemed to be creating a huge gap between legal (parliamentary and political) Italy and real Italy where the politicians became increasingly isolated. This system brought almost no advantages, illiteracy remained the same in 1912 as before the unification era and backward economic policies, combined with poor sanitary conditions, continued to prevent the country's rural areas from improving.

Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trasformismo>

ITALIAN FOREIGN POLICY 1870-1919

Foreign Policies before 1914:

- Consistent theme in Italian Foreign Policy – *“to guarantee the country’s security within Europe and extend the prestige of the new state”*
- The basic principle during the Risorgimento had been to establish and keep peace with Britain and France. When France lost against Prussia in 1870-71 the situation in Europe got different...
- Three Conflicting courses:
 1. **Anti-Austrian theme:** There were demands (especially from the Nationalists) for further territorial gains at Austria’s expense (South Tyrol, Istria, Dalmatia...)
 2. **Anti-French theme:** There were several territorial claims against France (Nice, Savoy and Corsica) + Colonial rivalry in North Africa (especially over Tunisia)
 3. **Colonial Expansion** (especially in North and East Africa)
- Italy has a **poor strategic position** – the country can be attacked from three sides by sea...
- The **conflicting Foreign Policies** in Europe remained through the whole period – and longer, from the unification to 1945. The countries two neighbours in the North; France and Austria-Hungary were, in various forms, enemies of each other almost this whole period which meant that who ever Italy choose to befriend the other one would automatically become an enemy...
- In **1882** Italy became part of the **Triple Alliance** between Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy. Meanwhile the contacts with France deteriorated; In 1860 Nice and Savoy had been transferred to France and in 1881 France occupied Tunisia (where Italian settlers greatly outnumbered the French ones).
- The **“Scramble of Africa”** also affected Italy. The country had interests both in North and East Africa. In 1890 Italy proclaimed Eritrea, on the horn of Africa. Italy also tried to increase their influence in the neighbour country Ethiopia. They supported one of the local leaders, King Menelek of Shoa who took over the country in 1889. They signed a Treaty with him which Italy thought meant that he accepted Italian protectorate over Ethiopia. In 1891 Menelek rejected this interpretation. The Italian Prime Minister Crispi decided on a campaign against Ethiopia. The Italian army was defeated twice – first at the Battle of Amba Alagi (January 1896) and then at Adowa (March 1896). Crispi resigned and the new Italian government asked for a peace. In October 1896 they signed the Peace Treaty of Addis Ababa. Italy recognized the independence of Ethiopia and promised to restrict their activities in Eritrea.
- **Settlement with France.** The same year, 1896, Italy and France came to an understanding. Over the next years they stopped the “tariff war”, Italy gave up the claims to Tunisia and accepted that France got “free hands” in Morocco (1902). In return Italy got “free hands” in Tripoli (part of today’s Libya).
- **The Tripolitan War 1911-1912.** In 1911, when the Great Powers were occupied with the Second Moroccan Crisis, Italy sent an ultimatum to the Ottoman Empire. Italy claimed that Tripoli was in a “state of neglect and disorder” and that threatened Italian lives. Then Italy sent troops and announced the annexation of Tripoli November 5th 1911. The native Arab population put up a stiff resistance against the Italian Army. Remembering the problems in Ethiopia Italy sent over 100000 troops. Still the war did not go very well. Then Italy launched some attacks in the Dardanelles and some of the Turkish Islands (like Rhodes). When Turkey also saw the threat from the Balkan League she decided to make peace with Italy. At the Peace Treaty of Ouchy (which was confirmed and made definite at the Treaty of Lausanne) Italy received Tripoli.

WORLD WAR ONE

Changing partners; The History of Italy during the 19th Century is clearly anti-Hapsburg. The Entente offered old Hapsburg territories in South Tyrol and some down the Adriatic coast for Italy to join the war. Since France and Italy had earlier reached an agreement about the colonies in North Africa and the fact that Italy had this anti-Hapsburg feelings made it easy for her to change partner 1915 – from the Triple Alliance to the Triple Entente.

When the war broke out 1914 Italy declared neutrality. In May 1915 Italy joined the war on the Entente side – after she had been promised Trento, South Tyrol, Trieste, Dalmatia and some other areas along the Adriatic coast.

War of attrition; The Italian campaign started with an attack along the line of the river Isonzo (north-west of Italy). Austria-Hungary occupied a line of mountainous defensive positions. Italian Historian P. Pieri said; “the river could not be crossed until the mountains had been seized and the mountains could not be seized until the river had been crossed.” Between June 1915 and August 1917 the Italian troops engaged in 11 separate battles along the Isonzo river without being able to break this stalemate situation. Italy lost nearly a third of her army strength and it was fairly easy for a few Austrian divisions to keep the Italian Army down. This meant that the Entente (Italy) saw no success at the Italian front and it was not good for diversion either...

Battle of Caporetto; In October 1917 a combined German-Austrian/Hungarian offensive at Caporetto (near Kobarid in today's Slovenia) nearly defeated Italy. She lost territory, the morale was low due to the high casualties (over 300 000 men) and so was the ammunition. An allied campaign in the Balkans, an exhausted Austrian army and domestic problems inside the Dual Monarchy diverted the attack. This gave the Italians a chance to regroup. First of all - the Italian Supreme General Luigi Cadorna was replaced by General Armando Diaz. He was the one that now reorganized the troops, blocked the enemy advance and stabilized the front-line around the Piave River. This situation would remain over half a year.

Battle of the Piave River; The main assault, fought 15-22 June 1918, was a response to German demands upon their ally to launch an offensive across the Piave River. The Austro-Hungarian army of June 1918 was quite different from the one that had triumphed at Caporetto eight months earlier. It was demoralized, equipment and other supplies were perilously low, and even if Austria-Hungary had as many divisions (or even a few more) they were weak. The attack failed and the Austro-Hungarian Army had to go back into their old positions after losing over 190 000 men...

Battle of Vittorio Veneto; As part of an all Entente offensive in September 1918 the Entente Command tried to talk General Diaz to launch an attack over the Piave River. He had after the success of the Battle of the Piave River preferred smaller local operations. Now the Entente leaders tried to convince him to launch a bigger advance. After the continuous success of the Entente on the Western front and the fact that it seems like the war was close to an end it was important for Italy to gain as much as possible before the Peace Treaties would be discussed. The attack opened on 23 October 1918 with an Italian advance in the mountains. After some initial problems the Italian army managed with the help of British and French forces to advance. A week later Vittorio Veneto fell. This split the defending Austro-Hungarian Army. With the Allies' succeeding in advancing 24km along a 56km front a truce was finally agreed on 2 November with the capture of Tagliamento; an armistice came into effect the following day, signed at Padua. Hostilities were formally concluded on 4 November 1918. The Italians lost some 38,000 casualties, a figure dwarfed by the 300,000 prisoners suffered by the Austro-Hungarians. Simultaneous political turmoil completed the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The war was over for the Dual Monarchy!

SUMMARY – ITALY 1870-1922

"The Move to Global War"

ITALIAN FASCISM: Mussolini set up the first fascist units in March 1919 – the "*fascio di combattimento*" ("*fascio*" means group and hints towards the old Roman symbol of the magistrate of sticks "*fasces*" bound together).

FASCIST IDEOLOGY: So what was the Italian "*fascist ideology*"?

Fascist ideology is not a very clear ideology... Fascism promoted nationalism, a strong leader (dictator), single-party government, empire building and war. It was anti-communist, against class-struggle, against internationalism, against a multi-party liberal democracy and against pacifism.

Key features of Italian fascism under Mussolini:

NATIONALISM

- View of the nation state, its culture and history, as a unifying force
- Desire to move foreign influence
- Own nation seen as superior to other nations

MILITARISM

- Promotion of political violence and was a method of revitalizing society
- Violence seen as necessary in order to progress
- Development of paramilitary organizations

SOCIAL DARWINISM

- The belief that races have evolved as superior to other races
- "*Survival of the fittest*"

SOCIAL UNITY

- Opposes class-based divisions in society and promotes collective national society

AUTHORITARIANISM

- Totalitarian; the state has influence or control over all aspects of society
- The people are subservient to the state
- Mussolini: "*obedience not discussion*"

FASCIST FOREIGN POLICY: The Italian Foreign Policy under Mussolini was influenced by the fascist ideology as well as:

- Italy's geographical position and its limited economic resources
- Previous foreign policy humiliations (especially the defeat at the Battle of Adowa in Abyssinia 1896)
- The Paris Peace Settlements after WWI
- The changing international context

BACKGROUND: Italy was first unified 1861. This unification was completed in 1870 when Venetia as well as Rome had been added to the previous unified nation. The period that followed - 1870 to 1922/1923 is an era known as "*Liberal Italy*". This period brought along several problems:

- Lack of a common national identity (note the differences between north and south)
- Resistance from the Pope and the Catholic Church
- Working-class protest and the force of socialism (PSI – The Italian Socialist Party founded in 1892)
- WWI (Italy signed the Treaty of London 1915 with Britain, France and Russia which Italy believed had promised them South Tyrol, Trentino, Istria, Fiume, Dalmatia and some colonies. Italy received the three first territories but not Fiume, Dalmatia and any colonies)

- Nationalism which demanded a completion of the unification and a revision of the Paris Peace Settlements (The dissatisfaction led to widespread support of D'Annunzio's occupation of Fiume 1919)

WEAK POLITICAL SYSTEM AND GROWING ECONOMIC PROBLEMS: The above problems affected Italy's political system – the liberal democracy. Giovanni Giolitti (Prime Minister 1903-05; 1906-09; 1911-14) tried to find some understanding with the more moderate socialists and the Catholic Church before WWI. This was partly successful before WWI but at the same time the PSI (Italian Socialist Party) and the PPI (The Italian Catholic Party) grew and they started to ignore the liberals and the Prime Minister. The Italian participation during WWI was very much a move backed up by nationalist and the more conservative forces of Italy. PPI (The Italian Catholic Party), the liberals under Giolitti and the PSI (The Italian Socialists) were against the participation of the war. When an editor of the socialist newspaper *Avanti* in 1915 argued in favor of Italian intervention he was expelled from the party and fired from his position as editor. His name was Benito Mussolini.

The post-war political problems: After the war the weakened liberal movement started to lose control. The extension of votes made the liberals weaker and we now saw a period of several short-term coalitions which undermined the liberal democratic parliamentary system. When the Italian population realized the lack of gains from WWI it enforced their critique against the government and the political system.

The post-war depression; high inflation (that seriously hit the workers and the middle class that had to work with specific fixed wages) and unemployment made the situation worse. Emigration to the US which had been an option before WWI was halted due to new harsh US immigration restrictions.

Communism: The Russian Revolution in October 1917 led to a widespread fear and unrest in several countries in Europe. Many Italian workers frustrated over the post-war depression and the inability of the Italian government to help them started to support the growing forces of revolutionary socialism in Italy. In 1921 the PCI (the Italian Communist Party) was founded.

Southern Italy: The economic situation and the growing radicalism also affected the very poor south. In several areas the landless peasants protested and used violence against their landowners. Italy seemed to be on the edge of a Civil War or a Revolution...

FASCIST PARTY: The Fascists under Mussolini benefited from the post-war situation. They openly opposed the Socialists and Communists – not only ideologically but also were prepared to confront them on the street physically. This led to support from wealthy industrialists, landowners and the Catholic Church. Pope Pius XI backed Mussolini as a way of improving the relations between the state and church (as well as hindering the anti-religious movement of socialism and communism). In November 1921 the Italian fascists officially became a political party – the National Fascist Party (Partito Nazionale Fascista, PNF). In the 1921 election the Fascist Party (PNF) received 35 seats. The socialists (PSI) and communists (PCI) received 138 seats and the Catholic Party (PPI) received 108 seats. Italian politics was polarizing...

1922:...