ASPECTS OF ANGLO-ITALIAN RELATIONS
WITH REGARD TO THE MEDITERRANEAN LIFE-LINE
1878-1893

A Thesis Presented for the
Degree of Master of Arts

BY

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THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
1948

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The writer extends this expression of his gratitude to those members of the faculty and staff of the Ohio State University History Department, the Graduate School, and Library who have given freely of their time and advice to assist him in the preparation of this work. He is especially grateful to Professor Warner F. Woouring of the History Department for not only suggesting the theme, but for the manifestation of an interest in its progress which far exceeded the normal requirements of his academic station.

Because of the profound understanding and patience which has been demonstrated throughout its preparation, the writer dedicates this effort of his scholastic endeavors to his wife, Melberta.

W. L. B.
Malsicuro rimane ogni avvenimento più grande.
E ciò perché, mentre alcuni tengono come accertato quanto udirono in un modo purchessia, altri svisano la verità, ed entrambi gli errori si accrescono con l'andar del tempo.

Tacitus, Annali. Italian translation by Rodolfo Giani.
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CHAPTER I

SETTING AND BACKGROUND

During the last half of the nineteenth century, the political primacy of Victorian England, "the first and only World Power", was altered profoundly in its relation to the other European Powers. The changes wrought in Britain's status were due to the emergence of new political and economical interests and philosophies coupled with technological developments. But for our purposes it will be necessary to consider only the ingredients of foreign policy hidden in the factors of imperialism, nationalism, and in the changes of naval strategy and architecture.

One of the political developments was the unification of Germany, 1858-1871; one was the unification of Italy, 1859-1871; and another was the phenomenal rise of Russia to a position of political primacy in Eurasia accompanied by large scale migrations of population and industries to the Urals and beyond. National unity, of consequence, sought its outlet through the means of a politico-economic philosophy called imperialism. However, an essential instrument in an imperialistic policy in the nineteenth century time

1 Sprout, Harold & Margaret, Foundations of National Power, 149.
2 Ibid., 184; and see Schevill, F., History of Europe, 524-552.
setting was the navy which assumed special importance in an age when empire was keenly competitive; and which saw a revolution in the navy's physical make-up.

With the opening of the Suez Canal, 1869, all of these forces were brought to bear on the shaping of foreign policy in all Europe, but more especially that of England and Italy. Great Britain's interest in the Mediterranean was economic, political, and strategic. The Suez Canal now made the Mediterranean, from the strategic and commercial point of view, much the shortest and therefore the principal highway between England, India and the East. By transferring to Egypt, most of the strategic importance which before belonged to the Cape of Good Hope, the Suez also served to involve the security of the British Empire, and thus became a vital link in the British life-line thru the Mediterranean. Bismarck is credited with having made the statement that in its relationship to the British Empire the Suez Canal was "like a spinal cord which connects the backbone with the brain". The significance of this utterance will best be explained by the exam-

4 "Intanto l'apertura del Canale di Suez...produceva la rivoluzione del Mediterraneo, che diveniva una grande via del traffico mondiale, ponendo in primo piano l'importanza della posizione strategiche nell Mediterraneo orientale e in quello centrale". Enciclopedia Italiana, XXII, 334.
ination of a few historical facts.

Although Great Britain's first contacts with India had been established by the way of the Mediterranean, the British had been accustomed to approach India by the route of the Cape of Good Hope from the time of the voyages of Drake and Cavendish until the advent of the Suez Canal.

From its very conception, British statesmen had looked on the building of the Suez Canal with apprehension and did everything within their power to prevent it. Thus in 1851, we find that Palmerston, on referring to the French attempts to secure approval of the Pasha of Egypt for an isthmian canal, had said:

...it is needless to point out how such a work, changing as it would the relative position of some of the Maritime powers of Europe towards each other, would involve the possibility of political consequences of great import and might seriously effect the foreign relations of the Turkish Empire.8

In the period following the Franco-German war the spectre of an imperialistic Russia, bent on finding a warm-water outlet, had stirred up considerable interest in an alternate overland route to India. However, after England had secured some representation on the controlling Board of the Suez Canal

7 Abbott, W. C., Expansion of Europe, 72 ff, 346, 351.
8 Hoskins, H. L., British Routes to India, 279. In 1855, Palmerston expressed fear of losing commercial and maritime pre-eminence. Ibid., 314; in 1856, he expressed a fear that the Canal might lead to the British occupation of Egypt. Moon, P. T., Imperialism and World Politics, 20.
Company all thoughts of such an alternate route were postponed since there appeared to be no possible chance of competition for the shipping which passed through the Suez Canal.

In 1877 the British cabinet became concerned over the situation in Turkey. Lord Beaconsfield, the Prime Minister, bearing in mind the persistent and unscrupulous advances of Russia both in Europe and in Asia over a long period, realized the importance to British and imperial interests of Constantinople and the Straits, of Egypt and the Suez Canal. With the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish War it was not difficult for him to persuade the Queen that Great Britain's disapproval of Russia's action should be expressed. This disapproval formed the basis of Lord Derby's, at that time Beaconsfield's Foreign Secretary, May dispatch to the Russian Ambassador at Constantinople. After a statement of British interests in the East with regard to Constantinople, the Straits, Egypt, the Suez Canal, and the Persian Gulf, the note continued with a warning that any attempt to disrupt the communication between Europe and the East would be regarded as a menace to India. Likewise it was stated that Great Britain could not endure Russian occupation of Constantinople or Egypt, and a "hands off" policy in the Persian Gulf was defined.

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Although Beaconsfield had emphasized the importance of the Suez Canal in 1876 by asking the Parliament to confer upon the Queen the title of Empress of India, it was his act of sending some seven thousand Indian troops thru the Canal to Malta during the crisis of 1878 that implied the new theory of imperial relations and shed a new light on the British attitude to the Canal itself.

Considering the above mentioned facts it should be easy to see that with the strategic geography of the Mediterranean now so basically altered, the defense of this imperial artery naturally became a major aim of British strategy. Consequently, measures taken for the security of Great Britain's Mediterranean life-line impinged at many points upon the interests or ambitions of other European Powers, especially the youngest Mediterranean Power, Italy. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that during the last decades of the nineteenth century some of the most vital problems of European Diplomacy were geographically situated in the Mediterranean Basin, with occasional meanderings to the Red Sea area and into Central Asia, its essential extension and bastion.

This region, broadly speaking, the Mediterranean Basin

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13 For example, Beaconsfield admitted time and time again that Cyprus had been acquired, primarily as a place of arms and as a base of operations for the protection of the routes to India. Hoskins, Op. cit., 443-445.
and its outlets, comprised three Mediterranean territories and the Near East. These are the peninsulas or promontories of southern Europe; the fertile margin of northern Africa; and the fertile east shore of the Mediterranean which merges into the semi-arid to arid peninsula of southwestern Asia.

The northern boundary of the Mediterranean Basin is formed by a broken system of highlands and mountain ranges which extend from the Pyrenees eastward across Europe to the Caucasus. The three great promontories which reach southward from this highland demarcation zone and which are cut off from the rest of Europe are the Iberian Peninsula; the Italian Peninsula; and the Balkan Peninsula. It can be seen that Italy was figuratively and literally, "in the middle".

Facing Europe across the Mediterranean and the Black Sea lies an irregular fringe of watered land which merges at various points into a desert hinterland. This fertile strip extends from Morocco across Algeria and into Tunis; and the region represents one of the most valuable parts of Africa for commerce, investments, and white colonization. In it, France was endeavouring to make a new and greater France. Eastward the southern shore of the Mediterranean rapidly grows more arid with the desert in Libya and Egypt pushing to the water's edge, save for the narrow irrigated valley of the Nile which thrusts a fertile corridor southward into the Sudan.

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Since Egypt represented the scenes of struggle between England and France, Libya and Tripoli was all that was left for Italy. But these regions were of much less value than the rest of the African littoral and Italy had to look elsewhere for colonies. Eastward from the Nile the belt of arid and semi-arid lands continues, to become lost in central Asia.

Such, then, was the geographic area in which the interests of Great Britain and Italy mainly met during the span of years from 1878 to 1893.

This raises the question of the relations and relative positions of the Powers during the period under consideration, especially the principal contestants in the Mediterranean, namely, Great Britain, Italy, France, Austria-Hungary, Germany, Russia, and Turkey. It is worthy of note that of these, only two, France and Italy, front directly on the Mediterranean; and only two, Italy and Austria-Hungary, had no frontage on any ocean.

England had acquired an interest in the sea communications of the Mediterranean long before the Suez Canal was completed. As early as 1194, a British fighting fleet entered the Mediterranean carrying Richard I to Palestine, and capturing enroute, Messina and Cyprus. Thence onward she made frequent excursions

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15 Ibid., 218-219.
16 This conception of the Mediterranean Basin does not vary much from that reached by Glanville, J. R., Italy's Relations With England, 1896-1905, 9-10.
into the inland sea, obtaining a maximum of visits in the seventeenth century. Through the Treaty of Utrecht, 1713, which closed the war of the Spanish Succession, England obtained possession of the strategical bases of Minorca and Gibraltar. "From that day on which that treaty was signed the Mediterranean changed its aspect with the entry of a new power, nationally a stranger to that sea".

Although taken in 1800, the British position in Malta was not formally recognized by the Powers until the Congress of Vienna, 1815, at which time she also received a protectorate of the Ionian Isles. Thence onward, throughout the nineteenth century, England's stake in the Mediterranean steadily increased. Technical developments in navigation and the rise of the Eastern question, along with the quickened step of her rivals, France and Russia, however, now, 1878-1893, gave constant impulse to form a line of defense along the road to India, especially in regard to Egypt.

At this point something must be said of the navy, which stood guard over all these growing economic commitments.

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17 Clark, G. S., "England and the Mediterranean", Nineteenth Century, (April 1885), XXXVII.
overseas. The period witnessed a growing rivalry among naval nations in the passage from wooden ships to "iron-clads". Although Great Britain had the largest fleet and incorporated in it many innovations such as the modern silhouette, all-steel constructed battleships, and especially in breech-loaders, such revolutionary changes when coupled with the new mode of motivation, steam, would tend to make the navy an uncertain factor. But through naval strength in the Mediterranean, Great Britain could sustain any continental power with whom she might be allied and thus maintain a balance of power.

A strategical factor for consideration was found in the naval axiom that the place for warships was wherever the enemy was to be found. At this time the center of gravity in a naval war was bound to be in the Mediterranean, so long as a French fleet or a combination with the French fleet was there. This would lead one to believe that the chief power that England built against was France, with a fleet much smaller but usually ahead in novelties. In all probability an Anglo-Italian naval co-operation in war was cherished as something to fall back upon in the last resort.

Thus after the Congress of Berlin, Great Britain's position in the Mediterranean was found to be stronger than it had ever been since the time of Napoleon III. "Gains made

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Langer, W. L., European Alliances and Alignments, 102.
by Russia in Asia Minor were counter-balanced by a revived alliance of England and Turkey and by the establishment of British control, first in the Suez Canal, and then in the Island of Cyprus. In short, Turkey-in-Asia, the Straits, and in general the maintenance of Mediterranean interests were to be the keynotes of British policy during the decade of the eighties. But England needed a Mediterranean ally and the most likely one at the time was Italy.

Since no other country is so closely bound and subordinated to the Mediterranean as Italy, her interests in the sea were fundamental. By reason of her geographical position, Italy is a maritime Power. It is against her interests that any other Power should dominate the Mediterranean by a navy of great superiority, by colonies on the North African coast, or by a commercial monopoly in the Near East. Italy also had strategic and cultural interests in the coast opposite her Adriatic side, because her eastern coast was flat and exposed, with very few harbors; and because many of the inhabitants of the Austro-Hungarian empire were Latin in origin and racially kin to the Italians.

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26 Feiling, K., *Italian Policy Since 1870*, 4-5.

27 Ibid., 10-11.
Just before the Congress of Berlin the international situation had brought England towards Italy with a genuine project for agreement on Mediterranean questions which was rejected. Thus Italy had not bound herself by any engagement by which she might possibly be involved in a policy of action. As a consequence, Italy had arrived at the Congress of Berlin without preparation and morally and diplomatically isolated. Passively she had witnessed the Austrian occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina which reinforced the Austrian position in the Adriatic and made more difficult the conditions for the recovery of the Trentino and Trieste. Still passively she had witnessed the English occupation of Cyprus and of Egypt; and also the French occupation of Tunis. These political perturbations, when coupled with the increased colonial problems, served to shake and rudely awaken the national sentiments, for shortly after the Tunis episode, 1881, the violent indignation expressed throughout Italy brought about the downfall of Cairoli.

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31 Tittoni, T., Sei Anni Di Politica Estera, iii-v.
32 Annual Register, 1881, 243.
Yet, while the exits to the world beyond were not under her control, Italy's position was strategic and one of strength. Like a bridge stretched across the Mediterranean, she lay athwart the line of communication between Great Britain and the East; threatened French communications with North Africa and Syria; and was in a position to prevent the full effectiveness of a Franco-Russian naval entente. Italy recognized that to utilize this position of strength she must possess a strong navy. During the years, 1878-1893, Italy undertook a naval construction program which elevated her to third place among the European naval Powers. With a fleet of significant influence, Italy became a factor to be considered in the shaping of Mediterranean policy, and this meant consideration of France.

During the same period in which England and Italy were developing Mediterranean policies, French ambitions and expansion had developed likewise. Algeria, quietly acquired in 1830, and Obock, occupied in 1862, formed springboards into Tunis and Somaliland. But unlike England, aggressiveness was the key to France's policy in the Mediterranean Basin. France,

33 Suez, Gibraltar, and the Straits were in the hands of England and Turkey, which situation gave rise to the diplomatic axiom that Italy can never, without courting disaster, break with that power or coalition which hold the sea gates of the Mediterranean. Sprout, Op. cit., 276.
34 Mario, J. W., "Italy On The Sea", Nation, (Sept. 3, 1891).
too, had a Mediterranean life-line, one running north and south from Marseilles to the North African coast. France also had strategic interests in the Mediterranean route to the Indian Ocean and beyond, as well as her historic traditions to be maintained in the Levant.

Though her traditional primacy on the continent had been lost in the Franco-Prussian war and wounded pride filled her with unwavering antagonism toward her eastern neighbor; and though she was inferior to England in naval strength and general resources, France was determined to keep open the lines of communication connecting her with her empire. It is thought by one scholar that France's Mediterranean policy, 1878-1893, was directed primarily, against her natural rival in the Mediterranean, Italy; but other sources would lead us to believe that Great Britain also was an object of her naval concentrations in the Mediterranean during this period. In any case it is an accepted fact that France was looking to the creation of a vast African empire.

Austria-Hungary was the one European Power that lacked the national energy which had prompted Great Britain, France, Italy, and Germany to seek markets and colonies and to under-

37 Geffcken, F. H., "Triple Alliance and Italy", Review of Reviews, (Feb. 1890).
38 Buckle, G. E., Letters of Queen Victoria, I, 359.
take the hazards of an imperialistic policy. Consequently we find Austrian interests centered in the Balkans and the Near East where the issues of Italian Irredentism and Russian Pan-Slavism were matters of concern. Still, her position was not alarming. The acquisition of Bosnia-Herzegovina at Berlin had provided some military security on the south; and close cooperation with England, and an alliance with Germany assured her a modicum of support in the advent of conflict with Russia.

Germany interests in the Mediterranean were primarily those of her ally, Austria-Hungary. With no frontage on the Mediterranean, it was natural for her to disclaim active political interest in the questions of the Mediterranean. But since Bismarck's foreign policy, 1870-1890, centered around his efforts to isolate France and to prevent her from waging a war of revenge, this attitude of disinterest could not be maintained. It was not infrequently that Bismarck was the decisive figure on the international scene. He was, as one scholar say, "the pivot around which Europe revolved during the years which the general orientation of the Powers underwent"

went some important changes".

Although the Russian expansion program made her lean toward a French alliance, autocratic Russia was politically nearer militaristic Germany. The Mediterranean for Russia, like Great Britain, was important chiefly as a highway. Her desires for a warm-water outlet and for closer ties with fellow-Slav Christians had constantly been opposed by Great Britain, generally with Austria-Hungary as an ally. Also, Russia had endured constant dispute with Great Britain over the guardianship of the routes to India.

Still, Russia's geographical position demanded recognition of her interests, if not her hegemony, in the outlet from the Black to the Mediterranean Sea; and this, despite the fact that England maintained a powerful squadron in the Mediterranean as a constant reminder to Russia of the pressure which could be brought to bear. However, any consideration of the Straits involved Turkey's interests in the immediate territory.

With Russia constantly aiming at Constantinople, it was inevitable that Turkey should become a center of diplomatic

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intrigue to determine which of the Powers would dictate its policies. In 1841, European protection for the integrity of Turkey had been substituted for the protection then being exercised by Russia. But it is of interest to note that this concerted protection of the Powers was not guaranteed until 1856.

Although Turkey had some cause for apprehension after 1841, England had purchased shares in the Suez Canal, it was made to appear unfounded as a result of the British guarantee of Turkey-in-Asia in the Cyprus Convention, 1878.

With only titular control over the non-Christian sections of her Asiatic possessions; and with maturing national consciousness in the Balkans pointing at her elimination as an European Power, it was evident that Turkey's existence as an imperial state was at stake. Turkey's main hope lay in a continued reliance on British support.

Such, then, were the leading material interests of the Great Powers of Europe in the Mediterranean Basin immediately following the Congress of Berlin. But the foreign policy of any one

49 England had informed Italy that Turkey was no longer a good ally for her and that a new one was necessary if Russia was to be successfully opposed. Hoskins, Op. cit., 466.
country can only be understood when properly evaluated in its relations with the policies of others. So, for a clearer understanding of these policies, it will be necessary to probe into the diplomatic background for guidance in pursuing Anglo-Italian relations from 1878 to 1893.
CHAPTER II

DIPLOMATIC MANEUVERS AND THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE

The explanation that the Triple Alliance was a direct result of the French occupation of Tunis, 1881, can be accepted as a historical fact only in the light of other pertinent circumstances. Firstly, it must be taken into account that the event occurred at a time when Bismarck was the pivot around which Europe revolved, years in the course of which the general orientation of the Powers underwent some important changes; and secondly, it still remains a point of contention whether or not Italy was exposed to the danger of a French attack. On the other hand, it is generally agreed that the event estranged France and Italy and that it did reveal to Italy the completeness of her isolation and thereby gave rise to agitation for an agreement with the Central Powers.

Signs of isolation appeared as early as 1878 in the con-

1 The Triple Alliance was but one link in Bismarck's system of alliances and ententes.


*Identified as Crispi by deLaveleye, E., "Foreign Policy of Italy", Contemporary Review, (Feb. 1892).
ferences which preceded the Berlin Treaty. There, the Italian representatives felt themselves very much shut out with "... their colleagues displaying coldness towards them, and even at times a lack of goodwill". This treaty, especially its immediate results, had provoked in Italy feelings of violent resentment which were deep and lasting. Austria-Hungary received Bosnia-Herzegovina; England, Cyprus; Russia, the liberation of Bulgaria; and France, Tunis; whereas Italy came away empty-handed.

The year following the Congress of Berlin the young realm was further isolated. Bismarck viewed with alarm the growing hostility between Russia and Germany, and at once sought a defensive alliance with Austria-Hungary which would promise mutual support in case of attack by a third Power, whether Russia, France, or Italy. On October 7, 1879, the Treaty of Alliance between Austria-Hungary and Germany was concluded. It is significant that it was the desire of English policy at this time that there should be a Central Europe strong enough to stem the tide of Pan-Slavism; and the negotiations

5 Pribram, Secret Treaties, I, 25-34.
6 Salisbury expressed the opinion that the treaty was one of the best things that could have happened. Pribram, A. F., England and the International Policy of the European Great Powers, 20. (Hereafter cited as England).
carried on in March, 1879, revealed that England was prepared to support the alliance by keeping Italy from entering into any understanding with Russia.

Meanwhile, in 1880, England had a change of government with Gladstone and the Liberals coming to power. The Liberals were determined to justify the criticism that they had made while in the opposition. Their views on the Suez Canal shares, the Eastern question, and imperialism formed such an utterly different policy from that of the Conservatives that ideas of friendly relations with Germany and Austria-Hungary were impossible. At the same time, Bismarck, seeing the need to protect monarchial States and dynasties against the increasing growth of democratic and anti-monarchial forces, renewed on June 16, 1881, the League of The Three Emperors. This treaty marked an estrangement from England and achieved a temporary compromise between the interests of Austria and Russia in the Balkans.

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7 Ibid., 22-23.
10 Ibid., 45.
11 The Liberals thought the idea of imperialism was being carried too far. Lunt, Op. cit., 708-709.
Concurrent with these developments were negotiations to include Italy in the system of Central European Alliances. As early as 1880, Italy had extended feelers to both Austria and Germany only to have them rejected as unofficial. Soon afterwards, France secured Bismarck's promise of support in North Africa. The periodic raids by frontier tribesmen into Algeria gave France the *causus belli* to send a punitive expedition into Tunis. With the Treaty of Bardo, May 12, 1881, the occupation of Tunis was consummated. It is Crispi's belief that Italy's isolation at this time was due, partially, to Cairoli's failure to follow up the early advances revealed in the exchanges between Rome and Vienna. At any rate, public opinion pressed for a new departure in foreign policy. Sonnino, a prominent member of parliament at the time, voiced the general sentiments when he urged a closer relation with the Central Powers and England.

It is of interest to note that during this time the European scene was altered. Towards the close of 1881, Gambetta became Prime Minister of France and it was generally felt that

13 Crispi, *Memoirs*, II, 118-119. Maffei, secretary-general of the Italian foreign office, authorized one Gronet Goercke to make this unofficial approach. After Bismarck's rejection the matter was dropped.
an era of active foreign policy was inevitable. While this ministerial change did not disturb Germany, it did tend to stir apprehensions in Italy. Gambetta's advent to power was considered as an encouraging event to the Italian radicals and republicans; and this change, when coupled with anti-clerical demonstrations in July, presented a problem of the most serious nature in Italo-German relations. With the Roman question having raised its head again, Bismarck could make overtures to the Pope and thus oblige Italy, standing alone and threatened as to Rome, to have recourse to himself. However, due to the development of Gambetta's policy of cultivating useful friendships, Bismarck's future negotiations with Italy were forced to undergo a change. It was fear of a republicanized Italy with a close French connection that disturbed him most. Bismarck now felt more inclined to enter into an agreement. Although Italy could be of little use beyond her own confines, she could assure the Central Powers against attack from the south in case of a two front war.


18 Ibid., 233-238.

19 Ibid.

20 Though Bismarck held slight esteem for the Italian army he considered their fleet as a power in the Mediterranean. Coolidge, A., Origins of the Triple Alliance, 213-218.
Negotiations moved forward quickly from this point onward. Out of the welter of proposals and counter-proposals, drafts and counter-drafts, the most important point for our consideration was the one concerning England. The Italians had suggested that a protocol be added making possible the admission of England to the alliance, or at least providing for her acceptance of the neutrality formula. The Central Powers were willing to include in the agreement a declaration that it was not directed against England, for they:

...fully understood the Italian position and realized that Italy and England had a common interest in checking French expansion in the Mediterranean. That Italy could on no account afford to arouse the hostility of England was also clear, for her long sea-coast was peculiarly exposed to naval attack.

To Bismarck the terms of the agreement were of relative little importance, the main thing was to have an agreement and to secure Italian neutrality and assurance that Italy would not tie up valuable Austrian forces on the Austro-Italian frontier. By May 20, 1882, all the differences had been patched up and the treaty was signed.

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21 For details of the Additional Declaration of Italy that the provisions of the alliance could not be regarded as directed against England, see Cooke and Stickney, Readings in European International Relations, 9-10.


Croce would lead us to believe that in Italy public opinion was the real motivating force behind the Triple Alliance. He writes that:

The truth is that the treaty was concluded as a result of the irresistible pressure of public opinion, led by the deputies, Senators and publicists of the greatest influence, including survivors of the Mantuan Trials and of the Austrian prisons, like Cavalletto and Finzi, who all alike advised and urged it. 24

Many scholars agree that the Italian action was essential and necessary to the welfare of the country; and that it contributed to the political peace and equilibrium of Europe at the time. Years later, Crispi, on speaking of the Triple Alliance, said that Italy had made its first step from isolation on entering into it.

Thus, with no alternative, Italy's position was transformed as if by magic. She felt herself thenceforth strong and well supported as against France, and uneasiness as to foreign interference vanished.

24 History of Italy, 121.
25 See, "Italy and France", Loc. cit., passim; Geffcken, F. H., "Triple Alliance and Italy", Loc. cit., passim; deLaveleye, "Foreign Policy of Italy", Loc. cit., passim.
26 "...il Trattato aveva realmente per iscopo precipuo di assicurare la pace, di allontanare, quanto meno, la calamità di una guerra". Chiala, Op. cit., 320, 353.
27 "...L'Italia fece benissimo fin dal 1882 ad entrare nella Triplice Alleanza....Era un primo passo ad uscire dall'isolamento, a stornare gli incombenti pericoli di guerra". Ibid., 354.
Meanwhile developments had continued elsewhere in the Mediterranean and the center of gravity had shifted to Egypt and the Near East, areas in which British interests were paramount. Although the British proposal to Italy in 1878, for a Mediterranean League had fallen through, it was important both as a precedent for the later agreements and as to showing the trend of British policy at this time.

In 1881-1882, the nationalist movement in Egypt accelerated to a new high and England was forced to resume the active interest in Egyptian affairs that the Congress of Berlin had deferred. It was the crisis produced by Arabi's national movement in April and May, that led to the intervention of England in 1882. For a while it appeared as if France and England would co-operate, especially after Gambetta and Granville issued a Joint Note expressing a mutual interest and policy. However, a few weeks later Gambetta was removed from office and the matter was allowed to expire. The next action on the part of the two Powers was to send war-ships to Alexandria with the avowed purpose of strengthening the

28 "...to consider the maintenance...of their commercial and political interests in the Mediterranean and the Straits..." T. & P., Op. cit., 382-383.
29 For details, see, Cromer, Lord, Modern Egypt, I-II, passim.
authority of the Khedive and safeguarding the legal state of things in Egypt. Every effort was made by England to assure the other Powers that she had no idea of occupying Egypt. On June 25, England, along with the other Powers, signed a "Self-Denying Protocol". Nevertheless, on July 11-12, English warships bombarded the forts at Alexandria; and her army destroyed the Egyptian troops at Tel-el-Kebir on September 13, and two days later occupied Cairo.

The international situation at the moment was favorable for the British invasion and occupation. The Tunisian question and the Triple Alliance had placed both France and Italy in such a position that neither could hazard a military adventure in Egypt. Though Granville had offered to receive the co-operation of any of the Powers, he knew full well that Turkey would be the only one to accept. France and Italy were interested but the latter refused to act. Italy's rejection of the invitation has been often criticized, while many of the

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32 British Papers, 1882, LXXII, 387, 399.
33 Foreign and State Papers, vol. 73, 1179.
36 The Italian Ambassador at the International Conference, meeting at Constantinople, had suggested that as long as the Conference lasted the Powers should refrain from isolated action in Egypt. British Papers, 1881, LXXXIII, 93.
prominent political figures of the country deplored the decision at the time. In any case, England was free to occupy territory which, from the time of Napoleon, had been regarded as a fine field for imperialistic operation. Such an imperialistic position carried with it attendant liabilities and burdens, and it was these factors which tended to point a way to English isolation and her decline of importance in European politics. However, it should be considered that Gladstone could not, in the face of injury done and threats to life and property, act otherwise. In fact, Lord Cromer went further with his justification of the policy and said that in addition to self-defense: "it was clear that the absence of effectual Turkish or international action, the duty of crushing Arabi devolved on England".

So long as Anglo-French rivalries in Egypt were unsolved, the British position in that country was so undefined and unrecognized that the rest of Europe was in position to bring pressure to bear. A rebellion in the Sudan, 1883, involved the British Government far more than intended. With increased financial problems as a result of the Sudan campaign, they decided that it was no business for Great Britain alone and

"Si presentò allora per l'Italia l'occasione di fare una politica ardita, perché l'Inghilterra domandò la nostra collaborazione...." Francesco Crispi...scrisse al Mancini dicendosi dolentissimo del rifiuto: "Bisognava accettare senza esitazione...." Orsi, P., L'Italia Moderna, 1750-1928, 326.

Modern Egypt, I, 298-299.
in April, 1884, Granville issued invitations for a conference of the Powers. Everything hinged on Bismarck's attitude who, unfortunately, recognized the weakness of England's position and was determined to use the Egyptian question to bargain with Granville on colonial issues. German support was essential but concessions weakened England. Needless to say, she emerged an isolated Power as the Conference ended in a failure so far as England was concerned.

Further events served to isolate Great Britain even more. In September, 1884, possibilities of a Franco-German naval entente were discussed at a meeting of the Three Emperors League. The following spring England came to the brink of war with Russia over the so-called Penjdeh incident. This situation represented the culminating point in the Central Asia question. The repercussions of this affair were widespread and the fear of conflict rested on the British position in all directions. The Sudan campaign was interrupted, the bonds binding the three Emperors were strengthened in a hostile entente against England, and the Rules of the Straits

39 Bismarck could count on Russia, Austria, and Italy as allies. His relations with Turkey were closer than they had been for some time. Spain was making overtures to join the Continental Group. Langer, Op. cit., 275 ff.


41 Bismarck suggested a Maritime League to balance England's position on the sea. Ibid., 301-302.

received a new interpretation. Also the Penjdeh incident gave a new significance to the attitude of Turkey.

After the Penjdeh incident had been settled, a serious crisis arose over Bulgaria. In September, 1885, Prince Alexander of Battenberg decided to unite the Bulgarias by annexing Eastern Roumelia. Both England and France favored the act despite the fact that it was in violation of the Treaty of Berlin and was in defiance of the Powers. As a result, Lord Salisbury, by adapting his policies to the circumstances of the time, managed to reassert Britain's influence in continental affairs.

At the same time that England was occupying Egypt, France and Italy were seeking strategic points along the route to the Far East; and had already established themselves on the Red Sea at Obock and Assab, respectively. England, too, fixed her gaze upon the area, because having possession of Egypt and control of the Suez, she was forced to become interested in all the territory then controlled by Egypt which included the Red Sea, Somaliland, the Harrar, Northern Abyssinia, and the Sudan.

46 Hertslet, Map of Africa by Treaty, II, 628; 446.
47 The Sultan of Turkey still claimed suzerainty over all these areas as well as Egypt itself. Work, E., Ethiopia A Pawn In European Diplomacy, 24.
In 1884, England moved in and established a protectorate over the territory now known as British Somaliland, as she could not let the whole of the Red Sea littoral fall into the hands of the French or any other power which might prove unfriendly. Since England had already supported the Italian program at Assab it was natural that from this point onward Anglo-Italian policy would tend to follow parallel lines in the Red Sea area.

Disappointed in Tunis, the Italians had officially taken over Assab in 1882, and with British approval. They now undertook to gain further compensation in East Africa, expecting as Crispi put it; "to find in the Red Sea the key to the Mediterranean".

When called upon by the British to help in the campaign against the Mahdists in the Sudan, Italian troops had occupied Massowah, 1885. There can be little doubt that England gave its approval to this occupation when one considers Granville's remarks to the Italian Ambassador, Count Negri, to whom he said:

...If the Italian Government should desire to occupy some of the ports in question, it was a matter between Italy and Turkey,... Her Majesty's Government, for their part, had no objections to raise against the Italian occupation of Zuela, Beilul, or Massowah. 51

50 Memoirs, II, 165.
It was evident that England was cultivating the friendship of the young Mediterranean Power in anticipation of threats to her life-line to the East. Italy was more than receptive because while the Austro-German Alliance had become more cordial and had achieved the purpose of bringing Russia to seek the goodwill of the Central Powers in March, 1884, Italy remained an object of suspicion to all concerned; and was neglected by her allies. As was to be expected, the occupation of Massowah became a matter of deep concern and had a most disturbing effect upon the other members of the Triple Alliance.

With England at Zeila, southeast of Obock, and Italy at Assab, to the north, French expansion on the Red Sea littoral was temporarily checked. Both Italy and England now directed their attention to the Mediterranean where the unsettled Bulgarian question had been further complicated by the forced abdication of the Bulgarian sovereign, Prince Alexander; and by the Russian effort to alter the status of Batum, a move which was a direct repudiation of the conditions under which it had been assigned at Berlin, 1878, and which was tolerated by all the Powers except Great Britain.

52 Crispi, Memoirs, III, 159.
53 Bismarck sharply condemned the step but wished "to give the Italians time to reform". Pribram, Op. cit., II, 45.
To all appearances this was a prelude to an aggressive Russian policy in the Balkans. As a result, England was compelled by force of circumstances to declare her hand on the Near Eastern question. Since, at the moment, Austria-Hungary was the most hopeful ally for maintaining the status quo in the Balkans, the British Ambassador at Vienna was instructed to communicate a confidential memorandum setting forth the British position. This memorandum made no specific proposals, being merely a preliminary sounding as to the possibility of Anglo-Austrian co-operation.

This was an important step because it was to culminate the following year in the Mediterranean Agreements, 1887. Because of the significance underlying these diplomatic maneuvers, they will be accorded a special treatment.

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57 _Ibid._, 442.
The year 1887 has singular importance in the history of Anglo-Italian relations for many reasons, especially with regard to British foreign policy in the Mediterranean. In January of that year, Salisbury entered the British Foreign Office while holding the premiership, thus possessing a position in foreign affairs more absolute than any of his predecessors; and before the year was over he had met the challenge of a tense international situation by departing from the "usual principle of avoiding alliances to enter into a secret naval convention with Italy for the preservation of the status quo in the Mediterranean". In order to appreciate this diplomatic achievement it is necessary to examine those factors which contributed to lend a special importance to British policy at that time.

On Salisbury's return to the Foreign Office in 1887 he was confronted with a very disturbed and anxious Europe, both in the east and in the west. In the Balkans there was the Russian threat to establish a sphere of influence in Bulgaria, due to a situation which grew out of the kidnapping and abdication of Prince Alexander of Bulgaria the previous September.

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1 Cecil, A., British Foreign Secretaries, 304.
However, the seriousness of this situation was overshadowed by one of the periodic Franco-German war scares which, in turn, was intensified by General Boulanger's ambitions and the dangerously stimulated patriotic emotions of the French.

That Italy, geographically in the middle, was impressed by these developments can be understood for she was fearful of a Slavicized Balkan area and a Gallicized North Africa. As early as 1885, Crispi had called the attention of the Chamber to the political and military significance of North Africa and had warned that Italy could not allow any power which was a potential enemy to occupy territory in that region. When the Balkan crisis, 1886-1887, placed Italy in a bargaining position, it was Crispi who extracted from Bismarck, by separate treaty on the day of the renewal of the Triple Alliance, the only pledge of aggressive action in his whole system of Alliances. Later, in 1890, Crispi secured virtual assurance from Salisbury that England, too, would back Italian claims in Africa.

There can be little room for doubt, that Crispi did exert a considerable influence on Anglo-Italian relations both in

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the Mediterranean and in Africa. Considered as the outstanding figure in Italian politics, 1878-1896, Crispi was responsible for Italy's close adherence to the Triple Alliance and for securing the friendship of Great Britain.

In the winter of 1886, Italy had opened negotiations with England for an entente; and though he could not understand why there should be rumors of war-like preparations coming from Italy, Salisbury was not willing to let the matter drop. At the same time Anglo-Russian relations over the Bulgarian question improved, but Salisbury, fearing that England would find herself isolated, began to seek closer relations with the Central Powers. In a letter to the Queen, January 24, 1887, he summed up the British position in these words:

We have absolutely no power to restrain either France or Germany, while all the power we have will be needed to defend our influence in the South-East of Europe. 8

Bismarck, also aware of England's dilemma, determined to draw her within the orbit of the Central Powers. He instructed Hatzfeldt to use encouraging terms in speaking to Salisbury about Egypt, England's recognized weak spot, adding that "if England holds herself aloof from any participation in European politics, then Germany no longer has any reason for withholding from France

7 Cecil., Life, IV, 15-16, 19.
8 Ibid., 14-15; Seton-Watson, R. W., Britain in Europe, 564 n.
and Russia the fulfillment of their desires in respect to Egypt and the East.

Meanwhile Bismarck, addressing himself to Salisbury placed great stress on the defensive character of Germany's armed power and made mention of the unstable elements in Europe, France and Russia. He concluded that Germany would be obliged to act, "either if the independence of Austria-Hungary were threatened by Russian aggression, or if England or Italy were in danger of being set upon by French armies. In other words, Bismarck was trying to impress upon Salisbury a fact which he already knew, that both Italy and England had the same interests in the Mediterranean and the Near East.

In his reply Salisbury went boldly to the root of the matter by expressing consideration of the contingency of a Franco-German war. But in so far as tying in with the Mediterranean Powers, he did not hesitate to let it be known that he preferred only an understanding because it could be kept secret and would be less binding than a formal agreement. This air of reserve was in all probability due to a peculiar constitutional arrangement that permits no British government to give an absolute guarantee for military or naval co-operation.

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11 British Documents, VIII, 1. (Hereafter cited as B.D.).
in future conflicts, simply because it is not certain whether the Parliament will fulfill those promises. In a letter to the Queen, February 10, 1887, Salisbury describes the matter to a point in these words: "It is as close an alliance as the Parliamentary nature of our institutions will permit".

On February 12, 1887, the negotiations which had been opened by Italy the winter before were concluded. In according to the secret Anglo-Italian Convention of that date, Salisbury had worded a letter to Corti as follows:

In the interest of peace, and of the independence of the territories adjacent to the Mediterranean Sea Her Majesty's Government wish to act in closest concert and agreement with that of Italy....If impossible to maintain the absolute status quo, both Powers desire that there shall be no extension of any other Great Power over any portion of those coasts. 13

With the maintenance of the status quo as the avowed object of this agreement, England undertook to protect the long coastline of Italy and to support her North African coast districts in case of encroachment by a third Power; and Italy, for her part, pledged herself to further England's interests in Egypt. In general, the policy was one of mutual support in the Mediterranean against a third Power. Undoubtedly, Salisbury confined himself to the expression of an edifying wish for co-operation which was deliberately left

13 B. D., VIII, 1; Pribram, Secret Treaties, I, 96-97.
14 Texts in Pribram, Ibid., 94-97.
undefined: "the character of that co-operation must be decided by the two Governments when the occasion for it arises, according to the circumstances of the case".

It is of interest to note that Count Corti was immediately afterwards retired by Crispi (letter of recall dated 13 February) for not securing a more explicit and positive engagement. Such resentment can be understood when one considers a letter from Salisbury to the Queen in which it was revealed that he had made it clear to Corti that: "England never promised material assistance in view of uncertain war, of which the object and cause were unknown".

While, however, England and Italy had reached the first understanding alone, conversations with Austria-Hungary were proceeding at the same time. Four days before the final exchange of notes between Corti and Salisbury, Paget, British Representative at Vienna, had asked Kalnoky what England could do to give Austria support in the event of an Austro-Russian war. In this discussion he was careful to insist that he was acting without instructions, however, on February 19, when he informed Kalnoky of the Anglo-Italian notes, he emphasized that he was then acting officially.

15 B. D., VIII, 1(Ed. n.).
16 Ibid.
17 Cecil, Life, IV, 23.
18 B. D., VIII, 1-2.
Thence forward, conversations continued on the basis of the Anglo-Italian notes and the common interests of England and Austria-Hungary in the Near East. Throughout the entire process Salisbury was consistent in maintaining that it was impossible for him to give any definite pledge as to British action. The results of these discussions were two exchanges of notes between Karolyi and Salisbury and between Karolyi and Corti dated March 24, by which Austria-Hungary acceded to the Anglo-Italian understanding. In the British acknowledgment of the accession of Austria-Hungary, London, March 24, 1887, the essence of the understanding was set forth:

They are fully convinced that, in respect to the political future of the territories which are washed by the Mediterranean and the adjacent seas, the interests of Austria-Hungary are closely related to those of Great Britain and Italy....the objects of English and Austrian policy are the same, and the principles which ought to guide it are clearly indicated in the communications to which Count Kalnoky has expressed his willingness to adhere. 23

The object, expressly stated, was to be the maintenance of the existing situation in the Mediterranean where Austria-Hungarian interests were of paramount consideration; and to

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21 The last occasion that England had promised alliance in event of war, was the Anglo-Turkish Convention concerning Cyprus, Even this was conditioned on Turkey's undertaking certain reforms. Ibid., 447.

22 Texts in B.D., VIII, 1-4; Pribram, Secret Treaties, I, 98-103.

23 Pribram, Ibid., 102-103.
prevent the Sultan from giving himself up entirely into the hands of Russia in the event of severe pressure from that quarter.

With both Spain and Italy fearful of French designs on the North African coast, the former in Morocco and the latter in Tripoli, it was not long before the Mediterranean Agreement was extended to include Spain. On May 4, 1887, Spain entered into a special arrangement with Italy to maintain the Mediterranean status quo. Spain agreed not to lend herself to any action against Italy, Germany, or Austria-Hungary. Though Germany and Austria-Hungary acceded to the Italo-Spanish Agreement on notice, there is no record of any reply from Salisbury. Thus was Spain attached indirectly to Bismarck's coalition.

Evidently, Salisbury's refusal to join any alliance directed specifically against France was complementary to an effort to establish better relations with her; and in turn, diminish his dependence on the Central Powers. Of all the ubiquitous Anglo-French conflicts, Egypt presented the chief problem. In 1887, a second attempt was made to put the British position on a more satisfactory footing by the negotiation of the Wolff Convention.

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25 E. L., VIII, 17 (Ed. n.).
26 In his youth he was employed on more than one special mission in the Near East. A member of Lord Randolph Churchill's "Fourth Party" in Parliament, 1874-1875. After his 1887 mission he re-entered diplomatic service and retired in 1890.
One of Salisbury's first acts on his return to power in 1885 had been to dispatch, in August, Sir H. Drummond Wolff on a special mission to the Porte. His aim was to secure Turkish co-operation in the evacuation of Egypt, "but with certain privileges reserved for England". Though the negotiation, completed in October, failed in its immediate object because Turkey was not ready to take part in any effective garrisoning of the Egyptian frontiers, the act did serve to deprecate the suspicion that England intended to assume sover-28 reignty.

The failure of the 1885 mission had left the critical question of the withdrawal of the British forces. In the hope of reaching a conclusion on this point, Wolff was sent on a second mission in January, 1887. In a letter of Instructions as to Wolff, January 15, Salisbury laid down a basic principle that: "the British Government must retain...a treaty right of intervention if at any time either internal peace or external security should be seriously threatened". On May 22, 1887, Turkey concluded a second Convention which provided for the evacuation at the end of three years on conditions stated. Ratifications were to be exchanged within a month, but owing

28 Ibid., 234-237.
to the pressure and threats of France the Sultan did not ratify the Convention. The Central Powers remained true to their entente with England throughout. Still, this was not enough. Salisbury had failed for a second time to settle the Egyptian question on the basis of Anglo-Turkish cooperation. England was stuck in Egypt.

Immediately following this incident, European politics underwent a peculiar development. Owing to the conflicts of interests between Russia and Austria-Hungary, Alexander III had refused to renew the Three Emperors League, thus allowing it to expire, 1887. Bismarck, however, was anxious to keep in touch with Russia. In June 1887, he signed, behind Austria's back and against English interests, a secret treaty with Russia. Though the negotiations began early in January, they had been delayed because Russia wanted to be certain that France would not be eliminated as a Great Power.

By the provisions of this treaty, Reinsurance, Germany recognized Russia's "historical" rights in Bulgaria and in an additional protocol, promised her "benevolent neutrality" in any measure which the Czar might find it necessary to take in guarding the key to his Empire at Constantinople. Russia, on her side, promised neutrality in the event of a French

30 Pribram, Secret Treaties, I, 275-281,
31 Cecil, Life, IV, 67.
attack on Germany. The Russian Minister insisted on absolute secrecy owing to the extreme unpopularity of Germany with his countrymen at the time.

It was an indirect threat to England's position in the eastern Mediterranean. Although the negotiations were secret, Salisbury's suspicions had been aroused by Hatzfeldt's new insistence upon the Czar's will for peace, and the impunity with which the Bulgarians might embark upon interesting political experiments. In an attempt to diagnose the political trends of the time, he concluded with the observation that:

The present aspect of European affairs is rather puzzling. The best explanation I can offer is that Bismarck had tried to induce Russia to sit still, or take a bribe, while France is being crushed, and that Russia has declined. 33

In a letter to the Queen, dated April 4, 1887, and which was in a similar vein, he expressed the opinion that he believed Bismarck wished for a war with France.

33 Cecil, Life, IV, 25-26
34 Ibid.
CHAPTER IV

THE SECOND MEDITERRANEAN OR "DECEMBER" AGREEMENT, 1887

In July 1887, just three weeks after the signature of the Reinsurance Treaty, the Bulgarian crisis entered a new phase. Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg again was offered the Bulgarian throne and this time he accepted. With attention thus again focused on the Bulgarian scene, rumors of overt action on the part of Russia not only caused anxiety in Germany but stimulated Austria-Hungary and Italy to think that an entente between them and England should be developed. The real object was to devise some form of common action calculated to encourage the Sultan in resisting further pressure from the Franco-Russian partnership.

The first thoughts of the idea appeared in August as a result of discussions, "in an academic fashion", between the representatives at the Porte: Calice, Austria-Hungary; Baron Blanc, Italy; and Sir William White, England. These discussions turned about the idea of consolidating and developing their "Group" in order to increase its effectiveness in Near Eastern affairs. It was from this "academic" beginning that the "December" or Second Mediterranean Agreement evolved.

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1 Cecil, Life, IV, 64-66.
3 Ibid.
On September 17, Calice forwarded to Kalnoky, the Austrian Foreign minister, the eight points which became the formula of the Second Mediterranean Agreement. He explained that the objects which he and his two colleagues had in view were to give Turkey a power of resistance, at least morally; and to restrain Russia. Meanwhile, Baron Blanc had also reported the substance of the proposals and Crispi had expressed approval, but with concern over the attitude exhibited by Great Britain.

Throughout the early stages of the negotiations Salisbury had revealed a hesitating policy. This was probably due to the fact that he did not receive the text of the Bases of the proposed agreement until the latter part of October. On October 22, the Austrian Charge d'Affaires at Berlin reported that Bismarck was prepared to support the project in London, that a communication had been made privately to Malet, and that Hatzfeldt had been directed to bring pressure to bear in order to secure this end. On the very same day, Paget, in a "Very Secret" dispatch to Salisbury, reported that Kalnoky had discussed the proposals with him and had explained his reasons for advocating it. This was followed a few days later by a letter from Kalnoky to Salisbury in which he asserted that

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4 Ibid., 456.
5 October 25, 1887, B. D., VIII, 8; Cecil, Life, IV, 67.
6 Crispi had discussed these proposals with Bismarck early in October. T. & P., O. cit., 456, 457.
7 B. D., VIII, 11. Text, 16-17.
the time was opportune, particularly because of ill-feelings then existing between Germany and Russia.

Bismarck, who had been hovering in the background throughout the entire exchange of notes, now took his cue to step forward and take the direction of the negotiations into his hands. But this time he refrained from any mention of Turkey. On October 25, 1867, Bismarck communicated to Malet a copy of the proposed Bases, which had, he said, been arrived at after consultation between the British, Austrian, and Italian Ambassadors at Constantinople and forwarded to Kalnoky for his approval. He added that he approved of the meaning of the document, as well as the intent, and hoped that Salisbury might see his way to accept it. One of his arguments in support of the proposal was that it was important to keep Italy "dans la bonne voie" and that this was the first occasion on which Italy had been ready to pledge itself to the maintenance of the peace and status quo to the exclusion of compensation. On the same day the Austrian Charge d'Affaires assured Malet that Bismarck guaranteed to hold France in check should war develop between these Powers and Russia.

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8 Ibid., 9-10, 15-16.
9 His previous plan to include Turkey as the fourth Power in an anti-Russian agreement had fallen through because of Salisbury's fear of indiscretion on the part of Turkey. Pribram, England, 39.
10 B. D., VIII, 8.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
The eight Bases represented, in fact, a response in kind to the Russian and French threats against the Sultan in the summer, threats to which the proposal owed its origin. An air of scepticism could be detected in Salisbury's immediate response because he thought it was rather for the advantage of Germany than of the other three Powers. Yet, at the same time, he felt that it might be more expeditious for England to adhere than to break up the existing understanding.

Salisbury, however, was forming a clear idea of his position because, among other things, Bismarck had communicated secretly the text of the Austro-German Treaty. In sending the text of this Treaty to the Queen, Salisbury pointed out that this, in itself, was an assurance since Germany's obligations to Austria-Hungary were thereby made clear. After making certain other comments and qualifications, he stipulated in particular that the notes should remain secret and took special care that this secrecy should be reserved in England. Although his insistence on a separate reply had caused some apprehensions to both Austria-Hungary and Italy, his assurance of co-operation was substantial enough to offset them. As Crispi saw it, "the principal thing is to bring the negotiation

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13 Letter to the Queen, October, 27, 1887, Cecil, Life, IV, 69.
15 B. L., VIII, 11, 13.
to an end, so that Salisbury does not escape us".

In a letter to White, dated November 2, 1867, Salisbury unwillingly agreed to strengthen the Accord a Trois, while, at the same time, he made clear Great Britain's position:

My own impression is that we must join, but I say it with regret. I think the time inopportune and we are merely rescuing Bismarck's endangered chestnuts. But a thorough understanding with Austria and Italy is so important to us that I do not like the idea of breaking it up on account of risks which may turn out to be imaginary. 17

On December 12, 1867, the Tripartite Agreement between Great Britain, Austria-Hungary, and Italy was concluded by an exchange of notes between Salisbury and the Austrian and Italian Ministers of Foreign Affairs. The Powers pledged themselves to the maintenance of the status quo, especially as regarded the Near East and Bulgaria, and the Straits; and announced their right to occupy suitable strategic localities for the purpose of achieving this aim.

The first four points recited in the notes between Austria-Hungary and Great Britain were identical and were in strict conformity with this understanding, as well as being consistent with the policy which had been pursued by Great Britain.

17 Cecil, Life, IV, 70-71.
19 Ibid., 125, 129.
The fifth, sixth, and seventh points referred to certain special dangers by which the state of things established by treaties and in the interests of the three Powers in the East may be menaced, and the course to be pursued if those dangers should arise. However, because of the emphasis placed by Salisbury on the fifth article, specific attention should be directed to its contents.

5. Consequently, Turkey can neither cede nor delegate her rights over Bulgaria to any other Power, nor intervene in order to establish a foreign administration there, nor tolerate acts of coercion undertaken with this latter object, under the form either of a military occupation or of the despatch of volunteers; neither will Turkey, who has by the treaties been constituted guardian of the Straits, be able to cede any portion of her sovereign rights, nor delegate her authority to any other power in Asia Minor.

To Salisbury, it was apparent that the illegal enterprises anticipated by this article would affect especially the Turkish domination of the Straits and the independence of the Christian communities on the northern border of the Turkish Empire. England recognized, he said: "that the protection of the Straits and the liberties of these communities are objects of supreme importance and are to Europe among the most valuable results of the treaty; and they cordially concur with the Austro-

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21 *Article 5, Second Mediterranean Agreement, Ibid.*, 129
Hungarian and Italian Governments in taking special precautions to secure them.

The eighth point provided against a contingency which the Porte might undertake to frustrate the objects of the agreement, and the ninth point, added by Salisbury, provided for a close secrecy of the contents of the pact.

In agreeing to this Treaty, England had abandoned the independent policy which she had hitherto followed, and engaged herself in as binding a form as possible, to an active participation in future conflicts that might arise in the Balkans. Still the treaty was not binding, except in a moral sense. It has always been kept secret and has never been put on official record, being kept by the Permanent Under-Secretary of State. On the other hand there is evidence that this secrecy was not as well guarded as intended, especially abroad, because in the following spring, 1888, rumors of alleged agreements with European Powers were circulated in England. In time, these rumors became a subject for discussion in the British Parliament, but most of the concern was expressed in the House and the interest in the Mediterranean Agreements reached its height in February, 1888.

22 Ibid., 128.
23 Ibid., 129-130.
24 Ibid.
On February 10, in a session in Commons, Labouchere, Member of Parliament, asked the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Sir James Fergusson:

Whether any engagements, contingent or otherwise, was entered into by Her Majesty's Government with Italy or with any other Foreign Power last year which has not been made known to the House; and, if so, whether he will lay upon the table of the House any Despatches relating to or entering into such engagement or engagements? 26

The Under Secretary answered to the effect that no engagement pledging the material action of England had been entered into which was not known to the House. On persistent pressure by Labouchere, he defined "material action" as an engagement which implied military responsibility.

A few days later, February 14, Labouchere reopened the issue by asking the Under Secretary whether he had seen a statement in a Vienna newspaper which stated that the Treaties which were signed last year between the Central European Powers:

'Are supplemented by special arrangements between Italy, Austria, and Great Britain, having for their object the defence of the Austrian and Italian coasts against a hostile country;' 28

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26 Ibid.
27 Ibid., (February 14, 1888), 377.
28 Ibid.
Labouchere also asked whether any arrangement of this nature was a matter of diplomatic correspondence; and, if so, did it result in any arrangement?

In his reply the Under Secretary took the same stand he had taken before, February 10, and concluded that in accordance with the uniform practices he had to decline to submit the correspondence on foreign affairs.

On February 16, the Under Secretary again refused to answer the inquiries put to him in the House, giving as an argument that it would be unwise to produce the correspondence at that time.

In consequence of this last reticent reply, Labouchere moved an Amendment to the Address to the effect that, if the Queen expected favorable consideration on some of the proposals that she had submitted to the House, it might be helpful if the members were informed that no correspondence had been exchanged:

Containing any assurance of a contractual character, which would constitute a binding pact upon Her Majesty’s Ministers in the unfortunate event of war breaking out during their tenure of office between the French Republic and the Kingdom of Italy.

The following day, February 17, another interesting scene was presented in Commons when Burt, Member of Parliament for Morpeth, asked the Under Secretary whether there was any truth in an article published in The Times, February 15, that Admiral

29 Ibid., (February 16, 1888), 557-558.
30 Ibid.
Hewitt, in a speech at Genoa, had intimated the prospect of an active alliance between England and Italy. However, in this instance the Under Secretary was spared. Lord George Hamilton, First Lord of the Admiralty, took upon himself the responsibility of replying, stating that it was a matter of common practice when an officer of one nation entertains those of another the wish is expressed "that the respective forces to which they belong may not be opposed to one another in actual warfare."

Despite the fact that Labouchere's question had been neatly turned aside, the fact remained that the new treaty involved grave war responsibilities for Great Britain as long as Salisbury remained in the Foreign Office, and that a precedent had been set for making engagements which ministers concealed from the body to which they were constitutionally responsible.

CHAPTER V

SEQUEL AND LAPSE OF
THE MEDITERRANEAN AGREEMENTS (1887-1893)

For the greater part of the last fifteen years of the
nineteenth century, Lord Salisbury was responsible for British
foreign policy; and though it is difficult to draw general con-
clusions on his work, one scholar has ventured to say, on re-
ferring to Anglo-Italian relations, that:

It was evident that as long as Salisbury
presided over the Foreign Office, the
relations of France and England were so
hostile that Italy could lose none of
England's good-will so far as the Triple
Alliance was concerned. 1

Undoubtedly, this observation was predicated on a sound
knowledge of developments in European politics, because during
the span of years, 1887-1893, immediately following the Medi-
terranean Agreements England became so friendly with the Cen-
tral Powers that in some quarters it was thought that she had
joined the Triple Alliance. That England had again become an
important factor in continental politics is attested by an
article that appeared in the London Times, which after comment-
ing on the, then, present state of affairs in Europe, concluded
with this observation: "We on the Continent are on the eve of
events, which Great Britain cannot regard with indifference,

and which will gradually induce her to take an active part in Continental politics".

Though many factors contributed to the development of this peculiar political arrangement between England and the Central Powers, especially Italy, there were some few, which more than others, influenced the effectiveness and life of the principal tie binding Anglo-Italian interests at this time. It is to an examination of these developments we now turn to seek the causes for the lapse of an agreement, the type of which is rarely found in the annals of international relations. In undertaking an evaluation of this nature, an analysis of the strategic considerations involved generally provides a convenient starting point.

It is an accepted fact that national prestige, as manifested in imperialism, was one of the major motivating forces in foreign policy during the last decades of the nineteenth century and was often reflected in the naval strength of the competing Powers. In order to illustrate this postulate, a consideration of the development of the Italian navy will serve our purpose.

During an era which witnessed a revolution in ship construction, ordnance, motive power, and size as well as in the development of new techniques of strategy, Italy early determined to enter the race. The reasons why the young kingdom

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3 London Times, May 14, 1889.
undertook such an intensive naval expansion program may be sought in the position which Italy took in Europe, after she became a united kingdom.

Definitely liberated and unified, after 1870, she was admitted to a place beside England, France, Germany, Russia, and Austria-Hungary. She became the sixth Great Power, and had a voice, with the others, in regulating the politics of the continent...Minghetti and others argued that she was now a Great Power, and as such, must accept the burdens with the honours...It was, therefore, essential that she be possessed of a large army and a powerful fleet, and also of colonies.

Once started, Italy's navy rapidly advanced toward the top in the ranking of naval Powers. However, it should be remembered that this progress was due primarily to the energy and foresight of two men.

Admiral Saint-Bon, Minister of the Marine, 1870-1873, and again in 1891-1892, must be regarded as the creator of the modern Italian navy, for he:

Affirmed that, autonomy, speed, and power being the desiderata, her best policy was to create a fleet of a few great battleships, larger, stronger, swifter, and more heavily armed than any afloat, to insure secure bases such as Spezia, Venice, Taranto...then an attendant fleet of rapid cruisers and torpedo-boats.

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5 deLaveleye, "Foreign Policy of Italy", Loc. cit., 155-156.
Thus did Saint-Bon set forth the principle and policy to be followed in Italy's energetic naval expansion program. But credit for putting the plans into operation and for the actual beginning of construction must be shared with another, Benedetto Brin, Minister of the Marine, 1873-1878, and 1896-1898. It was under him that the keels of the first of the monster battleships, the Duilio, the Dandalo, the Italia, and the Lepanto, were laid. Both the Duilio and the Dandalo were "central citadel battleships of 11,000 tons each, speed fifteen knots, with four 100-ton guns in the turret". The Duilio was started in 1873, launched in 1876, and armed in 1880. The Lepanto was launched in 1876 by the Orlando Brothers. It had as dimensions: "Displacement 13,550, horsepower 18,000, speed 18 knots, length 400 feet, breadth 73, water draught 28, greatest thickness of armor, on towers, 19 inches, carrying four guns of 103 tons each..."

With these figures in mind it can be readily understood why a contemporary observer would be led to conclude that by 1886:

Italians heard their Duilio and Dandalo, their Italia and Lepanto praised by "intelligent foreigners" as the biggest and swiftest battleships; carrying the biggest guns... and saw themselves placed third on the list of naval powers. 10

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7 "Sotto il suo ministro vennero altresì impostate le navi Fieramosca e Marco Polo, le cinque navi tipo Lombardia, le dodici navi tipo Tripoli e tipo Partenope, e vennero largamente introdotte le torpediniere, della quali ben 96 furono costruite. Ibid., VII, 859.

8 Mario, "Italian Fleet", Nation, (May 2, 1889).

9 Ibid.

10 Mario, "Italy On the Sea", Loc. cit.
Also there was universal admiration for ships of the Re Umberto class which had adopted for the first time defensive armor against under-water missiles.

In 1881, the Chamber became concerned over the merits of the Duilio which had just undergone a shakedown cruise. This concern also involved the greater question of the merits of the whole system of Brin's heavy armed vessel. The results seem to indicate that the Chamber was of the opinion that the monster ships were good for nothing and unserviceable. However, Italy continued its program of naval expansion, proceeding with the construction of three other vessels of the same dimensions of the Duilio.

Between the years 1884-1889, the Italian fleet had doubled. In 1884 it numbered 78 ships and 43 torpedo boats, with 457 guns. In 1889 she put into commission 144 ships, and in addition she possessed 123 torpedo boats and thus a force amounting to 1,640 guns. This rapid development may have been due in part to the decision of the Italian Government to order from other countries.

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11 "Universale ammirazione riscossero allora anche le navi tipo Re Umberto di suo progetto, sulle quali per la prima volta si adottarono nel doppio fondo particolari disposizioni di struttura per difesa contro gli scoppi subacqui". Enciclopedia Italiana, VII, 859.

12 Annual Register, 1881 (N.S.), 247-248.

13 Ibid., 1882, 229.

14 Ibid., 1889, 292.

Side by side with her shipbuilding, or purchasing, Italy was also paying the utmost attention to the enrollment and instructions of marine personnel and especially to the education and practical training of naval officers.

In her eagerness to possess a few first-class ships, with all powerful ordnance, the utmost possible speed, and the utmost capacity of coal-bunkers, Italy overlooked several important factors. Italy was inferior in providing anchorage and except for Spezia and Venice she had "no docks capable of receiving these vessels, and, when they anchored off her ports, the distance of her coal desposits is a serious consideration". Her abandonment of side armor as a protection to stability, though defended by the majority of Italian naval authorities, was criticized in other countries, especially her ordnance. Also the huge vessels with their hundred-ton guns proved exceedingly complicated in operations. It was clear then, that the only way which the Italian navy could play any important part in a campaign would be in conjunction with a Great Power such as England and Germany, in which case:

The advantages to be gained by a cordial alliance between Italy and England on the seas would appear to be greatly on the side of Italy; but England and Italy have

16 Mario, "Italy on the Sea", Loc. cit., 177.
18 Anon., "Foreign Policy of Italy", Contemporary Review, (Feb. 1892).
no clashing interests and many in common on the Mediterranean, so that the deficiencies of the younger nation may be in part supplied by the greater and older mistress of the sea. 19

In the case of the Italian navy the political situation must be taken into account as much as Italy's geographical configuration when examining the class of warships she had set herself to produce. Immediately after her unification it became the main objective of most Italian statesmen to maintain the equilibrium of the Mediterranean. This policy as could be expected created antagonism and difficulties with France; and since France occupied a preponderating position it was clear that Italy, to maintain an equilibrium, could only do by seeking alliances, the most logical one being with England, who also considered that she must have her share of influence and power in the Mediterranean.

However, both England and Italy were concenred over the possible change of the status quo in the Mediterranean. In 1884, England still possessed the largest navy in the world but her position or primacy was being endangered by the increased activity of France and Russia who were reinforcing their fleets with extraordinary energy. By 1886-1887, perceptible alterations in the Mediterranean naval balance were noticed. The feverish increase of armaments upon the Continent roused the English public to an acute sense of its...
deficiencies in this respect. The alarmist outcries from those in high public office were deprecated by Salisbury who reassured the public as to the Government's full sense of the gravity of the question.

In the actual insecurity of European peace, there were, in fact, solid grounds for the anxiety as to the state of England's preparedness. National defence became a subject of primary ministerial preoccupation. As a result of investigation by both Admiralty officials and civilians, the defect recognized as fundamental was that the size of the fleet, in itself, had come to be "politically out-dated". Based on existing conditions, a Franco-Russian combination was the emergency against which preparations had to be made. The Channel could not be left defenceless, the Mediterranean fleet was inferior to that of the French ships assembled at Toulon, apart from any detachable margin for operations at the Straits or in the Black Sea. France had not stinted on expenditures for the maintenance of her maritime strength, and Russia was laying down three new battleships by the year 1868.

It was at this time that Italy began to show definite signs of anxiety, especially in regards to the Franco-Russian rapprochement which by now had assumed menacing proportions.

20 Cecil, Life, IV, 183-184.
21 Ibid., 167; Marder, Op. cit., 131.
22 Ibid.; Ibid., 162-164.
Also, relations with France were worse than they been for some time, owing to the French attempt to break Italy's connection with both the Triple Alliance and with England. In addition to this, Italy was experiencing a "tariff war" with France as a result of Italy's abrogation of a commercial treaty which dated back to 1861; and the issues of Italian taxation in Massowah and the maltreatment of Italian nationals in southern France made things worse.

But it was Italy's alarm at the increased activities of France at Toulon and Bizerta in 1888 that led Crispi to approach England with a proposal for an alliance on the grounds that it would be advantageous to both countries to ally themselves. However, Salisbury assured Crispi that his fears were exaggerated. Some sources would lead us to think that England had reason to believe that the French concentration at this time was directed against her. On the other hand, Salisbury's reluctance to bind himself to Italy may have been due to the fact that he considered her too frail a reed to lean upon because already by 1888, there were visible signs of decline in the Italian navy.

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27 Marder, Op. cit., 142; and see Annual Register, 1888, 235.
The following year, 1889, Salisbury's outlook on the situation underwent a change, due to the intensity of French action at Bizerta which threatened to shift the balance of naval power in the western Mediterranean. England had either to enter on a large construction program or trust to the Triple Alliance and Italy with its precarious hold on the number three position of navies in the world. England chose the former of these alternatives and thus commenced to activate a policy which became known as the "Two-Power Standard". By this means she was determined to maintain her hegemony on the water with a single fleet equal to, or larger than, the combined fleets of any other two Powers. In March 1889, Salisbury introduced in the Parliament, the Naval Defence Act. His turn about-face may have been due in part to Crispi's renewed plea for assistance, but while this hypothesis is questioned in some quarters, there can be little doubt that the changing naval considerations in the Mediterranean had contributed to this new course in defensive policy.

As England's own naval power grew to the two-power standard, and as Italy naval power failed to attain the full promise

28 "...it is admitted to be a cardinal part of the policy of this country that the minimum standard of security which the country demands...is that our Fleet should be equal to the combination of the two next strongest Navies in Europe". (Lord George Hamilton in the House of Commons, December 19, 1893). Cited in Marder, Op. cit., 105.

29 Cecil, Life, IV, 94; 187.

of the earlier years, it became less certain that England's advantage in the alliance was equal to the risks involved in a commitment to an ally who could not be counted upon to defend even her own ports.

However, other factors operated to influence Salisbury's attitude. In 1889, a year after William II's accession, Bismarck made a firm and distinct offer of an Anglo-German alliance. He intended the alliance against France, only, as he still declined to bind himself against Russia. Because of this, Salisbury, who considered a Russian menace to England more serious than a French danger to Germany, did not accept an alliance that did not bind Germany against Russia would give England too little; one that did would cost Germany too much. In March 1890, Bismarck was dismissed.

It is a patent fact that right after Bismarck's fall Anglo-German relations became less cordial and Salisbury was forced to renew to the full his association with the Triple Alliance. The impact of Bismarck's dismissal was pronounced. Salisbury in commenting upon it made this statement:

There is no doubt that a suggestion or a friendly piece of advice from General Caprivi today will not carry the same weight as an expression of opinion from Prince Bismarck carried formerly, and I am convinced that...the German Cabinet... in spite of the position of the German

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Empire as a Power, ... no longer enjoys the same prestige as hitherto. 33

Although one of the first consequences of Bismarck's disappearance was a better understanding between France and Russia, which began in 1891 and grew in strength, Italy, too, felt its significance. Not only did Humbert draw closer the ties between Italy and Germany, but Crispi felt the need to draw nearer the Right in the Italian Parliament and openly made overtures for its support. However, it is a matter for conjecture whether or not Bismarck's removal had any effect on Anglo-Italian negotiations on the subject of the limits of African Colonies, which were broken off at this time over the issue of the occupation of Kassala, because in March and April, 1891, Protocols were signed marking out British and Italian spheres of influence in East Africa.

An incident in the latter part of 1891 raised Italy's hope for a closer relation with England. The occasion was in a visit which was made by a Russian agent to Italy and which aroused much speculation in European chancellories. Salisbury

33 Ibid., 465.
35 Annual Register, 1890 (N.S.), 294-295.
36 Ibid.
38 Anon., "M. DeGiers's Visit to Italy", Loc. cit.
in particular, expressed concern. In August, 1891, he reported to the Queen that: "In the present state of Europe our interests lie on the side of the Triple Alliance". Coupled with this incident of the visit, developments of Russian activities aiming at Constantinople and the gradual consummation of a Franco-Russian entente, served to add further to the unrest in London. But Italy's past reluctance to admit Russia on any terms into the Mediterranean promised some assurance that Russia could be locked out of that highway and the key entrusted to England.

When Salisbury fell in August, 1892, he felt considerable concern about the future. On leaving office, he noted for the edification of the new foreign minister, Lord Rosebery, that: "The key of the present situation in Europe is our position towards Italy, and through Italy to the Triple Alliance".

With Salisbury gone, Anglo-Italian relations tended to languish and although it was understood that the entente had not terminated, the Mediterranean Agreements of 1887, were never formally renewed. Gladstone's Government had a different attitude toward the Central Powers and toward imperialism. While Rosebery, first in the Foreign Office and then in the premiership, was not in full accord with Gladstone, it was

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39 Anon., "M. DeGiers's Visit To Italy", Loc. cit.,
41 Wilmot, "Development of Navies", Loc. cit.
natural that he take a line different from that of Salisbury.

On his accession to power, Rosebery, himself, had taken the precaution of refusing to read the Accord a Trois, although he knew of its existence. A few months later, however, the situation changed. Developments of the Franco-Russian entente and the crisis over Siam drove England closer to the Triple Alliance. Hence Rosebery entered into negotiations, 1893-1894, for a renewal of the Mediterranean Agreement, but conflicts with Germany, as well as with France, were a powerful factor in preventing the realization of this project.

The lapse of the Mediterranean Agreement permits of the following conclusions:

It established the fact that success in the conduct of foreign politics, especially in so far as Great Britain was concerned, was less a question of party and party principles than of personality and, in a lesser degree, of circumstances.

It indicated that a new political and military arrangement had been arrived at by the Powers to maintain a workable balance of power in Europe and in the Mediterranean Basin.

It was an affirmation of Great Britain's position of naval primacy in the Mediterranean, and at the same time, it pointed to the decline of the Italian fleet as a factor in European politics.

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Lastly, it witnessed a shift of Anglo-Italian co-operation from a naval entente in the Mediterranean to East Africa and the Sudan.

The next efforts of attempted Anglo-Italian co-operation to make secure the life-line through the Mediterranean concerned themselves with the British reconquest of the Sudan and the Italian attempt to conquer Abyssinia. To enter into a discussion of these campaigns would carry us beyond the range of our immediate problem which can be disposed of at this point. However, for those who may be interested in this period of Anglo-Italian relations in the Red Sea area, a classic account may be found in Ernest Work, *Ethiopia, A Pawn In European Diplomacy.*
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