



Naval Aspects of the Italian-Ottoman War (1911-1912)

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Admiralty Trilogy Seminar

Outline



- ◆ **Overview**
- ◆ **Theater of Action**
- ◆ **Naval Challenges – Italian and Ottoman**
- ◆ **The Navies – Italian and Ottoman**
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Theatre of Action



→ Italian Invasions

⊠ Naval Engagement Areas



Overview

- ◆ **1835: Tripoli officially becomes an Ottoman Protectorate**
- ◆ **1871: Italian Unification – looking to play equal role in European affairs, but late to the game. Need colonies for growing population, as source of raw materials, and market for manufactured goods.**
- ◆ **1881: France conquers Tunisia.**
- ◆ **1882: England conquers Egypt.**
- ◆ **1887: England conquers Cyprus.**
- ◆ **1896: Italy fails to conquer Abyssinia.**
- ◆ **1900: Italian plan to commercially annex Tripoli via banking and investment . . . Rise of Young Turks will stifle this effort.**



Overview (cont)

- ◆ **1902: Italy and France sign a secret treaty which accords freedom of intervention in Tripolitania (I) and Morocco (F).**
- ◆ **1902: British government promises Italy that "any alteration in the status of Libya would be in conformity with Italian interests."**
- ◆ **1908: Young Turk revolution in Istanbul.**
- ◆ **1909: Failed counter-coup by the Sultan in Istanbul.**
- ◆ **1910: Revolt in Yemen pulls significant portion of troops out of Tripoli, leaving a very weakened defense.**
- ◆ **1911: The Italian press began a large-scale lobbying campaign for an invasion of Libya in late March, predicting future invasion would be little more than a "military walk".**



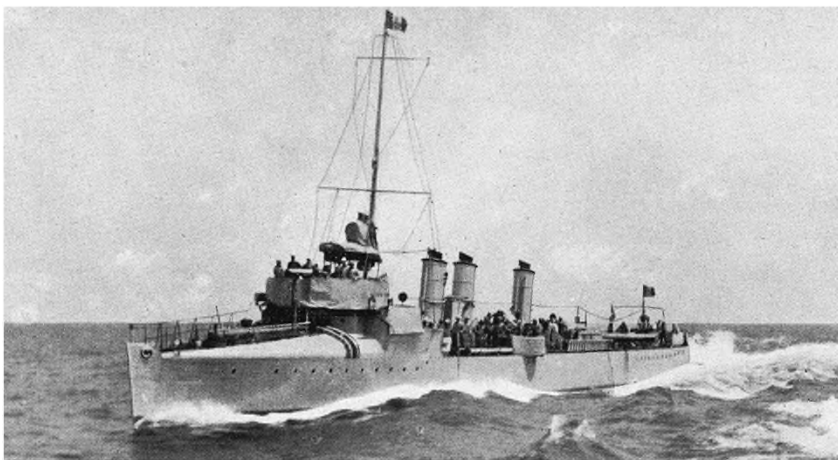
Overview (cont)

- ◆ **1911: Agadir Crisis; French military action in Morocco leads to the establishment of a French protectorate and removes Italian hesitation.**
- ◆ **28 Sep 11: Italy issues ultimatum for Ottoman surrender.**
- ◆ **28 Sep 11: Via Austro-Hungarian intermediation, Ottomans propose transfer control of Libya without war and maintain formal Ottoman suzerainty, similar to situation in Egypt between Ottomans and British.**
- ◆ **29 Sep 11: Italy refuses offer and war is declared.**
- ◆ **30 Sep 11: Italian invasion forces set sail for North Africa.**



Naval Challenges – Italians

- ◆ **Tripoli Waters – Protect the Tripoli landings, aid forces ashore, protect convoys enroute.**
- ◆ **Eastern Mediterranean – Contend with the Ottoman Navy.**
- ◆ **Adriatic – Contend with Ottoman Torpedo Boats.**
- ◆ **Red Sea – Protect colony of Erythrea.**



Italian Destroyer *Zeffiro*



Italian Cruiser *Piemonte*

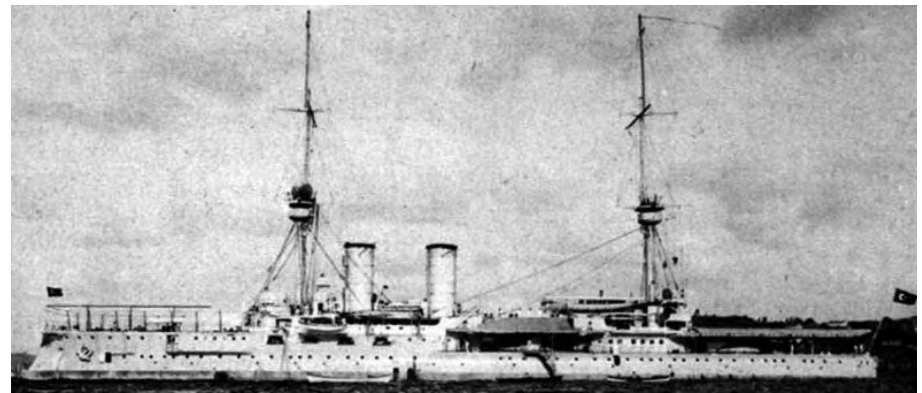


Naval Challenges – Ottomans

- ◆ **Tripoli Waters – Resupply defending forces.**
- ◆ **Eastern Mediterranean – Defend islands and mainland from Italian attack.**
- ◆ **Adriatic – Protect Ottoman Colony of Albania.**
- ◆ **Red Sea – Protect Arabian interests and resupply tripoli and Cyrenaica (Libya).**
- ◆ **Aging and ill-maintained fleet.**



Ottoman Torpedo Boat *Muâvenet-i Millîye*



Ottoman Battleship *Turgut Reis*

Italian Navy



- ◆ **Battleships (12)**
 - ◆ **Armored Coast Defense Ships (3)**
 - ◆ **Armored Cruisers (11)**
 - ◆ **Protected Cruisers (8)**
 - ◆ **Destroyers (12)**
 - ◆ **Torpedo Boats (16)**
 - ◆ **Gunboats (4)**
- (Numbers as reported by Commodore Beehler)**
- ◆ **The Italian Navy was fairly modern, with new ship designs, new technology and weaponry, intensified training, and backed with an impressive budget. Combined with growing industrial skill at home, it was a Navy on the rise.**



Italian Battleship *Roma*



Italian Cruiser *Marco Polo*



Ottoman Navy

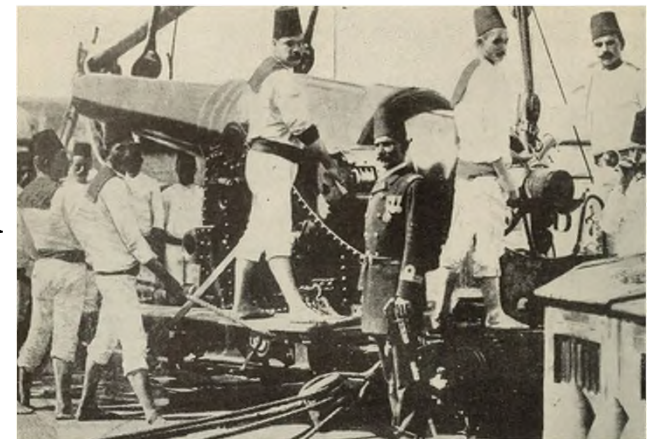
- ◆ **Battleships (3)**
- ◆ **Armored Coast Defense Ships (4)**
- ◆ **Armored Cruisers (0)**
- ◆ **Protected Cruisers (2)**
- ◆ **Destroyers (13)**
- ◆ **Torpedo Boats (15)**
- ◆ **Gunboats (24)**

(Numbers as reported by Commodore Beehler)

- ◆ **The Ottoman Navy was aging, ill maintained, and even new ships languished from inaction over fear of being political. 1908 saw a resurgence with purchase of new ships and British trainers. But it was too little, too late to help for this war.**



Ottoman Cruiser *Hamidje*



Ottoman sailors on a warship operating one of the big guns

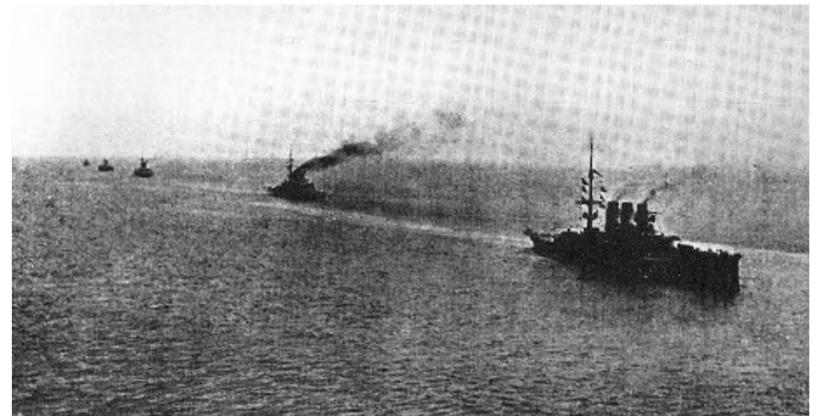
War Summary



- ◆ **27 Sep 11: Italy sends ultimatum for Ottomans to surrender.**
- ◆ **28 Sep 11: Italy declares war.**
- ◆ **03 Oct 11: Italian Navy commences bombardment of Tripoli.**
- ◆ **05 Oct 11: Italians land at Tripoli.**
- ◆ **15 Oct 11: Italians land at Derna.**
- ◆ **18 Oct 11: Italians land at Benghazi.**
- ◆ **21 Oct 11: Italians land at Homs.**



Italian Fleet off Tripoli Shore



Italian Convoy headed for Tripoli



War Summary (cont)

- ◆ **Nov 11 – Feb 12. Italians hold key ports, but unable to push inland very far. Ottomans and Arab allies repeatedly attack Italian positions inflicting heavy losses, but are unable to retake ports. Italian warships are key to resisting Ottoman attacks. Guerilla war against Italian positions starts.**
- ◆ **Apr 12. In effort to produce positive tone to the war, Italians turn to the Navy to achieve winning results in the Aegean.**
- ◆ **19 Apr 12. Italian Navy attacks forts at mouth of the Dardanelles, but this makes Ottomans close the Straits for a month, causing outrage from Neutral Nations.**
- ◆ **Apr 12 - Aug 12. Stalemate on land continues.**
- ◆ **Sep 12. Negotiations begin in Switzerland and end with the treaty signed on 18 Oct 12.**



Theatre of Action



→ Italian Invasions

⊠ Naval Engagement Areas



Naval Operations

- ◆ **Prevesa, Adriatic – 29 Sep 11 (1 hour after war declared). Italian destroyers sink two Ottoman torpedo boats.**
- ◆ **Hodeida, Red Sea – 02 Oct 11. Italian gunboats sink Ottoman destroyer.**
- ◆ **Red Sea – 30 Nov 11. Italian cruiser sinks several Ottoman sail craft attempting to ferry across 5000 troops and artillery.**
- ◆ **Kunfunda – 07 Jan 12. Italian cruiser and destroyer sink seven Ottoman gunboats at anchor.**
- ◆ **Hodeida, Red Sea – 26 Jan 12. Italians declare blockade.**



Ottoman Gunboat sinking in Adriatic



Ottoman Gunboat sinking at Kunfunda



Naval Operations (cont)

- ◆ **Beirut, East Med – 24 Feb 12. Two Italian armored cruisers sink Ottoman coast defense ship and destroyer in port.**
- ◆ **Red Sea – 29 Feb 12. Italians bombard several Arabian ports, provoking Yemeni Arabs to declare ‘Holy War’ against the Italians.**
- ◆ **Aegean – Feb 12. Italian Fleet plans major naval demonstrations in Eastern Mediterranean to counter lack of progress of war in Tripoli.**
- ◆ **North Aegean – 13 Feb 12. Italian squadrons cruise off Ottoman coast and bombard several coastal towns.**



Italians attacking Beirut Harbor



Wreck of *Avnillah* in Beirut Harbor



Naval Operations (cont)

- ◆ Aegean – 17 Apr 12. Italians seize Astropalia as base of operations.
- ◆ Gulf of Smyrna – 18 Apr 12. 1st and 2nd Italian squadrons cruise off mouth of Dardanelles, gun duel with outer forts.
- ◆ Samos, Aegean – 18 Apr 12. Italians invade Samos, sink Ottoman gunboat, cut telegraph cables, and fire on town.
- ◆ Dardanelles – 19 Apr-19 May. Ottomans close Straits to all traffic due to Italian operations. European nations protest over commercial losses and are angry with Italy for delay in a ‘quick war’.



Ottoman gun guarding Dardanelles

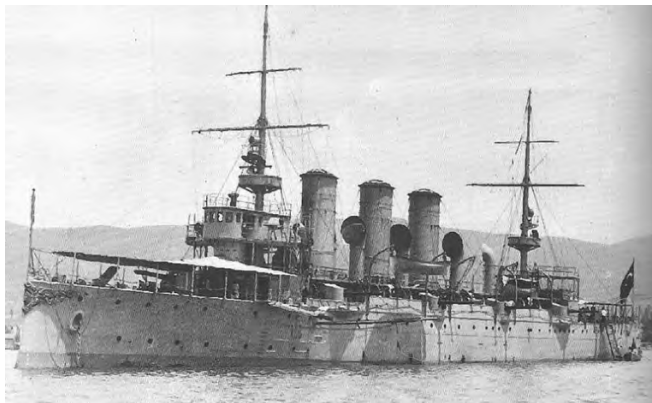


Italian Battleship supplying Torpedo Boats in Aegean



Naval Operations (cont)

- ◆ **Rhodes, South Aegean – 04 May 12. Italian Navy takes Rhodes.**
- ◆ **North Aegean – 08-20 May 12. Italian Navy capture 20 islands.**
- ◆ **Dardanelles – 01 Jun 12. Ottoman sailors demand that they be led in action against the Italians.**
- ◆ **Aegean – Late Sep 12. Italians cruise Aegean past Chios, Mityleni and Haifa to put pressure on Ottomans to yield to Italian demands.**
- ◆ **Dardanelles – 19 Sep 12. Italian torpedo boats go up to boom at Killid-Bahr despite Ottoman defenses. (War ends 18 Oct 12)**



Ottoman Cruiser *Mecidiye*



Italian Cruiser *Pisa*

Outcome



- ◆ **The Italo-Turkish War was the last typical 19th century imperial small war. However, it provided insight about what was to come: miles of trenches, machine guns, airplanes, tactical use of armored vehicles, torpedo boat attacks, and a deadly prolonged stalemate.**
- ◆ **The war also saw a guerilla force successfully resist a larger and more powerful conventional force, which forced the stronger power to seek victory by means other than a decisive battle.**
- ◆ **Italian Losses: 1,432 killed in action, 1,948 died of disease, 4,250 wounded.**
- ◆ **Ottoman Losses: 8,189 killed in action, 10,000 killed in Italian reprisals & executions.**



Outcome (cont)

- ◆ **The Ottomans lost the last of their holdings in North Africa.**
- ◆ **The Italians retained Rhodes and Dodecanese Islands.**
- ◆ **Reacting to perceived Ottoman weakness, the Balkan States pushed for autonomy of European Ottoman provinces, resulting in the First Balkan War breaking out mid-Oct 1912.**
- ◆ *“The most conspicuous lesson of the war is the well-known necessity of having command of the sea.”*
- ◆ **Italy could move troops and supplies without interruption.**
- ◆ **Ottomans could not readily send troops or supplies.**
- ◆ **Italy could interdict Ottoman colonies and the mainland at will.**
- ◆ **Ottomans could not defend colonies or even the mainland.**



ATG Potential Scenarios

- ◆ **30 Sep 1911 – Battle of Gomenita/Prevesa) (Could Have Been)**
 - Six Ottoman torpedo boats remain together as a squadron versus five Italian destroyers.
- ◆ **01 Oct 1911 – Battle of Patmos (Could Have Been)**
 - Italian cruising squadron does find Ottoman practice squadron.
- ◆ **07 Jan 1912 – Battle of Kurfuda (Could Have Been)**
 - Seven Ottoman gunboats and a cruiser have sufficient coal to get underway versus Italian cruiser and two destroyers.
- ◆ **19 Jul 1912 – Battle of Killid-Bahr (What if)**
 - Five Italian torpedo boats who penetrated into Dardanelles are met by Ottoman torpedo boats anchored at hawser-boom of Killid-Bahr.
- ◆ **Could Have Been = Forces existed in theater and were active.**
- ◆ **What If = Forces available are added to theater for battle.**



Battle of Patmos

- ◆ **On the same day as Italians attacked Ottoman naval forces near Corfu and at Tripoli, an Italian squadron sortied to search for, and then destroy, the Ottoman ‘practice’ squadron that was heading home. Threat to Tripoli convoys.**
- ◆ **Situation – The Italians are searching southward and passing to the east of the Ottomans, who are running north after having learned that they are at war. Sunset is coming, so the Italians must act fast once the Ottomans are detected.**
- ◆ **Aegean Squadron**
- ◆ ***Roma*** (Regina Elena class BB)
- ◆ ***Vittorio Emanuele*** (Regina Elena class BB)
- ◆ ***Pisa*** (Pisa class CR)



Battle of Patmos (cont)

◆ 'Practice' Squadron

- ◆ *Barbaros Hayr-ed Din* (Ex-Brandenburg class BB)
- ◆ *Torgud Reis* (Ex-Brandenburg class BB)
- ◆ *Medjidije* (Medjidije class CR)
- ◆ *Hamidije* (Hamidije class CR)

◆ Filotill One

- ◆ *Yadigar-I Millet* (Ex-S165 class DD)
- ◆ *Mumune-I Hamiyet* (Ex-S165 class DD)
- ◆ *Muavent-I Milliye* (Ex-S165 class DD)
- ◆ *Gayret-I Vataniye* (Ex-S165 class DD)

◆ Filotill Two

- ◆ *Basra* (Durandal class DD)
- ◆ *Tasoz* (Durandal class DD)
- ◆ *Samsun* (Durandal class DD)
- ◆ *Yarhisra* (Durandal class DD)



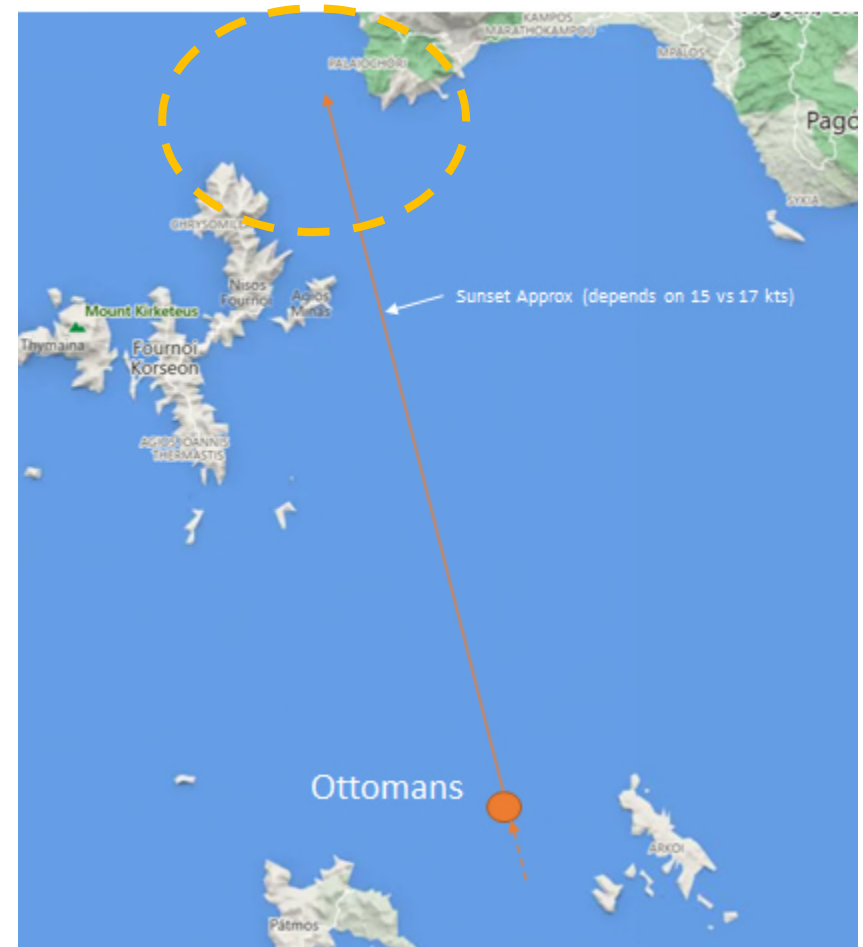
Building the scenario

- ◆ **Start with idea . . . Could the Italians have found the Ottomans?**
- ◆ **Research! – Research!! – Research!!!**
 - Who is there? Why are they there? Define the Orders and Forces.
- ◆ **Who was where, when, and how fast can they travel?**
 - How to bring the Forces together?
 - Courses, Speeds, Distances to cover, Locations. Define the Setup.
- ◆ **Contact and Engagement**
 - Detection ranges/visibility balance with gun ranges.
 - Who can hurt the other? How? What range? Define Victory Conditions.
- ◆ **Balance and Playability**
 - Using real forces can be unbalanced on paper, so adjust Victory Conditions to balance. Make it harder to superior side to win.



Building the scenario (cont)

- ◆ Ottoman capital ships are slower, but guns reach farther.
- ◆ Italians are faster, but there are fewer of them.
- ◆ Ottomans have destroyers, but only eight of them.
- ◆ Open ocean is a weakness for destroyers, but a narrows between land makes them tactically viable.





Conclusion

- ◆ **When building a historical scenario, consider what both sides need to do to win, how does that fit the orders, how do the orders fit the situation, how does the situation fit history?**
- ◆ **Both sides should have relatively equal chances to achieve their victory conditions.**
- ◆ **Both sides should have equal chances to have fun.**
- ◆ **Players should never have to ask ‘where is’ or ‘why am I’?**

And Remember

- ◆ **Never assume or count on what players will do.**
- ◆ **No scenario design survives contact with the players.**



Resources

- ◆ **Commodore W.H. Beehler (USN), “The History of the Italian-Turkish War (September 29, 1911 to October 18, 1912)”, Reprinted from Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute, with additions, The Advertiser-Republican, Annapolis MD, 1913.**
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- ◆ **Herbert Adams Gibbons, PHD., “The New Map of Europe (1911-1914)”, The Century Co., New York, 1916.**
- ◆ **Bernd Langensiepen & Aumet Guleryuz, “The Ottoman Steam Navy, 1828-1928”, Edited and Translated by James Cooper, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 1995.**
- ◆ **John D. Lyon, Jr., “The Tripolitan War, 1911-1912”, A Thesis for Graduate Faculty Central Washington State College, 1971.**



Questions?