litti’s Liberals and right-wing Liberals won, collectively, 114 seats. As PPI and PSI refused to work with one another, Liberals made government with PPI, however Giolitti’s anti-clerical past meant difficult relationship. Liberals forming government whilst PSI had one a plurality was seen by man as illegitimate, and a definitive marker of the illegitimacy of the liberal system.

Mussolini and the development of fascism

**Foundation of the Fasci di Combattimento, 1919**
- Benito Mussolini founded the Fasci di Combattimento, or Combat Group, on March 23. It was poorly attended event as only 118 people present.

**Party programme and support**
- In 1919 the nascent movement presented itself as left wing with policies of: republicanism, female suffrage, anti-clericalism, wage controls, social policy.
- November 1919 was a failure for the Fascists with not a single one being elected. Even in their powerbase Milan they achieved only 1.8% of the votes. It teetered on the verge of collapse, having only 4,000 active supporters in 1919. The mass occupation of factories by 500,000 workers in Northern Italy in 1920 provided the initial spur for increase Fascist support. Many ex-servicemen.

**Squadrismo and the move the right**
- From 1921 onwards Fascist gained in popularity in rural and urban areas. This was because agricultural employers required assistance against local socialist and Catholic unions. Fascists organized themselves into paramilitary groups, called Squadristi, led by former army officers; wearing black shirts for identification. They invaded villages beating up socialists and ransacking villages. During elections they intimidated voters and organised tax-strikes in socialist controlled towns. They had access to arms and were often helped by the army – and in some towns the police forces used them to put down strikers.

**Support**
- Predominately those who feared socialists: landowners, industrialists, and clerical workers. Fascism was popular amongst the young for its perceived vitality: in 1921 10% of all supporters were students

**Mussolini and the squadristi**
- Mussolini proclaimed himself the absolute leader of the Fascists, in contrast to the Ras, who led their fascist forces, who saw their own power bases. The figure of Mussolini provided a unifying figure for the Fascists and as an immense one – being the only person who could control the squadristi.
- By the middle of 1921 the socialist threat, esp. in the countryside, had subsided and the fascists controlled large areas: this placed Mussolini in a powerful position.

**Political legitimacy, the PNF and the ‘New Programme’**
- Mussolini pursued what has been termed a ‘dual policy’: persuading longstanding urban radicals he had not sold out while attempting to attract establishment figure with a more measured image - hence ‘New Programme’.
1919-22 saw five successive governments collapse. The moderate PSI and PPI were willing to work together in anti-fascist coalition, however Giolitti put personal animosity above unity and refused to support it.

Liberals tried to cooperate with fascists so as to bring them under their control. For example, in 1921 prior to the election Giolitti included the Fascists in the government bloc electorate list in an attempt to use transformismo. This system no longer operated and served only to increase the PFI’s legitimacy.

In December 1921 Giolitti’s successor, Ivanoe Bonomi, made a feeble attempt of reigning in the squads. This caused de facto toleration of the violence.

The general strike, July 1922

- The decision by Socialists to call a general strike on 31 July 1922 provided fascist squads with justification to attack strikers across the country. Despite the strike collapsing after a day, fascists continued fighting. In August the fascists burned down the building housing the newspaper Avanti!

- The PFI took credit for ending the strike. These events buttressed the view of the Liberal states weakness and instability; Mussolini appeared as a strong and decisive leader.

Mussolini’s dual policy

- He encouraged black shirt violence whilst working with established politicians, e.g. Mussolini tried to persuade Giolitti that the PNF could work in a coalition. The two sections were self-reinforcing: Giolitti listened to Mussolini due to the violence and knew that unless compromised with Mussolini could use violence. Thus, it strengthened his negotiating power.

The ‘March on Rome’, 1922

- They had only 34 MPs but were being considered for government in having between 2-5 Fascist cabinet members; with Mussolini making clear he would only accept a major position.

Events of the ‘March on Rome’, October 1922

- Meant to emulate a glorious coup d’état. The Ras cf. Mussolini, wanted a violent seizure of power to indicate a clean break with the previous regime.

- 27 October squadristi gathered outside Rome. March was success as propaganda coup, Facta resigned and Mussolini appointed PM.

The role of Victor Emmanuel III

- Two key decisions:
  1. Eventually refused to authorise use of martial law against the March on Rome, after initially agreeing two hours later.
  2. Supported appointment of Mussolini as PM on 30 October 1922. After Facta’s resignation, Mussolini would accept nothing less.

Why did the king make these decisions?

- Believed country nearing civil war, and the army unable to quash socialists and fascists. Significantly, unsure whether army would actually comply with order to crush fascists

- His cousin the Duke of Aosta was a fascist supporter and favoured by Muss.
In the 1920s Britain and France were still preeminent in Europe and upheld the status quo of the Versailles settlement; Mussolini became more assertive towards the end of the 1920s (despite veneer of good relations).

Mussolini called Britain and France ‘parasites’ and Italy ‘imprisoned’ due to their relative significance in the Mediterranean.

The impact of foreign policy success and failure before 1934

Mussolini and allies

Treaties signed between 1923-25:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>USSR, Switzerland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>Hungary, Spain, Albania, Greece</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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However, Mussolini had a reputation for fickleness. British Ambassador to Italy, Sir Ronald Graham, stated in 1923 that Mussolini would always ‘offer Italian friendship to the highest bidder’

Corfu, 1923

17 August 192 Italian general Enrico Tellini and four of his aides were assassinated in Greece, during a commission to delimit Greco-Albanian borders. In response, Mussolini demanded: official apology, payment of 50m lire indemnity as compensation and ceremonial measures. Greece rejected and Italy bombarded Corfu on 31 Aug. The matter was referred to the League of Nations: Greece was ordered to pay the indemnity; however Britain, with its greater naval might, ordered Mussolini to remove ships from Corfu – which he complied with.

The Balkans, 1924

Pact of Rome in 1924 ceded Fiume to Italy. This was largely a symbolic victory.

Accession of Ahmed Zog in Albania in 1924 resulted in 1926 Treaty of Friendship between the two countries – paving the way for Italian domination of Yugoslavia and confirming Albania’s status as a client state of Italy.

The Locarno Treaties, 1925

Delimited Germany’s western frontiers and opened up the opportunity for revision of Germany’s eastern border. Mussolini arrived late, but his appearance was touted as a Fascist success and propaganda success.

The Kellogg-Briand Pact, 1928

Mussolini signed this agreement, along with 8 other powers and 56 subsequently, that outlawed war. This was another example of his international statesmanship.

Relations with Britain, France and Germany

Britain and France
omy was more reliant on Germany and Mussolini’s increasing adulation of Hitler and his power.

- In 1936, the Rome-Berlin Axis was announced: a public declaration of amity between nations. 800,000 Germans came out in Berlin to listen to Mussolini.
- In 1937 the Anti-Comintern Pact was signed between Japan, Germany and Italy against Communism – this was due to the Sino-Japan War in which the USSR were supplying arms to China.

**Impact of the Sudetenland Crisis, 1938**
- Mussolini saw Hitler’s demands as an opportunity to be seen as an international statesman. On 30 September the Munich Agreement was signed and the Sudetenland was returned to Germany. Italy was drifting closer to Germany, and in 1939 the Pact of Steel (an offensive alliance) was signed.

**The annexation of Albania, March 1939**
- Invasion launched on 25 Mar 1939 and Mussolini wanted to demonstrate military prowess to Hitler. As a result of the invasion Britain and France gave guarantees of military assistance to Greece and Turkey, again pushing Mussolini closer into Germany’s arms.

**Domestic tensions**
- Military spending accounted for 80% of budget deficit increases from 1935-39: this angered elites and the population at-large.

**Pact of Steel**
- Signed 22 May 1939 – formal alliance between Germany and Italy. Hitler wanted an alliance to keep British and French forces deployed in the Mediterranean during his invasion of Poland.
- During negotiations Goering – the formal German negotiator – assured Mussolini that there would be no war for three years. Importantly, the Pact bound the two nations in war even if one of them was the aggressor.

**Why did Mussolini change his position?**
- Incoherent foreign policy in the 1930s; shared ideology; acrimonious relations with Britain.

**Italian neutrality, 1939-40**
- Italy remained neutral until June 1940. Mussolini labelled the position ‘non-belligerent’, representing Mussolini’s support of Hitler but not material support.
- In August 1939 Ciano, foreign minister, demanded the Germans send them 170m tonnes of goods from Germany, including 150 AA batteries and 17,000 military vehicles, to enter the war on the German side; it would have required 17,000 trains.

**Why neutrality?**
- *Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (Aug 1939):* Mussolini portrayed this as a betrayal of the Anti-Comintern Pact
- *Buying time:* did not want to, like WW1, commit to the loosing side