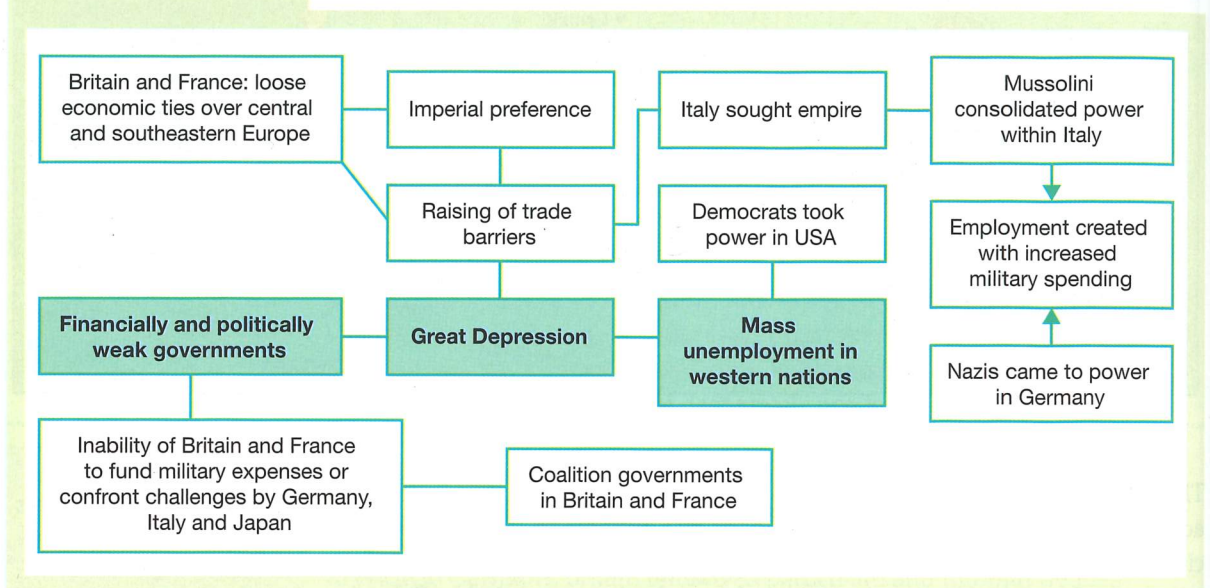


was chaotic and led to millions starving to death. By 1932, Stalin declared that the first Five Year Plan was a huge success, so a second one was begun.

The Soviets, busy with their own affairs and not particularly affected by the Great Depression, were relatively uninvolved in world diplomacy. They did not want any foreign entanglements, but certainly encouraged other communist groups such as those in Germany and France. By the mid-1930s, the Soviets perceived Nazi Germany as a threat, along with Italy and Japan, helping bring them into the League of Nations. They led world criticism of Italy in the Abyssinian Crisis and later during Italy's invasion of Albania (see page 131). Most countries remained wary of the Soviets and hesitated to co-operate with them throughout the 1930s.

SUMMARY DIAGRAM

The economic and political effects of the Great Depression



2 Mussolini and Fascist Italy

► **Key question:** How did Mussolini's Fascist Party affect Italian foreign policy?

Many states with republican forms of government became dictatorships between the First and Second World Wars and Italy was one of these. Benito Mussolini was named prime minister in 1922 and ruled the country as dictator until 1943. Mussolini's Fascist Party and its programme called for glory, war and empire. By the mid-1930s, as the height of the Great Depression, it made an effort to achieve these.

Mussolini and fascism

Fascism was a ruling philosophy of nationalism, which supported industrialists and (supposedly) workers, emphasized order and obedience to the state and enforced a single-party government. Mussolini came to embody this philosophy during his rule of Italy.

Mussolini

Although Italy had been one of the victors in the First World War, it was still weak, having struggled during the war. This was evident when Italy was not granted territories it had been promised in the Treaty of London in 1915, which brought Italy into the war against the Central Powers; France and Britain simply disregarded earlier promises, expecting Italy to comply.

Italy was already severely divided internally as the result of regional, economic and political issues before its entry into the First World War. Participation in the war meant even greater financial and social strain. Promises made to its 2 million soldiers, such as granting them farmland ownership, were not fulfilled and the government owed huge amounts to banks and industrialists that had been borrowed for the war effort.

Events such as riots, strikes, violence, a dysfunctional parliament, religious interference by the Catholic Church, the spread of communist ideology and more led to several turbulent years. Mussolini formed a gang that was financed by industrialists and bankers, as well as other conservatives. In time, this gang, called the Black Shirts, grew enormously in number and power. By 1922, Mussolini had admirers such as the king, industry leaders and the middle economic classes. He threatened to march on Rome and seize government. The king responded by naming him prime minister that year, a position he held until 1943. Soon Mussolini was simply called *Il Duce* or The Leader.

Mussolini's political party, the National Fascist Party, was soon the only political party allowed. Internal dissent was suppressed by:

- banning publications that opposed fascist views
- outlawing labour unions, replacing them with government-managed organizations
- resolving various long-term disputes with the Catholic Church
- the creation of youth groups to teach the young about fascist ideology
- violence against opponents.

Efforts were made to depict Mussolini's rule as a revival of the ancient Roman Empire. These efforts relied heavily on imagery and ancient symbolism, including the **fascēs**, the use of Roman letters, new versions of Roman-inspired architecture, public sculpture and more.

How did Mussolini come to power and what views on international relations were advocated by fascism?

What imagery in Source G attempts to connect the Black Shirts with ancient Rome?

SOURCE G

An Italian postage stamp from 1923 showing an ancient Roman coin and other symbols. The Latin words read: 'Pension Fund [for the] Black Shirts'.



KEY TERM

Fascēs A bundle of bound rods that included an axe that was carried by guards of important Roman officials, which eventually represented government authority and power.

 **KEY TERM**

Imperialism Policy or system of a state gaining control of foreign lands for reasons of trade, prestige or military advantage.

Indemnity A financial penalty.

? Why, according to Source H, does Mussolini not believe in peace?

How successful was Mussolini's foreign policy between 1922 and 1934?

? According to Source I, why was Italy limited in terms of foreign policy in the 1920s?

Fascism

In terms of foreign policy, fascism advocated war and **imperialism**. Essentially, fascism held that the country should be prepared for war so that it could expand. Only through warfare could it become the great nation for which it was destined. While women were supposed to stay at home and produce strong, healthy children for Italy's future armies, men should be warriors for the state. Women were encouraged to have children; those with the most children received awards. Various youth groups were founded by the Fascist Party to learn about fascism, and learn to march and shoot.

SOURCE H

Excerpt from a speech by Benito Mussolini, quoted in *You Might Like Socialism: A Way of Life for Modern Man* by Corliss Lamont, published by Modern Age Books, New York, USA, 1939, p. 173. Lamont was a socialist, professor of philosophy at Columbia, Harvard and other universities, and Chairman of the National Council of American–Soviet Friendship.

War is to man what maternity [giving birth] is to a woman. From a philosophical and doctrinal viewpoint, I do not believe in perpetual peace.

Fascist foreign policy 1922–34

In terms of foreign policy, Italy was economically weak and therefore militarily weak. Italy's economy was dependent on Britain, France and the USA in the 1920s. While fascism advocated war and empire, there were clearly limits on what could be achieved without putting the country at financial risk. An embargo on fuel by the USA or Britain, for example, would severely restrict the economy. Reduction in food imports from France would cause food shortages in Italy and massive price increases. An unemployed, hungry population would possibly demand a change in government and remove Mussolini from power. Foreign policy had to be necessarily cautious.

Italy's foreign policy in the 1920s was primarily opportunist, taking advantage of small incidents to gain politically. In the 1920s, Italy responded to the assassination of military officers who were ostensibly mapping Albania's borders by shelling Greece's island of Corfu. Greece, far weaker than Italy, was coerced into offering an **indemnity** which Italy accepted. Yugoslavia, involved in a dispute with Italy over the city of Fiume, today's Rijeka, was also weak and simply handed the city over to Italy before it could be attacked. These foreign policy successes required little on the part of Italy.

SOURCE I

Excerpt from *Italian Fascism, 1919–1945* by Philip Morgan, published by Macmillan, London, UK, 1995, p. 135.

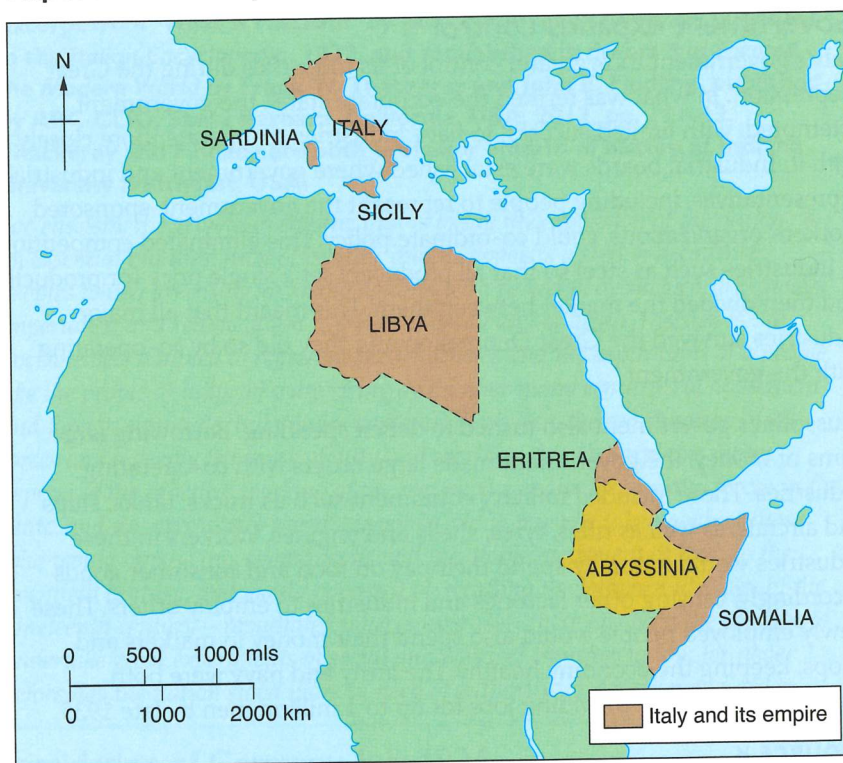
But Mussolini's predilection was to make trouble wherever he could and disparage the forms of conventional diplomacy, using methods of internal political subversion as covert, undeclared warfare on countries he regarded as Italy's enemies. The point is not that Mussolini could be credited with a decade of

good behaviour in foreign policy, but rather that the damage he could do in the 1920s was limited because of Italy's intrinsic economic and military weakness, and the lack of counterbalance to effective Anglo-French dominance in Europe which Italy could exploit.

Mussolini desired areas of southeastern France and the island of Corsica for Italy since their populations spoke dialects of Italian or closely related languages and not French. Since France was a far greater power than Italy, these desires were simply tabled for the future. France, working to isolate Germany, included Italy in its diplomatic efforts and was not concerned with Italy's weak military. While Italy needed France economically, there was little friction between the two states.

SOURCE J

Map of the Italian Empire in 1935.



The creation of an Italian Empire was not Mussolini's idea; it had been Italian policy for decades. Before the First World War, Italy managed to wrest control of today's Libya from the **Ottoman Empire**. This territory had few people and few resources, and oil had yet to be discovered. This empire was more of a burden than an asset. Soon Italy added Eritrea and Italian Somaliland, part of today's Somalia. Again, these were poor territories that did not add to the glory or economy of Italy.

What does Source J indicate about Italy's empire in 1935?



KEY TERM

Ottoman Empire Empire that once covered most of the Middle East, much of north Africa and the Balkan peninsula of Europe, with its capital at Istanbul.

How did the Great Depression affect Italy economically and therefore in terms of international relations?

The Great Depression and Italy

The Great Depression (see page 100) severely affected Italy's economy. It had to export its manufactured goods to pay for food imports, fuel and raw materials for its industries. Britain, France and the USA, its main trade partners, erected trade barriers to protect their industries. So, to survive, Italy turned away from Western markets and traded more extensively with Yugoslavia, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania. These countries mainly exported raw materials and food, allowing Italy to export manufactured goods to them in return.

This meant in terms of foreign policy that Italy had less fear of economic retaliation in response to its policies than it had before. So, in effect, the Great Depression gave Italy more freedom to operate its foreign policy than previously and more in line with its fascist governing philosophy.

Government expands control

Italy's government took greater control of its industries during the Great Depression. In what was termed the 'corporate state', the government attempted, with limited success, to have industries co-operate more closely with it. Industrial boards were established where government and industrial representatives, including people to represent the government-sponsored workers' organizations, could co-ordinate policy. This eliminated competition in industries such as steel so that all producers set a single price for products and then divided the market between them. This meant that all major industries survived the Great Depression and they did so by co-operating with the government.

Mussolini's government also turned to deficit spending. Borrowing large sums of money, the government made large orders with co-operating industries. These included military equipment such as trucks, tanks, ships and aircraft, as well as rifles, tyres, shells and engines. Workers in these industries would naturally spend their pay on food and consumer goods accordingly, causing other factories and industries to employ others. These newly employed people would also spend their money in markets and shops, keeping the economy healthy. The army and navy were both massively expanded, providing jobs for up to 1 million men by late 1935.

SOURCE K

Excerpt from *Italian Fascism, 1919–1945* by Philip Morgan, published by Macmillan, London, UK, 1995, p. 141.

The worst point of the Depression was 1932, when planning for an invasion [of Abyssinia] started. But the economy was beginning to recover during 1934. That recovery was certainly aided by the government's war-related commissions and contracts, which began to flow in late 1934 and early 1935, coinciding with and consequent on Mussolini's decision to invade ... Preparation for war undoubtedly had an impact on employment, which by spring 1935 was down 250,000 [unemployed workers] on 1934. Some sectors benefited hugely from

?

According to Source K, what helped Italy's economy recover from the worst effects of the Great Depression?

mobilisation, the war itself and colonial administration, obviously enough those supplying arms, clothing equipment, transportation and other logistical services for the war effort and the running of the empire.

Mussolini's Italy was better prepared for a more aggressive foreign policy as a result of the Great Depression. Not only was the country now less reliant on Western Europe and the USA economically, the government now had better control of industry and was in the midst of producing large amounts of military equipment. This meant that Mussolini's fascist goal for Italy could be realized, in terms of foreign policy. As a result of this new reality, Mussolini reorganized his government in 1933, granting himself the ministries of war, air and navy, while also serving as minister of the interior, minister of foreign affairs (until 1936) and prime minister.

SOURCE L

Excerpt from 'What is Fascism?' by Benito Mussolini, originally published in the *Italian Encyclopedia*, 1932, and republished in *Events that Formed the Modern World* by Frank W. Thackeray and John E. Findling, published by ABC-CLIO, Santa Barbara, California, USA, 2012, pp. 111–12. Thackeray and Findling are both professor emeriti of history at Indiana University Southeast, USA.

For Fascism, the growth of empire, that is to say the expansion of the nation, is an essential manifestation of vitality, and its opposite a sign of decadence. Peoples which are rising, or rising again after a period of decadence, are always imperialist; and renunciation is a sign of decay and of death. Fascism is the doctrine best adapted to represent the tendencies and the aspirations of a people, like the people of Italy, who are rising again after many centuries of abasement and foreign servitude. But empire demands discipline, the coordination of all forces and a deeply felt sense of duty and sacrifice: this fact explains many aspects of the practical working of the regime, the character of many forces in the State, and the necessarily severe measures which must be taken against those who would oppose this spontaneous and inevitable movement of Italy in the twentieth century, and would oppose it by recalling the outworn ideology of the nineteenth century – repudiated wheresoever [sic] there has been the courage to undertake great experiments of social and political transformation; for never before has the nation stood more in need of authority, of direction and order.

According to Source L, why is national expansion important?



Intimidation of Germany, July 1934

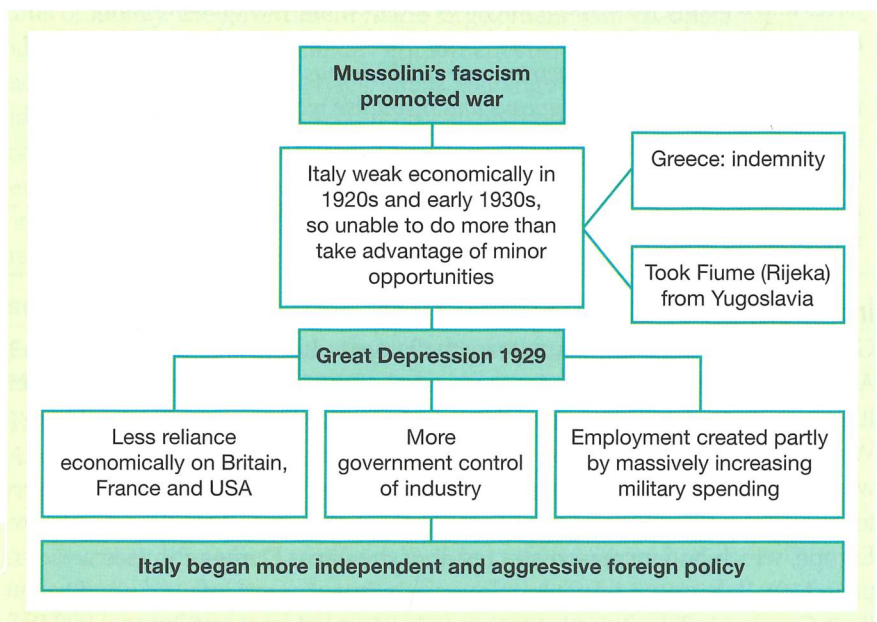
Germany offered the only European challenge to Italy's growing strength. After 1933, Germany was under the control of the Nazi Party (see page 106). Italy had worked with France and Britain to isolate Germany after the First World War and Austria was a buffer state between the two countries. Italy wanted to prevent any expansion of Germany into Austria or anywhere else for fear that it would replace Italy's interests in central and southeastern Europe, which had increased as a result of the Great Depression (see page 110). Italy wanted Austria to remain in its sphere of influence and to limit German influence in the entire region as much as possible.

In 1934, members of an Austrian version of the Nazi Party assassinated Engelbert Dollfuss, Austria's dictator. The plan was to overthrow the state and merge Austria and Germany. Mussolini immediately announced that Italian troops were heading to Italy's border with Austria. This was a clear threat to Germany that Italy would not allow Germany to absorb Austria and that Mussolini wanted it to remain independent. Germany had an extremely weak army and Hitler did not fully control his military at this point of his dictatorship (see page 142). A military challenge by Italy might cause Germany's military to oppose Hitler, something Hitler was not prepared for. Hitler's government did not intervene and the assassins and their co-conspirators were captured. Mussolini had demonstrated to his people and other states that Italy was now a significant military power.

Stresa Front 1935

In April 1935, the heads of government of Britain, France and Italy met in Stresa, Italy, to form a common diplomatic front against Germany. This was partly in response to Germany's earlier move to annex Austria and a result of Germany's announcement that it would begin rearmament (see page 144). All three countries condemned Germany's plans to rebuild its military and all agreed to work together.

Almost immediately, Britain and Germany signed a naval treaty (see page 154) without consulting either Italy or France, demonstrating that the Stresa Front countries were not as united as their public statements indicated. Italy and France felt betrayed by Britain and spoke about the possibility of mutual military co-operation in case of war. These talks went absolutely nowhere as a result of the Abyssinian Crisis.



SUMMARY DIAGRAM

Mussolini and Fascist Italy

3 The Abyssinian Crisis

▶ **Key question:** What role did the Abyssinian Crisis have in destroying the League of Nations' credibility?

The Abyssinian Crisis was a key event during Mussolini's rule and Italian expansion. It had tremendous consequences for the League of Nations, Abyssinia, Italy, Britain, France, Germany and even central and eastern Europe. The crisis itself developed out of Mussolini's desire to have an empire at just about any cost.

SOURCE M

Speech by Benito Mussolini, 2 October 1933 regarding the invasion of Abyssinia, *Lend Me Your Ears: Great Speeches in History* by William Safire, published by W.W. Norton & Co., New York, USA, 2004, pp. 134–5. Safire wrote speeches for several US presidents and was a political columnist for the *New York Times* in the USA, a newspaper with one of the largest circulations in the world.

It is not only an army marching towards its goal, but it is forty-four million Italians marching in unity behind this army. Because the blackest of injustices is being attempted against them, that of taking from them their place in the sun. When in 1915 Italy threw in her fate with that of the Allies, how many cries of admiration, how many promises were heard? But after the common victory, which cost Italy six hundred thousand dead, four hundred thousand lost, one million wounded, when peace was being discussed around the table only the crumbs of a rich colonial booty were left for us to pick up. For thirteen years we have been patient while the circle tightened around us at the hands of those who wish to suffocate us.

With reference to Source M's content, origin and purpose, what are some values and limitations of this source?



The Italian Empire

Mussolini wanted to create an empire in order to make Italy a Great Power, like France and Britain were perceived to be. There were economic reasons why empire was needed as well, but Mussolini did not emphasize these in his public statements. While Italy held Libya, Eritrea and part of Somalia, these territories were not particularly important and were somewhat of an embarrassment because of their poverty. As it stood, the Italian Empire was not impressive to Italians or anyone else.

When reviewing the world map for suitable territory to conquer in nearby Africa, there remained only Abyssinia (Ethiopia) and Liberia, a state formed by freed slaves in the nineteenth century and under the indirect supervision and sponsorship of the USA. Abyssinia was conveniently located beside the Italian colonies of Somaliland and Eritrea, and its borders were loosely defined, if at all. Mussolini was completely uninterested in its economic potential and also disregarded the state of the Italian economy, which was totally unprepared to finance a war for any purpose.

← What were the main reasons that Italy sought an empire?



What does Source N indicate about Italy's military in 1936?

SOURCE N

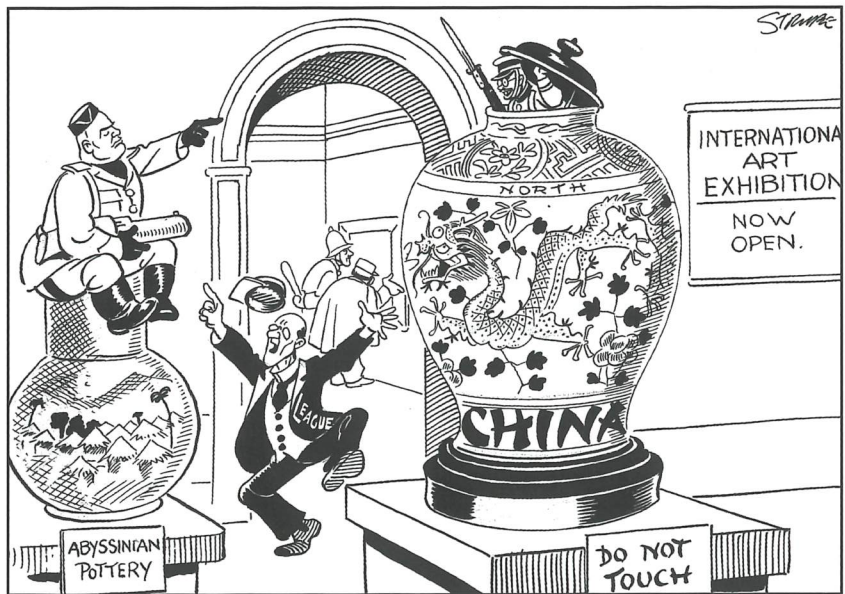
Hundreds of aircraft have been lined up for Mussolini's inspection before they are sent to support Italy's invasion of Abyssinia in 1936.



What is the message conveyed in Source O?

SOURCE O

'The Jap in the Vase.' A cartoon by Sidney 'George' Strube, the *Daily Express*, 29 November 1935. Strube was a British cartoonist who worked at the *Daily Express* from 1912 to 1948. The *Daily Express* is a British newspaper started in 1900.



The Wal-Wal Incident and war

In December 1934, a clash occurred between Italian and Abyssinian troops at the small oasis of Wal-Wal, 80 km (50 miles) on the Abyssinian side of the border with Italian Somaliland, leaving at least two Italian soldiers and over 100 Abyssinian troops dead. Italy demanded \$100,000 and an official apology from the Abyssinian government. Abyssinia responded by appealing to the League of Nations, of which both Italy and Abyssinia were members. An arbitration committee was established and announced in September 1935 that the Wal-Wal Incident, as it became known, was minor and that neither country was at fault. Mussolini, however, had already directed the Italian army in December 1934 to prepare for the invasion of Abyssinia. Armies also prepared to invade from neighbouring Italian colonies. Britain and France were very aware of Italy's plans, but were unwilling to jeopardize their relationship with Italy, which they believed was important for opposing German foreign policies.

← What was the significance of the Wal-Wal Incident for Italian foreign policy?

SOURCE P

A group of soldiers in the Abyssinian army in 1936 carrying shields and rifles during the war with Abyssinia.



What does Source P indicate about the Abyssinian military? ?

October 1935 saw the long-expected invasion of Abyssinia. The relatively modern Italian forces annihilated the Abyssinian armies sent against them that used a variety of antique weapons. Aerial bombing by the Italians and the liberal use of poison gas over large areas led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of men, women, children and livestock, poisoning water and destroying crops. The Emperor of Abyssinia, Haile Selassie, escaped to Britain while practically all organized opposition to the Italian occupation collapsed in the midst of the destruction in early 1936. Italian Somaliland, Eritrea and Abyssinia were then merged into one large colony: Italian East Africa. The capital of this new colony was Addis Ababa, Abyssinia's capital city, and the King of Italy was retitled as Emperor of Ethiopia.



According to Source Q, what is the benefit of war?

How significant were international responses to the Abyssinian Crisis for Italy?



KEY TERM

Guerrilla attacks Military attacks by small groups, usually on a larger military force.



What is the value of Source R for historians studying the Abyssinian Crisis?

SOURCE Q

Benito Mussolini quoted in *Social Darwinism in European and American Thought, 1860–1945: Nature as Model and Nature as Threat* by Mike Hawkins, published by Cambridge University Press, UK, 1997, p. 285. Hawkins is a sociology professor at Kingston University, UK.

... societies are formed, gain strength, and move forwards through conflict; the healthiest and most vital of them assert themselves against the weakest and less well adapted through conflict; the natural evolution of nations and races takes place through conflict ...

Responses to the Abyssinian Crisis

Abyssinia

Over 750,000 people were killed in Abyssinia during the war. Inhabitants and livestock of whole villages were completely destroyed. Suffering in Abyssinia continued after the war officially was declared over. **Guerrilla attacks** on Italian forces were relatively minor, but continued throughout Italy's occupation of Abyssinia. There were no large-scale revolts, probably because of the lack of weapons and organization, but also because of the sheer violence of the Italian military's response. Mussolini ordered that prisoners be shot, that various villages be gassed where resistance had been discovered, and that priests and others suspected of complicity in armed resistance be executed without hesitation.

SOURCE R

Telegrams from Mussolini to army commanders in Ethiopia, 1936, from *Mussolini Unleashed 1939–1941: Politics and Strategy in Fascist Italy's Last War* by MacGregor Knox, published by Cambridge University Press, UK, 1982, p. 4. Knox is an American professor of modern European history at the London School of Economics, UK.

Secret – 8 June 1936. To finish off rebels, as in case at Ancober, use gas. Mussolini

Secret – 8 July 1936. I repeat my authorization to initiate and systematically conduct policy of terror and extermination against rebels and populations in complicity with them. Without the law of ten eyes for one we cannot heal this wound in good time. Mussolini

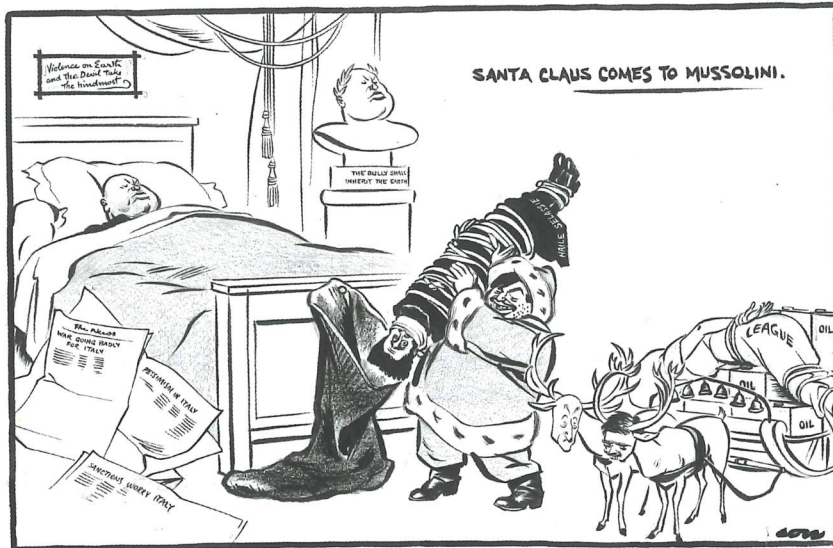
21 February 1937. Agree that male population of Goggetti over 18 years of age is to be shot and village destroyed. Mussolini

Response: League of Nations

In October 1935, the League, led by Britain and France, condemned the Italian invasion of Abyssinia, voting for a gradually escalating programme of economic sanctions. Other than ignoring the issues outright, this was the least the League could do. The League placed no embargo on oil exports to Italy, which would have brought the Italian economy to a halt, and quickly. Backed by public opinion and a weak National Government, Britain did not threaten Italy with war or even consider it an option, so a divided French government did not either.

SOURCE S

'Santa Claus Comes to Mussolini.' Cartoon by David Low, *Evening Standard*, 13 December 1935. Low was a cartoonist from New Zealand who worked for many British newspapers from 1919 to 1953. The *Evening Standard* is a British newspaper published since 1827.



Who do you think the individuals are in the cartoon in Source S and why are they depicted as they are?



Britain refused to close the **Suez Canal** to Italian shipping on the grounds that this might lead to war in the Mediterranean. The lack of an oil embargo and use of the Suez Canal condemned Abyssinia to defeat and this was accomplished by May 1936. When the Emperor of Abyssinia, Haile Selassie, was allowed to speak at the League of Nations in the same month, Italy withdrew from the League in protest, much as Japan had done earlier (see page 58).

KEY TERM

Suez Canal Major canal linking the Mediterranean and Red Seas and therefore the Atlantic and Indian Oceans.

SOURCE T

Excerpt from a speech by Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia to the League of Nations, 30 June 1936. Haile Selassie I: Ethiopia's Lion of Judah by Peter Schwab, published by Nelson-Hall, USA, 1979, pp. 168–70. Schwab is a professor of political science at the State University of New York, USA.

... The Ethiopian government never expected other governments to shed their soldiers' blood to defend the Covenant when their own immediate personal interests were not at stake. Ethiopian warriors asked only for means to defend themselves. On many occasions I have asked for financial assistance for the purchase of arms. That assistance has been constantly refused me. What, then, in practice, is the meaning of Article 16 and of collective security?

... Should it happen that a strong government finds it may, with impunity, destroy a weak people, then the hour strikes for that weak people to appeal to the League of Nations to give its judgment in all freedom. God and history will remember your judgment ...

What is the message conveyed in Source T?

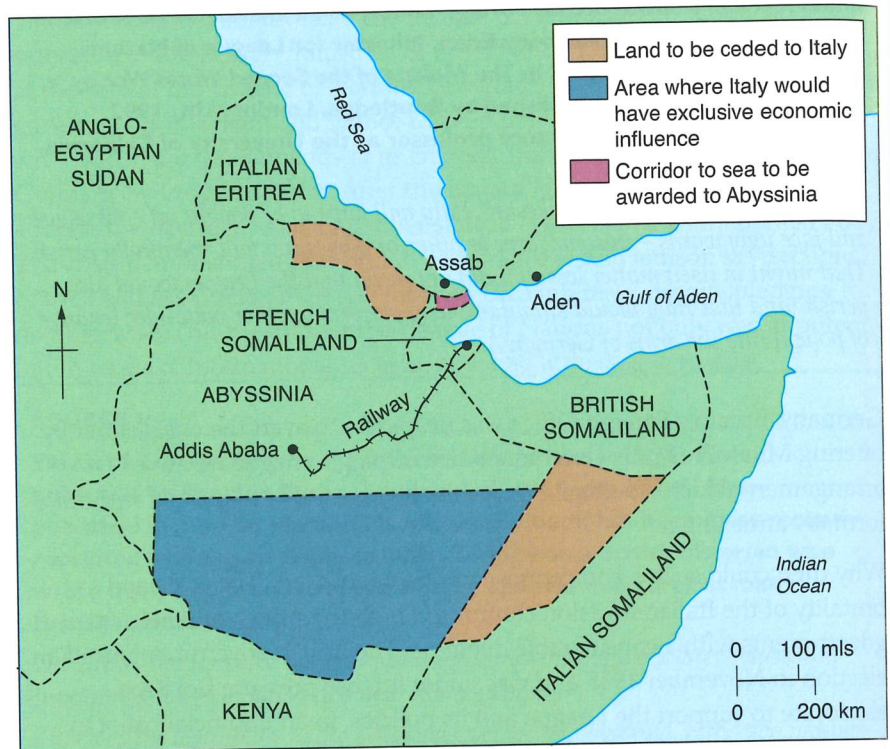




According to Source W, what were the most significant territorial changes proposed and who benefited?

SOURCE W

The Hoare–Laval Plan (1935) for the partition of Abyssinia.



In December 1935, when Abyssinia was all but defeated, Laval and the British Foreign Minister, Samuel Hoare, produced a plan known as the Hoare–Laval Pact or Plan. This called for placing two-thirds of Abyssinia under Italy’s control and giving what was left to an independent Abyssinia. This smaller state was a narrow strip of land, referred to as a corridor, to the sea. This land corridor would allow Abyssinia a seaport to build trade and a better economy for its people.

There was a strong possibility that the Hoare–Laval Plan would have been acceptable to Mussolini, but it was leaked to the French press and an explosion of rage among the British public forced Hoare’s resignation; the plan was dropped. *The Times*, a major British newspaper, ridiculed the idea of the corridor as a ‘corridor of camels’. The sheer violence and aggression against Abyssinia, not to mention war being built on the flimsy excuse of the Wal-Wal Incident, meant that a compromise sought by various governments was destroyed by public opinion bent on not rewarding war and not wanting to be drawn into one. No one bothered to ask Abyssinia’s government for its opinion on the Hoare–Laval Pact.

SOURCE X

Excerpt from *The League of Nations: Its Life and Times, 1920–1946* by F.S. Northedge, published by Holmes & Meier, New York, USA, 1986, p. 243. Northedge was a professor of international relations at the London School of Economics, UK, writing numerous books on the subject as well.

The fact is that the British and French Governments never had any intention of using force against Italy to stop its advance in Abyssinia, or even of closing the Suez Canal, which would have locked Italian forces in East Africa in a trap. Nor had any other country, though all were ready to cheer Britain and France from the side-lines, had they gone into action. Laval even regarded an oil embargo as a form of military sanction since he considered that it would have military consequences, and he opposed it for that reason. It was equally evident that, for his part, Mussolini did not intend to be prevented from conquering his victim by anything short of superior force. The conquest of Abyssinia was too important in his foreign policy; he had invested too much money, too much of his own political future, in it ... In these circumstances, what course remained for the chief League Powers except to try to reach a compromise settlement which might at least keep some part of Abyssinia outside the new Roman Empire [Mussolini's Italy]? The brutality and cynicism, the blatant deception, of the Hoare–Laval proposals might be deplored, but their logic was less easily condemned.

Response: USA

The USA worked diplomatically to encourage Mussolini not to invade Abyssinia, with no results. When the invasion began, the US government blocked the sale of weapons, ammunition and other war supplies to both Italy and Abyssinia through its **Neutrality Acts**; this only affected Abyssinia as Italy produced much of its own war materiel. Once Abyssinia was absorbed into the Italian Empire, the USA refused to recognize this annexation, in line with the Stimson Doctrine invoked against Japan (see page 61).

SOURCE Y

Excerpt from *War and Peace in Soviet Diplomacy* by T.A. Taracouzio, published by Macmillan, New York, USA, 1940, p. 199. Taracouzio was a writer who produced several books on the Soviet Union and its diplomacy and wrote several articles for the US-based journal *Foreign Affairs*.

Nine days later he [Soviet Foreign Minister Litvinov] referred to these considerations as the real reason why the League should fulfil its purpose to the greatest degree possible [with regard to Italy's invasion of Abyssinia]. This defense of the League Covenant became the primary concern of the Soviets, and to that end the USSR was to be 'second to none in the legal discharge of assumed international obligations, more especially in the noble task of securing for all nations the blessing of peace, which mankind never valued or appreciated so much as it does now after the relatively recent orders.' This meant Soviet loyalty to Article 16 of the Covenant, whose provisions called for sanctions. The Soviets insisted on their application to the fullest extent.

What does Source X indicate about Italy's conquest of Abyssinia?


 **KEY TERM**

Neutrality Acts A series of US government laws that generally imposed embargoes on the sale of weapons to states at war.

According to Source Y, why did the Soviets insist on complete economic sanctions against Italy?



Response: Soviet Union

The Soviet Union in 1935 was in the midst of continuing economic reconstruction and social upheaval (see page 163). With mass industrialization and struggles to produce enough food, the Soviets were in no condition to exercise an aggressive foreign policy. Nevertheless, the Soviets issued a series of declarations that the independence of Abyssinia must be guaranteed by the League of Nations. When the issue of Abyssinia was debated at the League's Assembly, the Soviet representative harangued Italian representatives, condemning their statements regarding Abyssinia in the strongest of terms. Unable to affect the League's failure to impose collective security, the Soviets participated in the economic sanctions against Italy, imposing an embargo on all trade, unlike Britain and France.

? What is the message of Source Z?

SOURCE Z

'International trick skating, practicing for the international event.' A cartoon by Sidney 'George' Strube for the *Daily Express*, 26 February 1937.



Response: Italy

Italy was affected by the Abyssinian Crisis in many ways. Economically, Italy was further isolated from the markets and relative wealth of Western Europe and its trade with the USA was restricted. This certainly affected the economy, which was already weak. This encouraged Italy to continue expanding its economic ties with central and southeastern Europe, giving it more independence in its foreign policy (see page 116). Economic sanctions simply pushed Italy further from co-operative diplomatic relations.

Italy was diplomatically isolated by its annexation of Abyssinia. It refused to participate in the London Naval Treaty conference that began in December 1935, although it had been part of the group that had initiated the naval treaty system in Washington in 1922 (see page 28). While this was partly a protest over economic sanctions by Britain and France, it was also because Italy wanted to build a larger fleet that could challenge France in the Mediterranean and perhaps even Britain eventually. As relations with Germany improved, Italy began to envision the possibility of Italy and Germany co-operating to create a joint navy capable of challenging Britain and France as well. The Stresa Front collapsed completely.

Italy left the League of Nations in May 1936, freeing it for other actions, much as Japan had done in 1933. Italy and Germany's new relationship was formalized in October 1936 with an agreement commonly known as the **Rome–Berlin Axis** (see page 159). This essentially outlined their mutual foreign policies and spheres of interest. Mussolini stated that he did not oppose German annexation of Austria, a key issue for Germany's Hitler.

SOURCE AA

Speech by Benito Mussolini in Milan, Italy, 1 November 1936, quoted in *The Causes of the Second World War* by Anthony Crozier, published by Blackwell Publishers, UK, 1997, p. 121. Crozier was a history lecturer at Queen Mary College, University of London, UK.

The Berlin conversations have resulted in an understanding between our two countries over certain problems which have been particularly acute. By these understandings ... this Berlin–Rome line is ... an axis around which can revolve all those European states with a will to collaboration and peace.

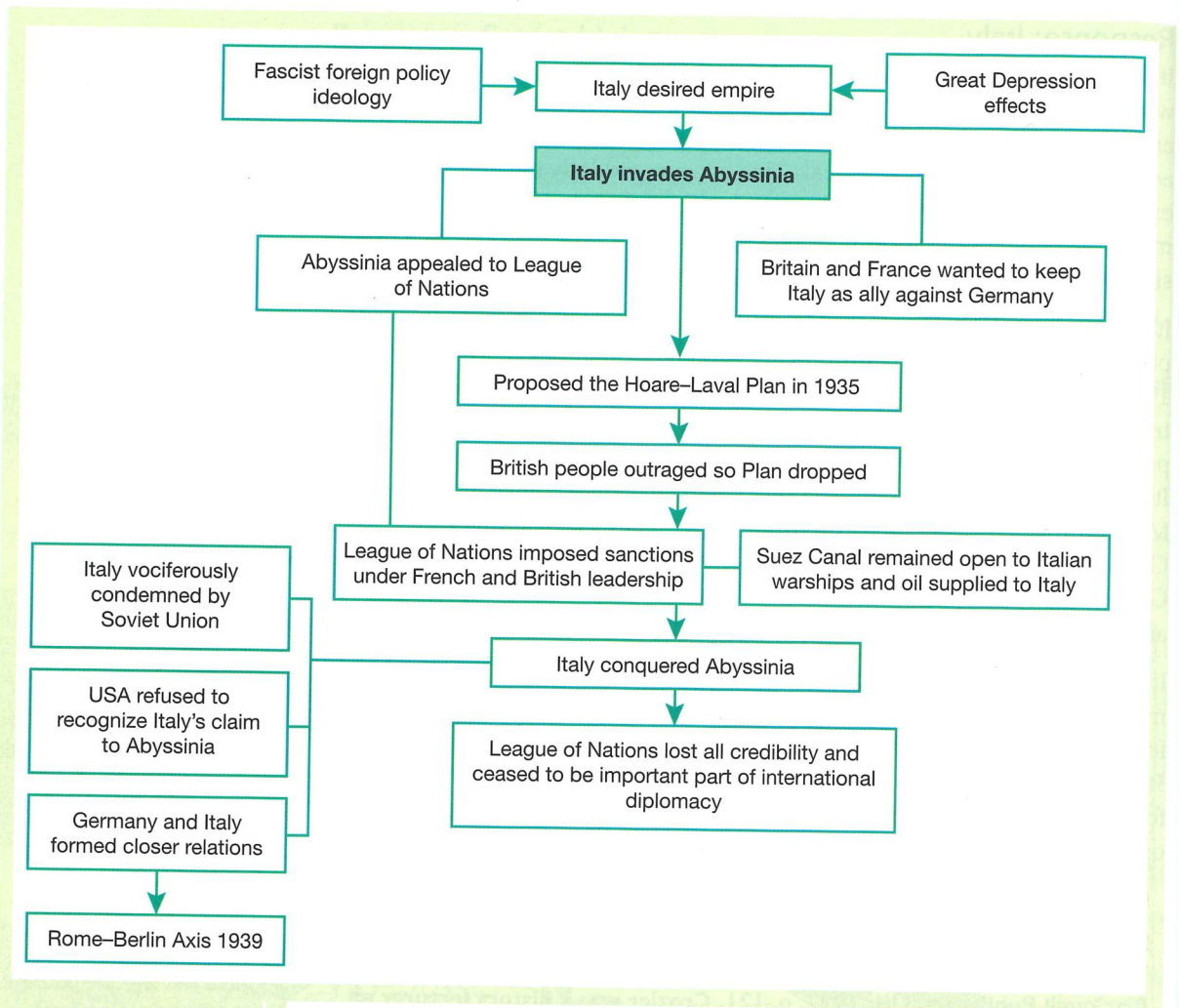
Germany's economy was far greater than that of Italy, and with Germany's economic and military expansion in the late 1930s, Italy was soon reduced to a junior partner in their relationship. This meant that Germany, not Italy, determined the course of their mutual foreign policies and that in time, Italy's opinions were of little importance to Hitler and the German government.

KEY TERM

Rome–Berlin Axis Treaty of friendship between Germany and Italy in 1936, signalling an end to diplomatic co-operation between Italy and Britain and France.

What, according to Source AA, was the purpose of the Berlin–Rome Axis?





SUMMARY DIAGRAM

The Abyssinian Crisis

4 Italy 1939

Key question: How did Italy's relationship with Germany change in 1939?

Between 1936 and 1939, Italy was deeply involved in Spain. Spain was in the midst of a massive civil war and Italy supported the conservative nationalist General Franco. Thousands of Italian troops and large quantities of weapons were sent in support of Franco's forces; Italy's navy assisted as well. Mussolini's hope was that France would become involved and that would allow Italy to seize Corsica and parts of southeastern France that Italy desired. This did not happen. Money, troops and supplies that Italy could not afford were wasted.

Perhaps as the result of this failure and the need for a foreign policy success, or in response to Germany's annexation of Austria and most of Czechoslovakia between 1938 and 1939 (see page 170), Italy decided to annex European territory as well.

Italy's interest in Albania

Albania was a small country with few people and great resources including forests, fields, metals and petroleum. It was also a relatively new state in European affairs, having been formed during the Balkan Wars in 1912 and 1913, just before the outbreak of the First World War. As a member of the Allies, Italy seized Albania in 1915 so that the Allies could use the port of Durrës, referred to in Italy as Durrazo, to supply the Kingdom of Serbia, another member of the Allies. This occupation was short lived and Albania was seized by the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

After the war, Italy worked to delineate Albania's ill-defined borders, working to prevent Greece from taking territory. This led to the assassination of an Italian military officer and a short military conflict between Greece and Italy (see page 114). Italy essentially assumed a protectorate over Albania, whether the Albanians desired it or not, and like Italy, Albania became less democratic in the 1920s. President Zogu, who had signed an alliance between Italy and Albania in 1926, worked to increase his power. He became King Zog I of Albania in 1928 by careful manipulation of a parliament which called for revisions to the constitution, allowing the formation of a **monarchy**, replacing the **republican** form of government.

SOURCE BB

Excerpt from *The History of Albania from Its Origins to Present Day* by Stefanaq Pollo and Arben Puto, published by Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, UK, 1981, p. 206.

In June 1931 a new agreement was signed in Rome: Albania was granted a loan of 100 million gold francs, to be paid at the rate of 10 million a year. But these new funds only just covered the maintenance of [the government]. The country's economy and finance continued to flounder amid growing difficulties, which were made even worse by the effect of the world economic crisis [Great Depression]. A year later Zogu was unable to repay the first annuity on the loan ... and Mussolini decided this was the moment to act: in exchange for putting off the payment again, he insisted on an Italian–Albanian trade agreement abolishing customs duty [tax on Italian imports].

... Zogu refused.

Italy's growing control and war, 1931–9

Mussolini's attempt to gain further control of Albania's economy in 1931 (see Source BB above) made Zog more wary of Italy. In 1932 and 1933, Zog closed all schools operated by Italians and removed Italian military instructors and advisors. He hoped to demonstrate independence from Italy. Mussolini

← What was the purpose behind Italy's annexation of Albania?

KEY TERM

Monarchy A government led by a king or queen.

Republic Form of government consisting of elected representatives of voters.

What does Source BB indicate about Albania?



responded to these actions by suspending the previous loan of money granted to Albania in 1931. This led to a suspension of government projects throughout the country and unemployment in the cities.

King Zog's bankrupt government appealed to France for financial assistance. French demands on Albania were even greater than Italy's in many ways, calling for Albania to set aside large regions where France could settle its poor farmers. Zog ended discussions with France and returned to negotiating with Italy. Mussolini, in a show of force, landed military troops from Italy's navy in Durrës in June 1934, demanding that Zog allow Italian military instructors and advisors back into Albania's military and forbidding the country to join any alliances outside the one it already had with Italy. Italy also required Albania to end all trade restrictions with it and to allow the construction of an improved port at Durrës so that it could be used as a future naval base for Italy's navy.

In March 1939, Italy may have decided to demonstrate its strength and independence to its theoretical partner, Germany. Without informing Germany about its plans, Zog and his government were sent an ultimatum. Italy demanded that Albania allow Italian troops to be garrisoned in various parts of the country, that Albania grant lands to Italian colonists who would automatically become Albanian citizens and that Zog's government contain an Italian minister to represent Italy's interests. In short, Italy wanted almost complete control over the country. Zog responded by proposing a few, limited concessions to Italy which were rejected.

On 7 April, 30,000 soldiers, supported by aircraft, marines and ships, landed at Durrës and other ports. Albania's army and volunteer fighters were quickly overwhelmed and by 10 April, all Albania was occupied. Albania was annexed to Italy and Italy's king was now King of the Albanians, as well as Emperor of Ethiopia.

Responses to Italy annexing Albania

SOURCE CC



According to Source CC, what action did the League of Nations plan to take regarding Italy's invasion of Albania?

Excerpt from *King Zog of Albania: Europe's Self-made Muslim King* by Jason Tomes, published by New York University Press, New York, USA, 2004, p. 238. Tomes is a lecturer in British history at Boston University, USA.

... [The] world accepted the seizure of Albania itself as a *fait accompli* [an accomplished fact]. They may not have rushed to recognise Victor Emmanuel's new title, but in most eyes, a land which had been virtually Italian was now really Italian, and that was that. When Zog asked the moribund League of Nations to protest at 'a state of things accomplished by blood and iron', Avenol, the Secretary-General, remarked: 'The reading of the letter constitutes the [only] action I intend to take.'

International response

International responses to the invasion and annexation of Albania were limited:

- Britain and France were preoccupied with Germany's demands in Poland (see page 171) and therefore did not protest.
- Neighbouring states of Greece and Yugoslavia were afraid of Italian attack, but also hoped to gain slices of Albania, and therefore did not protest.
- The League of Nations had been proven ineffective earlier, so it ignored the situation in Albania.

Only the Soviet Union protested Italy's actions; its condemnation was only verbal, yet aggressive. It was also to no avail.

Second World War begins, 1939

In May 1939, Italy and Germany signed a formal military alliance commonly known as the **Pact of Steel**. In this agreement, both states pledged to support each other in the case of war. The agreement also called for mutual co-operation in economic areas and sharing of military aid, such as weapons. Verbally, Germany told Italy that any war would not be immediate so there was no need to be too concerned with war preparations.

Italy was clearly not prepared for war. Its economy, always weak compared to many other European states, was in very bad shape: the Great Depression, deficit spending for war preparations, the invasion of Abyssinia and huge military support to General Franco in Spain had depleted the government of funds. Its military was smaller as a result of the economy and its military supplies had been consumed in these conflicts. By the time the invasion of Albania occurred, one Italian government official stated that if Albania had organized a single fire-brigade, Italy's military would have been driven back into the sea. Italy was not remotely prepared for war.

Germany seems not to have taken the Pact of Steel very seriously. Some historians believe that the Pact was a means of making sure that Mussolini did not build relations with France and Britain so that Germany did not have to be concerned with its border with Italy, a border created by the annexation of Austria in 1938 (see page 159). Additionally, Italy and France shared a border, so the Pact could also serve to distract France from any military plans it may have had to attack Germany's western border. Whatever the reason, Germany did not assist Italy in any way with war preparations. It also did not inform Italy until August 1939 that a war might break out between Germany and Poland over Danzig (see page 176).

When Italy understood that war was imminent, the Italian government panicked. Mussolini stated clearly that Italy would not be ready for a large war for approximately three years. If Germany insisted on going to war, then it would need to supply Italy militarily. Italy handed over an enormous list of military needs, attempting to demonstrate to Germany how unready it was

← **What was Italy's response to the outbreak of war in Poland in September 1939?**

KEY TERM

Pact of Steel More formally known as the 'Pact of Friendship and Alliance between Germany and Italy', the Pact publicly stated that the two countries supported and trusted each other; secret clauses stated that there would be a union of economic and military policies, although these were never enacted.

and its displeasure with Germany's probable war with Poland. Germany declined to supply Italy and instead granted Italy the right to remain in the alliance and not fight. Instead, Italy was to supply diplomatic and political support to Germany. Italy agreed readily, hoping that Germany's war with Poland would be limited in terms of time, involvement and impact on international diplomacy.

SOURCE DD

Excerpt from *Italian Fascism, 1919–1945* by Philip Morgan, published by Macmillan, London, UK, 1995, p. 170.

The news of German plans for immediate war put Mussolini in a corner. He was bound by the alliance to join Hitler in a war he had not anticipated would happen so soon, and which he knew Italy could not really fight. It was not only a matter of Italy's military and economic un-readiness to sustain a long war. Mussolini and [Foreign Minister] Ciano paraded this in front of the Germans, in order to get them to delay things or at least accept that the alliance could not be activated then. The other reason or pretext for prevarication was the need for more time to make the Axis popular in Italy and prepare the nation politically and psychologically for war.

SOURCE EE

A cartoon by Sidney 'George' Strube for the *Daily Express*, 30 October 1940, showing the rulers of Abyssinia and Ethiopia tied to the fasces, a symbol of the Fascist Party. Mussolini confronts a Greek man.



? According to Source DD, why did Italy try to deter Germany from war?

? What is the message of Source EE?