

AQA A Level History 2L  
Italy and Fascism c.1900 – 1945  
Part Two: Fascist Italy, 1926-1945

- Unit 5: Fascist foreign policies, 1926-1940
- Mussolini's foreign policy ambitions: the restoration of prestige; the Mediterranean and 'Mare Nostrum'; empire in Africa
- Mussolini the statesman; relations with Britain and France; Italian influence in Austria; the Stresa Front
- Mussolini and Empire: the invasion of Abyssinia and the conduct of war; the impact of the war on Mussolini's popularity and prestige home and abroad
- The slide towards war: the Spanish Civil War; the changing relations with Hitler's Germany; the Pact of Steel; the invasion of Albania; the neutrality of Italy in 1939 and the extent of Italy's military preparedness by 1940

How will you be assessed?

One exam that will take 2 hours 30 minutes.

You are advised to spend around:

- 60 minutes on the first section (question one based on 3 sources)
- 1 hour 30 minutes on the second section (answer 2 essay questions)

**7 key questions underpin this course:**

- How stable, secure and united was Italy by 1900?
- How stable, secure and united was Italy by 1915?
- How did the First World War make the problems of Liberal Italy worse?
- Why was Mussolini appointed Prime Minister of Italy in 1922?
- How did Mussolini consolidate his power in the years 1922 to 1926?
- To what extent did Mussolini create 'a nation of fascists'?
- Why did Mussolini fall from power?

## KEY PEOPLE

**Austen Chamberlain (1863-1937)** – The elder half-brother of the future prime minister, Neville Chamberlain. He was British Foreign Secretary from 1924 to 1929 and struck up a good working relationship with Mussolini.

**Pietro Badoglio (1871-1956)** – Marshal Badoglio held high rank in the Italian army being widely blamed for the defeat at Caporetto in 1917. He was Governor of Libya from 1929 to 1933. In December 1935, he led Italian troops to victory in Abyssinia and was promoted to the rank of Marshal. Badoglio was opposed to the Pact of Steel. He resigned from his command in December 1940. When Mussolini was removed from power in 1943, the King appointed Badoglio temporary prime minister but he was later replaced by Bonomi.

**Count Galeazzo Ciano** – A founding member of the PNF. He married Mussolini's daughter Edda in 1930. Ciano became Minister of Press and Propaganda in 1935 and was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1936. For some time he was a favourite of Mussolini but in 1944, Mussolini had him shot for supposed treachery. His diaries have offered an invaluable insight into Mussolini's regime.

**Engelbert Dollfuss (1892-1934)** – Became Austrian Chancellor in 1932 at a time of political and economic crisis. In March 1933, he suspended parliament and made himself dictator. He was threatened by the rise of Austrian Nazis, backed by Hitler and was worried about a German takeover of Austria. He looked to Italy to seek protection from German aggression and to maintain Austrian independence. Following Mussolini's advice, he attempted to suppress the Nazi Party in Austria and in February 1934, Dollfuss set up a right-wing authoritarian regime along the lines of Italian Fascism. He was assassinated by Nazi sympathisers in July 1934.

**Anthony Eden (1897-1977)** – Became Britain's Foreign Minister in October 1936 after the resignation of Sir Samuel Hoare. Eden disliked Mussolini and negotiations between the two were often difficult. Eden resigned in February 1938 partly because he was opposed to his prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, over how to deal with Mussolini.

**Dino Grandi (1895-1988)** - Grandi was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1929 until 1936.

**Rodolfo Graziani (1882-1955)** – General Graziani made his reputation in the 'pacification' of Libya from 1926 to 1934. He commanded Italian forces on the southern front in the Abyssinian War.

**Emperor Haile Selassie (1892-1975)** – Emperor of Abyssinia from 1930 – 1974. In 1936, he asked the League of Nations to take action against Italy and to defend his country. He was forced into exile in England from 1935 until he returned to Addis Ababa in 1941 when the British expelled the Italian occupiers.

**King Zog of Albania (1895-1961)** – Ahmet Zogu was President of Albania with dictatorial powers, from 1925. He was crowned King in 1928 and reigned until 1939. He depended heavily on economic and military assistance from Italy in the 1930s. He escaped to exile in England in April 1939 when Italian troops invaded Albania. Albania remained an Italian protectorate until the end of the war.

## Example Question 1:

This will always be based on 3 sources and will be worth 30 marks. You should spend about 60 minutes on this type of question. You have to answer question 1!

Source Based Question:

With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying Fascist foreign policy in the years 1935 to 1940.

Source A

From 'Inside Europe' by John Gunther, an American journalist who travelled widely around Europe. His book was first published in 1936.

Mussolini needed room – colonies – for Italy to expand in. But his habit of bluster had persuaded folk in Western Europe that he was bluffing. Why did he choose 1935 for the adventure he had long foretold? And why did he pick Abyssinia?

The climate of Fascism was high and adventurous. Like all dictators, Mussolini was a 'prisoner of prestige'. He had to keep on doing something. Hitler was stealing too much attention from him in world headlines. Mussolini was personally a warrior and imperialist; he talked of imperialism as the eternal law of life. Every rational, objective consideration told Mussolini (a strikingly intelligent man) that the Abyssinian war was a difficult and dangerous business. But Mussolini ignored this; an interesting example of the importance of personality, even megalomania, in politics. The Duce was not alarmed by the pessimistic reports from his experts on Abyssinia. He knew what its chief crop was – glory.

### Key Words

**Albania** – a country in the Balkans that became a satellite state of Italy, they supported the government led by Zog, invested in Albania's economy and advised the Albanian army.

**Abyssinia** – The old name for Ethiopia.

**Annex** – To take over or seize a country.

**Anschluss** – Literally meaning 'union', referring to the annexation of Austria by Germany, which had been prohibited by the Treaty of Versailles.

**Anti-Comintern Pact** – The Comintern was the Communist International based in Moscow and devoted to the spread of communism worldwide. The Anti-Comintern Pact was theoretically aimed against the spread of communism. In reality it was largely an anti-British grouping.

**AOI (Africa Orientale Italiana, Italian East Africa)** – the empire established after the conquests of the Abyssinian War 1935-36.

**Economic sanctions** – The banning of trade with an aggressor nation in an attempt to force that country to change its policy.

**Hoare-Laval Pact** – An Anglo-French attempt to find a compromise peace, giving Mussolini most of Ethiopia.

**Kellogg-Briand Pact** – Idealistic and largely meaningless international agreement proposed by the American and French foreign secretaries. The signatories agreed not to use war as an instrument of policy (to settle disputes), but it was soon ignored and broken.

**League of Nations** – An organization of nations created by the Treaty of Versailles to encourage international co-operation and peace.

**Munich Conference** – Major diplomatic meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1938 to settle German claims on Czechoslovakia. Neville Chamberlain, the British prime minister, had appealed to Mussolini to encourage Hitler to avoid war and to negotiate.

**Rome-Berlin Axis** – This was a loose agreement to co-operate and co-ordinate policy, not a full-blown military alliance. Italy and Germany agreed that Europe would turn on the decisions made in Rome and Berlin, like the earth does on its axis. The two became known in the war years as the Axis powers.

**Satellite State** – A country politically and economically dominated or controlled by another more powerful country.

**Sphere of influence** – An area where Italy would be the dominant power.

**Stresa Front** – A political alliance between Britain, France and Italy which sought to prevent any further breaches in the treaties by Germany that might threaten peace.

**Wal Wal Incident** – A skirmish between Italian and Ethiopian troops at the Wal Wal oasis where 30 Italian soldiers died. This gave Mussolini the excuse he had been looking for to declare war on Ethiopia.

### Timeline of Key Events

- 1926** Treaty of Friendship increased Italian influence over Albania
- 1928** Kellogg-Briand Pact
- 1930** Friendship Treaty with Austria
- 1933** Hitler came to power in Germany  
Mussolini's meeting with Dollfuss to support Austria and prevents a Nazi takeover of Austria
- 1934** Italian forces mobilized after murder of Dollfuss  
First signs of openly anti-British line in the press  
Wal Wal Incident on Somalia-Abyssinia border
- 1935** Stresa Front  
Italian invasion of Abyssinia
- 1936** Start of the Spanish Civil War and Italian intervention on the side of General Franco to aid 'Fascists' there  
Completion of conquest of Abyssinia  
Rome-Berlin Axis formed: Mussolini drew closer to Nazi Germany
- 1937** Italy signs the anti-Comintern Pact  
Italian forces defeated at Guadalajara in Spain  
Italian withdrawal from the League of Nations
- 1938** Italian mediation at Munich Conference
- 1939** Pact of Steel established with Germany that committed Italy to the Nazi side in a future European conflict  
Germany's invasion of Poland starts the Second World War  
Italian invasion of Albania  
Italian non-belligerence at outbreak of war in Europe
- 1940** German invasion of France  
Italy enters the Second World War on the side of Germany

### Example essay question:

The next 2 questions are essays and you choose 2 from 3 possible questions. They are worth 25 marks each. You should spend around 45 minutes on each question. Here is an example:

Example Essay Question:

**How important was the invasion of Abyssinia in shaping Italian foreign policy in the years 1935 to 1940?**

(25marks)