

+Italy (pg. 97, 100-103, 129-154)

Strategies

1920s – Musso wants to project strength and push for territory in Balkans and Africa. This is for domestic political reasons. However, he proceeds cautiously because Italy is weak and he also wants to be seen as a great peacemaker and statesman.

1930s – Mussolini’s diplomacy became more **assertive and rigid**. He formed **closer ties with Hitler** in the Rome-Berlin Axis and the Pact of Steel. Mussolini promoted **anti-French and anti-Semitic sentiments**. He found **cooperation with the Allied powers futile** as that did not help him gain any territory.

Foreign Policy Goals

- Build an empire and gain “**spazio vitale**” (living space) especially in Africa
- Increase in **national pride** (nationalism grew as Italians wanted Italy to restore its “past glory” and respect in the international lens.
- **Consolidate domestic support** for the empire. Mussolini wanted Italy to be a self-sufficient autarky and support itself as a militarist state. This was also a product of increased nationalism.
- **Revise the post-war settlements** of 1919-20. This stemmed from the disappointment over the Treaty of Versailles.
- Foster the **spread of fascism** in other countries.
- Dominate the **Balkans and the Mediterranean**. Mussolini wanted control of the Mediterranean to achieve the second Roman Empire. Mussolini viewed Italy being “trapped” in the Mediterranean by the British on the west and by the Turks on the East. He wanted to change Italy’s status in the Mediterranean. As for the Balkans, Mussolini wanted to gain territory in the region and undermine the pre-existing French influence.

Agreements/Alliances

Locarno Pact (1925)

- Germany and France agree to respect their border and maintain status quo from T of V

Kellogg-Briand Pact (1928)

- More than 60 countries, including Italy, sign a pact denouncing war as a method of solving disputes.

Results for Italy

Italy (with the UK) was a guarantor of the treaty. If one side invaded the other, Italy was committed to stepping in to enforce treaty. Mussolini hosted conference to boost his prestige.

Mussolini wanted to present himself as a mediator in Western Europe, even though he funded right-wing groups in Germany and trained German pilots, violating the Treaty of Versailles.

The Four Power Pact (1933)

- Britain, Germany, Italy and Germany signed the pact and vowed to adhere to the convention of the League of Nations, the Locarno Treaties and the Kellogg-Briand Pact.

The objective was to allow the European powers for “Great Power” Cooperation, though it did not have the same impact. Italians viewed this as a success for Mussolini.

Final Declaration of the Stresa Conference (1935)

- Italy, Britain, and France agreed to protect the independence of Austria and reaffirm the Locarno Treaties. They vowed to ensure no further changes in the European Settlement. This was violated when the Anglo-German naval agreement was signed in June, 1935.

This agreement was violated by Britain when it signed the Angle-German Naval agreement with Germany in June of 1935, without the consultations of other Stresa signatories. For Mussolini, this indicated that the Stresa agreement had ended and Italy no longer needed to abide by the terms of the agreement.

Spanish Civil War (1936 – 1939)

- Mussolini sent Italian forces to Spain to fight for Franco’s Nationalists against the Republic left-wing government. Mussolini wanted his popularity to further grow in Italy, prevent communism from spreading in Spain and undermine the French influence on the left-wing Spanish government.

Although Franco’s forces defeated the Republican forces in 1939, the war further depleted Italy’s resources and further cemented its ties with Germany. Spain did not become an Italian satellite state and instead remained independent. The war had left Italy in no shape of fighting another war – a reality that Mussolini failed to acknowledge and eventually joined the Axis powers in WW2.

Rome-Berlin Axis (1936)

- Germany and Italy signed a formal alliance.

Though Mussolini had been skeptical of Germany’s ambitions in Austria, he did view any alliance with the Allied powers futile and not in favour of his personal interests which were largely based on aggressive foreign policy and expansionist ideals.

Anti-Comintern Pact (1937)

- Italy joined the pact with Germany and Japan to ensure safeguards against the Soviet Union or communism in general. The pact was signed against the Comintern (an international association of communist parties)

Italy was now a part of the Axis powers. The rifts between Italy and Britain and France grew so much that Italy left the League of Nations in 1937. Italy also shifted its foreign policy regarding Austria – Mussolini refused to protect Austria from Germany and ultimately accepted the German annexation of Austria (Anschluss) in 1938.

Munich Pact (1938)

- Mussolini wanted to be seen as the mediator in the rising tensions between Britain and Germany. When Chamberlain, the British PM, failed to secure a deal with Hitler, Mussolini intervened to find a “solution”. Britain, France and Italy agreed to give away Sudetenland (a part of Czechoslovakia) to Germany. In March 1939, Hitler broke the Munich Pact and invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia.

Mussolini was hailed in Europe as the “peacemaker”. After observing the irresponsiveness of Britain and France towards Germany’s expansionist ambitions, Mussolini instructed the Italian parliament to demand the annexation of Corsica, Nice and Tunis from France. Mussolini believed that he could win a war against France with German support, as Britain was trying its best to stay out of any future conflict.

Pact of Steel (May 1939)

- A pact signed between Italy and Germany who vowed to cooperate economically and militarily against Britain and France.

The Pact accentuated the “unity” between Italy and Germany. However, Germany also signed a pact with the Soviet Union (Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in 1939) to ensure that Germany did not have to fight on two fronts should a war broke out.

Declaration of War on Britain and France (1940)

- In June 1940, Italy declared war against

After remaining a non-belligerent power when the War broke out in September 1939, Mussolini wanted to actively join the War, mainly to promote his fascist ideology and preserve Italy’s image as a major European power. Mussolini also wanted favours from

Britain and France and joined the Axis powers.

Germany in a post-war Europe if Germany had won the war. However, Italy's motives for joining the war were mainly economic. After Britain blockaded all German coal ports (Italy had become dependent on German coal), Italy declared war on Britain and France in 1940.

Expansion Events

- **Corfu Affair (1923)**

Italy invades Greek island, forced to withdraw by L of N, but forced Greece to pay "compensation"

Popular in Italy – but Musso forced to withdraw by L of N. Looks bad, weak.

- **Pact of Rome (1924)**

After Mussolini sent a military commander to rule over Fiume, the Yugoslavs shortly gave in and ceded the port of Fiume to Italy.

Mussolini wanted to undermine the French influence in Yugoslavia. He promoted nationalism among ethnic groups to destabilize the country. Rifts between Italy and France widened.

- **Tirana Pact (1926)**

Ahmed Zog, an Italian backed leader, took power in Albania in 1924. In 1926, the pact was signed to confirm that Albania was an Italian protectorate state.

An alliance was formed between Italy and Albania, who would also join the Axis powers eventually alongside Italy.

- **Invasion of Abyssinia (1935 – 1936)**

Originally, Mussolini had planned to annex Abyssinia in 1932. However, due to a clash between the Italian and Abyssinian forces in 1932, the plan was implemented in 1935. The ill-equipped Abyssinian forces were

The victory in the war resulted in an increase in nationalism and Mussolini's popularity. However, the League of Nations viewed Italy's actions as aggressive and imposed economic sanction of the country. Italy's budget deficit grew

soon defeated by the Italian forces and the emperor of Abyssinia fled to Britain in 1936. Abyssinia became a part of Italian East Africa.

from 2.5 billion to 16 billion lire, forcing Italy to trade more frequently with Germany. Germany and Italy grew closer while the rifts between Britain/France and Italy were widened.

- **Invasion of Albania**
(April 1939)

Even though Albania was an Italian satellite state, Mussolini wanted to assert Italy's power to counter Germany's successes in gaining territory. On April 7th, 1939, the Italian forces invaded Albania after the King, Ahmed Zog, refused to surrender to Mussolini. The Albanian forces were defeated shortly and Zog fled to Greece with his family. The Italians set up a fascist government under Shefqet Verlaci and Albania was now a part of the Italian Kingdom.

Albania had to withdraw from the League of Nations and would eventually enter the second world war as an Axis power. Italy would use Albania as a base from which it will launch its invasion of Greece in 1940.