

# 2 German and Italian Expansion

## 2.1 The impact of fascism on Italian foreign policy: the origins, 1870-1933

- Italy as unified state since 1861, before that a number of independent states
- Papal State and Rome join in 1870
- unification thanks to Piedmont Sardinia (Prime Minister) and Giuseppe Garibaldi
- society remains divided: geographical, religious, social lines
- divisions weaken government
- discontent and WW1 make Mussolini's rise possible

### Mussolini's rise to power

- liberal Italy (1870-1923): based on ideas of democracy and liberalism
- Italy lacks a coherent state
- loyalty to towns rather than state
- South in poverty; industrial North prospers
- Church and State get separated
- working class unrest: middle and upper class dominate political system
- vote for wealthy elites (up to 1930)
- strike of peasants in 1914
- politicians fight unrest with force
- Giovanni Giolitti supports masses, agrees to cooperate with all classes; initially successful
- Nationalist party is founded: glorify war, want a "Great Power" to compete with Britain

### What was the impact of the First WW on Italy, 1915-18?

- WW1: Italy remains neutral at first
- April 1915: Treaty of London (GB, F, Ru)
- Mussolini first opposes war, then favors intervention
- Church and Liberals against war; no gain and Austria is Catholic too
- WW1 is static: trenches
- Italians suffer, Austria and Germany advance
- 1918: victory over Austria, but huge human losses
- war divides Italy politically further

### What is Fascism?

- no founding doctrine: appeals to many
- promotes Nationalism, strong leader (dictator), one-party government, empire building, war
- against: Communism, class struggle, internationalism, multi-party liberal democracy, pacifism

### Why did support for Fascism grow in Italy after the First WW?

- after war: political crisis
- Liberal governments lose control (1918-22)
- no coherent government possible: short-term governments: undermine parliamentary credibility
- Italy receives claimed territories only partly
- widespread disgust of Versailles Settlement outcome
- Fascist Party benefits from post-war situation
- 1921 elections: Italian politics are polarizing
- post-war economy: high inflation, high unemployment
- US restricts immigration: Southerners can't escape poverty

- Bolshevik revolution in Russia causes fear of Communism
- industrialists, landowners, Church support Fascist Party
- Conservatives want to use Fascists for their own benefit: police does not comply
- 1922: Fascists feel ready for power: how to get it?
- Oct. 1922: government would include Fascists: Mussolini wouldn't accept anything less than a major role
- Oct. 24: Black shirts declare march on Rome
- King Emmanuel III sides with Mussolini
- post of Prime Minister offered to Mussolini

## **How did Mussolini consolidate his power?**

- at first has to share power with other parties
- moves towards setting up a dictatorship
- Feb. 1923: Nationalists join Fascist Party
- Dec. 1925: Mussolini gets significant executive powers
- 1926/27: Fascist Party creates secret police OVRA, trial without jury is permitted
- totalitarian state: government has control over all aspects of a citizen's life: political, economic, cultural and social
- Italians had to conform to Fascist expectations and comply with the state's laws
- Fascist had compromised with powerful non-Fascists (Vatican and King)
- Mussolini still could be dismissed by the monarch
- Fascism never achieves full control over South

## **What factors influenced Mussolini's foreign policy?**

- aims: increase national pride, domestic support for the regime, revise post-war settlement, dominate Balkans, dominate Mediterranean, build an empire, territories in Africa, spread Fascism in other countries
- wants Italy more significant in international politics
- Mussolini's belief that Fascist Italy could be the Second Roman Empire
- strengthening the economy as ambition
- make Italy self-sufficient
- economy able to support militarist state
- but: Italy has limited raw materials, south is less industrialized, low literacy rate
- productivism: increase productivity; high taxation to support industry: burden to workers
- Fascists envisage a society in which all people are involved in the economy for national good
- system with advantages of capitalism and socialism but without their disadvantages
- practice labour is exploited
- Mussolini increases value of Lira to British pound which causes falling exports
- Fascist foreign policy fails due to weak economy

## **How successful was Mussolini's foreign policy in the 1920s?**

- 1920s foreign policy consolidates Mussolini's domestic control
- 1930s foreign policy becomes more Fascist in character
- contradictory approach to European states: promoting peace and undermining of cooperation at the same time
- Nationalists: aspiration of gaining influence in Eastern Mediterranean and Africa
- Mussolini invades Greek island Corfu: League of Nations demands withdrawal
- Britain threatens of using navy: Mussolini withdraws but wants compensation payment
- Mussolini learns: can't bully smaller states, can't intimidate more powerful states
- funds ethnic groups in Balkan to destabilize country and undermine French influence
- treaty of friendship with Albania
- Italy is hostile to France
- wants to present himself as a force for moderation in Western Europe: meets with GB, D, Be, F
- agreements confirm Germany's western borders
- meeting creates new period of cooperation and hope for future peace
- Kellogg-Briand Pact (1928): denounces the use of war as a means to resolve disputes

- Mussolini aims to expand Italy's empire in Africa
- after Hitler's rise to power: Mussolini's foreign policy becomes more assertive
- wants to demonstrate that Italy is a major power
- future lays with virile state such as Germany
- recognizes Russian government with Lenin
- 1922: Rapallo treaty (It-D-Ru): want territorial and financial claims from WW1: are dissatisfied
- good relations Italy - Russia

## **2.2 The impact of Nazism on German foreign policy: the origins, 1918-1933**

- Nazism (Nazi/National Socialist Party) take power in Germany 1933, Adolf Hitler as leader
- German WW1 defeat as origin of foreign policy
- Wall Street Crash/Great Depression help Hitler to gain popularity
- once chancellor, takes full control of Germany and puts his foreign policy aims into action

### **What was the impact of the First WW and defeat on Germany?**

- Kaiser Wilhelm II (authoritarian system): expects it to be short and victorious
- Schlieffen plan fails: Germany ends up in war of attrition
- Russia falls into revolution (Oct 1917): peace with Germany
- Germany pushes Allies back and hope for victory
- Germany loses its best troops in 1918
- armistice is considered
- Germany has domestic problems: strikes, political unrest, food shortage
- armistice is shock: "stab in the back" theory: socialists are blamed (agreed to armistice)

### **What was the impact of the Treaty of Versailles?**

- armistice followed by peace treaty (1919)
- Prime Minister Clemenceau (France), Prime Minister Lloyd George (Britain), President Woodrow Wilson (USA)
- Wilson: Lasting system of international relations, held in place by League of Nations
- Clemenceau: wants Germany to pay for damage, wants Germany to suffer
- George: sides more with Wilson but has to accept British anti-German sentiment
- Treaty of Versailles not really successful, none of the three parties are fully satisfied

### **What was the impact of the First WW on Hitler's foreign policy?**

- was horrified by surrender
- disgust with treaty of Versailles: influences his foreign policy
- invited to Drexler's Party: soon the leading member
- renames the party to Nationalist Socialist Worker's Party and gives Swastika as sign
- party based on similar extreme ideas as Mussolini's Fascist Party
- can't be fully fitted into the overall category of European Fascism
- Mein Kampf: big part on foreign policy: desire to overturn the treaty of Versailles
- unification of all Germans
- his Germany would only include "pure" Germans: superior Aryan race
- "only fittest would survive" (social Darwinism)
- most inferior people are Jews: wants to protect Germany from them
- "Third Reich" would be created after purification of Germany
- loathes Communism: is convinced that all Jews are communists
- France as enemy due to WW1
- Britain as potential ally; he admired the British (racially similar)
- Italy as ally: ideologically sympathetic nature of government

## Why did support for Nazism grow after the First WW?

- Weimar Republic in crisis
- Communist party starts rebellion
- members of Freikorps attempt to overthrow government
- right-wing extremists assassinate left-wing politicians
- Jan. 1923: France and Belgium invade Ruhr area: hyperinflation in Germany
- Hitler wants to take over the government
- marches on Berlin with SA
- SA: Sturmabteilung/Brown Shirts: key role to Hitler's rise
- SS: Schutzstaffel: from SA as bodyguards for Hitler
- Hitler gets arrested: only light sentence (5yrs): serves less than year
- turns into a national figure
- writes Mein Kampf in prison
- relaunches Nazi Party in 1925
- economic recovery in Germany: Nazi support is limited
- Gustav Stresemann: halts Hyperinflation, reduces reparation payments to US, loans from US
- Young plan: further loans from USA to Germany
- Stresemann wants to restore Germany's position in Europe: cooperation with F, GB essential
- Germany joins League of Nations in 1926
- Germany agrees to hold western borders with France and Belgium
- stabilized situation makes electoral breakthrough for Nazi not possible
- Great Depression: Germany depends on US: catastrophic impact on Germany
- USA stops loans to Europe
- unemployment in Germany
- German politics polarize
- Hitler portrays Nazi party as one which provides food and jobs
- Hitler's promises seem more attractive due to situation

## What factors allowed Hitler to become a dictator?

- unscheduled election in 1930: Nazis get many seats
- leaders of German government think it's good to side with Hitler and they can control him
- misjudge him badly
- Hitler calls for a new election
- Communists get accused of burning down the Reichstag: communists and socialists are imprisoned
- Hitler passes law which allows him to pass laws without the Reichstag's consent
- July 1933: Germany is a one-party state
- 1934: Hitler moves against SA as they are becoming a potential threat
- Hitler merges offices of chancellor and president to one: becomes Führer of Germany
- by 1934: Hitler is in total control

## The historical debate: Did Hitler have a clear plan for achieving his foreign policy goals when he took power in 1933?

- in his two books his aims seem very clear
- historians are divided on the issue
- his actions were determined by economic pressures
- clear plan: alliance with Italy and Britain, defeat of France, conquest of Russia, (take over USA: achieve world domination)
- aims seem to be similar as King Emanuel II

## 2.3 Italian expansion, 1933-1940

### What factor had an impact on Italy's foreign policy in the 1930s?

- Mussolini pursues a clearly Fascist foreign policy in the mid-1930s
- methods more assertive, more aggressive diplomatically
- continues on anti-French territorial claims, moves away from good relationship to British
- fosters good ties to Germany instead
- Italy is affected by Great Depression
- farmers badly affected, industry declines, unemployment grows
- government takes control of many companies, raw materials and industries
- Mussolini uses foreign policy to take away the attention from inner problems
- Mussolini invades Abyssinia and intervenes in Spanish Civil War: high price
- Ciano (appointed in foreign policy) advises Mussolini in creating a buffer to Germany
- 1933: Mussolini wants to create an alternative to League of Nations for European diplomacy
- Four Power Pact (GB, F, D, It): smaller nations should have less a say in "Great Power" relations
- Four Power Pact has little meaning to the others than Italy and is dismissed
- Italy promotes independent Austria
- Mussolini opposes "Anschluss" (Austria's unification with Germany)
- Stresa Front (It, GB, F): prevention of any future changes to European settlement
- Britain is more concerned not to offend Hitler than Italy
- Stresa Front protects Italy better from "Anschluss"
- Apparently Britain ended the Stresa Front by signing a Naval Agreement with Germany

## Italian foreign policy, 1935-39

- Italy is continuously at war
- invasion of Abyssinia: condemned by the League of Nations, sanctions are imposed
- political elites did not support a shift in Italian foreign policy
- Mussolini aspires that Italy becomes a great imperial power by invading Abyssinia
- wants an empire like the classical Roman Empire
- takes attention to the war instead of the impact of the Great Depression
- border in Africa lacks clarity: Mussolini manufactures an incident which would lead to war
- incident in Abyssinia: Abyssinia wants investigation by League of Nations: Mussolini instructs his forces to attain total conquest
- Abyssinia is not modern so they retreat
- Italy launches a full invasion (3. Oct. 1935)
- League of Nations imposes sanctions
- 9. May 1936: Abyssinia is annexed by Italy
- war encourages nationalist sentiment, even greater due to sanctions
- Italian Queen supports the war (donates her wedding ring)
- Mussolini succeeds in creating an Italian East African empire
- Mussolini is warned against raising tensions with Britain
- Italy's navy is incomplete: naval war against Britain would be a certain defeat
- sanctions: Italy's victory comes at a high price
- Lira gets devaluated: hits the middle classes hard
- Italian trade shifts to Germany
- Abyssinia falls to British in 1941
- League of Nations causes Italy to move from Britain and France to Germany
- 6. Jan. 1936: Mussolini says he wouldn't object with Germany invading Austria (but must remain independent)

## Why did Italy intervene in the Spanish Civil War in 1936-39?

- success in Abyssinia: Mussolini looks further for military greatness
- Mussolini hopes to get naval bases in Balearic Islands
- also motivated by ideology: fight against liberal democracy and socialism, stop communism spreading
- Spanish Civil War: between Republicans and Nationalists, Nationalists led by General Franco
- Mussolini does not have a clear plan
- consequences are bad for Italy: economic cost, arms stocks are used: exposure of military weakness, Italy draws closer to Germany
- Mussolini commits himself to formal alliance with D (Rome-Berlin Axis Alliance 25. Oct 1936)

- Nov. 1937: Italy joins Anti-Comintern Pact (D, Jap, It): against communist international
- States form group: Axis powers
- Dec. 1937: Italy leaves the League of Nations
- 1938: Mussolini accepts "Anschluss" when Hitler invades Austria
- Mussolini's shift in policy is not popular domestically

## **What was Italy's role during the Sudetenland crisis in September 1938?**

- Mussolini wants to be seen as a great broker of peace
- it is clear that Mussolini is subservient to Hitler
- March 1938: Hitler breaks Munich Agreement and invades rest of Czechoslovakia
- Mussolini believes to win a war against France with Germany's help

## **Why did Italy invade Albania in April 1939?**

- invasion of Czechoslovakia: Hitler didn't consult Mussolini
- Mussolini wants to regain initiative
- 7. April 1939: meaningless assault on Albania (Albania is already an Italian satellite)
- King Zog of Albania wants independence from Italy
- Mussolini threatens with ships, drops leaflets telling to submit demonstrations
- Zog says he will resist Italian occupation
- badly equipped Albanian army: Italy invades: by first day Italy has all ports
- Zog flees to Greece and is deposed
- Mussolini creates Italian Empire: King Victor Emmanuel is crowned king of Albania
- 28. Oct. 1940: Mussolini invades Greece via Albania

## **Italy and the Second World War**

- 22. May 1939: Pact of Steel (It, D): trust and cooperation, union of military and economic policies (secret)
- Japan is meant to join but Japan wants to focus on being anti-Soviet while Germany and Italy are against Britain and France
- but: Germany signs Nazi-Soviet Pact in Aug. 1939 (Mussolini is told two days before)
- Hitler invades Poland (1. Sept. 1939): unleashes general European war
- Mussolini says Italy wouldn't be ready for war until 1943
- Mussolini declares Italy a non-belligerent
- Mussolini might have considered an alliance with Britain and France up until 1940
- Mussolini is realistic in not joining the war
- not joining the war is an embarrassment (esp. for Fascist ideology)
- Mussolini doesn't want Italy to be a lesser rank power by staying neutral
- war might give him the opportunity to radicalize the regime
- if Germany wins it would be towards Italy
- war could bring territorial gains
- Italy joins war in June 1940 mostly due to economic reasons
- June 1940: Mussolini declares war on Britain and France
- Mussolini expands war to North Africa: invades Egypt and Greece
- Italy is pushed back by British so Germany must step in
- there are many different perspectives on Mussolini's acting (see p. 152)

## **2.4 German expansion, 1933-1938**

- Hitler's goal to destroy Versailles treaty
- adds territorial claims; outbreak of general war (1939)

## **Changing diplomatic alignments in Europe after 1933**

- Germany is still vulnerable: constraints of Versailles treaty
- Britain pre-occupied with economic crisis and Japanese expansion
- Britain: right-wing politicians fear Stalin's communism: sympathy with Hitler
- France concerned about Germany; but too weak to act by itself (esp. after Ruhr-failure)
- France: economic problems, builds defensive line along Maginot line (1929-38), develops alliances with countries on Germany's eastern borders
- USA: focuses on domestic problems
- in Hitler's favor: encouraged national insularity, determined to prevent another war, military weakness GB and F; GB and F can't agree how to handle Hitler, League of Nations' failure in Japan, revision of Versailles treaty

## Germany's challenges to the post-war settlements, 1933-38

- Hitler has to be careful not to receive international backlash: cautious policy
- undermines collective security, backs out of multilateral commitments which might restrict him
- disarmament conference (1933): France is unwilling to disarm (Nazism on borders), Manchurian crisis, Britain also indicates to collaborate with Germany
- 1933: Hitler pulls out of conference and League of Nations (France won't disarm): makes an assault on Versailles treaty better possible
- Germany's eastern border is particularly vulnerable
- Non-Aggression Pact with Poland (Jan. 1934): Hitler secures his eastern frontier, undermines French security (France signed alliance with Poland to keep pressure on Germany)
- Germany breaks out of diplomatic encirclement
- Pact can be used to show that Hitler supports peace
- Hitler has no intention of keeping agreement: "temporary significance"
- Hitler prefers bilateral agreements to collective security agreements: can be broken easier
- June 1934: Hitler and Mussolini meet: not a success: rejection of *Anschluss*: Austria as buffer
- Hitler supports Nazi party in Austria: campaign of intimidation: assassinate Austrian chancellor
- Mussolini mobilizes men to northern borders: Hitler backs down
- Hitler doesn't want to alienate Mussolini: needs him against western powers
- Saar is given opportunity to return to Germany: vote for it (90,9%): supervised by League: chance for Nazi propaganda
- Feb. 1933: Hitler says rearmament is the most pressing priority
- Hitler only continues what was done before (disarmament is ignored): only increases it
- conscription is introduced (1935), existence of Luftwaffe is revealed
- justification: GB and F fail to disarm; Germany needs protection from Soviet army
- 1936: Hitler turns attention to Rhineland: remilitarizes it
- rising prices and food shortages in Germany: Hitler needs distraction from economic problems
- Abyssinian crisis: Mussolini breaks ties with GB and F, improves ties to Germany
- Franco-Soviet mutual assistance treaty: threat of Germany encircled: troops into Rhineland
- generals and office hesitant in marching into Rhineland: provoking response from GB and F
- troops march into Rhineland (7. March 1936) but no action is taken by Western powers
- Hitler shown as peace-man: considering League of Nations and is for demilitarizing Rhineland
- Spanish Civil War: Hitler and Mussolini pushed further together
- Germany transports Franco's troops from Morocco to Spain
- Hitler takes limits on involvement
- reasons for intervention: wants friendly government in Spain, would supply him with resources, testing his air force, pose as defender of Europe against communism, undermining F security
- civil war polarizes European opinions, distracts the West, improves ties to Mussolini
- opposition of German influence in Austria is removed
- Rome-Berlin Axis (Oct. 1936): cooperation between Germany and Italy
- Anti-Comintern Pact (D, It, Jap): against communist international
- agreements show that Germany is not isolated and important on the world stage
- 1936: rearmament is not progressing fast enough
- shortages of food and resources
- Hitler believes that economic problems can be solved by acquisition of land
- Sept. 1936: preparation for war by Four Year Plan
- 5. Nov: special meeting with top generals: meeting is known due to assistant's notes
- Feb. 1938: generals in doubt of war with GB and F are removed from position, Hitler appoints himself supreme commander of army

- removes everyone who is less committed to his goals
- Hossbach's notes are not sure proof for his foreign policy aims but show his expansionist intentions

## 2.5 German expansion, 1938-40

- Hitler takes more risks in foreign policy after shake-up from Hossbach Conference (1937)
- begins with takeover of Austria, the Sudetenland: pursuing goal of *Lebensraum*

### Challenging the post-war settlement after 1937

- Hitler achieves his aims between 1938 and 1939: presented at the Hossbach Conference
- annexation of Austria and dismemberment of Czechoslovakia
- fails to take Austria in 1934, but establishes Nazi influence
- July 1936: Austro-German agreement: reaffirms Austria's independence, won't interfere in each other's internal affairs, Austria conducts foreign policy consistent with it being a German state
- Schuschnigg is alarmed and meets Hitler: opportunity for Hitler to take over Austria
- Schuschnigg is forced to agree to list of demands which puts Nazis in good positions in Austria
- Schuschnigg announces plebiscite for 13. March 1938: vote: with Germany or not
- Hitler is scared of outcome: marches into Austria on 12. March 1938: West does not send help
- after Austria Hitler turns his attention to Czechoslovakia
- Hitler sees Slavs as *Untermenschen*, Czechs resist Austrian rule, Czechoslovakia is only successful state of Versailles treaty (is prospering), Germans live in Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia supports League of Nations and is allied to France and Russia
- Sudetenland is given to Czechoslovakia for prosperity and defense
- Czechs built defenses on frontier, have strong arms industry, well-organized army
- Sudeten Germans don't accept their position in Czechoslovakia (loss of status)
- Sudeten Germans' grievance is strengthened by Great Depression
- Konrad Henlein as Sudeten Germans' mouthpiece
- Hitler supports Henlein to make demands on Czech government
- Hitler does not intend to take over Czechoslovakia with force
- generals warn Hitler that Germany isn't ready for war
- Hitler changes mind: 20. May 1938: rumors that Germany will take military action
- Czech government orders partial mobilization and Britain and France send warnings
- tension increases so president Edvard Beneš agrees to Henlein's demands
- Hitler undertakes propaganda showing ill-treatment of Sudeten Germans
- Britain decides to act: Chamberlain wants to avoid war and meets Hitler three times
- meeting 15. Sept. 1938: Sudetenland is given to Germany
- meeting 22./23. Sept. 1938: Hitler wants excuse for war, France agrees to help Czech, which still had good fortifications, Czech reject Hitler's demands
- meeting 29. Sept. 1938 (Munich): Britain and France show they would fight: Hitler agrees to further conference, Mussolini as peacemaker: Four Power Conference plan
- plan: Sudetenland handed over, new frontiers are decided, Czechs can leave Sudetenland, Germany and other powers agree on independence of rest of Czechoslovakia
- Czech President and Stalin are not invited to conference
- Czechs are told to agree or they would not receive British and French help
- 21. Oct.: Hitler gives order for "liquidation"

### Beyond the Treaty of Versailles: The liquidation of Czechoslovakia

- result of Munich conference: Czechoslovakia loses 70% of heavy industry, third of population, natural and man-made fortifications in Sudetenland
- Hitler encourages Slovaks to cause disruption
- Hachá, new Czech president, meets Hitler to save Czechoslovakia
- he is forced to sign over Bohemia and Moravia to Hitler
- 15. March 1939: Germany occupies rest of Czechoslovakia; day after: declared protectorate



## German expansion: Poland

- clear that Hitler's next target is Poland
- is declared a nation at Versailles
- East Prussia is split from Germany: Germany wants direct link via rail and road and want Danzig
- Poland refuses as it sees it as direct attack on Polish territory
- Hitler tells Lithuania to hand over Memel (has substantial German population)
- Britain guarantees to help Poland in case of German attack (Anglo-Polish Treaty)
- Hitler is furious about this opposition
- Hitler declares Anglo-German Naval pact invalid and ends Non-Aggression pact with Poland
- Hitler tells to prepare for war, but only a limited war with Poland, rather than full war with West

## Changing international alignments: The Pact of Steel, May 1939

- Western powers see Mussolini's invasion of Albania as coordinated action between dictators
- Mussolini agrees to Pact of Steel after British and French resistance
- Mussolini tells Hitler that he will not be ready for war for three to four years
- Hitler still decides to attack Poland
- summer 1939: Western democracies and Hitler approach Soviet Union for alliance
- Hitler desires alliance to prevent two front war
- Soviet Union first favors Britain and France and enters League of Nations, alarmed by Hitler
- negotiations with West don't come to an end
- Stalin makes clear he would also favor a German agreement: 24. Aug. 1939: Nazi-Soviet Pact
- pledge to remain neutral, secret protocol gives Russia half of Poland and other Eastern states
- for Hitler this means a free hand in Poland, he can also receive resources from Soviets
- Stalin's advantages: keeps him out of war (weakened army), West would weaken each other and Soviets would be the strongest, territorial gains, trade can continue

## The outbreak of war

- Hitler does not suspect Britain and France to act if he invades Poland
- is taken aback: Britain and Poland sign full military alliance on 25. Aug.
- Hitler delays his attack on Poland, gives last chance to Britain
- Poles refuse negotiations too
- Hitler doesn't want to wait: staged attack on Germans near Polish border
- 1. Sept. 1939: German troops invade Poland
- British give Ultimatum on 3. Sept.: Hitler does not respond: GB and F declare war
- Hitler wants war with Poland to be local but unleashes full-scale war
- Eastern frontier is secured fast: focuses on West
- Oct. 1939: Hitler offers peace proposals to Britain but he isn't trusted
- April 1940: Hitler occupies Denmark and lands in Norwegian ports
- 10. May: Germany attacks Netherlands, Belgium, France: swift victories
- June 1940: British evacuation from Dunkirk
- Germans move southwards: Paris
- Germans occupy northern France and Atlantic coast
- fight over control of the air over English Channel: British defeat planned
- Hitler bombs British cities to destroy morale: fails
- concentrates on achieving *Lebensraum*: invades Soviet Union: presumes it to be short so he can concentrate on Britain after that again

## 2.6 The international response to Italian aggression (1935-1940)

### What was the policy of appeasement and why was it pursued by Britain in the 1930s?

- policy of making concessions to nations in order to avoid conflict
- associated with Britain, especially the Munich crisis of 1938
- policy is generally seen as positive idea
- reasons for Britain to follow policy of appeasement: public opinion, demands of dictators are seen as justified, lack of alternative policy, economic pressures, global commitments, defense priorities, impact of Neville Chamberlain
- Franchise Act (1918) increases number of voters in Britain substantially
- politicians more likely to take notice of public opinion: is against war and for collective security
- widespread anti-war feeling; WWI should be the last war
- British public has faith in League of Nations
- British politicians feel that the Versailles treaty is too harsh
- belief that WWI is caused by all at the powers
- Chamberlain believes he can do business with Hitler and Mussolini
- threat of communism is seen as more important than threat of fascism
- no clear anti-appeasement party and no political alternative
- Britain's economic position is weakened after WWI and Great Depression
- other powers are competitors in industry
- high unemployment, rearmament can't fully begin due to absent money
- defense spending increases dramatically in 1937
- some individuals speak against appeasement: Anthony Eden (foreign Secretary), Winston Churchill, Duff Cooper (Secretary of State), David Low (cartoonist for newspaper)
- foreign policy to reduce Britain's enemies due to weak military position
- British commitments should be more global rather than European
- self-governing parts of British Empire (Dominions) make clear they won't help in another war
- priorities on defense expenditure are made (most important repulsion of air attacks)
- Chamberlain detests war and is determined to resolve international tension
- uses negotiation and diplomacy: take the lead on Hitler
- has little faith in League, British allies, France and USA
- France wants Germany punished, as they laid big parts of land to waste, which had an impact on industrial and agricultural resources, also economic impact
- France wants to prevent German resurgence at all cost as they were invaded twice before
- France tries to uphold terms of treaty and invades Ruhr area: ends in defeat
- France signs numerous bilateral agreements to strengthen position
- Little Entente (CZS, F, Ro, Yug): mutual defense agreement
- very unstable French government: six different cabinets in less than two years
- changes in government leave little continuity in how to deal with Hitler
- conflict between France's foreign policy and its military planning
- in 1930s France's military planning is defensive: build Maginot line (fortresses along Franco-German border)
- France depends on Britain and thus has to follow strategy of appeasement

## **How was the international response to aggression in the 1930s affected by the weaknesses of the League of Nations?**

- League of Nations should have facilitated collective security
- League lacks credibility and economic power of USA
- council is lead by Britain, France, Italy and Japan (Germany in 1926): last three nations want to revise Versailles treaty
- Soviet Union is not a member until 1934
- fails to act effectively against fascist states and loses authority
- Britain and France have to uphold the League's resolutions but Britain is concerned with itself and France has little faith in the League

## **What was the impact of US foreign policy on the international response to the expansionist powers?**

- USA does not join League and pursues policy of isolationism
- avoids conflicts which don't have personal interests

- strong anti-war public opinion; non-involvement policy

## **What was the impact of Soviet foreign policy on the international response to the expansionist powers?**

- Western hostility towards the Soviet Union affect its response to German and Italian aggression
- relations remain hostile until 1920s when diplomatic and economic agreements are made
- Britain is especially scared of communism and diplomatic links are only restored in 1930
- under Stalin Soviet Union primarily concentrates on itself
- nevertheless activities of Communist International in Europe and Asia, also the democracies
- Stalin's foreign policy shifts from hostility to Western powers as he becomes threatened by expansionist policies of Japan and Germany
- Soviet Unions wants to build a popular front against fascism by joining the League of Nations, signing non-aggression pacts and mutual assistance pacts
- aim of popular front fails as Britain and France follow policy of appeasement
- during Spanish Civil War Soviet Union understands that Britain fears communism more than fascism
- Stalin is not invited to Munich conference, so Soviet Union abandons attempts to cooperate with West

## **What was the international response to the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935-36?**

- Britain and France want to keep good relations to Mussolini in order for him to contain German ambitions to unite with Austria
- at Stresa Front meeting Mussolini gets impression the France won't mind Italian expansion in East Africa
- French interest in Abyssinia are only economic
- Britain tolerates ideas of expansion at Stresa Front meeting
- Italy is scared of Britain if it used its navy
- British try to appease Italian expansionist plans, but Italy thinks that Britain wants to accommodate them
- international outrage and condemnation of League when Mussolini invades Abyssinia
- League of Nations proves ineffective in dealing with the crisis
- after Wal Wal incident, League sees neither side responsible
- 7. Jan. 1935: Franco-Italian agreement: Italy helps to contain Hitler, France gives parts in East Africa
- Abyssinia appeals multiple times to League: Italian mobilization continues
- clear that Italy wants war of conquest: Britain leaves Italy to do its thing
- Selassie (Abyssinian Emperor) mobilizes his weak and poorly equipped army; Italy invades
- League of Nations imposes sanctions which are limited and the process is slow
- not all members of League carry out sanctions
- British handles it tolerantly to keep good relations to Mussolini
- sanctions do little to impede on Italian war effort: rather improves Mussolini's domestic support
- League fails to take action even when Italy uses gas in attacks
- Haare-Laval Pact in order to end conflict and give Italy most of Abyssinia
- pact is leaked to press, public is outraged, Britain and France are forced to denounce the pact
- British and F attention drawn away from Africa when Hitler remilitarizes Rhineland (March 1936)
- France is prepared to let Mussolini complete his conquest in return for support against Hitler
- no official surrender by Abyssinia and guerrilla war continues against Italian forces
- Selassie criticizes League, but League ends sanctions and mostly accepts Italian Empire
- Abyssinian crisis fatally undermines the League as a credible body
- only route left for France and Britain is to avoid a conflict with Hitler
- Mussolini moves towards a full alliance with Hitler
- USA tells Mussolini that failure to arrive at peaceful settlement in East Africa will have effects on all nations
- USA takes no direct action against Italy: want to stay out of conflicts which are not in their interest

## The end of appeasement of Mussolini's Italy

- Britain and France condemn Italian invasion in Albania
- Chamberlain no longer trusts dictators and guarantees Greek border with military support
- when Italy joins war in June 1940 and invades Egypt, Greece, British take action and push them out of Egypt and sink half of the Italian fleet (with the British navy which the Italians feared)
- British military response reverses Italy
- British are pushed back when German support arrives

## 2.7 The international response to German aggression, 1933-1940

- to which extent do the decisions that Britain and France take encourage German aggression?
- Britain's sympathy towards Germany in certain aspects of Versailles treaty
- Britain works hard to get Germany into the League and Disarmament Conference after Germany withdraws from these
- Britain realizes in 1935 that Germany already has air force and conscription army
- other powers concerned as Germany contravenes the Treaty of Versailles
- Germany is catching up with military
- German can achieve changes in treaty with force when peaceful means don't work
- conference at Stresa: formal protests against Hitler, reaffirm Locarno commitment
- Stresa Front is undermined: France concludes Franco-Soviet mutual assistance treaty (Russia enters League), but Italy is unwilling to conclude any pact with communist government (Britain opposes the idea as Germany could feel encircled); Britain is unwilling to enter naval race (offends France and Italy), Anglo-German naval agreement (Germany's fleet is 35% of Britain's); Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia leaves Stresa Front in ruins
- effect: Hitler can pursue his aims with greater confidence
- when Hitler marches into Rhineland he opposes both Locarno and Versailles treaty but faces no opposition
- France cannot consider war, also society would not support it
- Britain has an overstretched military and won't intervene either
- Britain does not see Hitler's action particularly threatening
- this is seen as the last chance to stop Hitler without war
- public opinion in Britain is for peace and negotiation with Germany
- France would support Civil war in Spain as it did not want another right wing country next to it but decides not to intervene as Britain would not help
- Europe follows France with non-intervention
- Britain has other motives for not intervening: many business interests and investors in Spain
- Germany, Italy and Soviet Union do not sign the Non-Intervention Committee (NIC)
- Britain signs trading agreement with Nationalists in Spain (Dec. 1936)
- Franco is also able to get credits from British banks
- policy of non-intervention helps Franco to win civil war
- failure of non-intervention discredits appeasement policies of Britain and France: nations seem weak to Hitler and encourage him to continue his actions
- limited response to Hitler's invasion of Austria and Czechoslovakia: France is paralyzed by an international political crisis, Italy is dependent on German friendship, League is discredited after Abyssinian crisis, Britain sees *Anschluss* as inevitable
- it is clear to Western powers that Czechoslovakia is the next target
- France has two treaties with Czechoslovakia
- no one wants a military showdown in Czechoslovakia
- British politicians sympathize with Czechoslovakia
- Chamberlain does not see it worth fighting for: ultimately unsustainable, belief in negotiations
- Britain and France work hard to find diplomatic solution
- Chamberlain meets Hitler and believes in his word
- agreement that land with more than 50% Germans are given to Germany
- Czechs are told that when they disagree they won't receive help
- Hitler wants more claims

- further discussions are rejected and all nations start preparing for war
- third meeting is organized to which neither Czechs nor Stalin are invited
- Chamberlain gets promise that problems will not be solved with force
- Chamberlain has a lot of support; Liberals disagree
- when Hitler invades rest of Czechoslovakia it is clear his aims are not limited
- Chamberlain is put under pressure
- Britain offers guarantee to Poland, when Hitler wants claims on Danzig
- British support is a warning to Hitler
- Italy invades Albania and Britain promises support to Greece and Romania
- Pact of Steel makes clear that Italy is with Germany
- rearmament is started in France and Britain and they are in stronger position
- Britain is estimated to be on equal terms with Germany
- Soviet support in Poland would be key: France supports, Britain rather less
- other, more practical reasons why not to ally with Soviets: army is weak after Stalin's purges, can alienate other European countries that Britain wants to win over a diplomatic front, Germany can be pushed to war, alliance might push Poland and Spain into alliance with Hitler as they distrust Stalin
- April 1939: Britain decides to start agreements
- Britain and France only want guarantees to Poland
- Soviet wants mutual assistance to prevent to be left alone on Eastern border
- Soviets also want the right to intervene in neighboring states when feeling threatened
- negotiations fail as Britain does not take it seriously and Soviets demand too much
- Chamberlain hopes for diplomacy but Hitler invades Poland on 1. September 1939
- on 3. Sept. an ultimatum is set but Hitler does not respond and war is declared
- Britain and France cannot help Poland when Hitler invades
- Chamberlain resigns due to multiple failures and Churchill takes his role
- 1940: Britain is by itself against Germany after France is taken over
- Hitler puts forward another "peace offensive"
- Churchill is determined to fight
- USA continues with isolationist stance, most Americans are against war
- Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union ensures Germany's ultimate defeat

## **The Second World War: The historical debate**

- debate on whether appeasement was a cause of the war
- Churchill says it could have been prevented if Hitler was stopped earlier
- rather than resisting Hitler the "appeasers" gave him his demands and supported aggressions
- Chamberlain is said to have been in a difficult situation in deciding
- his plan of appeasement was the right one at the time