

PRESCRIBED SUBJECT 3: The move to global war

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Read sources A to D and answer questions 1 to 4. The sources and questions relate to case study 2: German and Italian expansion (1933–1940) — Italian expansion: Abyssinia (1935–1936).

The sources in this paper may have been edited and/or abridged: word additions or explanations are shown in square brackets []; substantive deletions of text are indicated by ellipses ... ; minor changes are not indicated.

Source A

La Domenica del Corriere, weekend supplement of the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, depicting Italian Blackshirts in action against Abyssinian forces, January 1936.



Source B

Memorandum from Marshal Badoglio, Chief of General Staff to Mussolini, December 1934.

The problem of Italian-Abyssinian relations has very recently shifted from a diplomatic plane to one which can be solved by force alone ... The object ... is nothing more or less than the complete destruction of the Abyssinian army and the total conquest of Abyssinia. In no other way can we build the Empire ... The speedier our action the less likely will be the danger of diplomatic complications. In the Japanese fashion there will be no need whatsoever officially for a declaration of war and in any case we must always emphasize the purely defensive character of operations. No one in Europe would raise any difficulties provided the prosecution of operations resulted rapidly in an accomplished fact. It would suffice to declare to England and France that their interests would be recognized.

Source C

Ruth Henig. *The Origins of the Second World War 1933-41* (1985).

Since his ascension to power in 1922, the Fascist leader had made no secret of his ambition to raise Italy's status as a European power by increasing its influence around the Mediterranean and by expanding its empire. Unlike Japan, however, Mussolini lacked a strong economic base and well-equipped, effective military forces, and the onset of the Depression made it even harder for him to secure them. Thus he aimed in the short term to seek glorious expansion on the cheap, possibly in Africa at the expense of Abyssinia, but for that he needed the agreement, or at least tacit consent, of Britain and France ... Mussolini was inclined more and more towards the prospect of a glorious, short, triumphant war of conquest.

Source D

Martin Blinkhorn. *Mussolini and Fascist Italy*, (1984).

The conquest of Ethiopia represented Mussolini's accomplishment of what had been an Italian nationalist dream for half a century. Neither the problems of the depression nor the African interests of certain industrial pressure groups were sufficient to dictate it. Existing colonies were failing to attract the millions of potential emigrants beloved of fascist propaganda, and were proving unrewarding to the few thousand who actually settled there; moreover, their administration, policing and economic infrastructures constituted a considerable drain on the Italian treasury. The explanation for the attack on Ethiopia thus lies in fascism and its Duce. The fascist need for excitement, conflict and dramatic success was perfectly personified in Mussolini himself and sanctified by the puerile machismo of the Duce cult. Other dictators such as Franco in Spain and Salazar in Portugal constructed personal cults on the appeal of stability and lack of excitement. Neither Mussolini's personality nor the psychology of fascism rendered such a thing conceivable.

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| 1. | (a) According to Source B how should an Italian invasion of Abyssinia be executed? | [3] |
| | (b) What is the message of the artist in Source A? | [2] |
| 2. | With reference to its origin, purpose and content, assess the values and limitations of Source B for historians studying the Italian invasion of Abyssinia. | [4] |
| 3. | Compare and contrast the views expressed in Source C and Source D regarding Mussolini's motives for invading Abyssinia. | [6] |
| 4. | Using the sources and your own knowledge, analyze the reasons for the Italian invasion of Abyssinia. | [9] |