### 2.3 Italian expansion, 1933–1940

#### Conceptual understanding

**Key concepts**
- Change
- Continuity
- Perspective

**Key questions**
- Examine the reasons for Italy pursuing a more expansionist foreign policy in the 1930s.
- To what extent was there continuity in Italian foreign policy in the 1930s?
- Discuss the consequences of foreign policy in the 1930s for Italy.

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After a 13 year campaign, the Italian colony of Libya is subdued

- 1932

Mussolini proposes the Four Power Pact

- 1933 January
- July

Italy sends troops to its border with Austria to prevent Hitler's attempts at Anschluss

- 1934 June
- July

Italy invades Abyssinia

- 1935 April
- October

Mussolini initiates talks of an Axis agreement with Hitler

- 1936 May
- October
- July

Italy joins Germany in the Axis agreement

- 1936 October

Mussolini is impressed by Hitler on a visit to Germany

- 1937
- September

- 1938

Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany

- 1933 January
- July

Mussolini meets Hitler in Venice

- 1934 June
- July

The Stresa Conference

- 1935 April
- October

Italy conquers Abyssinia

- 1936 May
- October
- July

Italy intervenes in the Spanish Civil War

- 1937
- September

Hitler’s Germany also sends assistance to Franco

- 1938

An unofficial agreement is made with Britain accepting the status quo in Mediterranean

- 1939

Italy joins the Anti-Comintern Pact with Germany and Japan, an anti-Soviet alliance

- 1940
What factors had an impact on Italy’s foreign policy in the 1930s?

1. The impact of fascism

The character of the Italian people must be moulded by fighting.
— Mussolini

In the 1930s, Italian foreign policy continued to be influenced by the factors identified on page 84. However, historians generally agree that Italian foreign policy was directed by Mussolini during this period and that he pursued a more clearly Fascist foreign policy from the mid-1930s: glorification of war for its own sake, pursuit of imperial expansion, and a move away from diplomacy and cooperation.

During this period, Mussolini’s methods became more assertive and he was more aggressive diplomatically. He continued to assert anti-French territorial claims, but he moved away from his relatively good relationship with the British, instead fostering closer ties to Hitler’s Germany. This led to a series of Italo-German agreements including the Rome–Berlin Axis and the Pact of Steel. Mussolini also engaged in wars in Abyssinia, Spain and Albania.
The road Mussolini embarked on in the 1930s would ultimately lead to the Italian entry into the Second World War in 1940 as an ally of Germany.

2. The impact of domestic economic issues

As with the other European countries and Japan, Italy was also affected by the Great Depression. The economic problems caused by overvaluing the lira were exacerbated by this worldwide crisis. Investment from the USA was withdrawn, and Italian farmers were also badly affected by the collapse in grain prices. Industry declined and unemployment grew to 2 million. The government responded with more intervention, including bailouts for the industrialists. The Bank of Italy was on the brink of collapse when the government set up the *Istituto Mobiliare Italiano* in 1931, which gave financial support to banks and industries. The allocation of raw materials was brought under government control and direct control of major industries increased. The *Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale* was set up in 1933 and took over shares of companies and banks. As a result, Italy developed the largest public sector in Europe, excluding the Soviet Union. Indeed, by the end of the 1930s, the government controlled 20% of the capital of key companies. Wages that had already fallen before the depression were cut further.

There were some measures that provided relief from the impact of the Great Depression, such as public works programmes and the removal of the ban on emigration. Indeed, Mussolini managed to prevent the social and political upheaval that the depression precipitated elsewhere in Europe and he retained power. Nevertheless, the economic crisis meant that Mussolini needed to distract the Italian public from Italy’s internal economic problems by fostering the “revolutionary” spirit that he and fascism espoused. Foreign policy would now need to be more dynamic and inspirational.

The result of this, however, was that from 1936 the Italian economy was further undermined by Mussolini’s emphasis on autarky, and the costs of *Il Duce*’s wars. Thus, domestic economic factors may have been a factor in Mussolini’s decision to invade Abyssinia and intervene in the Spanish Civil War; nonetheless, these wars came at a high price for the Italian economy. Even though taxes were increased, the wars led to an annual budget deficit of 28 billion lire by 1939. This ultimately had a negative political impact and undermined support for the regime from the elites.

Who controlled Italian foreign policy in the 1930s?

When he came to power in 1922, Mussolini wanted to control Italian foreign policy himself. In 1929, once his authority seemed secure, he appointed Dino Grandi as foreign minister. Grandi was a committed Fascist who favoured a “strong” foreign policy. He wanted to move away from Anglophile policies and demonstrate Italian strength, and ultimately ready the armed forces for the “coming war”. Grandi believed that Italy should not trust the League of Nations. Nevertheless, Mussolini still directed foreign policy and in July 1932 he moved Grandi to the position of ambassador in Britain.

In 1936, Mussolini appointed his son-in-law, Count Galeazzo Ciano to work on foreign policy. Ciano had initially supported closer links with Germany. However, Ciano then became disillusioned with Hitler and argued against the Pact of Steel, signed in May 1939. Ciano advised Mussolini to create a buffer zone in the Balkans against Germany and he supported the invasion of Albania. Ciano lost favour with Mussolini for his anti-German stance when Hitler swept victoriously across Europe. Ciano ultimately relented and supported Italy joining the war with Germany in June 1940.
Source skills


In the mid-1930s, Italy received 86 percent of its imports by sea, and of these, 13 percent passed through the Dardanelles, 17 percent through Suez, and 70 percent through Gibraltar. Hence the fascist conviction that Italy must either dominate or be the prisoner of its Nostro Mare, the Mediterranean. Nor could Italy willingly concede to any other power hegemony in the Mediterranean’s hinterland – the Danubian (including Austria and Hungary) and Balkan areas.

First question, part a – 3 marks

What key points are made in this Source regarding Italian economic needs and their influence on Italian foreign policy in the 1930s?

Examiner’s hint: In pairs, identify three of the following points. Highlight them in the source.

- Italy was dependent on imports from the sea.
- The majority of imports came through Gibraltar.
- Italy had to dominate the Mediterranean.
- Italy could not allow another power to dominate the area.

3. Changing diplomatic alignments in Europe after 1933

*Extract from Dino Grandi’s diary, 1932*

> I have asked myself why the Boss is so taken with Hitler. [Mussolini] has searched breathlessly for the last ten years or so, wherever they might be found, for “allies” for a revolutionary foreign policy destined to create a “new order” in Europe, a new order of which He considers himself supreme Pontiff not only in the spiritual but also in the material sense … An international action founded exclusively on the Party, on the Regime, on a revolutionary ideology.

**ATL Social skills**

Discuss the following question with a partner.

What does the quote from Grandi’s diary (above) suggest Mussolini wanted to gain from potential “allies”?

To demonstrate Italy’s central role in European diplomacy, Mussolini held a meeting in Rome in 1933. Mussolini’s intention was to develop an alternative to the League of Nations for European diplomacy. The Four Power Pact, or Quadripartite Pact, was signed on 15 July 1933 in Rome. It set out that smaller nations should have less say in “Great Power” relations, unlike their role at the League of Nations. Britain, France, Germany and Italy signed the agreement, although the French parliament never ratified it. The signatories agreed to adhere to the League’s covenant, the Locarno Treaties and the Kellogg–Briand Pact.
The resulting Four Power Pact allowed for further “Great Power” cooperation, though in reality this pact had little meaning and was dismissed by the other powers. In Italy, however, it was heralded as a success for Mussolini.

Nevertheless, in 1934, Mussolini’s actions were seen as significant, not only domestically, but also by the other European powers. Italy had promoted an independent Austria since the end of the First World War and so Mussolini opposed Anschluss (the name given to Austria’s unification with Germany, which was one of Hitler’s aims). When, on the 25 July 1934, Austrian Nazi supporters murdered the Austrian Chancellor Engelbert Dolfuss, Mussolini immediately mobilized his troops to the border to deter any attempt by Hitler to achieve Anschluss. This action was sufficient to deter Germany and Hitler did not intervene.

In addition, because by 1935 Hitler’s rearmament was alarming the rest of Europe, Italy was now perceived to be key to guaranteeing the status quo in Europe. In response to Hitler’s policies, Italy, Britain and France met in the Italian town of Stresa in April 1935. The “Final Declaration of the Stresa Conference”, signed on 14 April 1935, aimed to reaffirm the Locarno Treaties and to confirm the independence of Austria. The three powers also agreed to resist further attempts to breach the Treaty of Versailles. Together, they protested against Hitler’s violation of the Treaty of Versailles. This “Stresa Front” agreed to work to prevent any future changes to the European settlement. (See also pages 214–215.)

However, the agreement was vague and did not even specifically name Germany. No methods to uphold their aims were agreed. In fact, Italy had been keener than Britain to adopt a firm stance regarding Germany; Britain was more concerned not to offend Hitler. None of the signatories would sanction an actual invasion of Germany.

Nevertheless, Mussolini knew that a resurgent Germany would frighten Britain and France, and that this could lead them to be more accommodating towards Italian territorial demands. The Stresa Front also gave Italy more protection from Anschluss. Most significantly, Mussolini got the impression during the Stresa talks that, in working with Britain and France, he had gained their consent to expand Italian control in Abyssinia.

Only two months later, in June 1935, Britain apparently broke the principles agreed at Stresa when it signed the Anglo–German Naval Agreement with Hitler’s Germany (see page 214). By signing this agreement, Britain had condoned German naval rearmament and had done so without consulting its Stresa Front allies. Mussolini believed that this action ended the Stresa agreement.

**Source skills**


> In the long-term ... Hitler’s avowed determination to overturn the Versailles settlement offered fascist Italy, if allied to Germany, clear possibilities for the creation of Mussolini’s long anticipated Balkans, Mediterranean and Red Sea empire. As Mussolini stressed to Hungarian prime minister, Gyualia Gömbös, that same spring.
he did not intend Ethiopia to be the limit of 
an Italian expansionist drive. On the contrary, 
after taking Ethiopia he would also conquer 
the British-controlled territories of Egypt 
and the Sudan, thereby linking Italian north 
Africa possessions with those to the east of 
The empire would stretch uninterrupted from the Mediterranean to the 
Indian Ocean.

But in the immediate short term Mussolini 
continued to face domestic anxiety over his 
plans for Ethiopia. The fear that Hitler might 
well attempt a coup against Austria once Italy 
had deployed large numbers of troops to East 
Africa remained widespread, and Mussolini 
could not move without quelling Italian 
anxieties which, by mid 1935, were mounting. 
The foreign ministry, although having given 
support to Mussolini’s Africa policy, remained 
emphatic in its demands that Austria should 
remain an independent state. A detailed report 
on the current European situation of 2nd April 
concluded that Austria amounted to Italy’s own 
“demilitarised zone”, and that Italian defence 
policy should consider its future defence from 
German incursions to be an absolute priority. 
Meanwhile the Italian military continued to 
express their own reservations to the wisdom 
of Mussolini’s enterprise ... In actual fact, 
Mussolini had already elected to give orthodox 
diplomacy one last try. Amid rumours that 
the German and Austrian general staffs had 
recently held conversations, the dictator 
requested a meeting of British, French and 
Italian statesmen that April at Stresa, in 
northern Italy ... If Mussolini had wanted to 
sow anxiety within official German circles, he 
had succeeded.

First question, part a – 3 marks
According to this source, what were Mussolini’s 
key motives for engaging in the Stresa Front 
agreements?

Second question – 4 marks
With reference to the origin, purpose and content 
of this source, assess its values and limitations for 
historians studying Mussolini’s foreign policy in 
the 1920s.

Examiner’s hint: Remember 
that, as this is a “to what 
extent” question, you should 
identify points that agree and 
points that disagree with the 
assertion that Mussolini’s 
foreign policy had only limited 
success up to 1935.

Italian foreign policy, 1935–39
Mussolini’s Italy was at war continuously between 1935 and 1939. The 
key turning point in Italian foreign policy was the invasion of Abyssinia 
in 1935–36, which would take Italy’s foreign policy on a new course. 
This action was condemned by the League of Nations and limited 
sanctions were imposed. Although its aggression had a negative impact 
on its relations with the Western democracies, the invasion was received 
positively in Italy. The conquest of Abyssinia led to a surge of nationalist 
feeling and this in turn encouraged Mussolini to further acts of aggression.

What were the domestic influences on Italian 
foreign policy in 1935–39?
There was a lack of support from the political elites, 
including the King, for a shift in Italian foreign policy that 
had traditionally supported Britain. These groups were 
generally hostile to the Germans. The economic situation 
also influenced foreign policy. Italian industry and 
agriculture had not fulfilled Mussolini’s goal of autarky 
and the economy would not be able to sustain a general 
war. The limited war in Abyssinia and the intervention in 
Spain would be a drain on Italian resources. These factors 
had to be borne in mind while Mussolini still aspired to 
control the Mediterranean and maintain the momentum of 
“Fascistization” that had followed the war in East Africa.
Why did Mussolini invade Abyssinia in October 1935?

Source skills

Source A
A speech Mussolini made to the Italian public the day before the Italian invasion of Abyssinia, October 1935.

It is not only our army that marches to its objective, 44 million Italians march with that army, all united and alert. Let others try to commit the blackest injustice, taking away Italy’s place in the sun. When, in 1915, Italy united her fate with the Allies, how many promises were made? To fight the common victory Italy brought her supreme contribution of 670,000 dead, 480,000 disabled and more than one million wounded. When we went to the table of that odious peace they gave us only the crumbs of colonial booty.

First question, part a – 3 marks
What, according to Source A, were the reasons for the invasion of Abyssinia?

Second question – 4 marks
With reference to the origin, purpose and content of Source A, assess its values and limitations for historians studying the Italian invasion of Abyssinia.

Examiner’s hint: Read the provenance of Source A again. In response to the second question, consider the values and limitations given below.

- Would you have found the same values and limitations?
- Which ones had you not thought of?
- Do you have any comments to add?

Values
- A value of the origin is that it is a speech made by the dictator of Italy himself, and Mussolini directed foreign policy. The author had planned and ordered for the invasion of Abyssinia.
- A value of the purpose is that it offers insight into how the invasion was presented at the time to the Italian public. As it is a speech, it will give the reasons that Mussolini used to justify the invasion.
- A value of the content is that it reveals what the Italian government believed to be the key reasons for the invasion and what the Italian public would have related to at the time. It offers an insight into what Italians saw as important in October 1935.

Limitations
- Mussolini needed to justify his policies publicly and may not be representing the wider views held in Italy at the time.
- The date of the speech may be a limitation, as it is the day before the invasion and Mussolini needs to rally support. Indeed, as this is a speech, it is probably propaganda. Other motives for the invasion, such as to rally public support for his personal dictatorship, would not be revealed.
- The speech lacks hindsight as it was given on the eve of the invasion.
- The content focuses on the justifications, mainly historical, for Italian expansion. It presents a highly one-sided perspective of Italy’s position and does not elaborate on the specific aims of Il Duce.

Source B
Patricia Knight. Mussolini and Fascism (2003).

The invasion of Abyssinia was undertaken primarily to demonstrate Italy’s great power status and, in doing so, avenge Adowa, the scene of the disastrous defeat of Italian troops in 1896. One of the more frustrating aspects of Versailles had been Italy’s failure to acquire any new colonies and Mussolini now intended to recreate the glories of the Roman Empire and achieve a “place in the sun” to rival Britain and France. Further motives were the prospect of economic gains in the form of oil, coal and gold and of African recruits for the Italian army. Mussolini also thought of East Africa as a fertile area for Italian settlement, given the expected increase in population from the Battle for Births. Abyssinia was in any case the only remaining uncolonized African territory and seemed an easy target, given Italy’s military superiority and its presence in neighbouring Eritrea and Somaliland.
Mussolini’s foreign policy objectives in invading Abyssinia, which had not yet been colonized, originated in the longer-term Italian nationalist ambitions to build an empire and to become a great imperial power like Britain and France. He also aspired to an empire akin to the classical Roman Empire, which had controlled large swathes of African territory.

The political reason for the invasion was to consolidate Mussolini’s personality cult (Il Duce) and to rally support behind the regime. War for its own sake was also an element of the Fascist ideal, and this war would give Mussolini an easy victory as Abyssinia was not modernized. It would also be revenge for Italy’s ignoble defeat to the Abyssinians in 1896. In addition, Mussolini would be able to bolster his own military forces by drawing on colonial troops. However, there were also economic reasons for conquering Abyssinia. Mussolini needed to divert attention from the failings of the corporate state and the impact of the Great Depression. Abyssinia was targeted in order to gain territory for emigration and to provide an export market for Italian goods. Mussolini also hoped to find oil.

When Hitler announced German rearmament, Mussolini briefly hesitated in his invasion plans as he did not want to leave himself too exposed in Europe when he was at war in Africa. However, the Stresa Conference led him to think he had nothing to fear; the meetings had convinced him that Britain and France would not object strongly to an expansion of Italian control in the territory. Mussolini also wanted to demonstrate Italy’s power to Germany. Nevertheless, Mussolini did not make his plans clear to Britain and France as he did not want to provoke them in an area where they, too, had colonial possessions (see map).
The events – What happened?

As you see from the map on the previous page, Italy had already acquired colonial territory on the border of Abyssinia. The border itself lacked clarity, and this lack of clarity gave Mussolini the opportunity to manufacture an incident that would lead to war.

It was Italy that had backed Abyssinia’s entry into the League of Nations in 1923 and (as you read on page 102) the two countries had signed a treaty of friendship in 1928. However, Italy drew up a plan to annex Abyssinia in 1929 and an invasion plan in 1932. Then, in December 1934, Italian forces clashed with Abyssinians at the disputed Wal Wal oasis, which resulted in the death of 30 Italians. Mussolini demanded an apology and considerable compensation; the Emperor of Abyssinia, Haile Selassie, requested an investigation by the League of Nations. However, Mussolini would not entertain the idea of a League investigation, and in a secret order instructed his forces to attain “total conquest” of Abyssinia. Il Duce made a huge commitment to the war, sending an army with support personnel totalling 500,000 to East Africa. The Abyssinians, without modern weapons, were soon in retreat.

In September 1935, the League resolved that neither side could be held responsible for the Wal Wal incident as the area had been disputed. On 3 October, Italy launched its full-scale invasion, and then on 6 October, Italian forces captured Adowa. This had historic importance to Italy as its forces had been defeated there in 1896. The League of Nations condemned Italy as the aggressor on 7 October and, four days later, the League of Nations’ Assembly voted to impose sanctions. On the 18 November, these sanctions, although limited, were put into effect.

During the war, tensions between Italy and Britain reached crisis point in the Mediterranean, where Britain had two large naval bases. However, Britain and France wanted to retain good relations with Italy and to maintain the Stresa Front to contain Hitler’s Germany. In December 1935, the British and French foreign ministers, Samuel Hoare and Pierre Laval respectively, drew up a secret pact which would offer Italy half of Abyssinia to bring about a swift resolution to the crisis. However, this plan was leaked to the press, and Britain and France were pressured by public opinion to withdraw the deal (see Chapter 2.6).

Italy continued its war and, on 6 April 1936, the Abyssinian army was defeated at Lake Ashangi. Italian forces finally took the capital, Addis Ababa, on 5 May 1936, and Emperor Haile Selassie fled to Britain. On 9 May, Abyssinia was formerly annexed by Italy. It became part of Italian East Africa with Eritrea and Somaliland.

Mussolini had his great conquest. The war had the desired impact domestically, with a surge in nationalist sentiment that was further encouraged by the League’s condemnation and economic sanctions. Even the Italian Queen Mother had supported the war effort, and participated in the call to fund the war by donating her gold wedding ring to the government.
What were the results of the Abyssinian War?

Speech by Mussolini, May 1936

*Italy has her empire at last; a Fascist empire because it bears the indestructible tokens of the will and of the power of the Roman lictors ... An empire of civilisation and humanity for all the populations of Abyssinia. That is the tradition of Rome, who, after victory, associated the peoples with their destiny.*


The results of the Abyssinian War for Italy

By May 1936, Italy had won the war. Mussolini had succeeded in creating an Italian East African empire. The war had been won relatively quickly and had cost only 1,000 Italian casualties. Mussolini had demonstrated Italian military might and he had expanded the Italian empire. This was to be the peak of his foreign policy success. Giovanni Gentile, a Fascist philosopher, claimed: “Mussolini ... has not just founded an empire in Ethiopia. He has made something more. He has created a new Italy”. 
Nevertheless, the assault on Abyssinia had initiated a “Mediterranean scare” and the Naval Chief of Staff Admiral Domenico Cavagnari warned Mussolini against raising tension with Britain. Indeed, the Italian navy was incomplete due to unfinished building and modernization programmes and it could not take on the British Royal Navy. A naval war between Italy and France, and their ally Yugoslavia, was possible, but Cavagnari cautioned that a naval war with Britain would mean certain defeat.

In addition, although the League of Nations lifted sanctions in July, the Italian victory had come at a high economic price. The budget deficit had risen from 2.5 billion to 16 billion lire during the war, and there was the continued cost of maintaining 250,000 occupying troops. In October 1936, the lira was devalued by 40%, which hit the middle classes hard. Italian trade had to shift to Germany due to the sanctions imposed by the League.

The ferocity and atrocities perpetrated by Italian forces gave them a reputation for great brutality. Finally, for Italy, the war did not really end in 1936. The Italians were forced to fight a drawn-out guerrilla war in Abyssinia until it fell to the British in 1941.

The results of the war for collective security

The war had once again exposed the weakness of the League of Nations, which had been utterly ineffective in its response to Italian aggression. It also caused Italy to move away from good relations with Britain and France, and closer to Germany. Indeed, it is significant that, during the war, on 6 January 1936, Mussolini told the German ambassador that he no longer had objections to Austria becoming a German satellite. He stressed, however, that it must remain independent.

Then, on 22 February 1936, Mussolini agreed to the German rearmament of the Rhineland; this meant Italy would no longer uphold its Locarno obligations. (See page 162 for further discussion of the impact of Mussolini’s actions on Germany.)

Source skills

Source A

An Italian poster from May 1936, “Italy finally has its Empire”.

L’ITALIA HA FINALMENTE IL SUO IMPERO

Mussolini
Source B
A cartoon by David Low published in the UK newspaper, the Evening Standard, on 15 February 1935.

First question, part b – 2 marks for each source
What is the message of the artists in Sources A and B?

Second question – 4 marks
With reference to its origin, purpose and content, assess the values and limitations of Source B for historians studying the Italian war with Abyssinia.

ATL Thinking skills
1. Discuss, in pairs or small groups, the key differences in how Source A and B each get their 'message' across to the viewer. Which source is more effective in achieving this?
2. In what ways could the Abyssinian crisis be seen as a turning point in international relations?

Source skills
Fourth question – 9 marks
Here are some examples of the style of question you could expect for the Fourth question on a Paper 1 set on the Italian expansion in Abyssinia:

a. Using the sources and your own knowledge, examine the reasons for the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1936.

b. Using the sources and your own knowledge, discuss the results of the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1936.

c. Using the sources and your own knowledge, to what extent do you agree that “Mussolini’s foreign policy was wholly successful up to 1936”.

**Why did Italy intervene in the Spanish Civil War in 1936–39?**

Mussolini’s success in Abyssinia encouraged him to look for further military greatness and, when civil war broke out in Spain in 1936, he quickly decided to intervene. Taking military action was in line with Fascist ideals regarding the central role of war and society. Mussolini hoped to gain naval bases in the Balearic Islands from General Franco in return for his assistance, and had aspirations to re-establish the Mediterranean Roman Empire.

Nevertheless, Italian intervention in the Spanish Civil War was also motivated by ideology; Mussolini responded to requests for assistance from the militarist rebels to help fight against liberal democracy and socialism. Mussolini had made, as he had done in Germany, close connections to right-wing groups in Spain since the installation of a new Spanish Republic in 1931. He wanted to stop communism spreading in Spain and to prevent communists from attaining a strategically important position at the mouth of the Mediterranean. Indeed, he presented the rationale for intervention to the Italian public as part of the continuing struggle against Marxism. Finally, he also intended to weaken France, part of his wider foreign policy objectives, as France had close links with the left Popular Front government that Franco and the generals were attempting to overthrow. Thus, Mussolini would prevent France from gaining influence in a left-wing Spain, and would strengthen his own strategic position in the Mediterranean.

Zara Steiner highlights another reason:

> **Mussolini saw in the Spanish War an opportunity to fashion the “new Italy” and “the new Italian”. “There is only one way to create a warlike people”, the Duce claimed, “to have ever greater masses who have waged war and ever greater masses who want to go to war”. — Steiner, 2011**

However, unlike during his invasion of Abyssinia, Mussolini did not have a clear plan when he sent his forces to Spain; nor were there clear “nationalist” goals that could appeal to the wider Italian population. Italy sent more assistance, including 70,000 troops, to Franco than any other country and the war raged on far longer than he had anticipated.
What were the results of intervention in the Spanish Civil War?

Although the intervention was supported by the Church as Franco’s forces had aligned themselves with the Roman Catholic Church in Spain, it was not generally popular with Italians. Indeed, the consequences were mainly negative for Italy:

- The economic cost had been high; the lira was devalued and it lost half its foreign currency reserves. The total cost of the war amounted to around 14 billion lire and it led to Italy increasing its trade with Germany.
- One third of Italy’s arms stocks were consumed by the war. Although Italy had helped secure a right-wing regime in Europe, and was on the winning side, Italy’s military weakness had been exposed. For example, Italian forces were roundly defeated by the International Brigades fighting for the Republic at the Battle of Guadalajara in March 1937.
- Italian submarine attacks on supply ships led to increased tension between Italy and France and Britain.
- General Franco maintained his independence and Spain did not become an Italian satellite state.
- Italy drew closer to Germany.

**Thinking skills**

1. What does the extract below from the historian Richard Overy suggest about:
   - the economic impact that Mussolini’s wars in Abyssinia and Spain had on Italy
   - the impact of domestic economic weaknesses on Italian foreign policy?

War had become an addiction for Mussolini. His conversation had always been spiced with a vocabulary of conflict, but after Ethiopia and Spain, he came to see himself as a great war leader. In March, 1938, jealous of the King’s position as formal head of the armed forces, he appointed himself and his monarch as “First Marshals of the Empire” to create a spurious equality between them. Yet without expanding and modernizing Italy’s armed forces, future warfare was in jeopardy … The limited effort in Ethiopia and Spain forced Italy to spend almost as much of her national income on armaments as richer, industrialized Germany, and twice as much as Britain or France. From 1937 onward Mussolini, who now bore sole responsibility for the three service departments in the Italian government, began to authorize substantial new programmes of rearmament … The great weakness of the Italian strategic position was the economy. Italy was heavily reliant on foreign sources of raw materials, particularly coal, oil and iron ore, and was very vulnerable to blockade … She lacked the real means to play the part of a great power. Mussolini declared the need for a policy of self-sufficiency … To ensure that the strategy worked, the state extended controls over the economy like in Germany, on trade, investment, and labour utilization. By 1939 the state owned 80% of the country’s arms capacity. Italy was transformed into a war economy in peacetime.

Changing diplomatic alignments in Europe after 1936

The new relationship between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany

One of the key results of the Spanish Civil War for Mussolini was that he now committed himself to a formal alliance with Germany by signing the Rome–Berlin Axis Alliance on 25 October 1936. This coalition agreement between Italy and Germany was drawn up by Italian Foreign Minister Galeazzo Ciano.

Source skills

A public speech announcing the Rome–Berlin Axis by Benito Mussolini, 1 November 1936.

This vertical line between Rome and Berlin is an axis around which all the European states animated by the will for collaboration and peace can collaborate. It is not a matter of surprise that today we hoist the flag of anti-Bolshevism ...

We have in common many elements of our Weltanschauung [world view]. Not only have National Socialism and Fascism everywhere the same enemies, in the service of the same master, the Third International, but they have many conceptions of life and history in common. Both believe in will as the determining power in the life of nations and the driving force of their history ... Both are based on young people, whom we train in discipline, courage, resistance, love of the fatherland, and contempt for easy living ... Germany and Italy follow the same goal in the sphere of economic autarky. Without economic independence the political independence of a nation is doubtful.

First question, part a – 3 marks

According to this source, what key factors do Mussolini’s Italy and Hitler’s Germany have in common?

The end of Italian participation in Collective Security

Italy joined the Anti-Comintern Pact in November 1937, with Germany and Japan. The Pact was directed against the Communist International, and stated that in the case of an attack by the Soviet Union the signatories would consult on measures to “safeguard their common interests”. By joining the Pact, the member states now formed the group that would become the Axis Powers. Although Italy had drawn closer to Germany during the mid-1930s, the Axis Pact is seen by some historians as a key turning point for Italian foreign policy. Indeed, in December 1937 Italy left the League of Nations.

Italy’s new relationship with Germany was most starkly apparent with regard to Austria. As you have already read, Mussolini had promoted and protected Austrian independence since the end of the First World War. Indeed, he had successfully warned Hitler off Anschluss in 1934. However, in 1936 Mussolini told the Austrian government to deal directly with Germany, thus implying that Italy would no longer protect it, and in 1938 he accepted Anschluss when Hitler invaded Austria. This represented a major shift in the Italian position on Austria. The creation of Austria had been a key strategic gain for Italy at Versailles, and Mussolini’s shift in policy was not popular domestically.
Source skills

Source A


After the Nazis won power in January 1933, Mussolini had ideological as well as pragmatic reasons for closer ties with Germany. “The victory of Hitler is also our victory” was his immediate comment: a victory he had helped with arms and money and which raised the possibility of creating a new Rome-Berlin axis. Hitler sent him messages of homage and admiration, and other Germans were ready with positive encouragement for Italy to replace France as the dominant power in North Africa and the Mediterranean. If this encouragement was sincere, here was a basis for agreement. Tentative feelers were therefore put out to see whether the Germans would agree to confine their ambitions to Poland and the Baltic, leaving Italy free in the Mediterranean and the Balkans ... One obstacle to such an axis was Hitler’s ideas about racial inequality ... A more serious obstacle to an entente with Germany was the Nazi ambition to annex Austria, whereas Mussolini had confidently promised to defend his country against “Prussian barbarism” ... Three times in 1933, Dollfuss was brought to Italy and given a clear promise that, if both the Nazi and socialist parties in Austria were suppressed, Italian military support could be relied upon to prevent a German invasion.

Source B

The German Ambassador to Italy reports back to the German Foreign Ministry his conversation with Mussolini in January 1936.

[Mussolini] thought it would now be possible to achieve a fundamental improvement in German-Italian relations and to dispose of the only dispute, namely, the Austrian problem ... The simplest method would be for Berlin and Vienna themselves to settle their relations ... in the form of a treaty of friendship ... which would in practice bring Austria into Germany’s wake, so that she could pursue no other foreign policy than one parallel with that of Germany. If Austria, as a formally quite independent state, were thus in practice to become a German satellite, he would raise no objection.

Source C

A cartoon by David Low, “European clothes-line”, published in the UK newspaper, the *Evening Standard* on 9 May 1933.
First question, part a – 3 marks
According to Source A, what were the key areas of dispute between Italy and Germany?

First question, part b – 2 marks
What is the message of Source C?

Second question – 4 marks
With reference to the origin, purpose and content of Source B, assess the values and limitations of this source for a historian studying Mussolini’s position on Austria in the 1930s.

Thinking and self-management skills

1. In pairs, discuss the reasons for the change in Mussolini’s position towards Austria by 1938.
2. How far was the alliance between Mussolini and Hitler an alliance of equals?

What was Italy’s role during the Sudetenland crisis in September 1938?

During the Munich crisis in September 1938, Mussolini assumed a high profile. He wanted to be seen as a great broker of peace, helping to avert a general war. Following Chamberlain’s failure to gain a peace, deal over the Sudetenland after two meetings in Germany, Mussolini stepped in as a “peacemaker” at Munich. He was hailed in Europe as the architect of peace.

However, it was clear by this time that Mussolini was now subservient to Hitler; in fact, he had simply put forward Hitler’s own plan for the Sudetenland. In March 1939, Hitler broke the Munich Agreement and invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia.

The Munich Agreement highlighted the weakness of Britain and France, and Mussolini was now determined to take advantage of this. In November 1938, he 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, and do so with German support. Britain had shown itself desperate to prevent a war, at almost any price.

Source skills

Source A

Mussolini’s speech to the Fascist Grand Council, February 1939.

Italy is surrounded by an inland sea which is connected to the oceans by the Suez Canal ... and by the straits of Gibraltar, dominated by the guns of Great Britain.

Italy therefore does not have free access to the oceans; Italy therefore is actually a prisoner in the Mediterranean and the more populated and powerful she becomes the more she will suffer from her imprisonment.

The bars of the prison are Corsica, Tunisia, Malta, Cyprus; the guards of this prison are Gibraltar and Suez. Corsica is a pistol pointed at the heart of Italy; while Malta and Cyprus are a threat to all our positions in the central and western Mediterranean. Greece, Turkey, Egypt are all states ready to link up with Great Britain and complete the political and military encirclement of Italy ...

... From this situation, you can draw the following conclusions:
1. The task of Italian policy, which cannot and does not have territorial aims in continental Europe except for Albania, is initially to break the bars of the prison.

2. Once the bars have been broken, Italian policy has only one direction: to march to the ocean.

Which ocean? The Indian Ocean, connecting Libya to Ethiopia through the Sudan, or the Atlantic Ocean through French North Africa.

In both cases, we come up against Anglo-French opposition. It is stupid to try to resolve this problem without covering our backs on the Continent. The policy of the Rome-Berlin Axis thus caters for this fundamentally important historical question.

Source B

After Munich Mussolini’s options became narrower still. The German success fed his desire to share with Hitler the opportunity presented by Western weakness to “change the map of the world”, to make Italian policy genuinely independent of the approval of the West. But at the same time he knew that Italy was not yet strong enough to risk war with a major state. Tied down militarily in Africa and Spain, with a weakened economy, Italy did not pose the same threat as Germany.

Chamberlain confessed that if he could get a German settlement he would not “give a rap for Musso”. On the other hand Mussolini was aware that Britain and France were not the powers they had been in the 1920s. His analysis of the old empires as decadent and spineless, first formulated in 1935, seemed truer after Munich.

First question, part a – 3 marks
What, according to Source A, are key foreign policy aims for Mussolini’s Italy?

Second question – 4 marks
With reference to its origin, purpose and content, assess the values and limitations of Source B for historians studying Mussolini’s foreign policy in the 1930s.

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

Hitler broke the terms of the Munich Agreement in March 1939 when he invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia. Nazi Germany had now gone beyond revision of the Treaty of Versailles and had seized control of a sovereign state. Mussolini had not been consulted by Hitler. He was only informed of the conquest after the fact. Mussolini now wanted to regain the initiative and emulate Hitler’s success.

On 7 April 1939, Italy made a punitive assault on Albania. The invasion of Albania was rather meaningless as the country had been for some time a satellite state (see page 101). However, Mussolini wanted to assert Italian strength in order to imitate Hitler’s successful expansion, intimidate Yugoslavia, and pursue his ambition of dominating the Adriatic. Dino Grandi claimed that the conquest of Albania would “open the ancient paths of the Roman conquests in the east to the Italy of Mussolini” and threaten Britain “with the loss of its naval bases, and our complete domination of the Eastern Mediterranean”.

**Class discussion**
Read Source A again.
Discuss the following questions:
1. What continuity was there in Mussolini’s foreign policy in the 1930s?
2. What changes had occurred by 1939 in Mussolini’s foreign policy objectives?
How did Italy take over Albania?

King Zog of Albania had attempted to assert some independence from Italy when in 1934 he signed trade agreements with Greece and Yugoslavia. He had also refused to be intimidated when Mussolini sent warships to the region. When, on 25 March, Mussolini sent an ultimatum to the capital, Tirana, demanding agreement to the Italian occupation of Albania, King Zog refused.

Zog had attempted to keep the Italian ultimatum secret. However, the news was leaked and even the distraction of the birth of a royal baby, his heir, on 5 April did not prevent widespread anti-Italian demonstrations on 6 April. Mussolini sent 100 planes to fly over Tirana dropping leaflets telling the Albanians to submit but the demonstrators demanded weapons to fight the Italians. Then, although a mobilization of the Albanian reserves was issued, many Albanian officers and government officials fled the country. Nevertheless, King Zog broadcast a public address to his people stating he would resist Italian occupation.
Ciano had been considering annexing Albania. The Anschluss, while disquieting for Italy, also threatened Yugoslavia. He mused that [Yugoslav Prime Minister] Stoyadinovic's need for Italian friendship might mean that the Yugoslavian prime minister would be prepared to sacrifice Albania's independence in order to secure an Italo-Yugoslav alliance. Mussolini later agreed, saying that he was prepared to face a war, “as long as we get Albania”. Ciano’s tour of Albania, preceding Hitler's visit to Italy, had represented a kind of reconnaissance mission; Mussolini and Ciano needed better information to determine whether or not their project was desirable or feasible. Upon his return, Ciano submitted a report that encouraged Mussolini's expansionist desire. Albania had excellent agricultural potential, Ciano wrote, and had very extensive deposits of coal, though no one had yet completed a full list of Albania's potential mineral wealth. On the strategic side, there were several advantages. In the wake of Anschluss, German economic, cultural, and political tentacles would reach into the former Austrian sphere of influence. A firm warning from Italy and subsequent annexation of Albania would prevent any further German penetration there.

Source B


Less than a month after Hitler took Prague, the regime in Rome ordered the invasion of Albania. The idea of an outright annexation of the Balkan state had been under consideration by Mussolini since the time of Hitler's visit to Rome. It had also been the subject of some discussion by the naval staff and the chiefs of staff as a whole. As we have already seen, Cavagnari had urged Bagoglio to give the Italian strategic position in the Adriatic greater focus from his very first days in charge of the navy. Subsequently, the naval staff had demanded, in the immediate aftermath of the Mediterranean crisis of 1935, that

consideration be given to an outright invasion of Albania as a means of securing Italian domination of the Adriatic. Determined to secure some form of immediate gain from their developing, if tricky, relationship with Berlin, Mussolini and Ciano ordered the operation to go ahead in early April. The invasion, which included a naval bombardment of the port of Durazzo, brought widespread condemnation, and precipitated yet another crisis in Whitehall. It also poured scorn on Mussolini's declaration of peaceful Italian intentions during his meeting with Chamberlain in January.

Third question – 6 marks

Compare and contrast the views expressed in Source A and Source B regarding Italian motives for invading Albania in April 1939.

**Examiner’s hint:** Take a copy of the above sources. Using different coloured pens to underline or highlight the text, identify the following comparisons and contrasts.

**Comparisons**

- Mussolini had been considering annexing Albania for some time.
- There were strategic reasons for annexing Albania.
- The Italian relationship with Germany influenced Italy’s decision to invade.

**Contrasts**

- Source A highlights the role of the Italian Foreign Minister Ciano in the decision to invade, whereas Source B highlights the role of the Italian Navy.
- Source B focuses on the motive of dominating the Adriatic, whereas Source A focuses on the economic gains to be made in Albania.
- Source A suggests the invasion was to prevent Germany increasing influence in the area, whereas Source B suggests that it was motivated by Italy attempting to gain from its developing relationship with Germany.
- Source A only considers the reasons for the invasion, whereas Source B also considers the results, specifically the impact on relations with Britain.
On 7 April, led by General Alfredo Guzzoni, Italy invaded Albania with a force of 100,000 men and 600 aircraft. The Albanian army that faced them had only 15,000 badly equipped troops which had been trained by the Italians. King Zog had hoped to fight a war of resistance in the mountains, but Italian agents sabotaged the Albanians’ limited equipment. By the afternoon of the very first day of fighting, all ports were in Italian hands. The King and his family fled to Greece.

On 8 April, Italian forces entered Tirana and seized control of all government buildings. Then, on 12 April, the Albanian parliament deposed King Zog in absentia and voted to unite with Italy in “personal union”.

Albania withdrew from the League of Nations on 15 April 1939. The Italians then set up a Fascist government under Shefqet Verlaci. The Albanian foreign office was merged with the Italian foreign ministry and the Albanian army was put under Italian command. Mussolini declared the official creation of the Italian Empire and King Victor Emmanuel, already Emperor of Ethiopia, was crowned King of Albania.

Mussolini would later use Albania as a base from which to launch an invasion of Greece on 28 October 1940.

**Italy and the Second World War**

**Changing diplomatic alignments in Europe after 1939**

The Pact of Steel, or Pact of Friendship and Alliance, was signed between Italy and Germany on 22 May 1939. The Pact comprised two sections: the first was a declaration of trust and cooperation between the two nations; the second, a secret protocol, fostered a union of military and economic policies. The original intention had been to include Japan in the Pact but Japan had wanted the focus to be anti-Soviet, whereas Italy and Germany wanted the agreement aimed at Britain and France. (See pages 181–182 for more discussion of the Pact of Steel.)

Despite the Pact of Steel’s apparent show of unity, Hitler and his foreign minister, Ribbentrop, negotiated the Nazi–Soviet Pact in August 1939 between the Soviet Union and Germany (see page 183). Mussolini was only told about the agreement two days before it was signed.

**Source skills**

*Richard Overy and Andrew Wheatcroft. The Road to War: The Origins of World War II (2009).*

Now that Mussolini had restored his prestige in Albania by matching German with Italian “dynamism”, he began to contemplate a unilateral approach to Germany with the offer of an alliance which he was to call the “Pact of Blood”. There was strong resistance to such an idea inside Italy, even from the ranks of senior Fascists. The generals were hostile to further dangerous commitments; public opinion was strongly anti-German. Secret police reports showed a growing wave of opposition to war, economic crisis and the link to Germany ... Mussolini knew that he was increasingly on his own and resented the humiliating evidence of anti-German sentiment. No doubt honour had something to do with his decision ... In May he sent Ciano to Berlin with authority to sign an immediate agreement.
with Hitler pledging full military assistance in the event of German involvement in war. On 22nd May the agreement was signed; Mussolini changed its name to the more teutonic “Pact of Steel”. German leaders were surprised and suspicious at Mussolini’s move, though pleased enough that Italian promises might neutralize the threat from the West over Poland.

First question, part a – 3 marks
According to Overy and Wheatcroft, why was there resistance in Italy to the idea of a Pact of Steel with Germany?

TOK
In pairs consider how the Pact of Steel may have been perceived internationally when it was signed. Why might historians view the agreement differently to contemporaries?

Thinking skills

Italian government expenditure for defence, 1931–40

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Lire (millions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>4,890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>4,880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>4,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>5,590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>12,624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>16,573</td>
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<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>13,272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>15,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>27,732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>58,899</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overy, R and Wheatcroft, A. 2009.

In pairs discuss what the table above suggest about Italy’s defence spending.

Why did Italy remain a non-belligerent in 1939?

When Hitler invaded Poland on 1 September 1939, he unleashed a general European War. During negotiations over the Pact of Steel, Mussolini had suggested that Italy would not be ready for a general war until 1943. Thus, when Hitler ignited war over Poland, Mussolini declared Italy a non-belligerent.

It would seem that Mussolini’s response to the outbreak of war in Europe in September 1939 was against his aims of creating a “warlike” militarized society and his view that war strengthened a nation. It was also against the terms of the Pact of Steel with Hitler. Some historians have argued that from 1936 Mussolini had sealed the fate of Italy, and from then on he was on a path directed by Nazi Germany. However, the Italian historian Renzo De Felice asserts that this was not the case and that Mussolini had continued to consider an alliance with Britain and France against Germany until 1940. (De Felice has been criticized by left-wing historians in Italy, such as Paolo Alatri, for being too sympathetic to Mussolini and an apologist for fascism.) However, it could be argued that Mussolini was being realistic in not joining the war. Italy had been waging war for several years, in Africa and in Europe, and the country was war weary and could not afford to join a general European conflict.

Why did Italy join the war in June 1940?

Despite having declared Italy non-belligerent, it was difficult for Mussolini to keep Italy out of the war for several reasons:

- Not to join the war was something of an embarrassment for the Fascist leader; it was contrary to his Fascist doctrine and at odds with his portrayal of confident and decisive leadership as Il Duce.
- Mussolini did not want Italy to become a lesser rank power by staying neutral; he did not want to be “another Switzerland”. In April 1940, he said: “To make a people great [the country] must be sent into battle”.
- The war could give Mussolini the opportunity to radicalize the regime and to remove the influence of conservatives and the Church.
- If Italy remained neutral and Germany won the war, Europe would be dominated by a Germany that would be hostile towards Italy because it had remained neutral.
- The war could bring territorial gains and perhaps control over the Mediterranean.
However, in the end, the Italian motives for joining the Second World War in June 1940 were predominantly economic. Germany had been a principal buyer of Italy’s food and textiles, and by August 1939 it owed Italy US $40 million. Italy received German coal in return and became dependent on it. This German coal – two thirds of the Italian supply – had to be delivered by sea. In March 1940, Britain blockaded all German coal ports.

In June 1940, Mussolini declared war on Britain and France.

Source skills

Source A

Mussolini’s declaration of war on Britain and France, June 1940.

After having solved the problem of our land frontiers, we are taking up arms in establishing our sea frontiers. We want to break the territorial and military chains that are strangling us in our own sea. A nation of 45 million souls is not truly free unless it has free access to the ocean.

This gigantic struggle is only one phase of the logical development of our revolution ... it is the struggle of young and fertile peoples against sterile ones who stand on the verge of decline; it is the struggle between centuries and two ideas.

Delzell, C. 1971.

First question, part a – 3 marks

What are the key points made by Mussolini in Source A?

Source B

A 1941 poster showing Italian, Japanese, German and Italian soldiers attacking. The text reads “Victory! For the new social order, for civilization”.

First question, part b – 2 marks

What is the message conveyed by Source B?
Perspectives

Italian historiography

In general, “left-wing” historians in Italy assert that Mussolini had an overtly aggressive foreign policy and expansionist aims. The “right-wing” historians, such as Renzo De Felice (Mussolini’s Italian biographer), argue that Italy did not have large-scale expansionist plans. De Felice views Mussolini’s foreign policy in the context of the policies pursued before 1914 by the liberal Italian government. He argues that, from the 1920s up to at least 1935, Mussolini wanted to get France’s agreement to establish Italy as a great power with an expanded empire in North Africa. To this end, he was advised to pursue the “policy of the pendulum” or, in other words, to be the decisive weight in European relations. In addition, the right-wing historians generally claim that the alliance with Hitler’s Germany was not sealed in order to pursue imperialist objectives. Britain’s pressure on France to follow sanctions over Abyssinia may have fostered a new course. Felice suggests that Mussolini remained equivocal about Hitler, and hoped to attain his objectives by making one side and then the other pay for his support. Mussolini continued to follow this plan until his decision to enter the Second World War in June 1940.

The British historian AJP Taylor

Taylor suggests that Mussolini had expansionist goals, but that there was a lot of conflict between the foreign policies of Hitler and Mussolini. He argues, however, that Mussolini thought Hitler would agree to leave Austria independent and that Italy could then play France and Germany off against each other while gaining concessions from both. The problem was that Hitler intended to achieve Anschluss.

The German historian Gerhard Schreiber

Schreiber sees Mussolini’s foreign policy as dependent on socio-economic domestic policy. In his view, foreign policy was used for propaganda purposes, and its real aim was to gain domestic consensus and limited imperial expansion. He claims that Mussolini had no clear strategy aligned to Nazi Germany, and was more a victim of his own public promises to his people that he would create a Fascist empire. By the summer of 1940 he therefore had no choice but to join Germany in a general European war.

Mussolini’s actions in the war up to 1941

Following Mussolini’s declaration of war, there were some limited air raids and skirmishes between Italy and France before an armistice came into effect on 25th June 1940.

Mussolini expanded the war in Europe in the Mediterranean and into North Africa. Italian forces invaded Egypt from the Italian colony of Libya, whilst another Italian force invaded Greece from Albania. However, both of these Italian offensives failed due to the British response. Mussolini’s failures meant Hitler’s forces were drawn into both the Balkans and North Africa. German forces took Yugoslavia and Greece in April 1941, and forced an evacuation of British forces. Hitler’s forces, under General Rommel, had pushed the British back and advanced as far as El Alamein in Egypt by June 1942.

Self-management skills

Consider Mussolini’s foreign policy aims:

- increase national pride
- consolidate domestic support for his regime
- revise the settlement of 1919-20
- dominate the Balkans
- dominate the Mediterranean
- build an empire, gain spazio vitale (living space), and expand territories in Africa
- foster the spread of Fascism.

For each of these aims, identify the extent to which it had been achieved by 1941 and give evidence for your conclusions.

In small groups review the sources by historians in this chapter and investigate other historians who have written on Italian foreign policy in the 1930s. Where possible, find historians writing in different languages and at different times. What different viewpoints can you find? Consider the origin and purpose of the publications you gather. Discuss the extent to which the historian’s views seem to be influenced by preoccupations at the time of writing.

Do you agree with the idea that historical accounts are developed by individual historians rather than through collaboration between historians? How does this compare with the methodology in other subjects such as the natural sciences?