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NOTE: THE DATE IS THE 1<sup>ST</sup> OF APRIL, 1936

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FORUM: Historical Security Council

ISSUE: **The Invasion of Abyssinia**

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## INTRODUCTION

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Please keep in mind that the Historical Security Council on the issue of the invasion of Abyssinia takes place in April 1936, which means that all the events that occurred after January cannot be considered for the debate. The main purpose of this committee is to possibly rewrite the history by going back in time, and not follow the exact path that has been laid 80 years ago. Nonetheless, the use of contemporary sources in order to figure out a nation's policy during the invasion of Abyssinia is highly encouraged although you should be aware at all times that you are arguing for your country's view during the invasion, not for its current perspective.

The Italian invasion of Abyssinia is important for multiple reasons. It showed the League of Nations' inefficiency in maintaining the collective security (thus making it one of the most important events in the League's history). It also showed that the League of Nations was ineffective as a peace keeper between nations and that it didn't have the strength to prevent aggression. Furthermore, the invasion led to the withdrawal of Italy from the League of Nations in 1937. Italy was one of the founding members of the League of Nations, and its withdrawal from the League was more significant than that of Germany's and Japan's in 1933.



At the time, Italy's importance was increased mainly because of three reasons. Firstly, Italy was seen as a victorious nation, in contrast with Germany whose national prestige was undermined since the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. In addition Germany's debts to other European countries made its withdrawal less significant than that of Italy's. Secondly, Italy was a European nation, whereas Japan, for example, was treated as an outsider being an Asian power (although its military strength was comparable to the Western powers), its racial differences led to discriminations in the





League. In addition its aggressive attack on Manchuria was condemned by the entire League of Nations. Finally, inefficient economic sanctions were imposed by the League of Nations. This last reason in particular showed the League's inefficiency in curtailing military operations. Therefore, the invasion of Abyssinia was very significant in the organization's history.

## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

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**The Walwal Incident:** On November 22nd 1934, Italian troops arrived from Somalia, moved more than 50 miles inside Ethiopia to the oasis of Walwal (province of Ogaden) and constructed a fort: this went against the Italo-Abyssinian Treaty of Friendship. The Ethiopian government then sent troops to Walwal and faced off the Italians for two weeks: this minor battle resulted in the death of more than 150 people.

**The League of Nations (1919 - 1946):** Created after World War One, it was the first international organization whose principal mission was to maintain world peace and its task to make sure that war would never break out again.

**Fascism:** A form of radical authoritarian nationalism that came to prominence in early 20th century Europe. The first fascist movements began in Italy around the First World War in opposition to communism, socialism and liberal democracy.

**The Kellogg-Briand Pact:** an instrument of National Policy, a treaty signed by a number of countries (China, Canada, United States of America, France, Germany, Afghanistan, the Soviet Union, etc..) in 1928 renouncing aggressive war as a tool of international policy (also called the General Treaty for Renunciation of war).

**Italo-Ethiopian Treaty of 1928:** Also called the Italo-Ethiopian Treaty of Friendship and Arbitration, it was a treaty signed by the Kingdom of Italy and the Ethiopian Empire on the 2nd of August 1928. Mussolini devised this treaty as a means to gain access to the Ethiopian economy.

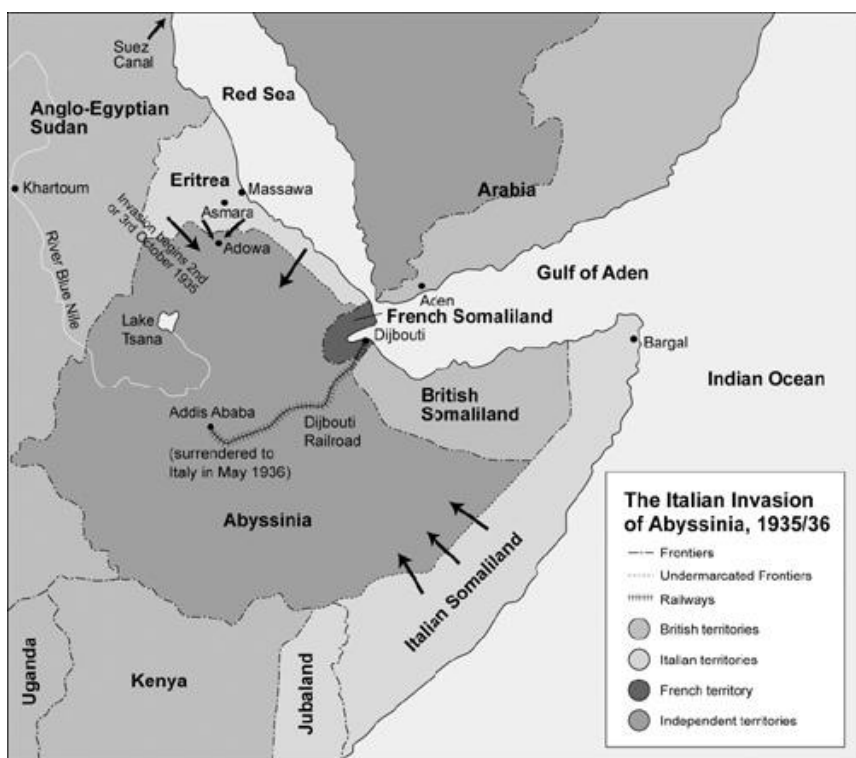


## BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND OVERVIEW



Benito Amilcare Andrea Mussolini was the leader of the Nationalist Fascist Party, Prime Minister from 1922 until he was removed in 1943. After being expelled from the Italian Socialist Party Mussolini denounced it and later founded the fascist movement. A part of his expansionist plans was to obtain a foreign policy triumph allowing him to push Fascist system in a more radical guidance at home. Italy's forces were far superior to the Abyssinian forces, especially in air power, and they were victorious. Emperor Haile Selassie was forced to flee the country, with Italy entering the capital Addis Ababa to proclaim an empire by May 1936.

Haile Selassie I was Ethiopia's ruler from 1916 to 1930 and Emperor of Ethiopia from 1930 to 1974. With an attack appearing inevitable, Emperor Haile Selassie ordered a general mobilization of the Army of the Ethiopian Empire. Persuaded that Mussolini wanted to conquer East Africa, he gave a speech at the League of Nations on the 30th June 1935: *"It is us today. It will be you tomorrow."*



## MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

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### Kingdom of Italy

The Italians had attempted to expand in eastern Africa by joining Abyssinia to her conquests, but in 1896, the Italians were heavily defeated by the Abyssinians at the Battle of Adowa. The loss of 6000 men against a backward army from Abyssinia was difficult for the Italian people to comprehend. However, this defeat did not stop politicians in Italy planning for a new attempt to take over Abyssinia.

### United Kingdom and France

Britain and France were also concerned about provoking Mussolini in the Mediterranean Sea where Britain had two large naval bases - Gibraltar and Malta. In fact, the Italian Navy was vastly overestimated by both the British and French but it was this fear which also led Britain to keeping open the Suez Canal. If this route had been cut, then Italy would have had extreme difficulties supplying her armed forces in the region during the conflict. It is also possible that both Britain and France considered the war too far away to be of any importance to them. They were not prepared to risk their naval power in the Mediterranean for the sake of a country barely anybody had heard of in either France or Britain. Britain and France also had another input into this affair. In an effort to end the war, the British Foreign Secretary - Samuel Hoare - and the French Prime Minister - Pierre Laval - met in December 1935. They came up with the Hoare-Laval Plan. This gave two large areas of Abyssinia to Italy and a gap in the middle of the country - the "corridor of camels" - to the Abyssinians. The south of the country would be reserved for Italian businesses. In return for this land, the Italians would have to stop the war.

## TIMELINE OF EVENTS

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**1895** - Italy invades Ethiopia ("Scramble for Africa" of the XIXth century)

**1928** - Treaty of Friendship between Italy and Emperor Haile Selassie.

**29th September 1934** - Non-Aggression Pact between Ethiopia and Italy.

**22nd November 1934** - "Wal Wal" incident in which Ethiopian armed forces demand the retreat of the Italian forces installed by the area, the disagreement becomes an armed conflict.

**6th December 1934** - the Emperor of Ethiopia accuses Italy to have opened fire.



**8th to 11th December 1934** - Italy demands excuses from Ethiopia and later adds the demand for financial compensation for damage.

**3rd January 1935** - Ethiopia calls upon League of Nations for help to settle the issue.

**7th January 1935** - French Foreign Affairs Minister proposes Italy take the French Somalia in exchange of help in case of German attack: this becomes known as The Franco-Italian Agreement of Rome.

**25th January 1935** - Five Italian military members are killed by Ethiopian forces.

**December 1935** - Hoare-Laval Plan established.

**23th February 1936** - Mussolini sends large amounts of troops in bordering countries to Ethiopia: Somalia and Eritrea.

**8th March 1936** - Ethiopia calls upon League of Nations a second time for settling of issue.

**17th March 1936** - Ethiopia calls upon League of Nations for help to push the Italians out.

**20th June 1936** - USA terminates application of Neutrality Acts towards conflicting parties to never recognise Italian sovereignty over Ethiopia.

**1934-37** - Abyssinian Crisis, as a result of "Wal Wal" incident of November 1934

**3rd of October 1935** - Invasion by Italian Troops of Ethiopia

**1936** - King of Italy made emperor of Ethiopia, combined with Eritrea and Somaliland becomes Italian East Africa; Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia flees.

**1941** - British and Commonwealth troops, greatly aided by the Ethiopian resistance (the "Arbegnoch") defeat the Italians, and restore Haile Selassie to his throne.

## League of Nations involvement:

In October of 1935, when invaded, Ethiopia asked for measures to be taken against Italy by League of Nations. After six weeks of debate, economic sanctions were forced upon Italy without pertaining to vital products but only weaponry, metal and rubber. Furthermore, no military support was sent to the country and three member states refused to impose sanctions on Italy. The Hoare-Laval Plan



was presented by Foreign Ministers of both the Britain and France in December 1935: it gave two areas of Abyssinia to Italy and left a gap in the center named the “Corridor of Camels” in return Italy was to stop warfare on Britain and France; Mussolini gave his agreement, yet due to British national protest this plan was dropped. The economic sanctions also failed as they did not threaten Italy’s economic stability and thus did not pressure it to refrain from pursuing the conflict with Ethiopia.

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

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- A larger military involvement coming from the **League’s member states**.
- **Britain** and **France’s** greater collaboration with African countries to agree upon a resolution through more important diplomatic involvement.
- Greater economic sanctions by **League of Nations members** which would include complete embargo of Italy, especially focused on vital materials so as to pressure the country to retreat and weaken it.
- Involvement of not only larger European powers but also of other member **states of League** to come to help through economic, diplomatic, and military measures.
- Less compromise and more action regarding the containment of Italy.
- Uniting of **African colonies’** armed forces against Italian troops.
- **Italy** could ask for alternative solutions to their wish for power over African countries, may they be financial or territorial.
- **Britain** closing Suez Canal so as to restrain Italian export and imports and therefore reduce financial and material gain as to weaken country.
- Putting forth world peace before national interest of countries (Hoare-Laval Plan).



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