

Explain why
mussolini took over
abyssinia and why he
might provide
different expl...

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Benito Mussolini had a variety of motivations in wanting to invade Abyssinia and build an Italian empire. Mussolini was a man who preached that "War is to men what childbearing is to a women!" As Prime Minister his attitudes towards other countries was that they were there to be invaded and there for him to create an Italian empire. Mussolini believed that after World War One, Italy had been cheated out of receiving certain territories that it had been promised by the other allies in return for Italy's participation in the war. Dalmatia and Fiume were two states that many Italians believed rightly belonged to their country, and in joining the war it was pledged that if the allies won the war that Italy would receive these two states. However, at the Treaty of Versailles the Italy was not granted these two states, in fact they received very little out of the treaty, certainly not as much as the Italians believed they deserved.

Mussolini now felt that Italy had a right to build her own empire, he wanted Italy to be a major player in world affairs, and he firstly did this by signing the Locarno Treaties in 1925 and then the Kellogg-Braind Pact in 1928. These were two treaties which stated that nations would not use military force to settle disputes with other nations. Mussolini signed these treaties to make Italy appear to be playing a major role in world affairs when, in fact, he was already planning the expansion of the Italian empire, through military means. Back at home Italy was facing severe economic problems; Italy was desperate for raw materials like coal, oil and iron and needed to find a source for these supplies. Due to this economic downfall Mussolini was losing support, he knew he needed to find a solution to Italy's problems and in the

mean time try to take the Italian people's minds off of their nations financial downfall.

Mussolini believed that the remedy to this dilemma was to invade another nation, he singled out Abyssinia as his target, it was already surrounded by the Italian states of Eritrea and Somaliland and so it was perfectly positioned. The Italian military would have no trouble in invading Abyssinia, they could take their troops and machinery right up to the border and the Abyssinian resistance would never be strong enough to cope with the Italian's explosive arsenal. By this time, Mussolini was craving glory, he was desperate to please the Italian people and so he readied his military for an invasion of Abyssinia. Another motivation behind the invasion was that Italy had previously tried to attack the African territory in 1896 at the Battle of Adowa, but the Italians were heavily defeated by the Abyssinians; this defeat had a colossal impact on Italian pride. The loss of 6000 men against a very primitive army from Abyssinia was difficult for the Italian people to comprehend; their national pride had been severely dented.

This must be seen as a large basis for Mussolini's desire to conquer Abyssinia. Mussolini's craving to show the world how powerful Italy could be became his prime motivation. He saw himself as a contemporary Julius Caesar who would one day be in charge of an Italian empire that stemmed all across Europe and Africa. In 1928, Italy signed a treaty of friendship with Haile Selassie, the leader of Abyssinia; however this was just a decoy for the invasion that was already being planned. In source F his argument for invading Abyssinia was that an empire was what Italy rightly deserved after

what they had sacrificed in World War One, he choose this argument as it was a lot closer to home and a lot more likely to strike a sensitive nerve with the Italian people as it is likely to have affected them all much more greatly than any other of Mussolini's desires for war. When writing to the British in source E his argument was that he felt he should be able to expand Italy's empire, as this is exactly what countries like Britain had already done.

This argument was chosen for the British as the Italian invasion would be seen a lot less favourably if Mussolini's reasoning was that he was taking what he deserved after the allies failed to live up to their word after the first world war, it would not have been a good idea to criticise Britain in case they, on behalf of the League of Nations, had launched a military attack on Italy in response to the invasion of Abyssinia. And so, in source E the Mussolini tried to 'spin' his reasoning's for war on Abyssinia so that they looked more acceptable to the British.