

Unit 5: Crisis and Change  
Lesson F: The Failure of Democracy and Return of War  
Student Resource: Timeline for World War II — Italy

### **Timeline for World War II — Italy**

#### **1920-1938:**

- 1922: October 28: Fascists took control of the Italian government with Benito Mussolini as the Prime Minister.
- 1924: April 6: Fascists received 2/3 majority and won elections in Italy.
- 1925: January 3: Benito Mussolini announced he was taking dictatorial power over Italy.
- 1928: August 2: Italy and Ethiopia signed the Italo-Ethiopian Treaty.
- 1928: August 27: The Kellogg-Briand Pact was signed in Paris by the major powers of the world. The treaty outlawed aggressive warfare.
- 1929: February 11: Italy and Vatican City signed the Lateran Treaty. This treaty made Vatican City a sovereign state (June 7).
- 1929: October 29: The Great Depression began.
- 1930: April 22: The United States, Japan, Italy, and Great Britain signed the London Naval Treaty, which regulated shipbuilding and submarine warfare.
- 1932: February 11: Pope Pius XI met with Benito Mussolini in Vatican City.
- 1934: December 5: The Abyssinia Crisis occurred. Italian and Ethiopian troops exchanged fire. Italian dictator Benito Mussolini attempted to expand the Italian Empire in Africa by invading the Ethiopian Empire (known as Abyssinia). Until then, Ethiopia had successfully resisted European colonization. Pre-1935, France wanted to secure alliance with Italy and, as a result, gave Italy the go-ahead for activities in Ethiopia, which Italy wanted as a colony.
- 1935: October 2: The Kingdom of Italy invaded Empire of Ethiopia. The Second Italo-Abyssinian Colonial War lasted until May 1936. Italy won and created the new colony of Italian East Africa. The Italians invaded without a formal declaration of war. The League of Nations declared Italy the aggressor, but failed to impose effective sanctions. The invasion was supported only by Germany; Italy returned the favor by revoking objections to German absorption of Austria. Initially, the war progressed slowly for Italy despite its advantage in weaponry. By the end of 1935, Mussolini approved the use of mustard gas.
- 1936: March 31: The Italians won the last major battle of the war, the Battle of Maychew. Emperor Haile Selassie fled into exile on May 2. Italian forces took the capital, Addis Ababa, on May 5. Italy annexed Ethiopia on May 7, 1936, and merged Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somaliland into a single colony known as Italian East Africa.
- 1936: June 30: Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie denounced Italy before the League of Nations and criticized the world community for standing by. He warned that "It is us today. It will be you tomorrow". As a result of the League's condemnation of Italy, Mussolini declared the country's withdrawal from the organization.
- 1936: July: Germany and Italy supported Franco in Spanish Civil War.
- 1936: October 25: The Rome-Berlin Axis was formed when Germany and Italy signed the Rome-Berlin Axis; after the German occupation of Czechoslovakia, Italy saw itself becoming a second-rate member of the Axis.
- 1936: November 26: The Anti-Comintern Pact was signed by Japan and Italy.
- 1937: December 11: Italy left the League of Nations.

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**1939:**

- 1939: January 26: Spanish nationalist forces, aided by Italy, took Barcelona.
- 1939: April 7-12: Mussolini's troops invaded Albania, which was occupied after a short campaign, despite stubborn resistance offered by the Albanian forces. Albania surrendered to Italy.
- 1939: May 22: The Pact of Steel, known formally as the Pact of Friendship and Alliance between Germany and Italy, was signed. It was an agreement between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, by the foreign ministers of each country.
- 1939: August 25: In response to a message from Benito Mussolini that Italy would not honor the Pact of Steel if Germany attacked Poland in 1939, Hitler delayed the attack on Poland by five days to provide more time to secure British and French neutrality.
- 1939: September 2: Italian dictator Benito Mussolini declared the neutrality of his nation in the German conflict with Poland, Great Britain, and France.
- 1939: October 20: Pope Pius XII's first encyclical condemned racism and dictatorships.
- 1939: December 7: Italy again declared neutrality.

**1940:**

- 1940: March 18: Hitler and Mussolini met at the Brenner Pass on the Austrian border; Benito Mussolini agreed with Hitler that Italy will enter the war "at an opportune moment".
- 1940: June 10: Italy declared war on France and the United Kingdom.
- 1940: June 24: Franco-Italian armistice was signed.
- 1940: August 19: Italian forces took Berbera, the capital of British Somaliland. The fall of Berbera completed the invasion of the British colony. By the end of the month, the Italians controlled British Somaliland and several towns and forts along the border with the Sudan and Kenya.
- 1940: August 20: Italy announced a blockade of British ports in the Mediterranean area, including a siege in Malta, conquer of British Somaliland, a move into British-held Egypt, and a failed invasion of Greece.
- 1940: September 9: During the Western Desert Campaign, Italian colonial forces in Libya launched the invasion of Egypt. The objective was to advance from defensive positions within Libya to Egypt.
- 1940: September 9: Tel Aviv in the British Mandate of Palestine was bombed by Italian aircraft, causing 137 deaths.
- 1940: September 13: After re-taking Fort Capuzzo just inside Libya, Italian colonial forces advanced into Egypt.
- 1940: September 16: The Italian invasion of Egypt came to a halt when five Italian divisions set up defensively armed camps. The Italians never approached the main British positions.
- 1940: September 27: The Tripartite Pact was signed in Berlin by Germany, Italy, and Japan, promising mutual aid. An informal name, "Axis", emerged. The pact stipulated that an attack against one of the countries (by any nation except the Soviet Union) would force a nation to go to war with all three nations.
- 1940: October 20: Italian aircraft bombed Cairo, Egypt, and American-operated oil refineries in the British Protectorate of Bahrain.
- 1940: October 4: Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini met at the Brenner Pass to discuss the prospects in the war.
- 1940: October 15: Mussolini and his closest advisers decided to invade Greece.
- 1940: October 28: Italy issued an ultimatum to Greece, and Greece replied: "So it is war". The Italian Royal Army launched attacks into Greece from Italian-held Albania and began the Greco-Italian War. Hitler was angered at the initiative of his ally.
- 1940: November 1: Turkey declared neutrality in the Italo-Greek war.

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- 1940: November 21: The Belgian government, in exile in Britain, declared war on Italy.
- 1940: December 12: In North Africa, over 39,000 Italians were lost or captured in Egypt.
- 1940: December 28: The Greco-Italian War continued to go badly for the Italians; the Greeks held roughly one-quarter of Albania. Italy requested military assistance from Germany against the Greeks.

**1941:**

- 1941: January 19: The 4th and 5th Indian Divisions continued the British counter-offensive in East Africa, attacking Italian-held Eritrea from Sudan.
- 1941: January 19: Hitler and Mussolini met at Berchtesgaden; Hitler agreed to provide aid in North Africa.
- 1941: February 9: Mussolini was informed that German reinforcements were on the way to North Africa.
- 1941: April 6: The Italian Army was driven out from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- 1941: April 21: The Italian Viceroy in Ethiopia surrendered. Some Italian troops kept on fighting.
- 1941: November 27: In Italian East Africa, the last Italian armed forces in East Africa surrendered at Gondar.
- 1941: December 11: Germany and Italy declared war on the United States. The United States reciprocated and declared war on Germany and Italy.

**1942:**

- 1942: May 22: Mexico declared war on Italy.
- 1942: August 22: Brazil declared war on Italy, partly in response to numerous riots by a populace angry at the sinking of Brazilian ships.
- 1942: December 4: The first US bombing of mainland Italy, Naples, occurred.

**1943:**

- 1943: January 16: Iraq declared war on Italy and the Axis powers.
- 1943: April 6: Hitler and Mussolini came together at Salzburg, mostly for the purpose of propping up Mussolini's fading morale.
- 1943: April 7: Bolivia declared war on Germany, Japan, and Italy.
- 1943: May 9: German and Italian forces in Tunisia announced surrender to British.
- 1943: July 19: The Allies bombed Rome for the first time.
- 1943: July 22: The fall of Palermo in the Allied invasion of Sicily inspired a subsequent coup d'état against Mussolini.
- 1943: September 3: Mainland Italy was invaded by Allied forces. An Italian Armistice was signed and Italy dropped out of the war.
- 1943: September 12-15: Mussolini was rescued from mountaintop captivity ordered by the Fascist Council. Mussolini was then set up by Hitler, who remained loyal to his old friend, as the head of "Salò," a quasi government that Mussolini proclaimed the "Italian Social Republic."
- 1943: October 1: Neapolitans completed their uprising and freed Naples from German military occupation.
- 1943: October 13: Italy declared war on Germany.
- 1943: November 5: The Italians bombed the Vatican in a failed attempt to knock out the Vatican radio.

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**1944:**

- 1944: January 12: Count Ciano, the Italian Foreign Minister and Mussolini's son-in-law, was executed by Mussolini's revived Fascist government sympathizers.
- 1944: March 24: 335 Italians were killed in the Fosse Ardeatine massacre in Rome, Italy. The number included 75 Jews and over 200 members of the Italian Resistance; this was a German response to a bomb blast that killed German troops.
- 1944: June 5: Rome fell to the Allies, becoming the first capital of an Axis nation to do so.
- 1944: June 18: The Allies captured Assisi, Italy.
- 1944: August 4: Florence was liberated by the Allies, particularly British and South African troops; before exiting, however, the Germans destroyed some historic bridges and buildings.

**1945:**

- 1945: February 24: Egypt declared war on Italy and other Axis countries.
- 1945: April 24: Allies encircled the last German armies near Bologna, and the Italian war, in effect, came to an end.
- 1945: April 28: Head of State for the Italian Social Republic, Benito Mussolini, heavily disguised, was captured in northern Italy while trying to escape. Mussolini and his mistress were shot and hanged in Milan the next day. Other members of his puppet government were also executed by Italian partisans.
- 1945: May 1: Partisan troops captured Trieste in northwest Italy. New Zealand troops played a supporting role. The war in Italy was over, but some German troops were still not accounted for.
- 1945: July 14: Italy declared war on Japan.

**1947:**

- 1947: February 10: U.S. signed a peace treaty with Italy.

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