

RENMUN VIII

The Restoration of Serenity



March 4th & 5th 2023

Chair Report

Chair Introduction

Greetings delegates,

It is truly a pleasure to welcome you all to the Historical Security Council at RENMUN this year. We are Valerie Yum and Milo O'Neill, from Chinese International School and Renaissance College respectively. As chairs, we are incredibly delighted to have you for this conference and are honored to chair this committee.

To introduce the Historical Security Council, delegates should be mindful of the cutoff date (different for each topic) and are reminded to keep their information and research within the dates provided. While this may seem inconvenient, it will actually enhance debate by putting delegates directly in the position of those who needed to deal with the immediate fallout of the topic at hand. Please also note that this cutoff date is a feature unique to the Historical Security Council within Model UN.

Given that the Historical Security Council is an advanced council, we expect delegates to come to the conference fully prepared by having researched their country's stance thoroughly. A comprehensive understanding on the topic at hand will help foster debate at the conference.

If delegates have any further questions, they should not hesitate to reach either of us chairs about the Historical Security Council's special procedures and or any further questions about each of the topics.

Warm regards (since it's cold),
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Reevaluating Italy's invasion into Abyssinia

Cutoff date of January 3rd 1935

Introduction

Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia or often referred as the Second Italo-Ethiopian War, was an aggressive war fought between Italy and Ethiopia from October 1935 to February 1937. The invasion is usually seen as an example of the aggressive way the Axis Powers chose to establish their dominance on the global stage. Alongside Japan's invasion of Manchuria, the Italian invasion of Abyssinia accentuates the League of Nations' ineffectiveness in dealing with global crises and failure in applying its core value of collective security.

The Italian invasion began on the 3rd of October 1935, when 200,000 Italian soldiers attacked from Eritrea (which was then colonized by Italy) without declaring war. Mussolini, unhappy with Marshal Emilio De Bono's slow advancements, Mussolini replaced him with General Pietro Badoglio. The Italians dominated in the war due to their technologically advanced weapons, and also took advantage of the Abyssinian army's incapability to communicate with different divisions of their army.

Meanwhile in Europe, Nazi Germany supplied munitions to support the Abyssinians because they were frustrated that Mussolini pushed back against German attempts to integrate Austria. This development made the Second Italo-Ethiopian War longer than it needed to be, and would soon lead to Italy's growing economic dependence on Germany and less interventionist policy on Austria. Note that Mussolini's response to this advancement in the war is key to Hitler's rise to power.

Though the Ethiopian forces managed to hinder Italian advance for a few weeks, the superiority of the modern Italian weapons was key to Mussolini's victory. As the war progressed and Ethiopia's Emperor Haile Selassie fled into exile, Italy announced its victory and succeeding in annexing the territory of Ethiopia on the 7th of May.

Though Italy ultimately succeeded in annexing Ethiopian territory, Italy violated the Geneva Conventions when they used mustard gas in aerial bombings against the Ethiopian civilians, which proved fatal to their international reputation after the war. Because of Italy's unprecedented use of chemical weapons, hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians died, and some historians even describe this as genocide.

Key Terms

Term	Definition
Nationalism	Italian nationalism promotes the notion that Italians are a nation with a single and homogenous identity, and therefore seeks to further a country's cultural and social unity.
Militarism	The belief that a country should always maintain a strong military and be prepared to employ to defend and promote national interests. Militarism almost always goes hand in hand with military aggression.
Social Darwinism	<p>The belief that one race has evolved to become superior to all other races.</p> <p>Social Darwinism has been used to justify racism, imperialism, eugenics (used to achieve racial purity), and social inequality.</p>
Social Unity	Opposes class-based divisions in society and promotes collective national security.
Authoritarianism	<p>An authoritarian state is where the state has influence or total control of all aspects of society.</p> <p>This was enforced by Mussolini as he continuously preached "obedience not discussion".</p>

Background Information

The reason behind Mussolini's invasion is still not fully determined by historians, but there are a number of theories. For example, historians think that Mussolini's invasion could be a retaliation for the unprecedented and humiliating defeat that Italy suffered at the Battle of Adowa in 1896, where Abyssinia was the first African nation to beat a European superpower at the time. Mussolini's invasion in the Second Italo-Ethiopian War could then be interpreted as revenge.

In addition, Italy wanted international recognition as a great European power alongside France and Britain, and Mussolini chose to do this through adding to his

collection of countries. Italy already had control over Somaliland, Eritrea, Libya but Italy's hopes that these colonial projects would turn into a lucrative enterprise simply failed. So, Mussolini needed to create an illusion of a successful Italy overseas. He was already jealous of French and British colonialism, so the invasion of Abyssynia could prove that Italy too was capable of colonizing African nations for their own political gain. As a result, Italy wanted to colonize Abyssynia in attempt to make Italy a greater power like that of Britain and France.

Domestically, Mussolini preached war-like values as he introduced fascism to the country but he knew that he needed an ambitious foreign policy win in order to gain the respect of the Italians. During Mussolini's rise to power, he also failed to follow through on his promises, as evident by the Battle of Grain, Battle of Land, and the Battle for the Lira. Therefore, since his domestic policies were failing, it can be argued that the invasion of Abyssynia was used as an attempt to distract Italians from looking into the failures at home.

Meanwhile, Mussolini still needed to maintain his image as powerful and to also consolidate his cult of personality as Il Duce. So, Mussolini may have believed that the invasion of Abyssynia would bring more opportunities for industrialists, increasing the middle class and other jobs in bureaucracy while also combatting the Depression induced economic slow-down.

Finally, some may argue that Mussolini invaded Abyssynia for oil, coal, gold and other natural minerals. New land or *spazio vitale* for Italy meant that there was territory available for emmigration to solve the overpopulation crisis, which Italy needed.

Potential Clashes

War crimes against the Abyssinian people

Though Mussolini's troops had major technological advantages as they possessed tanks and aircrafts, Ethiopia did not have many roads and this caused geographical setbacks for Mussolini's invasion. To combat this, Mussolini personally ordered the unprecedented use of chemical weapons to accelerate the attack, but many felt that this was inhumane because the Abyssynian army and its civilians didn't have technology such as gas masks to effectively evade and prevent the deaths of tens of thousands.

Failure to apply the notion of collective security in the League

Though collective security is at the epicenter of the League's core values, it was not applied in the case of the Abyssynian attack due to a variety of reasons. Article 16 of the Covenant which details the League's policy of collective security states that if "both countries are members of the League and one attacks the other, the attacker

can consider herself out of the League and also an official enemy of the League". However, because member nations needed Mussolini's allyship for their political gain, and because Mussolini demonstrated that he was going to carry out a war with or without the League's approval, this policy was not properly carried out by the League.

Lack of an organized opinion in the League against Italy's invasion

The League was unable to formulate a response to Mussolini's invasion as member nations each had their own political priorities. For example, France wanted Italy as its ally in case Germany decided to re-arm themselves, and Britain also feared that sanctioning Mussolini would cause him to ally with Germany which would have severe political impacts in the inevitable WWII.

Key Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Involvement with the Issue
Italy	<p>Italy was the aggressor in the conflict. The most prominent reasons why Mussolini chose to invade Abyssinia is for revenge for Italy's failures in the Battle of Adowa in 1896, and because Abyssinia was virtually the only part left uncolonized in Africa then.</p> <p>Mussolini made the argument that he should not be condemned for this invasion as his invasion was no different to Britain and France who colonized other parts of Africa for their own gain.</p>
Abyssinia	<p>Though Abyssinia appealed to the League of Nations, the notion of collective security was not applied and therefore Abyssinia could only helplessly fight back against the more technologically advanced Italy.</p>
Britain and France	<p>Britain and France both led the international outrage and condemnation within the League, but were both unwilling to go to war against Italy for Abyssinia. Furthermore, Britain and France were both worried about German rearmament and therefore were reluctant in</p>

	taking action against Mussolini.
Germany	The argument can be made that Mussolini simply adopted Hitler's ideology of acquiring territories he felt was Italian. As the Italo-Ethiopian progressed, Italy turned to Adolf Hitler for an alliance.

Key Past Events

The Battle of Adowa (1896)

The Battle of Adowa was a battle between Italy and Ethiopia in March of 1896. Italy was attempting to get a foothold in Africa in order to expand its colonial empire and was expecting an easy victory but the Ethiopian forces surprisingly defeated the Italians. This was the first time an independent African nation had defeated a European superpower, and Ethiopia along with Liberia were the only two nations who had maintained their independence after the Berlin Conference of 1884. Italy's humiliating defeat as a result of the Battle of Adowa is argued as one of the reasons they started the Second Italo-Ethiopian War.

Possible Solutions

An Arms Embargo

As discussed, Italy had much more technologically advanced weapons compared to Abyssinia. In order to level the playing field, the League could have limited the amount of arms, tanks, or personnel that Italy could put on Abyssinian land. Though imposing this could potentially have political drawbacks, the Italian troops were also much more experienced and so there is reason to believe that Mussolini would still be able to successfully invade and conquer Abyssinia even with an arms embargo. The arms embargo would then serve as the League's way of saying that they did intervene in the conflict but it was too difficult to hinder Mussolini's advancement in the invasion.

Blocking the Suez Canal

Ambitious delegates (or delegates who are not afraid to go against the delegate of the UK) should propose that the League should go ahead with blocking the Suez Canal. Though this response against Italy is highly controversial as it could potentially cause war in the Mediterranean and would also hinder other member nations' economies, this would hinder the speed at which Mussolini re-stocked his arms supply in Abyssinia.

Applying collective security

By applying Article 16 of the Covenant, Mussolini would have been deemed the aggressor in the invasion and would therefore not only be removed from the League but also deemed an “official enemy” of the League. The argument can be made that the League’s disapproval towards Mussolini’s actions could have effectively set back and slowed down the invasion.

Past Actions

The League of Nation’s condemnations:

Even after Haile Salassie, emperor of Abyssinia at the time, personally appealed to the League of Nations for help, member nations did not impose sanctions effective enough to halt the Italian invasion. In debate on the topic, though many member nations condemned the Italian invasion of Abyssinia, including Franklin D. Roosevelt of the United States, Neville Chamberlain of Britain and Prime Minister Pierre-Etienne Flandin of France, the lack of leadership in debate (which many blamed Britain for) and the lack of general support

The League of Nation’s failure to close the Suez Canal:

Though all League members were ordered to impose economic sanctions on Italy, the sanctions were limited and ineffective because member nations failed to put their individual interests aside when debating for potential solutions in response to the Abyssinian invasion. For example, Britain and France feared that sanctions on Italy would anger Mussolini, which could make him turn to Hitler in Germany as an ally. In addition, neither France nor Britain were willing to go to war with Italy or put their own army in Abyssinia on behalf of the League. The general indecisiveness of member nations led the League to fail to close the Suez Canal to Italian shipping. Britain’s Prime Minister Chamberlain was especially afraid to implement this sanction as he thought it may lead to war in the Mediterranean. Furthermore, though the Suez Canal was undoubtedly used by Mussolini to quickly transport his army from Italy to Abyssynia, the Suez Canal also played a very large role in trade across the European and African continent, and the potential economic impacts of this trade blockade was also feared.

The League of Nation’s failure to impose an oil embargo:

As some sources argue, the League’s failure to impose an oil embargo on Italy was its one fatal mistake: it was the key to stopping the invasion of Abyssynia since it would have brought the Italian economy to a halt and required Mussolini to retract his troops. Similar to the League’s failure to put an end to the Japanese invasion of Manchura in 1931, many member nations felt disappointed at the League’s failure to follow through on the single principle it was built on: collective security.

The Hoare-Laval Pact:

The initial secret pact between the British Foreign Secretary Samuel Hoare and French Prime Minister Pierre Laval was an attempt to end Italy's invasion of Abyssinia. Hoare proposed to cut up Abyssinia into parts and thereby achieve one of Mussolini's goals of making Abyssinia an Italian colony. However, when the pact was leaked, protests in Britain erupted and French political parties also pushed back against the idea of partitioning an independent nation for the gain of Britain and France. Foreign Secretary Hoare and French PM Laval were both fired after the pact was leaked.

Guiding Questions

- What were some other ways the League could have responded?
- Did closing the Suez Canal pose significant damage to Britain substantial enough to justify them not closing it and thus not force Italy to withdraw its troops?
- Why did the notion of collective security difficult to apply in the Italian invasion of Abyssinia?
- Which country was most responsible for the League's failure to respond?
- What were the short term and long term implications of the League's failure to respond to the crisis?
- Why did Italy invade Abyssinia? As revenge for the Battle of Adowa in 1896? As a distraction from domestic issues? For Mussolini to consolidate power? Did Mussolini just want an African colony like Britain and France? For natural resources?

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