

Paper 2, Option 2G.1: The rise and fall of fascism in Italy, c1911–46

Overview

This option comprises a study in depth of the turbulent years in Italy that saw the collapse of the liberal state, the creation of a fascist dictatorship and a return to democracy in the aftermath of the Second World War.

Students will gain an in-depth understanding of the extent and nature of the profound political, economic and social changes experienced by the Italian people in the years c1911–1946 and how the failure to create a stable, democratic Italian state in the early twentieth century led to the rise of a new political ideology and a personal dictatorship.

Key topics	Content
1 The liberal state, c1911–18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Italy in the early twentieth century: the political system; economic and social problems; the north-south divide; Italy as a 'great power'. Giolitti's government in 1911: the influence of Giolitti; relations with socialists, the Catholic Church and nationalists; foreign policy. Growing instability, 1912–14: impact of invasion of Libya; impact of the franchise extension of 1912; growth of nationalism and socialism; resignation of Giolitti; the declaration of neutrality 1914. Impact of the First World War: intervention crisis; military stalemate, 1915–16; defeat at Caporetto; socialist responses to war; the war economy and cost of war; the significance of victory.
2 The rise of Mussolini and the creation of a fascist dictatorship, 1919–26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges to the Liberal State: 'mutilated victory'; occupation of Fiume; post-war economic crisis; social discontent; political reforms; growth of a Socialist Party and Catholic Party; result and impact of elections 1919. Mussolini and the development of fascism, 1919–22: foundation of <i>Fasci di Combattimento</i> and party programme; <i>squadristo</i> and the move to the right; political legitimacy, the PNF and the 'New Programme'; nature and extent of fascist support. Mussolini gains power, 1920–22: taking advantage of political unrest; establishing a dual policy; the March on Rome and its significance; the role of Victor Emmanuel III; Mussolini's appointment as prime minister. The creation of a fascist dictatorship, 1922–26: parliamentary compromise and coercion; controlling the PNF; the Acerbo Law and the Matteotti crisis; repression in 1925 and constitutional amendments, 1925–26.

Key topics	Content
3 The fascist state, 1925–40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent and control: indoctrination of education and youth; <i>Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro</i>; press control and censorship; propaganda; the cult of <i>il Duce</i>; the influence of fascist culture; repression and terror; anti-semitic decrees. • Relationship with political and economic interests: monarchy and conservative elites; central and local government; PNF and Nationalists; economic interest groups. • Economic policies: early policies and the shift towards fascist economics; the Corporate State; response to the Depression; autarky, the 'battle for births' and the 'battle for grain'; agricultural policies; successes and failures. • Relationship with the Catholic Church: the move away from anticlerical views; Pope Pius IX; the impact of the Lateran Pacts; church support for the regime; church-state tensions in the 1930s.
4 Challenges to, and the fall of, the fascist state, c1935–46	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Italy's international standing in 1935: Mussolini's foreign policy aims; the impact of foreign policy success and failure before 1934; relations with Britain, France and Germany; the Stresa Front 1935. • Foreign policy, 1935–40: invasion of Abyssinia and its consequences; intervention in the Spanish Civil War and its consequences; diplomatic breakdown of Stresa Front and the move towards Germany; domestic tensions; Pact of Steel; Italian neutrality, 1939–40. • Impact of the Second World War, 1940–43: failures in France, North Africa, the Mediterranean; disaster in Greece; war economy and military weaknesses; political tensions 1943; Allied invasion of Sicily; Mussolini deposed. • Democracy restored, 1943–46: the Allied invasion, the Republic of Saló and the government in the south; German surrender and Mussolini's death; the outcomes of the referendum and elections 1946.