

a) Italy (the Ethiopia affair)

The sanctions automatically imposed by the League of Nations against Italy following Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in October 1935 met with little success because of limited support. Some 50 nations did apply the sanctions, but the US was not a member of the League of Nations at the time and Great Britain and France, worried about Germany, were inclined to appease Italy. The speed with which the invasion of Ethiopia was completed led the League of Nations to lift the sanctions in May 1936, as they were not serving any useful purpose.

The US, Germany and Switzerland, three of Italy's major trading partners, remained neutral during the conflict, undermining the efforts of the other members of the League and allowing Italy to pursue its war effort without experiencing too many shortages on account of the sanctions. Italy did suffer in some respects, however, notably in its export trade, losing a significant segment of its foreign markets after three or four months. Italy's introduction of exchange controls and nationalization of banks and some sectors of industry in 1936 bear witness to the impact of the sanctions; these moves did however enable the Italian government to successfully pursue its war effort. As *The Economist* had anticipated, the sanctions were "highly inconvenient but not crippling." Two factors working against the success of sanctions were the lack of consensus on the appropriateness of collective sanctions to oppose the act of aggression and the lack of consistency in the objectives, which were never clearly defined or perceived by the sanctioning countries. Moreover, the popularity of Mussolini's aggression against Ethiopia in Italy strengthened his ability to withstand the sanctions; the Italian public paid little heed to the objections of the sanctioners, whose message was unclear and unconvincing.

b) COCOM

In the post-war years, Communist regimes were installed throughout eastern Europe. The West, which already had differences of opinion with the Soviet Union during the war concerning both the end and the means, adopted the policy of "containment" to restrain Communist expansion and limit the strength of the emerging Soviet bloc. One of the non-military means employed for this purpose was the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Strategic Export Controls (COCOM),<sup>14</sup> which was set up in 1949 and grouped on a voluntary basis the NATO countries (except Iceland) plus Japan and Australia. COCOM aims to

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<sup>14</sup> COCOM differs from the other cases of sanctions in that it is also a preventive and defensive measure and was not introduced to counteract a direct or immediate threat.