



International Boundary Study

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Ethiopia – Somalia Boundary

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INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY STUDY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
I. Boundary Brief.....	2
II. Historical Background.....	2
III. Alignment	6
Documentation	9

ETHIOPIA – SOMALIA BOUNDARY

I. BOUNDARY BRIEF

Approximately 994 miles long, the Ethiopia–Somalia boundary consists of three distinct sectors. The thalweg of the Dewa constitutes a 22-mile sector between the Kenya tripoint and the confluence of the Dewa with the Ganale–Dorya at Dolo, from which junction the rivers form the Giuba. Between Dolo and 8° N., 48° E., the second sector is delimited by a provisional administrative line for 509 miles. The final sector, between 8° N., 48° E. and the tripoint with the French Territory of the Afars and Issas at Madaha Djalelo, is 463 miles long and is demarcated by boundary pillars.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Ethiopia–Somalia boundary incorporates what were previously the common boundaries of Ethiopia with both the Trust Territory of Somaliland (formerly Italian Somaliland) and British Somaliland. The protectorate of British Somaliland became independent on June 26, 1960, and five days later joined with the Trust Territory of Somaliland to form the Somali Republic.

The protectorate of British Somaliland was established in 1884 when a number of Anglo–Somali treaties of protection were signed, replacing earlier trade agreements. The next year Italy occupied Mits'iwa (Massaua) and proclaimed a coastal protectorate along the Red Sea southeastward to Aseb.

In 1887, the military forces of Ethiopia and Italy clashed at Dogali, and the following year both states signed the treaty of Wichale (Ucciali). Almost immediately the terms of the treaty were a source of disagreement between the two states. Italy considered Ethiopia to be under its protection and therefore claimed the right to administer Ethiopian foreign policy. The Ethiopian interpretation of the treaty was that the Emperor could, if he so desired, request Italian advice and help in foreign affairs.

Beginning in 1889,¹ through a number of treaties of protection with the Somalis, Italy made direct claims to the coast of Somalia along the Indian Ocean. Likewise, the Italians occupied Asmara and united its Red Sea possessions into the colony of Eritrea in 1890. On March 24, 1891, Italy, acting in the role of protector of Ethiopia in accordance with its interpretation of the treaty of Wichale, reached an agreement with the United Kingdom of British and Italian spheres of influence in eastern Africa. The Anglo–Italian agreement delimited a boundary between their respective spheres inland from the mouth of the Giuba

¹ Also, during 1889 the Imperial British East Africa Company sublet to Italy the ports of the southern Benadir Coast north of the Giuba which it held in lease from the Sultan of Zanzibar. In 1892 the Sultan of Zanzibar ceded the ports of Brava, Merca, Mogadiscio, and Uarsciech (Warsheikh) to Italy for 25 years subject to a fixed annual rent. Italy acquired complete title to the coastal area in 1905 by purchasing all rights from the Sultan of Zanzibar. At this time the name of Italian Somaliland came into official usage.

on the Indian Ocean ultimately to the Blue Nile. A second treaty, signed on April 15, 1891, delimited British and Italian spheres inland from the Red Sea to the boundary of March 24, 1891, on the blue Nile.

On May 5, 1894, again in the role of protector of Ethiopia, Italy signed a treaty with the United Kingdom establishing a boundary between Ethiopia and British Somaliland as follows:

1. The boundary of the spheres of influence of Great Britain and of Italy in the regions of the Gulf of Aden shall be constituted by a line which, starting from Gildessa [Jeldesa] and running toward the 8th degree of north latitude, skirts the north-east frontier of the territories of the Girrhi, Bertiti, and Rer Ali Tribes, leaving to the right the villages of Gildessa, Darmi, Gig-giga [Jijiga], and Milmil. On reaching the 8th degree of north latitude the line follows that parallel as far as its intersection with the 48th degree of longitude east of Greenwich.

In 1896, at Aduwa, a second conflict between the military forces of Ethiopia and Italy obstructed Italian penetration of the Horn once again. Signed on October 26, 1896, the Addis Ababa Treaty of Peace and Friendship annulled the Wichale treaty with its controversial protector clause. The following year, on May 14, 1897, a treaty between Ethiopia and the United Kingdom modified the limits of British Somaliland to exclude most of the Haud² in Ethiopia. Article II of the Anglo–Ethiopian treaty provided that the boundary was to be determined by an exchange of notes between representatives of the two governments; the notes would be included as annexes to the treaty. Annex 3 delimited the protectorate's southern limit, which became eventually the British Somaliland–Ethiopia boundary. Annex 3 also afforded the right of movement of adjacent peoples across the boundary for grazing purposes and is presently in effect as the delimitation of a sector of the Ethiopia–Somalia boundary.

The Addis Ababa treaty of 1896 specified that a boundary was to be negotiated between Ethiopia and the Italian sphere of influence in the eastern Horn. On March 28, 1897, the Italian Government dispatched to Addis Ababa Major Nerazzini, who had reached terms with Emperor Menelik in the peace treaty of 1896. Emperor Menelik, on June 24, 1897, drew a line on a map to indicate the boundary acceptable to Ethiopia. Major Nerazzini submitted the copy for approval to the Italian Government upon his return.

On September 3, 1897, the Italian Government sent a telegram to Ethiopia accepting the proposed line. However, official texts of the delimitation were never exchanged, and copies of the map cannot be found.

² Literally, the Haud means "the south," so-called by the northern Somalis. It is an area of wet-season grazing and consists of a rolling grass plain alternating with stretches of semi-desert, especially in the southeast.

It soon became apparent that different terms of reference had been used by Ethiopia and Italy in determining the boundary and that a large triangular area broadening northeastward was of questionable sovereignty. In effect, the boundary claimed by Ethiopia terminated at 8° N. latitude and 48° E. longitude, while that claimed by Italy reached a tripoint with British Somaliland farther inland at 8° N. latitude and 47° E. longitude.

An Anglo–Ethiopian agreement of December 6, 1907, established a boundary between Kenya (British East African Protectorate) and Ethiopia which placed the Italian Somaliland tripoint at the confluence of the Dewa (Daua Parma, Daua) and the Ganale–Darya, more than 40 miles northwest of Lugh Ganana.

On May 16, 1908, a convention between Ethiopia and Italy created a new Ethiopia–Italian Somaliland boundary between Dolo and the Uebi Scebeli (Wabi–Shabale).

Art. I – The line of frontier between the Italian possessions of Somalia and the provinces of the Ethiopian Empire starts from Dolo, at the confluence of the Daua and the Ganale proceeds eastward by the sources of the Maidaba, and continues as far as the Uebi Scebeli, following the territorial boundaries between the tribes of Rahanuin [Rahanwein], which remain dependent on Italy, and all the tribes to its north, which remain dependent on Abyssinia.

Art. II – The frontier on the Uebi Scebeli shall be the point where the boundary between the territory of the Baddi–Addi tribe, which remains dependent on Italy, and the territory of the tribes above the Baddi–Addi, which remain dependent on Abyssinia, touches the river.

Art. III – The tribes on the left of the Juba, that of Rabanuin, and those on the Uebi Scebeli below the frontier point shall be dependent on Italy. The tribes of Digodia, of Afgab, of Djedjedi, and all the others to the north of the frontier-line shall be dependent on Abyssinia.

Art. IV – From the Uebi Scebeli the frontier proceeds in a north-easterly direction, following the line accepted by the Italian Government in 1897; all the territory belonging to the tribes toward the coast shall remain dependent on Italy; all the territory of Ogaden³ and all that of the tribes toward the Ogaden, shall remain dependent on Abyssinia.

By the convention of May 16, 1908, Italy gained substantial territory, including the post of Lugh Ganana. Article IV of the convention delimited the boundary northeast of the Uebi Scebeli to the British Somaliland tripoint as that accepted by the Italian Government in 1897. However, the article did not clarify the situation relative to the divergence in the

³ Traditionally the Ogaden was located in the approximate area of southeastern Ethiopia, bounded on the north by British Somaliland and on the east by Italian Somaliland.

northern sector of the boundary between the Ethiopian and Italian interpretations of the Menelik–Nerazzini boundary of 1897. In 1910 an Ethiopian–Italian boundary commission reached agreement on about 80 miles of the boundary, which was demarcated by pillars between Dolo and Iet.

In accordance with the Anglo–Italian treaty of July 15, 1924, Italian Somaliland was expanded southward through the cession of Kenyan territory west of the Giuba, commonly called Jubaland or Trans–Juba, by the United Kingdom to Italy. During 1929–30 the boundary between British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland was demarcated by pillars, and the work included the line between 8° N., 47° E. and 8° N., 48° E.

From 1931 to 1934 an Anglo–Ethiopian commission demarcated the British Somaliland–Ethiopia boundary. The Ethiopian Government agreed that the demarcation need be made only west of 8° N., 47° E. but reserved its full rights in the area up to 8° N., 48° E. Following the Ethiopian–Italian war in 1935–36, Italian Somaliland (then known as the Italian East African province of Somalia) was enlarged by the addition of the Ogaden and the upper parts of the Giuba and Uebi Scebeli drainage areas.

For a short period at the beginning of World War II British Somaliland was under Italian administration. In 1941 British administration was reestablished in British Somaliland and extended to Italian Somaliland and the Haud and Ogaden in Ethiopia. The Ogaden was administered from Mogadiscio as part of Italian Somaliland, and the Haud was governed by a British Senior Civil Affairs officer from the Ethiopian administrative center of Jijiga.

The British withdrew from the major part of the Ogaden in 1948, and an Anglo–Ethiopian protocol of 1948 provided for a provisional boundary "as being without prejudice to the international frontier between Ethiopia and former Italian Somaliland." A minor unilateral adjustment of the 1948-provisional boundary was made by the United Kingdom prior to its withdrawal from Somalia in 1950, at which time the territory became a United Nations trusteeship administered by Italy. Both Ethiopia and Italy expressed reservations about the alignment of the provisional administrative line before its implementation.

On November 29, 1954, an Anglo–Ethiopian agreement provided for the withdrawal of British authority from the Haud but reiterated the right of British-protected Somalis to graze and water livestock in the area.

The UN trusteeship agreement for Somalia stipulated that the boundaries with Ethiopia "shall be those fixed by international agreements and, insofar as they are not already delimited, shall be delimited in accordance with a procedure approved by the General Assembly." Negotiations between them began in 1955, and Ethiopia and Italy agreed that the 1908 boundary convention should be the criterion for the delimitation of the boundary.

In December 1957 Ethiopia and Italy reported to the UN General Assembly that direct negotiations were not successful, a failure which was due in large part to lack of agreement on the interpretation of the boundaries of 1897 and 1908. The Italian Government refused to accept an Ethiopian compromise on the provisional administrative line, and an arbitration tribunal of three jurists was appointed in 1958.

The General Assembly then asked the King of Norway to nominate an adviser to assist in resolving the tribunal's terms of reference. Trygve Lie, the former UN Secretary-General, was appointed in August 1959, but he failed to obtain an agreement. Although no additional progress toward a settlement was reached prior to the independence of Somalia, both Ethiopian and Somali representatives agreed in December 1959 that the provisional administrative line should remain in force until a final settlement was reached.

At the 14th and last session of the UN General Assembly before Somalia's independence, a resolution regarding the Ethiopia–Somalia boundary failed to pass because the Fourth Committee was unable to make a recommendation. Following independence on July 1, 1960, Somalia withheld recognition of the Anglo–Ethiopian delimitation of 1897 and afforded only de facto recognition to all boundaries with Ethiopia.

III. ALIGNMENT

The boundary sector constituted by the Dewa thalweg between the Kenya tripoint and the confluence of the Dewa and Ganale–Dorya was previously part of the Ethiopia–Kenya boundary. The Anglo–Ethiopian agreement of December 6, 1907, states that the boundary with the River Ganale follows the thalweg of the River Dawa to Ursulli [Malka Murri]. With the cession by the United Kingdom of Kenyan territory (Jubaland) west of the Guiba to Italy in 1925 and its ultimate incorporation into Italian Somaliland, the Dewa thalweg sector became part of the Ethiopia–Italian Somaliland boundary.

The exact location of the Kenya tripoint with the Ethiopia–Italian Somaliland boundary was determined by an exchange of notes on November 22, 1933, between Italy and the United Kingdom relative to the alignment of the Italian Somaliland–Kenya boundary:⁴

Starting in the north from the Abyssinian frontier at a point [Ethiopia tripoint] in the "thalweg" of the Uebi Dawa [Dewa] about 450 metres upstream from Malka Rie, the boundary passes, in a south-westerly direction, in a straight line through the point where the south bank of the Uebi Dawa is intersected by the meridian of longitude 41°54'36.43" east of Greenwich to a point in the pool of Damasa so

⁴ The Ethiopia–Kenya–Somalia tripoint was described in Schedule I of the Ethiopia–Kenyan treaty of June 9, 1970: "The boundary between Ethiopia and Kenya starts from a point on the lowest point of the course of the Dawa River opposite Boundary Pillar No. 1 of the boundary between Kenya and Somalia, situated on the right bank of the river about 650 metres north-west of the Police Post on the Mandera–Dolo Gedo road of the Malka Rie area."

chosen as to afford equal watering facilities to both parties in the deepest portion of the pool without transgression of the frontier;

The sector between the confluence of the Dewa and Ganale–Dorya at Dolo and 8° N., 48° E. is delimited by the provisional administrative line as proposed in a note attached to a British letter forwarded to the United Nations Trusteeship Council in 1950.⁵

It is defined as follows: From the intersection of 48 degrees east longitude and 8 degrees north latitude, thence south-west to a point six kilometres to the south-east of Gherou, thence 3 kilometres to the south of Balli Abdi Ali, thence between Dabarueine and Gheligir, thence to Ferfer leaving Ferfer to the Ethiopian Administration, thence to a locality designated as Casiagur, thence approximately due west between El Garasle and Dudum Har, thence between El Durrei and El Meghet to Bag Berde [Bug Berde], leaving Bag Berde to the Ethiopian Administration, thence in a west-south-west direction to south of El Candar to Bur Nohle, through Bur Udalei, thence to the south of Dal Dal Gaandelei [Dal Dal], to Uascen, thence to let, leaving let to the Italian Administration, thence in a south-south-west direction between Abdi Nur and El Garap, thence between Ber Curale and Sanca Bissach, to a point 3 kilometres north of Laaz Chi Rahaanuin [Laazchi Rahaman], thence between Did Anan and El Did Anan, thence 3 kilometres to the north of Ega Dale, and thence to Dolo. At Dolo, the line follows the already demarcated frontier dividing the locality between Ethiopia and Somaliland.

For purposes of cartographic presentation, the sector between Dolo and 8° N., 48° E. should be shown by a symbol other than that of an international boundary. Also, it should be labeled a "provisional administrative line."

The sector between 8° N., and 48° E. and the tripoint with the French Territory of Afars and Issas at Madaha Djalelo was formerly the British Somaliland–Ethiopia boundary. From Madaha Djalelo to 8° N., 47° E., the boundary was delimited by a note of June 4, 1897, attached as Annex 3 to an Anglo–Ethiopian treaty of May 14, 1897. The boundary between 8° N., 47° E., and 8° N., 48° E. also was agreed upon in Annex 3 by referencing an earlier treaty concluded between Italy and the United Kingdom relative to the boundaries of British Somaliland.

Annex 3 of the treaty of May 14, 1897, affords the delimitation of the boundary as follows:

[from Madaha Djalelo], through Abbassouen till it reaches the hill of Somadou. From this point on the road the line is traced by the Saw mountains [Marmer Gedle] and the hill of Equ [Egi] to Moga Medir; from Moga Medir it is traced by

⁵ The provisional administrative line is the boundary shown on United Kingdom maps of 1946: East Africa; scale 1:500,000; Geographical Section, General Staff (GSGS) No. 4355, War Office; sheets NB 38/4 (Dolo, 3rd edition), NB 38/5 (Belet Uen, 3rd edition), and NB 38/3 (Rocca Littorio, 2nd edition). Important locations along the provisional administrative line are also shown on the United Nations map of November 1955: Frontier Area between Ethiopia and Trust Territory of Somaliland, scale 1:3,250,000, No. 740.

Eylinta Kaddo to Arran Arrke [Aran Arrei], near the intersection of latitude 44° east of Greenwich with longitude 9° north. From this point a straight line is drawn to the intersection of 47° east of Greenwich with 8° north. From here the line will follow the frontier laid down in the Anglo–Italian Protocol of the 5th May, 1894...

The treaty of May 5, 1894, stated that "on reaching the 8th degree of north latitude the line follows that parallel as far as its intersection with the 48th degree of longitude east of Greenwich." Thus from the 47th meridian the British Somaliland–Ethiopia boundary continued eastward along the 8th parallel to the 48th meridian.

The demarcation of the British Somaliland–Ethiopia boundary by pillars⁶ was completed by an Anglo–Ethiopian commission working westward from 8° N., 47° E. in 1934. Previously, a joint Anglo–Italian boundary commission in 1929–30 had demarcated the boundary between British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland from the Gulf of Aden inland to 8° N., 48° E., and then extended the demarcation along the 8th parallel to the 47th meridian.

The Anglo–Italian boundary pillars were numbered starting from the Gulf of Aden to B.P. 55 at 8° N., 48° E. and B.P. 71 at 8° N., 47° E. The Anglo–Ethiopian commission continued the numbering system from B.P. 72 through B.P. 189 adjacent to the French Somaliland (French Territory of the Afars and Issas) tripoint. Because Aran Arrei of the treaty was an indeterminate point, it was agreed by the commission that the boundary should follow a straight line from B.P. 71 to 9° N., 44° E. (B.P. 107). It was then agreed also that the boundary would continue in a straight line northwest to the Tug Wajale (B.P. 113), follow the bed of the Tug Wajale to the road (B.P. 130) between Tug Wajale Post and Jijiga, and then extend northward by a straight line to Mogo Medir, which was determined to be the rock of Jifu Meider (B.P. 132).

From Jifu Meider to the hill of Bayu Anod the treaty was of no help for demarcation so a straight line was extended northward to the peak of Egi (B.P. 135) and from this point the crest of the main ridge of the Marmar Gedle was utilized. There was no hill of Somadu, and it was decided that a prominent feature was the intention of the treaty makers: the elevation of Beyu Anod (B.P. 173) was chosen.

From Beyu Anod to the French Somaliland tripoint an old caravan road was to be used for the location of the boundary, but a more practical system of following natural features was finally agreed upon. In 1934, during the demarcation of the British Somaliland–Ethiopia boundary, it was agreed by French, British, and Ethiopian officials that Madaha Djalelo was the site of the tripoint with French Somaliland.

⁶ The location and numbering of boundary pillars for the demarcation of the British Somaliland–Ethiopia boundary are shown on United Kingdom maps of 1954: Somaliland: scale 1:250,000; Geographical Section, General Staff (GSGS) No. 3927 (2nd Edition), War Office: sheets from east to west 17 (Domo), 14 (Krit), 13 (Afmer), 8 (Tug Wajale), and (Sa-Wer).

DOCUMENTATION

1. Agreement between the British and French Governments with regard to the Gulf of Tadjourra and the Somali Coast, February 2–8, 1888. Edward Hertslet, *The Map of Africa by Treaty*, 3v. 3d ed. (London: Harrison and Sons, 1909), Vol. 2, pp. 726–728.
2. Protocols between the Governments of Her Britannic Majesty and of His Majesty the King of Italy, for the Demarcation of their respective Spheres of Influence in Eastern Africa, March 24 and April 15, 1891. United Kingdom. *Treaty Series, Italy, No. 1 (1891), C. 6316*.
3. Protocol between Great Britain and Ethiopia respecting the Demarcation of their respective Sphere of Influence in Eastern Africa, May 5, 1894. United Kingdom. *Treaty Series, No. 17, 1894*.
4. Treaty between Great Britain and Ethiopia (Frontiers of British Protectorate of Somali Coast), May 14, 1897. *The Map of Africa by Treaty*, op. cit., pp. 423–430.
5. Agreement between Great Britain and Ethiopia relative to the Frontiers between British East Africa, Uganda and Ethiopia, December 6, 1907. *United Kingdom Treaty Series, No. 27, Cd. 4318* (with map).
6. Convention between Italy and Ethiopia for the settlement of the Frontier between the Italian Possessions of Somali and the Provinces of the Ethiopian Empire, May 16, 1908. *The Map of Africa by Treaty*, op. cit., pp. 1,223–4.
7. Treaty between the United Kingdom and Italy regulating certain Questions concerning the Boundaries of their respective territories in East Africa, July 15, 1924. United Kingdom *Treaty Series, Italy, No. 1 (1924), Cmd. 2194* and *United Treaty Series No. 29 (1925), Cmd. 2427* (each includes a map).
8. Clifford, E. H. M. "the British Somaliland–Ethiopia boundary," *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. LXXXVII, No. 4, April 1936, pp. 289–307.
9. Letter [and note], dated 1 March 1950, received by the President of the Trusteeship Council from the Permanent United Kingdom Representative on the Council. United Nations Trusteeship Council *Official Records, Annex, Vol. I, Fourth year, Sixth Session, Document T/484* (note contains present alignment of provisional administrative line).
10. Agenda item 40: Question of the frontier between the Trust Territory of Somaliland under Italian administration and Ethiopia: reports of the Governments of Ethiopia and

of Italy. United Nations General Assembly *Official Records*, Annexes, Eleventh Session, 1956–7.

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