

Prof. B. Pierrri
History of Italian Foreign Policy

**The Abyssinian War and the Middle Eastern
aftermath**

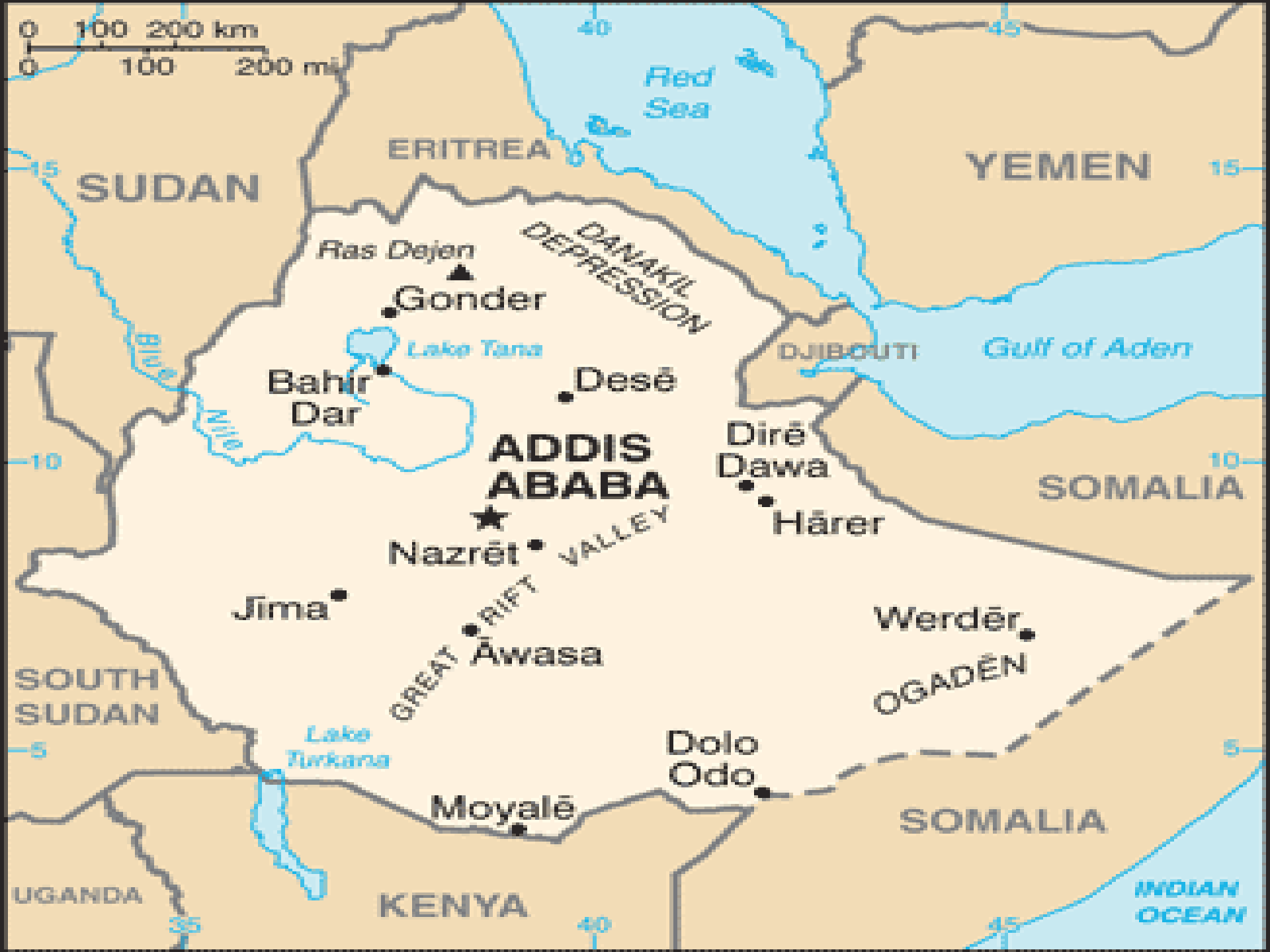
March 15th, 2016



Horn of Africa







MUSSOLINI'S TRIUMPH

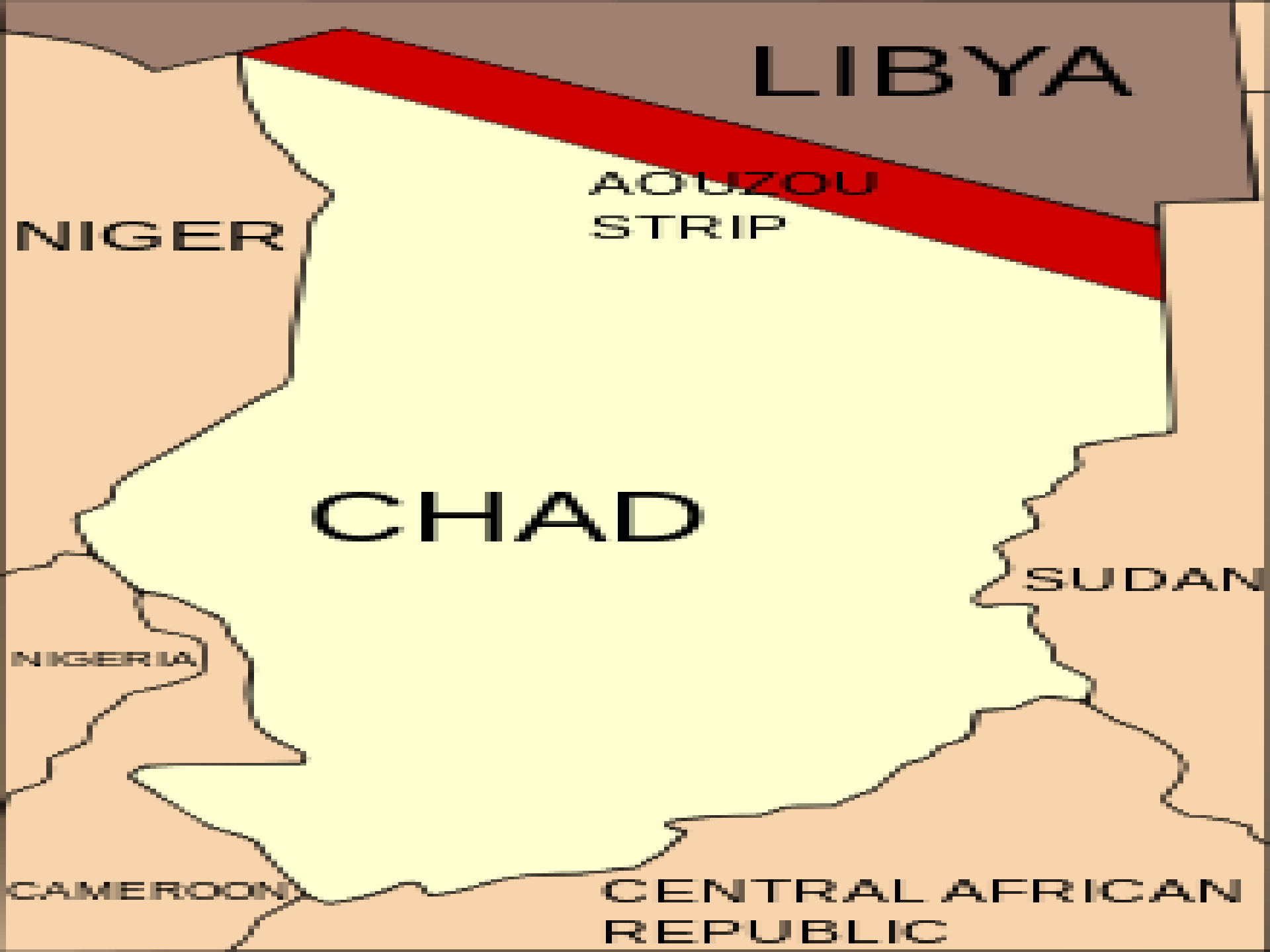


Italian East Africa



Mussolini-Laval Agreements Jan 1935

- **Jan 1935: treaty that defined disputed parts of French Somaliland as part of Eritrea, redefined the official status of Italians in French-held Tunisia, and essentially gave the Italians a free hand in dealing with Ethiopia**
- **Italy was also to receive the Aozuzu Strip, which was to be moved from French-ruled Chad to Libya**
- **In exchange for all these concessions, France hoped for Italian support against German aggression**



LIBYA

AOUZOU
STRIP

NIGER

CHAD

SUDAN

NIGERIA

CAMEROON

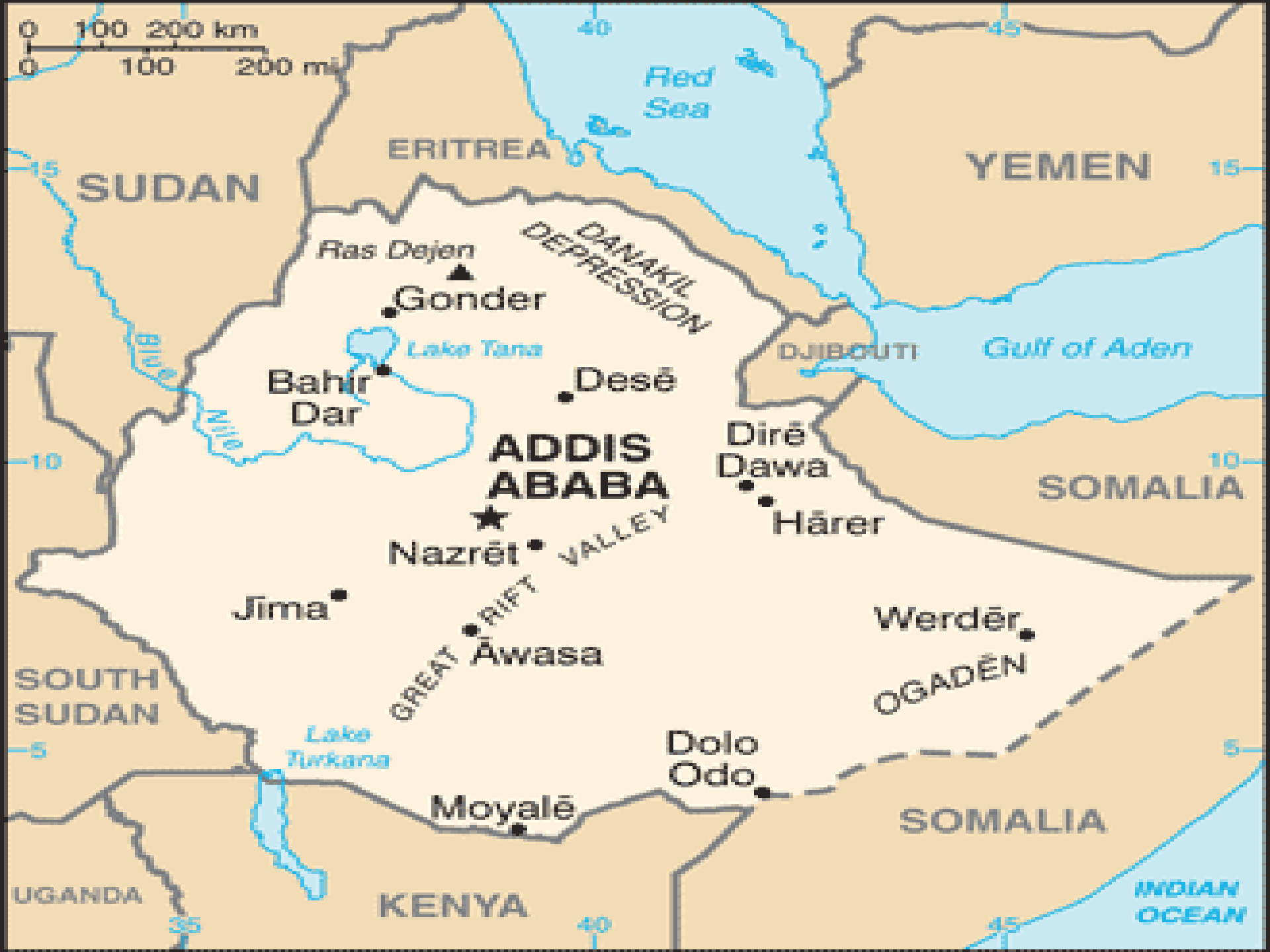
CENTRAL AFRICAN
REPUBLIC

Anti-British line: summer 1935

- **Native Policy: Britain to protect native peoples**
- **London had to control Lake Tsana waters and keep stability among Ethiopian populations and those leaving in border and grazing areas**
- **Another colonial war as a threat to stability of area**
- **French had only economic interests in Horn (Djibuti-Addis Abeba railway)**
- **Italy had to reach agreement with London on grazing and watering rights of Somalis in Ethiopia**

Anglo-Italian rivalry

- Mussolini wanted Britain to give him free hand in conquest of Ethiopia
- London wanted Italy to reach compromise with Ethiopia through diplomacy
- Maffey Report
- A) Question examined only from British point of view
- B) London had interests in Ogaden and Harar on grazing and watering rights, while in North-West Lake Tsana waters were pivotal for Sudan and Egypt
- C) In case of Italian conquest of all Ethiopia, Sudan would have had more than 3,000 km of border with European power claiming economic expansion.
- D) In case of war against Italy, colonial blockade in Horn would have been a serious threat to British strategic positions in Red Sea and Gulf of Aden
- E) It was always possible for Fascist regime to seek more glory in the North
- F) Independent Ethiopia was better for Britain. However, since the risk of war against Italy was very unlikely, and since a frontier with European power was always safer than one with unstable country, for Britain it did not make any difference if Ethiopia was independent or not



British Interests in Suez and Red Sea



British Interests in Suez and Red Sea

- **Suez Canal as a swinging door of Empire**
- **Shortcut to reach colonies in Indian Subcontinent and Australia**
- **Divergence with France, which put pressure on Addis Abeba to give as many concessions to Italy as possible**

Italian Propaganda in Middle East

- **Abyssinia and slavery**
 - **Abyssians as enemies of Egypt and Islam**
 - **Objective was rallying Arabs and Muslims**
 - **Blue Shirts Movement in Egypt got information on history of fascism**
 - **Luce newreels on agricultural developments in Libya**
 - **Radio Bari denounced British imperialism which subjugated about $\frac{3}{4}$ of Muslim world**
 - **Propaganda on Christian-Muslim rivalry in Ethiopia**
 - **Report on Muslims in Ethiopia**
- 1) **Moslems lacked leadership, had low education and low level of religious awareness**
 - 2) **Moslems excluded from public offices due to Christian fanaticism and low education**



Tigray

Afar

Amhara

Benishangul-Gumaz

Dire Dawa

Addis Ababa

Harari

Gambela

Southern Nations,
Nationalities,
and Peoples

Somali

Oromia

Hoare-Laval Pact

- **Anglo-French proposal approved Dec 8**
- A) Recommendation to Emperor to accept some territorial changes in favour of Italy**
- B) Easter Tigray, Dankalia, Ogaden**
- C) French monopoly on railways**
- D) Italian Economic sphere of influence in South (with military presence?)**
- E) Oil embargo against Italy to discuss in League of Nations. Laval sure that Mussolini could wage war on this, thus he suggested further attempts of reconciliation**
- F) In case of war, Laval did not want to accept precise duties towards Britain**

King Edward VIII

- Secret meeting with Italian ambassador
- King contrary to British Govt policies, while admiring Italian colonial enterprise
- War Britain-Italy could provoke deflagration of Europe
- The conquest of Abyssinia cured the continent from "[...] a secular centre of infection [...]" and make it possible an effective cooperation in that big part of Africa between the colonising mission of Italy and Britain".
- He committed himself personally to avoid any war against Italy, with whom cooperation in Mediterranean was pivotal
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- **[1]** Cfr. *L'ambasciatore a Londra, Grandi, al Capo del Governo e Ministro degli Esteri, Mussolini*, 29 aprile 1936, L.P., in DDI, Ottava Serie, Vol. III, pp. 843-856.
- **[2]** Cfr. *L'ambasciatore a Londra, Grandi, al Capo del Governo e Ministro degli Esteri, Mussolini*, 1° maggio 1936, L.P., in DDI, Ottava Serie, Vol. III, pp. 867-870.

Britain and Egypt

- Ethiopian crisis as catalyst for Egyptian independence
- Lampson (British commissioner) said that only positive outcome of Italian invasion of Abyssinia was that population in Egypt would accept some form of British control
- Mussolini denied that Italy posed a threat to Egypt
- Unilateral formal independence to Egypt Feb 28 1922
- Aug 1936 Treaty of Alliance Britain-Egypt
- A) Britain allowed to build military bases in Suez Canal area and station 10,000 soldiers and 400 *Royal Air Force* men
- B) Egypt had to build infrastructures for communications
- C) In case of war, Egypt to put at British disposal all necessary infrastructures for Canal and country defence

Italians in Egypt

- **Mussolini wanted to show that all Italians, both at home and abroad, supported conquest of Ethiopia**
- **Disciplined but enthusiastic manifestations while Italian ships went through Suez Canal**
- **Contacts between Italian Legation and Young Egypt leaders**
- **Italy to back full Egyptian independence in case of Egyptian support to Italian interests in Ethiopia**

Saudi Reactions

- **Officially neutral**
- **No sanctions implemented against Italy: not a member of League of Nations**
- **As warden of holy places, Saudi Arabia obliged to keep friendly relations with all countries with Muslim subjects**
- **Status of Italy as Red Sea power was cause of concern for Ibn Saud**
- **Britain could not grant military support in case of Italian attack against S. Arabia (Rome Agreement 1927)**
- **Ibn Saud suspicious of Italy: treaty of alliance with Iraq: mutual defence in case of attack by third party**

Yemen

- **Imam Yahya (ruler of Yemen) approached by Ethiopians in Spring 1935 to sign treaty of friendship**
- **Treaty with Ethiopia was to have no effects on good relations with Italy, since it only dealt with trade**
- **Mussolini: any occupation of Yemenite territory would provoke a conflict with UK. Better to improve relations with Yemen**
- **Yemen neutral during war, banning arms both to Italy and Ethiopia**
- **Limited assistance to Italian war effort: civilians labourers sent to Eritrea**
- **Britain could not grant military support in case of Italian attack against Yemen (Rome Agreement 1927)**

Palestine

- **Italy tried to persuade Zionist leaders to influence British not to include Palestine in sanctions**
- **Jewish opposition to war might have induced Mussolini to revise attitude towards Jews**
- **No pressure on Palestinian Arabs, probably not able to influence Britain**
- **However, Radio Bari broadcast propaganda to arouse indignation towards Britain, as sanctions harmed Palestine's economy**
- **Ciano appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs June 1936: connections with Zionism gradually severed. Relations with Palestinian Arab leaders began to flourish**
- **Mufti of Jerusalem appealed to Italian Consul General in Jerusalem to supply arms and money with which he could start revolt against British**

Zionist reactions

- **Mainstream Zionism generally critical towards Italy**
- **Weizmann had no hopes of obtaining anything from Italy and openly sided with British**
- **Revisionist Zionists more sympathetic towards Italy: press articles stating that Negus was a tyrant and that victory of Italy was better for white race. Moreover, Jews of Palestine would benefit from Italian threat to British in Suez Canal area - mandatory power could be induced to give Jews a state**

Syria, Lebanon, Iraq

- **Syrian and Lebanese public opinion more open towards Italy**
 - 1) Italian threat quite far away**
 - 2) Benefits from good Italo-French relations**
 - 3) Opposition to war led by Orthodox clergy, anti-colonialist circles and ultra-religious Muslims**
- **Iraq took a strong stand against Italy and sanctions were implemented**
- **AGIP in 1935 had 52% of shares in Mosul Oil Fields, multinational company with substantial concessions in Northern Iraq**
- **In 1936 Italian govt no longer able to maintain financial support of AGIP commitments in Iraq – all shares sold (expansion in Africa more important than independent access to Iraqi oil)**

Red Line Agreement

- **Signed by partners in the Turkish Petroleum Company (TPC) on July 31, 1928**
- **The aim of the agreement was to bind all partners to a "self-denial clause" that prohibited any of its shareholders from independently seeking oil interests in the ex-Ottoman territory**

MIDDLE EAST



Golan Heights is Israeli-occupied Syria.
West Bank and Gaza Strip are Israeli-occupied with current status subject to the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement – permanent status to be determined through further negotiation.
Israel proclaimed Jerusalem as its capital in 1950, but the US, like nearly all other countries, maintains its Embassy in Tel Aviv.



This map is without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area.