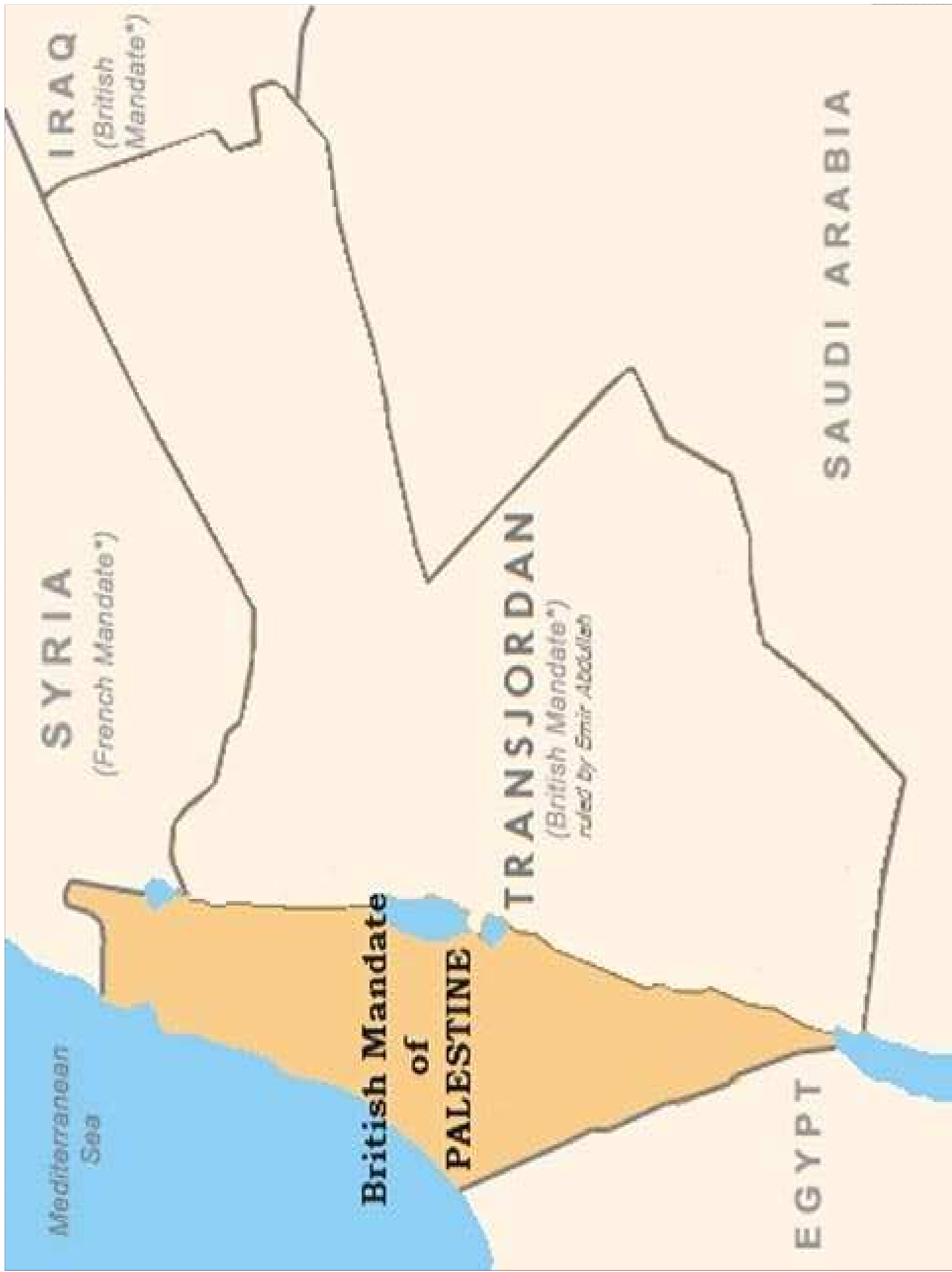


**Prof. B. Pierrri**  
**History of Italian Foreign Policy**

**Palestine Policies**

**March 18th, 2015**







After the Allied victory in World War I, the British and French governed the area and eventually divided it into the nations we see today.

# Tensions in Palestine

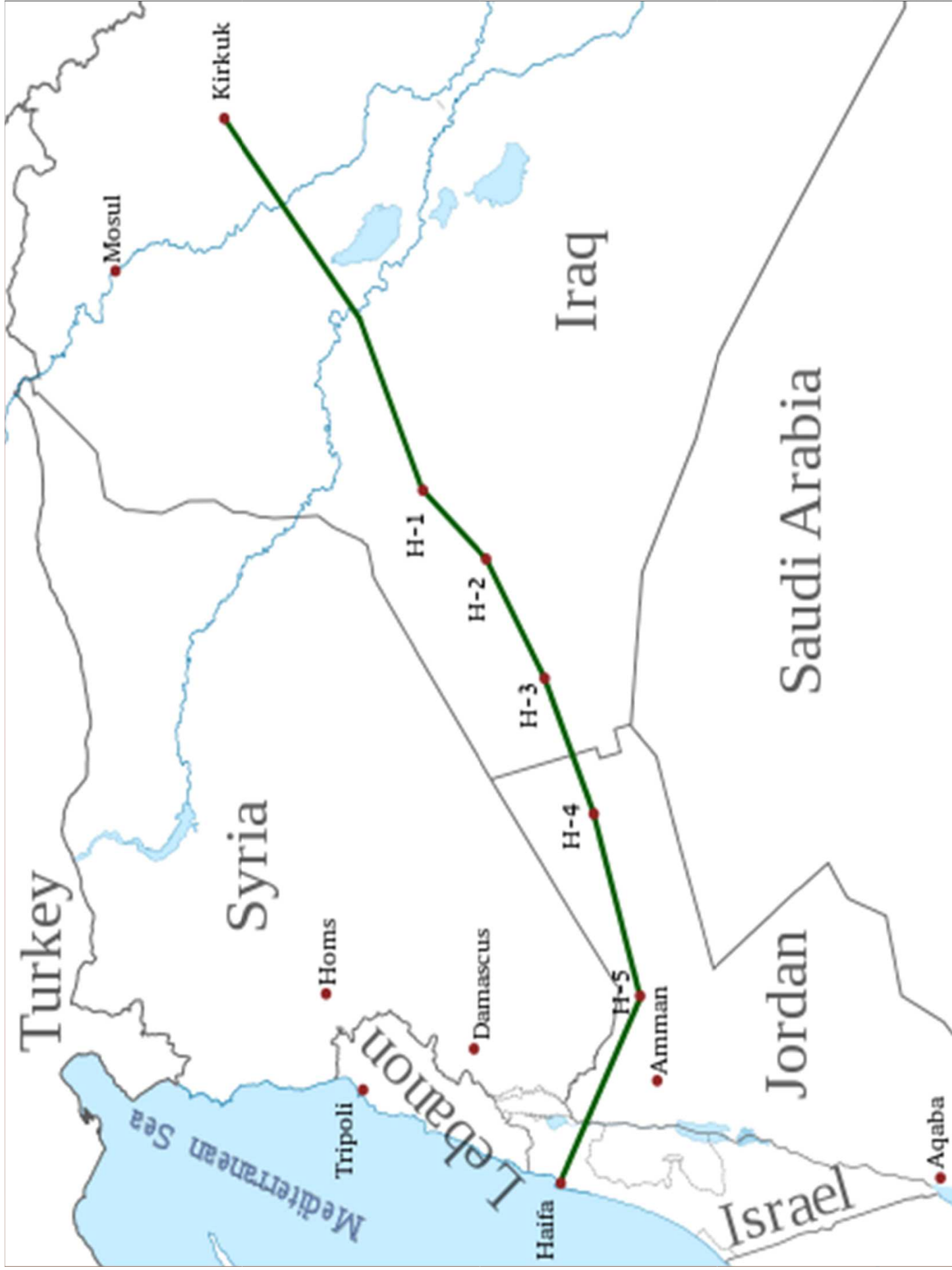
- **Increasing influx of Jews from Europe**
- **Purchase of Arab lands by Jews**
- **Syria and Egypt on the way towards independence**
- **Britain seemed weak (Italian conquest of Ethiopia and unrest in Egypt)**
- **1936: main political parties formed Arab Higher Committee, led by Mufti of Jerusalem**
- **Arab crowds attacked Jews in Jaffa and riots spread across country**
- **The revolt consisted of two phases:**
  - A) First phase directed primarily by urban and elitist Higher Arab Committee and focused mainly on strikes and political protest. By October 1936, this phase had been defeated by the British using a combination of political concessions, international diplomacy and threat of martial law**
  - B) Second phase, begun late in 1937, was a violent and peasant-led resistance movement that increasingly targeted British forces. Rebellion suppressed by British Army and Palestinian Police using repressive measures intended to intimidate Arab population and undermine popular support for revolt**

# Background

- **Discovery in October 1935 at the port of Jaffa of a large arms shipment destined for the Haganah, sparking Arab fears of a Jewish military takeover**
- **Jewish immigration peaked in 1935**
- **Between 1931 and 1936 Jewish population more than doubled from 175,000 to 370,000, increasing share from 17 to 27 per cent**
- **Palestine's peasants comprised over two-thirds of the Arab population and from the 1920s onwards they were pushed into urban environments where they often encountered only poverty**
- **World War I left Palestine, especially countryside, deeply impoverished**
- **High taxes on farming and during 1920s and 1930s this, together with a fall in prices, cheap imports, natural disasters, contributed to increasing indebtedness of fellahin**
- **Transfer of land from Arabs to Jewish settlement agencies increased the number of fellahin evicted**

# **Strategic Importance of Haifa**

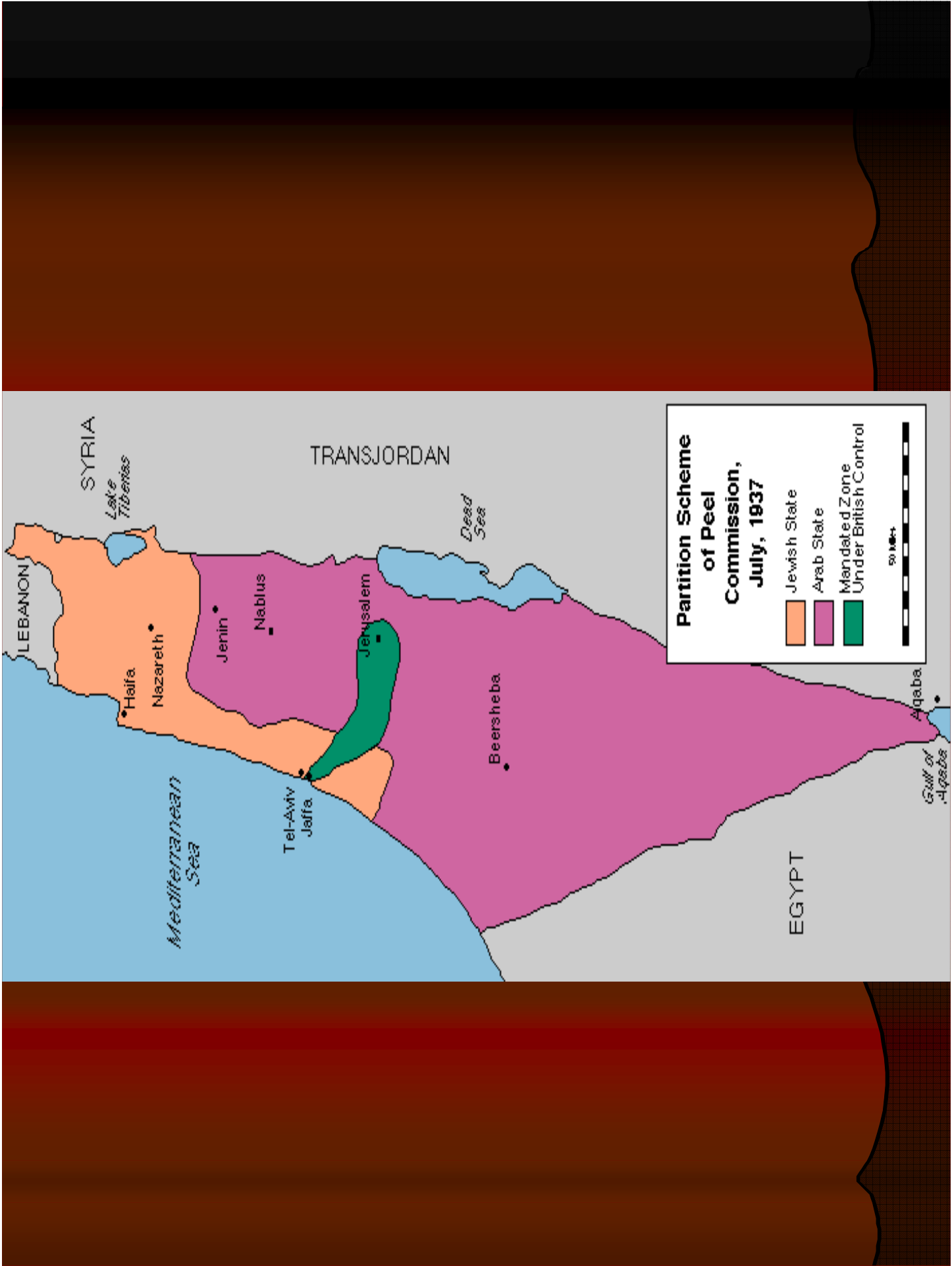
- **Britain had completed modern deep-sea port in Haifa in 1933 and finished laying a pipeline from Iraq in 1935**
- **Refinery for processing oil completed in Dec 1939**
- **These facilities enhanced strategic importance of Palestine and of Haifa in particular**
- **The threat to British control of the region posed by Italy after invasion of Abyssinia and deteriorating situation in Europe probably made British policy makers more willing to make concessions to Arab governments on Palestine issue**





# Peel Commission

- **Mandate had become unworkable and had to be abolished**
- **In favour of partition as only solution to Arab-Jewish "deadlock"**
- **It outlined several points on:**
  - 1) **Treaty system between Arab and Jewish States and the new Mandatory Government**
  - 2) **Mandate for Holy places**
  - 3) **Frontiers**
  - 4) **need for Inter-State Subvention**
  - 5) **need for British Subvention**
  - 6) **tariffs and ports**
  - 7) **Exchange of land and populations**
- **Jewish side was to receive a territorially smaller portion in the mid-west and north, while the Arab state linked with Trans-Jordan was to receive territory in the south and mid-east**
- **The report stated that Jews contributed more per capital to the revenues of Palestine than the Arabs. Partition would mean, on the one hand, that Arab Area would no longer profit from taxable capacity of Jewish Area. On the other hand, Jewish State should pay a subvention to Arab State when Partition came into effect**



# Reactions

- Arab leaders denounced partition and reiterated demands for independence, rejecting principle of awarding any territory to Jews
- Jewish opinion divided
- A) Zionist Congress in Zurich (3-16 August 1937) announced "that the partition plan proposed by the Peel Commission is not to be accepted
- B) The two main Jewish leaders, Weizmann and Ben-Gurion, convinced the Congress to approve the Peel recommendations as a basis for more negotiation

# Arab Claims

- **End to Jewish immigration**
- **Non payment of taxes**
- **Endorsement of general strike**

# Crossing paths

- **Palestinian Arabs' struggle for independence**
- **Italian ambitions and penetration into Middle East**
- **Opportunity for Rome to press London to recognise Empire**
- **Rome recognised Amin al-Husayini, (Grand Mufti of Jerusalem) as one of the most prominent leaders in Arab world**



Bundesarchiv, Bild 101/III-Alber-164-18A  
Foto: Alber, Kurt | 1943 ca.



# Fascist Funding of Arab Revolt

- **Autumn 1936: Italian involvement in Spanish civil war and approachment to Hitler – Ciano directly interested in Palestine**
- **British sources available:**
  - A) Up to Nov 1936 £ 75,000 submitted**
  - B) Part of funds misappropriated by leaders of revolt**
  - C) No evidence that Italians instructed Arabs on how to spend funds**



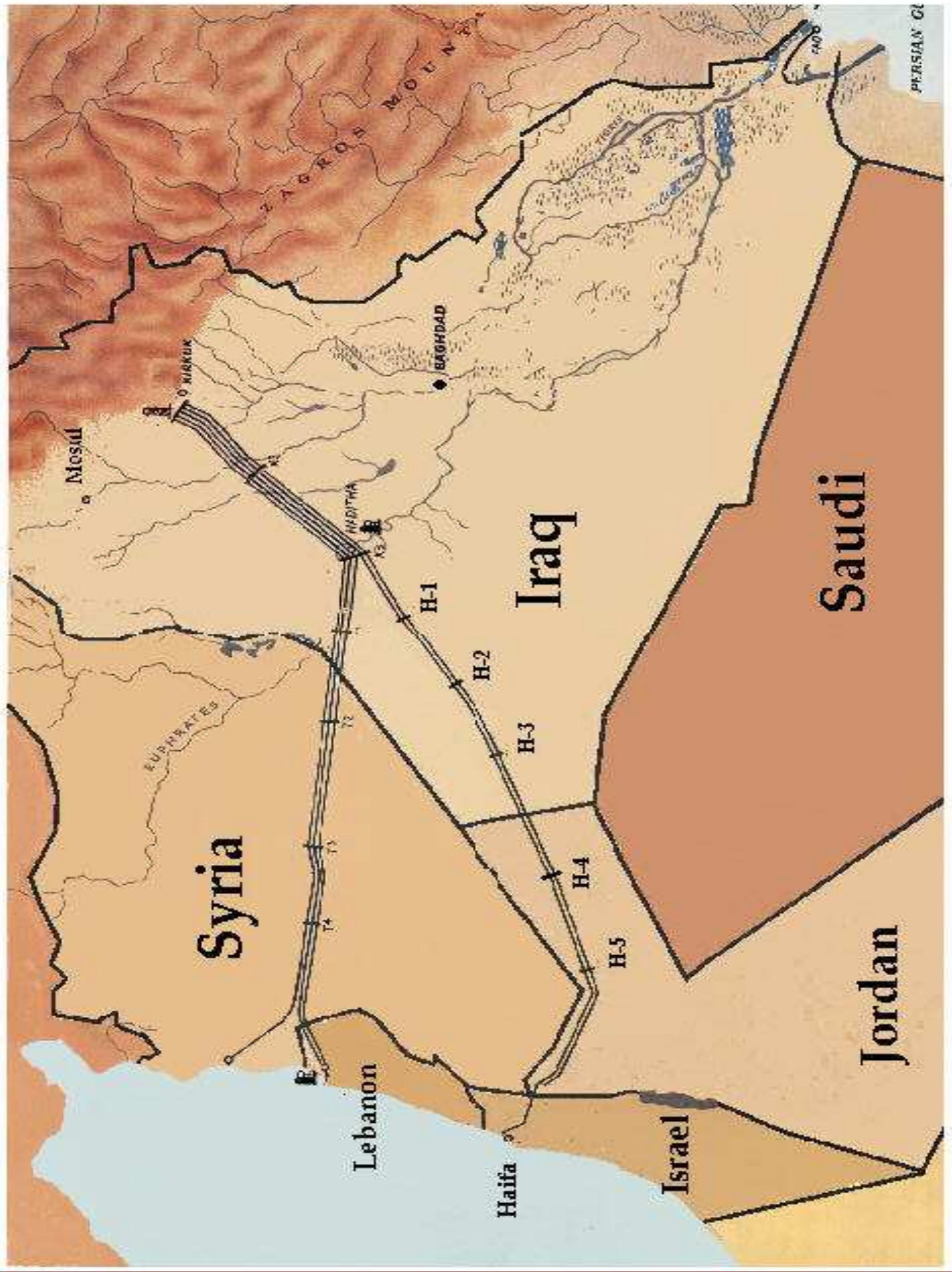
# Arms Supplies

- **In 1936 Mussolini decided to supply arms from Eritrea to Ibn Saud, after official request, in order for him to smuggle a portion of them to Palestine**
- **Ibn Saud was in no hurry to submit such a request. He did not want to arouse British suspicion**
- **Plan put on shelves after Easter Accords**
- **Suspension of Fascist material assistance to Arab Revolt**

# **Iraqi Oil**

- **Regia Marina approached Ciano to get information on pipelines from Iraq to Haifa and Tripoli**
- **Oil pipelines had military importance, since both British and French navy relied on them**
- **In case of war, sabotage could inflict serious damage to enemy**
- **Request to Arabs of involving intelligence to gather information**
- **Documentation does not clarify what happened to the project**





# Ciano-Göring 1939

- **According to Ciano:**
  - A) During Ethiopian war, Greek and other companies offered Italy various products in violation of League of Nations sanctions**
  - B) Italy accepted and orders were sent first to Albania, then to Italy**
  - C) Maybe these links helped create connections then used for transactions towards Palestine**

# **Italian response to Peel Commission**

- **Better for Italy to prevent implementation of partition project**
- **Concern over possibility for Britain to establish permanent military presence in Haifa**
- **Holy Places as Italian national interest**
- **Italian press violently attacked British policy when revolt resumed in Oct 1937**

# **Informazione Diplomatica n. 14**

- **First official anti-Semitist document Feb 16, 1938**
- **"....Fascist Govt intends to supervise activities of Jews recently come to Italy and work in order for the Jewish role in the life of our country not to be disproportionate to individual merits and the numerical importance of their community"**
- **Formal rejection of Peel Report**
- **Italy claimed creation of Jewish State somewhere, but not in Palestine**
- **Mussolini thought of some parts in Italian East Africa**

# **Palestine and Easter Accord**

- **Signed April 16, 1938**
- **UK request: Italy will refrain from any attempt to create difficulty for British policies or administration of Palestine**
- **Italians rejected proposal, as it implied abstention from interfering with partition plan**
- **Partition contrary to mandate Charter and Anglo-Italian Agreement, as well as balance of power in Mediterranean**
- **Italy wanted to safeguard prestige in Arab world**
- **Palestine issued settled in verbal assurance outside accords**
- **Ciano promised British Ambassador that Italy would refrain from creating difficulties in Palestine**
- **Britain to protect legitimate Italian interests in Palestine**
- **Any renewal of Italian assistance to Arab revolt had to wait for evolution of Anglo-Italian relations**



# Arab reactions to Italian policies

- **Pro-Italian manifestations linked to anti-British feeling**
- **On the other hand, some Arabs were sceptical about sincerity of Italy's policy: pretty words, but no real help**
- **Italy perceived as power challenging Britain in Middle East and as such Arabs in Palestine were attracted**
- **Support of Arab revolt was Italy's most explicit attempt to destabilize British position in Middle East prior to WW2**
- **Many others were aware of contradictions between Italian backing of Arab nationalism and Italian imperialism**
- **Mussolini did not mention struggle of Palestinian Arabs in public speeches**
- **Mussolini's main interest was to weaken and manouvre Britain as well as increase Italy's influence**

# Easter Pact and Arabian Peninsula

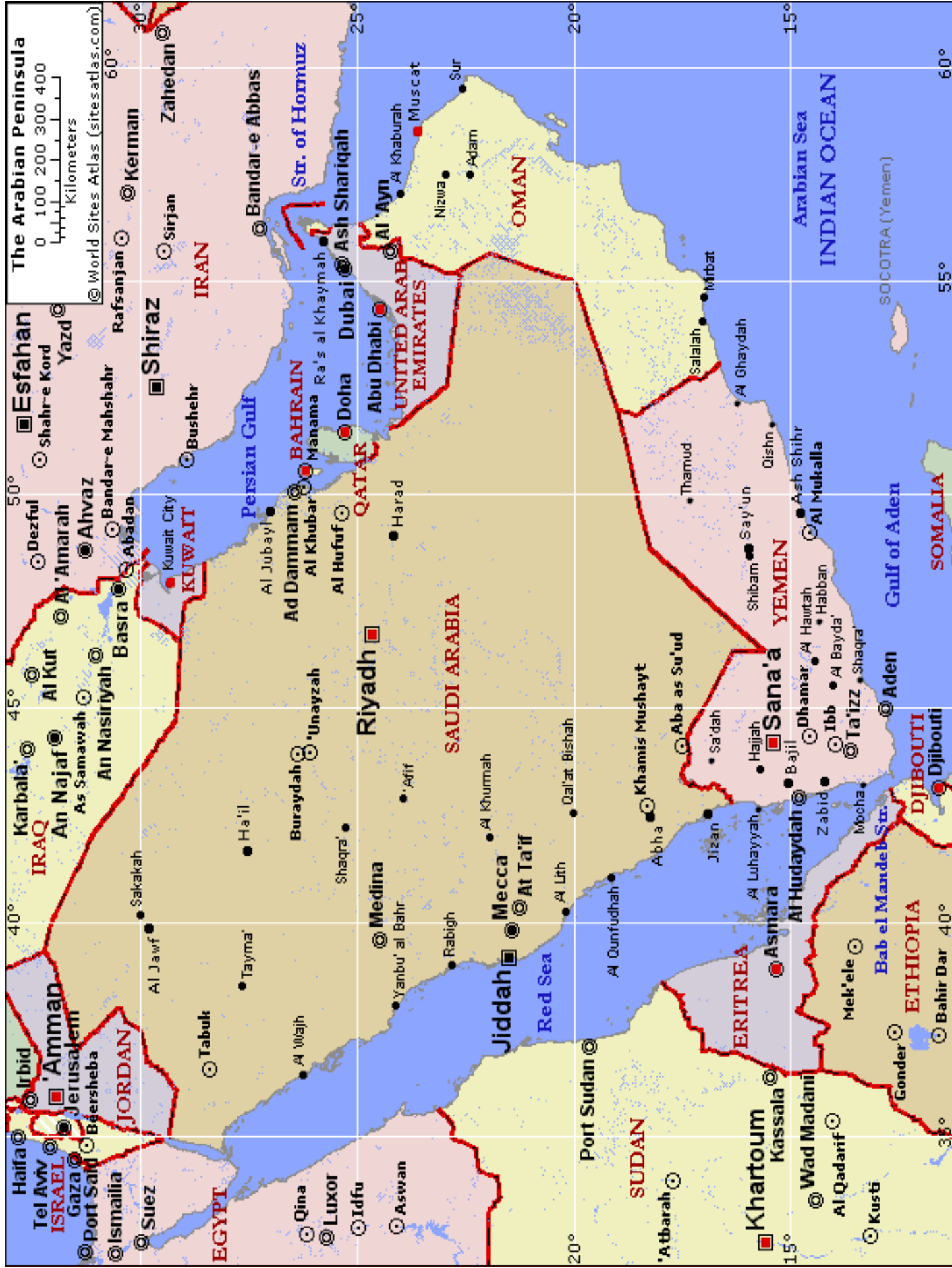
- **Annex 3 of Agreement:**
- A) UK thought old 1927 agreement did not satisfy all British interests, especially in Southern Arabia (Italians unaware of 1914 Anglo-Turkish agreement) - The Anglo-Ottoman Convention of 1913 (29 July 1913) defined the limits of Ottoman jurisdiction in the area of the Persian Gulf with respect to Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and the Shatt al-'Arab. Long-lasting impact of agreement was that of the status of Kuwait; the basis for both formal independence and the frontiers of modern Kuwait were established**
- B) Italy suspicious of British policy towards Aden Protectorate**
- C) Italy obliged to recognise UK control over Southern Arabia**
- D) Britain agreed not to build military installations, except defensive ones**
- E) Britain to maintain autonomy of Arab chiefs under protection**
- F) Independence of Yemen and Saudi Arabia guaranteed**
- G) Control of islands near Yemen by British and marginally by Italians (leaf-by-leaf territorial expansion)**
- H) Clause to be added on free entry, passage and exit through Red Sea turned down by Ciano, who said that such a clause would limit ability to use submarines in Red Sea and Indian Ocean**



BARRAGES

en fonction

en projet



**KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA**

**MUSCAT AND OMAN**

**Mahra**

Qishn

**KALBIYA**

Salyun

**Hou'aiti**

Mukalla

Shihri

**PROTECTORATE OF SOUTH ARABIA**

**YEMEN ARAB REPUBLIC**

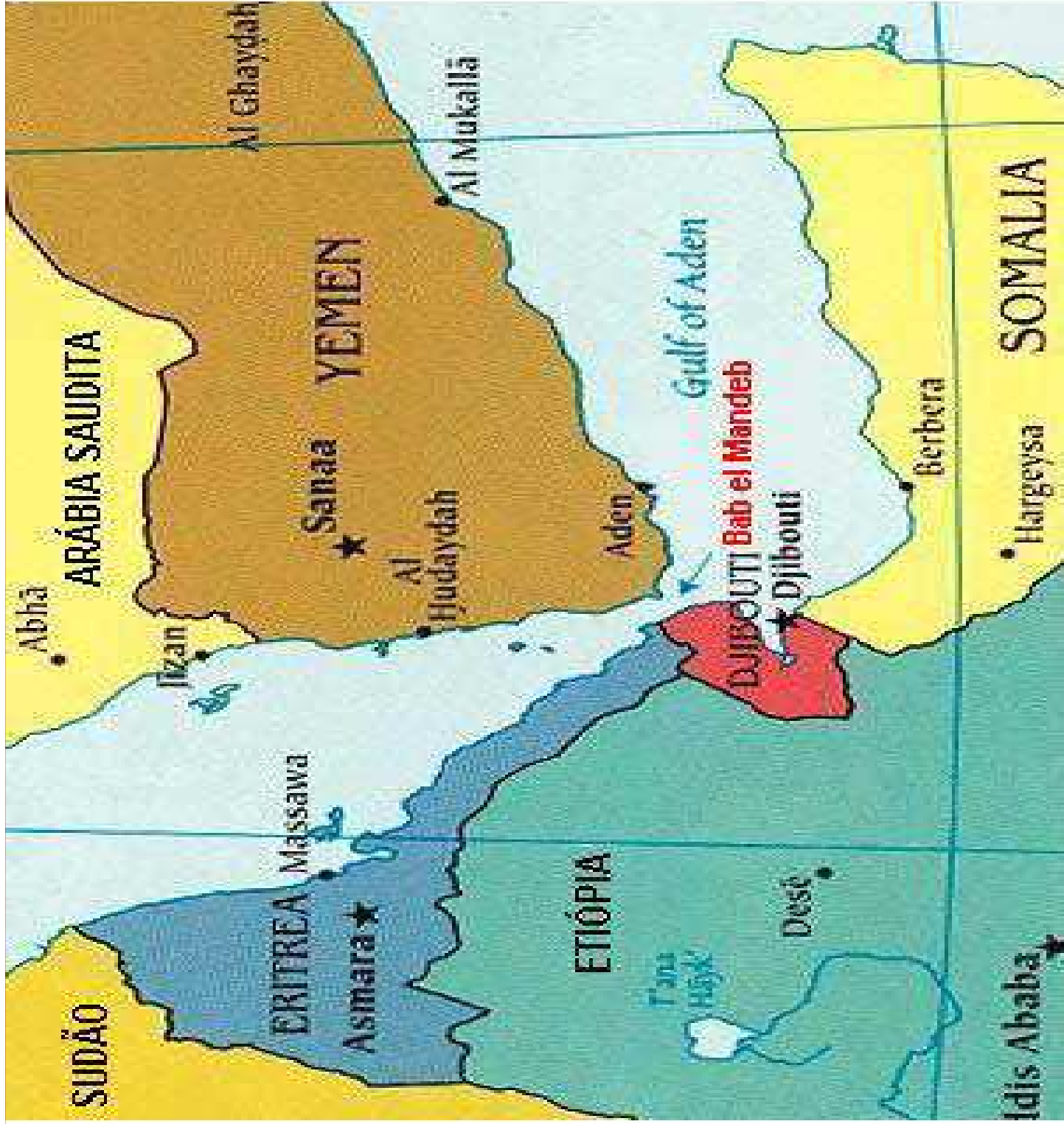
Upper Yafa

Aden

**FEDERATION OF SOUTH ARABIA**

Jan 1965





# **Baghdad Railway 1914 Agreement**

- **In March 1914 German government was obliged to recognize Southern Mesopotamia, as well as central and Southern Persia, as the exclusive field of operations of the Anglo-Persian Company**

