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History of Italian Foreign Policy

**Italian Colonialism: A
Historiographical Analysis, 1860-
1960**

February 18th, 2015

Mal d'Africa

- ▶ **Italy caught her mal d'Africa not so much from her own past, but rather from examples of other powers whose company she sought**
- ▶ **Italy wanted to do what other powers had already done**

France

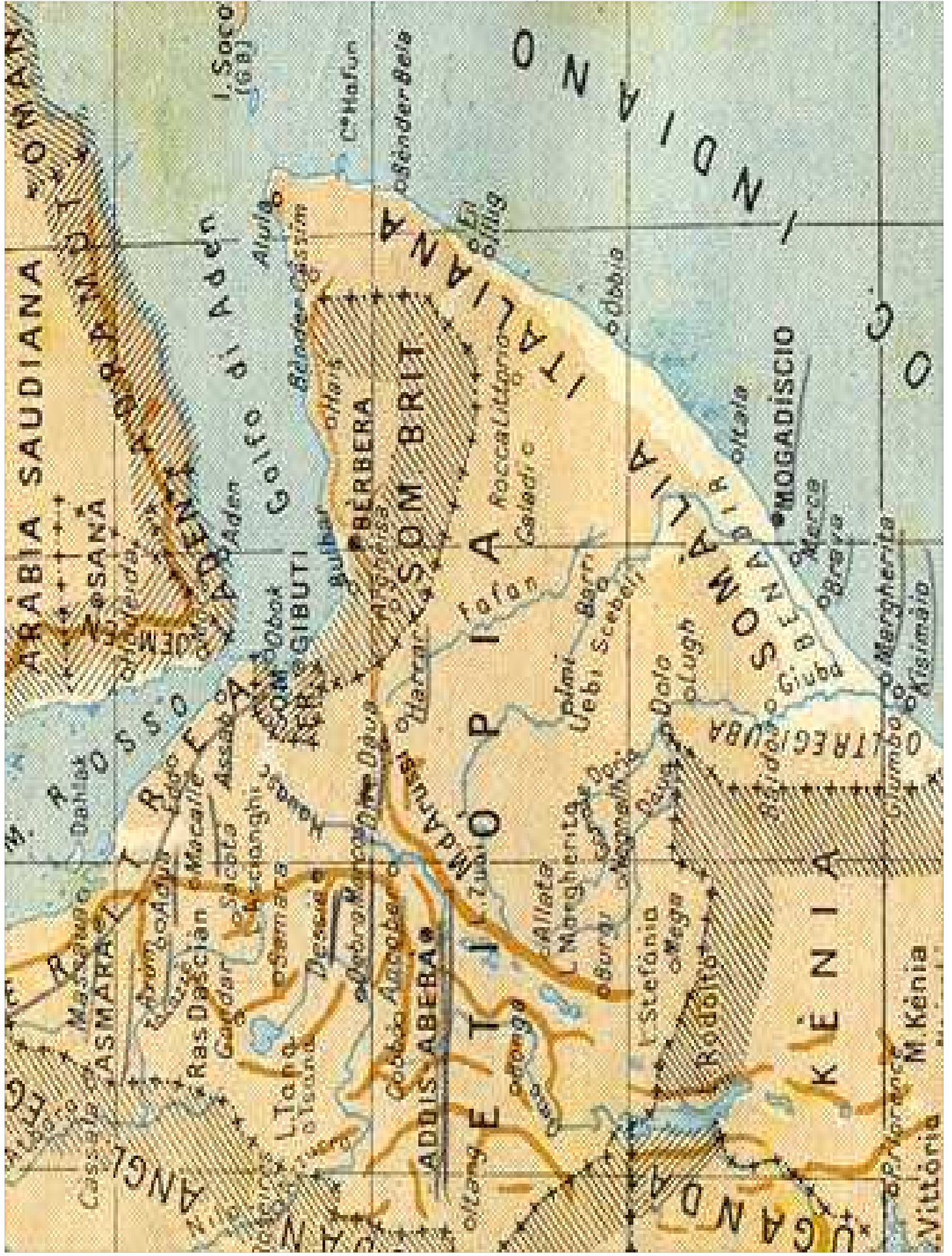
- ▶ **Tunisian Question:**
- ▶ **Treaty undersigned with Bey – Lord of Tunis, formally vassal of Sublime Porte, but practically widely self-governing – in Sept 1868 safeguarded Italians living there; Italy to benefit status of most favoured nation on economic level, as well as France**
- ▶ **In order to divert French attention from revanchism against Prussia, Bismarck persuaded them to concentrate on different aims**
- ▶ **Bismarck felt this would bring a double advantage to Germany**
 - A) **distract France from plans of revanche in Europe**
 - B) **France clashed with Britain and Italy over the African question**
- ▶ **While France remained hostile towards Britain, she could not fight in Europe, and an offended Italy would seek support in Germany and Austria-Hungary**
- ▶ **Tunisia became French protectorate (1881) with great Italian displeasure, also worried about threat of invasion**
- ▶ **This ended up to favour Austrian and German interests**
- ▶ **Italian irredentism moved to the background**

Italian Claims

- ▶ Taking advantage of France's defeat in the war against Prussia, Italy attempted to impose an agreement on Tunisia, which envisaged special privileges for the Italian residents
- ▶ The Bey decided to resist. The Italians then began to prepare a naval expedition against Tunisia and only a joint British, French and Turkish demarche forced them temporarily to relinquish their plans.
- ▶ French investors seized lands and concessions. They obtained concessions for the construction of railways, for lead extraction, for the construction of a port in Tunis.
- ▶ French capitalists became more and more persistent in demanding Tunisia's complete conversion from a semi-colony into a French colony
- ▶ Tunisia's annexation was raised at the Berlin Congress in 1878. France agreed to recognise the British and Austrian conquests (Cyprus and Bosnia-Herzegovina), and also Russia's expansion in the Balkans, under the condition that she be given the appropriate compensation
- ▶ Britain had no special interests in Tunisia. At the time, Britain was preparing to take over Egypt and had no objections to giving up Tunisia to pay for this acquisition and for Cyprus
- ▶ Large Italian community in Tunisia: still in 1936 94,000 Italians and 108,000 French

Early colonial policy

- ▶ **Italy aimed at establishing hegemony on Tunisia**
- ▶ **1881 French initiative caused a big change in Italian foreign policy**
- ▶ **Italian colonialism started by gaining Assab and Massawa on Red Sea (1882-1885)**
- ▶ **Some Italian entrepreneurs already working there**
- ▶ **Unlike European colonial powers, in Italy the State had to encourage capitalists to invest in colonies or areas of influence**

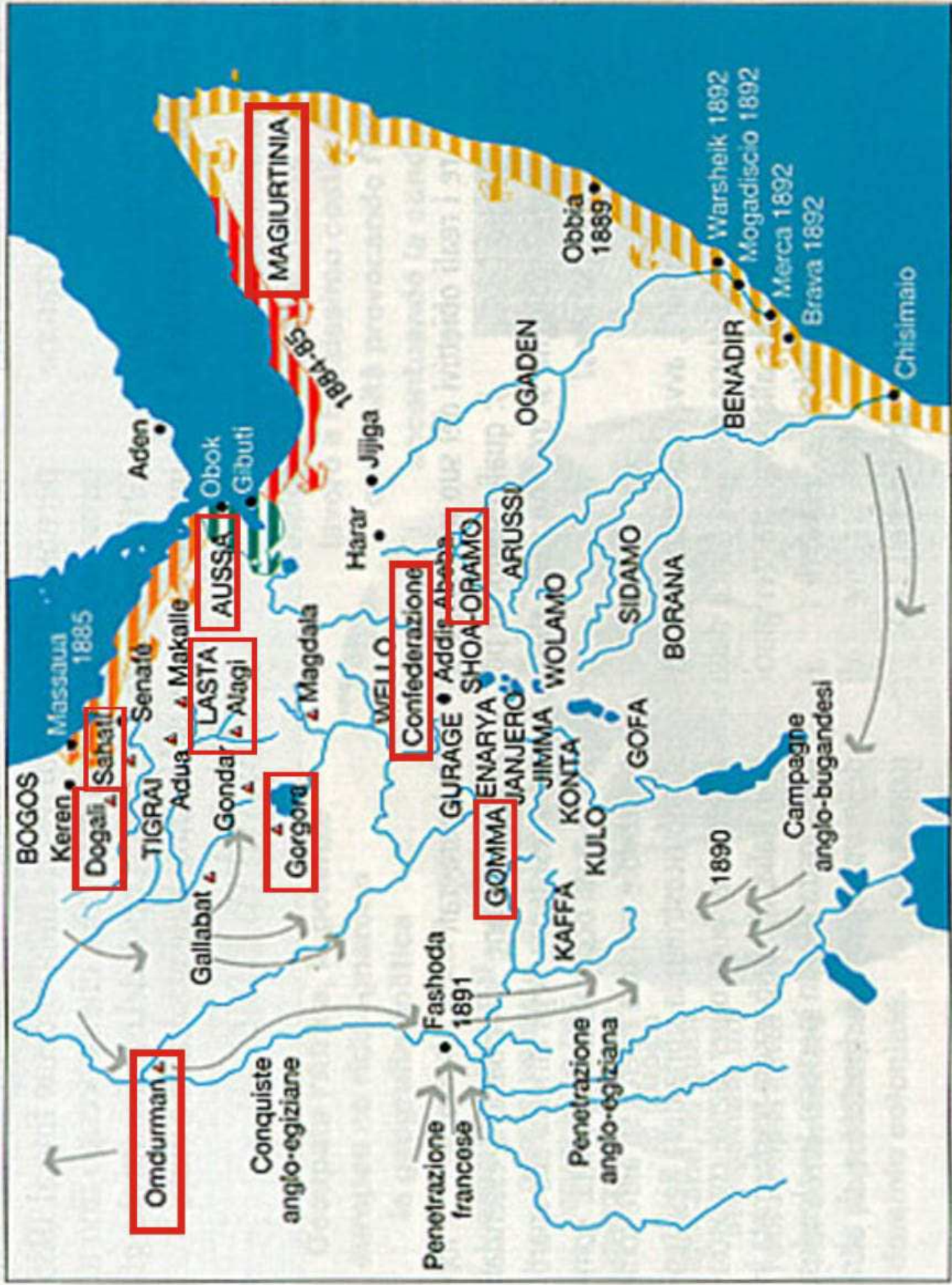


Massawa and Assab

- ▶ **Horn of Africa - Italy decided to orient expansion claims towards territories not well regarded by colonial powers yet**
- ▶ **1882: Rubattino shipping line acquired harbour of Assab, as a coaling station to serve vessels to India. Italian State purchased Bay of Assab**
- ▶ **1885: despite reluctance of Premier Depretis, exploiting as a pretext the massacre of a trading expedition Italian troops occupied Massawa harbour, thanks also to British approval. Shortly afterwards, occupation of coastal strip between Massawa and Assab and annexation of Massawa**
- ▶ **Plans of penetration into Sudan rejected by Britain**
- ▶ **1887 Robilant decided to carry on operations in Eritrea**
- ▶ **Social Darwinism: Italy had joined the struggle of the internationally fittest, a failure to compete in which would have meant national death**

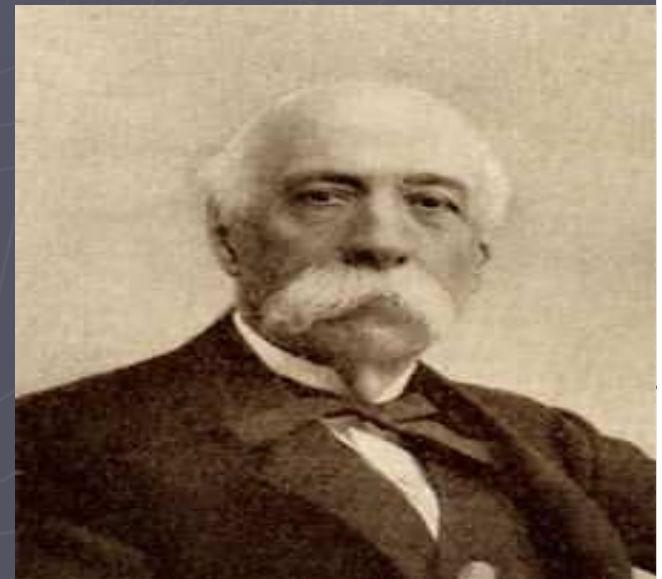
Dogali

- ▶ **Western plateau formally part of Ethiopian Empire**
- ▶ **Ethiopian Empire based on feudal structure: several local sovereigns (ras) only formally subjugated to Emperor (Negus), bound to give him tribute and support in case of war**
- ▶ **Negus had not opposed occupation of Massawa, but later he protested when italians occupied villages of Saati and Uaa, nominally under Egyptian sovereignty, but for a long time controlled by Ethiopia**
- ▶ **Robilant started diplomatic contacts with Negus, but afterwards he opted for military solution**
- ▶ **26.01.1887 Italian troops ambushed**
- ▶ **The defeat led to protests towards Govt's colonial policy, obliging both Robilant and Depretis to resign**



Crispi

- ▶ **Revolutionary mood and fervent patriotism**
- ▶ **Policy of power and civilization mission**
- ▶ **Admirer of Bismarck and rival of France - Mediterranean expansion**
- ▶ **Austria as a stronghold against Russian expansionism and Slav hegemony on Adriatic – Balkan policy**



Treaty of Wuchale

- ▶ Crispi carried on military operations in Eritrea, sending in expeditionary corp which reoccupied Saati
- ▶ Commanders on the spot decided to deal with local Ras in order to divide them (divide et impera)
- ▶ Italian Ambassador to Addis Abeba showed Crispi the possibility to sign a treaty putting the whole of Ethiopia under Italian protectorate
- ▶ 02.05.1889 Treaty of Wuchale: according to Italian interpretation, Ethiopia not only recognised Italian control on Eritrea, but also became de facto an Italian protectorate
- ▶ 1890 Eritrea became Italian colony



Wuchale

Ethiopia

Treaty of Wuchale Interpretations

- ▶ Italian translation of the treaty obliged Ethiopian Govt to rely on Italian diplomacy in order to deal with other European nations, thus practically making Ethiopia an Italian protectorate
- ▶ Ethiopian text saw only the possibility for Ethiopia to rely on Italian diplomacy in foreign relations
- ▶ Contrasts on interpretation discovered in 1890, when Menelik, who had invited Russian and British sovereigns to his own coronation ceremony, was replied that they could not directly answer him, in light of the treaty he had undersigned
- ▶ Ethiopia began purchasing weapons and ammunitions, especially from Russia and France
- ▶ Resumption of military operations – contrast with British interests in Sudan

Somalia

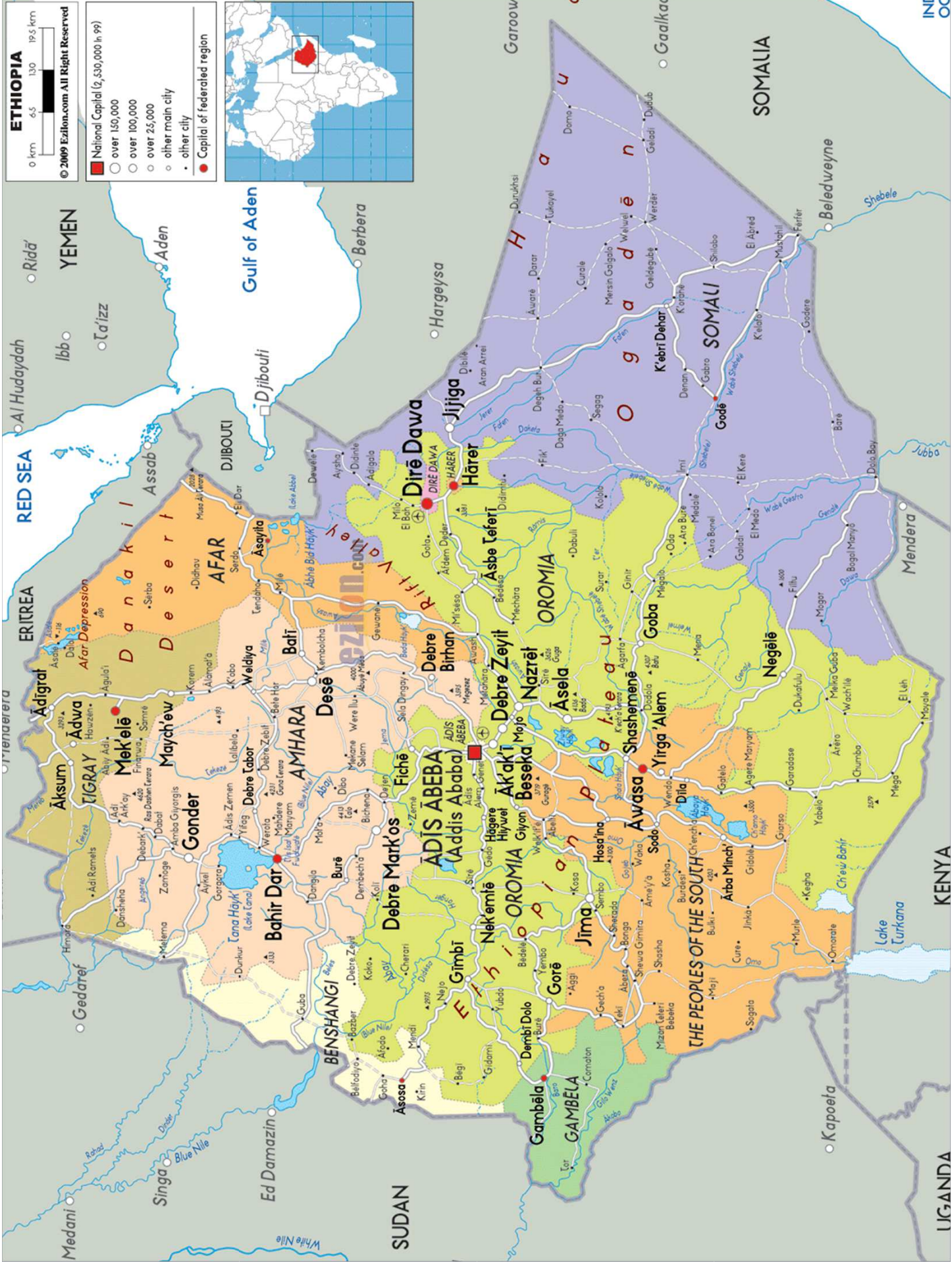
- ▶ **Commercial interests in 1890s through Horn of Africa, especially along Benadir Coasts**
- ▶ **Protectorate on port of Mogadishu**
- ▶ **1905: Control formalised through creation of colony – Italian Somalia**
- ▶ **True pacification never occurred**
- ▶ **Economy: always more imports than exports**

Adwa

- ▶ Occupation of Somali ports made sense as launching point for penetration or acquisition of Ethiopia
- ▶ Crispi reappointed Prime Minister 1893
- ▶ Jan 1895, Italians occupied region of Tigrai, formally part of Ethiopian Empire, but de facto self-governing territory, ruled by opposer of Negus Menelik
- ▶ Such a measure had to allow Italy to gain position of strength to exploit in negotiations with Negus
- ▶ Menelik summoned a 100,000-men-army, abrogated treaty of Wuchale and waged war on Italy

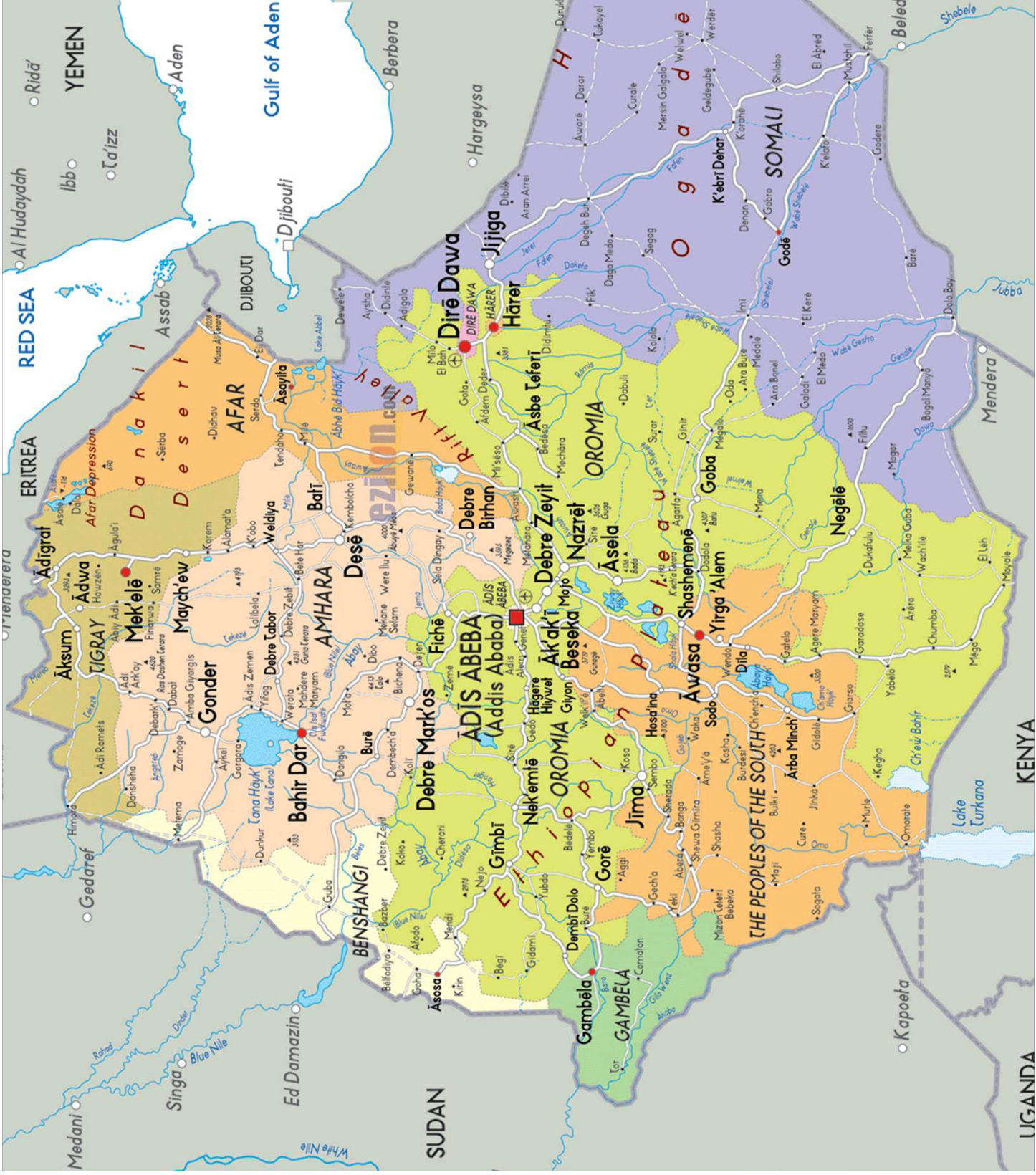
Adwa

- ▶ **Worried about conduct of war, Crispi chose to send in massive additional troops to Eritrea**
- ▶ **1 March 1896: Italian brigades scattered and unliased, thus giving the Negus's army the chance to challenge them one by one: 6,000 men killed, 1,500 wounded, and 3,000 prisoners**



ETHIOPIA
 0 km 6.5 13.0 19.5 km
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- National Capital (2,430,000 in 99)
- over 150,000
- over 100,000
- over 25,000
- other main city
- other city
- Capital of federated region



ERITREA
 YEMEN
 SOMALIA
 KENYA
 SUDAN
 LUGANDA
 INDIA
 OCEAN

Diplomatic isolation and the aftermath

- ▶ **Allies reminded Italy that Triple Alliance was not a shopping society to satisfy Italian interests**
- ▶ **France and Russia aided Ethiopia**
- ▶ **Britain neutral**
- ▶ **Total failure of Italian policy of power**

After Crispi

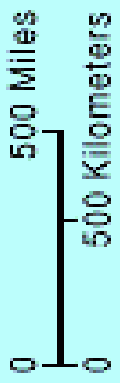
- ▶ **Crispi's resignation**
- ▶ **Di Rudinì Prime Minister**
- ▶ **October 1896 treaty of peace of Addis Abeba: Negus recognised Italian sovereignty on Eritrea, but Italy abrogated treaty of Wuchale and gave up any interference with Ethiopian policy**
- ▶ **Relinquishment of policy of power and resumption of position of balance in Europe through alliances**
- ▶ **No other great power anxious to replace Italy in Horn of Africa and Ethiopia: colonial aspirations never relinquished**





Area drained by the Nile River and its tributaries

- 1 Aswan High Dam
- 2 White Nile Dam
- 3 Sennar Dam
- 4 Khashm el Qirba Dam
- 5 Roseires Dam
- 6 Owen Falls Dam



Agreement on Abyssinia 1906

- ▶ **Common interest of France, Great Britain, and Italy to maintain intact the integrity of Ethiopia, to come to a mutual understanding in regard to their attitude in the event of any change in the situation arising in Ethiopia, and to prevent the action of the three States in protecting their respective interests, both in the British, French, and Italian possessions bordering on Ethiopia and in Ethiopia itself**
- ▶ **France, Great Britain, and Italy shall cooperate in maintaining the political and territorial status quo in Ethiopia**
- ▶ **In the event of rivalries or internal changes in Ethiopia the representatives of France, Great Britain, and Italy shall observe a neutral attitude, abstaining from all intervention in the internal affairs of the country and confining themselves to such action as may be, by common consent, considered necessary for the protection of the legations, of the lives and property of foreigners, and of the common interests of the three powers**
- ▶ **In the event of the status quo being disturbed, France, Great Britain, and Italy shall make every effort to preserve the integrity of Ethiopia. In any case they shall concert together in order to safeguard — (a) The interests of Great Britain and Egypt in the Nile Basin, (b) The interest of Italy in Ethiopia as regards Erithraea and Somaliland. (c) The interest of France in Ethiopia as regards the French protectorate on the Somali coast, the hinterland of this protectorate, and the zone necessary for the construction and working of the railway from Jibuti to Adis Abeba**

Libyan Question

- ▶ **Anglo-French agreements led to French encirclement to Tripolitania, towards which Italy had expansionist claims**
- ▶ **Italo-French agreement Jan 1901:**
 - 1) **France committed not to trespass limit agreed with Britain, thus leaving free hand to Italy**
 - 2) **Italy not interested in Morocco**
- ▶ **Anglo-Italian agreements 1902 (Premier Zanardelli)**
 - 1) **London had no claims on Tripolitania and, in case of changes to statu quo, committed to respect Italian interests**
 - 2) **Italy undertaken not to obstacle British interests in Mediterranean**



LIBYA

0 km 75 150 225 km

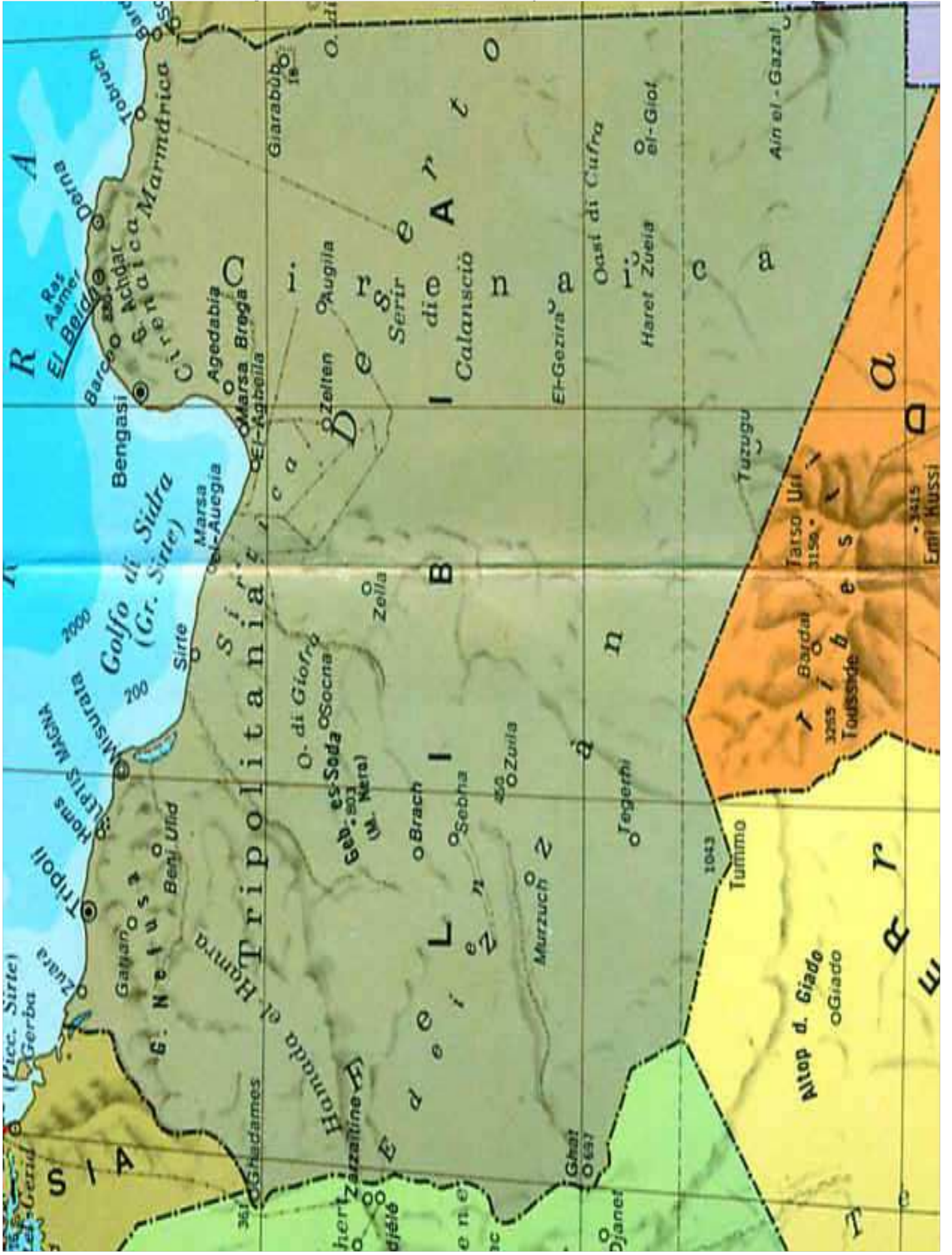
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2000 m
1800 m
1000 m
500 m
200 m
100 m
0 m
below
sea level

- National Capital (1,770,000 in 99)
- over 800,000
- over 200,000
- over 50,000
- other main city
- other city
- Chief town of Shabiyah



Libyan Shabiyah (provinces) have the name of their chiefs towns (indicated by ●)



Italo-Turkish War 1911-1912

- ▶ **French and British control on Northern Africa**
- ▶ **France tempted to extend influence along the whole African coast**
- ▶ **In order to pursue her interests, Italy decided to occupy Libya**
- ▶ **Economic penetration already on for years**
- ▶ **Constantinople tries to harm Italian projects and backs German trade**
- ▶ **Italian allies thought war against Turkey might weaken Ottoman Empire, thus favouring nation States in the Balkans, as well as Russian influence**





The War

- ▶ **Declaration of war 29.09.1911**
- ▶ **Austria thought of prehemptive war against Italy, but at the same time objected departure of Turkish ships (better to localise conflict)**
- ▶ **However, no action taken to stop war: neutrality to gain Italian amity**
- ▶ **Dodecanese islands occupied (Apr 1912). Austria worried about widening of conflict towards Turkish shores**
- ▶ **France and Britain aimed at Mediterranean entente with Italy**
- ▶ **Spring 1912 alliance Serbia-Bulgaria-Greece-Montenegro**
- ▶ **8.10.1912: war against Turkey**
- ▶ **18.10.1912 Peace of Lausanne and assignment of Libya to Italy: immediate great powers' recognition**

Italian Dodecanese

- ▶ Since 1923, civil governors substituted military commanders.
- ▶ The juridic state of the islands was an intermediate one (*possedimento*) between a colony and a part of the motherland: due to that, local islanders, although formally Italian citizens, did not receive a full citizenship and were not required to serve in the Italian armed forces
- ▶ Under the governorship of De Vecchi (1936 to 1940), a staunch and dull fascist, the Italianization efforts became brutal.
- ▶ Italian language became compulsory in education and the public life, with Greek being only an optional subject in schools

Aftermath of Libyan War

- ▶ **Libya never really pacified**
- ▶ **Nationalist Italian intellectuals talked about advantages of genocide**
- ▶ **War took place more through diplomacy than combat: Giolitti's diplomats sought to persuade Turks to relinquish territory bringing no profits**
- ▶ **Italian soldiers after war confined in coastal forts**
- ▶ **By early 1930s, Libya secured in Italian hands**
- ▶ **Some 100,000 Cyrenaicans deported to concentration camps**
- ▶ **Population continued to decline by natural wastage: livestock killed, wells poisoned**
- ▶ **By 1930, Fascist regime was not sure what to do with Libya: imports much more than exports**
- ▶ **Oil ignored**

Muslim Policy in Libya

- ▶ **Balbo appointed Governor of Libya 1934**
- ▶ **Major immigration scheme from Italy**
- ▶ **1940: 140,000 Italians living in Libya**
- ▶ **Mussolini's visit Mar 1937**
- ▶ **Sword of Islam**
- ▶ **Mussolini addressed crowd: Italy intends to ensure Muslims in Libya and Ethiopia peace, justice, well-being, respect for the Prophet**
- ▶ **Italian media proclaimed Mussolini as Protector of Islam**

LE DICHIARAZIONI DEL DUCE AL "DAILY MAIL" COMPAGNIA DELLA TELEVISIONE

L'ILLUSTRAZIONE ITALIANA

ANNO XXXV - N. 11 25 MARZO 1937 27



SULLA PIATTAFORMA DI FRONTE AL CASTELLO, IL DUCE, AVENDO IN PUGNO LA SPADA DELL'ISLAM, PARLA AI MUSULMANI DI TANPOLE E DELLA LIBIA E AI GIOVANI MUSULMANI DELLA LIBIA E DELL'ETIOPIA LA PACE, LA GIUSTIZIA, IL BENESSERE, IL RISPETTO ALLE LEGGI DEL PROFETA.

per tutti i motori
CHAMPION
 la candela migliore

Il motore è il cuore di ogni automobile. Per far sì che il motore lavori a regola d'arte, è necessario che le candele siano in ottime condizioni. Le candele Champion, con la loro speciale miscela di nichel e platino, assicurano un perfetto scintillamento, anche in condizioni di massima sollecitazione. Sono le candele che fanno lavorare il motore a regola d'arte, e che, per questo, sono le candele migliori.

Per ogni informazione rivolgetevi ai concessionari Champion.



Propaganda war with Britain

- ▶ Italian press portrayed difference between Libya, where Italy had brought progress, and India, which had been reduced in poverty
- ▶ Italy used Muslim discontent of Britain as a lever to pursue her interests in Arabian Peninsula and Palestine
- ▶ Jews of Palestine deterred from collaborating with Italy by links with Nazi Germany
- ▶ In Syria, Lebanon and Iraq Italy backed only by peripheral elements of society
- ▶ While some Arabs saw Italy as an aid to gain independence, others did not believe that an imperialist power would be better than any other one

Racial Policies

- ▶ **Jul 1935: fascism acknowledged existence of races and their differences and hierarchy, but Italy did not claim segregation and racial hatred**
- ▶ **May 1936 proclamation of Empire: Fascism to defend racial prestige and prevent madamismo - settlers living more uxorio with indigenous women. On a higher level than prostitutes but the relationship was always one of "master – slave".**
- ▶ **Jan 1937: Italians in Empire – full and absolute separation of races**
- ▶ **Racial laws in Italian East Africa**

Informazione Diplomatica n. 18

- ▶ While other powers were able to rule colonies through small number of officials, Italy obliged to send settlers to Libya and Eastern Africa
- ▶ To prevent catastrophic creation of bastard race not only through laws, but also through racial consciousness
- ▶ Sort of apartheid established in East Africa
- ▶ In Libya Balbo, though still racist, differed from Mussolini
- A) Low opinion of Black in Fezzan
- B) Inhabitants of coast viewed as descendants of great ancient civilization

Balbo aware of nationalist revolt outlook. He showed respect for religious customs and collaborated with local elite

Muslim population to elevate morally and socially to be integrated in Fascist schemes

Libyans could be appointed podestà of local communities, but not of mixed ones

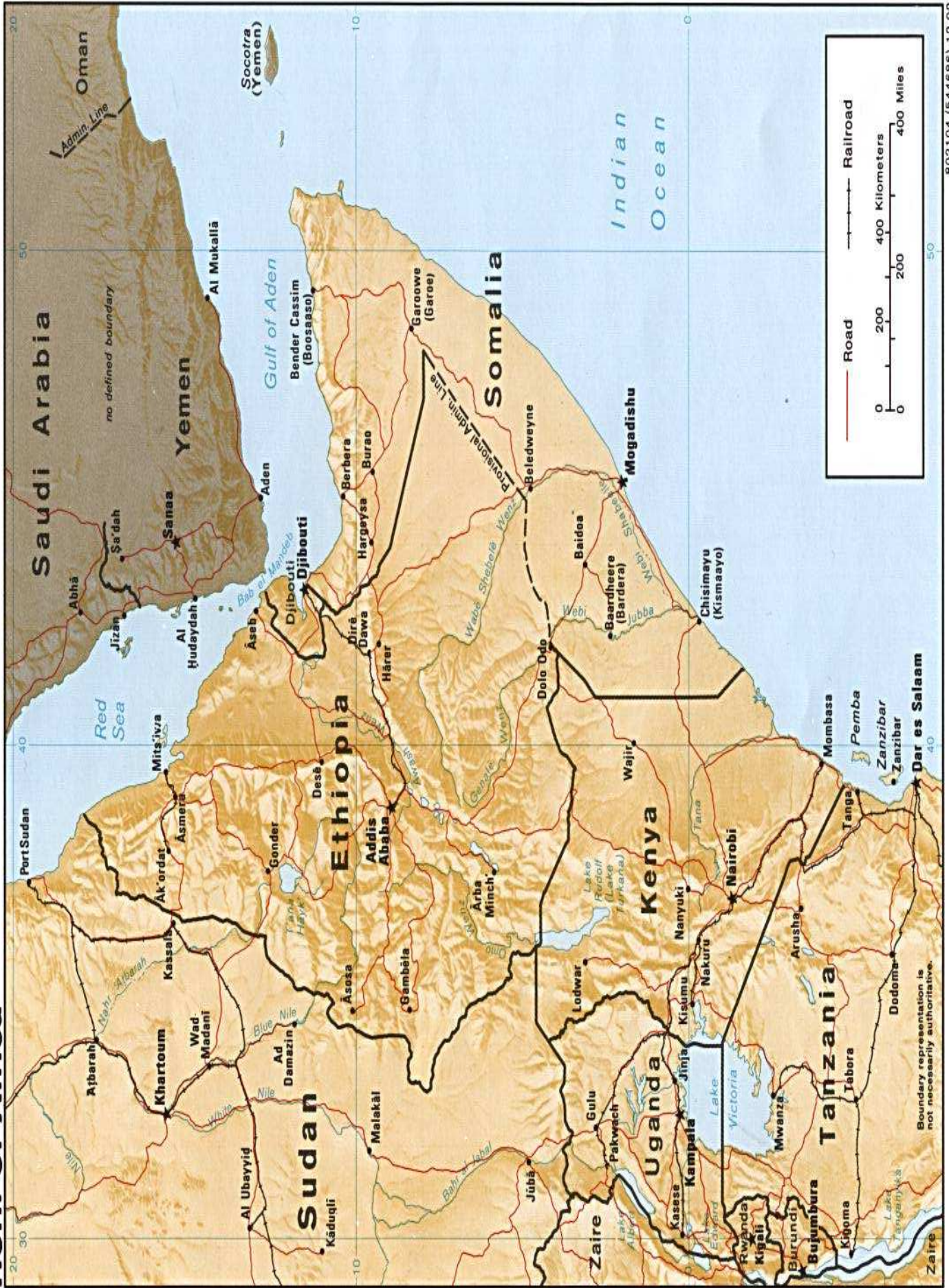
Balbo's policy defeated. In 1939 Libyans could not even touch Italian women – violation of racial prestige

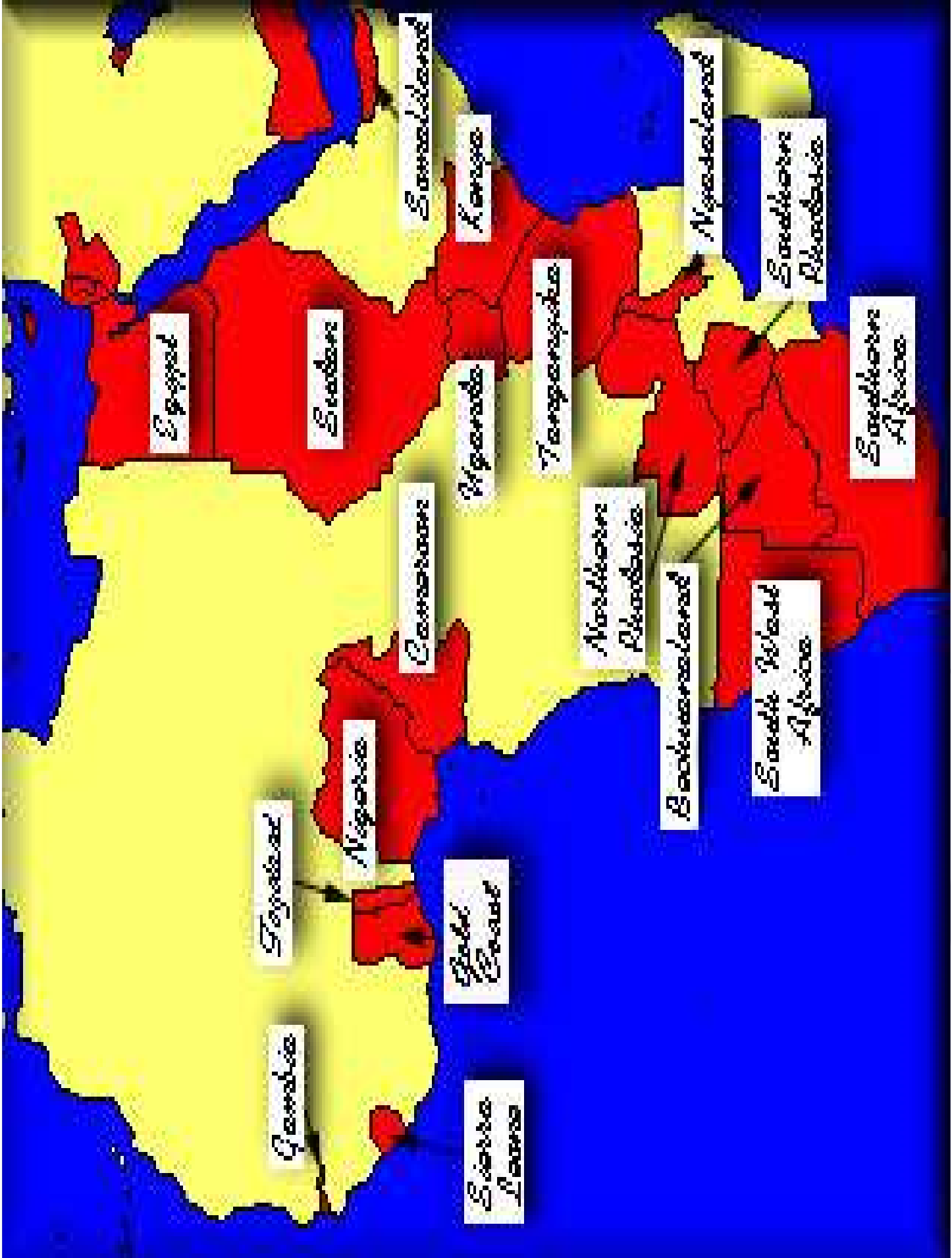
Ethiopian War

- ▶ **Libyan War as prelude to WW1,
Ethiopian War as prelude to WW2**
- ▶ **Parallels:**
 - A) European conflict threatens when Italy seizes territories in Africa, for which planning had begun years before**
 - B) Italy acts in Africa when and because European situation is running out of control**



Horn of Africa





Ghana

Senegal

Gambia

Nigeria

Sierra Leone

Liberia

Ivory Coast

Cameroon

Chad

Central African Republic

Congo

Democratic Republic of Congo

South Africa

Botswana

Zimbabwe

South Africa

Mozambique

Swaziland

Lesotho

Madagascar

Mauritius

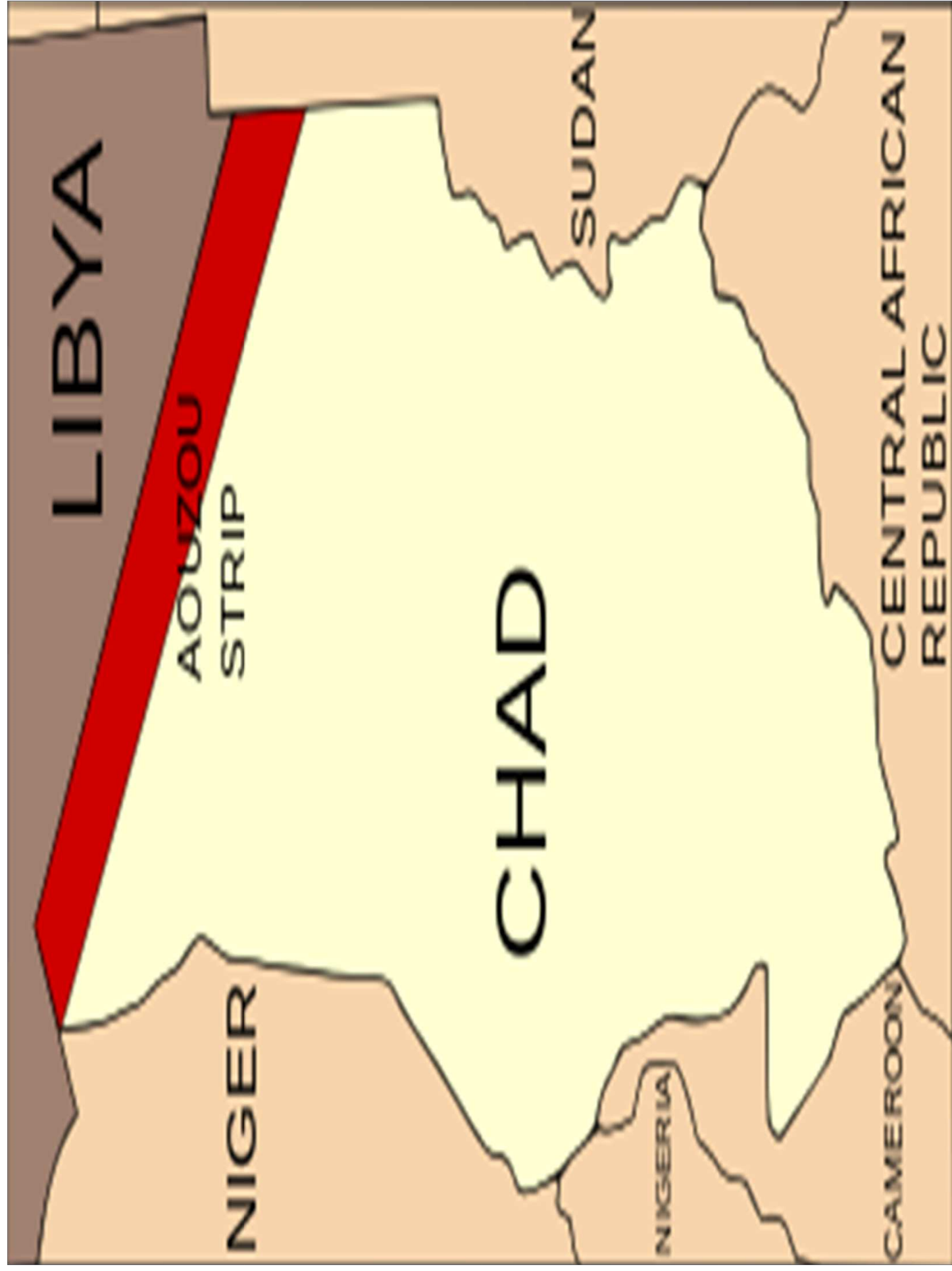
South Africa

South 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**



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) **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**
- B) **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.**
- C) **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**
- D) **It was always possible for Fascist regime to seek more glory in the North**
- E) **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**

Pacification

- ▶ **Ethiopia never totally pacified**
- ▶ **Feb 19, 1937: attempt on life of Governor Rodolfo Graziani**
- ▶ **Brutal reaction**
- ▶ **Some estimates say 30,000 Ethiopians died**
- ▶ **Nov 1937: Amedeo d'Aosta replaced Graziani – Mussolini hoped to manage an empire with style and methods of French and British, rather than with Nazi fanaticism**
- ▶ **New Administration less brutal and corrupt, but country's problems always unsolved**
- ▶ **By 1941, only 3,000 Italians farming in Ethiopia. Only those with Govt contacts benefited from colony**
- ▶ **May 5, 1941 – Haile Selassie back in power: end of AOI**



Racism

- ▶ **Myth: Italians as better colonisers than other Europeans due to lack of rigid racial sense**
- ▶ **Sexual dealings in more open way than British did in India**
- ▶ **Reality: Song “Faccetta Nera” scarcely spoke about romantic love between equals**
- ▶ **Italian elite seems to have possessed as strong a sense of colour and race as did any other**
- ▶ **G. Salvemini 1922, on occupation of Ruhr by French black troops: “How deplorable it was to drive German women to prostitute themselves and gratify the lust of negroes”**

Trust Territories

- ▶ **In 1941, Italian Somaliland occupied by British and South African troops**
- ▶ **The British continued to administer the area until November 1949, when Italian Somaliland was made a Trust Territory by the UN, under Italian administration**
- ▶ **During the 1950s, with UN aid money pouring in and the presence of experienced Italian administrators, infrastructural and educational development blossomed in the region**
- ▶ **In 1960, the Trust Territory of Somalia became independent, following the steps of former British Somaliland**
- ▶ **On July 1, 1960, the two territories united as planned to form the Somali republic**