



International Boundary Study

No. 87 (Revised) – May 18, 1979

Djibouti – Somalia Boundary

(Country Codes: DJ-SO)

**The Geographer
Office of the Geographer
Bureau of Intelligence and Research**

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DJIBOUTI – SOMALIA BOUNDARY

I. BOUNDARY BRIEF

The Djibouti–Somalia boundary consists of a geodesic line approximately 58 kilometers (36 miles) long. It extends southwestward from the Gulf of Aden to the tripoint with Ethiopia on Madaha Djalelo. Although the boundary was surveyed, available information indicates that it is not demarcated by pillars.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Following British acquisition of Aden in 1839, the United Kingdom became interested in the African coast of the Gulf of Aden and completed a number of commercial treaties with Somali chiefs. In 1862 France signed a treaty with Afar (Danakil) chiefs for the cession of the harbor, roadstead, and anchorage of Obok, along with the coastal plain extending from Ras Ali in the south to Ras Doumeira in the north. French trading companies were established at various times in the ceded territories after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869.

In 1884 and 1885, France expanded its territorial holdings both along the coast and inland of the Golfe de Tadjoura by signing treaties of protection with the Sultans of Tadjoura and Gobad and various chiefs of the Issas Somalis. In 1884, following the completion of Anglo–Somali treaties replacing the earlier trade accords, the protectorate of British Somaliland was established. France and the United Kingdom reached an agreement February 2–9, 1888, that delimited a boundary between their respective holdings on the Gulf of Aden.

The Anglo–French agreement of 1888 determines the alignment of the present Djibouti–Somalia boundary. In 1892 the town of Djibouti was made the capital of the French territory, which became known in 1896 as French Somaliland (Cote Francais des Somalis).

Following World War II, the colony of French Somaliland was made an overseas territory of the French Union; in 1958 it became an overseas territory of the French Community. On July 5, 1967, French Somaliland was renamed the French Territory of the Afars and Issas (Territoire Francais des Afars and Issas). The French Territory of Afars and Issas became independent on June 27, 1977, as the Republic of Djibouti.

British Somaliland was under Italian administration for a short period at the beginning of World War II. In 1941 British administration was reestablished in British Somaliland and extended to Italian Somaliland. The United Kingdom withdrew from the former Italian Somaliland in 1950, at which time the territory became the United Nations trusteeship of Somalia, administered by Italy. British Somaliland was given its independence on June 26, 1960. Five days later, with the independence of Somalia (formerly Italian Somaliland),

the two countries were merged into the Somali Republic (presently the Somali Democratic Republic).

III. ALIGNMENT

The Djibouti–Somalia boundary was established by the Anglo–French agreement of February 2–9, 1888, as follows:

1. The protectorates exercised, or to be exercised by France and Great Britain shall be separated by a straight line starting from a point on the coast situated opposite the wells of Hadou [at Loyada], and leading through the said wells to Abassouen; from Abassouen the line shall follow the caravan road as far as Bia-Kabouba, and from this latter point it shall follow the caravan route from Zeyla [Zeila] to Harrar [Harer] passing by Gildessa [Jaldesa]. It is expressly agreed that the use of the wells of Hadou shall be common to both parties.
2. The Government of Her Britannic Majesty recognizes the Protectorate of France over the coasts of the Gulf of Tadjourra [Golfe de Tadjoura], including the group of the Mushah Islands [Iles Moucha] and the Islet Bab [Ile Bab], situated in the Gulf, as well as over the inhabitants, tribes, and fractions of tribes situated to the west of the line above mentioned.

The Government of the French Republic recognizes the Protectorate of Great Britain over the coast to the east of the above lines as far as Bender Ziadah [Bender Ziada], as well as over the inhabitants, tribes, and fractions of tribes situated to the east of the same line.

The agreement of 1888 did not specify the tripoint with Ethiopia, but the Ethiopian–French convention of March 20, 1897, indicated that the Ethiopia–French Somaliland boundary extended westward from Madaha Djalelo (elevation 1,614 feet; approximately 10° 59' 55" N., 42° 58' 05" E.). An Anglo–Ethiopian treaty of May 14, 1897, realigned the western sector of the British Somaliland–Ethiopia boundary (as established initially by the Anglo–Italian protocol of May 5, 1894), but no mention was made of the location of a tripoint.

Between 1931 and 1934, an Anglo–Ethiopian boundary commission demarcated the British Somaliland–Ethiopia boundary. The tripoint—Madaha Djalelo—was decided from the context of the Anglo–French agreement of 1888, the Ethiopian–French Convention of 1897, and the Anglo–Ethiopian treaty of 1897.

In order to determine the alignment of the British Somaliland–French Somaliland boundary, it was necessary to establish the exact starting point of the boundary on the Gulf of Aden. According to the Anglo–French agreement of 1888, the boundary began opposite the "wells of Hadou." The so-called wells of Hadou could not be located, but shortly after the agreement of 1888, British and French Government officials agreed that the northern point

of the boundary was a short distance northeast of Loyada on the Gulf of Aden (approximately 11° 27' 55" N., 43° 15' 45" E.).

With the coastal point established, the boundary was delimited as a straight line inland to Madaha Djalelo. In accordance with the minutes of the 16th meeting of an Ethiopian–French commission demarcating the Ethiopia–French Somaliland boundary, dated May 16, 1953, the tripoint with British Somaliland on Madaha Djalelo was marked by Primary Monument No. 1.

DOCUMENTATION

1. Agreement between the British and French Governments with regard to the Gulf of Tajourra and the Somali Coast, February 2–8, 1888. Edward Hertslet, The Map of Africa by Treaty, 3 v., 3d ed. (London: Harrison and Sons, 1909), Vol. 2, pp. 726–728.
2. Protocol 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. Italy, No. 1 (1891), United Kingdom Command (C) 6316.
3. Protocol between Great Britain and Italy respecting the Demarcation of their respective Spheres of Influence in Eastern Africa, May 5, 1894. United Kingdom Treaty Series, No. 17, 1894.
4. Convention between France and Abyssinia, relative to the Frontier of the French Coastal Zone, March 20, 1897. British Foreign State Papers, Vol. 99 (1905–6), pp. 484–485.
5. Treaty between Great Britain and Ethiopia (Frontiers of British Protectorate on Somali Coast), May 14, 1897. The Map of Africa by Treaty, op. cit., pp. 423–430.
6. Clifford, E.H.M. "The British Somaliland–Ethiopia Boundary," The Geographical Journal, Vol. LXXXVII, No. 4, April 1936, pp. 289–307.

This International Boundary Study is one of a series of specific boundary papers prepared by the Office of the Geographer, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, in accordance with provisions of the Office of Management and Budget Circular No. A-16.

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