



International Boundary Study

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Sudan – Egypt (United Arab Republic) Boundary

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INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY STUDY

No. 18

EGYPT (UNITED ARAB REPUBLIC) - SUDAN BOUNDARY

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EGYPT (UNITED ARAB REPUBLIC) - SUDAN BOUNDARY

I. BOUNDARY BRIEF

The states of Sudan and the United Arab Republic (Egypt)¹ have both international and administrative boundaries in common. Except for a northward pointing salient of Sudanese territory along the Nile, the international boundary coincides with the parallel of 22° North between the meridian of 25° East and the Red Sea. The administrative boundary departs from the eastern part of the international boundary in two places: 1) north of the 22nd parallel and adjacent to the Red Sea where an area is administered by the Sudan and 2) immediately west of the first area and south of the 22nd parallel where an area is administered by the United Arab Republic.

The Anglo - Egyptian Agreement of January 19, 1899, relative to the Administration of the Sudan² established the boundary between Egypt and the Sudan initially as the parallel of 22° North. Article 1 of that agreement stated that "The word 'Soudan' in this Agreement means all the territories south of the 22nd parallel of latitude ...". Following the signing of the agreement the term of the "Anglo - Egyptian Sudan" came into general usage for the Egypt - United Kingdom jointly administered Sudan which was referred to commonly as a condominium.³ Also in accordance with the agreement, the Red Sea port of Suakin was to be an Egyptian enclave in Sudanese territory. On July 10, 1899, the part of the agreement relating to Suakin was abrogated and the enclave was given to the Sudan (reference footnote 1). Additional changes to the Agreement of 1899 transferred a small salient of land along the Nile from Egypt to the Sudan on March 26, 1899, and an administrative boundary was established along the eastern part of the 22nd parallel on November 4, 1902.

The Wadi Halfa salient was transferred by Egypt to the Sudan in accordance with a decree⁴ issued by the Egyptian Minister of the Interior to the Nubia Muhafiza on

¹ On February 22, 1958, Egypt was united with Syria to form the United Arab Republic. Syria withdrew from the union on September 28, 1961, but the Egypt region has retained the terminology of the United Arab Republic as the official name of the state.

² British and Foreign State Papers, 91:19ff.

³ From the British occupation of 1882 to 1914, although nominally a vassal of the Turkish Empire, Egypt was in effect a United Kingdom protectorate. However, the United Kingdom did not officially declare a protectorate over Egypt until December 18, 1914, which lasted until January 28, 1922. In 1898 a joint Anglo - Egyptian military force brought to an end a revolution in the formerly Egyptian administered Sudan. Following this military action the United Kingdom made claim to a voice in the administration of the Sudan, which was realized by the Anglo - Egyptian Agreement of 1899 relative to the joint administration of the state by the two signatories.

⁴ Although the content of the decree is available from other sources the following footnote is quoted from page 195 of Sudanese Egyptian Relations by Abd El-Fattah I.S. Baddour (Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1960). "The texts of these orders and letters are in dossier No. 211/1 of the Egyptian Survey Department; see also Code of Decisions and Circulations issued by the Egyptian Cabinet and Ministers in 1899; Official Bulletin, Cairo, March 27, 1899; and Revue Egyptienne de droit international Egyptian Society of International Law, Vol. 14, 1958, pp. 9ff; also see the article of M. Muchtar Abd Allah, "The Sudanese Boundary Conflict."

March 26, 1899. The decree stated "... that the Northern limit of the frontiers of the Sudan from the Western side should be 200 meters to the north of El Bariya at the side of Faras. From the Eastern side, the frontiers should be on the Bariya of Adindan.⁵ The new boundary in effect became an international line, and reference is made in the decree to the removal of palm trees from one side of the boundary to the other and the fact that 10 Egyptian villages were now within the Sudanese borders.⁶

The administrative boundary was first created by an arrete on July 25, 1902, and activated by a decree on November 4, 1902, both by the Egyptian Minister of the Interior. The boundary was to facilitate the administration of nomadic tribes along the international boundary and to retain the continuity of certain tribal areas.⁷ Both the arrete and decree established boundaries and enumerated the tribes and water wells to be administered by each state. In delimiting the western segment of the administrative boundary a straight line was drawn between Jebel Bartazuga to the south of the 22nd parallel and Korosko (Kurusku) in the proximity of the Nile north of the parallel. This left indefinite for administrative purposes a large triangle of land enclosed by the Nile (and along the eastern side of the Wadi Halfa salient), the 22nd parallel, and the line between Jebel Bartazuga and Korosko. On June 16, 1907, a letter from the Egyptian Intelligence Service⁸ directed to the General-Director of the Egyptian Survey Department suggested that the western segment of the boundary be shortened to extend only as far as the 22nd parallel from Jebel Bartazuga. This suggestion eliminated the triangle in question, and on June 22, 1907, a letter from the Intelligence Service to the Survey Department stated that the Egyptian Sirdar (army commander in chief) had approved of the proposal. In an Intelligence Service letter of October 10, 1909, to the Survey Department, it was confirmed that there were no changes contemplated to the boundary approved by the Sirdar.

The Libya tripoint at the intersection of the parallel of 22° North and the meridian of 25° East was determined by the Egyptian - Italian Accord of 1925, which established the southern terminus of the Egypt - Libyan boundary. Prior to the Accord of 1925, the northwest corner (commonly referred to as the Sarra Triangle) of the Anglo - Egyptian Sudan formed a triangular area of land with its apex pointing westward. The east-west line forming the northern side of the triangle was a conventional extension of the Anglo -

⁵ The exact meaning and location of "the El Bariya at the side of Faras" and "the Bariya of Adindan" are not entirely clear from the text of the decree. In common usage the names of Faras and Adindan are applied both specifically and areally to different features in the immediate vicinity of the salient. However, most maps indicate the location of the salient in the same place. Recommended for cartographic representation of the salient is the United States Army Map Service East Africa map sheet of Wadi Halfa published in 1949 (35-I with an inset of salient, compiled by the Survey Office, Khartoum, in 1942).

⁶ It should be noted that at the time of the transfer of the salient from Egypt to the Sudan, Egypt was technically co-administrator of the Sudan with the United Kingdom in accordance with the Agreement of 1899.

⁷ The principal tribes involved, were the Bisharin Bedouins under the administration of the Sudanese Government and the Ababda Bedouins under the administration of the Egyptian Government, except the tribe of the Melikabe-Kibli with the well at Bir-Bekhwat which would be under the Sudanese Government.

⁸ Correspondence cited between the Survey Department and the Intelligence Service was between British officials of these agencies.

Egyptian boundary formed by the 22nd parallel (see International Boundary Study No. 10, Libyan - Sudan Boundary). To the south of the tripoint, the Libya - Sudan boundary as presently constituted was established by the Italo - British - Egyptian Agreement completed at Rome on July 20, 1934.

II. ANALYSIS OF BOUNDARY

The Sudan - United Arab Republic international boundary has a length of 792 miles. The boundary follows the 22nd parallel along the entire distance, except for 38 miles in the Wadi Halfa salient. Although delimited throughout, the boundary has not been demarcated. Excluding the Nile valley, it traverses typical arid desert the entire distance with only a limited number of water wells nearby. Along the boundary the surfaces are alternately sandy and rocky with scattered hills. Eastward from the Libya tripoint there are sandy surfaces for about 180 miles, a section of rocky surfaces for about 140 miles, and then sandy surfaces extend to the Nile valley. East of the Nile valley sandy surfaces continue for about 160 miles and then rock surfaces predominate for the remainder of the distance to the Red Sea which is overlooked by low barren hills.

The Wadi Halfa salient consists of a small finger-shaped area along the Nile north of the 22nd parallel. The most northerly point of the boundary is about 22°12'12" North, and the width of the salient along the 22nd parallel is slightly less than eight miles. Most of the boundary is located well above the cultivated lowlands along the river. Initially the Sudan acquired the salient in order to have the northern terminus of a railroad constructed to Khartoum in Sudanese territory. The railroad extended southward from Faras which was the upstream limit of river navigation in Egypt and a transshipment point for goods. On November 8, 1959, the United Arab Republic and the Sudan entered into a Nile Waters Settlement Agreement.

The purpose of the agreement was to 1) make an equitable division of the Nile waters between the states for purposes of irrigation and 2) to make provision for the payment of damages and the resettlement of people in the Wadi Halfa area by the United Arab Republic Government in event a High Dam is constructed on the Nile upstream from Aswan. The construction of the dam would flood a large part of the Wadi Halfa salient.

The Sudan - United Arab Republic administrative boundary has a length of 222 miles which added to that part of the international boundary immediately to the west of it affords a total distance of 776 miles. Undemarcated the boundary is delimited for purposes of administering tribal areas. The area administered by the United Arab Republic to the south of the 22nd parallel has mainly sandy surfaces and contrasts with the predominantly rocky surfaces of the area to the north of the parallel administered by the Sudan. Sparse vegetation is available for grazing animals in both areas around water wells and in some wadi bottoms. The administrative boundary is comprised of a number of straight-line segments from west to east as follows: southeastward from the international boundary at approximately 33°10' East for about 31 miles to Jebel Bartazuga, east northeastward

about 29 miles to Bir Hesmet 'Umar, north northeastward about 32 miles to Jabal al Deiga (17 miles south of the 22nd parallel and 15 miles to the north of it), east northeastward about 35 miles to Jabal Umm at Tuyur al Fawqani, north northeastward about 42 miles to Jabal Niqrub al Fawqani, southeastward to Bir Meneiga about 17 miles, and northeastward to Bi'r Shalatayn and the Red Sea about 36 miles.

In reference to a Sudanese Constituency Order for an election of the House of Representatives (which included the Sudanese administered territories north of the 22nd parallel), the Egyptian Government on February 1, 1958, sent a note to the Sudanese Government requesting the return of all territory north of the 22nd parallel to Egyptian administration. In return Egypt would reciprocate by turning over the Egyptian administered territory south of the 22nd parallel to Sudanese administration. The Egyptian government noted that the territories north of the 22nd parallel were never part of the Sudan but were actually under Egyptian sovereignty because they were formerly administered by a bilateral arrangement in which Egypt was a partner. On February 16, 1958, Egypt informed the Sudanese government that it intended to send electoral committees guarded by a detachment of the frontier police to the areas in question for a plebiscite, which would take place on February 21, 1958, for confirmation of the United Arab Republic and in which all citizens were to participate. In response the Sudanese Government pointed out that in two previous elections held in the Sudanese territories north of the 22nd parallel, the Egyptian Government had not lodged any complaint. It also added that the inhabitants of these territories had not been asked to vote in a previous plebiscite held in Egypt. For most purposes the states concerned had treated the two territories as being under Sudanese administration for approximately a half century.⁹ On February 21, 1958, a plebiscite was held in Egypt and in Syria, and the people accepted the merging of the two states into the United Arab Republic by an overwhelming majority. Since the establishment of the union on February 22, 1958, the question of sovereignty has not been raised by the United Arab Republic in the disputed boundary areas.

III. CONCLUSION

There are no known negotiations concerning the Sudan - United Arab Republic boundary presently in progress. For purposes of cartographic presentation of the boundary the following recommendations are made: 1) the boundary of the Wadi Halfa salient should be shown as an international boundary (no boundary should be shown along the 22nd parallel at the southern extremity of the salient), 2) it is preferable to show both the international and administrative boundaries on a map (in the latter case the boundary should be labeled

⁹ The Provisional Constitution of the Sudan stated that the state is to comprise "all those territories which were included in the Anglo - Egyptian Sudan immediately before the commencement of this Constitution." The Sudan upon receipt of independence made known that it reserved the right to determine whether it would be bound by any treaty or agreement made on its behalf prior to independence. On January 3, 1956, President Nasser received a letter from the Prime Minister of the Sudan expressing the Sudanese position relative to existing treaties and agreements, to which the Egyptian Government made no formal protest.

"Administrative Boundary", and 3) where the map scale does not warrant or permit the use of both the international and administrative boundaries, the administrative boundary should be shown. The following United Kingdom World map series¹⁰ are suggested for the correct representation of the boundary.

¹⁰ United Kingdom, Director of Military Survey, War Office and Air Ministry, World map series 1404, Edition 1-2-GSGS, compiled 1960. Map sheets indicating the boundary are listed in order from west to east: 568-A (Gulf Kebir Plateau), 568-D (Jebel-Uweinat); 568-B (Bir Sahara), 568-C (Buget Tuyur); 567-A (El Diwan), 567-D (Wadi Halfa); 567-B (Bir Abu Hashim), 567-C (Bir Abaraga), and 566-A (Rayyis), 566-D (Muhammad Qol).

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

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