



BAGHDAD PACT

BAGHDAD PACT, popular name for the 1955 pro-Western defense alliance between Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom. At the height of the Cold War, the Middle East, with strategic bases bordering the Soviet Union, vital communications links, and significant oil wealth, represented a valuable region for Western interests. Initial attempts to align the emerging states in the area to Britain and the United States having failed (Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936 and Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930), London and Washington initiated a sequence of well-known agreements, including the treaty of “friendship and cooperation for security” between Turkey and Pakistan (2 April 1954); the “military assistance” understanding between Iraq and the U.S. (21 April 1954); the Turkish-Iraqi “mutual cooperation pact” (24 February 1955); the special agreement between Iraq and Britain (5 April 1955) which amalgamated the political-military bloc of pro-Western regimes into the Baghdad Pact (Khadduri, pp. 309-24).

The Pact’s purpose was the “maintenance of peace and security in the Middle East region” (Preamble) and called on member-states to “cooperate for their security and defense” (Article 1) and to “refrain from any interference whatsoever in each other’s internal affairs” (Article 3). “Open for accession to any member of the Arab League or any other slate actively concerned with the security and peace in this region” (Article 5), the American-engineered alliance was intended to satisfy several objectives (Europa, p. 102). It appealed to its members for very different reasons although the rising influence of the Soviet Union and that of Arab nationalism were widely shared. By agreeing to this



treaty, Turkey improved its relations with Western powers and Iraq strengthened its position vis-à-vis Egypt (Gallman, pp. 21-65). Iraq, as the original opponent of Arab nationalism, goaded Cairo to stand in the way of the pro-Western alliance. Yet, London's membership, intended to replace its 1930 preferential treaty which was about to expire, disappointed many Arab leaders, especially Gamal 'Abd-al-Nāṣer, who hoped for a neutral Arab bloc between the West and the USSR. Nāṣer opposed the Pact because he perceived it as a threat to his foreign policy objectives and as a tool geared to serve Western political and economic interests. Cairo also feared that such an alliance would isolate Egypt and strengthen the pro-British regime of Nūrī al-Sa'īd in Baghdad. Egyptian-instigated agitations against contemplated membership by Jordan and Lebanon were partially responsible for the disturbances in both countries in 1956 and 1957 leading the U.S. and Britain to intervene militarily. The Iraqi premier considered the Pact as a vindication of his source of power and to demonstrate his allegiance to the West broke diplomatic relations with Moscow in January, 1955. For Pakistan, the Pact was intended to balance relations with India and help it benefit from Western economic largesse. Iran, having abandoned its tradition of third-power policy and having disregarded Prime Minister Moṣaddeq's experiment with a neutralist approach, wished to align itself with the West. Yet, despite the shah's unquestionable sense of Soviet and Communist danger, he saw a unique opportunity in the alliance for the preservation of his throne (Ramazani, 1975, p. 276).

After the application of the Eisenhower Doctrine in 1958, opposition to the alliance in the Northern Tier emerged among indigenous nationalist groups. The U.S., having joined the Pact as an Associate member in 1956, exercised great influence in the Economic and Counter-Subversion Committees but received a severe jolt when, in July, 1958, a bloody army revolt overthrew the pro-Western Hashemite monarchy of Fayṣal II, bringing into power the revolutionary Qāsem regime. The Shah of Iran was shaken, fearing a similar fate for himself and viewing the upheaval in Baghdad as a "clear and imminent" source of threats to regional stability (Ramazani, 1975, p. 281). Iraq's consequent withdrawal from the Pact, henceforth the Central Treaty Organization (**CENTO**), led to the transfer of the International Secretariat from Baghdad to Ankara, Turkey. In the wake of the Pact's demise, the U.S. signed several defense treaties with Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan, guaranteeing their security against foreign aggression.



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