ARAB STATES NOW WANT THEIR OWN DEFENSE PACT
By ALBION ROSSSpecial to THE NEW YORK TIMES.
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ARAB STATES NOW WANT THEIR OWN DEFENSE PACT

Neutrality Is the Aim but They Might Make an Agreement With the West

By ALBION ROSS
Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

CAIRO, Feb. 23—The Middle East and the West are in the process of re-examining their strained relations. There is a sort of armistice in the war against the West's variously acquired political, military and economic assets in the area.

Egypt still is insisting that the British evacuate their garrison from the Suez Canal base and recognize King Farouk as monarch in the Sudan as well as in Egypt. And Iran is still determined to operate an oil company independent of British influence. Both countries, however, undoubtedly are renewing acquaintance with the tiresome old fact that it is all one world.

The Egyptian Premier, Aly Maher Pasha, turned over to Mahmoud Fawzi Bey, Egypt's permanent representative in the United Nations, the task of preparing a plan for Middle East defense. It would contain elements of the regional defense programs discussed at various times in the United Nations and provided for in the United Nations Charter, the four-power Middle East command proposal rejected by the previous Wafdist Government last October, and the Arab collective security pact.

Indigenous Defense

Sometimes the stress appears to be on an organization within the framework of the United Nations and closely associated with the world organization. Again it seems to be on the Arab collective security pact.

The central idea in any case is to create a defense organization that will be indigenous to the area primarily and in which the great Western powers will not have a predominant role. This is difficult. The Arab states have little military or economic potential.

The essential circumstance, which may not prove too difficult, is to induce the Egyptian political groups to accept an alliance with other Middle Eastern countries for the defense of the Middle East. An alliance between the West and the Middle East as a whole on a basis of certain mutual interest in the military security of the Middle East then might be possible.

The thesis of Washington and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization nations—that all have a common interest to defend the "free world"—has little appeal. The free world has come to mean the West, and neither Egypt nor Iran, as represented by the politically predominant elements, feels apparently that she has a common purpose and shares a common fate with the West.

The idea that the better they know the West, the better they will like it simply is not working out.

Foreign cultural and information institutions in Iran, Egypt and other countries of the area are constantly denounced as evidence of imperialism and determination to "influence" the people of the various nations.

Egyptian Aims

The Egyptian Middle East defense proposals, now being worked out, are a result of this desire not to have foreigners living in the house with the original occupants. The central idea of all the discussion and declarations is to create something that will be "our" Middle East defense organization. "We" includes, for obscure but evidently real psychological reasons, India and Pakistan, but to what extent it includes Turkey or possibly Greece is not clear. Turkey and Greece are now Nato powers. They have chosen to identify themselves with the West, but undoubtedly Islamic Turkey remains, to a certain extent at least, a bridge between the two.

To put it bluntly, the Arab nations seem prepared possibly and with hesitancy to make some arrangement for Western aid in defending their area. But defense of the West is not their affair.

In practical terms, this means that an arrangement is being sought that would permit this area to remain neutral unless it were directly attacked and prevent its being used by the Western forces for offensive operations unless it were directly attacked.

Evidence is everywhere—in the press, private conversation, statements of political men—that a world-wide conflict between the Soviet Union and its satellites and the Western democratic bloc is not considered to be a matter in which peoples such as the Egyptian and Iranian want to be involved.

To the Iranian Government's great embarrassment, it has little chance of getting more profit from its own operation of its nationalized oil company than it would have got under the type of concession arrangement that the Iraq Petroleum Company and the Arabian-American Oil Company made with Iraq and Saudi Arabia. It will have difficulty getting as much.

As each month passes, the Anglo-Iranian and other big combines are in a better position to ignore Dr. Mossadegh and Iranian oil. Anglo-Iranian is producing heavily in the Kuwait field, which it holds jointly with the Gulf Company of Pittsburgh. Carrying Kuwait oil is a far more profitable business for Anglo-Iranian than carrying Dr. Mossadegh's Iranian oil. The Iranian Premier finds himself up against the hard commercial fact that so far as he is concerned, it is a buyer's and not seller's market.

Vice President Robert L. Garner of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development went to Teheran as early as he did to give the Iranians a chance to do their thinking and their bargaining with Anglo-Iranian before they were in a position where it would be very hard for them to bargain at all.

Talk about the Soviet Union buying oil is nonsense. The question is, what is it going to take the oil away with? Iran's problem must be faced this year, not in five years. Once Iran agrees to the International Bank's proposals and Anglo-Iranian agrees, the bank can advance immediately something like $25,000,000 on petroleum and petroleum products now in storage.

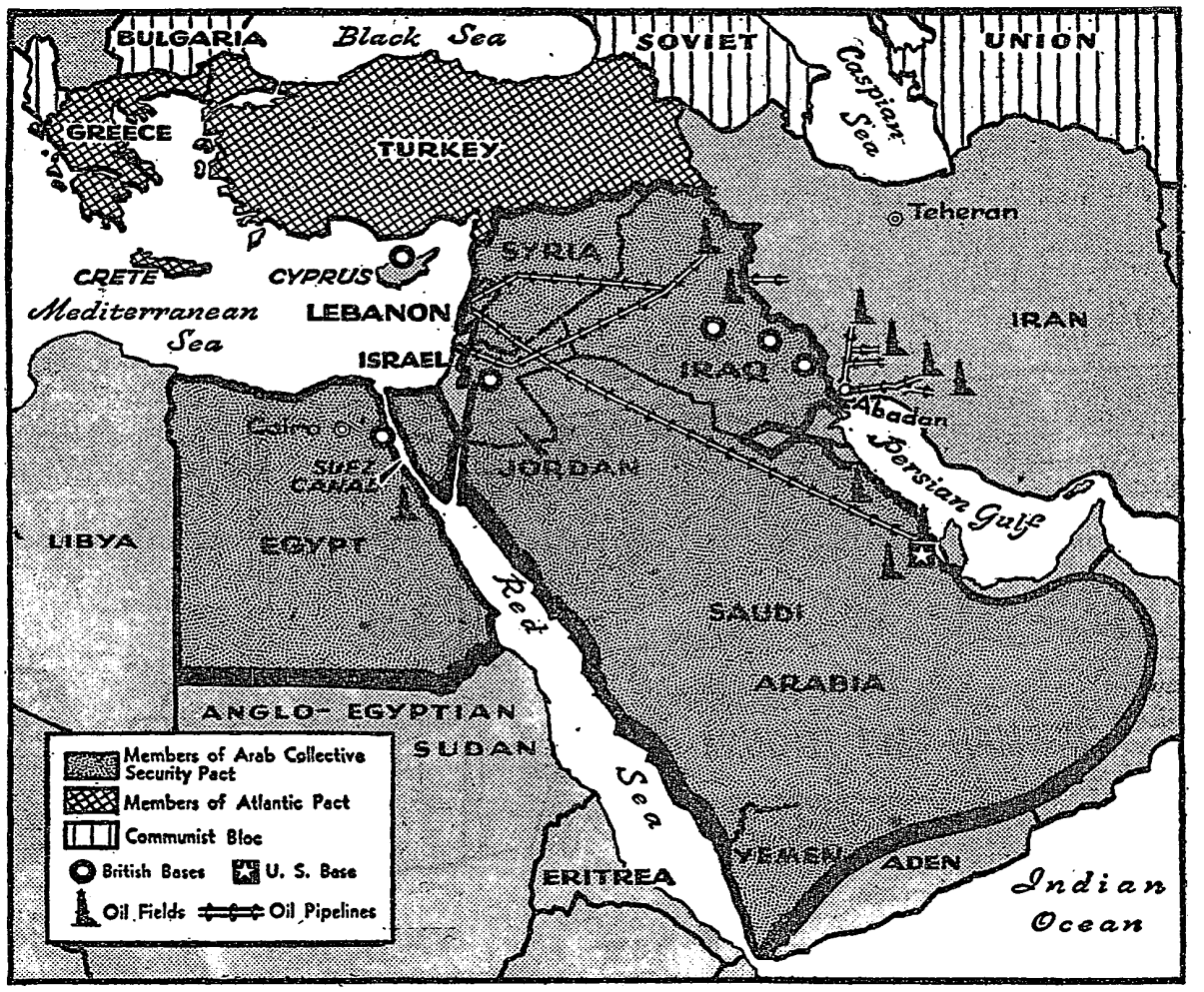
The wisest step taken by Western interests to ease the strained situation in this explosive part of the world is the 50-per-cent-before-taxes agreement made with Iraq, which passed the Iraqi Parliament this week. Iraqi income, which will be largely devoted under the National Development Law to making once rich Mesopotamia bloom again, will reach £59,000,000 annually in 1956 and will double and triple before that. The International Bank, after a survey of the country based on previous excellent survey work, laid down a $450,000,000 five-year plan of development, to begin almost immediately.

On the Egyptian and Iranian sectors it cannot be said that anything very concrete has been done recently to improve the situation. The fall of the Wafd Government in Egypt and the policy of the new Maher Cabinet have offered an opportunity. Washington and the British Embassy here have urged the British Government to take advantage of the situation before the old cry is raised again that Britain is playing for time and the old hate propaganda and instability return. Britain, from the Cairo viewpoint, seems to be dragging her feet.

How to Suit Everyone?

In a certain sense the problem is not how to settle the problems of the Middle East but how to find any solution that will suit the party in power in Britain, the party with the majority in Egypt, which is the Wafd, and the man in power in Iran, who is Dr. Mossadegh. The problem seems like one that can be solved. Whether those whose political future may be involved will permit it to be solved unless their all-important careers can be salvaged is another question.

DEFENSE ARRANGEMENTS IN THE STRATEGIC MIDDLE EAST



One of the chief problems of Western military planners is to find some means of linking the Middle East with the anti-Communist defense system. At present Greece and Turkey are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, while the Arab countries have their own Collective Security Pact. Last October the Wafd Government in Egypt turned down a Western proposal for a Middle East Command which would consist of the United States, Great Britain, France, Turkey and Egypt.

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