

# The Baghdad Pact

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**T**HE Baghdad Pact is a regional defensive grouping of four Middle Eastern powers—Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Pakistan—allied for this purpose with the United Kingdom. It came into being on February 24, 1955, with the signing of a "Pact of Mutual Co-operation" between Iraq and Turkey, in Baghdad. The agreement provided that the signatories would co-operate for their security and defence. It was declared to be "open for accession to any member state of the Arab League or any other State actively concerned with the security and peace of this region"; and under this clause, the United Kingdom formally acceded to the alliance in April 1955, followed by Pakistan in July and Iran last November.

Although Canada is not directly involved in the affairs of the Baghdad Pact, we have a natural interest in any defensive grouping of friendly countries. Moreover, with two of the Pact's members—the United Kingdom and Pakistan—we have Commonwealth affiliations, and there are also our North Atlantic Treaty ties with the United Kingdom and Turkey.

The Baghdad Pact has been criticized on the grounds that it is a sketchy defensive structure and that it exerts a divisive influence in the Middle East, since most of the Arab states, including Egypt, have not joined it. On the other hand, it represents a concrete stand against aggression and subversion; and furthermore, its increasing emphasis on economic assistance is not confined to members of the Pact but is directed towards the general area.

## Development of the Pact

The alliance had its origin in the efforts of the veteran Iraqi statesman, Nuri el Said, to "make Iraq's co-operation with foreign countries conform to the provisions of Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, under which relations of all sovereign countries are organized for the safeguarding of world peace." During the closing months of 1954, Nuri held discussions with Colonel Nasser in Cairo and with Turkish leaders in Istanbul on the possibility of establishing a collective defence for the Middle East. He also visited the United Kingdom. His theme in these talks was that the Arab countries were not strong enough to remain strictly neutral between the Eastern and Western blocs, that they could not collaborate with Communist countries; but that they could collaborate harmoniously with the West if satisfactory solutions to the problems of Suez and Palestine could be found.

Nuri al Said's approach met with a favourable response from Turkey, which had already displayed interest in a regional defence arrangement by the signature of a mutual co-operation and defence pact with Pakistan in April 1954. Accordingly the Pact of Mutual Co-operation between Iraq and Turkey, subsequently to be re-christened "the Baghdad Pact," was concluded on February 24, 1955.

In addition to the terms already mentioned, the agreement specified that a permanent Ministerial Council of the Pact was to be set up as soon as it had at least four members. An exchange of letters between Iraq and Turkey at the time of the signing placed on record their understanding that the treaty meant they would jointly resist aggression directed against either of them; and also