



THE
UNITED
STATES
and

The Middle East

THE "MIDDLE EAST"

There is no generally accepted definition of the term "Middle East." For the purpose of this pamphlet it is deemed to consist of the area comprising Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey, United Arab Republic, Yemen, the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman, the sheikhdoms of the Persian Gulf, and the South Arabian Federation. This area covers a distance of approximately 6,000 miles from east to west and 3,000 miles from north to south, with a population of about 110 million.

The Middle East is the home of the oldest civilizations known to man. Because of its location as the hub of three continents, it has been a crossroads for many peoples, each of which has left some trace among the present population. These have included the original inhabitants of the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in Iraq and the Nile in Egypt and succeeding waves of migrants and conquerors, among them Arabs, Greeks, Turks, and Persians.

The region is the birthplace of three world religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Israel bases itself on Judaic tradition, and there are remnants of Jewish communities in the surrounding countries as well. There are also Christian communities in the Arab world and in Turkey and Iran. But the majority religion in the area is Islam, practiced by most of the inhabitants of the Arab states, Turkey, and Iran. There are two major divisions of Islam—Sunni (orthodox) and Shi'a. The former is predominant in Turkey, the United Arab Republic, Syrian Arab Republic, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and northern Iraq. The Shi'a sect is predominant in Iran, southern Iraq, and parts of the Yemen and other areas of the Arabian Peninsula.

The main languages of the area are Arabic, spoken in the Arab states; Turkish, in Turkey; Persian, in Iran; and Hebrew, the official language of Israel.

The United States and the Middle East

The vital interests of the United States in the Middle East are primarily strategic and economic. These interests are magnified by our role as a leader of the free world. They are deepened by our desire as a people to see stable institutions and social progress take root in newer or less developed countries.

The Middle Eastern area contains two-thirds or more of the world's oil resources under its sands. The continuing uninterrupted flow of this oil is necessary to the economic and military strength of our European allies, which in turn is important to the security of the United States.

U.S. investment in Middle East oil production today represents some \$1.1 billion. Most of this oil production is centered around the Persian Gulf sheikhdoms. There are also fields in northern Iraq, in southern Turkey, and along the Gulf of Suez. Not only is this oil important to the economic and military

strength of the free world but it is also the main source of foreign exchange for the economic development of the Middle East.

The other major U.S. interest in the Middle East is due to the area's strategic significance. It controls both the land and sea routes linking Asia and its raw material resources with Western Europe, which is the principal supplier of manufactured goods essential to Asian development. It also is a gateway to Africa and its vast human and mineral resources, which is just beginning to play its role upon the world stage.

The United States has long been interested in the Middle East and its peoples—not least because the religious traditions of most Americans trace back to this area.

Formal relations date from the early period of the new American Republic, when the first official treaty with the Ottoman Empire was signed on May 7, 1830. American educational institutions such as Robert College at Istanbul (founded in 1863), Istanbul Women's College (1871), and the American Universities at Beirut (1896) and Cairo (1919), to mention only a few, have exerted an influence throughout the area for generations.

American trade with the Middle East also has a long history and has grown to substantial proportions. In 1963 we exported to the area some \$766 million worth of goods—mainly transportation equipment, machinery, industrial supplies and materials, food and beverages, and other consumer goods.

During this same period we bought \$332 million worth of goods from the Middle East. The heaviest imports were petroleum and petroleum products. Among other things we buy from the Middle East are textile fibers, precious and semiprecious stones, and hides and skins.

U.S. POLICIES

United States policies in the Middle East are based on a sincere desire to maintain and develop friendly relations with all of the nations of the area and to help them maintain their independence and territorial integrity. Accordingly the United States seeks to maintain along the southern borders of the Soviet Union a will and a capacity to deter Communist military aggression,

through collective security arrangements with countries in the area and with other nations of the free world.

The United States believes that economic and social progress are the best safeguards against internal unrest or subversion. Our aim is to encourage and help in the development of prosperous and stable societies whose material benefits are widely distributed.

American objectives in the Middle East encompass three factors of primary importance: the moral obligation and practical need to seek peace and prosperity for all men; the basic security interest of the United States in containing the spread of communism; and the aspirations of peoples eager to work out their own destinies and improve their own lot without outside interference.

PROBLEMS OF THE AREA

In addition to the internal political and economic problems of modernizing their societies, Middle Eastern countries must deal with several serious international problems.

External Aggression

One of the Middle Eastern problems which has been of great concern to the United States is that of protecting the region from external aggression. The Soviet Union after World War II continued its efforts to penetrate the Mediterranean and Persian Gulf areas, first by occupying and setting up a Communist-dominated autonomous region in northern Iran, and later by pressure on Turkey to cede certain rights in the region of the Bosphorus and certain Turkish border areas to the U.S.S.R. Under pressure from the United States and other free-world powers and from world opinion, the Soviet Union withdrew its forces from Iran in 1946 and the puppet autonomous regime collapsed.

Turkey has received large-scale U.S. economic and military assistance, beginning in 1947 under the Truman Doctrine for containing Soviet expansion. Iran and Turkey have agreements of cooperation with the United States, and both receive U.S. economic and military aid.

Turkey is also a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The United States is a member of the Military and

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Economic Committees of the Central Treaty Organization, of which Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, and Great Britain are members.

Arab-Israeli Hostilities

Another problem in the Middle East is the continued state of hostilities between Israel and the Arab states, resulting from the creation of the State of Israel in the former territory of Palestine. In November 1947 the U.N. General Assembly voted to recommend the partition of the former mandated territory of Palestine between an Arab and a Jewish state, politically independent but in economic union, and the internationalization of the city of Jerusalem. Jewish leaders accepted this plan and proclaimed the State of Israel in May of 1948.

Although Israel was recognized by the United States and other countries, the Arab states refused to recognize it and decided to challenge it by force. Fighting broke out in 1948 and continued until general armistice agreements were signed in 1949 in accordance with a Security Council directive. No final peace settlements have been reached between Israel and the Arab states, and a U.N. team of truce supervisors is still operating on the frontiers of Israel.

Arab Refugees

There is also the problem, growing out of the Arab-Israeli fighting, of the Arab refugees who left territory now in Israel during the fighting and who have not been able to return to their homes. Although the U.N. General Assembly passed a resolution in December 1948 stating that "the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest possible date and . . . compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property," no agreement has been reached on how this resolution should be implemented. The Palestine Conciliation Commission of the United Nations, of which the United States is a member, has made several efforts to solve this problem without success. In the meantime the refugees are being cared for by the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees.

The United States has consistently supported the peacekeeping machinery of the United Nations in trying to allay tensions and settle these conflicts by peaceful means.

ECONOMIC PROGRESS

The economy of the Middle East is primarily agricultural, outside of the oil-producing areas of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Iraq. Next to oil, cotton is the most important export item. In the case of the United Arab Republic (U.A.R.) cotton accounts for 70 percent of the country's exports. In Syria cotton is the most important crop and the largest single source of foreign exchange earnings. Other leading products of the area are coffee, fruits, vegetables, and hides and skins.

While the per capita income of the Middle East remains low, internal development measures and external economic assistance are slowly improving the standard of living.

The **United Arab Republic** is engaged in an intensive development program with an announced goal of doubling the national income in 10 years. About 40 percent of the U.A.R. budget is for development investment. A substantial industry has already been established, and particular emphasis is now being put on land reclamation, methods for increasing agricultural output, and electric power production.

In recent years **Syria** has completed a number of irrigation projects and is expanding its transport and communications facilities. A projected dam on the Euphrates River will be used for electric power production and extensive irrigation.

Israel has experienced very rapid growth and has achieved a per capita income on a par with many developed countries. Grant aid from the United States has been ended and technical assistance to Israel was terminated in 1962. Israel is now supplying technicians of its own to developing countries in Asia and Africa.

Iraq has reserved an important share of its oil revenues for a development program which has emphasized the building of schools, roads, hospitals, and housing.

Despite limited resources **Jordan** has gradually improved its economy through development efforts. A more adequate road

network has been developed, phosphate mining has been expanded, and a major irrigation project in the Jordan Valley is nearing completion.

Saudi Arabia has established a Supreme Planning Board to supervise a development program, and a sizable portion of the budget is allocated to implement it.

In **Turkey** the Government has been engaged since World War II in an effort to expand the country's productive base. A combination of inflation and an unfavorable balance of payments required that a stabilization program be put into effect in 1958. A new 5-year plan was inaugurated in 1963, with a consortium of 10 countries plus the World Bank contributing financial and technical assistance in support of the plan.

Iran has a development program which uses a large percentage of its oil revenues each year. A land reform program was inaugurated in 1962, and the Government is providing the new landholders with credit, technical guidance and assistance, and cooperatives for marketing their products.

ARAB UNITY

The concept of Arab unity, which has been developing since the early part of this century, is based on the heritage of the Arabic language and reinforced by the religion of Islam shared by most of the inhabitants of the Arab states. This concept has found expression in supranational political expressions such as pan-Arab congresses and the League of Arab States.

Formed in 1945, the League of Arab States is composed of the United Arab Republic, Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Yemen, Sudan, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. It has a permanent secretariat and a Secretary General located in Cairo. It meets periodically at the request of any of the member states.

Up to the present time, historical ethnic, economic, and social differences have prevented development of a deeper unity among the Arab lands.

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