THE NEAR EAST

INTRODUCTION, BY F. L. W. RICHARDSON, JR.¹

The Near East, now also called the Middle East, is an area of continual surprises and bewildering contrasts. To the archaeologist, it is magnificent ruins in living squalor; to indigenes, disease and poverty; to imperialists, power and wealth. For Christian pilgrims, it is Jerusalem, the church of the Holy Sepulchre where Moslems keep peace among rival Christians; for world Jewry, it is Palestine reborn. In Egypt the rich international set find winter sun, palace parties, and gambling casinos; while tourists take in camel riding, pyramids, Luxor, and stomach dancers. Those who explore the desert discover isolated fortresses that turn out to be monasteries millennia old, with living monks, or discover an exquisite blue mosque with golden dome rising from a fetid town.

Geographical and Historical Setting

The Near East, a region larger than the United States, commands a central world position astride three continents. It extends north-south from the Black and Caspian Seas to the Indian Ocean and Negro Africa and west-east from North Africa to India and Tibet. There are nineteen countries, colonies, dependencies, or principalities in the Near East.² Seventeen of these lie wholly within the area and two partly within it—one, the USSR south of the Caucasus Mountains, and the other the northern part of the Anglo-Egyptian

¹ The writer gratefully acknowledges the assistance of James Batal for his valuable suggestions and editing. Likewise the writer is indebted to several other friends, associates, and teachers for their criticisms, particularly to Professor Philip Hitti of Princeton University, Prof. E. A. Speiser of the University of Pennsylvania, and Laureston Ward of Harvard University.

² Not counting the tri-partition of Palestine passed by the United Nations in November, 1947.
Sudan bordering Egypt. (See Table 1.) Of these nineteen political units, all are Arabic-speaking except Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey, and the USSR. With the exception of Lebanon and Russia, all are predominantly Moslem and most proclaim Islam as their state religion.

To a considerable extent the Near East has been isolated by formidable barriers from the peripheral populations of the three continents it straddles. In early times these barriers kept the Near East sufficiently free from invasion to allow its peoples to have created what was at one time perhaps the finest world civilization. Between the Near East and the rest of Africa stretches the world's greatest desert, the Sahara; between the Near East and much of Asia are the world's highest mountains, the Himalayan and Tibetan wall. The world's largest system of inland seas, the Mediterranean, Black, and Caspian, plus the Caucasus Mountains separate the area from Europe. Throughout history three gateways have carried practically all the in-and-out traffic: first, the fording of the narrow, river-like strip of water between Turkey and Europe; second, the grassy desert between Iran and Siberian Russia; and third, the inland seas, notably the Mediterranean. With improvements in transportation technology, increasingly more people have poured through these gateways. The first was forded from earliest times; horsemen pounded through the second more than a millennium before Christ; and by Greek times the Mediterranean was becoming less and less a barrier to peoples and more and more the most used highway in and out of the Near East. In fact in modern times the Mediterranean has been like a giant pipe-line pouring Western peoples, armies, technologies, ideas, and intrigues into the Near East.

Although its area is vast, the territory of the Near East is largely sea and desert. The bulk of the population live crowded on the oases which dot the desert like green islands in a brown sea. (See Map 1.) Like an archipelago these verdant islands stretch from the thickly cultivated European mainland to humid central Africa. Each "island" contains a population ranging from a hundred to millions (See Map 2.) Cultivated Egypt is reputed to be one of the most densely populated regions in the world.

The effective cell unit of political organization, controlled by one or more cooperating overlords, has always been the cultivated "island"; that is, city, state, or combination of adjoining "islands"
MAP 1. NEAR EAST ENVIRONMENT
A scattering of green cultivated “islands” in a water and desert sea, lying between heavily cultivated Europe—Turkey and humid Africa.
Table 1

Area, Population, and Government of Near East Political Divisions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Area (sq. mi.)</th>
<th>Population (estimates)</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Date Established</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aden</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>British Colony</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Colony, and Hinterland</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>British Protectorate (incl. about 25 native rulers)</td>
<td>1839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Afghistan</td>
<td>112,000</td>
<td>700,000</td>
<td>From Absolute Monarchy to Constitutional Monarchy</td>
<td>1922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Anglo-Egyptian Sudan</td>
<td>323,000 b</td>
<td>2,000,000 b</td>
<td>British and Egyptian Condominium (a ruling Sheikh)</td>
<td>1899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Bahrein Is.</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>British Protectorate</td>
<td>1820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Egypt</td>
<td>386,000</td>
<td>18,000,000</td>
<td>Constitutional Monarchy</td>
<td>1922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Iran a</td>
<td>628,000</td>
<td>15,000,000</td>
<td>Constitutional Monarchy</td>
<td>1925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Iraq</td>
<td>143,000 (?)</td>
<td>4,000,000</td>
<td>Constitutional Monarchy</td>
<td>1932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Kuwait</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>70,000</td>
<td>British Protectorate (a ruling Sheikh)</td>
<td>1808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) Lebanon</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
<td>Republic</td>
<td>1941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) Oman Coast</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11) Muscat Oman</td>
<td>82,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>British Protectorate (a ruling Sultan) early</td>
<td>1800s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12) Trucial Oman and Qatar</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>600,000</td>
<td>British Protectorate (about 8 independent Sheikhs)</td>
<td>1820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13) Palestine</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>1,600,000</td>
<td>British Mandate</td>
<td>1923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14) Russia a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The 25 million Moslems in the USSR are not included here.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15) Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>700,000</td>
<td>4,500,000</td>
<td>Absolute Monarchy</td>
<td>1926–1932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16) Syria</td>
<td>58,500 (?)</td>
<td>3,000,000</td>
<td>Republic</td>
<td>1941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17) Transjordan</td>
<td>34,700</td>
<td>400,000</td>
<td>Constitutional Monarchy</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18) Turkey a</td>
<td>297,000</td>
<td>19,000,000</td>
<td>Republic</td>
<td>1923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19) Yemen</td>
<td>190,000</td>
<td>4,000,000</td>
<td>Absolute Monarchy (Theocracy)</td>
<td>Post-World War I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,130,000</td>
<td>84,000,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a The three non-Arabic-speaking countries entirely within the Near East (Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey) and two countries partly within the Near East (USSR, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan) are in various degrees buffer states or transitional in culture to regions contiguous to them; that is, Turkey is transitional to Europe, Afghanistan and Iran are buffer states between India and Russia, and the northern part of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan is transitional to Negro Africa. The USSR, and the most strongly transitional—Afghanistan and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan—are excluded for the most part from the present discussion. Turkey is included only in the over-all treatment of the region, but excluded from the second section devoted mainly to a description of the Arab core of component states.

b Including only about one-third.

## Table 2

**Foreign Trade of Near Eastern Countries with Different Regions**

(Imports and Exports Combined, in Thousands of British Pounds, as of 1937; for Iran only, as of 1935–36)

### Part I: By Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Near East</th>
<th>Rest of Asia</th>
<th>All Europe</th>
<th>Western Europe</th>
<th>USSR</th>
<th>Balkans</th>
<th>Miscellaneous</th>
<th>Not Listed</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Egypt</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Palestine and Transjordan</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Syria and Lebanon</strong></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Iraq</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Iran</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Turkey</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total of Above Countries</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Part II: By Total Value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Near East</th>
<th>Rest of Asia</th>
<th>All Europe</th>
<th>Western Europe</th>
<th>USSR</th>
<th>Balkans</th>
<th>Miscellaneous</th>
<th>Not Listed</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Egypt</strong></td>
<td>2,528</td>
<td>7,200</td>
<td>53,763</td>
<td>49,446</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>3,845</td>
<td>4,905</td>
<td>2,621</td>
<td>71,017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Palestine and Transjordan</strong></td>
<td>3,098</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>13,104</td>
<td>10,987</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2,117</td>
<td>1,134</td>
<td>836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Syria and Lebanon</strong></td>
<td>4,365</td>
<td>1,503</td>
<td>7,043</td>
<td>6,245</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>728</td>
<td>1,315</td>
<td>747</td>
<td>14,973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Iraq</strong></td>
<td>1,544</td>
<td>3,505</td>
<td>7,235</td>
<td>7,169</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,877</td>
<td>979</td>
<td>15,140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Iran</strong></td>
<td>3,336</td>
<td>4,217</td>
<td>20,444</td>
<td>13,700</td>
<td>6,744</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,791</td>
<td>4479</td>
<td>35,267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Turkey</strong></td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>32,010</td>
<td>28,820</td>
<td>2,150</td>
<td>1,040</td>
<td>6,260</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>41,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total of Above Countries</strong></td>
<td>16,071</td>
<td>17,685</td>
<td>133,599</td>
<td>116,367</td>
<td>9,502</td>
<td>7,730</td>
<td>18,282</td>
<td>10,562</td>
<td>196,199</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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*Almost entirely oil exports to Egypt.*

**Sources.**

- Egypt: Economic Research Institute, *Statistical Handbook of Middle Eastern Countries* (Hamadip Liphshitz Press, Jerusalem, 1944), p. 71. Exchange rate, 975 L. E. per 1,000 L. B.
But despite this ever-present island loyalty, the disposition of seas, deserts, and mountains has grouped these green islands into four areas peripheral to one common center. The four peripheral areas are Arabia, Egypt-Sudan, Turkey, Iran-Afghanistan. Through thousands of years of history, each has had relatively greater independence, homogeneity, and continuity than their common center comprising Palestine, Transjordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. The latter have been fought over ceaselessly and handed from conqueror to conqueror. As shown on Map 2 this geographical and historical grouping of city states into nations has been likened to four houses around a common courtyard.

The semi-isolation of these four houses (Map 2) has been furthered by the fact that all are contiguous to large, fertile regions—Turkey to Europe; Iran-Afghanistan to India and Russia; Egypt to the Sudan, to Ethiopia, and by sea to Europe; Arabia to Ethiopia. However, only in the case of Turkey and Iran has the actual connection been important.

Excepting Arabia (for which there are few statistics), each of the “houses” is strongly tied to its rich neighbors by trade (see Table 2). Egypt and Turkey are tied to Europe with 76 and 78 percent of the foreign trade, respectively, going to European markets; Iran to Russia, with 19 percent, or three times the percentage of any other country’s Russian trade. All these “houses” have very small percentages of foreign trade with other Near East countries: Egypt 4 percent, Turkey 3 percent, and Iran 9 percent. The latter, however, would be far less were it not for petroleum exports to Egypt, a new and special development.

In contrast, the five central courtyard countries trade proportionally more with other Near East states, an indication of their closer internal ties—Palestine and Transjordan combined, 17 percent; Syria and Lebanon, 29; and Iraq, 10. Iraq with its location at the head of the Persian Gulf has by far the largest trade with Asia outside the Near East. Twenty-three percent of Iraq’s total foreign trade was with Asiatic countries, especially Japan and India.

Although Europe dominates the trade of all Near Eastern countries, (Transjordan excepted), geographic location distinctly

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8 Fifty-six percent of the foreign trade of Transjordan, for example, was with Palestine in 1938 (The Statistical Handbook of Middle Eastern Countries, p. 123).
MAP 2. VILLAGE AND URBAN POPULATION

Centers of population concentrated in cultivated "islands." The distribution of these centers can be conveniently laid out into four areas peripheral to one central area—likened to four houses around a central courtyard (see inset).

Based on maps 1:4 million, Asia, G.S.G.S., London.
weights all trade connections. The “houses” favor contiguous external powers, and the courtyard countries their Near Eastern neighbors. Regarding the “houses,” their external trade tends to be a peripheral force drawing them away from the Near East and reinforcing an already existing geographic separation.

To understand the present status of the Near East one must continue to bear in mind the two features of its geographic position, already stated: one, its central world position contiguous to the more fertile and populous Russia, the rest of Europe, and India; and two, the internal layout of cultivated “islands” grouped into five archipelagos, which have been compared to four houses around a courtyard. Geography has set the frame within which, for over 5,000 years, Near Easterners have become mass organized into groups, and these units have variously combined and conflicted with other groups.

Reduced to simplest terms, group organization in the Near East, today as always, is the result of certain conflicting forces and loyalties: 1) the cellular isolation and patriotism of each cultivated “island” or section thereof (i.e., city states), as against, 2), the combination of these “islands” into four peripheral “houses,” or 3), the merging of “houses” to form a dominant Near East power. Whenever the latter condition existed, the Near East conquered the surrounding world; whenever the “island” organizations were dominant, the Near East has been conquered by outsiders, and the Europeans have been, by all odds, the invaders par excellence.

During the last 2,000 years the Near Easterners have been their own masters and masters of the surrounding peoples for about half of the time, while for the other half, many of them have been under European domination—Roman, Byzantine, the Crusaders, the Russians, English, and French. Power has alternated between the East and the West. The last alternating cycle began a little after 1300 when Near Easterners had expelled Crusaders, driven out and absorbed Mongols, and in turn themselves dominated much of Europe, North Africa, and India. The energy behind this drive finally dwindled, and, beginning about 1800 with Napoleon, Europe began to inundate the Near East with armies, navies, traders, administrators, and modern technologies. Map 1 illustrates four progressive stages in this, the most recent European domination of the Near East.
MAP 3. PROGRESSIVE EUROPEAN ENCROACHMENT ON THE NEAR EAST

Circle encloses Near East Area. Black indicates territory controlled by Europeans and Russians; white, territory controlled by Near Easterners, and stippled, territory independent of all these.

Before 1800, Near Easterners were masters in the Balkans, North Africa, and Northwest India. Since about 1800 to 1930-35, Europeans have been steadily wresting control from practically all peoples around the Near East and many within it.
From century to century the names of contestants have changed, but the conflict has been basically the age-old struggle between the East and the West. That struggle has resulted in Israelites fighting against Philistines; Greeks and Romans against Persians; Franks, Crusaders and young European powers against Moors, Saracens, and Turks; and, in modern times, Western European and Russian imperialists against Turks and Persians. And finally it is arraying European and American Jews of the West against the Arabs of the East.

The conflict has gone on variously under the banner of religion, trade, conquest, and colonization, but whatever the name, it results in the same basic phenomenon, namely *foreigners divesting local leaders of an authority they are unwilling to relinquish*. Seen in this light, the present-day Zionist program is but the most recent outbreak of an old, old struggle. Ironically enough, it is, in reverse, the one the Hebrews themselves faced originally against the sea-invading Philistines. Inevitably, to Arabs, the Zionists are the crowning burden in the century-and-a-half curse of Western conquest and imperialism, with the added sting that indigenous Jews are a minority easily controlled. Little do Arabs (not to mention Americans) appreciate the plight of a decimated, homeless, barricaded people on another continent. To Palestinian Arabs, these immigrant, Western-trained Jews are not unlike invading supermen, masters of modern organization and technology. Probably no army and no peoples in the history of the whole Near East have within one generation poured in in such numbers, certainly none as well organized, none since the Crusaders with the avowed aim and determination to settle, and none with such superior technology. Always in the past, the rulers of the Near East have achieved power by a combination of effective internal organization and technological superiority.

Because of its central position and because it has produced three world religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—the Near East has been subject to frequent invasion. All three religious groups have long established "claims" or connections which they have constantly kept alive from century to century by rituals, writings, and by streams of pilgrims. When, in the Middle Ages, Moslem conquerors cut off the Christian pilgrimages, the Christian world was
understandably inflamed. With famine and pestilence in their midst, and with church, military, and commercial leaders spurring them on, little wonder the masses joined the Crusades. When, through pogroms, millions of European Jews were massacred, burned, and butchered, little wonder that they too turned to the land which they have always prayed to restore to the glories it achieved in the days of Solomon. This yearning became more acute as other countries closed their doors to Jewish refugees.

Thus the Near East suffers from world disturbances brought on not only by itself, but by peoples beyond its borders and over whom it has no possible control. The Mongols, driven by droughts, progressive dessication, political troubles, and the like, started on their world conquest and poured into the Near East. In recent times, the Near East has been a battle ground in two world wars, in the most recent of which the independent states remained neutral, with certain short-lived exceptions. Even the United States was drawn in when American troops manned the Persian railroads and numerous airports throughout the area. And America is leasing in Arabia what is perhaps the world's biggest oil pool. How free is the Near East?

In its role as a center of world peoples, powers, and intrigues, the Near East has alternately been a power welling up and overflowing its boundaries with peoples, religions, and armies, and, as at present, a vortex or power-vacuum into which has poured the peripheral pool of world's peoples, armies, ideas, and technologies. Map 4 is an attempt to symbolize the historical role the Near East has played in the old world alternating between a source of power and power-vacuum.

In this ceaseless internal and external power struggle, it has been mainly the overlords and the city dwellers, a mere handful of the population, who have benefited or suffered. The mass of the people, by and large, have been little affected. The bulk of the present eighty million or more are still impoverished and disease ridden. Incapacitated and debilitated by eye infections; parasitic diseases such as malaria, hookworm, bilharziasis; epidemic diseases such as typhus, typhoid, and cholera; and venereal diseases—it is small wonder that they put their trust in God, in Allah, or even propitiate the Devil, as is the practice of one group. The peasants can put little trust in their earthly overlords, and they themselves have neither knowledge
MAP 4: CENTRAL WORLD POSITION OF THE NEAR EAST

Outer circle includes the Old World; inner circle, the Near East; solid black center represents the most frequently contested area within the Near East, here called the Central Courtyard.

Arrows in the outer circle indicate the movement of peoples in and out of the Near East. The Near East has been alternately a vortex into which world populations pour and a fountainhead from which Near Easterners themselves overflow to regions outside.
of germs nor of medicine. To them this condition is merely a part of life, sanctioned, or at least tolerated, from on high. To Western eyes, theirs is a spineless submission, the blind faith of ignorance, but to them religion is strength, security, and salvation. If one offers to take a peasant from one of the backward countries to a doctor to cure his growing blindness, he is very likely to refuse treatment, saying with superior, resigned conviction, "If Allah wants me to be blind, blind I'll be."

Withal, the Near Easterners have attained an adjustment that many of us fail in attaining, an adjustment in which villagers and tribesmen are more contented, if not more cheerful, than many groups in our own Western world, and in which nervous disorders are a rarity.

World Importance

With a land area largely desert, with people impoverished and disease-ridden, why since the beginning of time should anyone want to stay in the Near East who had any other place to live or work? And especially why have Westerners been trooping in in such large numbers for the last 150 years? Can it be oil, as the Near East is one of the world's richest petroleum centers, if not the richest? Britain, Russia, France, and now the United States, all have a stake in its oil development. Great Britain is dependent on Near Eastern oil and, at our present rate of consumption and known reserves, the United States may well be dependent upon it in the near future. However, oil is a recent arrival on the Near East scene. Western European nations long before the oil age had been jockeying for power within the Near East.

In addition to oil, several other products are important in present day commerce—Egyptian cottons, Iraq dates, Persian carpets, Turkish chrome, Palestine citrus fruits. Other items still present are reminders of by-gone days of splendor—frankincense and myrrh from Arabia and pearls from the Persian Gulf. In Roman times the Near East was important as a granary, but grain raising became unimportant here after the steel plough made the rich prairies and grasslands of the world into wheat fields.

A glance at Table 2 reveals that over two-thirds of the imports
and exports of eight Near East countries is with Europe. But the total foreign trade is not great; for example, the Netherlands Indies and British Malaya combined, with about the same population and a fourth the territory, carry on almost twice the volume.

A glance at Map 5 demonstrates that the major reason for the importance of the Near East is not to be found within the area itself, but outside. Note its central geographical position, between torrid Africa, raw-material producing Asia and manufacturing Europe, areas which contain more than half the world's population (550,000,000 Europeans and Russians, and 400,000,000 Indians, to say nothing of the uncounted Chinese and Africans).

With the Suez Canal connecting the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, the Near East is the funnel through which passes practically all commerce between Europe and the East. In 1937, the net tonnage passing through the canal totaled 35,269,000, representing 69 percent of the net tonnage of all foreign trade entering American ports. This is the commerce stimulated by Western development of Eastern raw materials—originally spices and luxuries, more recently rubber, ore, tea, cotton, grain—most frequently shipped to western Europe for consumption or manufacture into finished products. Some of the latter, such as cotton cloth and tires, are then reshipped throughout the world, many of them to regions which supplied the original raw material. It is a trade that has enriched every country fortunate enough to control a good share of it—Venetians, Portuguese, Dutch, English, to name only a few.

The surest way to get rich from this trade is to control all the sources of supply and all the routes. Now in the air age, with the advantages of a desert climate, minus rain and fog, the central Near East is the focus of world air routes. To control the water and air routes requires political power. And to achieve and maintain political influence usually requires political intrigue. No power is secure with other powers pressing for advantages. As Speiser has said, "Participation in the doings of the Near East has come to be equivalent of a seat on the world's geostrategic exchange."  

There is an additional reason why the Near East is important

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Map 5. Population and Technological Development

Population: Size of circle is proportionate to population. Numerals refer to population in millions.

Technological Development: Degree of Mechanization refers to industry, transport, agriculture (petroleum production is excluded).

Note that the Near East is a funnel for Old World trade, the focus of sea highways between populous, industrialized Europe and heavily populated India. Also note the small population and technological backwardness of the Near East as compared with Europe, Russia, and India.
today. Its countries are in the forefront of the new independence movement among Asiatic and African peoples. Following World War I, the eventual granting of independence to Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Transjordan was a basic policy agreed to by the League of Nations. But in part because the powers felt that these countries would at first not be able to govern themselves, the novel mandate experiment was devised, whereby an individual country, responsible to and agent of the League, would administer each territory until it was able to stand alone. The Treaty framers went out of their way to affirm the altruistic nature of the agreement: the mandate is a “sacred trust of civilization”; and, again, the mandatory power as trustee of the League of Nations “will derive no benefit from such trusteeship.” The system supplied for the first time in history the principle of public trusteeship and national responsibility to an international supervisory authority. By the end of World War II, of the mandated countries only Palestine had not been granted independence.

The world is seeing the intensification of this independence movement right in the heart of the colonial empires of those who helped frame the mandates. India has already been granted her independence. In Burma, Indonesia, Indo-China, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and Madagascar there are restless stirrings for freedom. Most Moslem peoples are in the van of the independence movement, including Pakistanis, Indonesians and North Africans, with their Near Eastern brothers encouraging them on in the Security Council meetings of the United Nations (summer of 1947). The Near East is the hub of Islam (see Map 6), which numbers close to three hundred million followers, almost twice the population of the United States. We sometimes forget that at one time the Moslems were the dominant world power, controlling the whole Near East, ruling or terrorizing at different times practically all of southern Europe from the Black Sea to the Atlantic, as well as much of Asia, and dominating the Netherlands Indies as aggressive traders and missionaries.

It all had humble beginnings. In the Islamic year 1 (our 622 A.D.) a handful of Arabs around Mecca and Medina launched a career of conquest and conversion which has not stopped to this day. Tribal warfare among believers was tabooed, so with unbridled fervor
MAP 6. THE MOSLEM WORLD

they unleashed their combined religious and warring energies on all nonbelievers. In a few years they had in their grasp the whole Near East (except for what is now Turkey), where the Christian Byzantine empire had been firmly entrenched.

It would be another eight hundred years before the Turks, as fighting Moslems, took Constantinople by storm and undertook their mission of bringing the Near East into the fold of believers, extending Moslem conquests even to the gates of Vienna. In the meantime, on fast camels and horses, they had an unrivaled mobility. Generations of tribal raiding had trained and steeled them in the arts of desert warfare. A sandstorm was cover for attack rather than an excuse to rest. With these skills and an enthusiasm whipped up by the flush of victory and booty in quantity hitherto undreamed of, they swept into India and across North Africa into Malta, Sicily, and Spain to the foot of the Pyrenees, where they were welcomed by the Jewish population as liberators.

It is true that at the time of the Arab conquest there was a decided lack of effective organization within any of the other powers existing at that time. However, success was attributable not only to this fact but also to the genius of Mohammed and the early Caliphs, who for the first time perhaps in Arab history turned internecine fighting into national cooperation for international conquest. Ibn Saud, the present king of Saudi Arabia, has accomplished in his lifetime a similar unification of most of the Arabian peninsula, but the airplanes and armored cars of European powers have restrained him from conquests for further unification.

Islamic success was carried right into the grasslands of Mongolia, where to this day it is reputed that Mongolian Moslems are the more vigorous groups, proselytizing their Buddhist brothers. The inherent militancy of Islam, in addition to the pilgrimages to Mecca, seems to endow the faithful with proselytizing success wherever they come in contact with people not superior to them in technology and education.

The Arabs achieved greatest success in the desert and grassland areas, an environment to which they were adjusted and in which their technology was naturally most effective. In varying degrees, however, their influence has spread to temperate and tropical forest-peoples. The Turks conquered the Balkans, and to this day in the
evergreen forest of Yugoslavia there are villages with wooden mosques and minarets. In the Netherlands Indies there are 80,000,000 Moslems. The Indonesians, who are mostly Malayans, were converted to Islam by aggressive Arab traders in the thirteenth century. For centuries previously these traders had sailed to Southern India, borne by two favorable winds—the summer monsoon, which carried them with sails full in one tack from South Arabia to Southern India; and the winter monsoon which was equally favorable for the return sail. This was the middle lap in the three-course ocean trade from the Indonesian spice islands to the growing towns of Europe, urban markets gradually becoming free from continual feudal fighting and armed banditry. Here in Europe a lively trade in spices was growing, not only for use as condiments but principally as drugs, a quackery unexposed until the advent of scientific methods. Hindus controlled the first lap from Indonesia to Southern India, Arabs the second to South Arabia and the Near East, where much of the goods was consumed. Sometime around the thirteenth century, Arab traders succeeded in wrestling the first from the Hindus, and as usual they set about proselytizing. The Arabs thus controlled the first two courses. The third lap through the Mediterranean was controlled by the Venetians. Later in the fourteenth century, they added a fourth to Western Europe by way of Gibraltar and the Atlantic, and thus themselves controlled two laps. Both Arabs and Venetians grew rich on their trade until the sixteenth century, when all trade routes to the East were short-circuited by the circumnavigation of Africa first by the Portuguese and soon after by the Dutch and the English. Although nowadays most trade between Europe and the East flows through the Suez Canal, virtually all of it is carried in Western bottoms. The Near Easterners have become the victims of a Western ship technology and trade organization that was fathered by them or for which they were at least largely responsible in first developing.

Despite the loss in trade, riches, and political power, the Moslems have managed to maintain the number of converts almost intact to this day, Spain, Sicily, and a few other places excepted. In many parts of central and southern Africa (as indicated on Map 6) Moslem missionaries are steadily winning converts among Negroes. Their success is due to the fact that, unlike Christian missionaries,
many do not maintain a superior racial attitude, but on the contrary intermarry among their converts, live intimately with them, and treat them to a greater degree as equals, socially and religiously. All this, despite the fact that south Arabian traders and other Moslems have for centuries profited from a rich slave trade, successfully stamped out by the British barely one generation ago.

In the arts of peace, too, the Arab conquerors made great progress. They introduced the new tool of political toleration. The three groups, Christians, Jews, Sabaeans, were required to pay a small tribute, far less than that of pagans, in return for protection. In architecture, painting, and embroidery, Moslem works are among the masterpieces of the world and were of considerable influence in early Italy. In the fields of science, philosophy, and mathematics, the scholars of the Near East were the best in their day, carrying the torch of learning while Europe of the Middle Ages slumbered. Prior to this period of Near Eastern ascendancy there were other eras in which the Near East led the world in cultural development: the first extended for 3,000 years, perhaps even longer, before Alexander the Great; the second has covered about 1,000 years of the 1,300 since Mohammed. Will there be another time?

Every day most Moslems publicly turn toward Mecca, and many of them, five times a day, recite “There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is His Prophet.” For one month a year, they fast during daylight hours. Their faith prescribes the regular giving of alms. Once a lifetime, all who can are supposed to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, upon the completion of which they receive the title of Hajji, which gives to all, whether prince or pauper, an enviable prestige.

From all corners of the old world, the pilgrims come, nearly 200,000 strong before World War II, all kinds—rich and poor, yellow, white, brown, and black. Of all world religions, Islam seems to be the most successful in demolishing barriers of creed, race, and nationality; the line is drawn between believers and nonbelievers. On the common ground of faith these Moslems meet and reinforce a somewhat waning solidarity. World War II brought the annual pilgrimage practically to a standstill. Since then the transportational difficulties are slowly being overcome, and prominent among those
who succeed in overcoming them is the contingent of pilgrims from among the 25,000,000 Moslems of the U.S.S.R.

The Near East's solid front against the Zionists, its grievances against the British, and the solidarity of Pakistan Moslems against the Hindus are familiar topics in today's newspapers. But perhaps we are less aware that the 80,000,000 Indonesians, fighting for freedom, are overwhelmingly Moslem. Before World War II, they formed the largest contingent of Meccan pilgrims, 30,000 annually. It is not irrelevant to point out that their island domain, including British Malaya and associated islands, produce about half of the world's tin and almost all the world's rubber. Before World War II the Netherlands Indies produced as much petroleum as Europe. In 1938 it made up 12½ percent of the total production of the entire Eastern Hemisphere. And as though by some trick of history, they together with their Near Eastern and North African brothers, watch over the strategic "tollgates" of the old world's waterways—Gibraltar, the Dardanelles, the Suez Canal, and the Malaccan Straits (Singapore). Who knows, perhaps the Moslems will once again dominate the world?

Technology and Organization

In this conflict between the Eastern and Western world, he wins who either surpasses the other in technology or effective group organization or both. Consider the European conquest of the Near East in World War I. Technologically, Europe commanded battle-ships, airplanes, mechanized industries, modern armies; the Near East had fleets of sailing dhows, a Turkish navy hardly worthy of the name, practically no mechanized industries, and a poorly equipped Turkish army.

The European powers numbered their populations in tens of millions, many of them effectively organized into business-finance corporations, world-wide trade combines, governments, hospitals, scientific bodies, modern universities, as well as religious and philanthropic bodies. In contrast, during World War I, Near Eastern countries had populations of around 10,000,000, if that many, ineffectively mass organized in (1) a corrupt government or (2) religious bodies, and practically nothing more. The Near East had
no world-wide trade combines of any consequence because the West had wrested world trade from her centuries ago. The industrial revolution had not been diffused to her, so she had neither the technical means of production, communications, and transport, nor the scientific knowledge which makes possible the large-scale modern business and scientific organizations. Her businessmen carried on small family businesses; modern hospitals were few and far between; and most doctors were Christians or Jews. Primary education was conducted in the mosques and consisted in memorizing the Koran, writing, and a little arithmetic. University education revolved around theology and metaphysics. Technical education was given by the guilds through the apprentice system. All this while she was the prisoner of her theocratic state—a collusion of political and religious leaders—a technique of mass organization she had fathered thousands of years before.

Now her theocracy was decrepit with old age, corrupt, but picturesque: a theocracy in which heirs-apparent were confined to harems till they ascended the throne, sometimes in a doddering old age and usually with the experience of an adolescent; in which eunuchs had power; and in which chief turban-winders and nightingale-keepers padded the palace payrolls.

Compare this state to that of a few centuries earlier, when Turkish armies met no equal in Europe because they alone were organized with conscripted forces and because their troops displayed an unmatched discipline. Even a thousand years ago when, with religious and political zeal combined, soldiers mounted on fleet Arab horses and camels met no equal in Europe or Asia. Then their theocracy was a unifying force, while their opponents had neither the organization nor technology to impede them.

From circumstantial evidence it seems that in the Near East, the practice of irrigated agriculture first made necessary the mass organization of people. It is similar to a modern factory production line where each successive operation is dependent on the ones preceding. Take for example ancient Mesopotamia, now Iraq. While the yearly floods are running, anyone who fails to keep his section of the banks high and firm and in good repair incurs the danger of ruinous floods bringing starvation not only for himself but for every family, tribe, village, and city along the river. In those early times,
up to tens of thousands of people were involved—a large mass organization even today.

In the low-water season, these same people would be busy digging out the canals which the silt-laden waters yearly choked. And throughout most of the year, officials metered out the irrigation water allotted to each canal or user. There was danger also from enemies or saboteurs who could cut the diversion dams or headwaters of the dam or weaken the banks or levees which contained the flood waters. Consequently a military or police system was inevitable. Thus it is possible that irrigated agriculture made necessary the first mass organization of people not only in the Near East but also in India and China. Let us Westerners not grow smug in attributing our present superiority to our supposed “innate” or “God-given” racial superiority. At present the skill of effective mass organization and the torch of technical progress are both in our hands, but they were not a little over 500 years ago, and who knows where they will be even 100 years hence?

Present Disorganization

The Near East is divided and subdivided into 19 separate political units—nations, protectorates, colonies, and so on—and 26 units counting such closely associated territories as the Islamized Horn of Africa and Cyprus.\(^6\) The population of almost all 26 political units is splintered into a number of minority and tribal groups many with an intense internal loyalty. It is a region of nation against nation, and within one nation, group against group, and cross-cutting nations cooperating groups with stronger loyalties to themselves than to their nation. The national rivalries are similar to those in the Balkans and Ireland. The group conflicts are similar but usually more intense than those in the United States between old Americans and immigrants, Catholics and Protestants, Gentiles and Jews, labor and management, Negroes and whites. And the groups with loyalty cross-cutting national ties are similar though less effective than world Communists.

The present 26 individual political units are listed on Table 3.

\(^6\) Omitting the recent subdivisions of Palestine.
**Table 3**

*Number of Political Units in the Near East*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographical Regions</th>
<th>Around 1800</th>
<th>1914</th>
<th>1947</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I. Nile Valley</strong></td>
<td>1. Egypt (nominally under Turkey; Sudan conquered 1821)</td>
<td>1. Egypt (nominally under Turkey; British administered)</td>
<td>1. Egypt (strong British influence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from Mediterranean to confluence of Blue and White Nile.</td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, British-Egyptian condominium, former predominant</td>
<td>2. Anglo-Egyptian Sudan same as 1914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>II. Asia Minor</strong></td>
<td>2. Turkey</td>
<td>3. Russia</td>
<td>3. Russia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aegean to Caspian, Caucasus and Black Sea to Syrian desert and Mediterranean.</td>
<td>3. Iran</td>
<td>4. Turkey</td>
<td>4. Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian mountains to Indian mountain wall, and Persian Gulf to Siberian plain.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IV. Central Courtyard</strong></td>
<td>Turkey (see 2)</td>
<td>Turkey (see 4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Syrian desert and fertile crescent.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(Arabian Peninsular)*

| **V. Center—grassland plateau**             | 5. Wathabi Arabs | 7. Northern Tribes | 12. Saudi Arabia |
|                                            |               |                  |                  |

*Note: The table lists the major political units in the Near East, categorized by geographical regions.*
VI. Western—highland rim

Turkey
Wahhabi Arabs (see 5)

VII. Eastern—lowland rim

Turkey
Wahhabi Arabs (see 5)

VIII. Southern—highland rim

6. Local Chieftains (including Sultan of Kishin; see 10)
Wahhabi Arabs (see 5)

7. Muscat (British Protectorate.)

6. Local Chieftains, including Sultan of Kishin; see 10)

8. Local Chieftains, (nominal), shore near Red Sea opening
Muscat (see 7) conquered Indian Ocean ports early 1800s

9. Ethiopia

IX. African Horn
East of Ethiopian mountains and plateaus.

8. Local Chieftains, Turkey (see 2)

9. Ethiopia

10. Sultan of Kishin (see 6)

11. British Somaliland (British Protectorate)

12. Italian Somaliland b

13. Yemen

14. Trucial Oman (British Protectorate)

15. Trucial Oman (British Protectorate)

16. Trucial Oman (British Protectorate)

17. Aden (British Colony)

18. Aden Hinterland (British Protectorate)

19. Muscat Oman (British Protectorate)

20. British Somaliland (British Protectorate)

21. French Somaliland (French Protectorate)

22. Italian Somaliland c

23. Eritrea c

24. Ethiopia

25. British Colony

Miscellaneous

X. Cyprus—Mediterranean island.

16. British Somaliland (British Protectorate)

17. French Somaliland (French Protectorate)

18. Italian Somaliland b

19. Eritrea (Italian Colony)

20. Ethiopia

XI. Socotra—Island off African Horn.

10. Sultan of Kishin (see 6)

11. Bahrain Island (British Protectorate)

12. Kuwait (British Protectorate)

13. Saudi Arabia (see 12)

14. Trucial Oman (British Protectorate)

15. Trucial Oman (British Protectorate)

16. Trucial Oman (British Protectorate)

a Political units are numbered in arabic numerals. A continuous political unit in more than one geographical region is numbered only once. The eleven geographical regions are numbered in roman numerals.

A political unit is a more or less continuous land area under a single authority, either bounded by a large body of water or other land areas under different authorities. (A protectorate is counted as a separate political unit.) To refrain from excessive complexity; (1) Independent local Chieftains, Sultans, Sheikhs, etc., in one geographical region or within one protectorate are counted as one political unit. (2) All islands are excluded except Cyprus, Socotra, and Bahrein. Each is counted as a separate political unit only if it is governed by a local authority different from that of the nearest mainland.

b Northern part.

c Status September, 1947, awaiting Italian Peace Treaty.
(Small protectorates and the like with independent chieftains are counted as one unit.) Compare this to the United States with one single authority and an area comparable in size. In fact the Near East is a rival of Europe for the dubious distinction of being the most politically fractured region in the world. Europe has twenty-five countries not counting Iceland and the several small principalities, duchies, etc. like Luxembourg, Andorra, Monaco. Instead of lessening, political fracturing in the Near East has progressively increased in the last 150 years creating more states and potentially more national rivalries. Around 1800, there were ten political units; in 1914, twenty-two; and in 1947, twenty-six.

Table 4 was compiled to bring out the degree of group splintering within political units. This table is restricted to five contiguous political units that are perhaps the most splintered of all Near East territories. These five territories comprise the central courtyard previously referred to—Palestine, Transjordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. Here live about 10,000,000 people split into almost twenty-five large organizational fragments of 10,000 people or more each. Every conceivable kind of Christian, Jewish, and Moslem sect is found and many pagan, most of them too small to include in Table 4: semi-nomadic Arab Christians with tents for churches; “good” Samaritans now no more than 100-200 strong, representatives of ancient Israel still clinging to their old practices and speaking Aramaic, the language of Jesus; representatives of modern Israel, political terrorists streamlined with the latest innovations in technical equipment, public relations, and legal procedures. But perhaps the most surprising of all are the handsome, hard-drinking, devil-worshiping Yezidis who solemnly rationalize that God will hurt no one so they had better expend their energies on keeping the devil at peace.

Some of these ethnic splinters are survivals of once large groups, important in bygone days. There are the Sabaeans or Mandaean moon-worshippers, now silversmiths in most cities and towns of Iraq. From their ranks in the third century A.D. sprang the founder of Manichaeism whose attempt to blend the doctrines of Zoroaster with those of Christ met with such success in the Roman world that the Emperors vigorously suppressed it, but it still continued to trouble the Christian churches well into the Middle Ages. There
are the Nestorian Christians who once boasted 230 bishops from Ceylon to Siberia, and from South Arabia to the great grass plains of Mongolia, where in the thirteenth century the Nestorians were prominent in the court of the Khans as doctors and administrators of the far-flung realm. Now they number a few tens of thousands and it was only thanks to the British that they escaped massacre and complete annihilation immediately after World War I.

In spite of all the persecutions and bloodshed by Moslems in the name of Allah, they have shown throughout their history a tolerance far greater than most realize, particularly for Christians, Jews, and Sabaeans. This goes back to the original teachings of Mohammed who held in great respect these believers in revealed religions who preceded him and with whom he came in contact. They were exempted from land and capitation taxes, and in civil and criminal judicial matters, they were subject almost entirely to their own spiritual heads except when Moslems were involved. This tolerance is therefore in large part responsible for the rich heterogeneity of ethnic splinters still existing in the Near Eastern world today.

However quaint these groups may appear to us, they have cursed the Near East with unabsoled and often fanatically independent groups and minorities, usually revolutionists against any who ruled, and frequently quislings for those who aspire to rule. The British used the Arabs against the Turks. The Italians and Japanese courted the Yemenites as a counterweight against the British and the rest of the Arabians. The Russians stirred the Kurds against the Turks, Iraqis, Iranians and indirectly against the British. The French played Maronites against Moslems.

For the Arabs, the Zionists are the most threatening of any minority group. Not only do Zionists comprise one-third of the population of Palestine and have been steadily gaining through immigration, but they are masters of modern technology and mass organization methods. Even taking the 10,000,000 people in the five countries of the central "courtyard," here the immigrant Jews together with indigenous Jews number close to 1,000,000 or one-tenth the whole population, which makes them the largest non-Moslem minority (see Table 4). The Sunni village and urban majority are only 4,000,000 and at that divided between five countries. What makes Zionism more unbearable to the Arabs is that
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOSLEMS</th>
<th></th>
<th>NON-MOSLEMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name</strong></td>
<td><strong>Approximate Number</strong></td>
<td><strong>Percent of Total</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Sunni-Arabs (urban and village dwellers)</td>
<td>4,000,000</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Shiite (urban and village dwellers)</td>
<td>2,500,000</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Sunni-Arabs (nomads)</td>
<td>over 500,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Sunni-Kurds</td>
<td>over 500,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Alouites</td>
<td>over 100,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Druzes</td>
<td>over 100,000</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Turcomans</td>
<td>over 100,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Iranians</td>
<td>over 100,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) Ismailites</td>
<td>over 10,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Moslems</strong></td>
<td>8,000,000</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11) Jacobites (Syrian Orthodox)</td>
<td>over 10,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12) Nestorians</td>
<td>over 10,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13) Mandaeans or Sabaeans</td>
<td>over 10,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14) Yezidis</td>
<td>over 10,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Non-Moslems</strong></td>
<td>over 2,000,000</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: As census taking is both rare and inaccurate in the Near East, any compilation of population statistics is open to doubt. This table was constructed by taking the best estimates from sources below.

For each of the 5 territories, the estimates of the size of the constituent groups was usually based on old censuses or estimates. To adjust for the present day, the following rough method was used: In a given territory, group A for example in 1927 comprised 100,000 out of a total of 1,000,000 people or 10% of the population of the territory. Say then, the latest total population census or estimate for the same territory is 1,500,000, so group A has been computed as numbering 150,000 people (i.e., 10% of the total), unless definite information to the contrary is known.


western Europe is dumping on them its own minority problem, administered by Great Britain and financed largely from the United States. In this day of large powers, 40,000,000 Arabs need a strong friend and protector—an ally to side with them—and they will find one.

Five thousand years as a world center with waves of conquerors and proselytizers parading in and out has left the Near East with the accumulated remnants of shattered groups like a beach littered with shipwrecks. None of these groups has been either sufficiently dominant or persistent to wipe out the differences. Thus far the Arabic language and Islamic religion have been the most effective unifiers. But even within Islam itself, rival sects have long been pitted against each other. Conquerors have been unable to rule large areas for long. Invariably large political units have split up. For example, the Wahhabis unified most of Arabia around 1800 (see Table 3), but it later re-splintered. Internal dissensions had weakened it within, and from without came Great Britain as a protector of autonomous coastal chieftains perpetuating the political fragments of the moment. Ibn Saud, the monarch of expanding Arabia, and descendant of former Wahhabi Arabian conquerors, has himself reconquered and unified much of it. But more than once British gunboats, airplanes, and the like have prevented him from incorporating further territory. Pax Brittanica in Arabia has encouraged and brought about commercial development, elimination of commercial slavery, internal reforms within individual states, but it has done little to lessen political fracturing within the peninsula.

Even America, in the name of education, has inevitably added to the process. In Turkey and Lebanon, colleges that were originally financed largely through private American contributions and still have Americans on the staff are the outstanding modern educational institutions in the whole Near East. Many students, educated in the better ways of life and thought, graduate to find opportunities limited. The technical backwardness, the contrast of enormous wealth and extreme poverty, the group hatreds, nepotism, the apathy of peasant millions and overlords alike for change, all this is disheartening. Some of these "over-educated" products of the West form small listless "middle-class" groups talking progress,
but either powerless, unwilling, or thwarted in their attempts to change a millennia entrenched system.

A second reason at the root of the Near Eastern disorganization is the segregation of the population into small scattered settlements, forming four peripheral groups and one central one, likened to four houses around a central courtyard. The Near East is not a continuous cultivated land mass; it is figuratively an archipelago of cultivated "islands" (see Map 1).

Up to a generation ago, practically the only communication between the "cultivated islands" of the Near East was by native sailing ships, so-called dhows, and camel caravans. Just as the towns along the coast are seaports with their sailors, so the towns facing the desert are desert ports, where one meets camel-riding nomads holding themselves in a tall, straight haughty manner. Only after World War I was the 600-mile desert crossing made in an automobile from the Mediterranean to Baghdad in Iraq. By camel caravan it takes six weeks, by automobile close to a day and a night, and by plane a few hours. Before World War II, a paved road was partially completed to supersede an indefinite desert track. Cars still traveled only in convoys as precaution against Bedouin raids and in case of breakdown. With the going from one country to another, with the inevitable customs, delays, and the ceremony and care attached, this desert crossing was much like an ocean voyage.

It is little wonder then that each isolated settlement has developed its own group loyalty, and its own customs and leaders, with varying degrees of national loyalty to the particular "house" in which it is located. Those of the "courtyard" have had little loyalty beyond their own local group.

The third basic reason for group fragmentation is the existence side by side of three groups, each engaged in totally different economies; agriculturists, nomad stockherders, and fishermen, each of course based on an adjustment to a different environment. People in these groups usually have as little to do with one another as possible and frequently raid or steal from each other.

As though these differences were not enough, each group has been, so to speak, blessed with the curse of great commercial possibilities by expending a little extra organized effort. Irrigated agriculture on the alluvial plains of Egypt and Iraq give tremendous
returns when properly cultivated and regulated; desert nomads have controlled the overland trade routes; and finally the fishermen and coastal dwellers had much of the world's ocean and sea trade at their doorstep, which they could either carry, control, or pirate, and in times past, they effectively did all three. The opportunity for great wealth divided each of the three groups internally between the rich benefiter and the toilers, and resulted in a kind of feudal system notably among the agricultural group. Among the desert nomads with their system of joint family responsibility, tribal councils, and the like, chief use of the wealth and prestige gained by one tribe was to attack other tribes.

These three basic economies have naturally been supplemented by the artisans, producers of all manner of utensils, tools, clothing, and luxuries. To this day they can be seen plying their trade in the picturesque, smelly bazaars, which are roofed to keep out the hot oriental sun. With the introduction of the modern factory system, the number of these artisans is diminishing. As in most countries, the factories are concentrated in the cities, drawing artisans and peasants from the communal security of their little villages to become puppets of the new get-rich-quick, but uncertain, industrial system. These urban factory wage earners are naturally creating a new group, and only time will tell the extent to which they will further fracture Near East society.

Technical means of communication and travel have been inadequate to bring together frequently the various historical, insular, and occupational groups. People diffused throughout a circular region 2,000 miles in diameter cannot keep in close touch by camel, horse, and dhow. The difficulties merely of keeping currently informed and of policing have been enormous.

Modern large-scale medical, industrial, agricultural, and other organizations can be the rallying points for the merging of people from different groups, but such modern organizations require a technical knowledge and ability that few Near Easterners possess. Efficient hospitals and public sanitation departments are impossible without medical knowledge and training; large factories, water power, and most big irrigation projects are impossible without advanced engineering training; large-scale agricultural extension is impractical without local scientific experimentation. With some
exceptions, these have barely made a beginning in the Near East.

Thus, the technological basis for merging people into modern
day large-scale organizations has largely been lacking in the Near East.
Loyalty and cooperation have usually been limited to one’s family,
customers, small community, religion, and state; and frequently
loyalty to the latter has not been great.

The number of groups and minorities within the Near East has
complicated the evolution toward large, unified states. Each group
is a little nation unto itself. For example, even before partition the
Jewish Agency in Palestine operated much like a government with
its own chosen leaders, its own “state” religion, its own schools,
its own language, its own script. Now in varying degrees, this same
system applies to most if not all of the other groups. These five
“courtyard” countries are in a sense not sovereign nations; each is
a federation of little nations and groups.

Many of these groups, in addition to having their own “state”
religion, their own schools, also raise taxes or tithes among their
adherents, administer their own system of justice regarding such
family relationships as marriage, divorce, inheritances. All are
dogamous. The people of many are physically differentiated,
and superficially differ one from the other in any number of ways
including dress, manner of speech, occupation. In material culture,
architecture, and the like, there are frequently also considerable
differences.

The European “master race” (and this is true also of Americans,
wherever present) are no exception, as they, too, retain their own
schools, religions, language, script, endogamy, physical differentia-
tion, dress, and mannerisms. They have their own clubs from
which “natives” are with rare exceptions excluded. What is gen-
erally not known, is that Westerners have been protected by their
own system of courts. These were abolished by the Turks before
World War I and by Iran in 1928. In Egypt, where they will
terminate in 1949, they are called “Mixed Courts,” made up of
judges from several different European countries and at present
(1947) presided over by an American.

The semi-independent nation-like organization of most of these
groups makes them loyal to themselves only. Within a state, such a
group can become both a powerful and a dangerous minority in the
hands of self-seeking politicians and powers and can either be bribed or terrorized into voting as desired, making public demonstrations and the like. This is one danger of importing Western democracy into an Eastern setting.

By and large during the last few thousands of years, the perpetuation of “independent” groups, and perhaps even the creation of new ones, seems to have been a stronger tendency than the merging of groups. Every ambitious leader who has tried to weld minority groups into larger and larger units has inevitably met with resistance—not only during conquest but after decades and generations of rule. Is it any wonder, then, that to build and maintain a state, a small minority has had to impose its rule over all the other minorities? And is it any wonder that to maintain its control, the ruling clique has frequently buttressed its power with religious sanction—creating, in short, a theocracy?

Thus in the Near East with groups against group, a state of any size tends to be a house divided against itself. In contrast, we Americans today have inherited a degree of unity unusual in any large state, and even so we have only achieved a limited democracy. Near Easterners today are the unfortunate heirs of a millennia-old fragmented social system in an age when independent group survival depends on large political units. Plagued with this inheritance, how effective is democracy for them now? Can such a fragmented social system become unified mainly through democratic action? Or must the seeds of democratic rule be sowed to reap at a later harvest? In the world as it is today, these are vital questions and important for all of us to ponder.

The Component States, by James Batal

The Southern Rim

The one spot in the world where centuries count little, even though it contributed toward the early development of civilization, is the rim of states that half-circle the Arabian peninsula. This arc, com-

1 The writer gratefully acknowledges the valuable guidance and advice of F. L. W. Richardson, Jr.
posed of mountains, desert, sandy plain, and tropical jungle, has a coastline nearly as long as the combined 4,883 miles of the Atlantic, Gulf, and Pacific coastlines of the United States. Starting at the mouth of the Persia Gulf this rim includes a number of entities.

**Kuwait** is a principality, occupying 1,950 square miles of almost unrelieved desert. Ruled by an Arab sheikh, this tiny area would have been swallowed up in 1919 by the stern Wahhabite revivalist, Ibn Saud, had not guns from British planes taught the desert chief to respect the treaty of protection which England had securely forged with this sheikhdom in 1898. The Kuwaitians, nearly 80,000 of them, depend almost entirely upon the sea for their living; Kuwait city itself is a major port for the transshipment of goods brought there from India for the Mesopotamian valley countries.

**Trucial Oman** comprises a coastal plain on the Persian Gulf. Inland, its sandy sparsely settled wastes seldom rises above 500 feet to merge with the Rub Al-Khali (the Empty Quarter). Along the coast are numerous capes whose inhabitants are principally fishermen; the area nearest to Bahrein Island is famed for its pearls, while Bahrein itself is a veritable pool of oil wealth. This entire coastal strip has been little affected by Westerners, largely because of the extreme tropical climate. Minor tribal chiefs, independent of the Sultan of Oman, administer what government there is, under protective treaties with the British.

**Oman,** better known as Muscat-Oman from the name of its principal port, is an independent sultanate. Its 82,000 square miles stretch from the Musandam peninsula in the Persian Gulf southerly to the Hadhramaut on the Indian Ocean. Mountain ranges that climb to 9,900 feet, with bare granite and limestone walls that frequently descend rather abruptly to the sea, mark its general topography. This area is inhabited by some half million people, mostly Arabs. Along the Indian Ocean the population contains a strong Negroid element. Between the mountains are lateral valleys whose fertile reaches are cultivated by settled Arabs and some seminomadic Arabs. There they raise sheep, horses, goats, and camels. Oman has an annual rainfall of about 10 inches which, along with a tropical climate, helps to yield abundant vegetation. Tamarisks, oleanders, milk-bush, and acacias grow profusely in the coastal area while in the interior the dates for which Oman is most famous are cultivated.
along with cereals, vegetables, and fruits. Oman is ruled by a sultan with a British protective treaty helping to subsidize him.

Aden is another British protectorate which occupies the south-central part of the Arabian rim. One must not confuse Aden, the city, with Aden, the province, in whose 112,000 square miles are a number of states in protective treaty relations with the British since 1839. Within Aden province lies the Hadhramaut, at whose easterly end is Dhofur, the one spot in the Mediterranean desert belt where dense tropical vegetation flourishes as a result of the abundant rains brought by the Indian monsoons.

Throughout the entire Arabian rim the only legislative council imitating democratic procedure is found in Aden City, a British crown colony of 48,638 population, mostly Arabs. This council legislate only for Aden city. The sultans and the tribal leaders rule the rest of Aden province according to their ancient tribal customs or Islamic traditions. Some 630,000 persons, some of them wild non-Arabic speaking tribes in the Dhofur region who have ringlet hair and paint their bodies blue, dwell in the Hadhramaut.

A narrow but lofty valley, situated between the encroaching sands of the Rub Al-Khali and the coastal mountain ranges that reach often to 8,000 feet, gives the Hadhramaut a distinctive setting. It is a valley strung with many towns, significant for their intense agricultural activity. This is the region where skyscrapers were first introduced to man—buildings five and six stories high carved into the hillsides.

Yemen is a medieval mountain kingdom at the western tip of the Arabian rim. Its 78-year-old ruler, Zaydi Imam Yahya (reported to have died in January, 1948) came from a long line of holy ancestors reaching back a thousand years to the Prophet Mohammed. The world’s remaining vestige of a priestly kingdom has tried deliberately to isolate itself completely from western influences. Only in 1946 did the Imamate finally agree to admit foreign diplomats officially, and since that was an extremely unusual occasion, modern plumbing was installed in the royal guest house for the benefit of the American negotiators.

Yemen broke out of its medieval cloister when it was elected the 57th nation in the United Nations in September 1948. The Yemenite kingdom, with its 100,000 square miles of territory, mostly moun-
tainous and inhabited by some 500,000 people, is the most fertile part of the Arabian Peninsula. It is famous for its highly terraced agriculture and for having first introduced coffee to the world (in the 16th century).

Yemen’s inhabitants are sharply divided into readily recognized social classes, a setup that has all the attributes of the ancient Sabaean social system:

1) divine origin (the imam and his relatives);
2) hereditary sheikhs and landowners;
3) free farmers (these comprise the bulk of the population); and
4) the workers (Hojjeri, usually Negroid in appearance; many of whom live primitively in caves in the escarpment area).

All these states have several things in common. The climate is tropical. Except where the Arabian desert cuts into it, the peninsular rim is buttressed by mountain chains that rise to 10,000 feet. Sufficient rain falls on all these mountains. Alluvial soil is washed down the valleys, making possible intensive cultivation of cereal and vegetable crops in some places and the growing of coffee orchards in the Yemen and fruits in Oman. In the plains that branch inland from the mountains toward the desert, nomadic herdsmen raise sheep, goats and camels. They come to the settled communities to exchange the products of their animals for the dates and cereals and a few manufactured articles which they may need for a Bedouin life.

Despite the fact that 6,000,000 people, living along the rim, offer a potential market for manufactured goods, manufacturing industries in any of the sultanates are as rare as snowstorms in the neighboring Rub Al-Khali. The masses live simple and elemental lives as did their ancestors when they traveled in camel caravans along the fringes of the desert, bearing the precious incense and myrrh from the frankincense country of the Hadhramaut. The one agricultural pursuit that made life tenable despite the aridity of the desert—camel raising—is losing its life-sustaining source for the Bedouins, who see the automobile from the West displace the desert burden beast of the East in the transportation field that was exclusively the camel’s for centuries. This change has created hardships for the camel herdsmen of Oman.
Another factor that has retarded the technological development of the Arabian rim is this: it is cheaper to employ human labor than to buy machines. A landowner or village sheikh has no need for expensive mechanical equipment for agriculture. These sheikhdoms have had no money to surface roads, and of what use would it be to pave them when nobody (except the Westerner) was in a hurry to get to some other place? With only two miles separating a natural linking of Muttreh and Muscat, it remained for the initiative of the British military to cut a road between the mountains to connect these populous Omanee cities.

The tropical climate has taught the population its centuries'-grounded lesson: there is no need to hurry to get things done; life will go on just the same. With such a basic philosophy, there has been little incentive to establish electrical production plants for the propulsion of an industry that doesn't exist even in the blueprint stage. It is cheaper to harvest wheat or barley by the means of hundreds of hands than to buy a mechanical reaper which would merely throw out of work people whose lot has been inured to elemental wants since recorded history. Only the government people and upper classes in the larger communities rely upon motor vehicles for transportation. The commoners continue to travel on foot or ride a donkey or camel, if they happen to be economically that fortunate.

Wherever modern medical or sanitation agencies are found in this Arabian rim they are of Western origin. The American missionaries not only founded hospitals in Muttreh and Kuwait but also wandered into the mountain valleys among the Bedouins, with mobile clinics to heal the sick and to teach sanitary habits. Disposal of sewage has scarcely been changed from the dawn of the Mohammedan era. In Sana’a, the walled-in capital city in the Yemen highlands, sewage flows down the middle of the main street. Municipal drinking water systems are a rarity everywhere.

Throughout the rim, life revolves about the tribal system. This finds its extremes among the almost aboriginal, non-Arabic-speaking groups that live in the miniature tropical jungles of Dhofur. In Yemen, however, the feudal links of society are most strongly tempered. Sabaean, Minean, Katabanian, and Hadhramaut kingdoms flourished here in ancient times. Accounts of their splendor are
found in the Biblical stories of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Even the impact of the Ethiopian conquest of Yemen in the sixth century and, before that, of the Jewish kings who ruled that terraced highland domain for a short time, failed to maintain whatever gains they may have made in the social order. A road along the Yemen coastal plain is called "The Road of the Elephants," a reminder of the failure of the elephant expedition which Ethiopians launched to conquer that area in the same year Mohammed was born. The mountains, paralleling the Arabian peninsula, have served as insuperable barriers in preventing outsiders from entering the Arabian desert, thus at the same time helping to maintain the purity and character of the Arab race in its desert core.

Unlike the desert tribes who live in tents made of goats' hair, the wilder tribes in Hadhramaut dwell in caves, while in other areas the serfs and lower classes live in simple stone abodes.

Unity and disunity characterize the states. Each sheikhdom or sultanate is a unit by itself. But taking the whole as a group, each state is separated from another by the very same geographical forces that bring homogeneity within itself—the weather, mountains, desert and sea, each playing its important role as a natural boundary.

What has made Yemen a united medieval kingdom for more than a millennium is, in the first place, its topographical features. Composed of high mountain ranges, reaching sometimes to 10,000 feet and at times rising almost precipitously from an extremely narrow coastal plain (when there is any plain at all), the area has been difficult of access to foreign intruders. Once when an African army, mounted on elephants, tried to conquer the Arabian peninsula, it was this very geographical obstacle that helped to block their progress and enabled a Persian fleet with a flanking attack movement to annihilate the invaders.

The sheer land rise from the Red sea coast rendered it impossible, certainly in ancient and medieval times, to scale the rugged Yemen mountains with wheeled vehicles. Even the patiently trudging donkey finds it difficult to haul commerce over mountain trails. The Rub Al-Khali desert makes it practically foolish for man to penetrate it from that forbidding boundary. Thus have the people in Yemen been left quite alone to develop their lives untouched by
the modern gadgets that form so essential a part of the Westerner’s everyday living.

With the exception of a small Jewish minority, whose history reveals traces of a direct link with the days of Israel’s glory, the entire population is strongly bound through its Iman to the Shiite sect of Islam. The ruler himself claims divine descent from Ali, Mohammed’s nephew who married the prophet’s only surviving child, Fatima. With the population submitting to an absolute feudal monarch who vests his rule upon the spiritual and temporal interpretation of the Koran, it was thus not difficult to keep Yemenites united under the banner of one strong religion—Islam.

Yemen is believed to have introduced the use of coffee to the world, but it was in the plantation of the new world that coffee became an important economic crop. Even the seaport of Hodeida offered little to attract foreign intervention in Yemen; that came only after the opening of the Suez Canal.

Much the same may be said of Oman, a mountainous land also cut off on the north from the interior of Arabia by the Rub Al-Khali and on the south by a generally narrow coastal plain facing the Indian Ocean. Several different tribes inhabit Oman. One, which gained its freedom from the Sultan of Oman after a seven years’ war, is the Anjar, fiercely independent. The other tribes pay nominal respect to the Sultan. Muscat, one of the two principal harbors in the Persian gulf, has given Oman its prominence for the Western world, while its fisheries and pearl industry attract trade especially with India. Tribal customs have helped to keep the inhabitants united within a rather small land area. Islamic faith and tribal laws have contributed to the development of an internal leadership that has kept these people closely knit for centuries. Because of the intensely humid climate, the lack of exploitable raw resources and the absence of convenient means of communications, Oman, like Yemen has been practically unspoiled by the external powers.

Another state whose unity has remained untouched is the Hadramaut, actually a mountainous valley continuously inhabited by tribes who are cut off from Arabia by the extension of the barren desert on the north and the Arabian sea on the south. This un-inviting geographical locale has not only kept Westerners in almost
complete ignorance of the country, but in the Dhofar flourishes a miniature tropical jungle rarely penetrated except by its aboriginal looking tribesmen.

Whereas Western nations have forced their way into other newly developed parts of the world and have imposed upon them colonial institutions, the Arabian peninsula rim has remained singularly free from this encroachment. But another kind of penetration has taken place—in almost every case in the form of "friendship" or "protective" treaties by Great Britain with each state. Peculiarly, such treaties have not interfered with the unity of each state; on the contrary they have strengthened the hand of the tribal or religious leader to the extent that for more than a century Britain has been able to carry on trade without friction from competing foreign powers, although in an earlier century, Portugal, and in more recent times, Turkey and Russia, tried to wrest control from Britain. Strangely enough, English money has helped to keep the peoples in the rim united to their own ruler, under their existing status quo.

The "House" of Arabia

The Near East, for centuries playing an insignificant role in the accelerating development of the modern world, has within the narrow limits of the past three decades graduated from a rags-to-riches role. Nowhere in the world, perhaps, is such a transformation better illustrated than in the very core of the Near East itself, previously described as the "house" of Arabia. Here is a nation that within the span of two recent World Wars has developed, from a poverty-stricken desert land, into the world's richest oil pool, although its form of government—a tribal kingdom—has scarcely changed from ancient times. From this seemingly barren core of Arab civilization have poured the waves of nomads that gave to the entire Near East a common culture through its Arabic language and a new religion that not only inundated that entire area but overflowed through the Mediterranean sea to the Atlantic ocean and eastward to the farthestmost islands in the southwest Pacific.

Tribal existence, the dominating mode of life for Saudi Arabia from time immemorial, has changed only slightly in recent years,
and that change has been caused by two forces: first, the autocratic rule of a former tribal chief, Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud, who for the first time in history succeeded in uniting the desert tribal chiefs; secondly, to the advance of Western technology that at this very moment is alchemizing the desert sands into grains of gold through the medium of petroleum exploitation.

The "House" of Arabia is the core of the world to which more than 300,000,000 faithful adherents of Islam turn, their faces toward Mecca, the birthplace of Mohammed their prophet. This is the core that in the first World War sustained the Arab revolt which led to the eventual establishment of seven internationally recognized Arab states, from a domain formerly under the Turkish Ottomans, although the seeds for political freedom of this area had been sown decades before in the "courtyard" states.

Saudi Arabia, an area of some one million square miles with a population of less than ten million people, is principally desert. Except for the Hijaz on the eastern coast of the Red Sea and the Nejd in the northern part of the desert—provinces where about four inches of rain fall a year—and except also for the Red Sea coastal mountain province of Asir, which gets more than ten inches of rain a year, Saudi Arabia is nearly barren of moisture. It is so barren, in fact, that its southernmost part nearest to Hadhramaut properly bears the name Rub Al-Khali. Most of Saudi Arabia's inhabitants are Bedouins who live in tents in the desert about ten months of the year; many of the rest are seminomads or village settlers who dwell close to the oases that nature has sprinkled in the region closest to the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf areas.

The Bedouins have accustomed themselves to their bleak environment, struggling with nature in their eternal quest for grazing lands for perennially wandering herds of camels and goats. Such a life has made them the most independent of peoples anywhere in the world, since their wants are few and their movable tents may be easily shifted about at will. Their lives are intensely centered about the family, which with its larger growth into tribes has produced a loyalty of kinship that democracy can seldom penetrate. For centuries the desert tribes made their living by raising herds of camels and goats and trading the produce from those animals—milk, melted butter, hides, and meats—for the grain and dates of the settled vil-
lagers, or, until recent times, lived by raiding or protecting the caravans whose routes followed the most ancient of the world's crossroads, across the northern or southern edges of the Arabian desert.

But Ibn Saud, who came out of his ancient family's domain in Riyadh in the center of the desert to unite all the Arab chieftains under his enforced leadership, is gradually changing the nomad's mode of life. He is inducing many of the tribesmen to settle in permanent villages near the oases or in rain-fed areas where agricultural production can thrive. He has imposed the Western concept of law and order over that entire area, by reducing the individual power of the tribal chiefs and by transferring that control under a state authority of which he is the head. He has established a well-organized army which, while it still uses camels as the principal means of locomotion, is gradually being mechanized with motor vehicles. He has solidified tribal loyalty by his several intermarriages with the daughters of tribal chiefs, since his Moslem religion permits him to have more than one wife.

Although Saudi Arabia is within the area of the world's earliest recorded civilization and although Europeans penetrated into almost every part of the Near East with their culture and technology, this Arabian kingdom had remained singularly free from Western encroachments until the past dozen years. An American engineer, writing in 1946, reported that Jidda, the most important commercial city and port in Saudi Arabia, contained only about fifty American and European families. The development of the Arabian oil fields by the California-Arabian Oil company has caused the establishment of a community of some 2,000 Americans on the Persian Gulf coast, the largest number of Western settlers in any part of the Peninsula. Otherwise the Western influence in the mode of life of the Saudi Arabians has been practically nil, despite the fact that it was Westerners who introduced the modern standards of commerce, schools, hospitals, water systems, paved highways, automobiles and airplanes—all this in an area where Bedouins still struggle in the ancient manner to avoid drought and starvation.

The impact of Westernization is most noticeable in another respect. For centuries the Sherif of Mecca depended, for his national income, upon the revenues obtained from pilgrims to Mecca in
the Red sea province of the Hijaz. Ibn Saud added that province to his desert domain when he defeated King Hussein in 1924, the same Arab leader who had led not only his tribesmen but the entire Arab world in a successful revolt against the Ottoman Turks on the side of the Allies in World War I. Since faithful Mohammedans come annually on this pilgrimage, they contribute a large share to the Meccan ruler's income. In times of war, the Sherif of Mecca would find himself without this substantial source of income. It so happened to Ibn Saud in the second World War, but he scarcely felt the loss, since royalties from the oil companies were now the primary source of income. Moreover, this form of Westernization has added another boon to Arabian economy: the oil companies have given employment to large numbers of nomads and thus have directly helped Ibn Saud in his program to settle the Bedouins on the land.

Natural resources and industrial development are the norms that today determine the importance of a nation in its relation with the rest of the world. The “House” of Arabia is fashioned mostly from desert and steppe with a few oases not too far distant from coastal mountains. Search anywhere in Saudi Arabia and you will not find a navigable river. Its streams are merely wadi beds which in the rainy season are briefly filled with water. While some areas could be transformed into farms through irrigation, there are no streams to tap, save in the narrow belt of Hofuf in the province of Al Hasa, which a thriving underground source has turned into a fertile date paradise for the seminomads who have settled there.

Unlike its neighboring states in the “courtyard,” whose economies are decidedly agricultural, Saudi Arabia has done little, comparatively, in producing its own food needs. Its agriculture is largely animal husbandry—camels and goats—and these are raised without modern scientific application. Even the wheat and the dates which, along with milk, form the basic diet of the desert tribesmen are obtained by exchanging for them the products of the herds. As the automobile has altered the lives of most people in all parts of the world, likewise has it done so among the Bedouin tribes, although less perceptibly. Bedouins used to find ready markets for their camels in Cairo, Damascus, and Baghdad, but now the motor truck is steadily displacing the camel as the commerce carrier. Now the
jeeps, carrying law-enforcement officers, skim over the desert sands with the result that the tribal marauders no longer carry on their caravan raids or smuggling with the same uninterrupted success as they have done from Biblical times until the present generation. All this change within a single generation!

Whereas the agricultural pattern in Egypt tended to keep the people united, since in the Nile valley agriculture was dependent upon an interlocking irrigation system, the virtual absence of any sedentary agriculture and the dissemination, over vast spaces, of tribes respecting only their own fealties, have kept Saudi Arabia from being united, until Ibn Saud's ascendency to power in the early 1920s. Paved roads also serve to unite peoples: formerly there was no need of highways, since the camel could reach the most inaccessible place. The single railroad, from Damascus to Medina, was largely patronized, not by the penniless desert roamers, but by the city and town dwellers making their annual pilgrimage to Medina and Mecca.

In this entire expanse of 1,000,000 square miles, there are few mineral deposits. Gold and silver mining has been undertaken on a rather small scale by an American syndicate at Mahab Dahab, about 250 miles northeast of the Red Sea port of Jidda. The scarcity of mineral resources is indicated from the fact that for centuries the tribesmen acquired their metal cooking utensils from Damascus; the principal currency was the Marie Therese dollar, minted in Austria. The limited output of the Mahab Dahab mine and the vast production of the oil wells on the Persian gulf side of the desert, both developed within the past fifteen years, are Saudi Arabia's prime resources. It is oil that has raised her stature to important world rank, especially to the extent that the Near East now plays a more vital and significant role in the international affairs of the United States—a role whose importance was hardly conceived before the beginning of World War II.

The Saudi Arabian desert has been a centuries-long testing ground for the survival of the fittest without benefit of medical science. Up to recent years, whatever health institutions existed in that land were founded by missionaries, principally Americans. Not so long ago the royal house of Saud called an American missionary physician to give medical aid to a female member of the family—a revolu-
tionary departure from the Mohammedan taboo that males should not attend the illnesses of Arab women. It is significant that such a change should come from the most orthodox of Islam’s sect, the Wahhabites.

Even though the tribesmen are Moslems, they do not generally practice polygamy. Unlike the women in the settled villages, the women of the desert seldom, if ever, wear veils. They live simple and rugged lives; they are not of the harem-kept breed of the rich city sheikhs. The desert population has remained fairly stable in numbers throughout the centuries, with the tribal feuds and wars, drought and hunger causing more casualties than disease.

With a population overwhelmingly nomadic, naturally there was small need of railroads to connect nonexistent commercial or industrial centers. The only skyscrapers are the steel skeletons stuck into the brown sands to disembowel the desert of its oil wealth. These derricks are the only evidence of industry throughout this desert kingdom, and their presence is completely foreign-inspired and namely, American.

Saudi Arabia has no government that can in any degree be compared to a democracy. Outwardly King Ibn Saud reigns as an autocratic monarch. Actually his government is a patriarchal one. There is no legislative assembly, no system of civil or criminal courts. Ibn Saud sits as ruler, lawmaker, and judge. Any of his tribal subjects may come before him with his plea which the ruler hears much in the manner of a tribal chief in ancient centuries. There is no appeal from the king’s decision. Since there is no civil or criminal code, justice is administered according to the Koran.

Since oil has forced this kingdom to deal with modern powers, Ibn Saud has expanded his government beyond the desert’s rim. He has followed the Western pattern of establishing embassies to deal with foreign powers. But even in this expansion, he has retained the patriarchal character of his government by filling most of the foreign posts with his sons, as well as choosing his own kin to hold the key positions in the important ministries at Riyadh or the bureaus in Jidda and Damman.

Not until the oil wells gushed their liquid gold was wealth a thing generally known in Saudi Arabia. Its primary beneficiaries, even today, are members of the royal family and the exploiting
foreign promoters. The masses of the people still exist day-by-day on the barest necessities of life: two meals daily based primarily on a loaf of bread soaked in soured goat's milk, or dates with bread. Meat is rarely eaten, and generally only upon religious feasts or such celebrations as weddings.

The nomad's wealth is limited to the clothes on his body, his tents and their appurtenances, the food supply for which he barter once a year and, most important of all, his herd of camels or goats. With such a simple economy the trade fluctuations in the world's markets have had little effect in the past; but today, with the market demand for camels steadily declining and with Ibn Saud's determination to settle as many nomads on the land as possible, a more complex way of life is in the making—somewhat attuned to Western methods.

It is indeed another paradox that the present inhabitants of the land which gave to the Arabs that purity of language found in the Koran should themselves be so universally illiterate. But this is understandable when it is remembered that education can hardly keep pace with a people who are constantly on the move in search of grazing lands. Where education does thrive, it is found among the villagers and townsmen. Schools have been established only in recent decades, those in the Persian Gulf area by the American missionaries at first, and now by the oil companies. Ibn Saud has recognized the importance of education by helping to found schools in the settled areas and also by sending Arab youths abroad to study, especially in America.

*The "Courtyard" (Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Transjordan and Iraq)*

Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt may be likened to "houses" facing a courtyard that embraces Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Transjordan. This courtyard has been the battle arena of Ramesis II, Joshua, Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander the Great, Pompey, Constantine, Omar, Richard Coeur de Lion, Haroun Al Rashid, Salim the Grim, Genghis Khan, Mohammed Ali, Allenby, Feisal, Wilson, and Catroux. Egyptian, Hittite, Phoenician, Assyrian, Chaldean, Hebrew, Persian, Greek, Roman,
Arab, Mongol, Turk, British, and French armies have trampled over it. After the end of the first World War the victorious Allies, dealing with the "courtyard" as if it were an exclusive real estate development, carved it into the independent Arab states of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Transjordan, and a Palestine mandated territory.

Here man finds the earliest recorded traces of his civilization. Here the world's most ancient trade routes crossed as the world's mightiest air lines do now. Here were nurtured in turn Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, that flung their outposts to remotest havens in the world. Here occurred the amalgam of a dozen different races, the first reformations in religious creeds, the flowering of social orders that even today are undergoing great flux. In this same "courtyard," man has always struggled for his bare existence, just as foreign nations have persistently competed for his political and economic domination.

This "courtyard" of 237,961 square miles, with a population of more than 10,000,000 people, is slightly larger than the states of Arizona and New Mexico, with much similarity to them in topography. More than half is barren mountain and desert. Mountains rim three sides. In the Lebanon on the west end and in Turkey on the north, the peaks tower close to 10,000 feet, while beyond the Iraqi border the ranges frequently rise to 12,000 or 14,000 feet. The mountains receive ample rains, from 10 to 12 inches on the Mediterranean coastal area to as much as 50 inches in the Elburz chain north of Iraq. The courtyard's southern area is an extension of the Arabian desert, over which poured successive waves of Semitic immigration. The Arab conquest of the courtyard after

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<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>116,000</td>
<td>4,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>3,475</td>
<td>1,025,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>73,587</td>
<td>2,800,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transjordan</td>
<td>34,740</td>
<td>400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>10,159</td>
<td>1,800,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>237,961</td>
<td>10,675,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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2 The figures, taken from *Information Please Almanac*, for 1947, are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sq. Mi.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>113,956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>122,634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>236,590</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mohammed's death (632) was not a conquest of race or language or culture. It was merely a conquest of religion that combined both a temporal and spiritual regime.

The settlement pattern follows a rather simple scheme: the principal cities and towns are found either in the lower mountain valleys or at the junction of the plains with the mountains, in effect, oases along the anciently established trade routes. Damascus is such a city as the very origin of its name indicates, "Pearl of the Desert." The Syrian desert is punctuated with ancient oases settlements although nomads still roam its wastes as in Biblical times, seeking pasture for their herds.

Palestine.—Palestine has been a land eternally torn by strife. A Holy Land for Jews, Christians, and Moslems, it has seldom been allowed to live in peace with the rest of the world. For centuries it was a part of Greater Syria under the Ottoman Empire. In its long history some nineteen commissions of varying political and religious hues have wrestled in vain to find a peaceful solution to the problem of its statehood. Torn by bloodshed in the establishment of the world's three dynamic religions, its peace interrupted by seven waves of crusaders, it has been crossed and crisscrossed with the clashing arms of the East and the West. As this book goes to press, Arabs and Jews are waging open warfare.

Except for its religious shrines, Palestine is not a highly valuable prize. Two fertile plains—one running along the Mediterranean coast and the other cutting inland across the country (Esdralon)—furnish whatever agricultural richness it possesses. In this tiny land of 10,159 square miles (about the size of New Hampshire) is found the world's deepest land gorge, the Dead Sea, 1,300 feet below sea level. This abyss cuts through the plateau that advances eastward into Transjordan. The southern part of Palestine below Beersheba, called the Negev, is actually an extension of the Arabian desert. Rainfall in the winter and spring is sufficient for growing crops, especially along the maritime coast, which is richly cultivated with citrus orchards. Snow occasionally and briefly covers the tops of the Judean hills, bleak-looking ranges denuded by ancient man and kept bare by hungry goats. The lack of forests is significantly indicated by the fact that wood is a major import (13,161,000 cubic feet in 1941). For years the citrus industry provided the country's
largest export item, four-fifths of its income coming from that source.

The Jordan river, rising in the Lebanon mountains, is Palestine's principal stream. Aside from its Biblical lore, its present importance is underscored in a power development project similar to the Tennessee Valley Authority. Another river, the Yarmuk, forms the northern boundary line with Transjordan. In all, five streams flow into the chemically laden Dead Sea, at whose northern extremity is an extracting plant.

The one thing that has given homogeneity to the "courtyard" is its Arabic language, but a wedge has been driven into its solidarity in the form of the introduction of Hebrew and English as official Palestinian languages, imprinted on all currency and used in official government business. This wedge was first made possible by the British government's pronouncement of the Balfour Declaration on November 2, 1917, and later through the League of Nations which designated Great Britain as the mandatory power and incorporated the essence of the Balfour Declaration into the terms of the mandate. This deal was arranged despite these facts: that the Arabs had inhabited the land for thirteen centuries and their ancestors before them for many more centuries; that the British, through McMahon in Cairo, had promised King Hussein of the Hijaz, independence for all Arab people; that the Arabs had helped the British to liberate Palestine from Turkish sovereignty.

A Jewish national home was imposed on the Arabs without consulting them, without their permission, and at a time when Palestine was inhabited by some 500,000 Arabs as compared to 55,000 Jews. Today the population consists of 1,200,000 Arabs and 650,000 Jews, with some 400,000 of the latter entering the Holy Land by enforced immigration.

A tragic consequence of the Balfour policy has been that the British mandatory power, instead of preparing the Palestinians to govern themselves (as the Arabs were prepared in Iraq) has neglected that international trust to the complete dissatisfaction of both Jew and Arab and in its stead established in effect a police state. The British formally ended their mandate on May 15, 1948, even while the United Nations was occupied in lengthy debate as to the future political status of the country.
Education had been practically ignored in Palestine under the Turks. Since World War I it has been promoted largely as a private enterprise. Of schools administered by the government 404 were for Arabs, with an additional 177 private Moslem schools and 189 Christian institutions, with a total enrollment of 90,748 pupils. The Jewish schools numbered 442, with an additional 309 private institutions, having a total enrollment of 86,626 pupils. Under their own aegis the Jews have expanded education to include five teacher-training colleges, 26 secondary and six trade-vocational schools, besides a Hebrew University in Jerusalem with a steadily increasing enrollment now exceeding 650.4

Three decades of British occupation, however, have resulted in the development of the transportation system, so that in addition to the section of the Hijaz railway, built by the Turks for the Meccan pilgrimage trade, there are 302 miles of broad-gauge railroad tracks and over 2,500 miles of roads, of which 1,451 miles are all seasonal highways.

Except for those established by French, Italian, and German missionary groups, Palestine had almost no medical institutions under the Ottomans. Malaria was prevalent, especially in the neglected marshy plains. Private Jewish enterprise, the government, the Arabs themselves, and the Rockefeller Foundation have all helped to free Palestine from malaria. The Arab schools are playing a major role in improving the health of the inhabitants, largely through compulsory hygienic courses for the schoolchildren.

Several factors conspire to keep Palestine disunited. First, is Western imperialism. Britain needs oil to maintain her empire’s lifeline. The United States, too, wants that oil for strategic purposes. The Holy Land serves as the indispensable link between the East and the West with the principal bastion at Haifa, a British-developed port important as the terminus of the oil pipe-line that originates several hundred miles away in Kirkuk, Iraq. Once united under a common Arabic language, culture, and religion during the greatest glory of the Islamic empire, Palestine today is torn between the sharply contrasting cultures and ideologies of the Arabs and the Jews.

4 All school figures are for 1941-42 and are from *Information Please Almanac* for 1947.
It is a curious anomaly that while the Arabs and the Jews are united in one thing—their opposition to English control—they are disunited within their own ranks. Their internal leadership is frequently rent with sharp dissensions. To complicate the problem, the Bedouins who, clinging to their ancient traditions and manner of living off the desert, become a serious problem to the settled population when drought drives the nomads into their communities.

The divergencies of the many religious groups have also kept the Holy Land stewing with trouble, especially when anniversary feast days roll around. The Caliph Haroun Al Rashid, practicing the democracy of his Mohammedan faith, acknowledged to Charlemagne, Christian rights in that Islamic domain. For two centuries, Crusaders disrupted the unity of Palestine. In more recent decades Christian sects have so failed to keep religious peace that a Moslem family was entrusted with possession of the key to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

The Mosque of Omar, second only to Mecca as a Mohammedan shrine, and the Wailing Wall enshrined in Judaic hearts as the enduring relic of Solomon's temple, frequently arouse religious fervors that break out of the ancient-walled-in city of Jerusalem and spread tension to all parts of Palestine. At the moment this is written, Palestine is once more torn with strife, Arabs killing Jews and Jews killing Arabs as a result of the United Nations' General Assembly's recommendation of November 29, 1947, that the Holy Land be partitioned into Arab and Jewish states.

**LEBANON.**—A Christian oasis in a Moslem world! That is Lebanon, where dwelt the ancient Phoenicians—civilization's first recorded seafarers; the one Christian citadel in the Near East which refused to succumb to Islamization; a tiny republic (about the size of Rhode Island and Delaware) which had always been an intimate part of Syria until imperialist France sliced it into an independent state in that great power-politics game of "divide and rule." This is the land which under the impact of Westerners—especially French and American missionaries—spearheaded the Arab renaissance: a movement that within the past three decades has flowered into seven independent Arab states and the more recently established Arab League whose over-all political, economic, and social program also envisions freedom for Arabs in North Africa.
Lebanon is named after the mountain range that rises from a narrow plain on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean, its 3,475 square miles including also the wide and level Beka'a plain with, on its east, the lower range of the anti-Lebanon mountains forming the boundary with Syria. The coastal mountains reach a peak of 9,900 feet within sight of Beirut, the capital and principal seaport. Rainfall, principally in the fall and winter months, averages 22 inches a year. The warm Mediterranean winds deposit an ample supply of water for the citrus and banana and olive groves along the coast, for the vineyards on the mountain slopes and the cereals on the plains.

Lebanon's agriculture is much like Palestine's in this respect: its mountain sides appear nearly ribboned with terraced gardens. Once the home of the majestic cedars that were cut down in pre-Biblical times to be hewn into ships, the mountains have since remained deforested, this condition being abetted by goat herds.

Lebanon is especially famous for its superior grapes and apricots that, along with the olives, grow in the valleys of the mountains. While much of her cereals are produced in the Beka'a plain, wheat is nevertheless imported in large quantity from the Hauran in Syria. Unlike her neighboring states, Lebanon depends primarily on rainfall for crop production, since there are no rivers of importance for irrigation. What the Lebanese call rivers—the Litani, Bardoni, Ibrahim, and Kalb—are really nothing more than small mountain brooks. For many years silk cocoons were a principal export. Since Lebanon was under the orbit of French influence—even from the time of the Crusaders—it naturally followed that Lebanon provided much of the raw product for France's silk factories in the early years of silk weaving. One of the factors that gave rise to strong emigration from Lebanon half a century ago was the decline in the silk industry after the Japanese usurped world-wide control of that market.

Whether it was the mountain barriers that halted the spread of Islam or the dominant strain of Ghassinid Arabs whose spirit of rugged independence made them impervious to a new religious dogma, or whether it was the impact of Western ideologies which penetrated through the eastern Mediterranean gateway into the Near East, Lebanon has remained a Christian island in a Moslem sea.
It is significant that the renaissance which the Arabs are witnessing had its start about a century ago in a movement that owes its impetus to Western missionaries, especially the French Catholics and the American Presbyterians and Congregationalists. Even prior to that period, the Westernization of the entire Near East had been launched when France obtained a concordat from the Turkish sultan in 1535—a right to protect the foreign colonies of traders in the Ottoman empire—which privilege was later expanded to become the first of modern capitulations permitting foreign powers to protect Christians in sovereign lands other than their own. These capitulations later made possible the exploitation of the Arab world for the benefit of Europeans.

Compared with Western standards, agricultural production in Lebanon is technologically backward, due primarily to the poverty of the peasants who have not the financial means to buy farm machinery, since even in good times they barely eke out an existence from the eroded and stony land. Strenuous efforts are being made, especially through the government-sponsored exchange of students and through instruction in the grade schools, to train farmers in the use of scientific equipment. Those who can most easily afford to purchase it are the rich landowners, but they are most often absentee owners who care little about the peasant’s welfare, being content to take their large proportion of whatever he produces. Since the majority of the deputies in the Lebanese Parliament consists of absentee landowners, there seems little hope for amelioration of this condition.

Although the Crusaders chose Lebanon as the main artery through which to launch their religious and economic conquests in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the means of communication remained about the same until recent times. Beirut, Tripoli, Sidon, and Tyre have been the principal water gateways from the West into the Near East, and the mountain trails (only slightly improved from the days of the Phoenicians) have continued to provide the main inland routes. Modern highways, as they are known in Lebanon today, together with the development of railroads, telephone, telegraph and airports, were enterprises sponsored largely by the French, in order to facilitate military control of the land.

Compared to her sister Arab states, Lebanon has always been
farther advanced in the maintenance of health standards. Here again the credit belongs in large measure to the missionary zeal of Westerners who found a dominantly Christian Arab population eager and willing to accept Western health standards based upon science—in contrast to the more hesitant Moslem Arabs who clung with unquestioning fealty to ancient superstitions and religious fetishes. It must be likewise admitted that the establishment of clinics, hospitals, and medical training schools, was in the first instance for the protection of the Westerners themselves. There is scarcely a city in the Near East whose physicians do not include graduates of the French or American medical colleges in Beirut. Many other physicians can also boast of education in European or American institutions.

Tribal living is the exception, rather than the rule, in Lebanon. People generally dwell in stone houses, whose red-tiled roofs remind one of southern Italy or Spain. Stone is Lebanon's most abundant building material. Homes are furnished much as they are in any American or European community; in the larger towns they are connected with water mains and sewerage systems, as contrasted with the stark and elemental simplicity of the mud huts of Egypt and the tented villages of the desert areas.

The family, rather than the tribe, is the social unit in Lebanon. While strong family loyalty persists, there is nevertheless a greater freedom of social intercourse among Lebanese Christians than among the orthodox Moslem families either in Lebanon or in the neighboring states. With reference to the status of women, while courtship is not widespread as it is among Westerners, the Christian girl in Lebanon is not compelled to accept a suitor picked out for her by her parents, as her Moslem peasant sisters are, in most other parts of the Near East. Family loyalty is so strongly entrenched that it has prevented industrial and commercial development on a wide scale. In business relations, trust is strictly confined within the family; that is the primary reason why great corporations have never developed successfully in the Near East.

Nature, religion and the foreign powers have conspired together to keep Lebanon disunited. Nature, through her mountains, has provided settlements in the fertile valleys or along the coastal or inland plains, but she has at the same time kept these communities
separated by tortuously accessible approaches. However, the ex-
pansion of highways, due to the steadily increasing use of automo-
biles within the past quarter of a century, is proving a stronger link
toward unity. By means of the automobile one can now cross the
width of Lebanon within two hours or its length within three hours.

Religion has served to impede the unity of Lebanon's population.
The Maronites are strongest in numbers among the Christian sects,
but equally forceful in many communities are the Greek Orthodox,
the Greek Catholics, the Roman Catholics, the Gregorians. On the
Moslem ledger, the Sunnites outnumber the Shiites by a small mar-
gin. To make the religious mixture still more indigestible there are
the Druzes in the central area that overlaps into Transjordan and
Syria, and the Alouites in the northern part that is contiguous to
the Latakian province in Syria. Throughout the centuries the Otto-
mans were able to rule Lebanon with comparative ease, simply by
playing one religious group against the other, causing bitter feuds
that at times degenerated into massacres. Even in most recent years,
France employed the "divide and rule" technique by spawning
rivalries between the Maronites and the other Christian sects. In
earlier years even Great Britain was not immune from such schemes,
as she relied upon the Druzes to cause religious turmoil so that the
attempted control of Lebanon by any foreign power against Otto-
man authority would remain precarious. Russia, too, under the
Czars championed the cause of the Greek Orthodox, who looked
to the Muscovite prelate for protection.

With such rivalries between powers and divergencies of loy-
alties between religious groups, it was not any wonder that a native
leadership failed to develop that would gain the harmonious sup-
port of most Lebanese. Even as recently as 1946-47, American
newspaper reporters with a strongly biased support of the Zionist
cause sought to destroy Lebanese-Arab unity by reporting that
the Christian sects in the mountain republic held views divergently
opposed to their Moslem brothers with respect to an independent
Palestine.

The lip service which France paid to Lebanon as an inde-
pendent country finally came to fruition as an exigency of World
War II, when Vichy France sought to hold the mandated territory
in obeisance to the Axis. After the British had destroyed this false
position by conquering the area in the summer of 1941, General Catroux proclaimed France's previous pledges of Lebanese sovereignty; a gesture which DeGaulle's government impudently tried to repudiate in 1945. Two years earlier, the United States, Great Britain, and Russia (among other powers) had recognized Lebanon's independence. The French attitude, together with her bullying use of military force, as she did in her heyday of colonial conquest, finally gave the Lebanese the one rallying point long needed to unite her people to free themselves from foreign exploitation.

Lebanon has a parliament modeled on Western lines: a chamber of deputies chosen at a free election in representative districts; a president, elected by the deputies; a cabinet, whose prime minister is named by the president and whose members in turn are chosen by the former with a fair cross-section of the various religious groups represented in the ministries.

Syria.—Syria may be described as occupying the very center of the Near Eastern "courtyard." Its area of 58,456 square miles is about the size of Michigan, but its population of 2,860,411 is slightly more than half of that American state. It is inhabited today by a racial stock that includes a strongly predominant Arab population, besides Kurds, Turks, Armenians, Circassians, and French.

Syria has been mankind's most fought-over battlefield, despite the fact that a rather barren desert preempts over half its area. Of some 12,500,000 acres suitable for cultivation, actually only one-fifth of it is now under cultivation.

Syria's principal cities reflect the roles imposed on them by nature. Damascus, the capital, is situated on the western edge of the Syrian desert, actually an oasis on the Baradi river that spills into the desert. Hama, farther west near the Lebanon mountains but in the Orontes valley, is renowned as a Bedouin trading center. Aleppo, second largest city and also on the Orontes, has been a major trading center on the ancient northern caravan route. The anti-Lebanon and Kurdish mountains form Syria's western and northern boundaries with Lebanon and Turkey, and it is in this area that most of Syria's population dwells. The Jebel Druze in the southwest near Transjordan, containing the great wheat-producing district of the Hauran, rises to 5,800 feet and tapers away in gradually declining steppes to the Euphrates valley. The rest of Syria
is largely steppe-land and desert, with Saudi Arabia on the south and Iraq on the east.

With the exception of the mountain and valley areas, Syria receives hardly more than four inches of rain a year. The summers in the hinterland are extremely hot and dry, where the bleakness of the desert is broken by oases settlements, such as the ancient Palmyra (once the seat of Queen Zenobia who in the third century ruled over the "courtyard").

The Euphrates river, whose source is in the Taurus mountains in Turkey, cuts through from the north to flow along Syria's eastern border. Along its northern reaches are more oases-like communities, while the interior is inhabited largely by nomadic groups that have come in persistent waves from among the Anaza tribe in the Arabian peninsula, constantly refreshing the Arab bloodstream for centuries.

The seminomads live rather settled lives about the oases. Besides growing wheat and barley, they and the Bedouins raised 2,492,000 sheep, 1,583,000 goats, 400,000 cattle, 287,000 donkeys, and 54,000 camels in 1943. Stock-raising is the principal industry, but this husbandry is still conducted along primitive lines, although Syria is making strenuous efforts to provide agricultural education to its farm population. It is common, on rural highways leading to major cities, to see flocks of sheep or goats traveling scores of miles on foot to a market center. Livestock transportation via railroads is rarely utilized, since in the first place few railroad lines reach into the interior of the livestock producing areas. It is also cheaper for the rich sheikhs to employ human beings at low wages to lead their flocks to market, even though the trip may consume days.

Syria in ancient times was the granary of the world, and today she retains that position in the Arab world. Where tractors and agricultural machinery have made their appearance, they are generally found on the huge estates of wealthy landlords. The hired fellahen and the farmers, who own only a few feddans of land, have rarely benefited from the scientific discoveries and the labor-saving machines of modern agriculture. The part of the Euphrates river that flows through Syria offers possibilities of increasing the amount of arable land through irrigation but, until the wealthy landowners are willing to support such a huge government venture, progress of this kind is unlikely to occur.
Railroad facilities are found primarily in the fertile crescent that connects the principal cities along the Orontes and Euphrates valleys with the eastern Mediterranean seaboard at Beirut, Tripoli, and Latakia. Rail lines stretch from the Aleppo gateway northward into the Taurus mountains to Turkey or southward into Baghdad. Railroad development, as in Lebanon, has been of very recent origin and promoted by French interests.

Highways, too, owe their modernization and increase to France, who held the mandate of Syria from the League of Nations from 1920 until world-wide public opinion finally forced her eviction in 1946. Road development was designed especially to knit closer together the strategically situated French garrisons that kept Syria under French domination, at the same time not ignoring their importance to trade outlets. Telephones and telegraphs, water mains and sewerage systems and airports are Western importations that have benefited city dwellers almost exclusively. The villagers and nomads have yet to enjoy these modern conveniences.

In the desert areas the system of tribal living continues much as it did when Damascus was the seat of the Moslem empire in the eighth century. The peasants who raise the bulk of the wheat, barley, millet, tobacco and mulberry crops (the major ones in Syrian export trade) still live under the feudal lordships of the wealthy sheikhs and absentee landlords who, incidentally, compose the vast majority in the Syrian parliament.

The desert, the variety of religions, the several races indigenous to her soil, the invading foreign powers—each has worked in its own way to keep Syria disunited. This Levant "courtyard," like most of the then-known civilized world, was once ruled for 89 years from Damascus, the seat of the Ommayyad dynasty. Through all the centuries the desert has intervened to keep the settled population widely separated, while the nomadic tribes have moved constantly about in search of evanescent blades of grass.

Although the Moslem faith predominates overwhelmingly, it has in itself had its disunifying influences from the time that the Shiites broke away from the Sunnites to establish the Caliphate capital in Baghdad. The Sunnite sect provides nearly 70 percent of the Islamic groups scattered about the country. In the Latakian province dwell the Alouites who make up 11 percent of the religious
population. In the most fertile part of Jebel Druze dwell another different Moslem group—the Druzes who contribute 3.1 percent to the religious mixture. The Greek Orthodox add 4.6 percent to the conglomeration, the Armenian Orthodox 3.5 percent and the Syrian Orthodox, Syrian Catholic, Greek and Armenian Catholics, and Israelites contribute 7.9 altogether.

Besides the present Arab stock, Syria contains Kurds in the northern mountain areas. Armenians, Turks, Circassians are spread out along the Orontes valley. The Arameans, remnants of the once dominant language group in the Levant, live along the Euphrates. The failure to assimilate these groups has kept Syria from that essential unity necessary for a strong, free land.

This country has been history's most abused political pawn. With its distinctive religious creeds and clannish racial fealties, a strong leadership loyal only to the greater service of Syria was impossible of development. The foreign powers, knowing this situation, took advantage of it to impose their authority. It is significant, however, that in the nationalist movement, Syria played a vital role in weakening the Sultan's power in 1908 and later participated in the coup against Turkey in 1915. After the province was freed from Turkish control following World War I, France tried to keep Syria in her pawn-like role. Under pressure from the United States and Great Britain, France was obliged to leave Syria in 1946, the first definite break in colonial imperialism. And it was left to the Syrian Faris Bey Al-Khoury (imprisoned by the Turks in 1915 for his part in his country's revolt against the Ottomans and twice imprisoned by the French) to preside as chairman of the Security Council in the United Nations in August, 1947, which heard the plea of the Moslems in Indonesia to be freed from another colonial power—the Netherlands.

Since Syria gained her freedom, she has made primary education compulsory, spending 9 percent of her budget for schools. She has founded a university in Damascus with faculties of law and medicine; she has tried to help solve the medical problems of her widely separated population by providing them with mobile health clinics; she has encouraged expansion of hospitals; she has enacted laws to protect labor, especially in the cities.

But Syria has not the latent resources of an industrial state to
finance huge, nationwide, undertakings. Her income is very limited. What industries she does have are mainly of the consumer variety: flour, fruits, soap, oils, brass utensils, tobacco, textiles and shoes. Most of her industries are handicrafts, designed primarily to meet the needs of local consumption. While the supply of potential labor is ample, the presence of the necessary natural resources, such as minerals for the development of industry on a large scale, are missing. For the immediate future, at least, Syria seems destined to retain an agricultural economy.

Syria, long under the domination of Western powers, has aped the democracies by establishing a constitutional form of government, built around a parliament with a chamber of deputies whose members are elected every four years. The deputies elect the president and he chooses the prime minister. A cabinet of ministerial department heads serves as the executive branch of the government. Syria has charted her course along democratic lines.

TRANSJORDAN.—Transjordan, with 34,740 square miles, is about the size of Indiana, yet its population is little more than that of Indianapolis (386,972). Originally a part of the Turkish province of Syria, Transjordan came into being as a result of the "real estate" exchanges by the Allies after World War I. As an inducement to revolt against the Moslem Turks, the British offered Sherif Hussein, the protector of the Islamic shrines of Mecca and Medina, freedom and statehood for the Arabs. The Arabs revolted in 1915–16 and helped to defeat the Turks. The Allies then carved Palestine out of the ancient area known as Syria and gave the mandate to Great Britain. The latter in 1920 chiseled another chunk from Palestine, named it Transjordan, and eventually called Abdullah, second son of Hussein, to be its ruler. This action may have been designed to appease the Meccan sherif. After a quarter of a century of mandatory existence, Transjordan, which is still dependent on British bounty for its economic support, was granted full independence by Great Britain in March, 1946, when Abdullah yielded his emirate to assume the kingly crown with English blessing.

Why so much importance should be attached to this backward spot in the Near East is, of course, best interpreted in its relation to Palestine. Moreover, Transjordan's location acts as a buffer state to any Pan Arabian ambitions that the Wahhabite Ibn Saud may
have; he faces Hashimite rulers both in Transjordan and Iraq.

Transjordan’s population contains about 120,000 seminomads and 50,000 nomads. Of 454 settled places, only four may be classified as urban centers. About one-fourth of the entire population live in ten communities that have municipal councils. The remaining 300,000 are scattered in settlements along a fertile strip bordering Palestine, or roam the desert with their movable black tents. Control of the area passed from the Bedouin chiefs, who had ruled it for centuries, to the Turks in 1894. Thirty years previously the Turks had taken possession of the area around Amman, the present capital. The Turks ruled this land as part of the province of Syria.

Of Transjordan’s total area, 80 percent of it (representing about three times the state of Vermont) is nothing more than steppe and desert. Actually, it is a plateau, whose height varies from 4,500 feet on the gorged edges of the Dead Sea land rift to 1,500 feet where the plateau molds itself into the desert that sweeps eastward from the Syrian and Arabian deserts toward Iraq. One has only to travel 233 miles to cross Transjordan at its greatest length or breadth—a distance comparable to an automobile drive from New York to Washington.

Transjordan’s mountains in the Jordan valley area get about 20 inches of rain a year, principally from October to March. The rainfall tapers off to about five inches in the eastern and southern desert zones. A few oases interrupt the barrenness of this arid expanse which in the winter time offers pasturage for the sheep, goats, and camels raised by the nomads and seminomads as their principal means of livelihood. Most of the settled population lives in the 31-mile wide strip west of the Hijaz railway line.

The desert is inhabited a few months each year by about 30,000 Bedouins, who have maintained a precarious routine for many centuries. They lead their herds in search of pasturage and, when it vanishes in the desert, bring their flocks to the settled communities. Their husbandry has not kept even slight pace with the progress made in the Western world.

The seminomads number about 100,000. Preserving their customs and manner of living along Bedouin lines, they continue to live in movable tents even though they have now become cultivators of the soil. They differ from the nomadic tribes in the
growth of subtribes within their own organization and with it the
increase in petty chieftains.

For centuries Transjordan has been divided by conflicts between
nomad and seminomad, the former regarding the settled dweller as
his natural prey (especially in times of severe drought) and the lat­
ter holding the Bedouin as his perpetual enemy. It was probably
from the desire to reconcile these groups and bring them together
in mutual understanding that Abdullah was empowered in the first
years of the mandate to establish a tribal control board. The scheme
was abolished in 1931 when it was decided to place the desert under
the more effective administration of an officer of the Arab Legion,
run by the British.

Transjordan’s ethnic background, traceable directly to the
Arabian peninsula from which it has received freshening streams
throughout the centuries, is far purer than the strain of Arabs in
the adjoining countries, Saudi Arabia excepted. Most of the settled
populace, as well as the nomads and seminomads, are descendants of
Bedouin tribes. Of an estimated 400,000 population, some 7,000 are
Circassians, 30,000 are Christians, and 3,000 represent miscellane­
ous racial groups, including a small number of Negroid strain who
probably came into this region as slaves from the Sudan.

Of the Arabs, 90 percent are Moslems with the vast majority
in this group Sunnites. In their profession of Islam, the settled Arabs
are far more devout than the Bedouins whose constant wandering
with their herds has ingrained in them a rugged individualism.

Of the Christians, the majority adhere to the Greek Orthodox
Church. The Catholics include the Roman (Latin) and Greek
(Melkite) rites. These congregations trace their origins back to
Byzantine-pre-Islamic times. There are also small numbers who
have become Protestants through the proselytizing efforts of Ameri­
can and British missionaries. Christians are found not only in the
principal towns of Salt and Madaba and in the leading villages but
also among such distant tribes as the Habashneh and Magali. In ap­
pearance they can hardly be distinguished from the Moslem tribes­
men. Polygamy is permitted in their mode of life, but it is rarely
practiced among them.

The Christian tribesmen have no priestly hierarchy, since they
choose their priests from among themselves, much as the Moslems
select their imams to lead them in Friday prayer in the mosque. As for churches, these do not exist according to Western concepts; their churches are in their tents.

It is indeed a paradox that while the Arabs and their ancestors have inhabited the Transjordan region for centuries as an almost 100 percent indigenous population, it was left to an influx of immigrants from the region of the Caucasus mountains to develop the country economically and politically. Some 1,000 Chechen Moslems migrated into Transjordan in 1864 from their mountain homes in Daghestan, rather than submit to the Christian rule of their new conquerors, the Russians.

The Circassians immigrated after the Turkish-Russian war of 1877-78, to escape Christian rule. They settled mostly in Amman, the capital of Transjordan. The Turkish sultan gave them preferential treatment, exempting them from taxes and conscription for a number of years. Since in their homeland they were familiar with modern methods of agricultural production, and since they brought farm equipment new to the Arabs and at the same time introduced the use of horse-drawn vehicles, they were able to turn undeveloped tracts into sown fields. They introduced new methods in tending livestock. Thus they helped to lift Transjordan’s economy from its depths of poverty. The Circassians are Shiite Moslems.

About 1,400 miles of good roads connect Transjordan with the principal towns in Syria, Palestine, and Iraq. Some highways grew from military necessity while others developed in response to the increasing demand for motor travel. Part of the pilgrimage railroad, which the Turks built from Damascus to Medina, passes through Transjordan. Besides building new roads, the British mandatory helped to establish educational and health systems. Illiteracy is very widespread among the nomads.

The government is a constitutional monarchy. Assisting the King is a cabinet of ministers composed of department heads and a Legislative Council of twenty elected members. The country is divided into districts; each unit is governed by an administrative officer aided by a council composed of two officials and four nonofficial members. According to the treaty of mutual aid signed on March 22, 1946, Britain is permitted to train, equip, and provide financial assistance and officers for the Transjordan Frontier Forces, to which, together
with the Arab Legion, is entrusted the defense of the country. The treaty gives Britain the right to maintain her own troops in Transjordan as well as several bases for her air force. These are privileges of tremendous importance to a Britain which is being slowly edged out of Egypt and away from the Suez canal, for it gives the London government an opportunity to further secure her world trade lifeline in the new shuffle of international politics.

Transjordan's resources include undeveloped deposits of iron, manganese, and ochre. Salt is already being extracted from its side of the Dead Sea. Wheat, fresh fruits, wool, and livestock are the chief items of export, in exchange for sugar, tea, and hundreds of miscellaneous items. That there are immense possibilities for the development of its untapped resources may be indicated in the persistent demands in some Zionist quarters that any creation of a Jewish state in Palestine should eventually embrace Transjordan as an integral part of it.

IRAQ.—The land between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, regarded by some Biblical scholars as the original Garden of Eden and known from earliest times as Mesopotamia, today bears the Arabic name of Iraq. Of the six Arab states that were created after the first World War, Iraq was the first to become internationally recognized when its constitutionally organized monarchy was admitted as a member of the League of Nations in 1932.

Situated at the eastern end of the Levantine "courtyard," Iraq (116,000 square miles) is about the size of the combined states of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware, but its estimated population (4,500,000) is less than that of Maryland. Iraq is primarily an agricultural country; more than 60 percent of its population gain their living directly from the land. Of the entire area more than half is arid desert; slightly more than one-fourth, principally along the river valleys, is potentially cultivable. A vast irrigation network once covered the latter area, but was completely ruined by the Mongols about the time they destroyed Baghdad in 1258. At the present time only 6,500,000 of the 20,000,000 cultivable acres are irrigated. Although the government is making some progress in restoring the irrigation system, the poverty-stricken fellah receives little benefit, for the reclaimed land is usually gobbled up by the already rich sheikhs and absentee landlords. As
in ancient times, Iraq continues to play her role as a world’s important granary. When the shipping crisis cut off the Near East from the rest of the world and when famine tormented India again, it was Iraq’s immense wheat and barley crops that not only helped to reduce the crisis but also helped to feed the Allied armies on Near Eastern soil, thus freeing Allied ships for other essential war needs. Except for sugar, coffee, and tea, Iraq produces practically all her essential foodstuffs, and this in spite of the fact that primitive methods of cultivation are still practiced as they were a millennium ago when the Abbassid dynasty spread Arab fame over the world. While the government has set up agricultural experimental stations and expanded agricultural education, the native wooden plough with its metal shoe and the sowing of seeds by hand still remain in almost universal use.

Rainfall occurs almost exclusively in the northern part of the country, where the mountains form a sort of retaining wall as they stretch from the Turkish to the Iranian borders. In that area, between Mosul and Kirkuk, are the wheat and barley granaries which depend entirely upon a rainfall that averages 16.71 inches a year. The rains occur mainly between December and March; the precipitation in southern Iraq is too slight to permit a regular agriculture without irrigation. It is extremely significant that mankind’s earliest known civilization should have started on land where irrigation was necessary for maintenance of life. It is in this irrigated area that Ur, the most ancient city in the world and the birthplace of the Prophet Abraham, was reputedly built some 6,000 years ago. The significance of irrigation to Iraq’s life may be seen in the fact that 6,500,000 acres are cultivated in that manner as compared to 3,000,000 acres in the dry farming zone.

Iraq has three main geographical divisions:

1. The desert that encroaches upon the Euphrates river from the western direction of Syria, Transjordan, and Saudi Arabia—a hard gravelly plateau in its northern part and a great stretch of sand in the south. It is sparsely settled with Bedouin tribes constantly on the search for the precarious pasture for their sheep and camel flocks. An intense heat fans over the southern part of this plain below Baghdad, hugging close to the 120-degree mark in the summer time.
2. The plains, where the vegetation derives from the alluvial soil deposited by the Euphrates and Tigris rivers between the desert and Iran's Zagros mountains. Flying over this twin-rivered valley in a plane, one can see the awesome specter of what centuries of neglect have done to an anciently established canal system. It is in this same valley that the bulk of Iraq's population lives, the cultivation being confined to river banks and their radiating canals.

3. The mountains in the northeast corner, where dwell the Kurds who cultivate the valleys and graze their goats and sheep on the ample verdure of its hills. The area where the mountains merge into the upper plains contains the Semitic plain-dwellers and the non-Semitic mountaineers—the Arabs, Kurds, Turks, Arameans and Yazidis.

Iraq's population statistics are difficult to obtain, because the Arabs have not forgotten that the census was a device used by the Turks to levy taxes or impose military service. The Arabs compose 80 percent of Iraq's population, with the Kurds representing the largest single minority at 17 percent. The Jews, whose origin is traceable to the Babylonian captivity, number close to 100,000. The ancient Assyrians, whose forbears once proudly dominated Asia Minor, have dwindled to a mere 25,000. They were brought into Iraq by the British from Iran and Turkey and speak an Aramaic dialect. Northeast and west of the oil producing region of Mosul live the Yazidis, a secret sect whose main shrine is at Shaikh Adi and whose religious tenets include the propitiating of the Devil.

The religious complexion of Iraq is equally interesting. Almost 95 percent of the people are Moslems with the Shiites composing 54 percent of the population and the Sunnites 41 percent. Karbala, the city where Mohammed's grandson, Hussein, was assassinated, and Najaf are shrines as holy to the Shiites as Mecca and Medina. The Sunnite stronghold is among the Kurds. There are close to 100,000 Christians, most of whose villages are in the Mosul province. The Christians are also divided into various sects, the ancient Nestorians (Assyrians) and Jacobites being the principal units, while others include the Uniate branches of these two, the Chaldeans, and Syrian Catholics.

The nomadic tribes inhabit the western desert. They live in tents woven of wool, or of goat or camel hair. They live mainly on
bread, dates, and the soured milk of their animals, exchanging livestock and animals skins for wheat, cloth, and elementary utensils.

The settled tribes or seminomads live mainly along the banks of the rivers, raising crops and stocks and remaining near their fields until after the harvest, when they resume their nomadic habits. Their homes are mud huts. In the rice area in the southernmost plains live the marsh Arabs, their dwellings a veritable forest of reed huts built upon piles driven into the water or on islands in the marshes.

Most of Iraq's stable villages are found in the north, where the dwellers may be agriculturists or carry on handicrafts. Some villages serve as distributing centers for the tribes. Often villages are entirely owned by the extremely wealthy absentee landowners or by Aghas (the sheikh or chief of a Kurdish tribe).

The cities are mainly commercial towns for the transshipment of merchandise to neighboring communities and for the home or export trade of the agricultural, animal, or mineral products of Iraq. The few industries are found in the cities where the merchant class includes large numbers of Syrians, Jews, Armenians, and other non-Moslems.

Nearly three-quarters of the population are peasants scattered through villages and small settlements, while another 20 percent are pure nomads. Politically oppressed by the Mongols, Persians, and Turks for nearly seven centuries, it is small wonder that Iraq has been a backward state. What progress it has made has come in the past quarter of a century since the British freed it from the Turks.

The oil pipelines that stretch across the barren desert to Tripoli and Haifa are the major bloodstreams rejuvenating this once fabulously medieval land. The British developed the petroleum fields that now finance the modernization program of Iraq's young government. The number of schools has been increased from 75 for the entire country under Turkish suzerainty to more than 1,000 today; women teachers receive the same salaries as men; and compulsory education has been introduced.

Iraq's first modern hospital was founded in 1872, but from that time until the first World War medical progress was appallingly slow. It was the foreign missionaries who founded medical institutions in the main towns. It was the British army of occupation which
laid the foundation for Iraq’s present health system—this in a land where a thousand years ago there were no medical schools anywhere in the world more famous than those in Baghdad, where Avicenna and Rhazes taught, and whose influences so profoundly affected the development of medicine and science in the West. Within the past quarter of a century a new medical college has been founded, with schools of pharmacy, nursing, and midwifery. Such endemic scourges as malaria, hookworm, bilharziasis, trachoma, and tuberculosis are being fought. In the past deaths caused by malaria have reached as high as 50,000 with as many as 700,000 people suffering either a new infection or reinfection.

The young government, founded by Feisal, third son of Grand Sherif Hussein of Mecca, divided the country into 14 provinces with a chief health officer directing the campaign to raise the health standards of a people who for centuries have been the victims of disease primarily because of their poverty and ignorance, the parents of disease. The magnitude of Iraq’s health problem is indicated in the fact that in 1946 there were only 528 doctors for the entire country. Were it not for the boon that has come from its oilfields, Iraq would probably have continued to be fatalistically at the mercy of endemic diseases.

While nature seems to have decreed that Iraq must remain basically an agricultural country, the government has made efforts to stimulate new industries by offering tax relief. Among 70 manufacturing concerns benefiting from government concessions are 20 brick and tile producing plants, eight cigaret companies, six woolen textile plants, three cotton ginneries, four distilleries, six mills, and three soap factories. Many handicrafts flourish by ancestral methods. While this industrial record is nothing much to boast of, at least it is a start, even if that start owes its principal support and some of its financing to Western interests.

Oil production remains by far the principal industry and wealth producing export item, not even excluding the date groves along the 100-mile stretch of the Shatt Al Arab river from the Persian Gulf to Basra, the area that produces 80 percent of the world’s date trade.

Many forces contributed to keeping Iraq disunited until Feisal, whom the French had previously purged as king of Syria, showed
his great statesmanship after he had been chosen in a plebiscite by the Iraqis in 1921 to head their government.

The thinly spread population, the lack of raw resources, the intervening desert, the limited means of communication restricted to three rivers and a recently established railroad, the diversity of races with their innate loyalties, the clashing ideologies of several religions, especially the feuding supporters of the Shiites and Sunnites, the feudalism of the rich sheikhs and landowning classes, the economical and political exploitation of the native by foreign powers—all these have been obstructions which this new Arab state has had to hurdle.

Iraq cannot be expected to become a great power until these conditions have been ameliorated. The frequent feelers that such Pan-Arabists as General Noury As Sa'id Pash have sent out for the establishment of a greater Syria under a Hashimite dynasty led eventually to the founding of the Arab League and give further evidence of some of the many rifts in the fabric of unity in that area.

The "House" of Egypt

Although it has a constitutional monarchy with an elected chamber of deputies, a senate, a cabinet of ministers headed by a prime minister—all this modeled on the Western conception of democracy—Egypt remains essentially a feudalistic state. To realize this fact, one has only to travel the 900-mile length of the Nile valley and see the abject poverty of its fellaeen (peasants), who number 13,000,000 of the country's 17,000,000 population; this in a land which 5,000 years ago had attained a high civilization while Europe was still a barbaric outpost.

What ironical travesty that the land which claims to be the cultural and spiritual center of the Arab and Moslem world should itself hold a population that is 80 percent illiterate, living in squalor and disease and hunger, while a few thousand live off these exploited masses in greatest comfort.

In Egypt, it is cheaper to hire human beings than to buy an animal to do the work. It is not unusual to see two or three men harnessed with ropes and pulling a boat through a canal when the breeze is not sufficient to stir the vessel's own sails. This is the land where
barefoot men often replace donkeys in the shafts of two-wheeled carts, tugging farm produce to the market.

If the Nile River were to dry up suddenly, Egypt would vanish. This 4,000-mile stream, longer than the combined length of the Missouri-Mississippi rivers, rises in Central Africa and flows northward into the Mediterranean, cleaving the monotonous expanse of the desert that covers North Africa from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea. It deposits a rich alluvial soil which from time immemorial has given life to a population whose maximum density per square mile in the overcrowded Nile delta is claimed to be higher than in any country in Europe. Through its course in Egypt the Nile is not fed by a single stream.

Egypt has an area of 386,000 square miles, about seven times the size of the New England states, but its cultivable area (8,600 square miles) is hardly greater than the state of Massachusetts; 99 percent of its population is concentrated along the extremely fertile Nile banks. Large irrigation works have tremendously increased agricultural production in the past century, so that two or three crops a year are possible instead of the lone crop under the Nile flood or "basin" system of Pharaonic times. The great irrigation works of the past half century—the Aswan dam and the several barrages that cross the Nile—have enabled the already wealthy and absentee landowning classes to profit still more from the engineer's skill, whereas up to the beginning of World War II, the fellaheen worked for as little as eight cents a day.

The population falls into at least eight distinct groups: the palace, Al Azhar University, aristocracy, wealthy middle class, lower middle class, leaders among the fellaheen, illiterate fellaheen, and illiterate townsmen. These may be regrouped into (1) the comparatively well educated, totaling a few hundred thousand persons and including the palace crowd, Azhar graduates, the aristocracy, the well-to-do middle class, and those from the lower middle class who happen to be well educated; (2) the barely literate, totaling about 2,500,000, and including the village 'omdahs (mayors), sheikhs, and heads of influential families, who can read and write but have not received an education in the Western sense; (3) the more than 12,000,000 illiterates—the fellaheen and the lower strata in the towns.
In Egyptian elections, all votes are generally controlled votes, the only question being who will do the controlling. The fellaeen and the poor townsmen are completely dominated by the other groups, as they have been from the beginning of time. Since they have faith in their 'omdahs or village notables, they take election advice from them, the village "bosses" having previously accepted orders from other groups more powerful than themselves. The fellah has no conception of democracy. He knows that through the harshness of fate he is absolutely dependent on the 'omdah as protector, and votes as his protector wants him to vote. The agents of the dominant classes make a special tour to the villages at election time and pass the word along to the little "bosses" as to how the masses should vote.

The fellaeen as a group are 95 percent Moslem. In Upper Egypt a few hundred thousand of them are Christian Copts. All are primitive tillers of the soil. Generally they are superstitious, and hence great followers of tradition. They distrust foreigners especially. Their "natural" leaders exert a pressure which they gullibly accept.

The people of the Nile lead a wretched life. Physically and mentally they are little better off than the animals they raise and with whom they often share their one-room mud houses. They have been in this condition for the past four thousand years. Any reasonable person who has the courage to present a bold, practical plan for reform is denounced as a communist and, as in Iraq where the landholders are solidly intrenched, runs the risk of spending a few years in prison. What is worse, out of sheer ignorance the fellaeen are unwilling and probably unable to help themselves.

Gloomy as this analysis may seem, the Egyptian government is making steady and definite progress to alleviate the conditions of the masses. A significant first step was the establishment of the Ministry of Social Affairs a few years ago. Since then many laws have been passed to better the educational, health, and economic standards of the masses.

The Westernization of the Near East can be said to have edged its way first through Egypt's door. It started, in a definite sense, in 1798 with Napoleon's invasion and conquest of the Nile valley, a conquest that was destined to carry him through the Near East
until his march was checked at Acre in Palestine, by the British fleet, aiding the Turks. The Napoleonic interlude paved the way for Mohammed Ali, an Albanian general, to take over the suzerainty of Egypt under the Turkish sultan. Mohammed Ali, founder of the present royal dynasty in Egypt, realized that if the Arabs were to have an army strong enough to resist future invaders, it must be trained and equipped like a European army. Therefore he sent his officers to the continent to learn scientific techniques and political organization. Since armies must have medical care for their sick and wounded, he founded the first modern hospital in Egypt, Kasr El Aini. He built roads and canals. He founded schools. He established a system of government, modeled on the Western idea of responsible department heads. The men he sent to Europe returned to Egypt and helped to spread Western culture in a land where Al Azhar university had long propagated an entrenched orthodox Islamic culture.

Missionaries—French, British and American—filtered into the Nile valley, to add the influence of their schools and health institutions to the Westernization process. Where once the center of Arab culture and learning was in the Levant, after the middle of the nineteenth century it began to shift to Egypt, as the Turkish sultans more and more restricted the movements of the Lebanese, Syrians, and Iraqis, who thereupon left their lands for the greater freedom in the Nile valley. This exodus into Egypt as a haven from Ottoman oppression attained its richest flowering at the time that the British had gained control over Egypt and not only permitted the Levant Arabs to settle in the Nile valley but also used them in key government posts, in preference to native Egyptians who were illiterate or untrained in government work.

The British seized control of Egypt in 1882 to protect the empire's lifeline to India. The key to this control was the Suez canal, which DeLesseps started digging in 1859, a task that took 10 years. Its importance as a world artery was convincingly impressed upon his queen by Disraeli, then British prime minister, who engineered the deal for control of the canal stock. It is this artificial waterway that has been the futile goal of the Germans, the Turks, and the Italians in their struggle to dismember the British Empire. It is this artificial waterway that keeps England so solidly anchored in Egypt.
its army now camping on the banks of the Suez as Egyptian statesmen in the summer of 1947 appealed in vain to the United Nations Security Council to order their eviction.

As a result of Western health standards, an orderly process of government, and the development of cotton as the principal export crop with its resultant increase in employment of the fellaheen, the population of Egypt has more than doubled since England intruded in her affairs. Of all the Arab states, industrialization is making its greatest and most rapid strides in the Nile kingdom. Within the space of five miles one can visit a textile plant at Mehalles el Kubra in the Nile delta, where thousands of natives operate Western-made machines, and then drive out in a few minutes time to a canal where he can still see the Saqqaras, the ancient water wheels of the pre-Christian era, the water buffaloes or donkeys, their eyes blindfolded as they faithfully plod in a circle, drawing water for the fields where the cotton grows. Along the Nile also grow barley, wheat, rice, dura, berseem, beans, dates. The peasants' daily diet is based on beans and dates when they are in season. Meat is a food that the poor can rarely afford to enjoy, generally only on weddings, religious feasts or national celebrations.

It would appear from a percentage point of view that Egypt is the most Moslem of the Arab countries we have been studying. The population, according to the 1937 census, was divided into 14,552,695 Mohammedans, 1,303,970 Christians, and 62,953 Jews. In this, as in other Arab lands, the population is splintered into many religious and racial groups. Most of the Moslems are Sunnites, among them Arabs in the Delta area near the Sinai peninsula border whose ancestors emigrated there from the Arabian peninsula. There are also Sudanese, whose presence in the Nile seems to have added a Negroid strain to the native Egyptians, especially in Upper Egypt, and the still different racial stock of the Senussi in the Libyan border area; some Berbers have also filtered in.

Among the Christians the largest single group is the Copts, about one and a half million of them, who have clung tenaciously to their faith despite Moslem pressure. Occupying mainly the Upper Nile Valley, they live in tiny villages and the larger towns, and while playing a decidedly minor role in the politics of Egypt, have nevertheless served as clerks and accountants in government offices. Some
have held cabinet posts. It is among the Copts that Protestant missionaries have gained few converts they have made in nearly a century of effort.

Egypt is one country where the trade and commercial life has been largely dominated by foreign groups. The Syrians and Lebanese (thanks to the establishment of the printing press which the American missionaries brought from Malta to Beirut in the 1820s) founded the first newspapers and magazines that now circulate throughout the Arab world from Cairo. Many of the principal department stores and businesses were founded by them. They have helped to expand Arabic education in this most ancient of valleys, but they have never been really assimilated, since the Moslem masses dislike them because of their Christian background.

The largest non-Arab racial group is the Greeks who are engaged in commerce, principally as owners of small stores, restaurants, hotels, and bars. Few of them command the respect of the Egyptians, although about 10,500 of some 75,000 have become naturalized Egyptian subjects. The next largest group, the Jews, are found almost exclusively in Cairo and Alexandria, where they are in business, ranging from money changing and keeping of small shops to high finance and ownership of impressive department stores.

The foreign culture that has left the deepest impress on Egypt is the French. Many upper-class Moslems send their daughters to French schools rather than to American or British, because of the cloistered life and at the same time the excellent instruction given by the nuns. The names of the months are Arabic forms of the French, daily newspapers and magazines of wide circulation are printed in French, and, until recently some of the government reports were printed in French as well as in Arabic.

The Italians had large colonies and were active in Egypt's business prior to World War II, while the Armenians compose another racial group that is engaged primarily as artisans, although a few hold minor government posts.

Toward all the foreign racial groups, the Moslem feeling is one of toleration; a feeling which occasionally gets out of control when nationalists stir the students to incite the lower classes against the English, particularly, or the Greeks and Jews.

In keeping with his design to modernize the army, Mohammed
Ali sponsored the establishment of spinning, weaving, glass, armaments, and shipbuilding industries, but these died away under his successor. Up to World War I only the sugar industry had prospered.

When the first global conflict closed the Mediterranean and caused Egypt to shift from its principal crop, cotton, the necessity was seen for diversifying employment opportunities. Sugar, weaving, spinning, soap, furniture, iron, leather, and perfume industries were launched but many of these failed after the war, in competition with the higher industrialized plants of the West. Since then, however, sound progress has been made, but still on a rather small scale, in the industrialization of Egypt. This progress followed as the foreign powers eased the severe restrictions which they had imposed in commercial treaties. An idea of the extent of the development of industries, since Bank Misr was established in 1920 with a primary aim of helping in the founding of business, is indicated for the period from 1930 to 1939 with this growth: 145 establishments ginning cotton (136 of them British financed); 162,843 tons of sugar produced locally and fully meeting the country's needs in 1938; production of 159,500,000 square meters of cotton pieces, meeting 40 percent of the nation's needs; also cement plants, alcohol, leather, cigarettes.

The largest industrial development in the Near East is the spinning of cotton yarns. Egypt has a total of 69,000 spindles, giving employment to 20,000 workers in that branch alone. While Egypt is decidedly an agricultural country, its expansion in industry may be indicated in the 609,735 persons employed, a figure representing 8.2 percent of all gainfully employed persons. The industrial process has been markedly increased both during and since World War II. As one of the wealthier Arab nations, which profited immensely from the recent war, Egypt bids well to stay in the forefront of the Near Eastern industrialization movement.

The Eastern Flank: Iran

Perhaps because of its majestic mountains, the ancient Parthians called Iran "Land of the Nobles." Certainly if one were to cross its 800-mile width from the western exposure along the Tigris valley
to the eastern proximity to the Indus valley, or plumb its 1,400-mile length from the northern Caspian shore to the southern extremity along the Persian Gulf coast of Baluchistan, one could not help but be awed by mountains that emerge from plateaus 4,000 feet high to become snow-capped peaks, towering, like pinnacle-shaped Mt. Demavend, to 18,000 feet. Iran's great land mass of 628,000 square miles would cover the block of American states from Maine through Minnesota and thence southerly along the Missouri-Mississippi rivers through Tennessee to the Atlantic coastline of Virginia.

The population, estimated at 16,000,000, comprises a polyglot of races, but the language which gives this area its distinction from the rest of the Near East is the ancient Persian. Iran has many kinships with its neighboring Arab lands. The script is Arabic, but the spoken words are Persian, although both languages have borrowed slightly from each other. Secondly, the vast majority of the inhabitants are Moslems of the Shiite sect, the Sunnites generally being represented by the non-Persian language groups, including large groups like the Kurds who dwell in the Elburz mountain area; the Armenians, in Azerbaijan: the Arabs, in the Persian Gulf delta; the Lurs, those hardy, Alpine-like tribesmen in the verdant Zagros mountain valleys; the Baluchis, south of the Persian Gulf, from the coastline to the Indian border, with a racial background seemingly blended of Arab, Indian, and Negroid. The northwestern part of Iran is inhabited by the Turkomen, among whom the Mongoloid influence is also apparent. Jews, aggregating some 40,000, center chiefly in the larger cities.

The most nomadic of Iran's peoples are the Arabs and the Baluchis, in the Khuzistan and Baluchi provinces, respectively. They retain medieval traits in political and social organization. The Lurs and the Kurds are the major tribes in provinces so named, and only within the past generation have the Kurds tended to adopt a sedentary life. Other mountain tribes include the Bakhtiaris and the Quashqais. Tribes have played a dominant role in Iranian life since remotest time.

Iran is, in effect, rimmed by mountain ranges that frequently rise above 10,000 feet, from a broad central plateau of bleak steppes
and stony desert—150,000 square miles of land whose northern part is called the Dasht i Kavir, and southern part, the Dasht i Lut—terrain as barren as Rub Al-Khali and equal in area to the states of Washington and Oregon. Except for some minor streams that empty into the Caspian Sea or disperse themselves within the bowl-like interior, rivers in Iran are rare, the only navigable one being the Karun which rushes through the southern plain into the Persian Gulf. In many areas water is relatively scarce; in many villages its distribution is controlled by a specially designated waterman answerable to a group of elders called the “graybeards,” who form a sort of city council.

The very nature of Iran’s geographical setting has prevented it from achieving the conditions of unity that are the first requisites toward the making of a great, powerful nation. Nature has fashioned a mammoth amphitheater in Iran: its center, the barren desert previously described; a plateau 4,000 feet above sea level; two major mountain chains—the Elburz and the Zagros—whose 10,000 to 14,000-foot barriers encircle the country on three sides. There are really only two easily accessible entrances into Iran, at the mouth of the Persian Gulf in the south and the corridor in the northeast through which swept the conquering Turkish and Mongol hordes.

Iranians do not live in contiguous communities, but as broken links in a human chain. Their villages are found mostly at the junction of the mountain valleys and the plains. Since they dwell vast distances apart, it naturally follows that there has been little incentive toward a strong unity of diverse racial strains.

The Persians have bowed beneath the invading swords of the Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks, the nomadic tribes of the Arabs, Turks, and Mongols. And like the Arabs, they have at times absorbed their conquerors, adopting the best in the arts and politics and religions of the foreigners and adapting or assimilating these features to their own fabric of life. At the time of Cyrus the Great, the empire was extended through the Near East to the Grecian mainland. Persian influence later was so great that when Alexander the Great vindicated his ancestors, the Hellenic warrior chose two Persian daughters to be his legitimate wives.
The ancient crossroads of world trade have also passed through Iran, since it was nearer than Arabia as the connecting land link to northern India and China.

Iran is definitely an agricultural country. Most of its people live in the numerous communities that abound on the well-watered mountain slopes near their junctions with the fertile plains and valleys. On these slopes the people raise wheat and garden crops in the summer while moving their herds farther up the mountain sides to pasture on the rich verdure made possible by the melting winter snows and the copious spring rains. In some of the higher altitudes as much as 50 inches of rain falls in a year. In the winter the nomads return to live in the valleys and plains.

Iran has made one rather unique contribution to the development of agriculture. It is called a “qanat,” an artificial canal which carries water underground, sometimes as far as twenty miles. The “qanats” are bored at the foothills of the mountains and are designed to preserve the water from evaporation and wastage. The “qanats” irrigate crops many miles distant. The summer season is generally dry, especially in Southern Iran, during the four-month period when the Shamal blows—a strong, hot, dust-laden wind.

Whether it be on the mountain sides or in the alluvial plains, agriculture is largely carried on with ancient quaintness—a pair of bullocks or donkeys drawing a plow usually fashioned from an iron shoe that has been attached to rough-hewn wood. At harvest time, bullocks still trample upon the dried stalks to thrash out the wheat after it has been harvested with hand-powered sickles. While ancient methods of farming generally prevail throughout the land, modern techniques have, however, penetrated in recent years; these are found not among the tribes but rather in the market-garden districts close to the cities where Western civilization has made its greatest impress.

Iran produces a wide variety of agricultural products, from rice, tea, tobacco, and fruits on the Caspian shore to dates and the usual tropical fruits in the Persian Gulf area. Cotton cultivation has been introduced but primarily to supply British demands, although a few native factories for the spinning of yarn and weaving of cotton goods for home consumption have sprung up, primarily with government support.
Only in more recent decades has some progress been made toward industrialization, and that at best a feeble and elementary one. While the development of industry began only a quarter of a century ago, it was left to World War II to give it a somewhat vigorous impetus. Carpet making, since the early nineteenth century, has been and continues to be the principal export industry of products made by man, but even its importance is beginning to recede as its artisans forsake the poorly paid and laborious task of hand weaving for the greater monetary rewards that come from the exploitation of petroleum, whose products give Iran its greatest income from exports.

These new industries have helped in extending the urbanization of many of Iran's areas: 23 cotton textile mills with 120,000 spindles, giving rather steady work to 7,300 persons; 9 woolen mills with 25,000 spindles, employing 3,200 persons; 25 hosiery factories, with 1,000 on their payrolls; 7 sugar refining plants, giving jobs to 50,000; 6 match factories with an output of 100,000,000 boxes; 15 soap and glycerine plants, 7 tanneries, 15 installations producing alcoholic beverages, 6 canning firms, a cement mill, a glass factory, an 8,000-spindle silk mill and two factories that make sacks. Many of these establishments are state-owned or supported, for without government aid Iran has not had the financial means to establish industries on a scale and scope to which the West is accustomed through its free enterprise system.

The country is considered rich in mineral resources but these, too, have been relatively undeveloped. What exploitation of natural resources has taken place has been sponsored by the Iran Department of Mines, but the major and most lucrative development has come through the Anglo-Iranian Oil Co., Ltd., a United Kingdom petroleum concern with an authorized capital of £33,000,000. What a boon petroleum is to Iran's economy is indicated in its £23,000,000 export in the last full normal year before World War II, an amount nearly three times as great as the total of all other exports.

Iran lacks a well-knit transportation system, because of several factors: First, high mountains fringe the country like a bulwark against the outside world. There are no navigable rivers (except the Karun) to connect the great cities for commercial communication. The great central desert intercedes as an impassable barrier.
Highway and railroad development thrive with industry and since Iran, for centuries, has been primarily agricultural, there has been little incentive to development. Admittedly richer in undeveloped resources than any of its Near Eastern neighbors, Iran’s growth as an important power has been retarded by the lack of transportation, which in many rural areas still depends on donkeys or the cart or the camel for shipment of goods.

The renaissance in transportation may be traced to Western influences, particularly to the rivalry between Czarist Russia, longing for a warm outlet through the Persian Gulf, and Britain, determined to safeguard her Empire lifeline to India from Russian envy. The first railroad lines were laid by a Russian company in northern Iran and with British support in southern Iran. It was not until just before World War II that Iran finally could boast of a railroad traversing the entire country from the Persian Gulf to the Russian border, construction of which was shared by Swedish, German, and Czechoslovakian companies during two decades. American Lend-Lease during the war years added to its modern equipment.

Highway construction, however, had been underway since the first World War, so that today a fairly good network provides motor vehicular connection to most major cities. In the smaller villages and among the tribes, animal power remains the popular means of transport.

Air travel, introduced by British, German, French and Dutch companies before World War II, brought Iran into closer contact with European centers, although the foundation for aviation within that country had been laid by the Anglo-American Oil company. Today a network of air routes connects Iran’s principal cities with the outer world.

Except in the larger cities, what few sanitation systems there are in Iran cannot begin to compare with their Western counterparts, but nevertheless steady progress has been made. There was practically no modern medicine in Iran until 1873, when the Shah founded Iran’s first modern college after having sent some of his younger medical subjects to France to study medicine. Today Iran has a medical college. Hospital facilities, rare or nonexistent only a few decades ago, are expanding rapidly in all parts of the country.

Tribesmen have always maintained a secure foothold in Iran’s gen-
eral history and particularly in its political life. What makes Iran different from the Arab countries is this: Most of her tribes are found in the periphery of the central plateau in the mountain ranges. Whereas Arab tribes come from the desert to beyond its fringes and then return to the desert, Iran's nomads roam from the mountains to the plains and back to the mountains, seeking pasturage for their herds of sheep, according to the seasons of the year.

When the British discovered oil in the Bakhtiari hills in the early 1900s, they paid large sums of money and provided arms to the tribal chiefs to keep their tribesmen under control while the British exploited the oil concessions unmolested. Sons of the Bakhtiari chiefs were sent to England to be educated. Among them later were found some of the leaders in the revolution of 1906 that led to the permanent establishment of a constitution, under which form of government Iranians today live.

At various times in Iran's history one or another of the tribes have gained supreme political control, the more recent one of longest tenure being the Kajars whose dynasty ruled for more than thirteen decades up to 1925. The Kurds, noted for the bravery and spirit of independence, were nomadic until comparatively recent times. The Lurs are considered the most restive of Iran's tribes; they live in brown square-shaped tents (like the Arab models) in the fertile Zagros valleys and until recently were wont to sweep down upon the sedentary villages for plunder. The Bakhtiaris are nomads, too, who move their flocks in the summer to graze on the mountain slopes and then return in the winter to the plains. The Baluchis seem to have racial kinships mostly to India but to a great extent, also, to Arabia with additional evidence of African immigration indicated among many through their Negroid features. The Turkomen tribes inhabit the northeast steppes that stretch from Iran into central Asia; they live in round tents, like those of the Mongols in inner Asia, instead of in the square-shaped tents of the Arabs.

Religion has been another disunifying factor. While most Iranians are Shiite Moslems, the non-Persian language groups are generally Sunnite Moslems. Iran, too, is the land where such world religions as Zoroastrianism, Mithraism, and Manicheism germinated. All three have made lasting impressions upon the thinking of the West, the
latter two religions being of a missionary character long before Mohammed founded Islam. Today, Zoroastrianism, which is not a crusading religion, still flourishes much as a closed corporation in that it does not seek converts; one must be born within that religious group to be a member. About a century ago (1844) another universal religion was founded in Iran, the Bahai faith. At present it has relatively few adherents. Then there are the Christians, represented mainly in the Armenian and Nestorian groups, plus some 40,000 Jews.

The feudal systems among the different tribes have had such a grip on individual groups that their massing toward a national loyalty has been exceedingly slow, as witness the revolt of the Azerbajians which was successful for a few months in 1946 until their rebellion was finally liquidated by government forces from Teheran. Tribal uprisings against the established government have occurred frequently in Iran’s long history. The loyalty of the groups is primarily to the tribe rather than to a distant central government. The motor vehicle, the plane, the railroads and an expanding network of roads is gradually changing this aspect of Iranian life.

External powers have also kept Iran disunited. Foreign intercession has plagued the land from the time of Alexander the Great. As recently as the winter of 1946 Russia supported the establishment of an autonomous state in Azerbaijan, while the Western powers backed the sovereignty of Teheran. Westerners want a strong stable government in Teheran since that is the surest way for them to continue to exploit the oil resources originally developed by Western capital. The huge oil refinery at Abadan on the Persian Gulf stands as a symbol of a busy Western technology in a hitherto placid East. Iran’s modern prominence in the council of nations is attributed mainly to the courtship which the Western powers especially apply to her oil.

Iran existed untarnished by European civilization until about the middle of the nineteenth century when the West intruded with her products of the industrial revolution. Previously Iran had attained important stature only as a buffer state when England gained control of India in the eighteenth century and Russia cast envious eyes in that direction, too. The rivalry between these two European powers heightened in the last century and with the United States
Near Eastern policy today quite frankly concerned about the region's oil reservoir, Iran once again finds herself in a rather gingery position, politically, especially in view of the present "cold war" between Russia and her Balkan satellites on the one side and the Western nations on the other side.

The British, ever alert to expanding trade and business to further their industrial expansion at home, constructed the first telegraph lines in Iran in 1864, thus awakening this slumbering land into rapid communication with the faster moving world. Financial troubles have stalked Iran ever since Western business imposed its markets upon her. The British obtained the concession to establish a national bank in 1872. This was succeeded by an imperial national bank a few years ago. In 1944 the Iranian government requested an American economic commission to help evolve a financial system more atuned to modern times.

When the Shah in 1906 granted the first constitution, the document was inspired and drawn by Iranians who had been indoctrinated with Western ideas, either through education in Europe or America or in mission schools, and by Iranians who had been in contact with Western governments. The constitution today provides for a Majlis (a national consultative assembly) whose membership represents the various classes of Iranian society—the princes, clergy, tribes, landowners, businessmen, farmers, and the religious and racial minorities. The parliament is composed of 162 members, each elected to a two-year term. The real governing power, however, is not the Shah but the Prime Minister, who, as the constitutional executive, chooses his own ministers to form a cabinet that has the responsibility of government. Commissions govern in the larger cities and towns and the "council of graybeards" perform a similar function among the tribal villages.

The French have also left their imprint on Iranian life, especially in the fields of art and learning. Iranians have gone to France to study medicine, engineering, law, and modern art. Iran realized in the 1870s that if she were to compete on a military basis with foreign powers she had to revamp her antiquated army and equip it properly. This she did by sending her officers to train in France. Later she invited Russians, British, Swedes, French, and Americans to aid in the modernization process. Such an influx of foreigners
in key government positions served to disunite Iran (although their primary assignment was to unite it), as each foreign group played the game of power politics in the interest of his native country.

A special mission of American educators was also called in to help reorganize the educational system. Iran became a pawn of the foreign powers again during World War II when Britain and Russia occupied it to prevent a Nazi coup d'état. Adding emphatic proof to Western intrusion is the Teheran pact which Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin signed in 1943, guaranteeing Iran freedom from foreign interference in its internal affairs after the defeat of the Axis. Russian troops were finally withdrawn in the spring of 1946, but only after implied and direct complaints had been made by the United States and Great Britain to the United Nations. While on the surface it appears that Iran is exercising her sovereignty as a free, independent state, actually, she is being subjected to pressure power politics as the Western nations veer toward solidifying a military bloc to meet whatever threat they seem to suspect in the Soviet Union's growing dominance in the East.

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