

## Accede or not Accede?: The United States and the Question of Joining the Baghdad-Pact

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**Geliş Tarihi/Received:**

**30.06.2020**

**Kabul Tarihi/Accepted:**

**21.12.2020**

**Yayın Tarihi/Published:**

**30.12.2020**

### ABSTRACT

To contain Soviet influence in the world the United States had allied with many states to be able to retaliate potential communist attacks. After the founding of NATO to protect Europe and SEATO for South Asia, the Baghdad Pact was established to shield the Middle East. Its members were Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan and Great Britain, just the US did not accede, despite having initiated the program and being a member of the other organizations. The paper aims to explain this American decision and shows that the United States was caught between several dilemmas and ambiguities. In the end, the negative effects of accession were seen as more serious than the positive ones and the pact was left to its fate.

**Keywords:** Baghdad Pact, Cold War, Suez Crisis, the US in the Middle East

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## **Kabul Etmek ya da Etmemek: ABD ve Bağdat Paktı'na Katılım Sorunsalı**

### **ÖZ**

ABD dünyadaki Sovyet nüfuzunu kontrol altına almak ve potansiyel komünist saldırılara misilleme yapabilmek için birçok devletle ittifak kurmuştu. Avrupa'yı korumak için NATO'nun ve Güney Asya'yı korumak için SEATO'nun kurulmasından sonra, Bağdat Paktı Ortadoğu'yu korumak için kuruldu. Üyeleri Türkiye, Irak, İran, Pakistan ve Büyük Britanya olan Bağdat Paktını ABD kurmasına ve diğer örgütlere üye olmasına rağmen pakta üye olarak katılmamıştı. Bu makale, Amerika'nın kararının nedenlerini açıklamayı amaçlamakta ve ABD'nin çeşitli ikilemler ve belirsizlikler arasında sıkıştığını göstermektedir. ABD nin bu pakta katılması diğer bazı ülkelerin pakta katılımlarını olumlu veya olumsuz katılımın etkilemiştir. Sonuç olarak, ABD'nin pakta katılımın olumsuz etkileri olumlu olanlardan daha ciddi ve baskın olarak görüldü ve pakt kendi kaderine terk edildi.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Bağdat Paktı, Soğuk Savaş, Süveyş Krizi, Ortadoğu'da ABD

### **1. Introduction**

It was but 75 years ago that the first nuclear bomb detonated. Soon, multiplied in its capacity of destruction and available to both of the world's superpowers it was to become the symbol of a conflict unprecedented in its scale. The Cold War was for half a century to affect every inhabited part of the planet, with his aftermath continuing to do so until the present day. The United States and the Soviet Union were driven by the will to expand their sphere of influence, to achieve and maintain their interests and to spread their ideologies. Therefore, they fought a bitter struggle in many fields and many regions, forcing the nations of the world to take a position. In this conflict, the Middle East, once a mostly undesirable and rough place of little value to the mighty, was to become a center of world politics. Its richness of oil and its central strategic position became first the prey of the colonial powers and were eventually pulled into the superpowers' struggle.

Having developed the strategy of containing the Soviets, the US had begun to ally many countries, especially at the borders of communism, to be able to counter and retaliate a possible attack immediately. NATO was founded in 1949, building an anti-communist frontier in Europe. In September 1954 South Asian countries were united in the defense organization SEATO, and also the missing link – the Middle East – was to be reshaped by America. The alliance of the Baghdad Pact was established to guard and, if necessary, fight the Soviet Union's southern flank. It consisted of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, and Great Britain, yet the United States never became its member. This fact is amazing, as they were members of NATO and SEATO and had initiated the Baghdad Pact themselves. It is, therefore, the aim of this paper to answer the question of why the US did not accede to the pact. Many conflicts in the Middle East today have their roots in the Cold War and once again the world is in the heart of the region engaged in struggle. The United

States, like 60 years ago is again at its very center. Therefore, it is relevant to closely analyze the facts that influenced the “land of the free” 60 years back in their decision to not adhere to the pact. As the general interests of American foreign policy have hardly been altered an understanding of the past of American decision-making might be also relevant for present times.

After a superficial summary over the conception of the Baghdad Pact, the core of this paper will discuss the different reasons, arguments and perspectives that influenced and spoke either for or against an American accession to the pact. Here seven main subjects will be discussed: The effectivity of the Baghdad Pact and the position of the US in the Middle East, the vacuum of power in the region following the Suez crises, America’s special relationship to Israel, the Baghdad Pact in the field of Middle Eastern conflicts, American and British sometimes diverging interests in the region as well as a series of US counter concepts against joining the pact. Hereafter, the history of the decision not to accede in late 1956 and early 1957 will shortly be touched on. Finally, after a summary, a short outlook on the aftermath of the decision will be provided.

## 2. The Conception Of The Baghdad Pact

For the United States, the Middle East had not been an area of special importance for the longer part of their existence. Beside smaller engagements in missionary and trade issues, the region was not of further interest, a state that should even last throughout World War I. It was not until the interwar period, that American attention began to rise in the area and not until after the End of World War II and the Iranian oil-crisis of 1951 that one can observe a fundamental change in their attitude (Al Sarahan, 2017:454-458). This is especially true for the Eisenhower administration after 1953 (Podeh, 2003:101). As already indicated in the introduction, this new awareness of the Middle East was immediately connected to their policy of containing the Soviets. To implement this policy several attempts were made. First came the idea to establish a Middle Eastern Command (MEC) in September 1951. Its members would have been the US, Great Britain, France, Turkey, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Egypt. As the latter could not be convinced to share in though, the MEC did not come into existence. The next attempt called the Middle Eastern Defense Organization (MEDO) failed for the same reason (Sanjian, 1997:226). Out of the understanding, that Egypt was an obstacle towards the establishment of a Middle Eastern Defense, US-Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, came up with the idea of the “Northern Tier Concept” and its implementation in a security arrangement (Podeh, 2003:101). The term referred to the states in the north of the region, that shared a border with the Soviet Union, had shown awareness of the threat posed by communism and were willing to work together with the West. The Northern Tier concept, therefore, consisted of Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan (Rabil, 2006:39). Eventually, also Iraq was to be considered as part of them.

*“[...] Dulles found that the states of the Northern Tier – Turkey, Iran, and Iraq [and Pakistan] – more exposed to external danger, were more likely to find a solution to the*

*security problem and also were so situated as to provide the greatest measure of protection to the area” (Howard, 1972:86).*

Furthermore, Turkey was already connected to the US by NATO, whose member she had been since 1950 (Howard, 1972:86). Also, Iran was closely associated with it. This paper does not reproduce the long series of negotiations that led to the final foundation of the Baghdad Pact. Furthermore, this already had been undertaken in-depth elsewhere. Here it suffices to state, that on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1955 the governments of Turkey and Iraq came to terms on a Treaty of Mutual Cooperation. This treaty was to become known as the Turco-Iraqi agreement or the Baghdad Pact (Yesilbursa, 2005:88). The content about cooperation in the field of security and defense, non-interfering in each other’s internal affairs and peaceful settling of any disputes, all this in the framework of Article 51 of the UN-Charta (Sanjian, 1997:257). However, the specific duties of the members had not been clearly defined and were postponed to future arrangements (Meiertöns, 2010:29). The pact was established for five years, to be extended by another five if wished by the members. Furthermore, it was open to access to any stated to be “actively concerned with security and peace in the Middle East” (Jasse, 1991:140). The pact was soon to be acceded by Great Britain on April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1955, Pakistan on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1955 and Iran on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1955 (Yesilbursa, 2005:97,103,110).

*“The United States did not formally join the pact but was the motor behind it as an instrument in containing the Soviets [as] [...] with the creation of the Baghdad Pact his ideas were concretized. The Muslim members of the Pact joined it to get more arms from the United States, whereas Britain joined the Pact to preserve its power in the Middle East” (Uzer, 2005:114).*

For the sake of completeness, it must be stated, that the United States never had given an official promise to join the pact, nevertheless, all actors waited for it (Ashton, 1993:129). Eventually, the USA became more and more engaged in the alliance. They were involved in the developing and establishing of the pact's organs and later sent observers to their meetings. Over time they were also to access several of its committees (Howard, 1972:88), becoming, as Howard puts it, “member in all matters of substantive significance, but not by name” (1972:85).

### **3. The Question Of The United States’ Accession To The Pact**

To, find, connect, and understand all the factors and events, that influenced the many different political actors to create the situation, that prevented the United States from acceding to the pact, is a task similar to catching small fish with a too wide-meshed net. It is nearly impossible to get all of them at once, for when the fisherman goes after the one, that has just snatched away, in the meantime, three others will take their chance to disappear. Therefore, it can be a confusing task to comprehend all the constellations and interdependences that are going to be shed light on.

This is why in the following occasionally some facts had to be split up in order not to lose the overview.

Whereas the decision not to accede to the pact was taken by one single man – President Eisenhower (Yesilbursa, 2005:181) – the councils, reports, and opinions he was advised by were manifold and did come from different perspectives. As will be shown, for this reason sometimes a certain fact or idea was used as a reason to accede as well as not to accede. It must be further made clear, that the decisionmakers' opinions, due to changing events over the more or less three relevant years for this research, repeatedly changed. This makes it extremely difficult to define the United States' point of view at a given time. Therefore, here only the consistent and unabrogated points will be mentioned, without giving too much importance to the exact dates of their usage in the discourse.

### **3.1. The pact's strength and weakness and the position of the US in the Middle East**

As had already been mentioned, the Middle East's importance had risen in the years before the pact and a military American presence in the region was considered of high importance. From this point of view, the United States' position was still not satisfying. It was assumed for instance, that Syria, Egypt, and Jordan were preparing another attack on Israel (Glennon, 1991:361), whose protection was and is of major importance to the US (Al Sarahan, 2017:459). Had the latter already been in the area in case of such an event, this defense-purpose would have been much easier to fulfill. Accession to the pact would have granted the chance to establish the needed military bases, not just in the Levante but probably all over the regional member states' territories (Yesilbursa, 2005:179). This, of course, would also simplify other American military or political plans in the Middle East (Glennon, 1991:374). It would furthermore strengthen the Baghdad-Pact's military capacities and effectivity (Sanijan, 2003:116), as well as bolster the governments of the Muslim member-states against potential threats from the inside (Glennon, 1991:334). If the United States, in contrast, decided not to join, they would risk losing their credibility and maybe also the friendship of these regimes (Glennon, 1991:374). This was especially true, as the United had up until then loudly and publicly supported the concept of collective security against communism (Glennon, 1991:363) as well as the Baghdad Pact itself. Such loss of reliability might have further negative consequences also for the other alliances the United States was involved in, like NATO or SEATO. All this, as any American disadvantage in the Cold War era, would directly support the USSR. The Joint Chiefs of Staff even went further stating, that without a US-accession the pact was doomed to become ineffective and eventually disperse, what would be an irreversible loss (Glennon, 1991:361, 374), as a whole piece of the Western defense arrangements along the communist southern border would vanish (Yesilbursa, 20015:183). Should the United States have to carry out any military operations in the Middle East after this, they would have to do this in an entirely hostile environment. Should the US on the other hand, accede, NATO's

Southeastern flank would be strengthened and the communication between NATO, the Baghdad Pact and SEATO would be eased (Glennon, 1991:374).

As has been stated above, the different points of view of Eisenhower's counselors occasionally evaluated the same situation quite contrary. Therefore, in opposition to the idea, that the loss of the pact, caused by non-accession, would be a disaster, other voices doubted the usefulness of the alliance as a whole. The suspicion of mistrust was founded of mistrust in the effectivity (Glennon, 1991:374) of the pact to serve as an anti-communist defense line. As will be shown below, the Soviet Union at several occasions used existing inner Middle Eastern tensions and conflicts to strengthen its position, by "[...] using psychological, economic and covert military measures rather than direct threats or armed force", thereby simply "hopping over the Northern Tier line", as Assistant Secretary of State William Rountree put it (Glennon, 1991:335). Applying the domino theory, the Pact maybe could function as a conventional military boundary, but not as a shield against ideological penetration (Uzer, 2005:111). Another reason to undermine the belief in the pact's effectivity was the thought, that after the Suez crisis, the alliance had lost public support in Iraq and Pakistan. Being, therefore, supported only by the populations of two remaining Middle Eastern member states, weakened the US-ambitions to take the risk of joining (Glennon, 1991:375).

### **3.2. A vacuum of superpowers after the Suez-crisis**

When Israel, Great Britain, and France launched their attack on Egypt in October 1956, they were about to create a deep rupture in worldwide politics, influencing the entire Middle East as well as both of the superpowers (Gorst, 1997: 44). It endangered the vital flow of oil to Western Europe and postponed a possible solution, for America highly important, of the conflict between Arabs and Israelis (Damms, 2008:180). It bolstered the prestige of Gamal Abdel Nasser and also of the United States, who had intervened on behalf of Egypt, but it weakened the British and French stands in the region.

Eisenhower's opposition to the joint attack against Egypt, also resulted from the fear, that a general undifferentiated wave of anti-Westernism could additionally harden the situation. All this resulted in a precarious vacuum of power in the area (Sanjian, 2001:145), which could be only filled either by the USA or the USSR. It was obvious, that the Soviets would not miss this opportunity to widen their already breeding influence in the area (Howard, 1972:90). Already In early April 1955, the Soviets had stated, that she saw any building of military blocks in the Middle East as a direct threat to her security (Howard, 1972:87). By October 1955 the reluctance of the US to support Egypt with modern weaponry to stand a chance against Israel had brought Cairo and Moscow in an even closer relationship, as the Soviets, using a bypass over Czechoslovakia provided the weapons (Rabil, 2006:40). After she had initially been distracted by suppressing the uprising in Hungary, the Soviet Union soon showed herself as a protector of the

Arab states who were not members of the pact. She openly threatened to attack Israel, Great Britain, and France, if they would not stick to the ceasefire. As directly after the crisis, Egyptian bank accounts in the United States were kept frozen, Nasser came into a shortage of food and medical supplies. The USSR immediately sent help, thereby gaining popularity and economic importance in the Middle East (Sanijan, 2001:147). In face of all this, the question of American accession to the Baghdad Pact became even more crucial. In this time, immediately after Suez Crisis, the Soviets came up with a suggestion towards America:

*“The proposal called for peaceful settlement of all outstanding issues, noninterference in internal affairs and respect for sovereignty and independence, renunciation of all attempts to involve Middle Eastern states in military blocs with great power participation, liquidation of foreign bases and withdrawal of foreign troops, reciprocal refusal to ship arms to Middle Eastern states, and promotion of Middle Eastern economic development”* (Howard, 1972:90).

The United States, of course, refused this offer, even though it was repeated twice in the following year (Howard, 1972:90); yet, despite the peaceful words, in the eyes of the US, it only underlined the importance of the Middle East for the Soviets. If the United States acceded the Baghdad Pact in this situation, thereby changing the vacuum of power, possibly unpredictable Soviet reactions could be triggered (Glennon, 1991:335).

Like in the previous chapter, also in the context of the Suez Crisis some dissenting voices evaluated the situation quite differently. To deter the Soviets, or at least to underline the importance of its Middle Eastern partners' independence to the United States, they also thought about joining the pact, exactly in this tensioned situation (Glennon, 1991:335). This would be especially useful to calm the “nervous pact members”, assuring them of American support “in the event of Soviet encroachment” (Damms, 2008:181). It would be a “[...] strong indication of US intention to oppose more actively and directly the extension of Soviet influence in the Middle East and to take a firmer stand against the efforts of Nasser and others to undermine the Western position in the region” (Yesilbursa, 2005:182). Also, the Department of States was convinced that the only way to downgrade Nasser's continuously growing reputation among the Arabs, and the therewith connected opposition to Western projects in the Middle East, was to adhere to the pact (Podeh, 2003:111). This would also seem like a good way to repair the rupture referred to in the beginning, at least to a certain extent (Glennon, 1991:334). Indeed, the harsh American reaction in the crisis against the French and British had not only had advantages for the US, as they could not afford a break in its alliances, which was not unlikely to happen, as after Suez Crisis a wave of anti-Americanism came up in England and France (Peterson, 2008:215). Therefore Dulles stated in March 1957:

*"The US needs the alliance for much the same reasons as does Britain. We rely on British help, both material and psychological, to implement our policies towards the Commonwealth, Eastern Europe, South Asia and some areas of the Far East. We recognize, that the two acting in concert, with the aid of the Commonwealth, form a more persuasive combination than the US acting alone"* (Peterson, 2008:216).

Besides the ideas of not provoking the Soviets and being especially now harsh against their interests, a third approach proposed to leave the entire matter to the United Nations (Glennon, 1991:337). Both the UN and the US had worked together after crises to prevent further escalation in the Israeli-Egyptian conflict and had managed to stabilize the situation. "Any change in the current U.S. relationships with the powers in the area [or even more an accession to the Baghdad Pact] might seriously jeopardize these efforts" (Glennon, 1991:335). Thinking about the constellation, such 'change in relationships' above all would probably have been mainly a threat to Israel, what the US would not let happen. At the point of leaving the matter entirely to the UN, the Joint Chiefs of Staff differed. For them, the United Nations would prove themselves to be ineffective for the American interest in the region, as they were slow, and above all the USSR was a veto-power (Glennon, 1991:363).

### **3.3. The United States and Israel**

As has already been indicated, Israel's position and point of view have the potential to share in shaping important matters of US-foreign policy. That is especially so, when her security is involved, as the country itself is of high importance to the USA. Israel had been opposing the Baghdad pact right from the beginning (Rabil, 2006:40), as the US worked together with her sworn enemies, and even Turkey, her up until then, the only moderate neighbor had taken part in it (Yesilbursa, 2005:93). Therefore, if the United States were to accede to the pact, they most probably would have had to give another security guarantee to Israel. Without it, the senate presumable was not to going ratify a possible accession (Glennon, 1991:376f). As the Baghdad Pact already included a security guarantee for the frontiers of Iraq, they were even more likely to pressure for it (Yesilbursa, 2005:177). Such a guarantee though would rise oppositions in the member states and even more in the non-member states of the Middle East, driving the latter even further away from the USA and towards the Soviet Union. Here one can see one of the weak points of the pact: There was a great discrepancy between America's interest to unify the Middle Eastern countries in an alliance against communism and her wish to keep the military power between Arabs and Israelis in balance if not in favor of the latter (Bickerton, 2015:135). The only way to overcome this divergence would have been a settlement the conflict between them. Therefore, the US placed their hopes in Nasser, as he was the most determined enemy of Israel. Several approaches like for instance the so-called "Project Alpha" (Yesilbursa, 2005:121-130) were undertaken, but in the end, all proved unsuccessful. The basic weakness of the pact could not be overcome.



To make sure, that Israeli interests found attention in the US, , the Jewish lobby got stronger and stronger in the 1950s. The American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) was founded in 1954 (Rabil, 2006:40). “Whilst the power of the Jewish lobby in Washington was nothing like that which it was to achieve in the post-1967 years, Dulles already had stressed [...] that the Administration had to be wary of arousing its opposition” (Ashton, 1993:133). The situation even got more tension in 1957, “[...] as the United States considered economic sanctions against Israel in response to its aggressive actions in the Suez Canal Crisis” (Inboden, 2008:242). Dulles even went a step further warning “if the Jews have the veto on US foreign policy, the consequences will be disastrous. The future of the UN is at stake” (Inboden, 2008:242). Be that as it may, the Lobby strongly pressed for the security guarantees (Yesilbursa, 2005:181). As 1957 was also an election year in the United States and the Jewish votes were of importance to Eisenhower, also this facet of politics touched on the question of accession the pact (Sanijan, 2001:117).

Once again, some people evaluated the situation quite differently. Admiral Radford of the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that Israel would not imperturbably stick with the idea of the security guarantees. According to him, the country would understand, that the United States’ accession to the pact was in her interest, as the US could better influence the Muslim pact members from the inside than from the outside (Yesilbursa, 2005:177). The Turkish diplomat Muharram Nuri Birgi further added, that, once America acceded, no Middle Eastern member states would dare to attack Israel anymore (Sanijan, 2001:164).

### **3.4. New Arab members and the Middle Eastern conflicts**

It was obvious, that a US-accession to the pact would have an impact both on the entire Middle East and on the single countries. Yet, it was much discussed how this impact would look like, and how the single states would react. While working on Project Alpha, the US had prevented other Arab states from joining, in order not to jeopardize Nasser’s potential cooperation, yet after the failure of program in 1956 (Sanijan, 2001:128) these reservations faded. Some, therefore, said, that a US-accession would make certain Arab states, like Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon drift away from Nasser and maybe towards the West (Glennon, 1991:374; Jalal, 1989:432). The memorandum of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from November 30<sup>th</sup>, 1956 even claimed to have evidence that Saudi Arabia and Lebanon were afraid of Communism and therefore not happy about Nasser’s rapprochement towards Moscow. If the USA acceded, maybe both nations could be brought into the pact as well (Glennon, 1991:362). This would even bear the possibility of isolating Egypt, whereas if the US would not accede, that could bring the toppling of the pro-Western governments in Jordan and Lebanon (Sanijan, 2001:117).

In direct contrast to this view the Secretary of Defense stated in a letter to the President on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1956, that accession would face strong resistance in Saudi Arabia (Glennon, 1991:375). This country should not be alienated as the United States had important interests there

(Yesilbursa, 2005:185). Further bitter opposition was to be expected from Syria and Jordan. Uzer further mentions, that some voices in the States still hoped to come to terms with Nasser and therefore voted against an accession, as it was known that Egypt and also Saudi Arabia were against the pact (Uzer, 2005:111).

As will be shown below, the Baghdad Pact had changed its identity over the years. It had been established as a defense alliance against communism but more and more became an area of Middle Eastern politics and conflicts. Accession would mean, to sting write into this constellation of hostility and have to choose a side, probably more than once. This again would raise tensions and again allow the Soviet Union to widen its influence (Glennon, 1991:335). Besides the omnipresent Arab-Israeli struggle, also the decade-long differences between the royal houses of the Hashemites, who reigned Iraq and Jordan, and the Saudis of Saudi Arabia would pressure the United States to take sides (Yesilbursa, 2005:187). Last but not least three Arab parties were struggling for preeminence in the region. While Nasser saw himself as the leader of the Arab world, the British tried to bring Iraq into this position, as did the Americans with Saudi Arabia (Ashton, 1993:134). Here one can also see the second basic weakness of the Baghdad Pact: The diverging interests and actions of the United States and Great Britain. This had caused the chaos of Suez, this was about to remain a problem here, and wrapped the entire pact, as will be shown in the next chapter. If the USA abstained from joining the pact, they would also be able to not get involved in all these tensions (Yesilbursa, 2005:183).

### **3.5. The idea of the hijacked pact and American and British Neocolonialism**

To understand the idea of the so-called “hijacked pact”, first the three general concepts on the question who initiated the Baghdad Pact must be explained. Sometimes it is assumed, that first Dulles came up with the Northern Tier concept and the British joined in later. Another point of view sees the original initiative on the British side. Yet, the last approach is a combination of both, giving the idea that the original American pact had been overtaken more and more by the British to serve their interests in the Middle East (Podeh, 2003:100). This last idea was called “the hijacking of the pact” (Ashton, 1993: 120).

*“Though the United States supported the Baghdad Pact, it did not sign it. The United States had some reservations about British intentions in the region. The United States, unlike Britain, was solely interested in organizing the Middle East as part of the Western alliance in order to contain the Soviet Union” (Rabil, 2006:39).*

Rabil shows correctly the different intentions of the two countries. While the United States indeed firstly and mainly had been concerned with establishing a defense against communism, Great Britain needed a way to gain back at least a part of its former power in the region to protect her vital interests. The Baghdad Pact seemed to be a suitable solution and so “the UK from the start [...] [had] viewed the military affairs and organization of the Pact rather as a

framework for its political aims than as a serious military undertaking” (Ashton, 1993:137). Rountree wrote to Dulles, that “the Baghdad Pact, unfortunately, [had] been regarded by the non-member states of the area as in large part UK dominated” (Glennon, 1991:336) and also Dulles said, that he felt the Baghdad Pact to be an instrument of Anglo-Arabic politics (Yesilbursa, 2005:177). Indeed had, for instance, the percentage of oil, that the British obtained from the Gulf area risen between 1938 and 1955 from 19% to 90% (Ashton, 1993:124) and probably one of the reasons why Iraq had joined the pact, even though it had been no part of the original Northern Tier concept was for the sake of the British (Rabil, 2006:39). Dulles was to argue after the toppling of the Iraqi government in 1958, that “the Iraqi government fell because Iraq was in an unnatural association with Turkey and the United Kingdom in the Baghdad Pact” (Ashton, 1993:136). Furthermore, it had been the British to add an economic committee to Baghdad Pact (Yesilbursa, 2005:133). Last but not least the British showed their attitude to the Baghdad Pact in attacking Egypt alongside Israel and France, without even informing the other pact members (Sanijan, 2001:167). This situation surely further weakened the United States’ attitude of joining the pact. As the standing of the British faded Rountree stated that

*“The decline of UK prestige in the Middle East will probably be so serious that some other vehicle must be found for exerting U.S. leadership if we are to maintain our position. We must at least wait until we know what changes in UK personnel and policy will take place in Her Majesty’s Government”* (Glennon, 1991:336).

This and the American will of more or less unshared leadership in a Middle Eastern defense organization, as well as the determination to not give the Arabs the impression of having been pulled in on behalf of the British were strong points against an accession (Yesilbursa, 2005:177). Additionally it must be said, that it was crucial for the United States and also personally for Eisenhower to avoid being connected in the Arabs’ minds with British colonialism and Imperialism (Ashton, 1993:126). Nasser had made the connection between colonialism or neocolonialism and the Baghdad Pact all along (Yesilbursa, 2005:217) and the other Arabs were not likely to have forgotten that time as well, even more as their brothers in Northern Africa still lived under French oppression. The British protection of their oil and other interests as well as their fostering and controlling of befriended regimes in the region (Ashton, 1993:124) showed the Arabs, that also Great Britain had not changed overnight. If the USA were to be lumped together with her, all achieved prestige among the Arabs and probably also other parts of the world would vanish. It must be noted yet, that the American interests in the Middle East (Al Sarahan, 2017: 459) differed not widely from the British neocolonialism. But their domestic oil support in the 1950s still met its needs (Ashton 1993: 124) and also the American tactics to establish military bases were different and more cautious. Nevertheless, for these reasons an accession, could have antagonized the entire Middle East against the US, even though the other member states, including Great Britain (Ashton, 1993:135) continued to try to persuade the United States to join

again and again (Yesilbursa, 2005:175). The States, on the other hand, tried to not get talked into something. Rountree wrote:

*“The immediate pressure upon the U.S. to adhere to the Baghdad Pact arises from the difficulties and apprehensions of the four area members resulting from the Israel-UK-French action against Egypt. We should not undertake the long-term commitment inherent in adherence to the Pact to meet this current and short-term crisis which can be and is being dealt with by other means”*(Glennon, 1991:336).

### **3.6. The question of financial aids and the counter concepts**

One last important point of the discussion about the accession was financial. As had already been mentioned and is also publicly known, the United States undertook and undertake huge expenses in distributing military or financial aid to a multitude of countries around the world. Natural this kind of money had always also been sent to the Baghdad Pact states. The question that arose was, whether the acceding the pact would lower these expenditures or raise them up. The Secretary of Defense, for instance, mentioned the possibility, that the costs would rise (Glennon, 1991:375) and also the Department of State wrote, that “this step might well be followed by strong demands for further U.S. aid to member countries on grounds that, as a member, we should demonstrate even more dramatically our support for these nations” (Glennon, 1991:336). Additionally an accession would not automatically have led to economic gain, that could have justified these expenditures (Sanijan, 2001:118). Nevertheless, this point does not seem fully convincing, as the member states' governments had no real leverage to force the USA to increase their payments. Other voices in the United States did not think that accession would increase the costs as America was going to take the leading military role in the pact, thereby reducing the security worries of the members (Glennon, 1991:374). Indeed it could also be expected that the member states were going to ask for higher aids in case of a non-accession for the same reason (Glennon, 1991:362).

Finally, some general factors to weaken the American will to accede as well as a couple of counter concepts to bypass the accession seem necessary to be mentioned. The first of these ideas was meant to calm the members and delay the decision. Therefore “a public reaffirmation of support for collective security through the Baghdad-Pact” (Glennon, 1991:337) was to be given by the US. It was done on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1956, stating that “The US would view any threat to the ‘territorial integrity or political independence’ of Middle Eastern members of the pact with the utmost gravity” (Yesilbursa, 2005:179). Secondly one must recall that the Bagdad Pact was organized and administered by several committees (Glennon, 1991:228). The US for instance already had joined the economic committee, without becoming a full member of the pact. By reminding the pact members of the fact, that the US already more or less was a member in most or even everything but the name, the members were to be calmed. Additionally, the American

accession to the military committee was likely to occur (Howard, 1972:88). Rountree though wrote, that such a step probably would not satisfy the members (Glennon, 1991:336). The third and fourth concepts related to the fact that Turkey was a member of NATO and Pakistan of SEATO. The United States had the idea to bring also Iran into SEATO. As the last, in the sense of the other two, unbound Northern Tier members this would seem rather logically and would supply the country in case of a Soviet attack with weapons, something of high importance for the Shah. This, of course, would yet have to be discussed with the other SEATO members and would bear the problem of a de facto isolation of Iraq (Glennon, 1991:336). Here, the next idea could take effect. As Turkey and Pakistan, and Iran was supported by further canals beside the Baghdad pact, maybe Iraqi and Irani needs could be met on a bilateral level, without American accession (Yesilbursa, 2005:177). Bearing in mind the discussion about possible increased financial aids, the fifth concept seems a bit awkward, as its main idea was to pacify the member states by funding important projects for the Baghdad Pact and sending additional military equipment. Examples were a planned motorway from Istanbul to Karachi, the thought to provide the member states with radar equipment or a program to train Iraqi pilots (Glennon, 1991:336).

#### **4. The decision**

As the many ambivalent reasons described above had shown, the different persons and institutions discussing the question of accession could not reach an agreement in the better way. In the following their respective views will be given: The defense department, in general, was for the accession (Yesilbursa, 2005:180) and secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson directly advised President Eisenhower to join (Glennon, 1991:372). Assistant Secretary of Defense Gordon Gray solely pointed out, that this would make the question of US military assistance more difficult (Yesilbursa, 2005:177). For the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the advantages of accession outweighed the disadvantages (Glennon, 1991:362). For them acceding was the only way to stabilize the situation in the Middle East and according to Admiral Radford save the pact. The same opinion was shared by the US-ambassadors in the region, who had declared a strong conviction for the accession. Secretary of State Dulles and his department, however, remained skeptical. For him especially the possible reactions in Israel and the Soviet Union were pivotal (Yesilbursa, 2005:175). Already before the Suez-Crisis Dulles had stated in July 1956, that the US would not join the pact, and the vacuum of power in its aftermath did not change his mind (Sanijan, 2001:130). Undersecretary of State Murphy explained further that America's freedom of action would suffer if she joined. It would not be in the national interest (Yesilbursa, 2005:177).

The final decision was to be made at the end of the year 1956. Dulles had stated on December 8<sup>th</sup>, that the United States had three options in the Middle East: Joining the pact, try to organize a new alliance or continue politics and diplomacy on a bilateral level. For Dulles, the last option seemed best. Initially, Eisenhower wanted that the first and the third possibility should be carried on with. He said that it would be very good if Saudi Arabia and Lebanon could be brought to the

pact as the US could go with them, but as the Jewish Lobby's pressure for security guarantees did not fade he understood that it was not possible to reach a bilateral agreement with Israel (Yesilbursa, 2005:181). Therefore, the non-accession was decided.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper aimed to give a profound overview of the factors and interdependences that hindered the United States from joining their self-initiated anti-communist alliance in the Middle East. It was intended to unravel the many layers and connections relevant to the subject, without getting lost in too many details. Hereby the following aspects were detected as the most important and pivotal:

The first aspect of the question of accession in this paper had focused on the military ambitions of the US and the Baghdad Pact's effectivity. On the one hand was shown, that a military presence in the Middle East was highly important for America. To achieve this and to also strengthen the effectivity of the pact were seen by some as positive effects of a US accession. Not acceding would cost credibility and might even have harmed effect on the other alliances. It could also seal the pact's fate and tear a hole in the anti-communist defense line. On the other hand, it was said, that the pact was ineffective anyway and a non-accession would save the USA from additional trouble. The statement, that the pact had lost public support in Iraq and Pakistan strengthened that position.

The next chapter dealt with the question, of the post-Suez vacuum of power. Should it be filled by the US or should the status quo not be altered? Some saw the point of time as ideal for joining the pact. According to them, this strong American statement would deter the Soviets from further engaging in the area. It would also calm the other pact members and reduce the prestige that Nasser could get from the crises. Others in contrast, were afraid of the unpredictable Soviet reaction to such a step and also of thereby jeopardizing the stabilizing work of the UNO in Egypt.

Further, the special American relationship with Israel found mentioning. If the United States acceded to the pact, Israel probably would have wanted new guarantees for its security, something that would have alienated the Arab World from the pact, possibly driving them even closer to the Soviet Union. This conflict was hardened by the Jewish Lobby in America, which gained much influence in this time. We must also bear in mind, that 1957 was the year of President Eisenhower's possible reelection.

The fourth chapter on the Baghdad Pact and the Middle Eastern Conflicts related to one of the most ambivalent issues of the paper. The ideas on how the non-member states would react to a US-accession differed drastically. One group hoped that this would make countries like Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon join the alliance as well, thereby isolating Nasser. The other group though predicted strong resistance in Saudi Arabia, a country where America had important

interests. The opposition was also expected in Syria and Jordan and it was feared that such a step could even lead to a toppling of the pro-Western governments in Lebanon and Jordan. Accession would furthermore sting right into all the Middle Eastern fields of conflicts, rising tensions everywhere and thus acting in favor of the USSR.

The idea of the hijacked pact in the fifth chapter explained a mainly psychological reason. The United States could not accede the pact, in order not to look like having been brought in by the British. Such a rumor could have destroyed any prestige the US had among the Arabs. Even more, America was afraid of being connected in Middle Easterners' minds with British colonialism and imperialism. While a non-accession would have disappointed the continuously pressuring other member states, America was determined to not be talked into the pact.

The last chapter touched on two points. Firstly, it was ambivalently discussed whether an accession would raise the military and financial aids that the United States was sending to the Pact members, without being able to give a clear answer. Secondly, some American concepts to bypass an accession were mentioned. These were publicly reaffirming US-support for the pact, reminding the member states of the US-involvement in several of the pact's committees, promising to further join the military committee, bringing Iran into SEATO, solving diplomatic and political matters with Iraq and Iran bilaterally and financing new Baghdad Pact projects as well as sending more military equipment.

For all these reasons with and against the council advisory bodies President Eisenhower decided, that the United States of America would not accede to the Baghdad Pact. To calm down the waves that this step was to raise and to nevertheless confirm the US-stand against the Soviet Union and communism his administration declared in January 1957 the Eisenhower doctrine, announcing amongst others the will to militarily cooperate with any nation in the Middle East that wished so. The United States would send troops to protect these nations' territories against any form of aggression by international communism (Yesilbursa, 2005:185). This allowed him to continue his containment policy in the Middle East without having to take a side (Ashton, 1993:136). The doctrine was not as successful as had it been hoped (Damms, 2008:182). While the other pact members were to welcome the doctrine but still to continue pressuring for US accession, other states would strongly oppose and reject it. To not give the pact members the impression of having forsaken the alliance, the United States would now even join the military committee (Sanijan,2001:167), but nevertheless, Eisenhower's decision had sealed the fate of the Baghdad Pact (Podeh, 2003:112).

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