

Unity of the ARAB STATES



THE Middle East has for many years presented perplexities. There has been an air of unreality in the political and economic outlook of almost all the Arab States and an uncertainty about their future relations with the outside world, and Great Britain in particular. Joint effort between the States was confined to "cultural co-operation" by means of missions and exchange of teachers, students or books. There was an opportunity waiting to be grasped by resolute statesmanship.

A movement negotiated with a wise and swift diplomacy has brought the Arab States together within recent months. In March a pact of union was signed by delegates from Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan and a Palestinian representative, and a constitution for a League of Arab States was approved. The future of the Middle East for the rest of this century may be determined by the character and ideals of the Arab leaders who have joined the League.

The Arab pact is a regional understanding which is consistent with general plans for world security and seems to indicate that there is now a sincere desire for unity among the Arab peoples. It makes provision for the setting up of a council composed of representatives of member States, each of whom has one vote. As well as supervising the carrying out of conventions concluded among the members, the council will study the means

of collaborating with international organisations. The use of force for the settlement of disputes between States is forbidden and means are provided for arbitration and conciliation. The aim of the League is to strengthen friendship among Arab States, co-ordinate their policy, safeguard their independence and build up their economic structure. In addition to political co-operation, provision is made for joint action in other fields, including industry, agriculture, commerce, communications, educational policy and public health.

In the past the Governments of most of the Arab States have been dominated almost completely by local interests and personal ambitions, and have paid only lip service to the ideals of Arab federation. Their countries have been divided by almost as many disputes as the States of Europe. Effective economic co-operation has always proved unattainable. There are scarcely any possible tariff modifications which would not affect the interest of Egyptian growers and industries, and any measure that might be thought to benefit Egyptian industry at the expense of Syria or Iraq has of course been blocked by the Governments of those States.

Probably, it was a realisation that co-ordination of interest would greatly increase their bargaining power with the Western Nations that provided the