

Forum: Historical Crisis Committee - HCC:

Issue #: Measures to promote international governance and cooperation on an international canal.

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Introduction

The Suez Canal Crisis was the invasion of Egypt by Israel, France, and the United Kingdom, following the Egyptian nationalization of the Suez Canal Company in 1956. The canal was previously controlled by France and Britain. The invasion was ordered by the Egyptian president, Gamal Abdel Nasser. The ultimate purpose of the nationalization was to use tolls to pay for the construction of the Aswan Dam. "This conflict precipitated an international crisis over ownership and operation of the Suez Canal ("The 1956 Suez Crisis")". Israeli forces invaded the Sinai peninsula, while France and Britain dropped military forces into the area surrounding the canal. The invasion was highly criticized by the Soviet Union and the United States. American President, Dwight D. Eisenhower, called for a ceasefire and encouraged the invading countries to withdraw from the invasion, in fear that the conflict would escalate. While the Soviet Union threatened Paris and London with nuclear reprisals for their actions ("The Suez Crisis"). The conflict was eventually resolved with a ceasefire and the withdrawal of each country's forces from Egypt on November 7th, of that same year.

Definition of Key Terms

Suez Canal: The Suez Canal is a canal connecting the mediterranean sea and

the Red sea through Egypt.

Sovereignty: A state's independence and its ability to govern itself.

Sanctions: Economic sanctions are financial and commercial penalties imposed upon a country or group because of political or social reasons.

Nationalization: This is the process of transforming privately owned assets into being publicly owned by the state or government.

Ceasefire: A temporary stoppage to war or a conflict

General Overview

Sub-topic #1: British, French, and Israeli Invasion

This conflict started when the president of Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nasser, nationalized the Suez Canal Company on July 26, 1956. The Suez Canal Company was owned by the British and French so this created a conflict between Egypt, France, and the UK. Egyptian armed forces occasionally engaged in battle with Israeli soldiers on the border between the two countries. Israel also wanted to reopen the Straits of Tiran which had been blocked. Israel had conspired with France and the United Kingdom to invade Egypt where Israel struck first. On October 29, 1956 Israel invaded Sinai. Later on November 5 1956, British and French paratroopers landed on the Suez Canal.

Sub-topic 2: Soviet and United States Influence

The Soviet Union took advantage of Egyptian nationalization and came to Egypt's aid. They were the ones who supplied weapons from Czechoslovakia to Egypt in order to seize the canal in the first place. They also helped Egypt build the Aswan Dam in the Nile River after the United States refused to help them. This

marked this conflict not only between Egypt, the United Kingdom, France, and Israel, but a conflict which was part of the Cold War. During the Canal conflict, The Soviet Union threatened to come to Egypt's aid and also threatened to use nuclear weapons if the Israeli-French-British forces did not withdraw (History). The United States president, Dwight D. Eisenhower eventually also told the Israeli-French-British to withdraw from Egypt, and also threatened economic sanctions if they did not comply. This worked since they all withdrew forces in December of 1956 and the Canal was reopened in March 1957.

Sub Topic 3: Aftermath

The United Kingdom and France were seen weaker in the global political stage as the withdrawal was seen as a loss for them. The British Prime minister resigned just two months after withdrawing from Egypt.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Gamal Abdel Nassar:

Gamal Abdel Nassar Husein was the second president of Egypt, serving from 1954 until his death in 1970. In his youth, he participated in anti-British demonstrations (St. John). When he became an army officer, he led a coup that overthrew the royal family. After a dispute with Britain and the United States, he nationalized the Suez Canal Company. He aspired to lead the Arab world, therefore forming the United Arab Republic in conjunction with Syria (1958-1961). Ultimately, he led the Arab World through the Six-Day War against Israel.

Anthony Eden:

Robert Anthony Eden was the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1955 until his resignation in 1957. After a distinguished military service in World War I, he was elected to parliament for Warwick and Leamington in 1923. He served as foreign secretary for three different periods, the most notable during World War II and the Cold War. Eden was not only Winston Churchill's foreign secretary,

but he was also his successor as leader of the Conservative Party ("Anthony Eden (1897-1977)"). "In 1954, he helped to settle the Anglo-Iranian oil dispute to resolve the quarrel between Italy and Yugoslavia over Trieste, aiming to end the Indochina War, and establish the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) ("Anthony Eden")." Eden feared that a new Arab Alliance would cut off oil supplies to Europe, therefore he conspired with France and Israel to regain control of the canal ("Sir Anthony Eden"). This would ultimately end Eden's premiership.

David Ben-Gurion:

David Ben-Gurion was the first Prime Minister of Israel, widely regarded as "Father of the Nation". He led a Zionist youth group in his teenage years. When he turned 18, he joined the Socialist-Zionist group, "Poalei Zion" (Workers of Zion). During World War I, Ben-Gurion was arrested by the Ottoman authorities in Palestine and deported on suspicion of being involved in Zionist activity ("David Ben-Gurion (1886-1973)"). He enlisted in the British army's Jewish Legion, participating in the effort to liberate Palestine from Ottoman rule (Zohar). In 1935, he became chairman of the Zionist executive and head of the Jewish Agency. In 1956, Israel joined the French-British military campaign against Egypt. Ben-Gurion ordered the Israeli army to take over the Sinai Peninsula. Then, he held talks with Arab leaders, looking to establish peace in the Middle East (Zohar).

Guy Mollet:

Guy Mollet was Prime Minister of France from 1956 until 1957. He joined the Socialist Party in 1921. "He was captured by the Germans in 1940 during World War II, and after his release in 1942 he joined the Résistance ("Guy Mollet")." He became secretary general of the Socialist Party from 1946 until 1969, followed by serving as Minister of State and working with the Council of Europe. During the

Suez Crisis, Mollet alongside Anthony Eden decided to retake the canal by force (“Eisenhower and the Suez Canal Crisis”). Mollet would then approach Great Britain about a union between the two countries, followed by a suggestion to join the Commonwealth (“Guy Mollet”).

Dwight D. Eisenhower:

Dwight David Eisenhower was the 34th President of the United States, serving from 1953 until 1961. He was chosen to command U.S. forces in Europe in 1942. Eisenhower then became supreme commander of the Allied forces during World War II (Reeves). He planned Operation Overlord, otherwise known as the Normandy Campaign in 1944. Afterward, he served as president of Columbia University, before being appointed supreme commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1951. Eisenhower warned Britain not to invade Egypt, threatening their financial system. After failing to develop the U.S. Space program, he created the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in 1958 (Reeves).

Nikita Khrushchev:

Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev was the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1953-1964) and Premier of the Soviet Union (1958-1964). He is best known for his involvement in the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. He was part of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and a member of the Bolsheviks (Gibney). Khrushchev was a passionate supporter of Stalin at the time and participated in the Great Purge in the 1930s. In 1953, Khrushchev replaced Stalin as First Secretary after his death. He denounced Stalin’s crimes and liberated and rehabilitated thousands of political prisoners. He embarked on a policy known as de-Stalinization. Khrushchev's ideology, better known as Khrushchevism, was a combination of Marxism and Leninism (Gibney). He criticized the invasion of Egypt and threatened to launch nuclear missiles on Western Europe if the

Israeli-French-British forces did not withdraw (“The Suez Crisis”).

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1869	The construction of the Suez Canal was completed this year. Ferdinand de Lesseps, a French promoter, oversaw the Canal's construction. It became a crucial shipping route between Europe and Asia (Notteboom, Pallis, and Rodrigue).
1947	This marks the beginning of the Cold War, a period of political tension between the Soviet Union and the United States. The two countries engaged in proxy wars in order to advance their political agendas. The US was seeking to repel communism, while the USSR wanted to spread it (Kutz).
1948	David Ben-Gurion declared the establishment of the State of Israel. It was quickly recognized by the United States, and the Soviet Union, among other governments (“Creation of Israel, 1948”).
July 26th, 1956	The Egyptian Revolution was a period of political and societal change in Egypt. It featured a coup that overthrew the monarchy and established a republic in its place. Gamal Abdel Nasser led the coup and was named President of Egypt shortly after. He installed a nationalist government (Baker, Goldschmidt, and Hopwood). Gamal Abdel Nasser announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal. This occurred after the United States and Britain withdrew

their offer of financing the Aswan Dam Project. The tolls that would be collected from the canal would finance the construction of the dam (St. John).

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The UN held the first-ever emergency session of the United Nations General Assembly on November 1, 1956, to resolve the Suez Crisis. In this meeting, the UN proposed a ceasefire to withdraw all troops from Egypt and to create a UN force to monitor the situation. The conflict ended on November 10, after the UN created the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF). They secured an end to the Suez Crisis through peacekeeping on the border of Israel and Egypt.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The United Nations had a crucial role in the resolution of the Suez Crisis. The UN General Assembly passed a resolution on November 2nd, calling for a ceasefire and the withdrawal of British, French, and Israeli troops from Egypt. The resolution also called for the creation of an emergency force (UNEF), in order to uphold peace in the area ("UNEF 1"). However, there were also unsuccessful attempts to resolve the conflict. The United States attempted to resolve the crisis, worried that it would escalate and that the Soviet Union would interfere. The US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, proposed the creation of an international association (The Suez Canal Users Association) of 18 maritime countries to operate the canal. Ultimately, this resolution did not pass. Therefore, the Eisenhower administration pressured France and Britain to accept the UN's resolution detailing a ceasefire. The United States also voted for the creation of the UNEF ("America and the Suez Crisis").

Possible Solutions

There are many solutions to this problem that would benefit different parties. Egypt granting Israel passage through the straits of Tiran could possibly end their attack on Egypt since that is a main goal of theirs. The British and French want to regain control of the Suez Canal, however, this would make the Egyptian government unhappy. The Egyptian government wants to keep the canal fully nationalized and expel all external troops from the country. This could be done by either a successful defense by Egypt or by foreign aid by Russia or another country. Another possible solution is to internationalize the canal. This would allow the Suez Canal to be open to all nations and put the canal in control of a neutral international body. This could also be solved diplomatically through compromise or strict terms be established by Egypt and the invading states.

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Appendix

- I. https://youtu.be/0e7LZu_ceZQ
 - A. Brief overview of the Suez Canal Crisis
- II. <https://youtu.be/cjEpEL9k0BI>
 - A. Short overview of the background and the Suez Canal Crisis concerning Israel's perspective
- III. <https://youtu.be/yjs0c-75dow>
 - A. Video with more details on The United States involvement and the aftermath of the Suez Canal Crisis
- IV. <https://www.nsa.gov/portals/75/documents/news-features/declassified-d>

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A. US Government document of the Suez Canal Crisis and their involvement