

United Nations Security
Council: The Suez
Crisis, 1956

UNSC



Model United Nations at the University of Chicago

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CHAIR LETTER

Dear Delegates,

I am so excited to welcome you to the UN Security Council at MUNUC 36! My name is Elizabeth Williams, and I'll be your chair for this committee. Currently, I am a third-year at the University of Chicago majoring in Business Economics on the pre-med track, and I am originally from New Jersey. For the past two years, I have been an Assistant Chair for UNSC, and I also staff our collegiate conference, ChoMUN. When I'm not participating in MUN or studying at the library, I love playing the piano, trying out new recipes, watching K-dramas, and exploring campus with my friends.

MUN has been an important part of my life for quite a while. My sophomore year of high school, I participated in my first conference as a delegate in a crisis committee. This experience, although fast-paced and intense, sparked my love for the world (no pun intended) of international relations, improved my debate and negotiation skills, and allowed me to make connections from across the globe. The Security Council also holds a special place in my heart since it's the committee I've participated in or chaired most often, both in and out of UChicago—this year at MUNUC will be my 6th time staffing a Security Council committee.

Throughout the weekend at this year's MUNUC, you will discuss the Suez Canal Crisis as a manifestation of neocolonial tension, devise solutions to its economic and commercial ramifications, and consider the crisis as a turning point in broader decolonization efforts and regional relations. Addressing these issues requires dialogue, diplomacy, and inclusive decision-making, and I am sure that all of you will bring fresh perspectives to the table. As delegates of the Security Council, you hold unique and nuanced power, and it is your responsibility to diplomatically negotiate conflicting interests while strategically dismantling colonial systems in the Middle East.

Keep in mind that the topics we will debate involve sensitive subject matter surrounding neocolonialism, and it is essential that you treat the discussion with the utmost respect. We can't wait to see your engaging debate and dynamic solutions at the conference. If you have any questions during your research and preparation, don't hesitate to reach out to me, Ketan, or Phalgun—we are all here to help. Good luck, and see you in February!

Best,

Elizabeth Williams

ewilliams25@uchicago.edu

Chair

CRISIS DIRECTOR LETTERS

Hey Delegates,

Welcome to the United Nations Security Council of MUNUC 36!

My name is Phalgun Garimella, and I'm currently in my fourth and final year at the University of Chicago. I'm majoring in both Statistics and Economics with a specialization in Data Science. Before coming to UChicago, I competed as a delegate all throughout high school (alongside my co-Crisis Director Ketan Sengupta). Inspired by that experience, Ketan and I have both been Assistant Chairs and Executive Assistant Chairs for MUNUC's UNSC during our past three years at UChicago. We loved our time with the committee, and as a result, we're coming back as Crisis Directors to provide you all with the space to try and tackle the Suez Canal Crisis set in 1956. Outside of MUNUC, I'm involved with several finance RSOs on campus (Promontory Investment Research, Phoenix Funds, and others), the South Asian Students Association, and a social fraternity. In my free time, I enjoy playing Spikeball and trying new restaurants in the Chicago area.

Although the committee is set in 1956, the discussion regarding the Suez Canal Crisis in which you all will be partaking is still highly relevant in present-day discourse. This issue, at a high level, is rooted in neocolonialism; the Egyptian regime pushing for nationalization is at odds with the coalition of the United Kingdom, France, Israel, and other members/allies of the Western bloc. Thus, it is imperative that you all approach researching this issue with integrity and diligence, as the geopolitical and commercial impacts of crises like this can still be seen today. We encourage you to familiarize yourselves with the history of the topic, understand the key drivers behind each major stance regarding who controls the Suez Canal, and prepare multifaceted solutions. We recognize that the scope of this issue is wide, yet we believe that each and every one of you has the ability to capture the nuance within this crisis.

As your Crisis Directors, Ketan and I hope to allow you all to participate in—as well as facilitate—engaging debate. Due to the structure of the committee as a hybrid, it will contain mainly crisis elements for the majority of sessions with the complementary end goal of writing a resolution like one you would see in a GA-style committee. We will also do our best to provide everyone with a comprehensive overview of both styles of committee during the first session such that everyone has a baseline level of knowledge before starting debate. Above all else, due to the sensitivity of neocolonial issues, we urge you all to be respectful and mindful of your dialogue. Please reach out to anyone on the Dais if you have any questions about anything, and I'm looking forward to meeting you all soon!

Best,

Phalgun

Hey Delegates!

It's difficult to overstate how excited I am to welcome you guys to the United Nations Security Council at MUNUC 36. My name's Ketan, and I'll be one of your Crisis Directors for UNSC (along with my co-CD, Phalgun.) As far as information about this committee goes, there's plenty to cover, but first, a bit about me: I'm a fourth-year at the University of Chicago studying Public Policy and Business Economics, and I'm also pursuing a minor in English and Creative Writing. Beyond MUNUC, I'm a section editor for *The Chicago Maroon's* opinion section, Viewpoints, and I dabble in writing for other on-campus publications when I get the chance.

My history with Model United Nations is a long one; I spent all four years of high school competing at conferences as a crisis delegate, and I've got more than a few Security Councils under my belt. Phalgun and I attended high school together, competed alongside each other as delegates, and—even before arriving at UChicago—promised each other that we'd run a Security Council together before graduating college. While we've staffed UNSC at MUNUC for the past three years as assistant chairs, it's beyond exciting to finally host our very own version of this committee—we hope you'll have as much fun with it as we've had designing it!

There exist a near-inexhaustible number of ways to describe the Suez Canal Crisis—a commercial disaster of epic proportions, a geopolitical inflection point of incredible magnitude, a flashpoint that no country on the planet could hope to insulate itself from—but I'd argue that it's best described as something *current*. The implications of the Crisis—not just for the landscape of global trade and commerce, but for concepts as nebulous and weighty as neocolonialism and national sovereignty themselves—reverberate across history. They define the reality in which we exist. Over the course of MUNUC 36, you'll be expected to grapple with the same considerations diplomats and statespeople found themselves wrestling with nearly seven decades ago: the relics of colonialism in the wake of the Second World War, the merits and demerits of interventionist policy, the extent to which free trade has anything to do with freedom, and—above all—the preservation of sovereignty in a world determined to stamp it out.

Our committee begins in 1956, with Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal—which, at the time, might very well have been the international community's single most critical piece of shared infrastructure. While some of the Crisis' major beats—from the Tripartite Alliance's invasion of Egypt to the total shuttering of a crucial trade route across the Mediterranean—will play out in this committee in familiar ways, the trajectory of this crisis rests in your hands. It's all up to you.

This committee is one that demands nuance, sensitivity, and an enduring, abiding faith in our shared capacity for good. Phalgun and I look forward to four days of captivating debate, exemplary leadership, unprecedented cooperation, and, as always, high drama. If you've got any questions in the meantime, feel free to reach out to Phalgun, our chair, Elizabeth, or myself. See you in February—we can't wait to meet you!

Warmly,

Ketan Sengupta

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Crisis Director, UNSC, MUNUC 36

SENSITIVITY STATEMENT

The very existence of a mediatory institution like the Security Council serves as proof of the fact that the international community is, to some extent or another, fundamentally broken. The conflicts that the member states of the UNSC find themselves tasked with handling are often violent, almost always protracted, and invariably deeply complex; they're inflected by ethno-racial tensions and longstanding geopolitical disputes, and they involve real people (with real lives and real liberties at stake). In spite of the fact that our committee is a simulation set several decades in the past, the things we'll be discussing in this committee very much happened. Nations were invaded; people, civilians included, were killed; ostensibly inalienable rights were threatened. We hope that you, as delegates, are prepared to address the Suez Crisis with the nuance, maturity, and sensitivity it deserves, and we hope that you're eminently aware of the sheer gravity of the situation you'll be exploring over the course of MUNUC 36. It's easy to get caught up in the thrill of a crisis simulation—we've all been there—but it's worth remembering that the goal of committees like this is to *outperform* the actual international community. If the UNSC's organizational aims are the preservation of peace and sovereignty, we expect you to do better than the UNSC did—and to be better than the UNSC was—back in 1956. It's a tall order, for sure, but we're confident that you're up to the challenge.

Now, onto the specifics. Let's start with the obvious: neocolonialism, the specter of which looms large over this committee. Yes, the Tripartite Alliance's invasion of Egypt represented an act of neocolonial aggression; yes, some of you will represent the nations that made up the Tripartite Alliance. This isn't a license for you to endorse neocolonialism—tacitly or explicitly—in your speeches, or your clauses, or your crisis notes. We don't expect you, as delegates and as a committee, to pretend neocolonialism doesn't exist. In fact, we don't even *want* you to pretend it doesn't exist. Rather, we expect you to address it, head-on, as the disease it is. There's also the issue of Israel—one-third of the Tripartite Alliance—to contend with. Historians frequently call the Suez Crisis the "Second Arab-Israeli War"; it's a conflict that continues, in a nebulous kind of way, to define the region. In this respect, what you're dealing with doesn't just exist in the past—it exists in the present. It's happening right now. What you say and do in this committee will carry weight in the real world, too, because the conflict you'll be grappling with never really ended. Navigating the Suez Crisis requires tact and mettle, but it also requires real empathy, and that's something we want to foreground as a guiding principle for this committee.

While this pretty much goes without saying, we've got a strictly zero-tolerance policy for things like crimes against humanity, or actions of wanton violence. We encourage you to be inventive with your crisis arcs and notes; we don't want you to resort to inflicting harm—even if it's simulated—upon people, even if they technically don't exist. Remember: what you do as a delegate is a reflection of who you are as a person.

As executives, our highest priority is your wellbeing. If you need to talk about the Suez Crisis—or anything even tangentially associated with it—in a context removed from this conference or this committee, we're here for you. If you are, at any point, uncomfortable with the direction committee's moving in, we're here for you—give us feedback, no matter what's on your mind, and we'll course-correct accordingly. We're available over email, and we're more than happy to answer any questions or address any concerns that you might have in the weeks and months leading up to MUNUC 36.

—The Dais



COMMITTEE STRUCTURE AND MECHANICS

Introduction

At its best, Model United Nations is a simulation that may not be highly realistic, but nonetheless is a critical learning experience for all those involved. Ketan, Phalgun, and Elizabeth hope that every delegate in this committee walks away with a meaningful understanding of the contradicting mandates that diplomats can face. Delegates often face the struggle of balancing multiple perspectives in policy – specifically regarding how to maximize payoff for all parties while minimizing damages, future tensions, and unintended consequences. We have the benefit of hindsight, and we can see the effects of this crisis and the Security Council's fix of it thirty years later; thus, any action (or inaction) you take must account for all of these issues. This action will mainly come in the form of resolution creation in the GA portion of this committee, where nations in aligned blocs collaborate to share detailed solutions with the remaining member states. Simulating the impacts of these policies is the basis of the Crisis portion of this committee, and thus, both portions will be highly intertwined. From this simulation, we hope delegates will learn to question all sides of an issue and critically examine the underlying reasons for a country's and the Council's policy. Additionally, delegates should focus on how to balance both the

macro-impacts of international policy (such as the implications of national sovereignty or economic integration) with the micro-level consequences that real people will face as a result (like the need for humanitarian aid or repression of cultural expression). Since this committee consists of double-delegate delegations, collaboration is encouraged amongst delegates to more effectively address the multifaceted impacts of potential solutions. Further, as mentioned in the *History of the Committee* section, the structure of the UNSC is special in that the P5 powers – the USA, UK, France, USSR, and China – boast the ability to veto resolutions. Navigating policy creation with this added committee element, and constructing blocs accordingly, is something that we encourage delegates to get comfortable with over the course of the simulation. Lastly, we hope that the committee recognizes that there are no correct solutions and there are no final solutions. Hindsight can only get you so far; international policy is a difficult realm that requires solutions that continue to evolve to fit the needs of the situation.

Single Topic

The UNSC at MUNUC 36 will cover only one topic: the historical conflict of the Suez Canal

Crisis. The rest of this background guide will cover several subtopics pertaining to the lead-up to the crisis and the internal and external tensions surrounding it, but it will not delve into another topic. As executives, we hope that only having one topic will encourage delegates to thoroughly research all sides of the issue, with little question of what will be debated once you enter the committee room. Delegates should come into the committee prepared to discuss all subtopics covered in the background guide, as there is no ambiguity about what the committee will cover.

Position Papers

This year, the UNSC will continue its unique structure for position papers. Rather than the usual several paragraphs that provide a general outline of the problems of the committee and a brief overview of the country solutions, Ketan, Phalgun, and Elizabeth ask that delegates submit position papers that are simple bulleted lists of possible solutions that they think their country would support on the issue of the different points of the conflict; consider potential solutions that would prevent the outbreak of the crisis, and also consider solutions to the humanitarian, geopolitical, and ideological fallout from a crisis in Egypt. We feel this is the best way to ensure that all delegates enter the committee with flexible solutions that they can use in the paper writing and debate process, without relying too heavily on one solution or stance. Since this

committee features double-delegate delegations, we only expect one position paper per delegation and encourage collaboration. Those who submit positions papers by the week before conference will receive emails from Ketan, Phalgun, and Elizabeth containing brief feedback on their solutions, either telling them this would be appropriate and should be further expanded upon in committee or receiving constructive criticism that will allow them to retool their possible solutions before coming into committee. Please ensure that you do not simply restate the Bloc Positions section of this background guide - for your sake!

Resolution Elements

The resolution-side of this committee will simulate policy-making in the UNSC, which is the careful, calculated process by which resolutions are proposed and adopted or struck down. There are two main skills that we will simulate: debate during the creation of these policies and lobbying for those policies once they have been decided.

Speeches simulate the debate surrounding the creation of each policy considered by the UNSC.

Generally speaking, there are two types of effective speeches in this committee. The first is meant to broadcast your country's position on a topic. The second is meant to critique another country's policies. Policy speeches explain how

the policy you are advocating for should be implemented, and why it is necessary to solve the problem at hand. Ideally, the policies in these speeches are feasible, relevant, and leave the world and your country better off. Proposing a policy of this caliber requires carefully researching case studies and similar policies, with particular emphasis on how those approaches can be tweaked to maximize impact in the current situation.

The second type of speech opposes a policy proposed in a speech. The best critical speeches are direct, but respectful. Clearly stating a pitfall with a solution will not be perceived by the dais as hostile, unless those pitfalls are conveyed in a manner that is disrespectful. No delegate will walk into the committee room on Thursday with a perfect solution. This means that every policy proposed will be workshopped and debated. We will argue over whether one consequence is less significant than another, and for the sake of time and clarity, those arguments should be concise and clear. Critical speeches are the main way in which this debate happens, and as long as criticisms are grounded in country policy, research, and respect, this dais will encourage them.

A speech that is dramatic or flashy but doesn't actually keep people's attention won't serve the purpose of the speech. Likewise, a speech that is full of content but misses the pulse of the debate also fails to shape the direction of the room.

Whatever your style of speaking, you should be able to shape the discussion in the room to your advantage. But these statements are generalizations. Debate in the committee room is a conversation, and conversations don't always happen in a stiff, two-sided back and forth. There is always room for style and thoughtful comments, whatever form those might take. This dais will listen to every word you say, and consider it in terms of your sincerity, research, verve and understanding of the flow of debate in the room. Our dais always takes brief notes of your speeches, so please ask us for feedback! We are here to help you develop your speaking skills.

Resolutions, as you can read from the MUNUC delegate training resources, as well as learn if you attend the pre-conference MUNUC training sessions, are often the culmination of a conference. They are the committee's response to the challenges it faces and the combined solutions of multiple policy proposals that have been debated and negotiated over throughout the conference. UNSC resolutions, in particular, should focus on directly addressing the Suez Canal Crisis, with the secondary (but still crucially important) concern of mitigating future problems that might arise in the region.

Crisis Elements

If the resolution process is meant to simulate the creation of policies, the crisis elements in this

committee will simulate real-life reactions to those policies. Delegates who have never competed in crisis committees should come prepared to learn and have fun interacting with a much more dynamic type of Model United Nations than is found in traditional GA committees. Delegates who have done crisis committees before should throw out everything they think they know about this style of committee; the UNSC demands a unique style of crisis that strikes a different tone than most crisis committees on the high school circuit.

Crisis in MUNUC's UNSC involves taking policies that are being considered in the room and simulating what the real-life reactions would be to those policies. For situations as complicated and as delicate as those debated in UNSC resolutions, every policy, no matter the scale or subject matter, has a definite and immediate impact on the ground. The decision to send food aid to an unstable region might prompt a cascade of effects that result in the completely unintended consequence of injury to peacekeepers and aid workers as well as the continued starvation of the intended recipients of the food aid. In the UNSC, crisis forces delegates to confront the consequences of their actions, and realize that there is never a correct answer or a policy that is one hundred percent beneficial. Instead, crisis elements map out the myriad of consequences stemming from a single word, in a single clause, of just one resolution. Succeeding in crisis means

strategically choosing and enacting the set of consequences that is most beneficial to your country and the situation that was on the ground in Egypt in the 1950s.

On a less abstract level, crisis in the UNSC at MUNUC 36 will occur in stages. In the first stage, the crisis directors will accept resource building notes. In these notes, delegates may write to the backroom, asking for clarification on their country's current assets in the region that are relevant to the Suez Canal Crisis, and write to build resources that will help them further their country's goals. During this stage delegates should also feel free to write to the crisis directors and clarify their country's policies in the region.

Examples of valuable resources include media capabilities, connections with local political parties, food aid, troops that are familiar with the region's geography, ties to the government, etc. By no means is that an exhaustive list. The best crisis delegates are those who take novel, creative approaches in building influence and power in a region. In resource notes, delegates will request resources that will be approved or denied by the crisis staff based on their feasibility, realism, and research into what types of resources would reasonably be available to their countries. The crisis staff recommends having a goal in mind when asking for each resource; delegates should be able to answer the following questions when writing each resource note:

Why does my country need this resource now?

What goals are served by acquiring this resource?

Is it reasonable for my country to have the means to acquire this resource? Are there any resources that must be established first, before it is possible to acquire this resource?

If you can, answer all of these questions preemptively in the note. The backroom will ask your intentions with every note when not provided justification - this is to help both us and you!

Once delegates are familiar with writing resource notes, and each country has established resources, crisis will move on to the execution stage. At this point, delegates may use their resources to execute actions that affect the committee. The goal of an execution note is to meaningfully change the situation that the committee is grappling with. In the case of MUNUC 36's UNSC, that means affecting the conflict in the Suez Canal. We expect you all to think through the potential fallout from your execution notes, as these may affect the front room, where you and your fellow delegates are still crafting solutions.

There are a variety of actions that are appropriate for the committee; we expect delegates to impress us with their creativity and effectiveness in shaping the conflict, and wresting power from each other and from the crisis staff. However, under no circumstances will any action that leads to, encourages, or implies gender violence, racism,

ethnic cleansing, or violations of human rights be tolerated. Ketan, Phalgun, and Elizabeth believe that creating change or gathering power does not necessitate atrocities or actions that you would be ashamed to debate in a history class. In fact, much of your job in this committee is to avoid the atrocities that occurred in reality.

Some execution notes result in crisis updates, where the delegate's actions during crisis sessions are so relevant and directly related to committee that they are introduced into the committee for debate by the crisis directors. Those execution notes then become crisis breaks that the committee then attempts to address alongside the standard set of problems plaguing the Egyptian populace. Crisis breaks are manifestations of a delegate's crisis notes in the committee room; they often alter the circumstances which the committee is operating under to solve the problem, or change the problem entirely. In the context of MUNUC, crisis breaks serve to help delegates understand the impact of their actions on the world in real-time.

The UNSC can take action on crisis breaks through directives, which are short (one or two pages long) sets of operative clauses that directly address the crisis update at hand. Similar to resolutions, directives attempt to solve the problems brought up in the crisis update, but unlike resolutions, they have neither preambulatory clauses nor specific solutions to the long-term problems outlined in this

background guide. Directives are intended as targeted actions for the UNSC to take in response to an emergency created by the crisis update.

Ketan, Phalgun, and Elizabeth have mapped this transition from resource building notes to full

execution notes so that delegates can engage in crisis regardless of experience. Hopefully, the lessons learned in crisis regarding the perils of careless policy-making translate into resolution-writing.



HISTORY OF THE COMMITTEE

After the United Nations was founded in 1945, the Security Council was established as one of its six principal organs, and it was endowed the responsibility of maintaining international peace and security.¹ The Council held its inaugural meeting in January of 1946, where they adopted the provisional rules of procedure that would govern the committee's meetings and debate.² The Council originally consisted of six elected member states, but later expanded to ten in 1965, amidst concerns over geopolitical inclusivity.³ Out of the fifteen member states, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, China, and Russia hold veto power—these countries are known as permanent five members, or P5.⁴ Veto power from any single P5 member prevents substantive resolutions from passing, even if the rest of the Council unanimously votes to pass. P5 member states are meant to use veto power to uphold foreign policy and defend national

interests. As of 2015, 293 instances of a veto had been recorded.⁵ The veto is a highly contested and controversial ability, because it gives the P5 greater power over the decision making of the Council—and the UN as a whole—and tends to cause gridlock in crises requiring intervention.⁶

To account for a lack of geopolitical representation in the Security Council, the UN General Assembly annually elects non-permanent members for rotating two-year positions.⁷ These seats are designated based on pre-existing regional groups that give comprehensive geographical coverage. Three seats are given to African states, two to Asia-Pacific states, one to Eastern European states, two to Latin American and Caribbean states, and two to Western European

¹ United Nations. "United Nations Security Council." United Nations. 2023.
<https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/>.

² United Nations. "Security Council." United Nations.
<https://www.un.org/en/model-united-nations/security-council>.

³ CFR. "The UN Security Council." Council on Foreign Relations. August 12, 2021.
<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/un-security-council>.

⁴ CFR, "The UN Security Council."

⁵ Security Council Report. "The Veto : UN Security Council Working Methods : Security Council Report." Security Council Report. December 16, 2020.

<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-security-council-working-methods/the-veto.php>.

⁶ Emmanuela, Florence, and Emmy Dallas. "The Security Council's Sine qua Non: The Veto Power."

<https://polisci.rutgers.edu/publications/occasional-paper-series/346-occasional-paper-8-florence-emmanuela-emmy-dallas/file>.

⁷ "Elections to the Security Council Publications : Security Council Report." Security Council Report. Accessed June 11, 2023.

<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/elections-to-the-security-council/>.

and Other states.⁸ In the 2023 elections, Algeria, Guyana, Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, and Slovenia were elected to serve a two-year period starting in January of 2024; the existing non-permanent members are Ecuador, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, and Switzerland.⁹



UN Security Council Meeting, New York¹⁰

As of June 2, 2023, the Security Council has passed 2685 resolutions since its inception, many of which aid in fostering and protecting human rights and security around the world.¹¹ For this purpose, one of the most important tools at the Council's disposal is Peacekeeping. There are over

70 peacekeeping missions that have been established over the years, with more than 100,000 personnel currently serving in 14 active peacekeeping operations.¹² As the only UN organ with the authority to issue binding resolutions, the Council determines when and where a peacekeeping mission should be deployed. When more assertive measures are required, the Council can impose sanctions on member states; these are imposed not with the intention of punishment, but in order to promote global trust, and support peaceful outcomes.¹³ Along with peacekeeping and sanctions, the Council frequently collaborates with other UN bodies and NGOs, such as NATO.¹⁴ Prior to the start of the committee in 1956, the Security Council has taken countless actions to aid foreign policy in its eleven years of existence, resolving various international disputes from Indonesia and the

⁸ CFR, "The UN Security Council."

⁹ "UN Security Council to Welcome Five New Non-Permanent Members | UN News." UN News. June 6, 2023.
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/06/1137382>.

¹⁰ Debebe, E. (n.d.). The Security Council. United Nations Photo.
https://live.staticflickr.com/1698/24402645745_aa598d48bc_b.jpg.

¹¹ "Resolutions Adopted by the Security Council in 2023 | United Nations Security Council." United Nations.
<https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/resolutions-adopted-security-council-2023>.

¹² United Nations. "UN Peacekeeping: 70 Years of Service & Sacrifice." United Nations Peacekeeping. 2018.
<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/un-peacekeeping-70-years-of-service-sacrifice>.

¹³ United Nations. "Sanctions | United Nations Security Council." United Nations. 2015.
<https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sanctions/information>.

¹⁴ NATO. "Relations with the United Nations." NATO. 2019.
https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50321.htm.

Netherlands to India and Pakistan.¹⁵ Delegates representing member states of the Security Council wield a massive amount of responsibility and play a crucial role in maintaining peace on the world stage; it is critical that delegates take action with the utmost respect and diplomacy.



¹⁵ United Nations. "Research Guides: UN Security Council Meetings & Outcomes Tables: 1947 (S/RES/16-37)." Dag Hammarskjöld Library. Accessed June 11, 2023. <https://research.un.org/en/docs/sc/quick/meetings/1947>.

THE SUEZ CANAL CRISIS

Statement Of The Problem

The Construction and Operation of the Suez Canal

First opened in 1869—following a decade of negotiation, fundraising, and construction—the Suez Canal predates its eponymous crisis by just short of a century. The Canal, at its inception, was a joint venture shared between France and Egypt; collectively financed by both nations' governments, and operated on the ground-level by the Suez Canal Company (which, while controlled primarily by French shareholders, was chartered in Egypt.) As of 1869, half of the Suez Company's stock was retained by French investors, with the other half held largely by one man: Sa'id Pasha, Egypt's incumbent Wāli. It's entirely fair, then, to characterize the Suez Company—and, by extension, the Suez Canal itself—as having been a piece of infrastructure shared evenly between the French and the Egyptians throughout its first several years of operation. In 1875, though—six years after the Canal officially opened—Egypt found itself balanced, rather precariously, on the verge of bankruptcy. Pressure from the Suez Company's French investors, coupled with domestic dissent throughout Egypt, led Isma'il Pasha—Sa'id Pasha's immediate successor—to begrudgingly liquidate, or sell, his stock. Egypt's shares were quickly snapped up by the British, giving them a

significant—but not majority—share of 44%. As it turned out, Britain's purchase of Egypt's Suez Canal shares was merely a precursor to a much less subtle, and dramatically more violent, imposition of English rule over Egypt; in 1882, the United Kingdom invaded Egypt, a nation weakened by years of nationalist uprisings and factionalism, and established a sphere of influence in the Middle East, in turn reaffirming their control over the Suez Canal.¹⁶

It's impossible to overstate the commercial importance of the Suez Canal. Within a decade of operation, it would become the single most critical geopolitical asset in France's (and England's) possession, representing one of the only viable trade routes between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean. Used by commercial powers to expand their operations overseas, and by colonial powers to bolster their control over their respective colonies, the Suez Canal mattered to everyone. It served as definitive proof that globalism worked, but it also served as definitive proof of the unbridled commercial promise of the 20th century. The Suez Canal was made of steel and concrete and dreams; it was

¹⁶ Grandfield, Lord. n.d. "SCA - Canal History." Suez Canal Authority. Accessed August 31, 2023. <https://www.suezcanal.gov.eg/English/About/SuezCanal/Pages/CanalHistory.aspx>.

built of the very best stuff humanity had to offer.¹⁷

The Suez Canal As Leverage

That's not to say that the Suez Canal was used exclusively for the promotion of international trade and cooperation. It wasn't. When things between nations soured—as they did in 1905's Russo-Japanese War, and again, a decade later, during the First World War—the French and the English leveraged the Canal as a bargaining chip that doubled as a weapon of mass destruction. Used by the United Kingdom to limit Russia's military capabilities in the Balkans during the Russo-Japanese War, and, later, by the Allied forces to cripple the Axis powers' economies, the Suez Canal just so happened to be the most vital asset in the Western World's strategic arsenal.¹⁸ Despite the Canal's existence as a piece of infrastructure meant—at least in theory—to facilitate relationships between nations, the first half of the 20th century demonstrated its utility as something more insidious. As the Suez Crisis unfolds, it's worth thinking about the Canal as more than just a commercial asset: it's simultaneously a source of nationalistic pride, a set of diplomatic handcuffs, a loaded gun, and a powder keg primed with a lit fuse.

¹⁷ Grandfield, Lord. "SCA - Canal History."

¹⁸ "Russo-Japanese War | Causes, Summary, Maps, & Significance." 2023. Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Russo-Japanese-War>.



Fig. 1: Map of the Suez Canal and surrounding territories (LOC)¹⁹

Domestic Considerations: Anti-Westernism And The Egyptian Revolution Of 1952

Describing the foundations of the 1952 coup d'état that redefined Egypt's sociopolitical landscape as "domestic" is a lot like describing the Suez Canal itself as *just a waterway*. It's not totally inaccurate, but it's a gross oversimplification of the issue that neglects to take into account a number of critical considerations. An understanding of the

¹⁹ The Library of Congress. n.d. "Suez Canal. Historic map, Library of Congress - LOC's Public Domain Archive Public Domain Search." LOC's Public Domain Archive. Accessed September 6, 2023. <https://loc.getarchive.net/media/suez-canal-2>.

Egyptian Revolution demands an understanding of a handful of phenomena: the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood, the formation of the Free Officers' Movement, and the termination of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936.

In the interest of clarity, we'll work through each of these in order, beginning with the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (and the civil unrest which occurred as a result.) Founded in 1928, the Muslim Brotherhood spent the first few years of its existence as an organization committed to social welfare; its popularity among Egyptian citizens, however—coupled with its rapidly-swelling membership—turned it into a political organ to be reckoned with nearly overnight. (By 1948, the Brotherhood boasted a membership of nearly half a million Egyptians—a little over 2% of the population of Egypt as a whole.)²⁰ Inseparable from the Brotherhood's political motivations was a general distrust of the Western world as a whole; anti-Westernism defined the Muslim Brotherhood, contributed to its meteoric rise as a political force, and eventually came to function as its primary ideal. While

members of the Brotherhood were, for most intents and purposes, extremists—operating on the fringes of Egyptian political discourse—the sentiments around which they organized trickled into Egypt's populace. Eventually, and maybe inevitably, those sentiments saturated Egypt; between 1928 and 1948, the Brotherhood, responsible for a number of acts of terror, served as a reflection of Egyptians' more general, visceral desire to dissociate themselves from Britain, France, and the West.²¹

Anti-Westernism in Egypt found itself a more secular home in the Free Officers' Movement (which, incidentally enough, included one Gamal Abdel Nasser—someone you'll become rather closely acquainted with over the course of this background guide, and throughout our committee itself. More on that later, though). The Free Officers' Movement, comprising a small but spirited group of nationalist officers committed to extricating their homeland from the clutches of the West, sought to establish democracy in Egypt (which, as of 1951, remained a monarchy—one helmed by King Farouk I).²² By 1949, the Free Officers had added a number of talented tacticians and beloved veterans to their ranks, amplifying their visibility and shoring up

²⁰ Laub, Zachary, Steven A. Cook, and Upamanyu Lahiri. 2019. "Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood." Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/egypts-muslim-brotherhood>; "Rapid Population Growth Imperils Egypt – The Cairo Review of Global Affairs." 2013. The Cairo Review of Global Affairs. <https://www.thecaireview.com/tahrir-forum/rapid-population-growth-imperils-egypt>.

²¹ Laub, Zachary, Steven A. Cook, and Upamanyu Lahiri. 2019. "Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood."

²² Abou-El-Fadl, Reem. n.d. "The Free Officers in Opposition: Imagining Revolution." *Cambridge University Press*. 10.1017/9781108566025.004.

public support for their movement. Egypt was on the cusp of tremendous change—change that could only begin with a definitive rejection of English influence.²³



Fig. 2: Former Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, 1960²⁴

But divorce gets messy when two parties share custody of one child, and—as far as Egypt was concerned—the right to the Suez Canal rested with them. In 1951—due either to mounting public pressure, or to increasingly frequent incidences of civil unrest, or to a generalized sort of frustration with Britain—the Egyptian crown terminated the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, which permitted British forces to occupy the Suez region in order to protect the interests of the Suez Canal Company. True to form, the British responded to the termination of the treaty the same way they responded to waning regional control in 1882: with a show of extraordinary

force. Less than a month into 1952, British forces—in an attempt to assert themselves and their right to occupy Egypt—ended up killing over forty Egyptians. The resulting riots claimed eleven British lives, and the damage was done.²⁵ Anti-Westernism exploded, sweeping Egypt and giving the Free Officers the momentum they needed to launch their planned coup.

In late July, the First Officers stormed Cairo, deposed King Farouk, and forced him into exile. Days later, Egypt—a newly-minted republic—appointed its first president.²⁶ The year was 1952. The future, while precarious, was bright.

Within four years, all hell would break loose.

Domestic Considerations: Non-Alignment, Nationalization, And The Aswan High Dam

Two years after the Egyptian Revolution occurred, Egyptian President Naguib's charm

²³ Abou-El-Fadl, Reem. "The Free Officers in Opposition: Imagining Revolution."

²⁴ *Nasser in Mansoura, 1960*. (n.d.). Wikimedia. <https://cdn2.picryl.com/photo/2021/08/05/nasser-in-mansoura-1960-5a83a9-640.jpg>.

²⁵ Sedgwick, A. C. 1969. "45 IN EGYPT SLAIN AS BRITISH DISARM POLICE IN A BATTLE; CLASH IN ISMAILIA 6-Hour Operation Costs Constabulary 42 Dead and 58 Wounded 800 MORE ARE DETAINED Cairo Held Near Diplomatic Rupture -- London Orders Malta Warships to ..." *The New York Times*, December 31, 1969. <https://www.nytimes.com/1952/01/26/archives/45-in-egypt-slain-as-british-disarm-police-in-a-battle-clash-in.html>.

²⁶ Tsourapas, Gerasimos. 2018. *The Politics of Migration in Modern Egypt: Strategies for Regime Survival in Autocracies*. N.p.: Cambridge University Press.

had begun to wane. Naguib's fondness for the Muslim Brotherhood—which, in spite of a handful of shared principles, was a group disavowed by the Free Officers—led to increasingly-frequent ideological skirmishes between the president and the people who'd helped install him *as* president. It turns out that the same people capable of installing a president are more than capable of removing one; by 1954, a bright young officer—one of the leaders of the Free Officers, and one of the faces of the Revolution—named Gamal Abdel Nasser had deposed President Naguib and secured the Egyptian presidency for himself. Nasser essentially created and defined what became Egyptian foreign policy's North Star: non-alignment, a principle centered around independence, sovereignty, and a rejection of the binary imposed upon the Middle East by the looming Cold War.²⁷

A cynic might argue that Nasser's steadfast adherence to non-alignment was a shameless attempt to appeal to the highest bidder, especially given his attempts to forge relationships with both the Eastern and Western blocs. That cynic would be correct. Non-alignment was a brazen play at launching a bidding war, disguised as something resembling ideological purity; in the years leading up to Nasser's eventual

nationalization of the Suez Canal, he approached both the United States and the Soviet Union in an effort to establish diplomatic and commercial relationships with them.²⁸

One of Nasser's flagship initiatives during the earliest years of his tenure as President involved the construction of the Aswan High Dam (designed to help mitigate the effects of a mercurial Nile prone to both flooding and drought.) An ambitious, expansive project, the Aswan Dam was—at least at first glance—something that lay entirely beyond the economic capabilities of Egypt under the Nasser regime.²⁹ It was too large, too expensive, and too sweeping to be feasible. That, at the very least, is what both the US and the USSR were led to believe; Nasser solicited support from both, dangling the carrot of diplomatic fealty on the stick of economic aid. The Americans and the Soviets each scrambled to provide Nasser with support—at the time, winning Egypt meant winning the Arab world as a whole, and during the Cold War, when the entire world looked like a chessboard, winning the Arab world was an

²⁷ Tsourapas, Gerasimos. *The Politics of Migration in Modern Egypt: Strategies for Regime Survival in Autocracies*.

²⁸ Payind, Alam, and Melissa McClimans. n.d. "Gamal Abdul Nasser and Non-Alignment – Keys to Understanding the Middle East." The Ohio State University Pressbooks. Accessed August 31, 2023. <https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/key2mideast/chapter/gamal-abdul-nasser/>.

²⁹ Joesten, Joachim. 1960. "Nasser's Daring Dream: The Aswan High Dam." *The World Today* 16, no. 2 (February): 55 - 63. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40393201>.

invaluable capture—but neither quite ended up panning out as any of the three parties involved might’ve hoped. President Nasser’s acknowledgement of communist China’s sovereignty stepped on a number of important toes in the United States, and his general unwillingness to commit himself fully to the Eastern bloc didn’t play all that well with the Soviets.

What followed was a perfect storm of competing stakeholder interests converging upon each other simultaneously. The U.S.—under President Eisenhower—pulled support for the Dam; the French attempted to quell a nascent revolution in Algeria, which Nasser just so happened to support; the British, convinced of Nasser’s innate proclivity towards despotism, began comparing him to Mussolini. Nasser responded by nationalizing the Suez Canal in 1956, a move which remains one of the single greatest displays of calculated petulance in human history.

Insistent on securing Egyptian national sovereignty in every possible respect—and seemingly repulsed by the prospect of being beholden to any kind of neocolonialist power—Nasser’s nationalization of the Canal brought it under the exclusive control of the Egyptian government. Our committee begins here, with the nationalization of the Canal and the Tripartite Alliance’s subsequent invasion of Egypt.



Fig. 2: The construction of the Aswan High Dam (Wikimedia Commons)³⁰

International Considerations: Two Cold Wars, Decolonization, And The Creation Of Israel

People have a tendency to describe the immediate aftermath of the Second World War as the beginning of the arduous and protracted “Cold War era,” a largely ideological conflict between the East and the West fought primarily by proxy. For the most part, it’s true—the Cold War and the bloc tensions it revolved around, as we’ve established, hung heavy over Nasser’s Egypt (in spite of his best efforts to tip the war to his own advantage). But the Suez Crisis was punctuated by another Cold War, too—the Arab Cold War, a struggle for regional hegemony fought between

³⁰ Wikimedia Commons. 2022. “The Aswan High Dam.”

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/ac/Aswan_High_Dam%2C_Construction%2C_1964_%282%29.jpg.

the Arab states in the wake of the beginnings of decolonization.³¹

Decolonization remains a topic of particular note here; it's not hard to see how the Non-Aligned Movement was one motivated by former colonies' mutual desire to shed the lingering vestiges of colonial control, just as it's not difficult to see how desperately former colonial powers sought to maintain some semblance of neocolonial control over those former colonies. The actions of the British and the French—via the Suez Canal Company, and then by virtue of the actual invasion of Egypt—make that much clear. Nations within this committee—including those directly involved in the Crisis, yes, but also those more obliquely involved in a postcolonial world's struggle for recovery—will *have* to grapple with decolonization as they attempt to navigate the Suez Crisis and the Tripartite Alliance's invasion of the Egyptian mainland.

There's an elephant in the room that's worth addressing before we move on. The words *Tripartite Alliance* imply the involvement of three parties. We've already acknowledged Britain and France's involvement in the invasion of Egypt, but there's at least one party we've yet to properly examine: Israel. For most of the 20th century, the areas we now term *Israel* and *Palestine* were roughly categorized into

³¹ Kerr, Malcom H. 1971. *The Arab Cold War: Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir and His Rivals, 1958-1970*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mandatory Palestine and the Emirate of Transjordan—both established under the (defunct) League of Nations' 1919 “Mandate for Palestine,” following the conclusion of the First World War.³² Immediately preceding the creation of this Mandate, though, was the issuance of the Balfour Declaration by Britain in 1917, which affirmed Britain's commitment to creating “a national home for the Jewish people” in the region.³³ Attempts at creating a free and independent Israel proved contentious—hence the persistence of a “Mandatory Palestine”—up until the adoption of United Nations Resolution 181 on November 29, 1947, recommending for the creation of independent Arab and Jewish States and a Special International Regime for the city of Jerusalem, along with the termination of the British Mandate in Palestine. By May of 1948, Israel had declared their sovereignty as an independent state with the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel. In response, a military coalition of Arab states entered the region, sparking the 1948's Arab-Israeli War and establishing a pattern of conflict that continues to exist, over three-quarters of a century later.

³² Yale School of Law. n.d. “The Palestine Mandate.” Avalon Project. Accessed August 31, 2023. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/palman da.asp.

³³ Encyclopedia Britannica. 2023. “Balfour Declaration | History & Impact.” Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Balfour-Declaration>.

Tensions between Israel and the Arab world—helmed in 1956, for all intents and purposes, by Egypt—continued to flare, and Israel’s diplomatic relationships with the West continued to flourish. The West saw Israel as a strategic foothold in the region; Israel saw the West as powerful allies in a hostile environment. Thus, like the other two parties in the Tripartite Alliance, Israel had a relationship with Egypt before the outbreak of the Suez Crisis that could—at best—be charitably described as terse.

Please note that this Security Council will be focusing on the Suez Canal Crisis; discussions of, directives on, and backroom arcs surrounding the complex and nuanced Israel-Palestine conflict, as it existed then through today, fall outside the scope of this committee. Inclusion and discussion of these parties should remain purely in the pedagogical scope of the Suez Canal Crisis that the UNSC seeks to address.

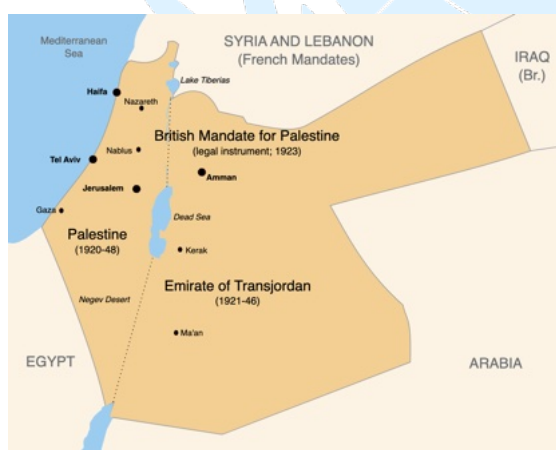


Fig. 3: The Emirate of Transjordan (Wikimedia Commons)³⁴

History Of The Problem

Background On Egypt: Creation Of The Wali System And The Suez Canal

Egypt’s Wali system dates back to the period when Egypt was under Ottoman rule, prior to the 19th century. The term *Wali* refers to regional governors who were appointed, by Ottoman officials, as administrative and political authorities over specified provinces. This system allowed the centralized Ottoman government to collectively exert control over vast swathes of territory by delegating governing responsibilities to a local Wali.³⁵ This system adapted over time to fit changing political and social climates but ultimately played a significant role in Egyptian governance, even up until the end of the Ottoman reign. Isma’il Pasha was the Wali of Egypt at the time when the Suez Canal officially opened in 1869. A prominent figure during the Canal’s construction, financing, and operating, Isma’il Pasha’s involvement in the joint venture

³⁴ Wikimedia Commons. 2022. “Palestine and Transjordan.” Wikimedia Commons. <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/11/PalestineAndTransjordan.svg>.

³⁵ Sansal, Burak. 2021. “The Ottoman State and Government | All about Turkey.” www.allaboutturkey.com. 2021. <https://www.allaboutturkey.com/ottoman-state.html>.

between France and Egypt was instrumental to its successful completion. But this stability was not for long, as mounting debt and financial problems during his tenure eventually led to the liquidation of Egypt's shares—selling all of them to get cash—in the Suez Canal Company, in the end being acquired by the British.³⁶

World War I: Division Of The Middle East

World War I, taking place from 1914 to 1918, put major powers from around the globe into conflict. On one side, there were the Allied Powers, led by France, Great Britain, the U.S., and Russia; on the other, the Central Powers, including Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire (who formerly controlled Egypt). With the alliance that established the Suez Canal now taking on opposite sides during the war, the Canal played a crucial strategic role—due to its being a shortcut between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean—in enabling rapid transportation of troops and supplies. As such, control of the Canal was a pivotal objective for both Allied and Central Powers; in retaliation to British ownership, Ottoman forces attempted to disrupt Canal operations, but their attacks proved unsuccessful. The British, with the help of the Allies, maintained control and ensured access

to their colonies in Asia and the Middle East, which only bolstered their war efforts.³⁷



Fig. 1: Ottoman Raid on the Suez Canal, 1914³⁸

After Britain's purchase of Isma'il Pasha's shares, the Suez Canal was controlled by Great Britain and France—but this would not be the only alliance between the two powers which had a lasting impact on the Middle East. At the height of World War I, two negotiators, Sir Mark Sykes from Great Britain and François Georges-Picot from France, signed a secret treaty on May 16, 1916: the Sykes-Picot Agreement. The primary purpose of the treaty was to divide the Ottoman territories in the Middle East—including what is now Lebanon, Syria, Israel, Palestine, and

³⁶ Ahmed, Nazeer, PhD. "Egypt and the Suez Canal," History of Islam. December 23, 2009. <https://historyofislam.com/contents/onset-of-the-colonial-age/egypt-and-the-suez-canal/>.

³⁷ "The Defence of the Suez Canal." The Long, Long Trail. <https://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/battles/the-campaign-in-egypt-and-palestine/the-defence-of-the-suez-canal/>.

³⁸ *World War I in Palestine and the Sinai*. (n.d.). Library of Congress's Public Domain Archive. <https://cdn18.picryl.com/photo/2019/12/04/world-war-i-in-palestine-and-the-sinai-838c9d-1024.jpg>.

Iraq—into French and British spheres of influence.³⁹ While the Sykes-Picot Agreement didn't nominally address the Suez Canal itself, the treaty did have implications for the canal's future. The division of the Middle East effectively disregarded the aspirations of local Arab populations for self-determination and independent nation-states, establishing a European colonial presence of mandates and protectorates in former Ottoman territory. This meant far less control over the Canal for those directly in the region, and even more for European powers who controlled a vital maritime route for their imperial interests in Asia and Africa—an aftermath which would shape the geopolitical dynamics leading up to the Canal's nationalization in 1956 as anti-colonial sentiments fueled by Western interference stepped in to the picture.

Post-World War I Treaties

Following the conclusion of World War I, the defeated Ottoman Empire was restructured by the Allied Powers through the Treaty of Sèvres, signed in 1920. The treaty imposed severe territorial losses for the Ottomans, as it saw numerous regions becoming independent nations or simply being taken over by other colonial

powers such as France, Italy, Greece, and, of course, the United Kingdom. With the Ottomans' dissolved dominance in Egypt, the British especially could maintain their occupation of the Suez Canal region to advance their Middle Eastern interests.⁴⁰ This increased French colonial presence as well, along with indirectly contributing to nationalism in Egypt, as explained in the Statement of the Problem section.



Fig. 2: Turkey following the Treaty of Sèvres, 1920.⁴¹

British domination did not seem to last for long, as just sixteen years after the Treaty of Sèvres came yet another treaty, this one called the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, also known as the Treaty of Montreux. Signed in 1936, it was an attempt

³⁹ Heller, Chris. "The Origins of the World War I Agreement That Carved up the Middle East." Smithsonian Magazine. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/sykes-picot-agreement-180957217/>.

⁴⁰ "The Sèvres Centennial: Self-Determination and the Kurds | ASIL." American Society of International Law. <https://www.asil.org/insights/volume/24/issue/20/sevres-centennial-self-determination-and-kurds>.

⁴¹ Araujo, Luisao. 2016. *Stratfor*. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/1a/The_Treaty_of_S%C3%A8vres_1920_-_English.png.

to address Egyptian grievances—such as granting the country more autonomy over its internal affairs—while alleviating British military presence, notably in the Suez Canal zone. But the British did not pull out completely; part of the treaty required that the U.K. retain a strategic presence in the Canal zone for the purpose of defending Egypt in case of a foreign threat.⁴² As you might guess, the treaty continued to be a point of tension between the U.K. and Egypt, and the presence of British forces remained an especially contentious issue. Rising nationalist sentiments fueled demands for full Egyptian control over canal operations, thus the treaty set the stage for continued negotiations and developments leading up to the crisis.

World War II: Military Use Of The Canal And Territorial Rearrangement

The First World War would not be the last time the Suez Canal played a divisive yet strategic role in a global conflict. Just a few years after the Anglo-Egyptian treaty was signed, a new confrontation, largely within Europe, erupted: World War II. This time, the Allied Powers were composed of the U.K., the U.S., and The Soviet Union; their opponents—the Axis Powers—were Germany, Japan, and Italy. During the war, which lasted from 1939 to 1945, the Suez Canal held

⁴² “Anglo-Egyptian Treaty | Terms, Significance, & Facts.” Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Anglo-Egyptian-Treaty>.

immense strategic importance as an indispensable maritime channel that facilitated movement of supplies, troops, and oil between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. The goal of the Axis powers was to disrupt Allied shipping and flow of resources through the canal; in retaliation, the Allies reinforced the canal’s defenses by carrying out naval operations. This was particularly important to the British who wanted to maintain supply lines and communications with India and the Far East.⁴³

Bringing World War II to an official end were a series of agreements known as the Paris Peace Treaties. Signed in 1947, there were five treaties constituting five different countries involved in the war: Italy, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Finland. Italy is notable here, because the Treaty with Italy changed their territory and colonial holdings in Africa. Before the war, Italy controlled Libya on Egypt’s western border; after the war, Libya gained independence from Italy.⁴⁴ As for the Suez Canal, Italy—although not directly involved with Egypt, it was still a colonial power—was removed from the region, which had the potential for reducing tensions and security concerns. It was also a small win for sovereignty

⁴³ HISTORY. “World War II.” History. A&E Television Networks. October 29, 2009. <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/world-war-ii-history>.

⁴⁴ “Paris Peace Treaties | Terms, Summary, & Conference | Britannica.” Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Paris-Peace-Treaties-1947>.

and self-determination efforts by formerly colonized nations, and their nationalist sentiments only intensified after this series of events.

After World War I, the British Mandate over Palestine—which was established by the League of Nations—effectively governed the area that included what would become Israel and the Suez Canal zone. But given the growing tensions between Jewish and Arab communities, the mandate became increasingly challenging for Britain to manage. The mandate ultimately ended in 1948 when the United Nations proposed a partition plan that would separate Jewish and Arab states the year prior, with Jerusalem as an international city. On May 14, 1948, Israel was officially declared as an independent state, and the next day, the British withdrew. The declaration and subsequent Arab-Israeli War resulted in Israel gaining control of significant areas, including parts of the Sinai Peninsula, which encompassed the eastern approach to the Suez Canal.⁴⁵ Israel's establishment fundamentally altered already volatile dynamics in the Middle East, with the ever-changing hands in charge of the Suez Canal zone becoming a critical flashpoint in Egypt's

determination to assert sovereignty over the waterway.

The Cold War: Capitalists Vs. Communists, Non-Alignment, And Nuclear Arms Race

In the post-World War II era, the world was essentially divided into three distinct blocs: the capitalists of the West, the communists of the East, and an emerging non-alignment movement. The United States and the Soviets were embroiled in an ideological struggle known as the Cold War, which lasted from 1947 to the early 1990s. The Suez Canal, being an essential geopolitical asset, found itself at the center of these tensions.⁴⁶ Its being located in Egypt made it a focal point in the Cold War; the West—Britain and France, especially—were keen on keeping the canal as a necessary shortcut for their imperial interests in Africa and Asia, while the Soviets saw it as an opportunity to gain influence in the Middle East and challenge the Western dominance that had taken hold for so long.⁴⁷

During the Cold War, both the Eastern and Western blocs engaged in an intense nuclear arms race, building up formidable nuclear arsenals.

⁴⁵ Office of the Historian. "The Arab-Israeli War of 1948." US Department of State. 2019. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/arab-israeli-war>.

⁴⁶ "Crisis Points of the Cold War | History of Western Civilization II." Lumen Learning. <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-hccc-worldhistory2/chapter/crisis-points-of-the-cold-war/>.

⁴⁷ "Egypt and NAM [1955-1973]: Gamal Abdel Nasser | Aswan Dam | Warsaw Pact." BYJUS. <https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/egypt-non-alignment-movement-1955-1973/>.

The United States and the Soviet Union developed and tested increasingly powerful nuclear weapons, including hydrogen bombs. The concept of mutual assured destruction emerged, where each side possessed enough nuclear firepower to retaliate and destroy the other, even after just one strike.⁴⁸ Access to the Suez Canal raised concerns about the possibility of a nuclear confrontation in the region, seeing that it was already a point of rivalry between both blocs—this only added an additional layer of complexity and risk to the Canal’s geopolitics and security dynamics.⁴⁹

While the Cold War intensified, newly independent nations—India, Libya, Indonesia, Yugoslavia, Ghana, and various others—sought to pursue their own interests, assert their sovereignty, and avoid becoming pawns in the communist versus capitalist proxy conflict. This diplomatic initiative was known as the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Egypt pursued non-alignment during this period under President Gamal Abdel Nasser, who was one of NAM’s founders at its first conference in 1961.⁵⁰ However, Nasser’s perceived leaning towards the

socialists raised concerns among Western powers. Nasser needed to mitigate the damage caused by yearly Nile river flooding, so he sought to build the Aswan Dam. Financing this project required taking out a huge loan from either the Soviets or the Americans, both of whom had unique conditions for the loan. Nasser’s preference for the Soviets’ anti-Zionist ideologies, stance against the formation of Israel, and long-held distrust of British and French presence in the area all led him to accept a loan from the Soviets. This new “alliance” had its advantages for Egypt: the Soviet Union supplied weapons and ammunition to Egyptian forces during the crisis.⁵¹



Fig. 3: *Non-Aligned Movement Conference Attendees, 1961*⁵²

⁴⁸ “Nuclear Files: Key Issues: Nuclear Weapons: History: Cold War: Strategy: Mutual Assured Destruction.”. Nuclearfiles.org. 2019. <http://www.nuclearfiles.org/menu/key-issues/nuclear-weapons/history/cold-war/strategy/strategy-mutual-assured-destruction.htm>.

⁴⁹ “Crisis Points of the Cold War | History of Western Civilization II.”

⁵⁰ “Egypt and NAM.”

⁵¹ “Egypt and NAM.”

⁵² *Belgrade Conference, 1961*. (2016, June 15). Wikimedia. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/4d/Belgrade_Conference%2C_1961.jpg.

Flashpoint: Nationalization Of The Suez Canal And Tripartite Invasion

On July 26, 1956, President Nasser declared that Egypt would assume full control over the Suez Canal. His decision was motivated by several factors, such as Egypt's entanglement with the Soviet Union to construct the Aswan Dam as mentioned previously, along with anti-Western sentiments.⁵³ Amid the burgeoning tensions and the broader context of decolonization, Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956 became a manifestation of the struggle for influence during the Cold War that demonstrated Egypt's assertion of independence and its refusal to be dictated by either bloc—and this is where our committee starts.

Bloc Positions

In 1956, the members of the UNSC are as follows (with the first five holding veto power): China, France, Soviet Union, United Kingdom, United States, Algeria, Australia, Belgium, Colombia, Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Peru, Philippines, and Yugoslavia. Delegates should note that they are not obligated to work with the suggested blocs; rather, the bloc positions serve as a guide for delegates to shape their foreign relations and policy.

⁵³ "Egypt and NAM."

Western Bloc: United Kingdom, United States, France, Australia, Belgium

The Western World's history with colonialism is a long and fraught one—one rife with bloodshed, wanton violence, and subjugation. More often than not, Western nations find themselves on the wrong side of history, something that's largely attributable to their aggressive expansionism and insistence on establishing so-called "spheres of influence" in the Eastern world.⁵⁴ All of these things hold true today, but they proved to be especially pressing concerns in the mid-20th century, as the developed world attempted to simultaneously pursue decolonization and maintain the extant benefits of having colonies. The result was the worst kind of compromise, resulting in a sort of half-hearted, anemic foreign policy that prioritized proxy wars and the exertion of Western influence over emerging Eastern powers. It's a phenomenon aptly described as "neocolonialism": not quite colonialism, sure, but not something far enough from it to merit a moniker of its own, either. Most of the nations in the Western bloc were guilty of this; the United States, mired firmly in a cold war—the Cold War—with the Soviet Union, sought to prop up

⁵⁴ Université du Luxembourg. n.d. "The Suez Crisis - Decolonisation: geopolitical issues and impact on the European integration process." CVCE. Accessed August 31, 2023. <https://www.cvce.eu/en/education/unit-content/-/unit/dd10d6bf-e14d-40b5-9ee6-37f978c87a01/003be399-1fcb-4a0b-bf84-70781e403376>.

regimes which aligned with America's unique brand of liberty, while nations like the United Kingdom and France struggled to preserve their waning control over their former colonies.

As far as the Suez Crisis goes, the Western bloc's key actors included the three members of the Tripartite Alliance: the United Kingdom, France, and Israel. The United Kingdom and France found themselves motivated primarily by a desire to maintain commercial control over the Suez Canal—something that would, in effect, translate into commercial control over the Arab World.⁵⁵

Israel, by all accounts a fairly new nation with a number of powerful allies, sought to carve out and strengthen its own position as a fledgling nation surrounded by hostile powers.⁵⁶ All three aligned, quite firmly, with Western capitalism, positioning them against the Eastern bloc, helmed by the Soviet Union and China (which we'll discuss in greater detail below).

Going into this committee, the members of the Western bloc are tasked with actively rejecting colonialism while minimizing the damage to their

international influence and reputation in the process; attempts at diplomatic cooperation and relationship-building are more crucial than ever. Having only recently emerged from the Second World War, the states comprising the Western bloc are wary of conflict; each sustained heavy losses throughout the 1930s and 1940s, and none of them are particularly eager to ignite another global conflict. As representatives of these nations, it's up to you to keep your countries out of war without dismantling the commercial and geopolitical relationships your nations rely on.

Eastern Bloc: Soviet Union, China, Algeria, Cuba

The antithesis of the Tripartite Alliance's beliefs came in the form of those of the Eastern bloc, consisting of nations such as China and the USSR. Nationalizing formerly private segments of an economy was generally at the forefront of the Eastern bloc's objectives, and a threat to nationalization and state ownership in Egypt was a threat to the implementation of these practices in other regions as well. Due to the spheres of influence both China and the USSR exhibited, neighboring countries also engaged in support for President Nasser in the face of adversity from Western nations. The United States also ended up playing an important role in this perspective towards the Nasser regime due to its unlikely support of Egypt during the Cold War.

⁵⁵ Hussein, Muhammad. 2022. "Remembering the Suez Crisis and the tripartite invasion of Egypt." Middle East Monitor. <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20221029-remembering-the-suez-crisis-and-the-tripartite-invasion-of-egypt/>.

⁵⁶ U.S. Department of State. n.d. "Milestones: 1945–1952 - Office of the Historian." Milestones: 1945–1952 - Office of the Historian. Accessed August 31, 2023. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/a-rab-israeli-war>.

With respect to the Chinese view on the Suez Canal crisis, it is important to recognize China's journey towards becoming a global communist power in the mid-twentieth century. The creation of the People's Republic of China in 1949 by Chinese Communist leader Mao Zedong marked the beginning of a large-scale push for communist ideals – prompting a search for overseas allies that exemplified similar philosophies.⁵⁷ Several years later, the Chinese government saw their opportunity to strengthen a relationship with one of these potential allies in the form of Nasser and the Egyptian regime following the nationalization of the Suez Canal. Even before the crisis began, the People's Republic of China made strides in developing this relationship with Egypt when Premier Zhou Enlai and Nasser met at the Bandung Conference of April 1955.⁵⁸ Right after the destruction of the Egyptian Air Force by Israel in the initial moments of the crisis, the People's Republic of China proceeded to send around \$5 million to Egypt in aid.⁵⁹ Joint efforts

such as these only continued as the Suez Canal crisis progressed, motivating an official recognition of the People's Republic of China as a legitimate political entity by the Egyptian government; the effects of this move were compounded by added support from other Arab and African states.⁶⁰

The Soviet Union's relationship with the Nasser regime was slightly different from others in the Eastern bloc due to the added influence of the United States and Cold War pressures. Similar to the Chinese, the Soviets first established a connection with the Egyptian government in the same year of 1955 with the Moscow-Cairo arms deal.⁶¹ However, the Egyptians were strategic in their connection with the Soviets due to their lack of public commitment to the USSR's ideals – in fact, they viewed the United States and the USSR somewhat as equals by accepting help from both states yet not publicly endorsing one over the other, despite aligning with the Soviets on the economic practice of nationalization.⁶² The most surprising part of the Cold War's influence on the

⁵⁷ U.S. Department of State. n.d. "The Chinese Revolution of 1949." Milestones: 1945–1952 - Office of the Historian. Accessed August 31, 2023. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/chinese-rev#:~:text=The%20creation%20of%20the%20PRC,Communists%20entering%20Beijing%20in%201949.>

⁵⁸ Finnane and McDougall, Bandung 1955; Ma, "China's Cultural and Public Diplomacy to Countries in the Middle East."

⁵⁹ Khalili, "Sino-Arab Relations;" Alsahbah, "China's Relations with the Arab World Post Bandung Conference."

⁶⁰ Kyle Haddad-Fonda, "RevolutionaryAllies," (PhD thesis, Oxford University), 13.

⁶¹ Smolansky, O. M. "Moscow and the Suez Crisis, 1956: A Reappraisal." *Political Science Quarterly* 80, no. 4 (1965): 581–605. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2147000>.

⁶² Stuart, Logan. "How China's response to the Suez Canal Crisis helped shape Sino-Egyptian relations." *Zenith! Undergraduate Research Journal for the Humanities*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.17161/zenith.v5i1.15567>.

Suez Canal crisis was the markedly similar reactions from both the USSR and the United States. The Soviet Union was armed with ballistic missiles that would be released (a message that eventually ended up being a product of Soviet propaganda) if the United Kingdom, France, and Israel did not withdraw from the Egyptian invasion; additionally, the United States threatened to implement economic sanctions against Israel in the same push for a retreat.⁶³ Allies of both the Soviet Union and the United States, besides the major Western powers that were members and affiliates of the Tripartite Alliance, were similarly supporters of protecting Egypt's sovereignty and preventing invasion.

Non-Aligned Bloc: Colombia, Iran, Iraq, Peru, Philippines, Yugoslavia

During the Suez Canal Crisis, the Non-Aligned nations, including Egypt, played a significant and distinct role within the broader international context. This group of newly independent nations sought to maintain their independence and sovereignty by avoiding alignment with either the Western or Eastern blocs during the Cold War. In the context of the Suez Canal Crisis, countries pursuing non-alignment sought

to assert their independence and condemn the actions of the Western powers (the Tripartite Alliance) and their intervention in Egypt. Led by Egypt's President Gamal Abdel Nasser, this bloc viewed the invasion of Egypt by Britain, France, and Israel as a violation of Egypt's sovereignty and a blatant display of neo-colonialism.⁶⁴ Being at the center of the crisis as the country that had nationalized the Suez Canal, Egypt received far-reaching support from other non-aligned nations, who condemned the Tripartite Invasion and the use of military force to intervene, which aligned with Egypt's stance on the importance of self-determination and the rejection of external interference. These nations rallied behind Egypt in various international forums, including the United Nations, condemning the invasion and demanding a peaceful resolution to the crisis. Their position highlighted the movement's commitment to international law, diplomacy, and the principles of non-interference and national sovereignty.⁶⁵

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, India was a prominent

⁶³ Peck, Michael. "Yes, the 1956 Suez Crisis Almost Caused Nuclear War." *The National Interest*, The Center for the National Interest, 12 May 2021, nationalinterest.org/blog/reboot/yes-1956-suez-crisis-almost-caused-nuclear-war-166532.

⁶⁴ "Egypt and NAM [1955-1973]: Gamal Abdel Nasser | Aswan Dam | Warsaw Pact." n.d. BYJUS. Accessed August 27, 2023. <https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/egypt-non-aligned-movement-1955-1973/>.

⁶⁵ Munro, André. 2015. "Non-Aligned Movement | International Organization." In *Encyclopædia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Non-Aligned-Movement>.

member of the Non-Aligned Movement and shared solidarity with Egypt during the Suez Canal Crisis. Nehru, a key figure in the fight against anti-colonialism, emphasized the principles of peaceful coexistence and anti-imperialism.⁶⁶ India, like Egypt, struggled against British rule since being acquired as a trading outpost—and later part of the British empire—in the 18th century. Resources were exploited, economies impoverished, cultures subjugated, and politics repressed. As self-governance and independence gained traction, organizations like the Indian National Congress emerged, playing a pivotal role in channeling nationalist sentiment. Figures like Mahatma Gandhi were essential leaders of the movement for civil disobedience. World War II only served to further galvanize demands for self-governance, until India gained independence in 1947.⁶⁷ Experiences like these resonated among the non-Aligned nations and their advocacy for anti-colonialism.

Another country, Algeria—which had recently gained independence from France in 1962—was a staunch supporter of Egypt during the Suez

Canal Crisis. Having experienced colonial rule themselves, the Algerians empathized with Egypt's struggle for sovereignty. Somewhat similarly to Egypt, Algeria's struggles with colonial rule were marked by a long and complex history of resistance against French domination. Algeria came under French colonial rule in the early 19th century, initially as a French protectorate and later as an integral part of France. Over time, Algerians began to resist the colonial oppression and harsh conditions they became subjected to. As a sense of nationalism emerged, so too did a war for independence between Algerian nationalist forces and French colonial authorities. These struggles informed Algeria's support for Egypt's anti-Western ideology as they stood in solidarity with the rest of the non-Aligned nations.⁶⁸

Several Arab states, such as Syria, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, also supported Egypt's position during the Suez Canal Crisis. These countries saw the crisis as emblematic of broader struggles against Western influence in the Arab world. More than ever, these countries emphasized the importance of Arab solidarity and condemned the Tripartite invasion as an affront to the Arab world. While each nation had its own geopolitical considerations, the crisis brought about a sense of

⁶⁶ Upadhyaya, Priyanka. 1987. "Nonaligned States and Indias International Conflicts." Shodhganga. Jawaharlal Nehru University School of International Studies. <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/16265>.

⁶⁷ Kurtz, Lester. 2018. "The Indian Independence Struggle (1930-1931) | ICNC." ICNC. 2018. <https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/indian-independence-struggle-1930-1931/>.

⁶⁸ Gençoğlu, Halim. 2021. "French Colonial Legacy in Algeria." United World International. October 12, 2021. <https://uwidata.com/21460-french-colonial-legacy-in-algeria/>.

unity among various Arab states in the face of external intervention.⁶⁹ Overall, other Arab states and the rest of the Non-Aligned nations shared common concerns about colonialism, imperialism, and the need to safeguard the sovereignty of newly independent nations. They saw the Suez Canal Crisis as a test of the international community's commitment to their principles. This perspective demonstrated their determination to chart an independent course amid Cold War rivalries, advocating for a peaceful resolution and condemning actions that threatened the sovereignty of member states, especially those at the heart of the crisis like Egypt.



⁶⁹ Munro, “Non-Aligned Movement | International Organization.”

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