



# HMUN 2025

**The Suez crisis**

**HSC**

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**Forum:** Historic Security Council (1956)

**Issue:** The Suez Crisis

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## Introduction

The Suez Crisis of 1956, also called the Second Arab-Israeli War, stands as an important turning point in the mid-twentieth century that transformed the global landscape, reshaped post-colonial autonomy, and exemplified the decline of Western colonialism. A nationalization policy towards the Suez Canal, which President of Egypt Gamal Abdel Nasser enforced, represents a turning point of the crisis. This, alongside the nationalization of the Suez Canal, was a wider self-determination and revolt against Western dependence. For decades, the canal had been an economic key center and a regionally embedded political instrument controlled mainly by the British and French. Nasser's policy domestically was seen as a restoring factor of national dignity, but internationally, it was an aggressive step that jeopardized Western Enterprise and political domination of the area.

This event showcased a bigger picture: the strengthening of the nationalist movements in the Global South against the hegemonic control of the Western nations. It also brought into light how regional disagreements like that of Israel and Egypt fitted into the complexities of a global conflict like the Cold War, where the USA and USSR were both fighting for power. The crisis took place through a series of events that were equally dramatic, such as the Tripartite Aggression, in which Britain, France, and Israel formed an alliance that fought against Israel Sedat and his allies, leading to the participation of the UNEF for the first time in history.

This report will contemplate the Suez Crisis in detail, including its history, what prompted its occurrence, what were the goals of different countries, and even how the rest of the world reacted to it. By going through the literature, this report seeks to have a target of ensuring that each delegate is familiar with the opportunities and threats to understanding the Suez Crisis from the perspective of its geography, its economy, and its ideology. Participants of this activity are encouraged to analyze the reasons and the aftermath of the Suez Crisis with a focus on current tensions between countries as a result of the struggle over territories, resources, and international laws.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Nationalization

This is the process of taking over a privately owned industry, company, or resource in order to give it a use that is either self-governing or a use that benefits civilians. As with the Suez Canal, under President Gamal Abdel Nasser, Egypt stated that it took over the water system as a move aimed at retrieving Egyptian resources from foreign control.

### Sovereignty

The power of a nation-state to govern without being influenced or interfered with by other nations is absolute. The Suez Crisis drew attention to the sovereignty of Egypt as the Nasser government sought to control the Suez Canal while Great Britain and France had been dominant in the influence of the area for ages, and they did not want that to change.

### Cold War

It was characterized by a lot of politics. Military as well as economic strife between the American nation and the USSR (specifically the Soviet Union). The development of the Suez crisis occurred during the most extreme periods of the Cold War as both superpowers had a big impact on the outcome in order to avoid extremism.

### Anglo-French Suez Canal Company

A company formed in the mid-19th century with the aim of financing and overseeing the construction of the Suez Canal with the permission of Egypt. The Anglo-French company was created in August 1854 and was made up of British and French interests. Its control of the canal epitomized Western control in the Middle East, and its assets were lost during Egypt's nationalization program.

### Tripartite Aggression

The Anglo-French-Israeli collusion that intended to reassert their dominance over the Suez Canal and control Nasser's government also took place in 1956. In this invasion, also known as the Suez War, Israel first occupied the Sinai Peninsula, and then the Anglo-French troops interceded in the guise of securing international commerce.

### Armistice Lines

These are the boundary lines negotiated by the partners involved in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, which served to isolate Israel from its neighbors. These then became the focal reasons that brought into the Suez Crisis, as incidents of the blockade and even cross-border attacks on Egypt by Israel enabled it to intervene militarily.

### **Pan-Arabism**

The political, cultural, and economic unification of Arabs started receiving attention during the regimes of leaders like Gamal Abdel Nasser. For the most part, Pan-Arabism rejected that the Middle East would be under Western control, and this certainly heightened tensions between Nasser's Egypt and the colonial empires.

### **UN Emergency Force (UNEF)**

This was the first peaceguarding force formed by the United Nations to oversee the ceasefire and supervise the removal of external forces from Egypt. Relations of UNEF can be described as bold steps in dealing with diplomacy that involved many countries.

### **Aswan High Dam**

It is an infrastructural development in Egypt aimed at regulating floods, producing hydroelectric power, and improving farming. The dam was supposed to be built with money from Western countries, but they changed their minds following the arms deal between Egypt and the Eastern Bloc. As a result, Nasser decided to take over the Suez Canal so as to pursue the project.

### **Straits of Tiran**

Body of water located on the North and the western side of Egypt's shipping routes on the southern point of the Gulf of Aqaba. Egypt's closing of the Straits of Tiran before the Suez War was one major reason why Israel joined the Tripartite Aggression.

### **Multilateralism**

A form of international relations where several countries combine their strengths towards the solution of certain global problems. The Suez Crisis has shown the intervention of a multilateral system in the conflict, with the UN assisting in reducing the fighting.

### **Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)**

An organization of states professing non-alignment in global superpowers of the Cold War while striving to promote solidarity among them being the newly independent nations. Under Nasser, Egypt became an outspoken activist of the NAM and used the crisis to promote the movement's ideas of respect for sovereignty and non-interference in the affairs of other countries.

## General Overview

The Suez Crisis, which is widely considered to be one of the most important events in the 20th century, exemplifies the changes in power relations in the aftermath of the Second World War and the process of decolonization. This section is designed to provide readers with a thorough understanding of the historical background causes of the crisis, as well as the multifaceted interests – both regional and global – that resulted in the crisis.

### Historical Context and Causes

To global power struggles, the formation of national movements in the Middle East, and the history of colonial control there, the origins of the Suez Crisis are inextricably linked. The Suez Canal, which was finished in 1869 with the assistance of the French engineer Ferdinand de Lesseps, functioned as a symbol of economic development as well as imperialism. For existentially encompassing periods, the canal was run by the Anglo-French company Suez Canal Company, and as a result, European nations benefited abundantly economically while Egypt, which was under the influence of colonial powers, gained a scanty amount of the riches that were made from this vital trade route.

The position of all European countries has declined to bring the United States and Soviet Union into drama, the main superpower. The dominant position that Britain and France held as colonialists has also eased. At the same time, the Middle East also appealed to nationalist sentiment as there was an anti-European sentiment that was wide and a desire for independence that was widespread. This feeling, which was present in Egypt, was brought together and concretized by Gamal Abdel Nasser, who came to power in Egypt in 1952 after forcibly removing King Farouk due to actions by the Free Officers Movement.

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encompassing periods, the canal was run by the Anglo-French company Suez Canal Company, and as a result, European nations benefited abundantly economically while Egypt, which was under the influence of colonial powers, gained a scanty amount of the riches that were made from this vital trade route.

### **The Nationalization of the Suez Canal**

The crisis actually stemmed from Nasser's announcement of the Suez Canal's nationalization on the 26th of July in 1956. This dramatic step came after a long history of confrontation and defeat, including the cessation of Western investment in the Aswan High Dam. Exasperated by Egypt's arms purchases from Czechoslovakia and Egypt's recognition of China, the United States and Britain severed relations with Mr. Nasser, suspicious of Egypt's affiliation to the Soviet bloc. Saddled with a financial constraint, Nasser declared that revenues from the canal would be utilized for the construction of the dam to affirm the right of Egypt over its resources.

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### **The Role of the Cold War Superpowers**

The United States and the Soviet Union had common interests in the face of their ideological competition, and that was opposing the tripartite aggression. For the United States, the intervention risked resenting Arab nations further and also thwarted America's aim to contain Sovietism in the Middle East. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who was devoted to this task, also applied pressure on Britain and France to retreat, threatening them with economic sanctions and diplomacy.

Nikita Khrushchev's Soviet Union thought of the crisis in a very different manner as they felt it was their chance to strengthen the Soviet's foothold in the Arab world. The USSR characterized the aggression as a crime and made threats of a military response, which caused alarm, widening the conflict evermore. The combined pressure from these superpowers underscored the diminishing influence of Britain and France as active players in world affairs and represented a notable change in the global power equilibrium.



## United Nations Intervention

Similarly, the United Nations emerged as one of the key players in the resolution of the crisis. After the AGM, Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold was able to call for an emergency session of the General Assembly using the Uniting for Peace resolution. The resolution provided the assembly an opportunity for action at times when the Security Council was caught in a veto stalemate. A ceasefire was called on 6/11/1956, and the UN peacekeeping force, which was the first-ever armed forces for peace processes, was created to ensure the expulsion of the opposing forces.

The establishment of UNEF changed permanently the course of international diplomacy, demonstrating how a multilateral approach might be useful in dealing with such complicated issues. The UN intervention did not settle all the induced tension, but it was able to contain further escalation and create conditions for subsequent peacemaking efforts.

## Timeline of Key Events

### July 26, 1956

This step for Egypt was a controversial one, since it sought to replace US and Britain's funding for the construction of the Aswan High Dam. The President of Egypt Gamal Abdel Nasser announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal, claiming that this was an important step in recovering national wealth and consolidating Egypt's economic independence.

### July 27, 1956 – August 1956

Egypt took over control of the canal and, through the entire process of commotion, assured the continuity of the operations of the zone in the foreign nations. Canada reciprocated by reinforcing Egypt's Authority and control over the canal operations. These two events attended the Arab India suspended.

**August 16–23, 1956**

The United Kingdom and France held a diplomatic follow-up conference in London to review the objectives of the Suez Canal International Crisis Group. The conference witnessed notable attendance of some worldwide key Nations, for instance, America and the Soviet Union. However, Egypt, under Nasser's fear, refused any form of international supervision, thus preventing any form of foreign exploitation from emerging.

**October 22–24, 1956**

The United States, France, and Great Britain devised a scheme referred to as the Sèvres Protocol that was done in secret. British and French military units would engage Egypt under the pretext of intervention to guard the canal zone as Israel waged war against Egypt, a tripartite approach to the invasion of Egypt. The plans indicated how the three countries plotted to subdue Nasser.

**October 29, 1956:**

In search of military objectives through Operation Kadesh, which involved attacking the Egyptian forces, Israel particularly went for the Sinai Peninsula in its military undertaking. This attack was meant to make it easy for Israelis to ship within the straits of Tiran as it purposefully focused on neutralizing all Egyptian forces.

**November 6, 1956:**

Faced with pressure from the United States and the Soviet Union, Britain and France agreed to a cease-fire. Threats of economic intervention on



Britain were issued by the United Nations, while direct warnings were issued by the Soviets to Britain about the invasion.

**November 7, 1956:**

As an unprecedented historical event, it paved the way for the deployment of U.N. Peace Keeping Forces, which sought to ensure a ceasefire and the respect of borders by removing foreign nations operating in the area. This was a landmark achievement in the resolution of international conflicts.

**March 1957:**

The last British, French, and Israeli troops withdrew from Egyptian territory, completing the resolution of the crisis. British, French, and Israeli naval ships left the Suez Canal, maintaining peace in the region.

## Major Parties Involved

### Egypt

Egypt under Gamal Abdel Nasser put forth one of its most audacious attempts to assert its independence and reduce Western interference – this was the nationalization of the Suez Canal. To Nasser, the canal was not only a means of seeking funds for financing the Aswan High Dam construction but also an avenue to improve Egypt's economic independence. Also, the rationale of nationalization would appear to have fitted within his wider scheme of political objectives based on Pan-Arabism, which was aimed at unifying the Arabs in resisting colonial and imperial nations.

### France

With the international control of the area, many French were especially agitated with the expansion of the canal because of its strategic and economic relevance. Along with Britain, France

sought control of the canal as they were afraid that Nasser's actions were antagonistic to the Western forces. Algeria, of course, was in the colonies of France, and Nasser was also accused of backing those who were in the struggle for Nasser. Therefore, to France also, weakening Nasser was purely a matter of strategy and politics.

### **United States**

The US opposed the tripartite military action, arguing that it was in the interest of the Middle East, as well as countering Soviet expansionism. While critical of Nasser's nationalization, the US sought a diplomatic and multilateral solution through the UN to the crisis. It tried to protect its relations with the Arab countries while complying with international law and discouraging any aggressive action.

### **Soviet Union**

Nasser's regime provided a rallying point for the sentiment that the Soviets were seeking an opportunity to expand their influence in the Arab world by supporting Egypt diplomatically during the crisis. It denounced the tripartite invasion and made threats of intervention to prevent further such action. The crisis allowed the USSR to project herself as a champion of anti-colonial struggles, which helped her to strengthen the relations with the Arab countries and consolidate the geopolitical position of the USSR in the region.

## **Possible Solutions**

### **1. More focus is required on Strategic Interna to Lakes and International Rivers**

In the potential solution, nations can fish out share liability under the auspices of the United Nations concerning waterways, for example, the Suez Canal. This would guide regions and countries from making decisions or engaging in warfare. Delegates could engage and discuss other criteria that are relevant to such a framework, including its enforcement modalities and sources of funds.

### **2. Dialogue and Promotion of an Arab Peace League**

The Urge to influence other Middle Eastern countries through the sailing of the canal between members would lessen comfort zones and lead to disagreements. Delegates may also propose the establishment of an Arab governing body to manage the Suez Canal in a more efficient manner alongside protecting the interests of all nations, economies, and national security.

### 3. Introduction of Resolutions Relating to Maritime Defense Objectives

Resolving the issues with effective delimitation will eventually promote peace and many economic opportunities and goodwill. Resolutions can include treaties that can assure the free and peaceful movement of all the nations with a scope to address active security threats of piracy, military, and human activity in the ramifications of the canal zone.

### 4. Creation of a World Infrastructure Fund

International participation with funding towards the construction of facilities like Aswan Configured National Utility Aided would be an essential starting point in counteracting and mitigating the other economic roots driving such crises.

## Further Reading

**Books:** “The Suez Crisis 1956” by Anthony Gorst and Lewis Johnman gives a nice overview of the events and their global impact.

**Articles:** “The UN and the Suez Crisis: Multilateral Diplomacy in Action” provides the overall idea of the role of the United Nations.

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