The 1956 Suez Crisis

In July of 1956, President Gamal Abder Nasser of Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal. In doing so, he transferred this major, European entity from private to state ownership. Outwardly, Nasser claimed he nationalized the canal only to pay for the construction of the Aswan dam in Egypt. However, this conflict stemmed from over a decade of precarious relations between Britain and Egypt and ever growing instability between the newly established state of Israel and its Middle Eastern neighbors. This economic confiscation of a traditionally French and British owned canal resulted in war among many world powers, an indirect Cold War confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States and panic in Britain—a nation that still strove to keep hold of its crumbling colonies.

The Suez Canal, built in 1869, was the shortest ocean link between the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. Essentially, it was an indispensable tool for European trade with India, Asia and the Middle East. When Nasser came to power in 1952 his nationalistic outlook on the future of his country put the status of the Suez Canal in great question. To begin with, Nasser sought to fully end the British occupation of Egypt. Though Great Britain had steadily reduced its presence in the country since 1936, Nasser wanted this great empire to disappear from his land completely. He also wished to construct a dam at Aswan to irrigate the Nile Valley but had no funds to do so. He found an answer to both of these objectives in the Suez Canal.

By nationalizing the canal, Nasser blocked Israeli merchants from using the canal—a direct act of aggression—and removed all British and French claims to any profit that the canal might make. Nasser’s confidence in the situation was fueled by the Soviet Union, which had spent the past few years providing Egypt with weapons and other military funding. Furthermore, the Soviet Union promised Nasser to assist him if this crisis caused war. Understandably, this anti-colonialist and Soviet sentiment angered Israeli, European, and American parties.

For Britain, this canal was its last colonial claim in the Middle East. Prime Minister Anthony Eden endeavored to follow in the great steps of his predecessor Winston Churchill and
The 1956 Suez Crisis

feared that the loss of the canal would lead to his and Britain’s eventual loss of power. Eden strongly supported military aggression against Egypt in an effort to avoid the appeasement strategies that led to Hitler’s rise in power.

French politicians urged a strong anti-Nasser approach, comparing him to the likes of Hitler and Mussolini. Israel pushed for an alliance with France against Egypt, leading to a consistent supply of arms from France to Israel in Israel’s war against Egypt. French animosity towards Egypt was heightened especially due to Nasser’s support of the FLN, or the National Liberation Front, rebellion in Algeria against French colonial rule.

Since its creation in 1948, the state of Israel found itself at odds with its Arab neighbors. In fact, Israel’s independence day was followed by the Arab-Israeli war, as Egypt, Jordan, and Syria sought to destroy the new country. Nasser carried this attitude towards Israel when he came to power in 1952. Therefore, he coupled his aforementioned goals with the destruction of Israel. Originally, these attacks occurred as small, sporadic battles on the Egyptian-Israeli border. Israel, however, fully aware of greater impending aggression, sought to ally itself with Britain and France in an effort to protect itself.

The United States’ involvement with Egyptian affairs began as a part of President Harry Truman’s anti-communist, containment policies in the Middle East. America sought to influence this area of the world before the Soviet Union could establish a presence. In order to assert his influence in the Middle East, President Eisenhower agreed to finance Nasser’s Aswan Dam project. However, after Egypt purchased arms from the Soviet Union, the United States withdrew these funds and thereby greatly angered Nasser. Knowing this, as Israel, Britain, and France planned their attack on the Suez Canal, they sought to include the United States—believing that they too harbored a grudge against Egypt. To their surprise, Eisenhower consistently cautioned against military involvement, in fear that this would lead to a nuclear, Cold War confrontation.

In terms of direct military confrontation, the fighting began with an Israeli invasion of Egypt due to French and British pressure on this new country. Soon, British and French forces joined the fighting. The US, though allied with the aforementioned countries, had other goals in my mind for this crisis. Eisenhower sought to avoid direct Cold War confrontation and promoted negotiation over military action. The majority of the fighting occurred in the fall and winter of 1956. Though delegates are not required to adhere to this exact military strategy, they should be aware of what actually occurred.

In this committee, delegates will begin their work on July 26th 1956, otherwise known as the day President Nasser nationalized the canal. The committee consists of delegates from the USA, Britain, France, and Israel, such as President Eisenhower and British Prime Minister Anthony Eden. Delegates will have a chance to change the events of this crisis as they react to the nationalization of the canal and decide what military actions or negotiation they must take.
The 1956 Suez Crisis

Delegate List:

**United States:**

**President Dwight D. Eisenhower**
President Dwight D. Eisenhower is the 34th President of the United States, serving from 1953 to 1961 as a Republican. His primary objectives in office were to reduce the threat of communist expansion and put pressure on the Soviet Union in the midst of the Cold War. In early 1957 he enforced the Eisenhower doctrine, authorizing the United States' commitment to provide economic and military assistance to any Middle Eastern country threatened by another state.

Generally speaking, the United States President acts as chief of state, chief executive, chief administrator, chief diplomat, commander in chief, and chief legislator. Constitutionally given powers include the declaration of war, ratification of treaties, cabinet appointments, and signing (or vetoing) legislation into effect.

**Secretary of State John Foster Dulles**
John Foster Dulles served as Secretary of State for President Dwight D. Eisenhower, enforcing his aggressive approach to communism expansion and influence. He focused on strengthening NATO and threatened "massive retaliation" if the Soviet Union waged war. He is responsible for signing a number of treaties against communism, including the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, which authorized collective action against Soviet aggression.

The Secretary of State, appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, is the President's chief advisor on foreign relations and diplomatic procedures. Alongside the President, the SoS meets and receives foreign leaders, negotiates treaties regarding foreign policy, protects the interests of U.S. citizens abroad, advises the President on ambassador appointments, and much more.

**Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson**
Charles E. Wilson served as the Secretary of Defense for President Dwight D. Eisenhower, remarkably known for his tendency to treat defense as if it were a business. He pursued efforts towards modern warfare and discouraged conventional warfare. Therefore he enforced nuclear readiness, investment in research and development, and a decrease in the size of the army.

The Secretary of Defense is the primary defense advisor and holds power, second only to the President, over the United States military. This position is the highest in the Department of Defense and holds authority over advisory on militaristic action or inaction.

**Chief of Staff of the United States Army General Maxwell D. Taylor**
Maxwell D. Taylor was an old fashioned military commander who detested the increased dependence on nuclear weapons as a defense tactic. He often criticized the government system and placed a great emphasis on the concept of honor.

The Chief of Staff of the United States Army acts as the head of the army and drafts policy, plans, and projections for future military endeavors. In addition, he must almost always
The 1956 Suez Crisis

The 1956 Suez Crisis

report to the Secretary of Defense but has some autonomy in planning and decision making when it comes to the status of USA military.

Vice President Richard Nixon

The history of Nixon speaks for itself. He is cunning and tricky and cares only for himself. Anything he does it to serve his own popularity and success as a politician. Knowing this, act accordingly.

The Vice President of the United States acts as consultant to both the Federal government and the legislative branch. He is also a ceremonial figure in the American government and often present at ritual events.

Great Britain:

Prime Minister Anthony Eden

Prior to serving as Prime Minister of Great Britain, Anthony Eden was appointed to foreign secretary. He was known for his policies of appeasement, acting as a "Man of Peace" in his diplomatic approaches to foreign affairs. However, this reputation did not apply to the Suez Crisis as he encouraged military intervention.

The Prime Minister of Great Britain is granted authority over the policies and appointments in the British government. Roles include cabinet appointments, sitting in on committees, managing relations between the government and the monarch, etc. Alongside members of the Cabinet, the Prime Minister decides on budgetary contents, diplomatic procedures, and defense actions.

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anthony Nutting

Anthony Nutting, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs under Prime Minister Anthony Eden, served as a diplomat and leader of the Conservative party. He adhered to policies of internationalism, or greater cooperation among nations, and was the founder of the Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding.

In Great Britain, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs is responsible for matters regarding foreign policy, especially diplomatic duties such as state visits or hosting world leaders. The level of power within this position depends on the strength of the Prime Minister; a stronger Prime Minister will subsequently limit the powers of the Foreign Minister.

Downing Street Press Secretary William D. Clark

William D. Clark was an avid part of British public relations for almost two decades. He spent World War II handling relations and media between the United States and Great Britain. Media perception of the Suez Crisis was his final project in the British government.

The Downing Street Press Secretary is in charge of the release of government press and the general control of media in the United Kingdom. He or she also serves as an advisor to the Prime Minister in terms of international and national perception of the United Kingdom and its action across the world.
The 1956 Suez Crisis

Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd
Selwyn Lloyd was a British Conservative party politician elected as Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Minister of Supply of Defense prior to his term as Foreign Secretary. During his term, many believed he was not on good terms with his U.S. counterpart Secretary of State John Foster Dulles.

The Foreign Secretary in Britain operates similarly to the Foreign Minister in other nations. The responsibilities within this position include maintenance of diplomatic relations, promotion of British interests domestically and abroad, and oversight of government intelligence.

Minister of Defense Walter Monckton
Walter Monckton served as Anthony Eden’s Minister of Defense, yet rarely agreed with Eden’s policies. In particular, they had directly contrasting opinions on how to handle the Suez Crisis, as Eden was far more vigorous on the military involvement aspect of the subject.

The Minister of Defense is responsible for coordinating the defense and security of the British nation. It was created to conduct the legal proceedings of war time in policy in relation to both national and international safety measures.

France:

Prime Minister Guy Mollet
Guy Mollet is a French socialist politician elected as Prime Minister of France from 1965-1957. He founded a coalition between the center and left parties and called it the Republican Front, which subsequently won the 1956 legislative campaign. He is known for his opposition to French colonialism but faced great difficulty when he tried to withdraw French troops from Algeria, as it led to a counterterrorism campaign against the National Liberation Front in Algeria.

The Prime Minister of France is elected every five years and is thereafter granted control over foreign policy and defense. This position generally guides policy, proposes a list of ministers to the President, and make budgetary decisions.

Minister of National Defense Maurice Bourges-Maunoury
Maurice Bourges-Maunoury was a prominent figure of France’s Radical Party. This party enforced principles of private property, secularism, and anti-colonialism. In order to win the 1956 election, this party combined with the Republican Front to create a centre-left coalition.

The Minister of Defense, serving under the French Cabinet, oversees the military of France and makes decisions regarding defense policy in cooperation with other departments. Other powers include the mobilization of troops and managing military infrastructure.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Christian Pineau
Christian Pineau is notable for his active participation in the French Resistance to Nazi Germany’s occupation of France. During his time as minister in the French government, he was
The 1956 Suez Crisis

known for his advocacy of European integration, or the economic, political, and social integration of states within Europe

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development serves under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs cabinet department, and is responsible for French foreign relations. Duties include the negotiation of peace treaties and oversight of diplomatic relations.

Chief of the Defense Staff Augustin Guillaume

Augustin Guillaume was a French general in the French Army during both World War I and World War II. He eventually retired to his position of Chief of the Defense Staff and led strongly conservative conduct in the government.

The Chief of the Defense Staff not only report to the Minister of National Defense, but also has autonomy when it comes to conducting military operation, training and choosing troops for the French military, and gathering intelligence for the French spy network.

Minister of Overseas France Pierre-Henri Teitgen

Pierre-Henri Teitgen was one of the most educated members of the cabinet, as he previously served as both a lawyer and professor. He was a vast support of human rights.

The Minister of Overseas France is in charge of managing French territory and departments outside of the country’s borders. Before 1945, this position also involved the managing of French colonies. Essentially, such a minister would have been very alarmed at the loss of the Suez.

Israel:

Prime Minister David Ben Gurion

Prior to serving as Prime Minister, Ben Gurion was a primary leader in the Zionist movement and one of the main founders of the state of Israel. He assisted in the development of Israel through the creation of state institutions and oversight of national projects. He is known to respond aggressively to Arab guerrilla attacks and sought to sustain friendly relations with West Germany.

The Prime Minister of Israel is the head of the Israeli government and holds real power over state affairs as opposed to the President’s ceremonial power. Duties include oversight of national decisions, interaction with other nations, appointing members of the Cabinet, and forming policies with the approval of the President and Cabinet members.

President Yitzhak Ben Zvi

Yitzhak Ben Zvi was Israel’s second-longest serving president. He believed in the paramount importance of setting an example to the public and to the world through his civil behavior in the government. He was an important Zionist leader and integral player in the creation of Israel.

The president of Israel acts as a ceremonial figurehead for the country. He is often the representative at various formal peace agreement events and a visit from this figure in another country often represents a diplomatic outreach to another government. The president is also a
The 1956 Suez Crisis

respected leader among the general population of Israel and can both inspire and discourage everyday citizens.

Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett

Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett was an experienced diplomat, a leader of the Zionist movement, and one of many signatories in the Israeli Declaration of Independence. He believed in and supported a liberal policy, compatible relations with the West, Jewish immigration and settlement, and the admission of Israel into the UN.

The Foreign Minister of Israel works under the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This position oversees the implementation of foreign policy decisions and maintains relations with other nations.

Chief of General Staff Moshe Dayan

Moshe Dayan was a primary figure in the Arab-Israeli War of 1948 and a fighting symbol for the newly established state of Israel. In response to Arab-supported terrorist activities, Dayan enforced a strong militaristic campaign against the Arab states and led the first raids against Gaza.

The Chief of General Staff, known as the Commander-in-Chief of the Israel Defense Forces, holds supreme command rank and is subordinate only to the Defense Minister. This position operates as the Chief of Staff of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), overseeing the ground, air, and sea military forces of the nation.

Government of Press Director David Landor

David Landor was the director of the Government of Press from 1954-1977. He single-handedly managed media relations throughout the Suez Crisis and the Six-Day War.

The Government of Press Director is responsible for communication between the government and the media. He decides what information from administration affairs may be released to the public and also has influence over release on national and international statements from the Israeli government.