



Historical Security Council

UNHSC

**“Addressing the International Crisis Arising
from the Nationalization of the Suez Canal (1956)”**

I. Committee Background

The United Nations Security Council was established in 1945 as one of the six main parts of the United Nations. It was created after the Second World War to help international peace and security and stop conflicts between countries from developing into larger wars. The Security Council had its first meeting in January 1946 in London.

The Security Council first had eleven members: five permanent members, which were the United States, Soviet Union, United Kingdom, France, and China, and six non-permanent members elected for two-year terms. The five permanent members were given veto power, meaning that any one of them could prevent a resolution from being accepted.

The Historical Security Council uses the structure and membership of the Security Council from a specific period in history. In 1956, the Council had the five permanent members and six non-permanent members: Australia, Cuba, Belgium, Iran, Peru, and Yugoslavia. The committee allows delegates to debate international issues using the political circumstances, countries, and information that were available during the historical period.



II. Introduction to Topic

The Nationalization of the Suez Canal and the International Crisis of 1956

On July 26, 1956, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company, the joint British French enterprise which had owned and operated the Suez Canal since its construction in 1869. Nasser's announcement came about following months of mounting political tensions between Egypt, Britain, and France. Although Nasser offered full economic compensation for the Company, the British and French Governments, long suspicious of Nasser's opposition to the continuation of their political influence in the region, were outraged by the nationalization. The Egyptian leader, in turn, resented what he saw as European efforts to perpetuate their colonial domination. The Crisis itself began on October 29, 1956, when Israeli armed forces pushed into Egypt toward the Suez Canal.

Primary geopolitical and economic significance of the Suez Canal

The man-made waterway—which opened in 1869 after ten years of construction—separates most of Egypt from the Sinai Peninsula. At 120 miles long, the Suez Canal connects the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean by way of the Red Sea, allowing goods to be shipped between Europe and Asia more directly. Its value to international trade made it a nearly instant source of conflict among Egypt's neighbors—and Cold War superpowers vying for dominance.

International Diplomatic Response

The response of President Dwight Eisenhower his administration was measured. It warned the Soviets that reckless talk of nuclear conflict would only make matters worse and cautioned Khrushchev to refrain from direct intervention in the conflict. However, Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles also issued stern warnings to the French, British and the nation of Isreal to give up their campaign and withdraw from Egyptian soil. Eisenhower was upset with the British for not keeping the United States informed about their intentions.

III. Essential Questions / Key Issues

1. Nationalization of the Suez Canal

- Did Egypt have the legal right to nationalize the Suez Canal Company?
- How should compensation for the former shareholders be handled?
- How could Egypt maintain control of the canal while ensuring international shipping access?

2. Freedom of Navigation

- Should the international community guarantee freedom of navigation through the Suez Canal?
- What responsibilities did Egypt have under the 1888 Constantinople Convention?
- How could the UN prevent the canal from being used as a political or military tool?

3. Use of Military Force

- Was military intervention by Britain, France, and Israel justified?
- How should the Security Council respond to military action against Egypt?

- What measures could prevent the conflict from expanding into a larger international war?



4. Role of the Security Council

- How should the Council respond when a permanent member is directly involved in a conflict?
- What should happen when a permanent member uses its veto to prevent Security Council action?
- How can the UN maintain its authority during a major international crisis?

5. Cold War Tensions

- How should the United States and Soviet Union respond to the crisis?
- Could the conflict develop into a wider confrontation between the major powers?
- How could the UN prevent the Suez Crisis from becoming part of the wider Cold War?

6. Peacekeeping

- Should the UN deploy an international peacekeeping force?
- What powers and responsibilities should a UN peacekeeping force have?
- Under what conditions should foreign troops withdraw from Egyptian territory?

7. Regional Stability

- How could the UN reduce tensions between Egypt and Israel?
- What role should neighbor Arab states play?
- How could the crisis affect future conflicts in the Middle East?

IV. Countries List

- Arab Republic of Egypt
- French Republic
- United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- State of Israel
- Republic of India
- Russian Federation
- People's Republic of China
- Kingdom of Belgium
- Islamic Republic of Iran
- Commonwealth of Australia
- Republic of Cuba
- Republic of Peru
- Ukraine
- Republic of Slovenia
- Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- Hungary
- Czech Republic
- United States of America
- Federal Republic of Germany
- Kingdom of Spain
- Syrian Arab Republic
- Republic of Türkiye
- Republic of Austria
- Portuguese Republic
- Kingdom of Denmark

V. Sources

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