



Model United Nations

Committee: Historical Crisis

Topic: Suez Canal Crisis

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Introduction

The Suez Canal was built by the French in 1869. The 120 mile long canal connects the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. Since its construction, the canal has been a hotbed of activity because of its importance to international trade. Many world powers sought control of the canal, and many countries signed the Convention of Constantinople in 1888, which allowed any country to use the canal in times of war or peace. This convention has allowed the canal to stay open and universal throughout the multitude of wars from 1888 to the present. The only major exception to this rule was during World War II, when allied air and naval superiority allowed canal controllers to deny use of the canal to the Axis powers, even though they were still theoretically allowed to use the canal. However, tension in the region had existed for a very long time. Starting with the Anglo-Egyptian treaty of 1936, this tension would eventually lead to a crisis in the region. That treaty gave Egypt its independence, but in doing so it also allowed the British government to station 10,000 troops and 400 Royal Airforce Pilots in the Suez area until Egypt could protect the canal itself. This treaty was incredibly unpopular to many Egyptians, and the Egyptian military started pressuring the English to end their effective occupation of the area in 1947. Finally, the treaty was effectively terminated in 1951 and the Egyptian military gained access to the canal. The tension in the region grew to a new high in 1956 when Gamal Abdel Nasser, the second president of Egypt, nationalized the Suez Canal. He took this drastic action because the United States and the United Kingdom refused to continue funding for the Aswan High Dam. The United States refused to continue funding the dam because Nasser's government was growing increasingly close to the USSR and some of its Warsaw Pact constituents. Nasser thought that he would be able to collect the necessary funds

from his dam from the tolls gained from the canal, and so he declared martial law and seized control of the region. He took it from the Suez Canal Company, which was controlled mainly by the British and French. In the wake of the nationalization, Britain and France were worried that Nasser would close the canal and they would lose many required natural resources such as oil. They began to plan a secret military offensive to regain control of the region and possibly even depose Nasser. Israel was willing to aid in this offensive because Nasser was incredibly anti-Zionist and had both attacked the Israeli borders on the Sinai Peninsula and closed the Straights of Tiran at the end of the Gulf of Aqaba. So, Israel invaded Egypt in October of 1956, and in response both England and France intervened to supposedly keep the peace in the region. Forces from both countries invaded the region in December of 1956 and now control parts of Suez Canal.

Present Time:

The time is January 1957. The world is looking for a solution to this crisis that could have major implications for the now decade long Cold War between the United States and the USSR. The purpose of this committee is to find that solution.

Some Guiding Questions:

1. How does the committee solve this crisis peacefully, without leading to a third World War in fifty years?
2. What should be done with the newly nationalized Suez Canal?
3. What should be done with the three perpetrating countries of this Crisis?

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