



Research Report

The Historical Security Council

AGENDA ITEM

The Suez Crisis (First Emergency Special Session)

Chairing Panel

Felix Borchers

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Welcome

Forum: HSC- Historical Security Council

Topic: The Suez Crisis (First Emergency Special Session)

Chair: Felix Borchers

Dear Delegates,

First of all, I want to welcome you to these years Historical Security Council. I hope you all are looking forward to engage with the historical issue at hand and are eager to voice your opinions as representatives of your states involved in this conflict.

The Suez Crisis is an utmost interesting historical case to study. The conflict itself gives much insight into the beginning of developments we clearly see today. The pan-Arabic movement which once tried to unite the Arabic world and whose leaders were mostly get rid of after the Arab spring marks an important part in world history. Britain as the decreasing colonial power succeeded by the USA and the Soviet Union who are in the midst of the Cold War. France also struggling with its less important role in world politics. Then we have the Israel conflict at its very beginning a point in time where many choices were made that affect today's politics as being the problems we still have to face and haven't resolved so far. This research paper will offer you some insight into the conflict, but as it is a conflict on a global scale the task of covering everything to the extent needed is almost unfulfillable. Therefore, I would like to ask you to further research your countries positions and involvement in the conflict at hand. In the appendices you will find further information regarding this conflict. I wish you a pleasant preparation phase and am looking forward to the upcoming debate.

*Sincerely,
Felix Borchers*

Introduction

The Suez Crisis is about power, but it's not only about the power over a waterway. It was the beginning of a new era which wasn't favourable for the United Kingdom and France. An era of global tension and change. How should the League of Nations approach a conflict in which two of its founding members have such a deceitful role? And on which terms are negotiations to be made when the trust in each other is eroded? The Suez Crisis offers insight into the world of global politics and its consequences. It also presents the variety with which such conflicts can be met. One has to admit that the solution wasn't perfect, but that's something to be resolved.

Definition of Key Terms

Suez Canal:

The Suez Canal is one of the most important waterways worldwide connecting the Mediterranean Sea with the Red Sea. The Suez Canal was built by the Suez Canal Company



from 1859 to 1869 with French stakeholders holding the majority and Egypt owning the rest still significant share. During a financial crisis in 1875 Egypt sells his shares to the British Government for four million pounds. In 1956 Egypt's President Nasser nationalizes the Canal leading to the outbreak of the Suez Crisis.

Gamal Abdel Nasser:

Second Egyptian President from June 1956 until his death in 1970. Nasser was very popular due to his opposition against western influence in the region. He negotiated the terms with the British to withdrawal around 90.000 troops from their Suez Canal military bases in March 1953. In June 1956 after overthrowing former king of Egypt Farouk in 1952 he took office. Following his inauguration and the withdrawal of the last of the British troops he declared the Suez Canal to be nationalized.

Anthony Eden:

The prime minister of the United Kingdom and successor of Churchill played an important role in the conflict. It was his decision to invade Egypt after Israel invaded them in October 1956 as a cover up for Britain and France to enter the war.

Dwight D. Eisenhower:

34th president of the United States of America and successor of Harry S. Truman. Because of his intervention in the Suez Crisis by condemning Britain's and France's actions and taking steps against them in international politics the war ended by Britain exiting the war.

Ceasefire:

A temporary suspension of fighting. An order or signal to stop fighting.

Pan-Arabism:

Nationalist notion of cultural and political unity among Arab countries. Its origins lie in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when increased literacy led to a cultural and literary renaissance among Arabs of the Middle East. This contributed to political agitation and led to the independence of most Arab states from the Ottoman Empire (1918) and from the European powers (by the mid-20th century). An important event was the founding in 1943 of the Ba'ath Party, which formed branches in several countries and became the ruling party in Syria and Iraq. Another was the founding of the Arab League in 1945. Pan-Arabism's most charismatic and effective proponent was Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser.

Anglo Egyptian Treaty of 1936:

This treaty between Egypt and the United Kingdom allowed Britain to maintain the military base along the Suez Canal and was meant to stay in place for twenty years. Nevertheless, Egypt revoked the treaty in 1951.



General Overview

Since its opening in 1869 the Suez Canal was subject to international politics. The enormous importance of the Suez Canal was due to its advantage of shortening the route from the Middle East and India to Europe by 7.000 km making shipping economically more attractive and shortening the time delay. For Britain the Suez Canal was essential to maintain its oil supply.

As the Suez Canal was so vital for many European countries they settled with Egypt for the Convention of Constantinople in which the neutrality of the Suez Canal was manifested.

“The Suez Maritime Canal shall always be free and open, in time of war as in time of peace, to every vessel of commerce or of war, without distinction of flag.”

But even though this treaty should guarantee passage for all ships independent of their flag Egypt denied access for Israeli ships. During the Suez Crisis Britain and France took the same steps against Egypt.



In the aftermath of WW2 Britain sought to reconsolidate its influence in the Middle East. Its wide spread military presence all over the region and the large military base at the Suez Canal were of great importance. Britain’s interest in the region was due its vast oil reserves which should also help Britain to return to its former colonial power, as the Suez Canal was the fastest route to transport Oil from the Gulf to Great Britain. During this time Britain also engaged in strengthening its relations to countries such as Iraq and Jordan.

At the same time Egypt anti-colonial sentiments started spreading as radical leaders demanded more domestic politics with less influence of the old colonial powers. The pan-Arabic movement established itself successfully with different nations striving to be the leader of this movement. At the same time, they all had in common that they opposed Zionism. Therefore, it wasn't of much help that Britain played a major role in establishing Israel as an independent state in 1948. In Egypt those leaders gained power to and as a result Egypt declared the Anglo-Egyptian treaty of 1936 to be void in 1951 disregarding that the treaty granted Britain's military presence for another seven years.

The United Kingdom opposed the decision of Egypt and kept its military base running. As a reaction to an upsurge against the British military forces, British military forces attacked an Egyptian special operations police taskforce. This counterattack sparked violent protest in Cairo and ultimately led to the King of Egypt Faruk being overthrown in a following military coup paving the way for Nasser to gain control over the country.

In 1953 under the leadership Naguib, his predecessor, Nasser started negotiations with the United Kingdom to plan the withdrawal of the British troops. In 1954 both parties agreed upon the withdrawal of all troops by June 1956.

Nasser was a strong believer in pan-Arabism and was disinclined towards attempts of western powers to gain influence in the region threatening Egypt's role as the leader of the Arab League. He saw a threat in the cooperation of the some Arab-League nations with London under the Baghdad pact. Nasser envisioned the Arabic peninsula to be free from colonial powers. He also saw a great danger in the establishment of Israel as a nation and deployed multiple operations attacking Israel.

He denied a weapons deal with the USA as he disapproved of the condition that he wasn't allowed to use those weapons against Israel. Instead he made a deal with the Soviet Union, creating further tension between the two global superpowers over the influence in the region.

France involvement with Israel as a weapon trades partner was another reason for Nasser to try to depower the countries holding control over the Suez Canal in order to fulfil his dream of pan-Arabism.

The starting point of the crisis was when the USA and Britain didn't see in Nasser the ally anymore. Following this both countries cut their funding for the Aswan high dam, a major infrastructure project for the uprising Egypt leader.

Hence, he declared the Suez Canal to be nationalised on 26th of July 1956. As the United Kingdom and France saw their influence in the region threatened and also feared Egypt cutting the oil supply they tried to defend their interests by all means. At first they tried to negotiate terms which would grant them more influence again, but those discussions failed. During the process both parties had anticipated that Egypt would refuse their terms and therefore engaged in secret talks with Israel which was a close ally and dependent on France regarding weaponry. Those arrangement where agreed on in the Protocol of Sèvres. It was



complicated that Israel should first invade Egypt whereupon Britain and France will set an ultimatum for both to withdraw from the canal and, if Egypt didn't accept the ultimatum Britain and France would intervene.

As negotiations between Egypt and the Anglo-French failed Israel invaded Egypt on Oct 29th with the objective to gain territory at its southern border and diminish the threat posed by Nasser's army which was armed heavily after the support by the Soviet Union. The following day France and Britain set the ultimatum which Nasser denounced. Therefore, Britain and France joined the war on the 31st.

Major Parties Involved

Egypt:

Egypt played a major role in the conflict. As it strove to be the leader of the Arab-League and pan-Arabism movement. It is important to note that Egypt itself wasn't an especially strong country, but it knew how to defend his interest by playing major powers against each other in competition to ally Egypt. The competition between the Soviet Union and the USA is here of great importance.

Great Britain:

As former colonial power and a steadily declining stronghold in the world it especially struggled with redefining itself after the second world war which had accounted for major loses.

France:

France had been involved in the Suez Canal since the building phase and always played a major role due to its majority in shares of the Suez Canal Company.

Israel:

Since its foundation in 1948 Egypt restricted all Israel-flagged ships access to the Suez Canal. At the same time of the begin of the crisis Israel faced major opposition from its neighbouring countries which often resulted in terrorist attacks and smaller armed conflicts.

USA:

Timeline of Key Events

- 1859-1859 The Suez Canal is constructed by the French-Egyptian Suez Canal Company.
- June 13th, 1956 the withdrawal of 90.000 British troops is finished.
- June Nasser becomes the president of Egypt
- July 26th Nasser declares the nationalisation of the Suez Canal
- Oct 29th Israel starts attacking Egypt as discussed with Britain and France
- Oct 31st Anglo-French coalition enters the war following the refusal of Egypt to accept peace treaty terms set by Britain and France



- Nov 6th Britain declares cease fire without warning Israel and France
- Dec 22nd All troops from Britain and France are withdrawn
- Dec 22nd First UN peace keeping mission is deployed
- March 1957 Israel leaves Sinai
- April 24th Suez Canal opens again under full Egyptian control.

Attempts to solve the Issue

In attempts to solve the crisis numerous negotiations have taken place none of which proved to be successful as Britain and France did not want to weaken their position. Only international pressure could solve the conflict.

Possible Solutions

The Conflict was ended by an international cooperation of states who pressured Britain and France to leave the Suez Canal Zone.

In the first days after deploying troops Britain and France faced international criticism by many western-European countries and the USA. In the following days the participation in the Suez crisis sparked protests all over the world, also in Britain.

Other political and economical measures were undertaken. Saudi Arabia put an oil embargo on Britain and Syria destroyed a pipeline connecting British oil tankers with Iraq's oil. President Eisenhower put pressure on Israel by threatening the cutting of payments vital to its survival. At the same time, he made efforts to get the UN to declare resolutions in their emergency sessions. The Resolutions 997 and 1001 condemned most of Anglo-French behaviour and demanded the withdrawal of troops, further embargos on weaponry and the reopening of the Suez Canal. The resolutions which were backed by most members of the security council even enemies such as the US and the U.S.S.R. Eisenhower even went that far as he prevented Britain to get urgently needed funds from the IMF, and proposed to sell sterling bonds which would further devalue Britain's currency.

The UN resolution 1001 also backed the first peace keeping mission United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF).

Notwithstanding the international pressure Britain announced a ceasefire and the Anglo-French coalition withdrew all troops until the 22nd December 1956. Israel withdrew only in March 1957.



Appendix

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/modern/suez_01.shtml

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hobEyWTXu2k>

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<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2001/mar/14/past.education1>

<http://internationalrelations.org/pan-arabism/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ETOUALw2EIs&t=116s>

PDF:

<https://www.google.de/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&ved=0ahUKEwiW8rjssJLYAhXB2KQKHUvfDMoQFgg2MAI&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.un.org%2Fdepts%2Fdhl%2Fdag%2Fdocs%2Fares1000e.pdf&usg=AOvVaw3Z4OY6hU9HYMVreRdJanAT>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7RRZ6740L5s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hobEyWTXu2k&t=218s>

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