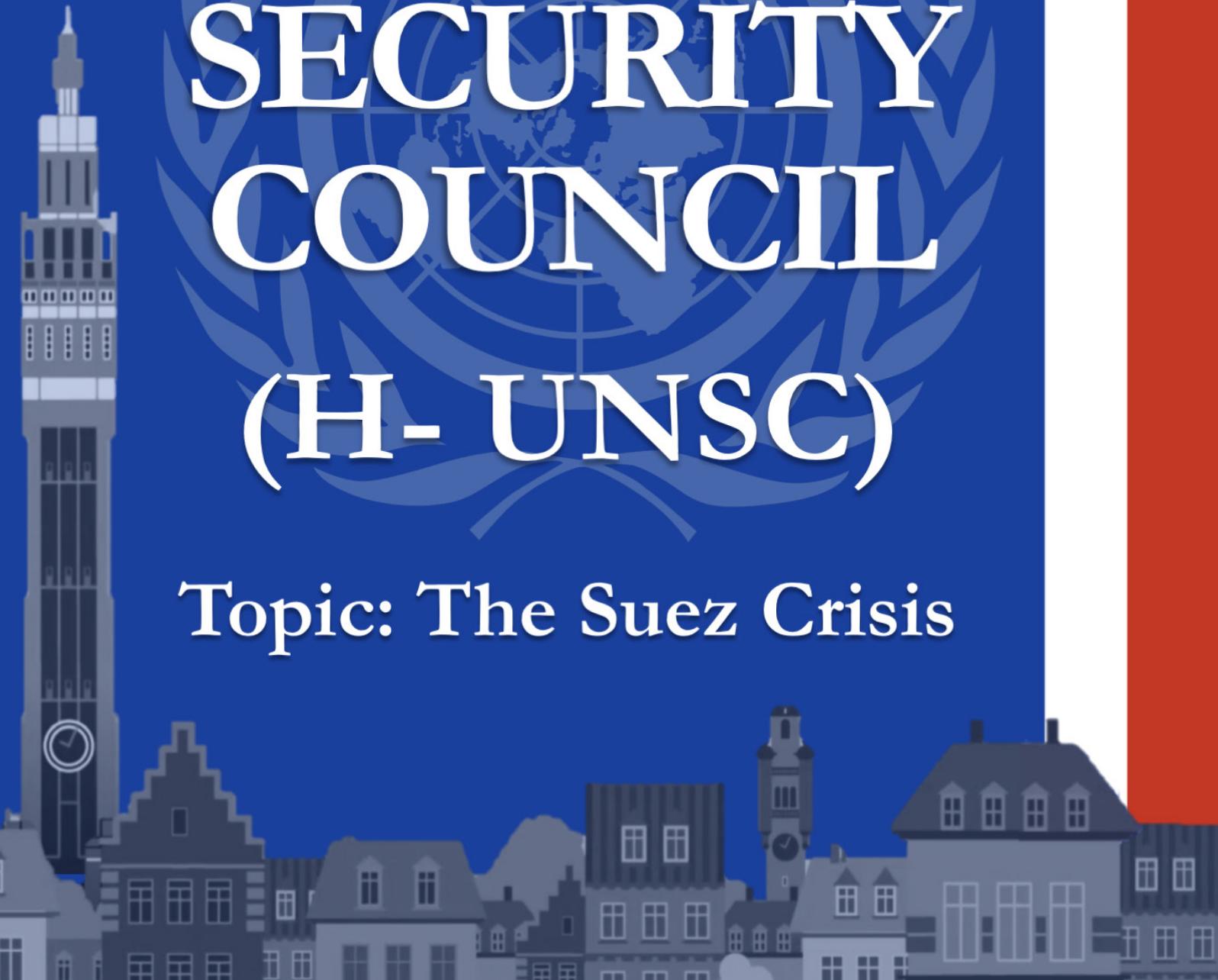




# Historical SECURITY COUNCIL (H-UNSC)

Topic: The Suez Crisis



# Historical United Nations Security Council

## Table of Contents

<b>Committee:</b> Historical United Nations Security Council .....	1
Introduction from the Chairs .....	2
Introduction to the UNSC .....	3
Introduction to the topic .....	3
Topic History .....	4
Timeline of the Events .....	6
Timeline of International Actions .....	7
Current Situation .....	7
Major Parties Involved and Their Views .....	9
Questions to Consider .....	9
Further Research: .....	11
Bibliography: .....	12



## 1. Introduction from the Chairs

Honourable delegates of the Historical UN Security Council,

My name is Zoe and it is my pleasure to be your Chair for this most prestigious of committees at MUNFrance this year. I am a third year student studying Politics and Economics at the University of Reading, currently on a year's placement in the British Government. I hope that this topic that you have before you allows you to see the way in which this could have played out, how it did and how you can shape history to your countries preference and I am excited to see where you take the topic and the issues it proposes.

I have been a part of the MUN circuit for the last eight years with MUNFrance looking to be my 46<sup>th</sup> conference. So if you have anything that you wish to ask in advance, any help, guidance or advice on the topic, then please do not hesitate to contact me on my email at [zedembee@live.co.uk](mailto:zedembee@live.co.uk). While I have debated a great number of topics in my career, historical committees are my personal favourite as they allow greater freedoms and challenge delegates to adapt their policies to past eras of global politics.

I look forward to meeting you all in March for a weekend of fascinating debate!

Kind regards,  
Zoe Braddick

Distinguished delegates of the Historical UN Security Council,

My name is Pierre, and I am honoured to be your assistant Chair for this 2019 edition of the MUNFrance. I am currently studying Politics and Social Sciences at Sciences Po Lille, specializing in International Relations, before going abroad for the third year of my curriculum. I hope you will appreciate learning about the topic selected for this committee, and enjoy the upcoming debate!

About my MUN experience, I have been a member of the MUNWALK association of Sciences Po Lille for two years, which allowed me to participate in the Harvard World Model United Nations, held in 2018 in Panama. Later this year, I will have the pleasure to take part in the Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change at the New York National MUN. I also had the great opportunity to be Chair of the Social, Cultural and Humanitarian Affairs Committee at a conference for high-schoolers last spring. Today, I am looking forward to the MUNFrance with enthusiasm, as a new fascinating experience!

I am eager to meet all of you soon for an interesting conference,

Yours faithfully,  
Pierre Romanillos



## 2. Introduction to the UNSC

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one of the six main organs of the United Nations, charged with two main missions: the maintenance of international peace and security under the chapters V et VII of the Charter of the United Nations, and a substantial institutional role, having a role in the nomination of the members of the International Court of Justice, of the Secretary General of the United Nations and in the admission of new Member States to the United Nations.

It is composed of fifteen members, 5 permanent members (The Republic of China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America), also known as the “P5”; and 10 non-permanent members elected by the General Assembly taking in consideration the contribution of the said states to the actions of the United Nations and the need for an equitable geographical distribution.

Under Section VII of the United Nations Charter, the Security Council is the main organ responsible of the maintenance of international peace and security. It takes the lead in determining the existence of a threat to the peace or an act of aggression. Its first mission is to call upon the parties to a dispute to settle it by peaceful means and to recommend methods of adjustment or terms of settlement. The Security Council can resort to imposing sanctions or even authorize the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security. Non-coercive sanctions-such as economic sanctions- are stipulated under article 41 and coercive measures-such as military interventions- are regulated by article 42 of the United Nations Charter.

We strongly encourage all delegates to read and study the application of the United Nations Charter (especially of its Chapter VII) prior to the conference.

This committee will be set in a historical time period which will alter the course of the committee, the actions it will take and the subject of debate. The specific date that the committee will be set on will be detailed later in this guide, however we ask delegates to remain conscious of the time period throughout their research. Certain solutions and paradigms that exist in the UN of today were extremely different in the early days of the UN, and we expect delegates to be conscious of this throughout debate and to avoid defaulting to modern solutions. References to ‘future’ events will not be permitted. We want you to re-write history as you would like to see it play out, and how you think the conflict can be resolved best. This is your opportunity to simulate the dilemmas faced by policy makers at the time, and we are interested in where your negotiations take you, not in a verbatim repeat of history.

## 3. Introduction to the topic

A critical strategic and economic region for many different players, the Suez Canal is the first artificial channel used for trade and travel. It was built as a link between the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean beyond that, the canal is a key trade route between Europe and the East, cutting out thousands of miles of shipping lanes around the southern coast of Africa. As such, it has been a precious area since its conception and in 1853, a French Company, Universal Company of the Maritime Suez Canal, gained exclusivity rights for constructing and controlling the Canal, bestowing it with a 99 year ownership, after which ownership would be transferred to Egypt.



Due to Egypt's increased debts in 1875, their shares within the Canal were bought by Great Britain, who was increasingly aware of the potential for profit from this Canal route. This gave complete control of the Canal over to Britain and France, until 1954 where the complete withdrawal of British forces from the Canal was used as a main clause in the Anglo-Egyptian territory.

The Suez Crisis occurred two years later, in 1956, and was the result of increasing tensions in the Anglo-Egyptian as well as French-Egyptian relationships. As Britain and the United States had forgone their guarantees and promises to Egypt in building the Aswan Dam at the Nile River, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser opted to nationalize the Suez Canal. By doing so, Nasser expected that the revenues from the Canal would be enough to cover the construction of the Dam.

With the need for the oil tankers from the Middle East, that would head through the dam on their journey to Europe, supplying oil for both Britain and France, control of the Canal, or at the very least the ability to use it for both them and their training allies is an issue of vital importance to the French and British. Thus anything that might disrupt this would soon become a source of conflict.

This conflict has extremely high stakes around it, with the potential for the UN to shine as its new role as international mediator which it has only held for the past ten years. This is a key opportunity for it to display its ability to foster dialogue and diplomacy between nations that would otherwise use violence to solve their disputes.

#### 4. Topic History

##### a. *Suez Canal*

The Suez Canal was proposed as a project to Mohamed Said, the Viceroy of Egypt, by French former diplomat Ferdinand de Lesseps in 1854. This ambitious project aimed to connect Mediterranean Sea and Red Sea through 100 miles of desert between Africa and Asia via shipping canal, which would significantly ease the trade between two different parts of the world. The official construction started in 1858 with the establishment of the Universal Company of the Suez Maritime Canal, which was set to supervise canal's work for the next 99 years. In the beginning of its operation French and Egyptian interests owned the shares of company. Despite the colonial influence in the region, Britain refused the offer of shares and even boycotted the entire construction of the canal, fearing the growing influence of French in Africa. However, the death of Said in 1867 and the ambitious plans of his successor Ismail significantly increased the debt of Egypt and the decision was made to sell all of the revenue shares of the channel. British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli did not miss another opportunity to gain influence over such an important waterway and purchased the shares for £400 0003. In 1888, almost 20 years after the opening of the channel the terms of an international convention signed in Constantinople allowed 'vessels of all nations without discrimination, in peace and war' to cross the canal.

##### b. *Tensions in the region. Arab Israeli Conflict*

The 1947 UN Special Committee on Palestine recommended the division of Palestine into an Arab state, a Jewish state, and the city of Jerusalem under international trusteeship, to be implemented by Britain; and the recommendations of the UN Partition Plan were approved

on 29 November 1947 under UN General Assembly Resolution 181. Arab states remained opposed, refusing to accept the imposed state on the nation of Palestine. In its turn, Britain refused to implement a resolution which did not have the support of both parties, and set a date for its prompt withdrawal from the mandate on 14 May 1948.

On the day of British withdrawal, David Ben-Gurion declared the independence of the State of Israel, and was immediately recognised by President Truman of the United States. The following day, Transjordan, Egypt, Syria and Iraq intervened on behalf of the Arab League, launching expeditionary forces against Israel and thus beginning the First Arab-Israeli War. The Israeli army was able to win the offensive, conquering the vast amount of territory. The 1949 Armistice Agreements established Egyptian occupation of the Gaza strip and the Jordanian occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Israel gained 78% of the Palestine mandate. Later on the State of Israel was admitted to the United Nations, while no Palestinian state was ever established. During the following years, both sides were performing raids and military offensives along the borders, provoking each other to a bigger military conflicts with guerrilla warfare, terroristic attacks on the civilians and air strikes.

### *c. Nasser's political program*

After the Egyptian defeat against Israel in 1948, Gamal Abdel Nasser, a young military, deplored the disorganization of the Egyptian army. His country had to free itself from the British control and more widely from colonialism, which clearly affected the Egyptian military abilities during the war. According to Nasser, King Farouk (the Egyptian leader at the time) was a pro-British leader who had to be ousted, in order to accomplish the Egyptian independence. Thus, he created in 1952 the Free Officers committee, whose first objective was to “liquidate colonialism and the Egyptian traitors that back it”. Therefore, on July 23rd, 1952, he overthrew the Egyptian king and took power along with General Mohammed Naguib and his fellow officers. Based on the idea of a strengthened Egypt, he quickly decided to suspend the parliament, widely criticized for its inefficiency and corruption, and forbid political parties. The military, embodied by Nasser, was thereby controlling the Egyptian government. Gamal Abdel Nasser built a strong ideology based on a union of the Arab people called the pan Arabism. Nasser wanted to renew the Arab world, newly independent from Europe. Thus, the “Free officers” program was composed by five key principles: struggle against feudality, the capital, social despotism, political corruption and the weakening of the military.

One of his first goals was the evacuation of the Suez Canal by the British troops. As a cornerstone of the Egyptian strategic location, Nasser considered that the canal had to return under the control of his government. The United Kingdom military had, throughout the 20th century, insured its protection against the Turkish in 1917 and the Germans in 1942. Eventually, in 1954, a treaty between the United Kingdom and Egypt was signed, according to which the British would have to evacuate the Canal within two years. Indeed, for the new Egyptian leaders, the British presence was lived as a continued colonial domination, which was incompatible with his will of complete independence towards the West. On the other hand, for the British, this evacuation came with a clear degradation of its relations with Egypt, considered hitherto as a strategic ally in the Middle East. Nonetheless, in 1954, the nationalization is not yet considered, or at least not publicly. This first blow to the British presence in the Middle East occurred in a context favourable to the emergence of a third voice.

### *d. The 1955 Bandung Conference*



In 1955, the first African Asian international conference is held in Bandung, from April 17 to 24. The “Third World”, which refers to the underdeveloped, newly independent world that does not respond to the logic of the blocks came to reality. India, Pakistan, Myanmar, Indonesia and Ceylan were at the origins of this conference. 20 other Asian countries, as well as 14 African and Middle Eastern countries were invited, and among them, Egypt. If a wide majority agreed upon a fostered economic cooperation, cleavages appeared regarding the participants’ political positions. Indeed, some countries such as Iraq or Turkey wanted to maintain their relationship with the Western powers, notably by the adoption of military agreements. On the other side, other newly independent states were militating for a complete independence towards the former colonial powers. Eventually, a compromise allowed the participants to join international military alliances. In fact, this decision became a major point of dispute between the West and Nasser’s Egypt prior to the Suez Canal Crisis. Despite these political divisions, the Bandung conference led to the adoption of numerous principles, such as the respect of territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference in internal affairs, reciprocity of benefits, and peaceful coexistence.

Egypt, among the Bandung conference participants, was clearly in favour of putting an end to the military and political influence exerted by the colonial powers. Nevertheless, he still looked towards the West, as well as the East, as potential allies. As a former British colony, Nasser always had seen the United States as an example. When he took power in 1953, his officers even ordered a weapons delivery to the American administration, which was though stopped after British Prime Minister Winston Churchill’s opposition. During the Bandung conference, he eventually asked China’s help. Later on, after having transmitted the demand to the USSR, Czechoslovakian weapons were delivered in Egypt. This will definitely question Nasser’s neutrality and position towards the United States and the USSR.

### Timeline of the Events

- 1869: Opening of the Suez Canal within the Egyptian borders but under the control of an international company, which later operated under the Constantinople Convention (that was signed in 1888 when Great Britain purchased Egypt’s shares from the Company). The Suez Canal connected the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea and so was considered vital to British interests, as well as other countries’ transports.
- 1875: Egypt sells its shares of the Canal to Britain due to its increasing debts. The Suez Canal is then put under British protection and is considered a neutral zone.
- 1936: An Anglo- Egyptian Treaty was signed in London by both countries, and it entailed that Egypt is a sovereign state, all the while allowing for Britain to keep its troops on the Suez Canal in an attempt to protect its strategic and fiscal benefits.
- 1952: As a result of a military coup, Mohammad Naguib replaces Egypt’s King Farouk.
- 1954: Anglo-British Agreement was made that suspended the 1936 treaty and resulted in the British forces’ withdrawal from the Suez Canal Zone.
- 1955: Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan and Great Britain initiated the Baghdad Pact, whose main purpose was to exclude Communist insurgency in the participating countries. President Nasser, who wanted a more neutral stance for the Middle East in the Cold

War, disapproved of this pact and attempted to limit Middle Eastern membership in this defensive organization. This did not adhere to the Western Powers' wishes and was portrayed as a challenge to their influence.

- 17-24 April 1955: The Bandung Conference took place whereby African, Asian, and Middle Eastern countries participated. The conference tackled the issues of sovereignty, equality and the non-interference in other states' internal affairs, as a means to limit colonial powers' influence. The participants were torn between their desire for complete independence and their need for establishing relationships with the Western powers. In this conference, Egypt was one of the main advocates of states' sovereign rights. Gamal Abdel Nasser in the Bandung Conference.
- 1956: As Egypt had opted for a neutral stance regarding the Cold War, its purchase of arms from Czechoslovakia as well as other Soviet-produced aircraft was pegged as an alliance to the East by the USA and Britain, thus compromising its affiliation to the West.
- 19 July 1956: The United States of America informs Egypt that it would not fund the building of the High Dam at Aswan, which was followed by British and World Bank withdrawal of funds from the project.
- 26 July 1956: Abdel Nasser announces the nationalization of the Suez Canal, arguing that the revenues would be enough to cover the expenses of constructing the Dam.

##### 5. Timeline of International Actions

- 16 August 1956: Under the United States of America's support, 24 countries (including the signatories of the Constantinople Convention and other states who have vital interests and are frequent users of the Canal) met in London in order to discuss a plan that reduces the possibility of militarizing the Suez Canal conflict
- 3 September 1956: Australian-led delegation from the meeting was sent to propose the plan (that was approved by 18 of the states present) to Nasser. The Egyptian President rejected it six days later.
- 19-21 September 1956: A proposition to create a Suez Canal User's Association in order to run the Canal was made. Meanwhile, the French and British authorities raised the conflict to the UNSC.

##### 6. Current Situation

###### *e. Israel and Egypt*

As of the moment of our committee taking place, the situation is tense in the region and conflict has broken out between Israel and Egypt. Israel and France are believed to have been in negotiations for several months on joint plans to reopen the Suez Canal by force. Since September 1956, it has been suspected that the two states and their armed forces have been collaborating on joint war plans given their aligned aims of having the canal open for their ships. Additionally, the majority of Israel's military equipment is French, including their Dassault Mystere IV and Ouragon aircraft, and the AMX-13 battle tanks.<sup>25</sup> Britain's role in the hostilities



is more ambiguous, given reported differences in policy opinion between the UK and their French and Israeli counterparts.

On the 29th October, only 3 days ago, Israel launched Operation Kadesh and landed a paratrooper battalion in the Sinai, just east of the Suez Canal. The paratroopers are being supported with French airdrops of supplies and weaponry and have advanced towards the Suez Canal.

Additionally, several branches of Israeli forces are advancing through the Sinai towards the canal area. On the 31st October, the key strategic village of Abu Uwayulah fell to the IDF and Israel now have effective control of the road network across the Sinai. On the same day, there were battles on the Ruafa Ridge and at Umm Qataf, the former a success for the IDF despite all of their attacking armour being destroyed and the latter a victory for the Egyptian defenders.

Israel has also been conducting assaults on the key strategic city of Rafah, which connects the Sinai and the Gaza Strip. After several days of fighting, the city fell to the IDF yesterday morning on the 1st November, and Egyptian forces are now retreating from there back to the canal area. According to local sources, Israeli forces killed around 100 refugees in a camp outside the city on their way into the city. Also on the 1st November, Israeli forces took Gaza City, killing around 3500 Egyptian forces in the process. Israeli forces are currently believed to be advancing on the key port of Sharm al-Sheikh in southern Sinai.

Israeli naval and air power has also clashed with Egyptian forces. Israeli aircraft have cut Egyptian phone lines in the Sinai inhibiting communication, and have almost established total air superiority in the area. Egyptian withdrawal of air forces is expected in the next few days. Egypt launched a brief naval attack on the Israeli city of Haifa, but was chased away by French and British forces.

#### *f. Britain and France*

The day following the Israeli invasion, 30th October, Britain and France issued a 12-hour ultimatum to Egypt and Israel demanding that both sides withdraw from the canal area or the two powers would enter the conflict as peacekeepers. With no response given, the two nations launched a bombing campaign as part of Operation Musketeer on 31st October, with the aim of destroying Egyptian air force capabilities. Yesterday on the 1st November, British air strikes from various aircraft carriers destroyed around 200 Egyptian planes.

It is not clear yet what the scale of Anglo-French involvement in the conflict will be, but there have been reports that First Sea Lord Admiral Mountbatten has expressed his concerns over the British involvement in the conflict to the Prime Minister Anthony Eden, suggesting the UK's desire to continue its involvement.

#### *g. The United Nations*

On the 30th October, the UN Security Council called a special emergency session and failed to pass a resolution sponsored by the United States that called for the withdrawal of Israeli forces behind armistice lines. This was due to Britain and France using their veto powers. At this point it is worth noting the UN General Assembly Resolution 377 (1950), known as the 'Uniting for Peace' Resolution. If the UNSC fails to act accordingly due to lack of

consensus with the permanent members, this resolution allows an emergency session to be called within the General Assembly to enable the body to make recommendations as it sees fit in the situation, effectively bypassing the UNSC in order to establish peace. On the 31st October, the Security Council passed Resolution 119 calling for the first ever emergency session of the General Assembly to be called to deal with the crisis, given that Britain and France were seen to be blocking UN action on the conflict. This means that the special session is currently ongoing alongside our own Security Council session, and while the UNSC may struggle to achieve consensus on the issue, any documents produced in committee may be passed on to the Emergency GA for approval and may be able to avoid the veto obstacle.

### 7. Major Parties Involved and Their Views

The USA is in a difficult situation at present, jostling for power militarily and ideologically with the USSR. At present, there is a revolution ongoing in Hungary where the US is focusing much of its efforts into supporting. This also makes it difficult for the USA to support its allies Britain and France, given that the hypocrisy of supporting their actions in the Middle East while opposing similar actions by the USSR in Hungary would be damagingly hypocritical. Additionally, supporting Britain and France could swing the local Arab nations against the USA as an ally and push them towards aligning with the Soviet Union. The USSR is currently preoccupied with the Hungarian Revolution; however it opposes Britain, France and Israel's action around the canal. Threats have been made over intervening on the side of Egypt. The USSR has supplied the majority of Egyptian war machinery, including tanks and warplanes. Britain and France have distinct national interests in the Suez Canal, given that their supplies of oil from the Middle East come through it. Additionally, Britain's primary trade access to the remnants of its empire is through the canal, and therefore having it open to its shipping is vital to its national interests. Both countries are suspected of having worked with Israel on formulating alliances and battle plans for reclaiming the Suez Canal, and both have supplied Israel with resources and weaponry. Israel's interest in the conflict primarily stems from its desire to reopen the Straits of Tiran that Egypt closed to it before the crisis cutting off a vital Red Sea trade route to Israel. Additionally, the Egyptian-held Gaza strip has been a major cause of trouble for Israel for many years, with attacks coming from the area for several years targeting civilians. A war to weaken Egypt would strengthen Israel's southern border and remove a key regional rival.

### 8. Questions to Consider

1. How will all-out war in the region be avoided? What peacebuilding measures will you deploy?
2. Who is the aggressor in the conflict? How will they be punished if at all?
3. Should a neutral force be sent to the area? Who will provide troops? What will their mandate be?
4. How will the veto power play into negotiations? Will you attempt to bypass it?
5. What should happen with the canal after the conflict has ended?
6. How will trade be conducted after the conflict?
7. How will an agreement leave the politics of the region?
8. What has your country done and which position does it advocate with regards to this situation?
9. What can your country do in order to limit the crisis or resolve it?



10. How has your country's internal situation affected the course of the crisis?
11. What are the means needed to ensure a peaceful conclusion to the crisis?
12. What has this crisis resulted in?
13. What are the benefits of solving the crisis, and to what extent will its repercussions affect nations?



## 9. Further Research:

These links lead to further information on the Timeline of the Suez Crisis, relevant Facts and Figures as well as certain country positions. You are more than encouraged to look for further links and sources.

Suez Crisis Facts and Figures: <http://www.suezcrisis.ca/summary.html>

The Protocol of Sevres:

<https://www.brandeis.edu/israelcenter/about/troen1/TheProtocolOfSevres.pdf>

Encyclopaedia Britannica: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Suez-Crisis>

Documentary on the Suez Crisis: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ETOUALw2EIs>

Timeline of the Suez Crisis: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/5194576.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/5194576.stm)

US Department of State Summary of the Crisis: <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/suez>

1888 Constantinople Convention: <http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/dept/polsciwb/brianl/docs/1888ConstantinopleConventionon.pdf>

The Baghdad Pact: [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/baghdad.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/baghdad.asp)

Resolution adopted at the London Conference (22 August 1956) – In French: [http://www.cvce.eu/obj/resolution\\_adopted\\_by\\_majority\\_vote\\_at\\_the\\_london\\_conference\\_on\\_the\\_suez\\_canal\\_22\\_august\\_1956-en-88c86d4f-fffd-4945-b66d-397bebbb8b4c.html](http://www.cvce.eu/obj/resolution_adopted_by_majority_vote_at_the_london_conference_on_the_suez_canal_22_august_1956-en-88c86d4f-fffd-4945-b66d-397bebbb8b4c.html)

Resolution of 13 October 1956: <http://daccess-ddsny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0109/52/IMG/NR010952.pdf?OpenElement>

Draft Resolution 30th October 1956:

<http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/5943FD140CF8D53505256523005CD36C>

Resolutions adopted through emergency special sessions from 1st to 10th of November:

<http://www.worldlii.org/int/other/UNGARsn/1956/1.pdf>



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